

Forced migration and sport: An introduction

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Abstract

In introducing the *Sport in Society* special issue, this paper aims to extend and deepen conversations among scholars, policy makers and practitioners about the role of sport in relation to contexts and issues of forced migration. The five themes that cross through the contributions of the special issue address and expand existing and emerging concerns in the literature, specifically focusing on: 1) participatory methodologies, power, voice and ethics; 2) emotions and embodiment; 3) gendered, socio-ecological and intersectional perspectives; 4) critical perspectives on integration and intercultural communication; and 5) fandom and media representations of forced migrants in elite sport. Often contributing to several of these themes at once, the papers in this special issue critically analyse and interrogate the implications of existing approaches, practices, and research around sport and forced migration. They do so by engaging with complex, yet necessary, dialogues and perspectives that cross disciplinary boundaries, and by not shying away from conceptual and ethical tensions that interrogate concepts, methodologies, policies and forms of representation regarding forced migrants' experiences and contributions to global sporting cultures. While not (cl)aiming to exhaustively address the wide variety of issues and contexts that are relevant to exploring the relationship between sport and forced migration, the papers in this special issue provide key contributions to advance critical scholarly analyses and inform applied interventions on the ground.

Keywords: forced migration; asylum seekers; refugees; sport; sport for development

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Introduction

I feel like I am standing at the starting line of the biggest race of my life. The gun is about to sound. My opponents surround me, but I am not nervous. No, I am excited. I cannot wait to start the race. I cannot wait to take off, running for joy in a race that will not end until God takes me home.

– Lopez Lomong (2012: 221), South Sudanese-born American track and field athlete

I remind myself that I'm not alone in this. Each of my team mates stands for millions of people, many of them with stories harder and more harrowing than mine. And here we are, showing the world what we can achieve.

– Yusra Mardini (2018: 273-274), Syrian-born Olympic swimmer

Far from being relegated to relatively niche academic debates, discussions on the role, relevance and uses of sporting mediums, practices and domains in contexts of forced migration have gained in the last decade significant traction and visibility in mass media and in practitioner and policy domains. National and supra-national actors ranging from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, the Australian and Canadian governments and the British Home Office have all stressed the importance of sport and leisure in newcomers' integration processes and/or invested in research, frameworks and interventions for forced displacement and settlement settings (e.g. Ndofor-Tah et al. 2019; UNHCR, IOC and Terre des hommes 2018). Concurrently, the high-profile sporting engagements and migration journeys of athletes like Yusra Mardini and Lopez Lomong have contributed to provide visibility and to increase public interest on the topic (including through the publication of autobiographies from which the excerpts above are taken).

While certainly welcome to some extent, the increased relevance and visibility of sport and leisure practices and domains in relation to issues of forced migration needs to be approached with caution and requires critical examination (see Spaaij et al. 2019; De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell 2021a). Firstly, as Brighenti (2007) has highlighted, the visibility of an issue or a specific social category does not translate in the capacity of those 'under the limelight' to control the conditions in which they become and are made visible. In this sense, the public visibility that refugees tend to gain through participating in sporting domains (whether as athletes competing at international events or as recipients of sport interventions)

often make them *legible* through existing humanitarian narratives that focus on victimhood and trauma, or more recently on resilience and self-responsibility, as indicative of what public perceptions expect from ‘real’ or ‘worthy’ refugees (see Blair 2020). Another excerpt from Yusra Mardini’s autobiography foregrounds this point. Relaying the experience of attending a media day, Mardini (2018) writes:

I look around the cluster of camera lenses. The reporters want to know what happened on the boat. I smile and tell them my story politely, but I speak without emotion. My heart closes, shuts out the vision of marching waves. Only my head is working I do five group interviews back to back. I say the same words, over and over again. It’s impossible to relive the horror of the crossing for each reporter. My heart stays shut, I lock the calm smile onto my face. (p. 298)

Further on in her autobiography, Mardini describes the cumulative effect of repeating her story to journalists: ‘I come to dread telling the boat story. Always the boat, often the first question. It’s a mystery to me why every journalist seems excited to hear it again’ (p. 263).

