

Book

Rebel Games: Football, Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions

British Sociological Association Activism, Social Movements, and Revolutions Study Group

Call for Chapter Contributions

Edited by

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The British Sociological Association's Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions Study Group invite chapter proposals for an interdisciplinary edited collection provisionally entitled *Rebel Games: Football, Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions*.

Football is frequently presented as a world apart from politics: a form of entertainment, a cultural spectacle or an escape from the conflicts of everyday life. Yet football has repeatedly served as an arena through which political identities are formed, collective grievances are expressed, and struggles for recognition, equality, democracy and justice are organised. From anti-colonial nation-building and resistance to dictatorship to anti-racist mobilisation, feminist activism, labour organising and campaigns for supporters' rights, football has provided movements and communities with distinctive resources for political action. Stadiums, clubs, supporter groups, players' associations, chants, banners, colours, commemorative practices and digital fan networks can all become infrastructures of mobilisation. They gather people together, generate emotionally powerful solidarities, circulate political symbols and provide public visibility to groups that might otherwise remain excluded from dominant political arenas.

At the same time, football is not inherently emancipatory. It has also been used by states, political parties, governing bodies and corporations to produce national unity, manage dissent, legitimise authoritarian power and promote commercial or geopolitical interests. Football therefore represents an intensely contested public culture in which solidarity and exclusion, resistance and discipline, rebellion and branding, and emancipation and control are often closely intertwined. The proposed collection will bring together theoretically informed and empirically grounded contributions examining football's relationship with activism, social

movements, political contention and revolutionary transformation. It seeks to move beyond collections of isolated political anecdotes by developing a comparative understanding of the organisational, emotional, spatial and symbolic mechanisms through which football becomes politically consequential.

Themes and Areas of Interest

We welcome contributions from sociology, political science, history, anthropology, criminology, sport studies, media and cultural studies, geography, international relations, gender studies, human rights, social movement studies and related fields.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

Football as an Infrastructure of Mobilisation

Football clubs, stadiums and supporter organisations as spaces of political socialisation and collective action.

The transfer of repertoires, identities and organisational practices from football terraces to streets, demonstrations and wider political campaigns.

The political significance of chants, banners, colours, symbols, choreographies and rituals.

Emotional solidarity, collective identity and political belonging within football communities.

Rival supporters' alliances during moments of political crisis, uprising or democratic mobilisation.

Football-related networks as infrastructures for organising beyond formal political institutions.

Football, Revolutions and Resistance to Authoritarianism

The participation of football supporters, players and clubs in revolutions, uprisings and pro-democracy movements.

Football cultures under authoritarian regimes, dictatorships and military governments.

Supporter resistance to state violence, repression, surveillance and securitisation.

Football and the development of political courage, oppositional identities and contentious citizenship.

Historical or contemporary cases involving ultras, supporter groups and revolutionary mobilisation.

Football as a space in which democratic practices and alternative political institutions are rehearsed.

Nation, Colonialism and Anti-Colonial Struggle

Football and anti-colonial or national liberation movements.

Football's role in postcolonial state formation, nation-building and Pan-African, Pan-Arab or other transnational political projects.

Colonial legacies within football institutions, cultures and governing structures.

Football as a site of struggle over sovereignty, national recognition and political belonging.

National teams and clubs as instruments of unity, legitimacy, diplomacy or resistance.

Indigenous, diasporic and stateless communities' uses of football to articulate collective identity.

Race, Empire and Anti-Racist Activism

Anti-racist and anti-fascist mobilisation within football.
Football and struggles against apartheid, segregation and racial discrimination.
Supporter-led campaigns challenging racism within clubs, governing bodies, media and wider society.
Players' activism against racial abuse and institutional discrimination.
The relationship between symbolic anti-racist gestures and demands for structural transformation.
Racial capitalism, migration and the unequal organisation of football labour.
Contestation surrounding official anti-discrimination campaigns.

Women's Football, Feminist Mobilisation and Gender Justice

Historical struggles against the exclusion or prohibition of women's football.
Feminist organising within football clubs, associations and supporter networks.
Campaigns for equal pay, facilities, resources, professional status and media visibility.
Women footballers as workers, activists and public political figures.
Football and wider struggles over bodily autonomy, public presence and citizenship.
The institutionalisation, commercialisation or depoliticisation of feminist demands within the women's game.
Intersectional approaches to gender, race, class, sexuality, disability and nationality in football.

