Moving players, traversing perspectives: Global value chains, production networks and Ghanaian football labour migration

Paul Darby
University of Ulster, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

Since the publication of Bale and Maguire’s (1994a) groundbreaking collection on the transnational migration of athletic talent, the movement of sports labour around the world has become a focus for critical research within the social sciences of sport. Much of the resultant scholarship has interpreted the migration of athletic labour as a process that both contributes to and is a consequence of the unevenness of globalisation in the field of sports and far beyond (Bale and Maguire, 1994b; Bale and Sang, 1996; Klein, 2006a, 2006b; Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Magee and Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1999; Maguire and Falco, 2011; McGovern, 2002; Milanovic, 2005; Poli, 2010a; Taylor, 2006). Research on the place of Africa in what has become a global market for football labour has further contributed to our knowledge of the dynamics that contour the migration of sports labour (Bale, 2004; Cornelisen and Solberg, 1997; Darby, 2000, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2010, 2012; Darby et al., 2007; Darby and Solberg, 2010; Mukharji, 2008; Pannenberg, 2010; Poli, 2006, 2010b). Perhaps more importantly, in a context where Africa receives passing touches broadly on the impact of and responses to globalisation on the continent.

This article extends our understanding of sports migration in novel ways by examining the production and transnational export of Ghanaian football labour via a cross-disciplinary approach that utilises perspectives rooted in the sociology of development, global value chains (GVCs) and economic geography. The study is underpinned by two central arguments. Firstly, it contends that the GVC framework is useful in accounting for how Ghanaian players are produced and prepared for the international market, identifying the key agents and agencies involved, mapping the geography of production and export and assessing the institutional context within which the trade operates locally, nationally and internationally. The second draws on the GPN perspective to argue that while Ghanaian football labour migration remains a process contoured by uneven asymmetries of power that favour actors, stakeholders and entities in the global North, there are currently segments of the production–export chain where power is much more diffuse and some benefits are captured in the global South. The paper draws on interview data and observations gleaned from four periods of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ghana between January 2008 and June 2011.
structures that facilitate this process, maps the space through which these players move and details the institutional context within which their migrations take place. The third part (Section 4) assesses the value of GVC and GPN approaches in making sense of how production and export is governed and where benefits might accrue and by whom. While acknowledging that the trade continues to be contoured by uneven asymmetries of power, this section accounts for segments in the production–export chain where power is much more diffuse and some benefits are captured locally. This is exemplified in the final section (5) which focuses on Right to Dream, a football academy that has not only emerged as one of Ghana’s primary producers of football migrants but has also recently begun to extend its organisational mission by engaging in ‘development’ focused activities. The paper draws on empirical evidence gleaned from four periods of multi-sited ethnographic field work in Ghana between January 2008 and June 2011. This field work was focused around football academies, formal and informal, and involved observations and interviews with key actors including general managers, technical directors, coaches, teaching staff as well as academy recruits. The sample of respondents for this study included a range of other stakeholders including officials and coaches from local clubs, former migrant players, licensed and unlicensed player agents and a number of well-informed local journalists.¹

2. Fusing chains and networks: a theoretical frame

Much of my earlier work on the out-migration of African football labour (Darby, 2000, 2002, 2007a, 2007b), was informed to varying degrees by Immanuel Wallerstein’s and Andre Gunder Frank’s classic analyses of the asymmetrical nature of global development (Wallerstein, 1974, 1979; Frank, 1969). This allowed me to argue that the export of football labour from Africa to Europe was underpinned by colonial and neo-colonial exploitation, uneven global flows, domination and dependency, deskilling and impoverishment. The broad thrust of these analyses remains valid in understanding the macro-level. However, recent developments in the regulation of international transfers and further insights into the ways that the trade in African football labour is structured and operates in the local context (Darby et al., 2007; Pannenberg, 2010; Poli, 2010a) raise questions about the extent to which core-periphery perspectives can fully capture the social, cultural and economic complexities of talent identification, production and distribution. The field-work in Ghana on which this article is based has uncovered segments of the trade that do not fit with interpretations that paint it as uniformly characterised by dependency, underdevelopment, impoverishment and exploitation. All of this makes adhering to and applying a rigid core-periphery framework to a dynamic, multi-faceted problem problematic because it constrains us to think about the trade only in terms of one-directional economic exchange between a dominant, powerful core and a weak, dependent periphery while also overlooking how local actors respond to global processes.

This paper argues that GVC and GPN perspectives offer significant potential in theorising the trade in Ghanaian football players in ways that account for structural constraints but also acknowledge practices and processes that challenge core-periphery dynamics within the global football industry. The former represents a useful heuristic device for organising data and accounting for the key anatomical features of the trade while the latter is valuable in making sense of the networks and relations of power that contour sports migration and determine where value might be captured. Considering the mobility of African football players in these ways is not entirely novel. Poli (2005) has tentatively explored how the trade in African players might be considered as a global commodity chain and he subsequently advocated a network centred approach to understand the place of Africa in the international football transfer market (Poli, 2010a). The point of departure of this paper though is its detailed empirical focus on Ghanaian football and the fusing of chain and network analysis. Before turning to this, it is first necessary to provide a brief overview of the GVC and GPN frameworks and highlight their potential as a cross-disciplinary framework in making sense of sports migration.

