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# freeing the veil's offside

an inquisition into Muslim women in the Dutch arena of football

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# it's a pickle.

The world of women's football is rapidly expanding, and consequently the feminisation of sportive spaces, a development which has similarly touched Dutch soil. (Elling, 2015) Casestudies in The Netherlands denote neighbourhoods consisting of a particularly dense demographic of diverse diaspora express a remarkable interest in football, its popularity often deducted from the collective field of play: the urban streets. As the fair majority of these communities identify Islam as a religious conviction, the paradigm shift concerning women's eligibility in football practice is gradually redefining the borders of playgrounds and football courts for Muslim girls and women. The prodigious amplification of Muslim female participation in this branch of sports manifests not solely in an increase of Muslim women's apparel in the public realm but transcribes accordingly into official club membership. (van den Bogert, 2021)

The official veiling ban in 2007 stated in Law 4 by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) stirred a worldwide controversy, after the Iranian Women Football Team was coerced to proceed to forfeiture due to the governing disallowance of the hijab, a type of head veiling which women in Iran are, according to national law, bound to wear. (Prouse, 2015)

The abrasive debate on this matter evoked a clangorous media storm, resulting in IFAB's revision on football enactments during a two-year-trial period, eventually preceded in May 2014 into the recoil and amendment of Law 4, with respect to player's equipment. Following up, the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) modified its corresponding section of football legislation later that same year. (Prouse, 2015; FIFA, 2014)

# to be attained.

The affairs mentioned above reveal a problematic discursive pattern in the sportive realm concerning the produced identity of the Muslim veiled woman by Dutch society. Sports, gender and religion constitute as three sections that are inevitably densely interwoven.

Drawing on intersectional theory, my purpose is to narrate the exclusion of female Muslim football players and untangle the epistemological power construct that defines sport governance as a derivative of Dutch nationalism through colonial logics and critical feminist' approaches, as my argument comprises the encounter between sports and religion to be thoroughly gendered.

The aim within the scope of this inquiry does not wish to construct further rendering of the essentialised embodiment of the Muslim female footballer, but rather attempts to underline the importance of relinquishing the violence of repetitive identification.

# brick by brick.

Through engaging with the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) I utilise a select variety of Dutch newspaper articles to disclose and contextualise public statements supporting my case.

In this paper, I first explore how the context of Dutch nationalism as a political establishment has defined debates over sexuality, gender, race and religion and othered Islamic identities into its binary opposite.

From this Islamophobic depiction, the creation of a post-colonial subject has led to the identity formation of a victimised Muslim woman in need of liberation, and her necessity to literally unveil to become part of the emancipated, modern Dutch world.

I henceforth determine the laws of football as currently stated by IFAB a result after invasive medicalisation of the hijab, where the conundrum over physical safety has validated supremacy over women's bodies.

Afterwards I explain the dispute over the hijab as either an object of religious or cultural meaning and make a brief exploration on how race, gender, and religion behave along the intersectional axe within the domain of Dutch football culture.

Lastly, I clarify the appearance of a backward portrayal of courtesy by sports media and governance through gendering logic.

# this is me.

Being human, we always start in media res. (Moyaert, 2014) I attest that, drawing on Holmes' theory as a self-reflexive researcher, I "aim to achieve "empathetic neutrality, i.e. that [I] should strive to avoid obvious, conscious, or systematic bias and to be as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data... [while recognizing that] this aspiration can never be fully attained - all research will be influenced by [me] and there is no completely "neutral" or "objective" knowledge." (Holmes, 2020)

As a scholar of theology I am invested in conflictstudies in the field of religion and I am particularly involved in Indo-Dutch religious history and post-colonialism. My ideologies have sprung from my own sex, mixed race and spiritual convictions. I am committed to actively contribute to a society that listens to repressed voices and strives for human rights equality. Decolonisation therefore, is a central theme in my writings and inquiries. I have been previously unacquainted with sports and anti-Muslim discourses, although I bring to the analysis my own presuppositions negotiating intersectional colonial, racial and gender predicaments. I balance at the junction between design and social sciences and I consider myself an agnostic, pacifistic, and curious humanist.

