



Leisure and forced migration: lives lived in asylum systems

edited by Nicola De Martini Ugolotti and Jayne Caudwell, London, Routledge, 2022, 222 pp., £120.00, ISBN 9780367356712

Pui Yan Flora Lau

To cite this article: Pui Yan Flora Lau (2022) Leisure and forced migration: lives lived in asylum systems, *Leisure Studies*, 41:4, 603-604, DOI: [10.1080/02614367.2022.2037153](https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2022.2037153)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2022.2037153>



Published online: 02 Feb 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 524



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Leisure and forced migration: lives lived in asylum systems, edited by Nicola De Martini Ugolotti and Jayne Caudwell, London, Routledge, 2022, 222 pp., £120.00, ISBN 9780367356712

Scholars across the globe have exposed extended periods of waiting as emasculating the adult executive competence of asylum seekers. Thus, time itself is used as an implement in controlling and othering asylum seekers, imposing on them an idle existence, which results in helplessness and dependence (Griffiths, 2015; Hyndman & Giles, 2011). Long periods of waiting, coupled with the interdiction to work, lead to a great deal of free time on forced migrants' hands. The ways in which asylum seekers use time, in particular, leisure time, to alter their relatively desperate situation and transform time for self-expression are the subjects of this book.

De Martini Ugolotti and Caudwell clearly recognise that most of the research on this topic has focussed on the functions of leisure in forced migrants' adaptation to host countries. Scholars have concentrated on community cohesion and enhancement of asylum seekers' health and wellbeing, rather than their deprivation from the perspectives of the persistence of social and economic inequalities in their use of time and space. Moreover, these studies often assume that the stress of trauma and acculturation is essential and intrinsic to the experience of refugees. Based on the above shortcomings, this book aims to illustrate and call for a closer analysis of leisure and forced migration using an interdisciplinary lens and to articulate leisure theories and perspectives on the issue of forced migration.

To grasp asylum regimes through forced migrants' everyday lives and leisure practice, this edited volume comprises three inter-related themes: 1) spaces and temporalities; 2) displaced bodies and intersecting inequalities and 3) voices, praxis and (self)representation. The first theme, spaces and temporalities, discusses how refugees and asylum seekers negotiate and transform their ordinary spaces and contexts through leisure pursuits, potentially empowering themselves and regaining their agency in terms of time use, socialising and self-expression (arguments clearly outlined in Chapter 4). For example, the establishment of 'Football for All' (FFA), an informal football space, enables asylum seekers to 'take back control of themselves' and to restructure the meaning of their time from 'dead time' to 'shared time' (Chapter 2). Engaging in a cycling recreation programme in Germany allows female Afghan and Somali refugees to claim access to a public sphere to which they were denied outdoor activity in their homeland (Chapter 3). The commitment to Arsenal soccer fandom also transforms an individual's ethnic persona and identity as a forced migrant into a transnational identity (Chapter 5).

The second theme, displaced bodies and intersecting inequalities, focuses on the diversity and complexities of forced migration leisure experiences experienced by refugees and asylum seekers of overlapping demographic markers such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and legal status. For example, Chapter 6 examines the opportunities and constraints in developing a leisure provision project for LGBTIQ+ refugees with Venezuelan refugees who self-identified as victims/survivors of sexual violence in Brazil. Taking a gendered perspective, Chapter 7 analyses how inequality in resources such as money, time and household responsibilities shapes access to leisure time physical activities among Eritrean and Syrian women in Denmark. Chapters 8 and 9 discuss how sports and physical activities play a role in transforming and reinterpreting forced migration experiences: while the former chapter analyses the impact of trauma-sensitive yoga courses on Syrian Muslim refugee women, the latter discusses the reconstruction of a sense of identity and communal solidarity via khat-chewing among male Somali refugees in England. Chapter 10 focuses on the impact of sports and physical activities on Afghan youth in Sweden.

The final theme, voices, praxis and (self)-representation, explores how processes of representation and knowledge production shape narratives and practices among forced migrants in the domain of leisure. Examples include sports and physical activities among Afghan youth in

Sweden (Chapter 10), various approaches to doing theatre with refugees (Chapter 11) and a Shia Ismaili Muslim's ringette (a winter team sport similar to ice hockey) experiences on and off the ice (Chapter 12). These chapters attempt to identify what voices and whose viewpoints are incorporated in research into and interventions about leisure and forced migration.

This book uses an interdisciplinary approach to critically address the interconnection between leisure and forced migration. Rather than simply focusing on the functions of leisure as conventional research does, it highlights the role of cultural processes (e.g. forced migrants are inactive due to their original culture) and spaces in shaping forced migrants' access to and opportunities for health, well-being and sociality, which should give insights into forced migration policies that have increasingly been taking an assimilationist approach.

Nevertheless, rather than serving the purposes of this book by integrating leisure and forced migrants into the discussion, a couple of chapters puts the focus on the activity itself only by giving a detailed discussion of a specific project and its evaluation. These discussions may offer added value to readers in terms of learning about new activities, but they are unfortunately discussed without concretising forced migrants' situations and thus fail to demonstrate any perspective on how these projects contribute to forced migration policy and scholarship. Overall, this book would be valuable for both researchers and practitioners in organisations dealing with forced migration, as well as policymakers, in that forced migrants should not be depicted as passive victims waiting to be 'assisted' or 'protected' by others, but as people actively seeking to hold on to their own agency via leisure. It also opens up a research niche in leisure studies in that forced migrants are among the agents in this domain.

References

- Griffiths, M. (2015). Here, man is nothing: Gender and policy in an asylum context. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(4), 468–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X15575111>
- Hyndman, J., & Giles, W. (2011). Waiting for what: The feminization of asylum in protracted situations. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 18(3), 361–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.566347>

Pui Yan Flora Lau
Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Hong Kong
 pylau@hksyu.edu

© 2022 Pui Yan Flora Lau
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2022.2037153>