The literature on GVCs, originally referred to as global commodity chains, is vast and it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive review. Nonetheless, some brief conceptual ground clearing is required. The concept of commodity chains first emerged in world system analyses of global trade and capital flows prior to the 19th century undertaken by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1977, 1986). In an oft-quoted definition, they describe commodity chains as ‘a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity’ (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1986, p. 159). The concept gained considerable traction through Gereffi and Korzeniewicz’s (1994) seminal work on more recent linkages between organisations in the global economy that facilitated the production, distribution and consumption of a diverse range of commodities. The term commodity chain has since been replaced by value chain to reflect value adding processes as a commodity or product is brought from conception to consumption (Gibbon and Ponte, 2005). The GVC perspective essentially identifies and seeks to analyse the key elements of global production specifically the input–output structures, or technical components of production; the institutional structures within which the chain or sectors of the chain operates and the agents, agencies and policies that impact on production and export; the territoriality or space through which the chain operates; and the governance structures or relations of power between ‘lead firms’ and other entities in the chain (Gereffi, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2001).

The GVC framework has been applied to an increasingly diverse range of industries, commodities and products over the last decade (Plathe, 2005). However, beyond work by Korzeniewicz (1994), Maguire (1999), Nadvi (2008), Nadvi et al. (2011) and Lund-Thomsen (2013), it has not been used in a sustained manner to account for global processes in sport. With the exception of Klein’s (2011, 2012) recent work on the transit of Dominican baseball talent to the United States, discussed shortly, the GVC approach has also largely been overlooked in studies on sport migration. Considering athletes through the sort of mechanical language applied to inert commodities such as agricultural produce, clothing or electrical components requires caution. The risk is that the migrant sports person is portrayed in a distant and reductionist manner rather than as a sentient, social actor whose ambitions in, relationship with and mobility through sport are shaped by the exercise of agency as well as the broader structural context that they find themselves embedded in. Nonetheless, the GVC perspective is useful as a skeletal framework that helps to structure our view of the production of athletes for export across international borders. While they are not inert objects, in modern professional sports, athletes are not only central in the production of the commodity but are the core commodity that is produced. As Brackenridge (2010: 3) observes, young people either in or on the cusp of professional football are ‘both worker, a unit of labour, and as commodity, to be traded in international markets’.

The GVC framework is not used uncritically in this article. Indeed, its limitations in allowing us to move beyond a descriptive, top-down, structural account of Ghanaian football talent have

¹ This research was conducted as part of a broader collaborative project with Alan Klein, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-000-22-2617) which compares and contrasts the role of Ghanaian football and Dominican baseball academies in facilitating the export of sports labour from the developing world to the developed.
informed the cross-disciplinary approach adopted here. Recent debates in the scholarship on what might be considered more conventional commodities have also been crucial in this regard. In the late 1990s critics began to question the theoretical or explanatory value of the GVC model. While advocates argued that it allows for nuanced analyses of global political economy (Collins, 2005; Friedland, 2001; Watts and Goodman, 1997), others have suggested that the perspective is largely ‘innocent’ or devoid of theory and that it constitutes merely a method for research (Kaplinsky, 2001). Network-centred analysts have been particularly vocal and they argue that the GVC perspective fails to deal with the full range of mechanisms of production and distribution, examines only a narrow range of commodities and adopts a static view of governance or relations of power within global production (Dicken et al., 2001). The latter issue continues to irk network analysts who contend that the GVC approach over-simplifies the distribution of power in the world economy, depicting it as involving the dominance of firms in the global North and the automatic subordination of their counterparts in the South (Coe et al., 2008).

This critique gathered pace in the early 2000s and led to the emergence of the GPN framework. This perspective builds on a longer-standing tradition of network-based analysis within economic geography (Harvey, 1969; Law, 1999; Murdoch, 1998) and it seeks to capture and explain ‘the nexus of interconnected functions and operations through which goods and services are produced, distributed and consumed’ (Henderson et al., 2002: 445). The GPN approach differs from the GVC model in a number of important respects. Firstly, while GVCs are conceived of as essentially linear, vertical structures with largely unidirectional flows of power, GPNs are considered as much more dynamic structures, containing horizontal, diagonal and linear interconnections and multi-directional power relations (Coe et al., 2008; Coe and Hess, 2013). Secondly, while GVC research tends to adopt a top-down analytical lens which concentrates on those ‘lead’ firms at the apex of the chain and considers ‘supplier’ firms at the base of the chain primarily in terms of their opportunities for ‘upgrading’, the GPN approach encourages a focus on all actors in the network, including micro-enterprises that operate at the base of the chain (Kelly, 2013). Thirdly, the GPN approach advocates a ‘bottom-up’ perspective that addresses the social, political and cultural contexts ‘on the ground’ within which production processes are embedded and crucially the agency of those considered in the GVC framework to be most powerless. As Henderson (2005: 2) helpfully notes, this offers the promise of research that identifies ‘the global in the local’ and ‘the local in the global’ and in so doing, offers a more critical and nuanced route into analyses of global production.