# our mise-en-scene.

Ever since the 1970's, hermetic quarrels on Dutch identity in public debate have resulted in the apprehension of a Dutch national self in which to be 'typically Dutch', or to portray true *Dutchness* has become a prerequisite for acquiring Dutch citizenship and adaptation into Dutch 'culture'. (van Reekum & van den Berg, 2015)

Bolkestein's declamation in 1991 at the Liberal International Conference in Luzern signified a turning point in the revision of Dutch identity, as the contents of its speech diagnosed Islam as the ill factor in the delinquency of 'migrant integration' into Dutch cultural climate, an ambient representing 'the separation of church and state, freedom of expression, toleration and non-discrimination'. (Bracke, 2011) The reception of the Dutch as a small yet exceedingly just, secular and anti-racist nation, operating from a moral high ground, inherently driven throughout progression, straightforwardness and open-mindedness whilst demonstrating exceptional hospitality and 'tolerance' towards minorities, despite its history as an imperial aggressor, is an internalised dominant discourse and part of a 'cultural archive'. (Wekker, 2016)

This discursive repertoire of Dutch exceptionalism can be understood through the disquisition of the concept of nationalism, which assumes more than ideological aspects but evolve around the notion of 'practice' and most prominently emphasise that no cultural correspondences among a nation's inhabitants dictate the identity of state. "Nationality is a contingent and contested claim, not a social fact." (Friedland, 2001) Nationalism's unpopular annotation, paradoxically led to the aberrant Dutch self-perception by Dutch aristocracy as putatively anti-nationalist resulting in the formation of a new nationalism: *anti-nationalist nationalism*. (Kešić & Duyvendak, 2016)

A pivotal trait mark embedded in Dutch exceptionalism is the peculiar concatenation of secularisation, deriving from the social order of fragmental moieties 'along confessional or sectarian lines in a segmented polity' named *pillarisation* [dutch: *verzuiling*]. Pillarisation structures religious and political convictions and ideologies among separate pillars and creates distinction by default, and therefore entails a lengthy history of centralisation in public debate, in which the alleged occurrence of *de-pillarisation* [dutch: *ontzuiling*] as a momentum of post-modernism, neoliberalism and secularism has been under scrutiny. (Bracke, 2011)

# the left method.

This brief inquiry will convey the method of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA), and analyse how sport governance produces knowledge ergo determines which knowledge is accepted in the public debate. Discourse is the articulated construct of an assembly of either the written, spoken or drawn (or any derivative) that has acquired certain meaning through its repetitive character. (Foucault, 2019)

An important element in understanding discourse is through 'intertextuality' which relates to the manner in which a collection of correlating discourses, known a 'discursive formation', conduce meaning. As discourse creates 'the world as it understands it', power dwells deeply - not interpreted within the stacked or dominant fragmental levels of institution - but across extent: "power is everywhere, since discourse too, is everywhere." Dominance and hegemony however, structure the 'claim over absolute truth', whereas the 'truth' is rooted in the intersection between power and knowledge. (Rose, 2019)

