

Sport, Labour, and Migration

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Abstract: This chapter offers a discussion around some of the general features of sport labour migration research. In doing so, the treatment draws on general migration literature and contemporary events to demonstrate the current significance of migrations. The focus then shifts to issues in sport labour migrations research, including: the existing gaps between general and sport migration research and the need for broadening the sport array of migration research, moving towards interdisciplinary approaches and reconsidering traditional, western-based research practices. The next section offers an overview of key theoretical approaches present in this area of research, focusing on Marxism, Cultural Studies, Process Sociology and Transnational Mobility. Each theoretical approach is considered in relation to their classical roots and sport labour migration. This is followed by a section that explores debates around the history, role and limitations of migratory typologies. Here an observation is made that there are advantages to engaging with general migration typologies to enhance sport research, whilst acknowledging the limitations of ideal-typical representations. The concluding section offers a brief summary of the chapter and a recommendation for researchers interested in sport labour migration regarding the importance of continually revisiting their own and others' work and reflecting on the pertinence and meaning of the research they do.

Keywords: professional sport, labour, migration, theories, trends, typologies, directions

It is reasonable to argue that the history of humans is, by and large, also the history of migrations. Why people migrated and still migrate, the development and decline of migratory routes/patterns, the multiplicity of conditions migrants faced/face in their original local as well as in their new settings, and to what extent migrants may or may not assimilate into their new culture are essential to understanding the development of societies and people within (Samers, 2010). Arguably, people have always migrated and will always migrate (de Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2019). However, there might be qualitative differences between pre-European extension wanderings and the premeditated movement (whether voluntary or forced) of people from an identified or identifiable location to target areas with specific purpose. In this chapter, migration refers to peoples' premeditated movements and is understood as a 'multifaceted, highly complex phenomenon, touching many aspects of modern life' (Marshall, 2006, p. 3).

According to Stalker (1994, 2000), most migrations of today are associated with the idea of the international labour market and so we can easily connect work (labour) and migration. In fact, there is a plethora of evidence showing that people frequently migrate for work-related reasons, either because of the availability of better work conditions in the target country and/or because of withering options in the domestic space (for recent statistics see International Labour Organisation [ILS], 2020). Whilst it is a sensible and well-versed approach to understand and explain migrations based on connections between people and economic capital, it is also limiting and places a dominant, if not exclusive, emphasis on the financial gains to be had through mobility. Such approaches have been supported by a range of theoretical perspectives such as neo-imperialism theory, dependency theory, and world system theory (de Haas, Castles, &

Miller, 2019). Whilst these are useful and we cannot deny the significance of financial gains, such mono-causal depictions of the complex tapestry of global as well as local migrations may not capture all essential aspects of every migratory venture. A good case in point may be found in the recent waves of forced migration through the Mediterranean Sea to many European countries (Bierbach, 2019), many instance of which have been subject to controversial public narratives and are not directly connected to economic gains.

It might be reasonable to argue that such finance-driven approaches have always enjoyed prominence as, when we talk of migrations, we are often presented with statistics and maps (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2014) which portray how migrations play out in terms of influx, emigration, and net migrations. Based on those statistics, we can determine a country's role in the migratory process which may be characterised as receiver, donor or transitional. Such insight is useful for politicians and policy makers to assess their country's migratory status and make decisions whether they think it is best to shut down, restrict or encourage migratory flows. In terms of governmental reactions to migrations, Samers (2010) notes the example of how fortifying the Spanish boarder at Ceuta and Melilla in 2005, as a consequence of increasing immigration from Morocco and a directive from the European Union (EU), affected migratory patterns and experiences. To illustrate changes in migratory experiences, Samers (2010) refers to media reporting from 2007, describing the drowning of 47 illegal migrants. Whilst this example is pertinent to understanding how migrations are and can be connected to nation-state and supra-national organisations' politics, what this also represents is that migrants are more than just mere numbers, statistical figures or lines on a map who move across territories and oceans for a range of reasons. Therefore, to fully understand migration both as a process and experience, going beyond a macro-analysis driven insight is essential.