The relevance of the broad thrust of this debate and its potential in allowing for a greater understanding of sports labour migration is evident in Klein’s (2011, 2012) work on the production of Dominican baseball players and their export to Major League Baseball (MLB) in the United States. In recent years, Klein has observed evidence of counter-hegemonic tendencies that challenge the contention that this process is one entirely controlled by MLB interests. Indeed, he sees the presence of local brokers, or ‘buscones’ in the trade and the dramatic increases in the size of signing bonuses paid by MLB academies to local players over the last decade as examples of how Dominican interests are being served through an increasingly integrated, transnational baseball industry (Klein, 2006a). In order to make sense of these developments, Klein draws on global commodity chains (GCCs). However, he echoes some of the criticisms of the chain framework by GPN analysts, noting that it ‘tends to be bereft of any critical orientation’ and that it approaches production from ‘above’ (Klein, 2011: 89–90). Nonetheless, for Klein, the GCC framework is valuable heuristically in that it allows us to ‘structure our view of global production, distribution and consumption as it stretches across nations, time and space’ (Klein, 2011: 89–90). In order to circumvent the limitations of the GCC framework, he adopts an interdisciplinary approach that merges it with anthropological method and concepts. This allows him to add a critical ‘bottom up’ perspective, one that focuses on processes at the base of the chain that appear to be recasting typical outcomes of the neoliberal approach to talent production and export by MLB franchises in the Dominican.

In terms of understanding how the criticisms of the GVC approach might bring us closer to a framework for understanding Ghanaian football labour migration, it is important to note that those who prioritise networks do not advocate a theoretical model that is completely distinctive from the GVC approach. Indeed, the literature that uses network or chain metaphors to explain global production processes acknowledges that GPNs and GVCs are ‘complementary’ (Sturgeon et al., 2008) and that some work in the GPN tradition is organised under the GVC ‘rubric’ (Henderson, 2005). This speaks to the potential of interdisciplinarity. This paper employs such an approach by blending both models. It does so by framing the production and distribution of Ghanaian football players as a GVC. This allows for the key anatomical, geographic and institutional features of the trade to be identified and described. Thereafter the article draws on the more flexible, critical and bottom-up approach to governance evident in GPNs in order to analyse how power is exercised, by whom it is wielded and how it manifests itself in and impacts on the Ghanaian context.

3. The Ghanaian football global value chain

While there has been a long-standing tradition of outward football migrant flows from Africa to Europe that stretches back to the beginning of the 20th century (Darby, 2000), it was not until the early 1990s that sustained football migration from Ghana began. The turning point was Ghana’s victory at the under-17 World Youth Championships in 1991 which awakened the European market to the potential offered by young Ghanaian talent and clubs began to establish the sorts of channels or chains that would facilitate the identification and export of this talent (Darby, 2010). As a consequence, Ghanaians increasingly featured in European football during the 1990s and by the turn of the new millennium, Ghana had become the third highest exporter of football labour on the continent, accounting for 10% of all Africans in the European professional game (Bale, 2004). The country’s footballers have continued to figure prominently in international transfers and by 2010 there were just over 350 Ghanaian players expatriated in football leagues ranging from professional elite to semi-professional around the world but predominantly in Europe (www.ghanaweb.com accessed on 7 January 2010). According to the Deputy General Secretary of the Ghana Football Association (GFA), Isaac Addo, around 40 players currently leave local clubs in Ghana each year on officially sanctioned international transfers.2 Over the last decade, much of this transfer activity has taken place within an evolving GVC oriented around the identification of young talent, their production or training as potential professional players and their export to a European club.

3.1. ‘Producing’ Ghanaian football labour: input–output structures

The Ghanaian football GVC operates across six phases or what Gereffi called ‘nodes’. I refer to these here as embryonic; colts; academy (formal and informal); local league; European; and post-career.3 Some exceptional football talents will progress

---

2 Interview with Isaac Addo, Accra, 27 January 2009.
3 Poli’s (2005) description of these stages involves progression through a neighbourhood team; more or less structured African club; structured African club; junior sector of a European club; Professional; European club; top European club.
through each value adding stage of the chain from informal youth football to an academy or a local league club and onwards to the European market. However, because the production and distribution of football talent is dependent on a whole range of social, cultural, economic, physical and market variables, the Ghanaian football GVC is not a linear structure that proceeds inexorably from the input of raw, young talent and value adding production through to export and consumption in the European game. In football, there are no guarantees that the production process will elicit a finished player, capable of sustaining a career in Europe. In the vast majority of cases players do not fulfil their ambitions, even those trained at the best equipped academies with the most direct channels to European clubs.

At the embryonic node, prior to the formalisation of the chain, young children and their unrefined athletic ability are drawn into the game. This occurs organically, is linked to the long-standing cultural pervasiveness of football in Ghana (Darby, 2010) and involves informal games played in the street, in fields or on waste ground. As boys get older they begin to gain exposure to more organised forms of football in school teams and in regional `colts' or youth leagues. This youth system or colts node is peerless in West Africa and features prominently as a site where young players develop their skills. Running alongside these youth leagues is the academy node. This is the key input structure in the GVC because much of it is specifically oriented around the identification, production and overseas distribution of players. In Ghana, as is the case elsewhere in Africa, football academies, defined as facilities or coaching programs designed to develop football talent, fall into four broad categories (Darby et al., 2007). The first are African academies, organised and run by local club sides or national football federations. Most Ghanaian Premier League clubs possess some sort of youth academy or at least an affiliation with an existing colts team where young players are prepared for a career in the local game or, if sufficiently talented, for transfer overseas. The GFA also operates a residential centre of excellence at Prampram on the outskirts of Accra which caters mainly for developing Ghana’s youth national teams.

