Association football (soccer) is widely referred to as both ‘the beautiful game’ and ‘the people’s game’. These descriptions are potentially at odds. The first suggests that football is something of an art form to be appreciated in the manner of other arts such as painting, poetry, music and dance. Appreciation of art forms is traditionally believed to involve discernment and the acquirement of specialist knowledge. This has resulted in the arts being framed as ‘high culture’ and regarded as elitist. Reference to ‘the people’s game’ suggests that football is anything but elitist. It suggests that football is culturally democratic, that it can be enjoyed by anyone and everyone. The title of the autobiography by former England international football player Alan Hudson, *The Working Man’s Ballet*, goes some way to proposing a reconciliation of football as both the beautiful game and the people’s game. Hudson’s title may be taken to suggest that while working-class people are disconnected from more conventional art forms and venues of the arts, such as the art gallery, the opera house and the ballet theatre, they can be fully appreciative of the aesthetic aspects of football play and at home within the venue where their art form is viewed, the football stadium. Yet, while prompting a challenge to the distinction between high and popular art forms, Hudson’s title raises questions about the cultural inclusivity of football. Historically, football has been a male-dominated sport, both for participants and observers. Hudson’s title speaks to this history. But would it be appropriate or, more importantly, correct, given the interest of women in football, to use such a male-focused descriptor for a player biography today? What about football’s relationship to social class? Although not referring directly to workers as a class, the mention of ‘working man’ suggests a nexus between class identity and football. Football undoubtedly holds a particular cultural and historical significance for the working class in many countries, but what is the relevance of class-based identity to the sport today? As the ‘people’s game’, certainly in its professional context, is run more and more to the prerogatives of big business and related media interests, has this lessened the meaningfulness of working-class roots to contemporary supporters? And has a middle-class interest in following football developed significantly enough to challenge references to the sport as a game primarily of working-class culture?

These and many other related questions that might be asked reflect the cultural, social, historical, philosophical, political, economic and organisational bases of the sport of association football. The *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies* brings together contributions by academics...
from the disciplines pertinent to these fields of human enquiry. To accommodate these contributions, the volume is divided, albeit unevenly, into five parts. The sequential parts are headed History; Organisation; Media and culture; Society; Regions.

Part I of the Handbook comprises eight chapters on themes relevant to the history of football. In turn these chapters address: (1) how the discipline of history has dealt with football as a historical topic (Matthew Taylor); (2) the importance of local and regional identities in the shaping of particular football histories (Dave Russell); (3) the historical relationship between association football and rugby football as football ‘codes’ (Tony Collins); (4) the historical development of women’s football as a participant sport (Jean Williams); (5) charitable investment in football-related infrastructure, via the example of the Football Trust (Geoffery Z. Kohe); (6) the historical relationship between football and gambling (Mike Huggins); (7) the meaning, significance and preservation of football’s heritage, primarily in non-museum contexts (Kevin Moore); (8) the representation of football’s history, and social and cultural significance within museums (Kevin Moore).

Part II of the Handbook carries the heading Organisation. Themes pertaining to economy and management are included with chapters more directly concerned with the organisational aspects of football at various levels of the sport. The six chapters included in this section address: (9) the formal governance of football as a sport to counter potential problems of corruption and to regularise such matters as ‘financial fair play’ (Borja García); (10) the growth of commercial sponsorship in professional football and the overall implications for football culture (Anna Semens); (11) the role of football participation programmes as a tool for social development and peace building (Jimmy O’Gorman and Joel Rookwood); (12) the development of women’s elite football, via a case study focus on England (Carrie Dunn and Joanna Welford); (13) professional football as a driver of sport-related migration (Gyozo Molnar and Christopher Faulkner); (14) the economic and financial arrangements pertinent to football (Stephen Morrow).