Whilst adopting a migrant-centred approach to migration is desirable (Sinatti, 2017), it is not without challenges. There are contemporary examples where migration and its reduction was offered as a solution to overpopulation and/or, recently, to restore national security and national pride. Populist political parties have exploited public resentment of rising multiculturalism to blame the immigrant 'other' for the various ills of thier nation (Yılmaz, 2012). Recent populist political narratives have reduced migrants to mere numbers and turned them into what Adams (2000) calls the 'absent referent' in relation to animals. It is the process, when applied to migration, through which the individual migrant, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, etc. becomes an objective, depersonified number, with the resultant effect being rising tendencies for us to forget that, hidden within those statistical narratives, there are real people with real feelings, desires and hopes. Such dehumanisation, coupled with scapegoating, have played a significant role in the UK's Brexit referendum, and, arguably, shifted the vote towards the leave side. It is then possible to argue that, in the recent and (at the time of writing) still ongoing Brexit debate and broader populist political context, migration has been and become much more than an economic cost-benefit question and been elevated to the level of national security and identity. More importantly and, pertinent to the content of this chapter, contemporary, politicised migratory narratives demonstrate that: (1) migration and related socio-cultural issues are still relevant and capture the public's attention, (2) migrations are connected to and influenced by broader social, cultural, political and economic processes, and (3) our understanding of migration and its multiple consequences requires continuous examination as our complex global-local socio-cultural tapestries evolve. Sensitive to these matters, in this chapter, I offer an overview of sport labour migration research, focusing on issues, approaches and debates.

Issues

One of the issues that relates to sport migration research is the general social perception of western sports in many cultural domains. Similar to the majority of mainstream sociology textbooks and, in fact, mainstream sociology per se, we may decide to marginalise the importance of sport in relation to everyday life and reinforce the traditional and, I believe, dated thinking that sport is separate from society or, at best, sport mirrors society. These types of perceptions are anchored in assessments that underestimate the socio-cultural significance of sport and related leisure activities and likely play a role in why the standing of sociology of sport, and other sport-focused sub-disciplines, has tended to lag behind parent disciplines. This prejudice is perhaps also the reason, or one of the reasons, why the academic field that explores links between migration and sport began to emerge around the late 1980s to early 1990s as opposed to the general migratory literature which may be dated to as early as the beginning of 1900s (see Ferenczi, 1929). Whilst I cannot specifically pinpoint the beginning of general migratory research, Ferenczi's work indicates that it began long before we turned our attention to sport migrations.

We can hypothesise that one of the reasons for sport migratory research's relative infancy is the lack of sport-specific migrations in the early 1900s. This may appear to be a reasonable argument, but historical evidence suggests that sport and people travelled together even during those times (Lanfranchi & Taylor 2001). In fact, pioneers of sport migration were instrumental in spreading and establishing sport across the globe (Fox, 2003). In relation to football, Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001) noted that the migration of footballers was 'fundamentally bound up with general migration patterns' (p. 3). Perhaps then we could argue that early sport migrations had little to no social significance, and, thus, remained unnoticed or negligible. Again, we have evidence to suggest, that as western sports spread, they often had significant interactions with local cultures. Sometimes sport was a 'good fit' from the outset, such as how rugby morphed into the everyday culture of many Pacific Island nations (Molnar & Kanemasu, 2014). At other times, sport's introduction caused a national uproar against the physically violent foreign practices that were spreading, much to the detriment of local values and cultural practices. A good example here may be seen in the Hungarian parliament's reaction at the early sight of football related violence (Handler, 1985). It very well maybe that our general, traditionally held perception that sports are beneficial to society, and to anyone involved with it, is responsible for sport migratory research's relative infancy. Sports have been perceived and employed as social glue, rehabilitative tool, health improving activity, creator and rebuilder of (national and other types of) identity and, generally, an essential element in the development and maintenance of successful societies through social solidarity. Many governments, politicians, and political regimes used and still use sports for nation building purposes (Bairner & Molnar, 2010; Molnar & Whigham, 2019). Yet, we often hold an uncritical, functionalist perception of modern, western sports (Molnar & Kelly, 2013), which, I would argue, is responsible for the gap between the studies of sport and their parent disciplines, the lack of critical dominant narratives around sports, and for the relative infancy of sport labour migration research.