The second broad category of academy is classified as Afro-European and these take two forms. In the first, a European team effectively `off-shores' talent production by establishing an academy overseas. In Ghana, the Dutch team Feyenoord instituted a residential academy in Fetteh-Gomoa on the Cape Coast in 1999, while the Austrian club, Red Bull Salzburg invested around six million euro in a facility in Sogakope in the Volta Region which opened in 2008. More recently, in 2011 FC Utrecht from Holland became the first European team to set up a presence in the northern region, partnering Abdulai Ahlissan, a former Ghanaian migrant player, in establishing an academy in Tamale. The second form sees European teams invest in an existing club or academy in order to secure first refusal on players. In 1999 Ajax Amsterdam became active in Ghana in this way, investing almost six million euros in a 51% stake in the then Premier League club, Obuasi Goldfields. In the mid-2000s, the Danish club FC Midtjylland brokered a relationship with local club, FC Maamobi United that was designed to give Midtjylland access to young Ghanaian talent. Both of these ventures were short-lived with Ajax ending their investment following limited returns, and Midtjylland deciding that Nigeria offered better, less competitive recruitment opportunities than Ghana.

The third category is comprised of privately sponsored academies. The most notable in Ghana, and the focus of discussion later in this article, is Right to Dream, a not-for-profit venture established in 1999. The fourth type is comprised of a variety of improvised, non-affiliated set-ups that operate at the base of the chain in what Ferguson (2006) referred to as the ‘shadow’ economy. These academies provide a loosely structured football education, often from poorly qualified coaches and are typically not affiliated with the GFA or local Government. Most owners are either local entrepreneurs who see football purely as a business opportunity or are coaches of colts’ teams who invest their own, often limited capital in an effort to produce a saleable football asset. Some recruit young boys into a neighbourhood team and invest in equipment, training facilities, travel and competition fees. Others have bigger ambitions, setting up nation-wide recruitment networks and building small rudimentary facilities or ‘club houses’ where young boys are housed, fed and clothed.

As noted earlier, insertion into the academy node, even at the best organised, is far from a guarantee of a professional contract in Europe. The vast majority fail to progress and will either drop out of football altogether or will move to local leagues. For those in the latter category, local clubs not only function as sites where talent is further developed and value added, they also serve as an additional platform where players are ‘marketed’ for overseas distribution. Local leagues constitute the fourth node in the Ghanaian football GVC. It is here that many young players get their first taste of senior level football. The best thrive in this environment and will join players from some of the prominent football academies in the ranks of the national under-17 team. This international experience and exposure adds further value increasing the likelihood of player mobility.

Providing that players who have progressed through the Ghanaian end of the chain are of the requisite quality and there is sufficient demand in the market, they will move to the European node of the GVC. This is by no means the end point of their journey through the chain. Indeed, given that the context within which football talent becomes actualised is unpredictable, migrant players, depending on their abilities, experiences and opportunities can move forwards to the more high-end, select sectors of the chain or their European careers can stagnate or be short-lived. While GVCs involving inert commodities are typically linear, beginning with production and ending with consumption, those involving athletic labour can be circular and involve a post-career node. We see this in those instances where retired migrant athletes return home and reinsert themselves back into the chain as producers of talent by investing the intellectual, financial and cultural capital accrued during their career overseas. Ghana’s most decorated football export and three times African Player of the Year, Abedi Pelé, is a particularly revealing example of this. Following an illustrious career that took him to France, Italy and Germany, Pelé returned to Ghana in 2000. Armed with significant footballing knowledge and expertise and equally importantly, first-hand experience of the networks that facilitate football migration in various European countries, Pelé established his own club, FC Nania and

---

4 Interview with Tom Vernon, Dawu, 1 February 2008. Vernon is former chief scout for Manchester United in Africa and founder of the Right to Dream Academy in Ghana.
5 This study involved ethnographic research at academies located in each category.
6 Those players who live within reasonable travelling distance of an academy usually live at home and will attend for football training at set times. Those bigger clubs who cast their recruitment net much wider than neighbouring locales will often bring young players to the town or city where they are located and place them with a relative or an appointed guardian.
7 Interview with Francis Oti Akenteng, Prampram, 31 August 2010. Akenteng is GFA Technical Director.
9 Personal correspondence with Jolanda Goes, 17 January 2011.
10 Interview with Francis Oti Akenteng. Akenteng was formerly a coach at Obuasi Goldfields during Ajax’s investment.
11 My thanks to Jacob Ebsen Madsen from Aarhus University for this information. Jacob interviewed officials from FC Midtjylland. Personal correspondence, 28 May 2010.
12 Interview with Issac Addo, Accra, 27 January 2009.
set up a youth academy that not only produced talent for the club but also became a fruitful conduit for exporting players.\textsuperscript{13}

3.2. The geography of Ghanaian football labour

It is clear that the production and export of football labour from Ghana takes place across a series of interconnected phases or nodes. While these nodes are dispersed and operate across the country, those that feature most prominently are mainly found in the south. There are two key reasons for this. Firstly, it reflects broader historical patterns of football diffusion in Ghana that saw the game gain popularity first in Cape Coast, Accra and later Kumasi (Darby, 2013). While football is popular in the northern and central regions, the swathe of Ghana from Kumasi to the coast remains football's heartland. Secondly, and importantly from the perspective of managing European academies in Ghana, the international airport is located in Accra and this, coupled with a more extensive road network in the south, facilitates relatively easy travel into and out of the country. As a consequence, prior to overseas export, highly skilled football labourers will often experience some form of internal, mainly southward migration that sees them recruited into European academies, colts' teams or local clubs in either the greater Accra and Kumasi regions or those situated along the coastal belt.

