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Title:

‘Blue Moon’ Rising: A narrative exploration of football fan identities in a neoliberal era

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Abstract:

Professional football in the United Kingdom has been significantly transformed by a combination of commercialisation, commodification and globalisation – ideologically, processually and practically - resulting in numerous tensions and conflicts for football supporters as they come to terms with the shifting nature of contemporary football cultures. This paper seeks to discuss the impact of these processes on the lived experience of football fans, utilising an auto-ethnographic methodological approach to critically reflect upon the impact of the hyper-commercialised nature of contemporary professional football on modern football fan identities. The first half of the paper draws upon the findings of an undergraduate student dissertation which uses an autoethnographic and narrative turn – utilising a critical discussion of the football ‘song’ to poetically explore the impact of foreign ownership, financial investment and competitive success for Manchester City fans, outlining the resultant conflicts and tensions that these developments have caused, such as the marginalisation and alienation of traditional ‘City’ fans. The second half of the paper builds upon this analysis by discussing the potential benefits of similar narrative projects in a wider range of contexts across the UK, thus exploring the contrasting and nuanced impacts of processes such as commercialisation and globalisation on fan identities in different geographic regions and levels of competition.