Part III of the Handbook, headed Media and culture, contains seven chapters, including two from the discipline of philosophy. In running order, the chapters discuss: (15) the treatment of football within academic media and communication studies (Raymond Boyle); (16) the impact of social media on football-supporting culture (Peter Millward); (17) football stardom and celebrity (Dave Andrews and Bryan Clift); (18) developments within football fan culture, focusing on a case study response to the judicial handling of the Hillsborough tragedy (Steve Redhead); (19) football as subject matter within fiction writing (Lee McGowan); (20) the aesthetics of football – posing the question, whether or not football is ‘the beautiful game’ (Stephen Mumford); (21) how the playing of football might be regarded as a philosophical undertaking (Steffen Borge and Mike McNamee).

Part IV of the Handbook is the lengthiest. Under the heading Society, it offers ten chapters on a variety of matters. The chapters in Part IV address: (22) football considered from a gender studies perspective (Kath Woodward); (23) the themes of race and racism, relevant to football as a social arena (Kevin Hylton); (24) football and disability, both in regard to participation and spectatorship (Martin Atherton and Jess Macbeth); (25) the relationship between football and the collective expression of national identity (Anthony King); (26) how misogyny and sexism have impacted on football in different cultural contexts (Jayne Caudwell); (27) football’s problem with homophobia (Rory Magrath and Eric Anderson); (28) female spectatorship of and fandom for men’s football (Stacey Pope); (29) collective supporter ownership of football clubs and the issue of fan democracy (Mark Doidge); (30) a consideration of social network analysis as a means of explaining the interconnecting ways in which football exists as a social phenomenon (Paul Widdop and Mike Collins); (31) football hooliganism within sociological and related research (Ramón Spaaij and Alberto Testa).
Finally, Part V of the Handbook considers football as a ‘global game’, under chapters given to the discussion of regions around the world in which football is played. The chapters relate to FIFA-designated confederations. Part V commences with a chapter (32) on FIFA and the World Cup (John Hughson) and then proceeds with region-specific chapters, as follows: (33) football in South Asia (Kausik Bandyopadhyay); (34) football in West Asia (Mahfoud Amara); (35) football in East Asia (John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter); (36) football in Africa (Marc Fletcher); (37) football in Europe (Christos Kassimeris); (38) football in Oceania (Mark Falcous); (39) football in Latin America (Pablo Alabarces and Verónica Moreira); (40) football in North America (Charles Parrish and John Nauright).

The global coverage in Part V is extensive, but not exhaustive. The chapter offerings reflect the expertise available for contributions to the Handbook. This applies to chapters in other parts as well. The final version of the Handbook does not entirely reflect the plan the editors had on the ‘drawing board’, but is the result of a process of negotiation between particular contributors and the editors that took shape over the last few years. Inevitably, some offers to contribute were not taken up and, in some other cases, contributors withdrew from the project at some point along the way. This has led to delays and, again, to a slightly different volume to the one we had in mind at the outset. Nevertheless, we do not hold a monopoly opinion on what must be included in a handbook of football studies and, we believe, the volume has benefited from the inclusion of some avenues of enquiry that have come to us via the necessity of contingency planning rather than from a definitive editorial vision. Furthermore, a handbook is not an encyclopaedia. It is not intended to be as comprehensive as the latter type of publication and, by conventional definition, it tends to involve instruction on how to undertake some or other procedure or activity. For example, an instructional handbook on football, of the type written by a number of professional football players over the years, will involve a fair degree of personal viewpoint on how the game should be played. Instruction on how best to pass a football may involve a degree of consensus, but each player will have their own way of advising on how to go about putting foot to ball with the aim of delivering it advantageously to a teammate. Similarly, themes relevant to football considered from standpoints within the social sciences and humanities will reflect the particular intellectual and ideological bearings of academic writers. Such is the case in the Routledge Handbook of Football Studies. While the contributions, in most cases, provide a ‘fact-based’ summary of their topics, they also, where appropriate, draw on the research undertakings of contributors. To the extent that this may involve tendentious discussion, we believe that it makes for informative and interesting reading. We trust that the contributions will be useful to scholars and students in their academic work. Should a reading of chapters encourage further research into the topics addressed in chapters or lead to study into areas that are not dealt with in much detail here then our ambition as editors when taking on this project will be largely fulfilled.

We are thankful to the publisher for giving us the opportunity to edit the Routledge Handbook of Football Studies and, in particular, to Simon Whitmore for making the invitation.