In terms of the spatial distribution of Ghanaian football labour internationally, most is consumed in Europe with Germany constituting the primary importer followed by England. The status of Germany in this regard is attributable mainly to two factors. The first relates to the profile and popularity of German football in Ghana, particularly during the late 1970s and 1980s, which was facilitated by 'Made in Germany', a weekly Bundesliga highlights television programme that was aired across the African continent in this period (Daubitzer and Rathbone, 2011). The second is linked to the success and popularity of high profile Ghanaian football migrants to the Bundesliga such as Sammuel Kuffour who served Bayern Munich with some distinction in the late 1990s and early 2000s and Tony Yeboah who had five successful years with Eintracht Frankfurt between 1990 and 1995. The popularity of England as a key destination is reflective of colonial ties, a shared language and broader patterns of transnational migration (Grillo and Mazzucato, 2008). This latter trend bears similarities to the postcolonial contouring of African football labour migration to Europe more generally which sees Belgium, France, Portugal and increasingly, England as the prominent destinations for African migrant players (Darby, 2000). Of course, economic incentives are also key in shaping the spatial dimensions of this GVC with the richest leagues in Europe, particularly those in England, France, Spain, Germany and Italy representing the most sought after destinations. However, a significant proportion of those Ghanaian players playing in Europe do so outside these elite leagues (Poli, 2006). Furthermore, alongside Afro-European routes is a much more diffuse and seemingly random movement of Ghanaians, to leagues in Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere in Africa (see Fig. 1).

In most cases though, migration to these sorts of leagues is seen by players as intermediate steps on the way to one of Europe's major leagues (Darby, 2000). Indeed, for those young players interviewed for this study, the majority saw Europe as their destination of choice.\textsuperscript{14} The comments of two young trainees at Red Bull Salzburg were typical with one describing ambitions 'to be a great player in the future...I want to play in Austria and from Austria I would move to England' and another suggesting that 'I don't know where I will play but I would prefer to go to Red Bull Salzburg or any club in Europe, in Germany, in England, in France. It would be very good for me.'\textsuperscript{15}

3.3. ‘Facilitating’ Ghanaian football labour: institutional structures

The Ghanaian football GVC operates within a broad institutional and regulatory context that influences the spatial dimensions of the chain and shapes the manner in which football labour is produced. At the base of the chain, the institutional context for the game ensures that there is no shortage of young football talent. As noted earlier, football is immensely popular in the country, there are well established infrastructures for the youth game and young players have strong aspirations to play professionally in Europe. The latter are shaped by mediated images of top level European leagues,\textsuperscript{16} juxtaposed with an acknowledgement that local football offers few opportunities for a professional career. Although professionalism was introduced to the Ghanaian game in 1993, player salaries in the Premier League currently average between $100 and $300 per month.\textsuperscript{17} This combined with broader poverty in Ghana, creates a compelling economic incentive for players to ‘go outside’ to seek the sort of living from the game that might allow them to support themselves and their extended family.\textsuperscript{18} As Durosimi Thomas, a former sports journalist, currently managing an academy in Sierra Leone explains:

He (young footballer) is encouraged to go all out. As far as Europe is involved, they do all they can to move, even if it’s for the slightest contract, even if it’s for 20,000 dollars (US), as long as that boy is not in Ghana and is going overseas...they [the parents] will let him go. So, they know that at the end of the month they have some income coming back to them even if it is only 200 or 300 dollars (US). So the boy becomes the breadwinner.\textsuperscript{19}

This view was confirmed by those academy trainees interviewed for this study, most of whom identified the opportunity to earn a good salary and have the opportunity to support their

\textsuperscript{13}Pele’s three sons, Andre, Jordan and Ibrahim all transferred from Nania to European teams.

\textsuperscript{14}During the course of my field work, I had numerous informal conversations with trainees in each category of academy. Those who were interviewed (no. 15) or who took part in focus groups (no. 16) were drawn primarily from the Right to Dream and Red Bull Ghana academies.

\textsuperscript{15}Interviews with author, Sogakope, 27 and 28 August 2010.

\textsuperscript{16}In individual and focus group interviews as well as informal conversations with academy recruits, virtually all pointed to the successes of high profile exports such as Michael Essien as central in framing their aspiration to migrate.

\textsuperscript{17}Interview with Tom Vernon; Interview with Alhaji Sy Tetteh; Interview with Eddie Gallagher, Accra, 2 January 2009. Gallagher was then manager of the Premier League team, Sekondi Eleven Wise. It should be noted that players also complement their basic salary with win bonuses and signing fees.

\textsuperscript{18}Interview with Nii Odartey Lamptey, Accra, 11 February 2008. Lamptey is a former Ghanaian international and migrant player in Europe, the Middle East and South America.

\textsuperscript{19}Interview with Durosimi Thomas, Accra, 8 February 2008.
family as an important aspect of their football ambitions. Beyond economics, Ghanaian football functions in an unstable climate in terms of the governance of the game which further strengthens the resolve of aspiring players to leave the country to pursue a career abroad. For example, the start of the second half of the 2010–2011 season was delayed when Premier League clubs suspended their activities in protest over a raid on the offices of the GFA by Ghana’s serious fraud unit, the Economic and Organized Crime Office, in December 2010 as part of an investigation into alleged financial improprieties (Ghana News Agency, 9 December 2010).

This local context not only ensures the availability of football talent at the base of the football GVC but also guarantees the commitment and malleability of young players within the chain’s production processes.