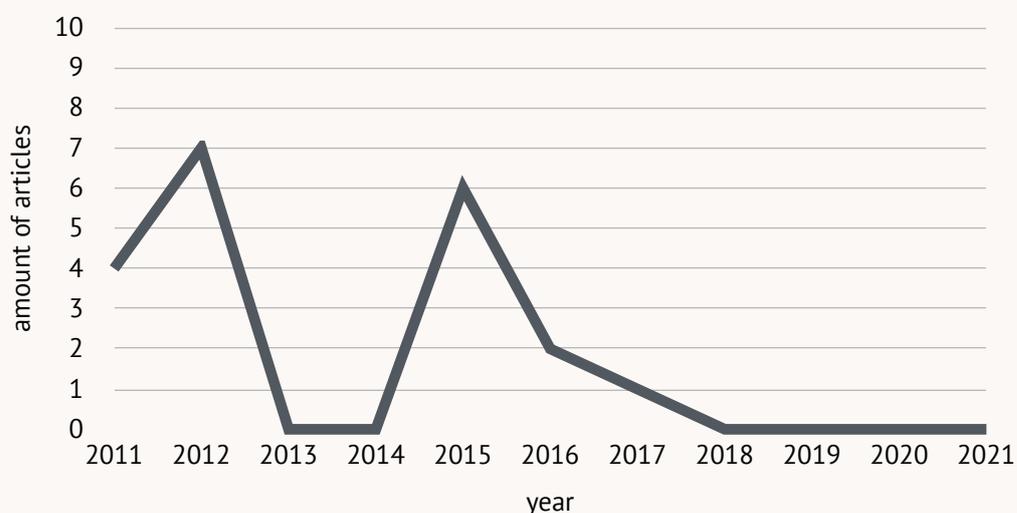
Apart from constituting the legitimacy of knowledge, discourse simultaneously distinguishes between those who can be spoken of (objects) and those who may speak (subjects). (Foucault, 2019) Subsequently discourse systematically entitles a selection of subjects as 'bearers of knowledge' meanwhile depriving objects freedom to self-represent and fuelling the 'subjugation of certain social groups' by the establishment of exclusive rules that adjudicate 'topics, methods, and actors of speech'. (Rutten & Theewis, 2020)

CDA examines discursive patterns and origins in relation to their capacious contexts, and attempts to untangle and reveal the implicit political power structures that linger intertwined in the layers below the surface of the public narrative, and endeavours to empower the interests of the marginalised. (Fairclough, 2001)

# spy with my little eye.

For this particular examination I have consulted Nexis Uni, a source database and online archive for newspaper, journal and magazine articles. I have, for the purpose of framing the Dutch context, resorted to texts exclusively issued in Dutch language and by publishing houses situated in The Netherlands, and limited my brief inquiry to written media solely. In addition my time window has enclosed a strict boundary of the past ten years. Finally, to more thoroughly demystify policy on sport governance produced by FIFA, IFAB and the KNVB, I have consulted official organisational publications.

Within the above stated preset conditions, I detected over tens of thousands of articles about football of which two thousand mentioned 'religion' (or any Dutch synonym e.g. 'spiritualiteit', 'godsdienst', 'levensbeschouwing', 'levensovertuiging') and approximately half of them 'Islam' (or 'moslim' or 'moslima'). Of that selection I found 50 articles that mentioned the 'hijab' or 'headscarf' [dutch: hoofddoek] and preselected the articles that devoted more than one sentence on the latter. As a result - a total of 20 articles provided me with the information for this specific analysis.



The diagram above states the amount of articles per year of publication, out of the selected total of 20 articles, and over the course of ten years. The two peaks in the figure indisputably indicate two causes and upon further review attest of three different events leading up to media coverage, in respectively 2011, 2012 and 2015. In order to interpret their meanings and substantiate the content with a theoretical framework I will elaborate on these time-peaks one by one.

# dime a dozen.

The articles published in 2011 cover three different interviews with foreign Muslim female football players, whose statements are presented below.

“In contrast to Shahnaz, Maysa does not wear a headscarf, just a cap to shield her from the cold. ‘I am religious, but also liberal. My family gives me the freedom to choose for myself.’”

(*Het Parool*, 4 februari 2011)

“In that way Jbarah explains to the Dutch players during a theory lesson that she is not very religious and therefore does not wear a headscarf.”

(*Trouw*, 5 februari 2011)

In the analysis of both citations from the articles, the undeniable presence of presuppositions concerning the hijab paves the groundwork for a collection of discourses, in which the *religious* contradicts the *liberal*, Islamic *freedom* of veiling is considered a *gift* rather than a *given*, and the hijab represents a ‘level of *Muslimness*’. (Hamzeh, 2017; Bracke, 2011)

These notions are inherently related to *Islamophobia* and *hijabophobia*, where the creation of a post-colonial subject has led to the identity formation of a victimised Muslim woman in need of liberation, and her necessity to literally unveil to become part of the emancipated, modern Dutch world.