Another issue in sport migration research has been the dominance of football related work. When I contributed a chapter (Molnar & Faulkner, 2016) to the *Routledge Handbook on Football Studies*, the amount of work accumulated on football migration was overwhelming. The chapter did not adopt a systematic review approach, but in light of that work, I think it safe to say that football has dominated and still dominates sport migration research. The dominance of

football in research carried out within the remit of social sciences was also recognised by the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF, 2015, p. 117) panel (a UK based government organisation responsible for assessing research excellent in universities) noting that: ‘the sub-panel [Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism] did express some concern that much of the focus of this research has become concentrated in only a few sports, most notably football.’ This observation, I think, is pertinent for future migration-centred researchers to consider. There is a clear need to decentralise football from migration studies and seek out opportunities to explore migratory tendencies and experiences in other sports and physical activities as well.

In addition to sport labour migration research having an almost unrelenting focus on football, there is also a tendency for research to be mono-disciplinary and for studies to be dominated by seatings in history, sociology, human geography, or anthropology. Whilst all of these disciplines have their traditions, strengths and favoured research paradigms, I think there is a need for engaging with multiple disciplines and theoretical perspectives simultaneously. Similar calls have been made in other areas of sport and physical activity studies which herald both the challenges and benefits of theoretical and disciplinary diversification (Bouffard & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2016). In the field of migration studies, an example of going beyond disciplinary silos is represented by the work of Engh, Settler, and Agergaard (2017) who adopted an intersectionality informed approach to their research in exploring the experiences of athletes in relation to their gender, race and sport. Here, there is evidence of fruitful engagement with critical feminist and racialisation theories as Engh and colleagues made sense of the experiences of Nigerian female footballers in Scandinavian countries. This work is particularly pertinent as it does not simply demonstrate the advantages of employing intersectionality, but also provides impetus for engaging current and emerging political narratives in Europe that tend to favour and envision white, patriarchal Christian values as dominant and favourable (Fernández-García & Luengo, 2018).

As another major trend in sport migration research has been the dominance of men, here too, Engh et al.’s (2017) research, albeit indirectly, points towards the need to consider having more women on both sides of the migratory research platform as researchers and participants. Male dominance is clear in relation to studying both athletes and types of sports given attention. With few exceptions, Kanemasu and Molnar (2019) note that men have dominated this field as researchers, which might, to some extent, explain the preoccupation with football and male athletes. Women conducting research in the field of migration have not only begun to address this gender imbalance but have broadened the spectrum of migratory research. Here examples include exploring handball (Agergaard, 2008), winter sports (Thorpe, 2014, 2017), as well as Japanese (Edwards, 2018) and Taiwanese (Jiang & Lee, 2016) women’s sporting experiences. By engaging with different cultures, different sports and intersectionality-informed approaches, women academics have helped the field diversify both theoretically as well as empirically.

Finally, in light of the needs identified by Spaaij et al.’s (2019) recent review of sport, refugees and forced migration literature—to go beyond the dominance of instrumentalist approaches, to engage diverse innovative methods, to reconsider ethical relationships with research participants, and to decolonising postures embedded in research—I suggest that a key issue for and ethical responsibility of academics interested in sport labour migration to ponder upon is their relation to research participants. Spaaij et al.’s (2019) findings, and my recent collaborative work (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2019), suggest that the inherent power imbalances in

research, so often manifest between researchers and participants, are not well recognised, and neither are they well-articulated. Whether we consider power inequalities as Euro/Western-centric bias, neo-colonial knowledge production, Western research paradigm re-production or othering, they all point to the complexity of power matrices that envelope metropolitan epistemology-informed research and, thus, to the majority of research that has focused on sport labour migration. Gegeo (2001, p. 182) posed a pertinent question regarding Western knowledge systems and their relation to local knowledge(s) in the Pacific: ‘What good is political independence if we remain colonised epistemologically?’ Indeed, researchers should consider their epistemic responsibility (Carlson, 2010) and as such continuously ponder: what is the point of future research around sport, labour and migration if knowledge is predominantly generated from a uniform perspective that may arguably be in line with the viewing of research participants as exotic, foreign noble savages (Smith, 1989). Of course, some migrants do come from Western countries, but not all of them. However, we, researchers and academics (here I also include the majority of my previous work on sport labour migration), seem to apply the same straightjacketed approach to exploring and representing their experiences regardless of their culture and country of origin. In doing so, we remain in control of the entire research process and narrative and we are often the ones reaping the benefits of the research’s outcomes (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2019). These aspects of Western-practice-informed research create and maintain power imbalances that cannot be overcome by seeking and gaining informed consent in traditional fashion (Spaaij et al., 2019). Kanemasu and Molnar (2019) noted that such practices, including disregard for inherent power differentials in research, have the tendency to reduce our participants to research commodities who, through our systematic and colonising academic work, remain typecast due to our framings within the *sport research production complex* as oppressed, marginalised and exploited.