At national level, the GFA has to varying degrees helped to create an enabling institutional context for the Ghanaian football GVC. In the past, resistance against European academies and the export of African football talent more generally has been expressed by the Confédération Africaine de Football (Darby, 2000). However, since the early 1990s, the GFA have been largely supportive. The rationale for this has been partly financial and partly linked to football development in Ghana. For some key figures in previous GFA administrations, the emergence of a fledgling European market for Ghanaian players in the 1990s was an opportunity for personal financial gain. Indeed, in 1999 a judicial inquiry into 150 overseas transfers in the 1990s uncovered numerous incidents of player exploitation and financial corruption involving senior GFA officials, local club chairmen and a number of European agents (Gbadegbe Commission, 1999). These sorts of abuses have declined with the introduction of tighter regulation following the publication of the report. Nonetheless, the GFA has continued to view international transfers from Ghana as unproblematic and sees the establishment of clubs as aiding the development of players for the various national squads. As Kwesi Nyantakyi, the current president of the GFA observed:

> Academies are an integral part of football in Ghana and we appreciate the role they play in training players. Academies give assistance to our policy objective to give footballers skills in football and education, and so we welcome to existence of academies…we have also targeted the academies as one of the sources of selecting players for our national teams’.20

So enamoured are the current GFA administration with the prominent foreign run academies that in April 2011, they initiated discussions aimed at organising a competitive nationwide league specifically for licensed football academies.21

Internationally, the trade operates within a regulatory context largely contoured by a set of international transfer regulations, introduced by the game’s world governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), in 2001. These regulations emerged partially in response to compelling evidence and criticism of the exploitation of young football players, particularly from Africa, during the 1990s (Krushelnycky, 1999; Donnelly and Petherick, 2004) and they prohibit clubs from signing non-European Union players under the age of 18 on professional contracts.

Allied to the introduction in 2008 of an electronic system for registering international transfers and increasing oversight of contracts exercised by the GFA in recent years, the new transfer provisions have helped to curb, although not completely eradicate, the exploitation of minors. One unintended consequence of creating a stringent set of procedures around the transfer of young African players is that FIFA has encouraged European teams to rethink their recruitment strategies and activities on the continent. In the interests of cost effectiveness and remaining competitive in the African market, clubs have increasingly sought to establish their own academies or enter into formal relationships with African teams. With the approval of a set of licensing and financial fair play regulations by the European football confederation (UEFA) in 2010 that require European clubs to ensure that their expenditure does not exceed turnover, it is likely that this trend will continue. What FIFA’s regulatory interventions into international transfers and UEFA’s new financial fair play rules have done then is to create an institutional context that is likely to formalise and sustain the development of African football GVCs, not least in Ghana.

The GVC framework is clearly useful in accounting for the anatomical features of the production of Ghanaian football labour, observing its geographical dispersion and describing the institutional context within which it operates. Adopting a chain metaphor when considering these processes suggests a linear, transnational process characterised by governance structures that see European clubs control production processes and the terms of overseas transfer. As has been illustrated, these types of arrangements do exist in Ghana. However, player production and export in Ghana is a much more complicated and contested field comprised of a multiplicity of entities and actors engaged in complex power struggles in their attempt to capture value from football talent. The remainder of this paper examines the merits of GVC approaches to governance and those that have emerged from the GPN perspective as tools for capturing this complexity. More specifically, it assesses how they help us understand the terms upon which key actors, agents and stakeholders participate in the trade, how and where they do so, what returns they accrue, where value is captured and who this benefits.

4. ‘Governing’ the chain: power relations in Ghanaian football migration

GVC conceptualisations of governance (Gereffi, 1994; Gereffi et al., 2005; Sturgeon, 2008) help to explain the distribution of power in some segments of the Ghanaian football labour chain. The orthodoxy in GVC analysis is that power ultimately resides with lead firms, typically located in the developed world and that their interests routinely supersede and consistently trump those of other entities and agents involved in the chain, particularly those found in the developing world. There are a number of clear examples in the Ghanaian context where this form of governance manifests itself. The Fetteh Feyenoord academy and Red Bull Ghana are both vertically-integrated, transnational structures where all elements of production, distribution and consumption are closely controlled by the ‘lead firm’ and all activities are focused on developing players for the parent club. As Karel Brokken, General Manager of the Feyenoord academy observed: ‘The number one objective of course is forming a few boys for Feyenoord. That’s the reason for the academy...It is about getting a return on the investment’22 Gareth Henderby, former chief scout at Red Bull Ghana, painted a similar picture by confirming that its primary aim ‘is to try to produce professional footballers’.23

These academies typically recruit boys aged between 10 and 14 via local, regional, national and transnational recruitment networks and through organised trials or ‘justifies’. The ‘production’ process takes place on site and involves technical, tactical and physical football development, formal schooling and the readying of players culturally for the overseas market. This latter process occurs in a range of ways from placing foreign language skills at the

---

20 Interview with Kwesi Nyantakyi, Accra, 28 May 2011.
21 Ibid. Correspondence between the GFA and Red Bull Academy, 13 April 2011.
22 Interview with Karel Brokken, Fetteh Gomoa, 30 January 2008.
23 Interview with Gareth Henderby, Sogakope, 26 August 2010.
centre of the school curriculum to the inculcation of character and personality traits deemed by academy staff to be important in securing and maintaining a career in European football. On the field, the progress of players is monitored continually and if it becomes clear that individuals will not make the grade as a footballer, the academy terminates his contract.24 Those players who demonstrate potential either for the parent club or as a saleable asset will remain in the academy until they turn 18. Leading up to this point, their contact with the parent club will intensify via participation in tournaments, trials and/or training placements. Thereafter, the parent club will make a decision on whether they will recruit the player, make him available for sale to other European or Ghanaian clubs or simply end their relationship.25