Along the coequal verges of Dutch ideological secularism lies the notion of homonationalism, a complex phenomenon ingrained with conundrums of gender and sexuality where The Netherlands depicts a beacon of ‘women’s liberation and sexual freedom.’ Genealogically located as an immediate consequence of de-pillarisation, the *secular* has come to represent emancipation, whereas the *religious* its binary opposite. *Id est*, to be religious is to express homophobia and to acquiesce male’s oppression. (Bracke, 2011)

It is in these disputes that a creation and emphasis on the division between minor and major narratives has occurred. Dominant discourse declares harmonious ‘coexistence of LGBTQ+ citizens and religious communities within Dutch society’ a non plausible scenario as traditional Islam is interpreted to oppose sexual tolerance. (Bracke, 2011; Rutten & Theewis, 2020)

The process of othering creates negative identities, the so-called post-colonial subject in what Said refers to as Orientalism, often in binary opposition to the Western, normative one. It justifies exploitation, exclusion, and marginalisation and preserves the Western identity as the *ideal* and any deviation as *less ideal*. This deviation manifests in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, body-type, and religion. (Spivak, 2012; Said, 1985)

The events of 9/11 signified a universal boiling point in 'anti-Muslim stigmatization' as did succeeding violent incidents such as the bombs in London and Paris conducted by Islamist supremacists in the discursive formation of a notoriously, radical and patriarchal Islam. Understood in Western semantics as 'acts of terrorism', the murder of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and Theo van Gogh in 2004, contributed to a distinctive Dutch inferiority and anxiety over Islam. (Amara, 2013)

The relation of Muslim women and Islam within this discourse is two-fold, as she is considered foremost a victim of her own misogynist religion, and subsequently beholds an interest in Western assimilation and civilisation in order to terminate this alleged victimisation. Two identities have sprung from this line of thought: 1) 'the victimised Muslim woman', unable to verbalise her own oppression and unaware of her own freedom possibilities and 2) 'the highly educated Muslim woman' who is regarded as an ostentatious 'rebel without a cause' implicitly responsible for the continuation of despotism of 'her fellow sisters'. (Bracke, 2011) In France, the minister of Women's rights, made the comparison between Muslim women wearing headscarves to 'Negroes who supported slavery.' (Baldi, 2021)

Thus white liberal Feminism preaches a salvation of the Muslim other, and lays bear an assembly of scattered and fragmental female subject positions across the Dutch ethnic sports landscape, while organising "along the lines of 'us' (our feminists, our mothers) and 'them' (the Muslim victim, the educated covered Muslim)." (Bracke, 2011)

As contrary to the beliefs of many, where dominant discourse indicates muslim women do not belong or may be restricted by the Qur'an to compete in physical activities, Islamic scriptures in fact assiduously underpin the importance of Muslim women to engage in sports, and marginally negotiate the hijab within these references. (Ahmad, 2011)

Hijabophobia underpins the assumption and localisation of the veil as a metaphor of 'intrinsic incompatibility between east and west' where the *materialised* has turned into the *symbolised* and Western media fixation has fuelled the creation of the hijab as an entity representing Islam and therefore endangering Dutch society. Additionally veiling equates opposition of secular values and gender equality whereas the women's choice to veil is

hermeneutically deemed an obstruction of women's freedom to dress as they please. The veil, and the hijab as a category classifies as an icon of a patriarchal, violent Islam on one hand, and an icon of women's oppression on the other. (Baldi, 2021)

“The idea that clothes can cause ‘disruption’, or that they can be intended as ‘a threat to the values of a society’, as in the never-ending legal debate over the veil, shows that it is not the simple article of clothing but its symbology that can threaten the *status quo*. The power of clothes, I have argued, lies exactly in their location: since they are at the margin of the body, they symbolize the boundary between the self and the external world...”