LGBTQ+ Activism and Queer Football Cultures

LGBTQ+ supporter groups and campaigns against homophobia and transphobia.
Queer football clubs and alternative football spaces.
Football as a site of both heteronormative regulation and queer resistance.
Conflicts surrounding inclusion campaigns and institutional diversity programmes.
Gender-nonconforming participation and struggles for recognition.
The relationship between grassroots queer activism and football's governing institutions.

Labour, Players' Rights and Economic Justice

Footballers as workers and the development of players' unions.
Collective bargaining, contractual rights and labour organising.
Campaigns concerning salaries, maternity rights, working conditions, welfare and career security.
Migrant labour and unequal employment relations within football.
The political economy of academies, transfers and professional football.
Labour struggles in women's football and lower-league or semi-professional football.
Player strikes, boycotts and other forms of workplace resistance.

Supporter Activism and the Commercialisation of Football

Supporter mobilisation against the commercial transformation of football.
Campaigns concerning ticket prices, club ownership, stadium relocation and competition restructuring.
Supporters' trusts, fan-owned clubs and experiments in democratic governance.
The "Against Modern Football" movement and related transnational networks.
Resistance to corporate branding, financialisation and private ownership.
Conflicts surrounding breakaway competitions, club takeovers and football governance.

Community clubs and alternative models of ownership and participation.

Football, Human Rights and Social Justice

Human rights campaigning through football.

Football and struggles concerning freedom of expression, assembly and association.

The rights of supporters, players, migrant workers and local communities.

Activism surrounding the social and political consequences of mega-events.

Football-related campaigns addressing poverty, displacement, discrimination, violence or exclusion.

Tensions between official human rights commitments and institutional practices.

Human rights advocacy directed at FIFA, continental confederations, national associations and clubs.

Humanitarianism, Development and Social Change

Football-based humanitarian, educational and development programmes.

Sport-for-development initiatives and community-based interventions.

Football's role in social cohesion, peacebuilding, refugee inclusion and community recovery.

Critical analyses of humanitarian branding and corporate social responsibility.

The relationship between charitable initiatives and structural inequality.

Grassroots alternatives to institutionally managed football humanitarianism.

Football programmes in contexts affected by armed conflict, displacement or political violence.

Memory, Victimhood and Transitional Justice

Football and the remembrance of dictatorship, political violence, war or state repression.

Stadiums, clubs and supporter cultures as sites of political memory.

Commemorative practices involving disappeared, murdered or persecuted supporters and players.

Football's role in transitional justice, truth-seeking, recognition and symbolic reparation.

Football and the intergenerational transmission of memories of violence and resistance.

Clubs' responses to historical complicity with authoritarian regimes.

Contestation over memorialisation, silence, denial and institutional responsibility.

Media, Communication and Digital Activism

Supporter media and the communication of political identities.

Social media campaigns involving players, clubs, supporters and activist organisations.

Digital networks and the transnational circulation of football-related protest.

Visual activism, documentary practices, podcasts, fanzines and independent journalism.

Football broadcasting as a site of political contestation.

The mediation, commodification or suppression of activist messages.

Hybrid relationships between stadium-based mobilisation and digital activism.

Repression, Policing and Surveillance

Policing and securitisation of football supporters.

Surveillance technologies in stadiums and football-related public spaces.

Criminalisation of ultras, supporter groups and political expression.

Stadium bans, restrictions on banners and chants, and other controls on political communication.

Racialised, gendered or class-based patterns of policing.

The relationship between football policing and wider strategies for managing protest.

Supporter campaigns against repression and restrictions on civil liberties.

Conceptual and Comparative Questions

In addition to case-specific studies, we particularly welcome chapters that engage with broader analytical questions, including:

Under what conditions does football facilitate political mobilisation?

How are identities and organisational practices developed within football transferred into wider social movements?

What forms of political agency become possible through football that may not be available through conventional political institutions?

How do emotional intensity, ritualised assembly and collective memory shape football-related activism?

When do football institutions incorporate, commodify or depoliticise activist demands?

How do political authorities attempt to regulate football-based mobilisation?

How do football movements negotiate tensions between local identity and transnational solidarity?

In what ways can football simultaneously reinforce and challenge racial, gendered, national and economic hierarchies?

What distinguishes football-based activism from activism associated with other cultural or sporting institutions?

