



**The productive turbulence and unresolved questions of
“new” materialist approaches to sport, leisure and physical
culture**

Journal:	<i>Leisure Studies</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Book Review
Keywords:	New materialisms, Post-human, leisure, Coloniality/De-coloniality, Indigenous onto-epistemologies, Critical Disability Studies

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2 **The productive turbulence and unresolved questions of “new” materialist approaches to**
3 **sport, leisure and physical culture**
4
5

6
7 ***Abstract***

8
9 *Sport, Physical Culture and the Moving Body* is an important collection that will underpin and
10 inform several perspectives and engagements-to-come with sport, leisure and physical culture. This
11 volume meaningfully captures and expands the momentum created by feminist scholars who in the
12 last decade have underlined the relevance of more-than-human theoretical orientations in addressing
13 the domains of sport and leisure. In doing so, the book sets out a number of questions and domains
14 of enquiry that push the boundaries of sport and leisure scholarship and provide meaningful lines of
15 flight in approaching the material-discursive entanglements that weave together bodies,
16 technologies and ecologies. The breadth of topics addressed in the collection surely makes this book
17 a go-to resource for post-graduate students and for scholars across the fields of leisure, sport and
18 physical cultural studies. However, while advancing exciting domains of enquiry, this anthology
19 also leaves open some important questions and gaps. In this review, I briefly underline two issues
20 that I contend are particularly relevant for more-than-human analyses of sport, leisure and physical
21 culture.
22

23 **Keywords:** *New materialisms; Leisure; Post-human; Coloniality/De-coloniality; Indigenous onto-*
24 *epistemologies; Critical Disability Studies*
25
26

27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36 *Sport, Physical Culture and the Moving Body* is an important collection that will underpin and
37 inform several perspectives and engagements-to-come with sport, leisure and physical culture. This
38 volume meaningfully captures and expands the momentum created by feminist scholars who in the
39 last decade have underlined the relevance of more-than-human theoretical orientations in addressing
40 the domains of sport and leisure. In doing so, the book sets out a number of questions and domains
41 of enquiry that push the boundaries of sport and leisure scholarship and provide meaningful lines of
42 flight in approaching the material-discursive entanglements that weave together bodies,
43 technologies and ecologies.
44

45
46
47
48
49
50 *Sport, Physical Culture and the Moving Body* is comprised of fifteen chapters addressing three
51 themes: Body Ontologies, Body Technologies and Body Ecologies. As the editors set out in the
52 introduction, the collection aims to explore “the depths and possibilities of physicality” (p. 7). The
53 book chapters engage with this aim by expansively addressing “the physical” as including the
54 materiality “of and beyond” (p. 123) biology, technologies and ecologies. Ahead of the chapters, the
55 introduction offers an extensive and insightful contextualisation of “new” materialist perspectives in
56 relation to the domains of sport and physical culture, and discuss some gaps, debates and future
57
58
59
60

1
2 lines of enquiry. Together with the introduction, some of the most productive discussions come
3 from chapters that map different materialist approaches to the body (Markula), diffract mind-body
4 relations (Fullagar), explore telomere biology in an age of precarity (Weedon), outline multi-species
5 sport studies (King), weave moving bodies with(in) urban assemblages (Rick and Bustad) and
6 engage with the waters of Rio de Janeiro's sporting mega events (McDonald and Sterling). In
7 closing the volume, Pringle's chapter provides a meaningful discussion of the *return* to materialist
8 thinking and the possibilities that might emerge from this renewed interest in the material for the
9 critical study of sport and physical culture.

10
11 The breadth of topics addressed in the collection surely makes this book a go-to resource for post-
12 graduate students and for scholars across the fields of leisure, sport and physical cultural studies.
13 However, while advancing exciting domains of enquiry, this anthology also leaves open some
14 important questions and gaps. Below, I briefly underline two issues that I contend are particularly
15 relevant for more-than-human analyses of sport, leisure and physical culture.