(Baldi, 2021, p.46 - 47)

This *hijabophobia* is argued by Manal Hamzeh (2017) into two typologies: ‘Colonist’ and ‘Islamist hijabophobia.’ Both forms of hijabophobia ‘essentialise bodies of muslim women specifically through their dress,’ where Colonist hijabophobia attempts to intrusively demonise religious headwear through ‘racist gendering logic’ and epistemic violence within ‘Orientalist representations’ that identifies veiled women as mentioned previously. To the contrary, Islamist hijbophobia evolves around the enactment by Islamists of protecting the ‘modest Muslim women’ from the oversexualised secular culture, praising the hijab as symbolic testimony for spiritual devotion and a worthy degree of *muslimness* - in other words, veiling shows dedication and determines agency over the idea of a true Islam. (Hamzeh, 2017)

# no pain, no gain.

The articles published in 2012 cover the preceding and succeeding events around the abolition of the hijab ban.

“For those practical problems the FIFA-committee has not yet come up with a solution. There will be a study regarding safety aspects. ‘The safety must remain a first criterium,’ explains the committee.”

(De Volkskrant, 29 oktober 2011)

The close examination of this citation within the articles, display the *medicalisation* of the hijab in regards to the safety requirements and the *codification* that legitimises rule over women’s bodies.

Below is stated a fragment out of Law 4.4 2021-2022, constituted by IFAB, published worldwide for public purposes, concerning ‘Other equipment’.

“Non-dangerous protective equipment, for example headgear, facemarks and knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight padded material is permitted as are goalkeepers’ caps and sports spectacles...Where head covers (excluding goalkeepers’ caps) are worn: they must...”

The amendment continues by clarifying the conditions under which the statement above can be met, the sum of five requirements in total.

1. “be black or the same main colour as the shirt (provided that the players of the same team wear the same colour)
2. be in keeping with the professional appearance of the player’s equipment
3. not be attached to the shirt”
4. not be dangerous to the player wearing it or any other player (e.g. opening/ closing mechanism around neck)”
5. not have any part(s) extending out from the surface (protruding elements)”

These five statements are the product of a two-year-trial after a special advisor was appointed by the FIFA and IFAB Board to oversee the maintenance of potential physical dangers of the hijab such as ‘head and neck injuries, choking, and overheat,’ even though not a single piece of attestation had anteriorly raised any cause for suspicion over safety measures. (Hamzeh, 2017)

As a result of the seminar, 'medical' tests would have to indicate the hijab would not pose any physical harm to players on the football field. This form of medicalisation, in which a selection of criteria are to collectively regulate dress of Muslim women in terms of colour, quality, typology, safety and uniformity codify and legitimate exclusion by default.

"The dress code in particular operates as a technology of power that governs how particular women must act and dress within the space of the football pitch and, consequently regulates who is able to take the field."

(Prouse, 2015 p. 28)

The appearance of the term 'allowance' in this discourse nods to the beguilement these regulations entail as they re-engrave a repetitive authority and create a select right for *some* to regulate over some *other*. The mitigation by safety experiments paradoxically secure a fictional liberal character through which these sport governing bodies are portrayed to the outside world. (Prouse, 2015)

"The regulation of women's bodies and the limitation of their personal freedoms thus becomes the *emblem* of the intrinsic contradiction in human rights discourse in general and liberalism in particular."

(Baldi, 2021, p. 62)

Veiling as a religious trait cannot be rationalised through secular codification, and attempts to do so approves the endurance of epistemic violence. (Prouse, 2015)

"The history of veiling starts long before Islam... The practice has been a useful tool to define and express not only class, gender, caste, marital status and kinship/community belonging, but also political agency and national identity. The particularity, plurality, and situationality of the practice is mirrored in the different shapes, colours, and uses of the headscarf. Veiling, then, is lived, performed, and experienced differently, and acquires different meanings and interpretations based on historical, cultural and geographical contexts."