What has been described thus far reveals that the interests of Feyenoord and Red Bull Salzburg are accorded primacy. This is not to say that there is no scope for benefits to accrue to others. Isaac Addo, the Deputy General Secretary of the GFA suggests that the activities of both academies may have a broader developmental impact; ‘The European teams who are setting up academies are creating jobs. They develop the game. They help students go to school’.26 Senior staff at Fetteh Feyenoord share this view and point to the academy’s educational provision, its involvement in peer education around HIV/AIDS and a partnership with UNICEF as evidence of a broader impact on Ghanaian society.27 Beyond sponsoring a local team in Sogakope where the academy is situated, Red Bull’s corporate social responsibility extends to the provision of a tap that supplies fresh drinking water for neighbouring villages and donations of equipment to a local hospital.28 Others remain unconvinced about the benefits that accrue in the Ghanaian context. For example, Emmanuel Maradas, head of FIFA’s media department, argues that European academies are ultimately business focused entities with minimal concern for how they impact the local communities in which they are based;

In the academy system, it is a business. People are doing it as a farm. If they get a crop, they draw everything, they sell whatever they can and whatever is left is gone…It is not being done for the African market. African football is not their concern. The concern of the academies is Europe.29

Ultimately, Maradas’s comments attest to a pattern of governance in which most value is captured by entities that are based in the developed world. While Fetteh Feyenoord and Red Bull Ghana are involved in a number of projects in Ghana that suggest at least a heterogeneous developmental impact, the primary self-stated objective of their operations is focused around extracting skilled human resource and achieving a financial return.

As noted earlier, football academies in Ghana are not uniform but rather are comprised of a variety of arrangements that sit outside or on the fringes of the linear, vertically organised structures that we see with Fetteh Feyenoord and Red Bull Ghana. Many of these have been initiated and developed by Ghanaians. Some are small scale micro-enterprises while others are larger, more structured entities and they play a role at various nodes in the production chain. In terms of understanding the distribution of power in what is a crowded, contested production field, the GPN approach to governance is valuable in two important respects. Firstly, it sensitises us to complex, multi-directional configurations and asymmetries of power in the global economy (Coe et al., 2008). Secondly, its emphasis on a ‘bottom-up’ approach encourages consideration of elements of the trade in Ghanaian football labour where power relations are not characterised by the complete capitulation of local interests to global ones and where we see some evidence of value being captured locally. A number of local responses to the integration of Ghanaian football into the global marketplace for players and the emergence of more ethical approaches to academies are particularly revealing in this regard.

Since the second half of the 1990s there have been significant interventions by Ghanaians into the football value chain. The most notable is Liberty Professionals Football Club, founded in 1996 by Alhaji Sly Tetteh, a former local league player who worked as an advisor to a number of Ghanaian clubs in the early 1990s, helping them to sell talented players abroad.30 Rather than operate on the fringes of a chain that was almost entirely controlled by overseas interests and offered limited access to Ghanaians, Tetteh inserted himself in a much more central manner and with the support of a group of local investors, he purchased a third division club, Accra All Stars. Tetteh employed a number of experienced local coaches and put in place an extensive nation-wide network of scouts that allowed the club to, ‘go to the root’ and capitalise on intimate knowledge of conditions at the base of the chain.31 They have since been highly successful in the trade and have located, developed and exported players such as Michael Essien, Asamoah Gyan, Sulley Muntari, Kwadwo Asamoah and John Paintsil, all of whom have represented clubs in elite European leagues as well as the Ghanaian national team.

While certainly the longest standing, Liberty Professionals is not the only Ghanaian entity that aspires to extract value from the player production chain. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Ghanaian individuals and consortia that have inserted themselves into the trade. Some have done this by purchasing existing clubs but one of the most prominent local initiatives is the Unistar Academy which opened in April 2009. This enterprise, funded by a group of Ghanaian businessmen led by Ernest Kuffour, a specialist in financial markets, is specifically oriented around developing the sorts of relationships with European clubs and agents that will allow them to maximise investment through the sale of players.32

Entities such as Liberty Professionals and Unistar are clearly business ventures operated by enterprising local entrepreneurs. These individuals have identified an opportunity to position themselves as important agents in the global marketplace for Ghanaian football labour and in so doing help to facilitate a process that is broadly extractive. They do not necessarily participate in the trade on an equal footing with European clubs nor can their activities be considered as particularly counter-hegemonic. However, both are examples of Ghanaian controlled enterprises that have been able to position themselves in the chain in a manner that allows them to exercise considerable power in how and in whose interests the trade operates. This contrasts significantly with the pattern of governance within which Ghanaian based European academies are located and ensures that greater capital is captured and distributed locally. While the export of Ghana’s best players overseas continues to create structural difficulties for the local game (Darby, 2012)
individuals such as Sly Tetteh have benefitted from the trade as have those players who have secured contracts in the European game. Beyond owners and players, the academies also provide employment opportunities for local coaches, teachers, construction workers, and support the activities of a whole plethora of local micro-businesses. This suggests that some academies have the potential to operate in a manner that sees value, economic and social, accruing to Ghanaian interests. This potential is particularly apparent in the Right to Dream academy.