In addition to reflecting on issues of visibility, voice and representation, authors have underlined the necessity for sport scholars and practitioners to contextualise sport-for-refugees interventions within exacerbating political processes of State-sanctioned bordering practices, exclusion and violence (see De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell 2021a); what Alison Mountz calls the diffusion of ‘best practices of exclusion’ (2020, p. xvi) towards people seeking asylum across national contexts. In this sense De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell (2021b) have argued that scholars in sport, leisure and forced migration have often unwittingly contributed to narratives that construct refugees as a ‘kind of person’ (Malkki 1995, p. 513): traumatised, lacking or needing to ‘integrate’. In calling for sport and leisure scholars to critically engage with essentialising humanitarian narratives and State-sanctioned attempts to dehumanise and exclude forced migrants from (and within) national borders the authors underlined how:

explorations of refugees’ leisure [and sporting] practices have often enabled the leaching out of political histories and processes that have shaped refugees’ lives and subjectivities through a seamless continuum of ‘paternalistic humanitarianism, bureaucratic violence, and compassionate repression’ (Beneduce, 2015, p. 560, in De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell 2021b, p. 3).

Importantly, the aim of critically interrogating existing approaches, practices and research surrounding sport and forced migration is not to underplay the fact that for people seeking asylum the domains of sport, leisure and physical activity can constitute meaningful forms of sociality, identification and belonging in the face of multiple and often perilous journeys and transitions (see Spaaij 2015; Dukic et al. 2017; Stone 2018, 2021; McDonald et al. 2019; Ley et al. 2020; Nunn et al. 2021; Webster and Abunaama 2021; Mashreghi 2021; Mohammadi 2021). Here again, Yusra Mardini hints at this embodied sense of freedom and belonging when she expresses:

All of us in the water, you will forget who you are, what you did in your life, and which country you are from. You are a swimmer, and whoever is next to you is a swimmer, too, even if it is a world champion (Mardini, quoted in Schuppe and Cobiella 2016).

Following from these considerations of current trends, issues and critical questions, the rationale for this special issue thus lies in the aim to capture and expand the scope, depth and breadth of critical, theory-informed and practice-oriented analyses of the role of sport in relation to contexts and issues of forced migration. As guest editors, we set out to design and develop this collection of essays in dialogue with knowledge gaps, opportunities and future directions identified in a range of literature reviews on the topic (Bailey et al. 2017; Spaaij et al. 2019, 2021; Michelini 2020; Middleton et al. 2020) and the contributions included in the first edited book on the topic (De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell 2021a).

This attempt is underpinned by two main principles. First, we aim to bring perspectives and approaches from different disciplines into dialogue in order yield novel interdisciplinary insights and conversations (Middleton et al. 2020). We contend that this is a key dimension to pay attention to as, while substantially increasing in volume, scholarship on sport and forced migration still appears fragmented and scattered across disciplinary domains that often do not speak to each other. Our aim to address this issue is reflected in the composition of the guest editorship for this special issue, which brings together scholars with expertise and backgrounds in sociology (Spaaij), public administration (Spaaij), physical education and sport pedagogy (Luguetti), feminist studies (Luguetti), physical cultural studies (De Martini Ugolotti), medical anthropology (De Martini Ugolotti), and clinical psychology (De Martini Ugolotti). The necessity to engage in interdisciplinary dialogues in research

addressing the domains of sport and forced migration is further evidenced by the disciplinary diversity of the authors represented in this collection of papers, which spans a wide range of social sciences and humanities. Second, we intend to centre the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers as much as possible in the papers in this collection. This is reflected in our strong encouragement to authors to feature the voices of people with lived experience of refugee and asylum seeker status in their empirical research, but also to critically reflect how refugees' voices are mediated or even obscured in the process of conducting and disseminating research (even when aiming to be participatory). Relatedly, we dedicated our proactive efforts to solicit and support contributions and co-authorship from scholars and practitioners with lived experience of forced migration.

