

in: S. Agergaard & N.C. Tiesler (eds.), *Women, Soccer and Transnational Migration*, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 33-50. <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415824590/>

3 Current fluxes in women's soccer migration

Towards an understanding of the circularity of athletic mobility and skills-exchange

Sine Agergaard and Nina Clara Tiesler

Introduction

The international mobility of women's soccer players has increased substantially in recent years. For instance the percentage of national team players playing in clubs abroad grew from 13 percent among the squads participating at the 2008 Olympic Games (Tiesler 2012a) to 26.6 percent at the 2012 Olympic Games. Very little, however, is known about the main trends and patterns in the international mobility of women soccer players. Which countries are involved? How do the streams of emigration and immigration evolve? And how may we develop new insights into fluxes in sports labor migration by taking a transnational perspective?

With a background in macro-sociological analytical frameworks such as world-systems theory, dependency theory and colonialism the existing literature on sports labor migration has tended to describe streams of players' migration as one-directional flows from donor country to host country leading to inevitable challenges (mainly described as losses) primarily for donor countries, but also for host countries. However, studies of women's soccer migration have already helped to identify that athletic migrants continue to engage in cross-border activities, for instance, through regular communication and travel (Botelho and Agergaard 2011, Agergaard and Botelho 2013). Athletes may be living and working/playing in one country/club during the season (or if the season is short playing in several countries/clubs a year) and also concurrently representing their home country as part of the national squad on various occasions during the year.

Hence, our aim here is to present the main fluxes in women's soccer migration between specific countries while also bearing in mind that migrants may maintain and develop a transnational embeddedness in various communities and countries simultaneously. Viewed from a transnational perspective, migration may also lead to fluxes of finances, influential relations, knowledge and skills, and social and cultural remittances returning back to so-called donor countries (Al-Ali et al. 2002). When presenting our material we will not only point to the main fluxes of emigration from so-called donor countries and immigration into host countries but also to total moves to and from specific locations. [...]