Approaches

In this section, I briefly review what I consider to be key theoretical approaches and their relation to sport labour migration. For this purpose, I limit consideration to four main theories, namely: Marxism, Cultural Studies, Process Sociology and Transnational Mobility. Whilst my selection and grouping of migration theories may appear truncated given that the theoretical field is much richer (Brettell & Hollifield, 2002), I, to some extent, follow Bale and Maguire’s (1994) approach to theory identification. At the outset of sport labour migration research, Bale and Maguire (1994) identified four main theories: Modernisation, (Neo)Imperialism, Dependency and World System Theory. Whilst this grouping was useful and still provides valuable pointers to identify key theoretical threads and work embedded in them, sport migration research has progressed, which means that some of the previously separated theories now form an overlap and that there are new perspectives to consider. However, I would argue that many of the key theories that have been implemented in explaining sport migrations derive from or are connected to thinking that is embedded in classical roots, which, to some extent, informs the categories presented below.

Marxism Informed Approaches

A Marxist view perceives sport as one of the tools of capitalism for exploiting and oppressing the proletariat. That is, Marxist scholars argue against the (functionalist) myth of sport that exists in contemporary societies cultivating a type of physical activity that is beneficial and mainly consists of play-like characteristics. Rather, they pose that sport and labour are structurally analogous, exploitative and marginalising (Rigauer, 1981). Marxists strictly

distinguish between the features and functions of sport and play and argue that sport is essentially a product of capitalism (Brohm, 1978; Ingham & Loy, 1973; Ingham, 2004) that incorporates: the achievement principle, result rationalisation, specialisation, bureaucratisation, quantification, and an obsession with records (Guttmann, 1978). In this sense, athletes, such as workers, sell the fruits of their labour and talent to the bourgeoisie for a wage. Here, the product is athletic performance that can be recorded, quantified and evaluated. So, to add to Brohm's (1978) argument, sport is not only a prison of measured time, but the penitentiary of capitalist production values, class struggles, and supply and demand.

To understand migration from a Marxist-informed perspective, academics engaged dependency (Baran, 1973) and World System (Wallerstein, 1974) theories as well as (neo) imperialist explanations (Cashman, 1980; Mangan, 1986). These theories depict power imbalances between colonizers and colonized, and compartmentalize the countries of the world into certain (e.g., two or three) regions and support the idea of economic and political regionalization and movement of people from less to more developed geographic locations. Arguably, in relation to sport migration, Wallerstein's (1974) World System Theory (WST) has been broadly used to explain the global flow of human capital from the periphery to the core. Specifically, the early work of Bale (1989, 2003) and Bale and Sang (1996) have pointed to some significant economic factors in athletic labour force migration. Bale (2003, p. 107) observed that 'modern sport is a part of the entertainment industry [and] as profit and commercialisation have become increasingly prevalent in Western sport, so sport clubs have engaged in a number of geographical readjustments'. One of these 'geographical readjustments' has widened clubs' geographical area of recruitment, leading to an increasing flow of athletes from non-Western countries to Western ones, caused by financial differentials. To this category I would also add work carried out by scholars such as Poli (2006, 2010) and Darby (2013). This approach, and work embedded in it, has been useful to highlight migration trends, talent pipelines, global inequalities and various forms of exploitation. In particular, Darby's (e.g., 2002, 2010, 2013) work has been influential in terms of revealing the exploitative potential of global north-south economic power inequalities in terms of African footballers.