The resulting special issue brings together a diverse group of established and emerging scholars from across the globe whose research addresses the nexus between forced migration and sport. In a number of cases, scholars were able to team up with practitioners who possess valuable practical wisdom and first-hand experience of working with forced migrants in sport and physical activity settings. Collectively, the contributions to this special issue highlight how the role of sport in contexts of displacement, forced migration and settlement needs to be understood and addressed in relation to the multiplicity of meanings it holds for the various actors involved, as well as the political, socio-cultural and economic structures and frames that shape those meanings. At a broader level, this special issue indicates the relevance of sport and physical culture as an analytical lens through which it is possible to reveal, interrogate and address practices, narratives and policies regarding forced migration in a variety of socio-political contexts. Rather than being merely reflective of these practices, narratives and policies, sport is also generative thereof in ways that can either reproduce or deepen exclusion and marginality or offer opportunities for transformation at the level of access, experience and/or representation.

We have grouped the papers in this collection thematically, as a way to dialogue with and contribute to some of the key gaps and directions for future research that have emerged in recent contributions on the topic. Resultantly, the special issue contains five sections that each address and expand some of the most relevant areas of investigation in this field of research. The five themes are:

- participatory methodologies, power, voice and ethics;
- emotions and embodiment;

- gendered, socio-ecological and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- critical perspectives on integration and intercultural communication;
- fandom and media representations of forced migrants in (elite) sporting domains

Below we outline the contributions to this special issue for each theme, while in the conclusions we will outline some outstanding gaps and future directions for research on the topic.

Overview of special issue

Part 1: Participatory methodologies, power, voice and ethics

Recent studies in sport and forced migration recognise participatory methodologies as potentially powerful ways to co-create knowledge and emphasise co-researchers' needs, actions and voices (Luguetti et al. 2021; Mashreghi 2021; Venturini-Trindade 2021; Robinson et al. 2019; Spaaij et al. 2019; Stone 2018). However, to date there has been little empirical research that explores in depth the issues and complexities that arise during this process. A series of empirically grounded papers in this special issue contribute to filling this gap.

Some papers focus on the complex and dynamic ethical issues that may arise in Participatory Action Research (PAR). Robyn Smith, Louise Mansfield and Emma Wainwright's PAR with young people from refugee backgrounds in London, UK, provides new insights into sensitising issues such as developing trust and negotiating reciprocal partnerships, negotiating ethical dilemmas and doing PAR with integrity. They argue that embedding a reflexive approach and developing trusting and reciprocal relationships allowed them to negotiate these issues and promote the benefits that may be derived to all partners involved through the participatory process.

Carla Luguetti, Loy Singehebhuve and Ramón Spaaij's collaborative self-study explores ethical ambiguities and dilemmas that emerged in PAR with refugee-background young people in a grassroots football programme in Melbourne, Australia. The authors discuss several ethical issues including challenges of negotiating identities and the ethics and politics of knowledge production, and the need to share power and the accompanying fear of losing research control. They recommend that PAR projects with refugee-background young people consider critical ethic of care as a framework for anticipating and navigating ethical

issues that may arise. An ethic of care framework can give form to sensitive conversations to reveal power relations, capture complexities and contradictions inherent within caring, and guide collective practices towards recovering dignity and equity within PAR.