How should scholars evaluate the political consequences of football activism beyond its public visibility?

How do social class, social milieu, family background and local context shape participation in football and particular clubs or supporter communities, and with what consequences for political socialisation and mobilisation?

Geographical and Methodological Scope

The collection aims to be genuinely international and comparative. We strongly encourage proposals examining cases from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and other contexts that remain underrepresented in Anglophone football scholarship. Contributions exploring transnational campaigns, diasporic networks or comparisons across countries and regions are particularly welcome.

We invite chapters drawing upon a wide range of methods and sources, including:

Ethnographic research and participant observation.

Interviews and oral histories.

Archival and historical research.

Comparative historical sociology.

Social movement and protest-event analysis.

Political discourse and frame analysis.

Visual, digital and media analysis.

Organisational and institutional analysis.

Participatory and community-based research.
Critical analysis of policy, governance and human rights documentation.
Quantitative, survey, experimental, network and computational approaches.

We are interested in both contemporary and historical contributions. Chapters should, however, move beyond descriptive accounts by articulating a clear conceptual argument about the relationship between football and political action.

Proposed Audience

The collection is intended for scholars, postgraduate students and advanced undergraduate students in sociology, social movement studies, sport studies, political science, history, media and cultural studies, anthropology, criminology, human rights, gender studies and area studies.

Written in an accessible but analytically rigorous style, the volume will also be relevant to journalists, campaigners, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, supporter networks and politically engaged football audiences.

Submission Guidelines

Prospective contributors are invited to submit a chapter proposal of approximately 500–700 words by **Monday 07 December 2026**.

Proposals should include:

- A provisional chapter title.
- A clear statement of the chapter's central argument.
- The geographical, historical and political context of the study.
- The theoretical or conceptual framework.
- A brief description of the methods and evidence.
- An explanation of how the chapter contributes to the collection's central themes.
- Up to five indicative references.

Please also include:

- The author's name, institutional affiliation and email address.
- A biographical statement of approximately 100 words.
- An indication of whether the chapter is single-authored or co-authored.

Completed chapters are expected to be approximately 7,000–8,000 words, including references. All chapters must be original contributions that have not been published previously and are not under consideration elsewhere.

We particularly welcome submissions from early-career researchers, scholars based in the Global South, independent researchers, activists and practitioners whose work can contribute to theoretically informed analysis of football-based political action. Collaborative proposals involving academic and non-academic authors are also encouraged.

Indicative Schedule

Deadline for chapter proposals: Monday 07 December 2026.
Notification of decisions: Monday 11 January 2026.
Online contributors' workshop: Monday 1 February 2027.
Deadline for full chapter submissions: Monday 07 June 2027.
Editorial feedback returned: Monday 05 July 2027.
Deadline for revised chapters: Monday 30 August 2027.
Submission of the complete manuscript to the publisher: Monday 13 September 2027.

The final publication schedule will be confirmed following discussions with the selected publisher. Publication arrangements are currently under discussion with prospective publishers.

Proposal Evaluation

Chapter proposals will be assessed according to:

Their relevance to the central focus of the collection.
The clarity and originality of the proposed argument.
The strength of their empirical or historical foundation.
Their engagement with relevant theoretical debates.
Their contribution to the geographical, methodological and thematic diversity of the volume.
Their capacity to speak to readers beyond a single national or disciplinary context.

Acceptance of a proposal does not automatically guarantee inclusion in the final collection. Final decisions will be based on the quality and coherence of the completed chapters, responses to editorial feedback and the requirements of the publisher's peer-review process.

How to Submit

Please send proposals to the editors as a Word document to: rebelgames@live.ucl.ac.uk

The email subject line should read:

Chapter Proposal – Rebel Games – [Author surname]

Informal enquiries may also be directed to the editorial team at the address above.

About the Collection

Rebel Games: Football, Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions will examine football as one of modern society's most visible and contested political cultures. Rather than treating football as a passive reflection of external political struggles, the collection will explore how the game itself provides spaces, networks, symbols, emotions and collective identities through which political action becomes possible.

By bringing together research on anti-colonialism, anti-racism, gender equality, labour rights, supporter activism, democratic mobilisation, revolution, humanitarianism, memory and transitional justice, the collection will develop a comparative account of why football repeatedly becomes a medium of both political rule and political resistance.

Football may be called the beautiful game, but its political history is also a history of rebellion, organisation, repression, solidarity and struggle.