Cultural Studies Informed Approaches

Cultural Studies (CS), an approach closely linked to Marxist tradition, are not defined or dominated by one methodological or theoretical position and is often considered to be a bricolage of disciplines and ideas (Hall, 1980). CS scholars focus on developing systematic and critical analysis of cultures and people's experience within (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000). Culture is an ever-evolving tapestry of power matrices where people and their cultural values are in continuous conflict for domination. Thus, from this perspective, the main concern is to identify, explain and challenge dominant and oppressive cultural practices (not that different from what described in the previous sub-section). Western sports are part of the dominant culture(s) and has moved from a local, national level to a global stage (Bairner, 2001). In this sense, sport has been influenced by, and has impacted on numerous cultures (see Klein, 1991) and has the tendency to reinforce global, cultural inequality and economic disparity, but can also act as a site of resistance.

A particularly useful review of existing sport migration literature has been conducted by Smith, Spaaij, and McDonald (2018) to explore present work that connects migration and cultural capital. Based on current research they identified four key connections between migration and cultural capital, that: (1) participating in mainstream sports/physical activity (PA)

has increased migrants' cultural capital and helped assimilation in the host environment, (2) participating in ethno-specific sports/PA has aided the reinforcement and preservation of migrants' original cultural identity, (3) migrants have also negotiated their cultural capital which was essentially a balancing act between points 1 and 2 by both producing destination country specific cultural capital and maintaining their original ethnic identity, and, finally (4) cultural capital can also act as a barrier to assimilation when, for instance, there is a form of clash between mainstream and ethno-cultures. In addition to being thorough, Smith et al.'s (2018) review of 45 research papers indicated the importance of cultural studies in unpacking the complex connections between migrations and cultures and the applicability of concepts such as cultural capital and hegemony. To this category, I would also add the work of Kanemasu and Molnar (2013, 2014) who in many instances employed Wallerstein's (2004) WST—a revised and updated conception that takes culture into consideration and expresses clear awareness of the cultural domination and oppression that is performed by core, metropolitan countries—to explain economic and cultural inequalities, as well as cultural resistance experienced and enacted by migrant Fijian rugby players during and after their professional career.

Process Sociology Informed Approaches

This sociological approach is informed by the work of Norbert Elias and grew in popularity through the work of Eric Dunning and his students. This perspective views sport as part of long-term socio-cultural processes which have been interconnectedly shaping our societies. According to process sociology, western societies follow a civilizing process in their development that drives societies to become more civilized and less (physically) violent. The civilizing process can be interrupted by de-civilizing spurts, creating decreased appreciation for values and practices previously upheld (Dunning, 2002). Modern sports and related migrations are an optimal example of such long term global and cultural interchanges, i.e., 'sport is a significant touchstone of prevailing global, national and local patterns of interchange' (Maguire, 1999, p. 76). Therefore, the worldwide spread of modern sports, and people along with it, has been understood as part of long-term historical processes that began to emerge around the mid-nineteenth century as part of Western industrialization (Elias & Dunning, 1986; Maguire, 1999). As modern sports diffused from England to other countries, mainly between the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries (Elias, 1986), the significance of sport related migrations began to first manifest then increase. In essence, from this perspective migrations are considered as part of larger historical and socio-cultural processes such as globalization and, thus, are complex, multifaceted experiences.

Writing from this perspective, the work of Maguire (1994, 1995, 1996) has been both pioneering and influential. Maguire explored basketball, cricket, ice-hockey, rugby and football, thereby enriching the smorgasbord of sports to be considered as the foci of migratory research. He also introduced typologies to the field of sport migration. Whilst those sport migrant categories and categorizations have been questioned (more on this in the next section), those have made a contribution to our understanding of different migrants and migrations (Molnar & Maguire, 2008). Another contribution of process-sociology has been to theorize the globalization of sport and related migrations through the concept of diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties (Maguire, 1999). This approach has helped flesh out the phenomena of the global diffusion and differential popularization of sports. This concept depicts the sport-cultural interchanges between different nations, indicating two-way, interactive processes between Western and non-Western cultures. Western societies attempt to introduce and imprint specific