(Baldi, 2021 p. 18 - 33)

# on the ball.

The articles published in 2015 cover the elections regarding the presidency of FIFA, and Prince Ali Al-Hussein as one of its selected candidates.

“Al-Hussein personally sees to the suspension of the hijab-ban and proves successful in this regard: it vanished last year... ‘the headscarf in women football does not relate in any capacity to religion; but is culturally defined,’ he speaks on the occasion.”

(NRC, 13 januari 2015)

The inquiry of this citation encompasses the understanding of the *culturalisation* of the hijab as opposed to its *religious* meaning within a Dutch cultural context and the *benevolence* of the male father figure saving the female Muslim victim.

The dispute over the hijab as either an object of religious or cultural meaning contests the debate over religiosity and culturalisation in reference to a national context and not a global one - in this specific discourse the hijab is shaped a codification of cultural norms as Al-Hussein is a representative of Jordan descent and therefore characterises a national jurisdiction in which religion is inseparably connected, that requires women to veil. Rooting the debate to Dutch grounds, other complexities rise forward.

To understand specifically how the Muslim female footballer as a subject of race, gender, and religion behave along the intersectional axe within the domain of Dutch football culture requires insight into its Dutch nationalistic perils since Dutch nationalist exceptionalism has trickled down other societal realms, whereas the sports arena is equally compliant.

Football, as the paramount of worldwide field play conducts an unusual flood of chauvinistic expression during periods of global and European contests. (Lechner, 2007; Starkenburg, 2013) This *orange-fever* [dutch: oranjekoorts] evidences most significantly a communal sense of belonging and national pride, a corollary originally sprung from nostalgia towards a historical period of time in which The Netherlands received international acclaim for their football achievements. In football recollection, early 70's demarcate the beginning of Dutch prestige, stirring the nation's collective arena to a sentiment of well-nigh hysterical patriotism. (Lechner, 2007)

The shepherd leading the passionate herd into beliefs of how 'a small country can achieve great things' - n.b. observe the colonial resonance here - during this epoch, was Johan Cruyff. Hoc modo, Cruyff encompasses the embodiment of the Dutch style [dutch: Hollandse School] and is in later discourse commonly memorised as one of the most influential figures in the world of football - a Dutch divinity on grass-green soil. Cruyff, being a fair advocate of the Dutch self, instigated a conjecture of Dutch romanticised superiority in which the heroic accomplishments of its national team testify to the idea of Dutch exceptionalism, a symbol of what it *means* to be Dutch. (Lechner, 2007)

The media plays an essential role in the construct of a dominant narrative here, where its key site is defining the hermeneutics of societal themes such as race, gender and national identity in relation to sports. Particularly television has facilitated a place of collective encounter, whereas "the viewing experience can be considered a social act in which connectedness with the Dutch team is actively created by viewers on the one hand and is mediated and reinforced by the television's broadcast on the other." (van Sterkenburg, 2013, p. 397)

Over the years, racial diversity among professional football team players has invoked 'cultural anxiety' by Dutch white supporters who have expressed concerns over the 'disappearance of adequate representation' - an extremely problematic racist assumption in which Dutchness equals being white. Furthermore racial stereotyping strains the debate on the lack of multi-ethnic composition in the mere pretentious segments of might such as sport academics, politics or governance - a phenomenon best described as *enlightened racism*, where the black body is considered superior, yet exclusively in the category of sports physicality. If the football arena were to resemble a hierarchy, non-white players still roam in the middle of the field, while white men look down on them from the top chairs of the stadium. Critical post-colonial writing on Dutch football and intrinsic power relations is seldom produced let alone ubiquitously distributed as common knowledge. (van Sterkenburg, 2013)