Finally, Mitchell McSweeney, Robert Hakiza and Joselyne Namukhula examine the ethical complexities associated with PAR using visual and digital methods with refugees in Kampala, Uganda. The authors suggest that the ethical complexities of using visual and digital methods with people from refugee backgrounds may differ from other sport-focused research. For them, it is essential to understand the power relations associated with the co-production of knowledge in PAR when using visual and digital methods (e.g., who is speaking for whom was a constant thread in their study). In conjunction with the two aforementioned papers, McSweeney et al.'s work contributes to the existing literature on sport and forced migration by emphasising the ethical complexities of PAR in order to challenge the assumption that PAR is guaranteed to be an empowering experience for co-researchers (Block et al. 2013). In addition, the papers show how PAR demands researchers to reflect and act beyond standard ethical guidelines and the 'do no harm' mantra (Block et al. 2013), through reflexivity with respect to both researcher positionality and the particular context within which the research is situated, problematising the (re)production of knowledge (Doná 2007).

Thierry Middleton, Robert Schinke, Deborah Lefebvre, Bahaa Habra, Diana Coholic and Cole Giffin critically examine a community-based PAR project with forced migrant youth in Ontario, Canada. The authors argue for the importance of decolonization, collaboration and praxis in their research (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). They present creative non-fiction accounts to show how forced migrant youth, their families, staff members and a research team collaborated to increase awareness of the diverse cultural 'realities' present in our community and social inequalities faced by forced migrant youth.

All papers in this section invited co-researchers to be co-authors of the publications. This co-authorship highlights a change in the research area, moving from people from refugee backgrounds as 'objects' (when their lives and experiences are investigated from the perspective of others) to a consideration of people from refugee backgrounds as 'social actors' (when they are involved, informed, consulted, and heard in dialogue with researchers to co-produce knowledge) (Doná 2007). This change in power is also evident in the paper by Shahrzad Mohammadi and Sepand Mashreghi. The authors discuss methodological challenges and opportunities in working within a participatory paradigm in the context of sport, forced migration and settlement. Drawing on the authors' personal experiences as

insider researchers (i.e. occupying a dual role of researcher and member of the researched group), they contribute to the field by bringing about a high degree of participation and reflexivity, which enabled them to shift power relations to a significant extent. They argue that if participatory research is not undertaken or utilised critically, such initiatives run the risk of becoming tools in reproducing neoliberal and neo-colonial agendas, hence propagating social injustices.

Part 2: Emotions and embodiment

The papers contained in this section address a gap in knowledge regarding the emotional and embodied dimensions of sport and leisure experiences in contexts of forced migration, displacement, and resettlement. Apart from relevant exceptions (Evers 2010; De Martini Ugolotti 2020; Collison and De Martini Ugolotti 2021; Gulamhusein 2021), this focus remains relatively unexplored in research on the topic. The papers in this section contribute to underlining the relevance and productivity of addressing the articulation and co-constitution of emotional and embodied dimensions of sport in contexts of forced migration. In the first paper, Soolmaz Abooali takes an auto-ethnographic approach to explore the entanglement of her embodied experiences of forced migration and sport (more specifically the martial art of karate). Through a rich and compelling phenomenological exploration, Abooali examines how through practicing karate she re-appropriated and redefined forms of sensory awareness (e.g. smells, sounds, sight) and embodied experiences of tension and conflict as self-affirming dimensions that helped her to negotiate the precariousness and transitions of life as a refugee and to eventually become a competitive athlete. Offering an in-depth analysis of her embodied experiences as a refugee *and* martial artist, Abooali's paper opens relevant insights that while not speaking for all refugees' experiences address the embodied dimensions and relevance of sporting and physical cultural practices in contexts of forced migration.

In the second paper of this section, Chris Webster discusses the (in)significance of footballing pleasures in the lives of forced migrant men. Webster's analysis is grounded in a long-term and in-depth engagement with the football club Yorkshire St. Pauli and the club's initiative Football for All, whose politically engaged and anti-discriminatory ethos are captured by the statements 'no person is illegal' and 'refugees are welcome' (see also Webster and Abunaama 2021). Informed by a feminist understanding of pleasure and emotions as always embedded in, as well as reflective and transformative of power relations Webster's analysis finds that the footballing pleasures experienced by forced migrant men in the study – whether bodily, cognitive, cathartic, convivial –act as a counter to the

dehumanising effects of the UK asylum process. Rather than isolating pleasure as a subjective bodily sensation or psychological stimulant, Webster highlights how engaging in sporting pleasures for people seeking asylum can constitute a political act.