values onto outsider groups, but a concurrent reaction comes from the outsider (non-Western) groups as well. 'As a result of this cultural interchange, outsider, non-Western codes and customs began to permeate back into Western societies' (Maguire, 1999, p. 44). The form and degree of interaction between established and outsider societies (cf. Baran, 1973) depends on various factors, which are to be concurrently and case specifically considered. For instance, dominant, Western nations introduced both the forms and the ethos of sport to outsider populations. These outsider, subordinate populations sometimes only adopted the sport or the ethos, and other times adopted both matters, depending on the culture of the specific subordinate population and its relations to the dominant groups. What is particularly useful here is not only the recognition of cultural exchanges through and within sport, but also in recognizing the power matrices that develop between donor and host countries in an ever-transforming global context (Maguire, 2005)

Transnational Mobility Informed Approaches

This approach has emerged from the discipline of anthropology around the 1970s when anthropologists began to more broadly embrace the concept and phenomenon of migration and extended their attention to metropolitan societies (Brettell & Hollifield, 2002). Whilst this turn helped different theoretical explanations arise and advanced anthropological concerns in the analysis of world social order, the approach was often perceived to be more constraining than enabling. Consequently, a sense of dissatisfaction with applying macro approaches to migration emerged. Brettell (2002) noted that such macro analyses did not perceive migrants 'as active agents but as passive reactors manipulated by the world capitalist system' (p. 104). To overcome the limitations of previous approaches and, to some extent, the host-donor country binary, interpretations adopting transnationalist perspectives began to take centre stage. The work of Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc (1992) and Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc (1994) is frequently cited as seminal in advancing meaningful debates around transnationalism and its connection to migration. These debates questioned the extent to which migrants' experiences and mobilities may still be reasonably considered through 'uprooting' and 're-grounding' concepts (Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier, & Sheller, 2003) and not through more fluid interpretations of home and receiving environments. As a critique of the host-donor bipolar model of perceiving migration, transnationalist perspectives acknowledge that by relying on various global networks of technology, migrants often maintain their connections with their country of origin, and previous host countries, thereby enhancing their ability to 'move' freely between various geographic locations. In doing so, migrants may experience space, place and mobility based on their individual circumstances and connections. Transnational mobility, thus, indicates a shift away from perceiving migrants as 'bounded units' (Brettell, 2002) and while there is a clear recognition of the agency of the individual migrant, it is also considered that those actions are enveloped in national identity and international politics (Castles & Miller, 2009).

In relation to sport labour migration, this theoretical approach has been so far underutilized in comparison to other perspectives. However, there are good examples of engagement with transnationalism to explain sport related mobility. Perhaps the most significant deployment of transnationalism has been made by the work of Carter (e.g., 2007, 2011) who approached sport migrations from an anthropological perspective. Whilst the importance of networks in explaining social mobility were also recognized by Poli (2009), and arguably Maguire also explored such aspects of migrations through the concept of social figurations, it was initially Carter's work that explicitly used this approach. The benefit of interpreting sport

migration through this theoretical lens is that the spectrum of analysis is broadened. For instance, there is a clear move away from giving exclusive centrality to migrating athletes and more attention is paid to other components of the migratory dynamics such as family networks (Carter, 2007), along with recognizing that other sport professionals (e.g., coaches) can and have migrated to enhance their career. There is also importance given to people who engage with and experience migration as opposed to depicting them as passive dupes in top-down driven processes and flows. Carter (2011) offers an extensive critique of existing approaches to sport migration and suggests a research direction that is informed by anthropology and transnationalism with a view to bring about ‘a more dynamic articulated space in which theories about the cultural insinuation called ‘sport’ will become more nuanced and less blinded by presumptions of historical pre-eminence, cultural superiority... that reduce people to cardboard cut-outs’ (p. 11). Given transnational mobility’s emphasis on the individual’s experience and how that is bound up in globalization, technological development and cultural interchanges, transnational mobility informed approaches have recently been gaining momentum in sport labour migration research (e.g., Engh & Agergaard, 2015; Thorpe, 2014, 2017; Faulkner, Molnar, & Kohe, 2019) and have the potential to become broadly recognized and utilized.