The envision of the 'male locker-room' has sketched a global precedent of gender representations of masculinity. While football is unquestionably not solitary in the exertion of hegemonic masculinity, heterosexism and homophobia, the fields of greenery continue to function as a legitimate space to authorize 'tests of manhood which have been the catalyst for idolisation.' The behavioral norms set within these seemingly communal practices of bonding define gender role-play through an exclusively male perspective, and have been exploited and culturalised under the absence of a variety of gender participation. (Jones & McCarthy, 2010)

Regarded and inaccurately judged a secular space, the football arena facilitates no encounter with the supernatural, spiritual or divine, although religious gestures do appear occasionally on the Dutch grass beds e.g. in the form of shoot prayers or cross signs. In light of these nationwide apparent accepted articulation of religious expression it most definitely contests debate on white normative Christian norms and values that insidiously have come to identify notions of secularism.

Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan, president of the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF), vice president of FIFA for Asia, and founder of the non-profit commission Asian Football Development Project (AFDP), summoned a conference in October 2011 to revise the ban on headwear in Law 4. As of that instant, Prince Ali has appeared in Dutch media, consistently accompanied by the latter statement.

The discourse derived from this particular joint depicts Prince Ali as a heroic savior of the Muslim female footballer and is complicit in exploiting gendering logic where the benevolent converse draws immediate attention to Al-Hussein's charitable triumph, globally celebrated as a performance of integrity while Muslim women's activism during the same contestations is completely neglected, and ordained to the passive subjection of gratefulness. "the gender structure of FIFA shaped who could be celebrated for advocating for female players, thus re-entrenching the patriarchy of the football space and the media that framed these events." (Prouse, 2015, p.28) In this story Prince Ali receives absolute praise for the abolition of male restrictions on women's bodies, deciding, as a man, once again, over women's bodies.

# long story short.

“Freedom to play football should not be dictated by nationality or way or dress or religion... it is a game for the rich and the poor, for the white and the black, and for the one wearing a hijab and the one not wearing a hijab.”

(Hamzeh, 2015 p. 529)

In this paper I have intended to narrate the exclusion of female Muslim football players by drawing on intersectional theory, and untangle the epistemological power construct that defines sport governance as a derivative of Dutch nationalism through colonial logics and critical feminist' approaches, as my argument comprises the encounter between sports and religion to be thoroughly gendered.

As the scope of this inquisition is fairly limited, there remain plenty of questions to be answered. The absence of voices in the public debate addressing KNVB governance in such a capacity leaves me disheartened and emphasises the pertinence for adequate representation and need for critiques doubting the 'common sense' when resorting to similar societal themes.

The silence, is in my opinion, no attestation to irrelevance - as the lack of debate does not correspond automatically to a lack of controversy, and do neither indicate a nonexistence of violations of human rights. In the words of Bracke (2011):

“‘Talking back’ is a complicated matter. It provides fruitful ground to explore how speech and subject formation, and indeed agency, relate. The subject who talks back to dominant discourse is ultimately a subject who has been interpellated by that discourse, and therefore whose being, at least to a certain extent, relies on or points back to that discourse.”

(Bracke, 2011, p. 43)

The alarming regime over the bodies of women is particularly interesting in a period of time where daily public debate over Covid-19 regulations raises passionate discussion over the civil sovereignty of the human physique.

Sport governance and media are key institutions in the circulation of sports discourse. The laws they produce are 'neither static nor uncontested' for they

are no 'homogenous entity'. (Prouse, 2015) The arguments presented here offer a direct invitation to encourage Dutch sport polities, governing bodies and sports media to educate their representatives in order to acquire a more sophisticated, nuanced and complete view on discursive normative complexities within the socially layered sports structure.

There is an urgent necessity to engage with decolonising theory as the produced policy that derives from fallacious discourses continue to violently oppress and exclude minorities from the football arena. Awareness of the entrenched power relations and the biased hegemonic positionalities it constructs should be a first step in untangling, modifying and freeing the Muslim female footballer.

# food for thought.

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*NRC*, 13 januari 2015. "Een moslim president van de FIFA - kan dat?"