In the last paper of the section, Koopmans and Doidge highlight the relevance of a focus on play and fun in Sport for Development initiatives taking place in refugee settings (in this case, the Rwamwanja refugee settlement in Uganda). Drawing on and expanding existing analyses on the topic in the domain of SDP (see Sterchele 2015) the authors underline the significance of sporting activities focused on enhancing play and fun instead of the development of specific, competition-based sporting skills in refugee settings. On top of providing much needed insights on the relationship between sport and forced migration in contexts beyond the Global North, Koopmans and Doidge underline how play and fun constitute important ways of breaking boundaries and fostering different community dynamics in refugee settings through the creation of safe and playful spaces. Through these findings, the authors contend that a focus on fun and play can thus contribute to minimise the barriers that can be implicitly reproduced in traditional (gendered) aspects of sport and outcome-focused SDP interventions.

Part 3: Gendered, socio-ecological and intersectional perspectives

There is a body of scholarship that acknowledges gendered and intersectional perspectives as a vital issue in sport and forced migration (Spaaij et al. 2019, 2021). For instance, there is a growing body of empirical research that have critically employed an intersectional lens to explore leisure, sport and forced migration (see Agergaard et al. 2021; Collison and De Martini Ugolotti 2021; Swain 2021). Scholars have indicated the need to consider intersectionality carefully, highlighting the multidimensionality of identity and recognising that refugees are an extremely diverse group of individuals with unique journeys and experiences (Spaaij et al. 2021). Although we know that identity markers and social processes (such as gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, religion, and sexuality) and their intersections can affect migration and settlement journeys and people's interest in and access to sport (Spaaij et al. 2019), there is the need to continue to expand and engage with studies that centre gender and intersectional perspectives.

Three papers in this special issue contribute to the body of knowledge by adopting gendered, socio-ecological and intersectional perspectives. The papers analyse the lived experiences of women using different theoretical lenses.

Meredith Whitley presents the narrative of a young refugee woman ('Makena') as she moves between Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and the United States. Drawing upon the analytic practice of creative non-fiction, Whitley describes Makena's lived experience of forced migration, trauma and resilience, as well as her experiences with sport-for-development interventions. Through her narrative, readers learn about the role such interventions can play in the lives of refugees, exploring both their possibilities and their limitations. Ultimately, Makena expands our understanding of trauma survivors' experiences within (and beyond) sport.

Using a socio-ecological lens, Hayley Truskewycz, Murray Drummond and Ruth Jeanes investigate how African refugee and migrant women negotiate and navigate multilevel contexts and social forces throughout their migration and resettlement, in the pursuit of their passion for football. The authors argue that the experiences of the women in the study highlight the cultural, religious, and gendered intersections that influence their football participation both pre- and post-migration. The women in the study demonstrate that although they were subject to varying degrees of socio-cultural pressure, they were able to draw on resources and skills to successfully negotiate their football participation.

Hillary Kipnis examines the everyday lives of Palestinian sportswomen through the lens of the politics of invisibility. The author discusses how Palestinian women have either been rendered invisible by the denial of their existence, homeland, and culture, or made visible through Orientalist images portraying them as victims of a backward culture or as terrorists. By using Nadera Shaloub-Kevorkian's (2010) critical feminist lens, this paper draws attention to how young Palestinian women's everyday sporting practices have become a form of resistance against mobility restrictions in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Although life under occupation often shatters aspirations and daily movements, this paper argues and accounts for how Palestinian women actively negotiate the oppressive environment of occupation by engaging in sport. Furthermore, it highlights how through sport Palestinian women challenge Orientalist narratives that have served to render their identities and politics invisible.