Debates

As typologies of migration in the realm of sport studies have received controversial attention and some typologies have been contested, in this section, I explore debates that revolve around the use and significance of migration typologies in sport labour migration research. In doing so, I offer a brief overview of some of the migration typologies and note that if we recognize the utility of ideal-type description of migrants, then there is a need for a more extensive engagement with the general migration literature to draw upon already existing categories and concepts as opposed to (re)inventing sport specific ones.

The migration of workers (athletes) usually follows certain patterns. These patterns can create so called talent/migratory pipelines, networks or routes, through which individuals can move and/or be recruited. For example, Maguire, Jarvie, Mansfield, and Bradley (2002) noted that ‘after the people’s revolution of 1989 and the subsequent ‘opening up’ of Eastern Europe, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and Romanians moved west - creating a talent pipeline’ (p. 27). Such connections, regardless of what they are called, are essential between host and donor countries and are indicators of international migratory movements. By mapping migratory patterns we can also identify reasons for/motivational forces behind migrations. For instance, based on the above example of post-Iron Curtain migrations, we could observe the development of migratory flows from East to West for work-related purposes, mostly for gaining economic benefits. Initially, many of these migrants embarked on their journey to profit from the re-opening of borders (Wallace & Stola, 2001) and, thus, may be referred to as *target earners* with the view to return to their country of origin. The arrival of labour migrants in one country may in tandem contribute to the relative *de-skilling* of donor countries (Klein, 1991), as well as stimulating varied local reactions to the increased presence of foreign influx. Therefore, migrants’ stories and experiences can be complex. Indeed, in many instances, they can be unpredictable, influenced by the fluidity of migration routes, and wrapped up in local, regional and global politics (de Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2019). Additionally, the migratory intentions of individuals can, and often does, change. The many migrants’ stories in Sorhindo and Pattullo’s (2009) collection reveal how some of the Dominican migrants may not have envisioned a long stay in their chosen host country, but then remained there for decades. In addition, this collection

of stories also highlights that migration related experiences often do not end with returning to the homeland, and, that migration may have a longer reach that includes returnees and retired athletes as well (see also Kanemasu & Molnar, 2014). Therefore, I would argue that to garner an initial and broad understanding of the complexity of migrations, certain migration patterns, practices and motivational forces, the creation of migration typologies can be a useful heuristic device to provide a state-of-play representation. This is perhaps the reason why migration typologies have been developed since 1950s and have multiple variants.

Petersen (1958) may be credited for one of the earliest migration typologies, including categories such as *primitive, impelled, forced, free* and *mass*. Not long after, from an anthropological standpoint, Gonzales (1961) identified types of labourers in the Caribbean region, namely: *seasonal, nonseasonal, temporary, recurrent, continuous* and *permanent*. In Du Toit's (1975) work we find references to *weekly commuters, seasonal/circular movers, permanently displaced* and *sojourners*. In Tilly's (1990) history informed writing there are mentions of *colonizing, coerced, circular, chain* and *career* migrants. Düvel and Vogel (2006) developed their typologies on Polish migrants and Iredale (2008) on professional migrants. This is only a small representation of the different typologies from the general migration literature, but what they all do is present an overview of migrations in a given temporal era and geographic area, which is both beneficial and limiting. In relation to sport, it was Maguire (1996) who introduced typologies of migrant athletes, which helped map the field and included *pioneers, mercenaries, settlers, nomads* and *returnees*. These categories were later contested by Magee and Sugden (2002) who introduced new types to explain their data. In a similar vein, Molnar and Maguire (2008) also introduced a typology that was informed by primary evidence and previous general migration typologies such as Tilly's (1990) work.