16
17 The first regards the lack of exploration of some important elements of debate and (productive)
18 contention among different post-human theoretical approaches. The editors make clear in the
19 introduction that more-than-human orientations take multiple avenues in displacing human-centred
20 analyses of power, politics and subjectivity and highlighting the agentic capacities of things.
21 However, what the editors do not seem to discuss *as clearly* is that diverse more-than-human
22 approaches offer not just different, *but quite conflicting ways* to understand, (re)frame, address or
23 even consider intersecting forms of injustice and oppression (e.g. poverty, land-grabbing,
24 extractivism, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, coloniality, to name a few).

25
26 On this matter, scholars have argued that a generalised ambivalence toward any “humanist”
27 intellectual or political project among more-than-human enquiries has often resulted in the
28 sidelining of the historical contingencies and political specificities of worldly phenomena (see
29 Navaro-Yashin, 2009; Dawney, 2013; Goodley et al., 2020). Addressing more explicitly these
30 debates could have helped the reader to appreciate not just the multiple, but contrasting standpoints
31 and approaches that more-than-human analyses can offer on politics, subjectivity and change;
32 something that emerges also from some of the chapters but is not clearly addressed in the
33 introduction, or elsewhere in the book. Relatedly, and with the partial exception of King's chapter,
34 the lack of contributions engaging with anti-racist, queer, post/de-colonial, Indigenous and critical
35 disability scholarship remains a crucial gap of this book. Although acknowledged by the editors, I
36 contend that this gap illuminates a fundamental and problematic blindspot for new materialist
37 approaches to sport, leisure and physical culture. It would be important in fact to ask *why* analyses
38 that aim to offer novel and relevant perspectives on entangled bodies, technologies and ecologies
39 would not engage with these situated knowledge positions *to start with*, instead of reflecting *post-*

1
2 *hoc* on their absence from the contributions advanced in the book.

3
4 Each from their own and at times overlapping positionalities, queer, post/de-colonial, Indigenous
5 and critical disability perspectives have been displacing “modern” conceptions of humanity,
6 illuminating their violence(s) but also indicating other relations with time-space-matter implied by
7 other *possible and existing* forms of being-with-the-world (see Denowski and Viveiros de Castro,
8 2017; Fox and McDermott, 2019; Goodley et al., 2020;). While absent from this work, these
9 perspectives constitute much needed *starting points* to provoke and multiply new materialist
10 analyses of sport, leisure and physical culture. At present, the failure of (most) more-than-human
11 examinations of the physical to engage with diverse onto-epistemologies and ways of being-with-
12 the-world risks to unwittingly reiterate the *presumption of universality* of the modern/colonial
13 knowledge forms (e.g. the nature/culture split) that they aim to displace.

14
15 While I consider these issues to be crucial, nevertheless they not should not be seen as a reservation
16 against the book, but as constructive critical remarks for new materialist engagements with sport,
17 leisure and physical culture more generally. At the net of the absences and omissions discussed
18 here, this book constitutes an important work, and I clearly picture leisure scholars, including
19 myself, thinking with the possibilities that this anthology offers to engage with the entangled
20 materialities of bodies, technologies and ecologies.

21 22 **References**

23
24 Dawney, L. (2013). The Interruption: Investigating Subjectivation and Affect. *Environment and*
25 *Planning D: Society and Space* 31, 628–644.

26
27 Denowsky, D., and Viveiros de Castro, E. (2017). *The Ends of the Word*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

28
29 Fox, K. and McDermott, L. (2019). The Kumulipo, Native Hawaiians, and well-being: how the past
30 speaks to the present and lays the foundation for the future. *Leisure Studies*, 39(1), 96-110.

31
32 Goodley, D., Lawthon, R., Liddiard, K., and Runswick-Cole, K., 2020. The Desire for New
33 Humanism. *Journal of Disability Studies in Education*, 1, 1-20.

34
35 Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2009). Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of
36 Anthropological Knowledge. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (1), 1–18.