All three papers emphasise the multidimensionality of identity as girls and women from refugee backgrounds present unique journeys and experiences in their migration, settlement and sport participation trajectories. They highlight that taking an intersectional and/or socio-ecological perspective in research is critical if we are to develop an in-depth understanding of the complex process of identity formation and layered experiences of discrimination (Collison and De Martini Ugolotti 2021; Spaaij et al. 2019; Venturini-

Trindade 2021). Kipnis's paper highlights the need to expand and engage with feminist theories and lenses beyond the West/Global North as a key domain for future studies.

Part 4: Critical perspectives on integration and intercultural communication

As mentioned at the start of this editorial, the domains of sport, leisure and physical activity have gained an increasing salience within national and international bodies aiming to advance and promote the health, well-being and integration of people seeking asylum. Yet at present, and apart from rare exceptions (e.g. Jeanes et al. 2015), such increasing policy focus has not been met with critical examinations of how integration and intercultural communication are understood and enacted in public debates, policy domains and everyday (sporting) contexts. The papers in this section thus provide much needed critical engagements with issues that are at the core of public narratives, sporting initiatives, scholarly debates, and policy practices at the intersection of sport and forced migration domains.

In the first paper of the section Mridul Kataria and Nicola De Martini Ugolotti address these issues by drawing on an ethnographic study of a sport project that employs running as an instrument of integration and health promotion for migrants and refugees in Geneva, Switzerland. The authors put to dialogue Nicholas De Genova's (2013) work on the 'border spectacle' with critical analyses of integration in (forced) migration studies to explore what they call the 'integration spectacle'. Through this lens, the authors address the project's activities to examine the *scenes of inclusion* and the *obscene of exclusion* that sport interventions aiming to foster refugees' social integration can at the same time make visible and unwittingly conceal through their interventions. Their findings illuminate the ambivalent positions that sport interventions occupy within the politics and moral representations of asylum. This, as a premise to imagine, co-create and support sport and leisure practices and contexts that are more closely attending to and engaging with refugees' experiences, struggles and trajectories within and beyond contemporary regimes of asylum.

In the second paper of the section Sine Agergaard, Jeppe Klarskov Hansen, Jesper Seemann Serritzlew, Jonas Thorøe Olesen and Verena Lenneis employ a post-colonial perspective to address refugees' trajectories as volunteers in Danish sport clubs. Their work draws on and expands important critiques of the ways in which refugees' sport participation is considered mostly in relation to refugee-receiving social contexts, thus neglecting forced migrants' former experiences and specific interests in sport and physical activity (see Agergaard 2018).

Drawing on life history interviews with four refugees who have taken up roles as volunteers in Danish sport clubs, the authors highlight how taking up sport volunteering bears on the participants' experiences in sport, but also appears for the participants as an escape from social processes that position them as 'Other' in Danish society. Furthermore, the postcolonial perspective adopted in the study enables the authors to discuss how newcomers' engagement with volunteering in sport may challenge dominant analyses and discourses on the topic. This in turn can help to understand new forms of civic involvement drawing on hybrid constructions of voluntariness and "being helpful" amid the participants and prevalent understandings of voluntary work in Denmark.

By exploring the 'integrative potential' and socio-political constraints of football in Southeast Europe, Rahela Jurković and Ramón Spaaij orient their analysis towards a geographical context that has assumed central relevance in European analyses of forced migration but has received close to no attention in sport scholarship on the topic. Basing their analysis on a cross-national ethnographic study, Jurković and Spaaij's discussion highlights the incongruity between micro-level practices and experiences of solidarity and inclusion enacted through football, and State-sponsored marginality and deterrence taking place in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The discussion shows that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Southeast Europe are highly constrained, with profound implications for their engagement in sporting and other social opportunities. The authors conclude by underlining that if the proclaimed "integrative potential" of football is to be realized beyond social connections and sporadic examples of access to decent working opportunities, issues of foundational rights, and hence dehumanizing policies and discourses need to be explicitly examined in scholarly analyses and practitioners' interventions.

