

# Football, politics and popular culture

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**Daniel Parnell**, Senior Lecturer in Business Management at Manchester Metropolitan University and an expert in football business provides some insight on the recent activity of the new emergent scholarly network, The Football Collective.

In a meeting of in excess of 80 football researchers, academics and journalists converged at the 2nd Annual Football Collective Conference hosted by the University of Limerick on the 23 and 24 November. The event welcomed participants from every continent and displayed the link between football, politics and popular culture.

The event included over 60 presentations discussing everything from football hooliganism, to player welfare, through to the role of sporting director. A detailed insight into the conference was featured on RTE media . A highlight was the featured film by Dr Joel Rookwood (University of Central Lancashire), The Sarajevo Derby:

[DP1]<https://www.rte.ie/eile/brainstorm/2017/1106/917757-more-than-a-game-football-politics-and-popular-culture/>

The first keynote address was delivered by Dr Simon McKerrell (Newcastle University), where he argued that football and music are ever-present in contemporary society and that “part of the power of football and its songs, chants and tunes” lies in the manner in which it can inspire feelings of belonging while also encouraging division.

The final keynote was delivered by Dr Mark Doidge of the University of Brighton. In his paper entitled ‘Refugees United – the importance of activism in football scholarship’ he talked about how political activism and public engagement are not only important areas of research but an important way of challenging the power structures in society offering challenges and reflections for The Football Collective.

## Who are The Football Collective?

Following the economic downturn we observed substantial changes in the higher education sector, which included growing demands on academics, from PhD students through to Professors. In a very humble response, a number of scholars convened in the summer of 2015 to support one another.

The primary intention of the first meeting, which combined a research methods seminar with a social event, was to support one another through collegiate and critical research debate. Whilst disciplines and ideologies differed, our shared values in a desire to support other complimented friendships and created an idea, *The Football Collective*, an idea that came to fruition in February 2016.

**Founding members:** *Dr Daniel Parnell (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr Paul Widdop (Leeds Beckett University), Dr Peter Millward and Dr John Hayton (Liverpool John Moores University), Professor John Hughson and Dr Joel Rookwood (University of Central Lancashire), Dr Danny Fitzpatrick (Aston University), Dr Mark Doidge (University of Brighton) and Dr Jamie Cleland (University of South Australia)*

The Football Collective is dedicated network of people who wish to bring critical debate to football – for those interested and involved in building football for the future. Through sharp analysis and research informed original reporting, the Football Collective aims to provide a platform for thought provoking critical debate in football.

The manifesto of the collective is simple: ***We are a network bringing critical debate to our game***

To achieve this The Football Collective has two main aims, which are (i) to deliver high quality events that provide a platform for critical and collegiate support and (ii) to showcase best practice

and help share academic peer reviewed research in an accessible and understandable format for all online.

To date the collective has hosted two major conferences: Future Football: a design for life (Manchester, 2016 ) and Football, Politics and Popular Culture (Limerick, 2017 ). On top of this, the collective has grown from the original nine founders to a network in excess of 200 members spanning every continent.

The foundation of the Football Collective is the combination of high quality events and an aligned online presence, which has helped support successes of those involved. From supporting PhD students and ECRs, idea generation, new collaborations, including a book series and several special issues – notwithstanding the many new connections and friendships established.

This endeavour builds on the historic and contemporary multidisciplinary connections between Manchester Metropolitan University and football across the region.

Associated media:

- RTE <https://www.rte.ie/eile/brainstorm/2017/1106/917757-more-than-a-game-football-politics-and-popular-culture/>
- The Football Pink <https://footballpink.net/2017/11/27/hasta-la-victoria-siempre-until-victory-always/>

[DP1]<https://footballcollective.org.uk/the-collective/>

[DP2]<https://footballcollective.org.uk/2017/01/09/positive-future-for-football-research-in-2017/>

[DP3]<https://www.rte.ie/eile/brainstorm/2017/1106/917757-more-than-a-game-football-politics-and-popular-culture/>

[DP4]<https://footballcollective.org.uk/the-collective/>

[DP5]<https://footballcollective.org.uk/2017/09/01/routledge-book-series-critical-research-in-football/>