These classifications of migrants present in the literature reflect and reinforce certain patterns, motivational forces and issues that surround the sphere of labour migration as well as the limitations of this approach. Consequently, when it concerns migration typologies, I would argue that they are a useful, but not flawless way of approaching migrations. Typologies are useful to: develop an initial understanding of specific areas of migration (e.g., sport and professional migrants or refugees, etc.); aid general assessment of migratory tendencies and issues; help shape migration related policies; identify general issues that migrants and host, transit and donor countries may experience before, during and after migrations; and serve as springboard for future research inquiries. On the other hand, migration typologies can be: overly rigid and simplistic representations of the fluidity and complexity of migratory experiences; dismissive of individual iteration of migratory stories and bound to historical eras and geographic locations. Therefore, to successfully deploy typologies, I suggest that we continuously revisit existing categories and change/revise those as and when necessary; ensure that classifications are informed by appropriate primary and/or secondary evidence; develop connections between evidence and theory to underpin migration typologies, and, finally, clearly express that a typology is not another term for 'absent referent' and neither are a migrant's experiences often 'stuck' or wholly contained within one category, but rather more typically can transition from one category to another(s) as their journey unfolds. With specific regard to sport focused research, I would also suggest a greater level of engagement with the broader, general migratory literature which features a more extensive history of carefully developing and effectively deploying migration typologies.

Conclusion

In sum, it can be observed that despite that sports, migrations, and cultures being inherently interconnected long before academics took notice and evidence that the general migration literature could be more extensively utilised in sport migration research, the field began to demonstrate growth from the 1980s onwards, developed a good deal of momentum in the 1990s, and has significantly broadened post-2000. Essentially, in the last four decades, researchers have generated an impressive and extensive body of literature. This literature has deployed a range of theories, used different sources of evidence and data collection methodologies, and explored diverse sporting contexts, and considered the experiences of people from different national, gender and cultural identity backgrounds. Hence, it is safe to say that what we have at present is a still evolving but vibrant academic area that has made significant contributions to knowledge generation and increased our understanding of the socio-cultural significance of sports, not only in Western societies but across the globe.

However, based on the issues, approaches and debates presented above, there are some shortcomings in the field and, thus, careful consideration should be given within sport labour migration research to placing more emphasis on broadening the array of sporting contexts that typically garner focus in migration research. Specifically, de-centring football from the foci of sport labour migration research could be a useful strategy to consider whereby more space is allotted to other areas and activities. Accompanying this, there seems to be clear evidence about the benefits of adopting interdisciplinary approaches and decolonising research practices. Whilst interdisciplinary collaborative work may be considered to be complicated and demanding as we can find it challenging to part with our disciplinary assumptions (Szostak, 2014), the benefits of such integrative approaches are multi-fold and ‘interdisciplinary conversations are productive and have the potential to address complex problems’ (Bouffard & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2016, p. 11). I contend that the field of sport labour migration would greatly benefit from increasing interdisciplinary, collaborative research given that the subject is culturally complex and both empirically and epistemically diverse.

Epistemic diversity is particularly pertinent to take note of in relation to how we perceive and pursue research. Here, I heed the suggestions of Spaaij et al.’s (2019) review prompting future sport labour migration researchers to consider adopting more varied, ethically balanced and responsible approaches. A key aspect of such research approach would be that the researcher’s voice does not reign supreme (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2019) and neither do academic texts distort, marginalise or exclude the knowledge(s) and perspectives of our research participants (Ortner, 1995). To strive for research that is more participant oriented and emancipatory is our epistemic responsibility that is connected to our epistemic authority (Carlson, 2010). We, researchers, academics, journal editors, etc., have epistemic authority to define and identify what counts as acceptable and legitimate knowledge and are in the position to authoritatively speak of such knowledge. In this sense, and in supporting Spaaij et al.’s (2019) observation, it is our epistemic responsibility to recognise, reflect on and systematically challenge traditional Western-based academic research practices that continuously marginalise, even silence, participants’ words and their knowledge(s), which would need to be in a position to play a more central role in the work we produce.

In this light, I would encourage all researchers to continually revisit their own and others’ work and ponder on the pertinent and perennial questions posed by Ingham and Donnelly (1990) in relation to the sociology of sport, which in its contemporary practice cuts across disciplines and sub-disciplines: ‘Knowledge from whom and for whom? knowledge for what ends? whose

interests influence the perception of what is really useful knowledge?” and “whose knowledge counts?” (p. 58). When we see these questions as guiding principles for research that focus on, in this case, labour migration, we then develop the potential to not only return to meaning, but to return meaning to our work as social scientists (Alvesson, Gabriel, & Paulsen, 2017).

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