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12 The typology of athletic migrants revisited

Transnational settlers, sojourners and mobiles

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In the “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 1993/2009), following the growing intensification of global relations, there is a diversification of migrant groups and migrant profiles evolving outside of the traditionally defined categories such as immigrants, refugees and guest workers. Time-space-compression is reflected in the fact that travel between different parts of the world becomes easier, quicker and cheaper, while communication across different time-zones is supported by information technologies, etc. (Giddens 1990/2005, 1991/2006). Although migrants have long maintained, physically and/or emotionally, linkages to their countries of origin, a remarkable intensification of cross-border activities and relations can today be identified (Vertovec 2001).

The intensification of global relations and movement of people is also making itself prevalent in the field of sport, which has witnessed an increase in the international mobility of, particularly, professional athletes, in a variety of sporting contexts around the globe (Thibault 2009). In the existing literature various typologies for sports migrants have been suggested based on empirical studies of male athletes migrating mainly into Anglo-American societies (Maguire 1996; Lanfranchi and Taylor 2001; Magee and Sugden 2002; Takahashi and Horne 2004). In these studies the primary focus has been the athletes’ motives for migrating, rather than their experiences in migration and outcomes thereof. As yet only incipient, early accounts indicate that female athletic migrants’ motives and experiences may not fit neatly into the existing typologies, but are, rather, foreground for new (or just yet unidentified) types of athletic migration pointing to family dynamics and desires for (geographic and) social mobility and international experiences within their sport as being more important than (limited) financial rewards (Agergaard 2008, 2010; Agergaard and Botelho 2010; Botelho and Agergaard 2011; Williams 2011; Tiesler 2012a, 2012b).

Consequently, it is also remarkable that it is in studies of women’s soccer migration that the theoretical conceptualization of athletic migration as transnational migration is currently developing (Agergaard and Haugaa Engh 2012; Haugaa Engh and Agergaard 2013; Tiesler 2013), while being pioneered by studies of baseball migration by Thomas Carter (2007, 2011a, 2011b). Following Elliot and Maguire (2008) and Maguire and Falcous (2010), who have encouraged scholars who are concerned with sport migration to think beyond their particular subject area by building on research related to the broad tradition of studying migrations in contexts outside of sport, we will draw here on insights from migration studies in constructing a theoretical framework to guide our investigation of mobility types in sports labor migration. [.....]