



CZECH ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

PRESENTS
LADISLAV HOLY LECTURE 2022

by
NIKO BESNIER
(University of Amsterdam and La Trobe University)

**The Sport Industries in the Neoliberal Age
and the Reconfiguration of Future in the Global South**

19 February 2022 from 16:00

The lecture will be held in the auditorium of the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University ([Pátkova 2137/5, Prague](#)) and [online via ZOOM here](#).

ABSTRACT

Since the late 1980s, a constellation of social and political dynamics has placed the possibility of a professional career in sport front and center in how young men in the Global South see the future. In most world sports, the hope of a sport career invariably means migrating to the Global North, and migration to pursue a career in sport has emerged as the desirable alternative to migrating to escape poverty. However, the probability of success in this endeavor is infinitesimal: not only do many hopefuls fail to migrate at all, but if they do, they often end up in undesirable locations, where their presence may not be welcome and where they struggle to make ends meet, secure residence documents, and gain the talent recognition they seek. Young men are all too aware of the disproportionate imbalance between possibility and probability, and yet they persevere, raising the question of what motivates them to do so. The answer lies in large-scale structural dynamics that encourage a cruel optimism in the contemporary moment, particularly in the reconfiguration of the self through neoliberalism.

BIO

Niko Besnier is currently in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, and Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam and Research Fellow at La Trobe University Melbourne. He has been affiliated with numerous institutions in Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. His most recent publications are *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics* (coauthored, University of California Press 2017, also in Japanese, French, and Spanish) and *Sport, Migration and Gender in the Neoliberal Age* (co-edited, Routledge 2021). In 2015–19, he was Editor-in-Chief of *American Ethnologist*.



ABOUT

The annual Ladislav Holy Lecture honours the life and work of Ladislav Holý (1933–1997), a Czech anthropologist celebrated for his contributions to African studies, the research on nationalism and anthropological theory. Holý was an alumnus of Charles University in Prague, and later lectured at Queen’s University Belfast and the University of St. Andrews.