In the final paper for this section, Froukje Smits and Annelies Knoppers address the relationship building skills enacted by social work students leading a sport project in a refugee reception centre in The Netherlands. The authors observe that in contrast to sport professionals who may often be involved as leaders in sport for development (SfD) projects, social workers may be well suited as professionals who work with young refugees in sport and physical activities during a SfD project. The authors observed how the lack of a personal history in physical education or sport coaching courses may have enabled social work students to focus on relationship building that could produce enjoyment rather than emphasizing achievement in progressions of skill development and competitions as may occur in SfD projects. In their findings the authors suggest that SfD staff members need to

engage in critical self-reflection to grasp how their previous training and curricular background could enhance or detract from relationship building with participants. Importantly, they contend that an understanding of the Foucauldian concepts of dressage and pastoral power may contribute to this critical self-reflection.

Part 5: Fandom and media representations of forced migrants in elite sport

The contributions discussed above are reflective of the state of play in the study of sport and forced migration in the sense that they focus overwhelmingly on recreational sport (Spaaij et al. 2019). There have been very few academic interrogations of how forced migration intersects with elite sporting domains, the main exception being Michelini's (2018) research on how war, migration, and resettlement influence and are influenced by socialisation in competitive sport. Soolmaz Aboali's aforementioned autoethnography of her journey as a karate world champion (see also Mucino-Sanchez 2021) adds to this slim body of research, and affirms Michelini's (2018) conclusion that the influence of conflict and forced migration on sport careers is profound and reciprocal.

The paper by Ryan Turcott and Emma Ariyo complements this knowledge base by widening the lens on elite sport to include media discourses on elite-level 'refugee athletes'. Expanding existing analyses of the topic (Michelini 2021), Turcott and Ariyo critically examine how refugee issues are represented through sporting domains, institutions, and events. They set out to examine how international news media equated the Refugee Olympic Team with the current global refugee crisis for the 2016 Rio and 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and what discursive frames were used in media reporting. Reminiscent of wider critiques of humanitarianism in the Olympic Games and sport for development (most scathingly, Hoberman 2011), the authors question whether the Olympic movement's engagement with forced migration constitutes a form of celebrity humanitarianism which, rather than giving voice to communities affected by war, displacement and forced migration, reproduces existing hierarchies and inequalities.

Chris Stone's contribution pushes the currently limited academic knowledge on the relationship between forced migration and elite sport further by examining a hitherto almost unexplored issue – forced migrants as football fans and, more specifically, attending professional football matches (see also Woodhouse and Conricode 2017; Stone 2021; as well as Nunn et al. 2021 and Mashreghi 2021 who briefly discuss fandom). Stone's analysis of the Football Supporting Refugees project, a collaborative intervention based in Sheffield, UK, indicates that for a small number of forced migrants there were realistic opportunities of

being incorporated into the football community. Moreover, the project showed the potential for a professional football club to have a meaningful impact in fostering a shared sense of belonging if structured in a way that involved participants as more than just consumer-fans. At the same time, the results lead Stone to conclude that ‘it would seem that forced migrants still face barriers against achieving citizenship of any kind, be it the formalities associated with political recognition or the consumerist means for (cross-)cultural membership’. Here, again, the uneasy relationship between sport, forced migration and belonging rears its head.

We are grateful for the ways in which the contributions to this special issue expand the scope, depth and breadth of critical, theory-informed and practice-oriented analyses of the role of sport in relation to forced migration. We hope that, in doing so, they create space for ongoing conversations and engagement among scholars, policy professionals and practitioners.

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