5. Capturing value in the Ghanaian context: Right to Dream

As noted earlier, Right to Dream (RtD) is a not-for-profit charitable venture that has been operating in Ghana since 1999 and is the brainchild of Tom Vernon, a British social entrepreneur and former scout for Manchester United. Based in New Akrade on the banks of the Volta River, it operates on a fully residential basis with on-site accommodation, a school, training facilities and pitches. The organisation is a football academy in the conventional sense and is increasingly significant in producing Ghanaian players for the overseas market. Since its inception, the academy has exported 15 professional players to clubs in England, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France and Portugal. In light of their success in honing the abilities of young players, they entered into a long-term collaboration with an English Premier League club in 2010. This relationship facilitates financial investment, exchanges of coaches, training placements for players and for the most talented, an opportunity to sign professionally for the club. At first glance then, RtD resembles other vertically integrated, foreign academies or an outsourcing arrangement where the primary focus is on producing football talent for export.

However, the philosophy and ethos of the academy are much broader than football. This is best encapsulated in its vision to offer talented, underprivileged children the opportunity to reach their true potential in life and claim a better future for Africa.33 It is clear how the academy might achieve this at the level of individual opportunity. While trainees are encouraged to develop into professional players, RtD places considerable emphasis on education. This is facilitated through an on-site school which blends a combination of Ghanaian and international curricula, pastoral care, life skills training and a number of partnerships with elite boarding schools in the United States. Of the forty or so students who have graduated from RtD to date, around three-quarters have availed of this educational provision and this has enabled some to achieve full scholarships at prestigious US universities. The centrality of education in the academy has become so embedded that some to achieve full scholarships at prestigious US universities. The embedding of education at the core of RtD’s mission marks it out as a unique node in the wider Ghanaian football labour GVC. Of course, none of this is to suggest that its aspirations in terms of using football as a vehicle to contribute to a wider development agenda are unproblematic. While SfD practice in the Global South has increased exponentially since the early 2000s, concerns have been raised by critical scholars about the extent to which sport can realistically facilitate sustainable development. Coalter (2007, 2010), for example, has suggested that policy and practice in this field is driven by an ‘evangelical’ rhetoric that is rooted in ‘mythopoetic’ assumptions about the power of sport to create significant societal transformations amongst impoverished, disenfranchised communities. Darnell (2010, 2012) concurs and argues that there is limited evidence that the SfD sector engenders transformative change and that it does little to challenge the broader structures of inequality between the Global South and the North that necessitate development in the first place. For him many organisations operating in this sector simply aim to empower better participation of the marginalised in a neoliberal world and in doing so create ‘a form of neoliberal citizenship’ amongst programme participants (2010: 66). Others are similarly concerned about the sorts of development philosophies and power relations at play in this sector. Both Nicholls (2009) and Levermore and Beacom (2009) point to vertical hierarchies of power where actors in the global North make decisions about the lives of those in the glo-
natal South in a top-down manner while Hayhurst (2009: 205) points to a ‘clear neo-liberal narrative’ at the heart of SfD discourse.

Given that RtD’s development focus is in its infancy, it is difficult to gauge whether these broad criticisms of SfD apply to RtD or if value will be captured in local contexts in a meaningful, sustained manner. Manzo’s (2012) recent analysis of two ‘football for development’ initiatives in Africa is instructive here. She identified two contrasting models of development at play in the Katina 2009 football tournament in Uganda led by the Guardian newspaper in the UK and Barclays Bank and the ‘Football for Hope Movement’, a partnership between FIFA and the non-governmental organisation Streetfootballworld.

In the first, a postcolonial variant of development was evident, one that prioritised local knowledge and voices while in the second, a neoliberal agenda characterised by entrepreneurialism and individualism was very much to the fore. Both models can be seen to overlap in various aspects of RtD’s practice and mission.

The organisation’s website does indulge in a certain essentialising of sport and taps into the broader ‘power of sport’ discourse that is so prominent in the sector and that may lead to an overestimation of the capacity of sport to facilitate major social and economic change. It is also clear from interviews with staff and boys as well as observations of educational and pastoral activities that the academy does tend to valorise values consistent with a neo-liberal model of community development such as individual responsibility, empowerment, entrepreneurship and leadership. However, senior staff are generally cautious in their assertions about the academy’s development potential impact and are reluctant to make grandiose claims. The academy also encourages communitarian and collectivist values that seek to encourage students to think beyond the corporate or individualism in terms of how they might contribute to development. For example, when asked what he understood by giving back, one thirteen year old academy trainee commented, ‘For most people “giving back” is about giving money but I don’t see it that way because giving someone money, within an hour or two that person will spend the money and it’s gone, it has no benefit’. Another trainee shared a similar understanding: ‘if I have been given that opportunity to better myself, I think that giving back is a major way because giving someone money, within an hour or two that person will spend the money and it’s gone, it has no benefit.’

Some staff have also spoken about an aspiration for the academy to be transformative or at least eschew the top-down approach that characterises much of the SfD industry. As Tom Vernon commented;

... it (development) starts with the boys... using them as agents of change, getting them into leadership positions where they can have significant influence... the perspectives that they can provide could be valuable for the country as it works to stand on its own two feet.

Others within the organisation appear similarly committed to a development agenda at RtD that is driven ‘from below’ and in the longer term to seeing the academy being run by graduates. The fact that the ‘giving back’ scheme was developed in consultation with the student council and is currently managed by an academy graduate is revealing in this regard and hints at a postcolonial development model where the local knowledge and voices of ‘recipients’ of development are at least being heard (Briggs and Sharp, 2004).

This interpretation is further supported by pedagogical practice in the academy school which is periodically tailored around imbuing the academy boys with a sense of Ghanaianness, an understanding of their history and an appreciation of their cultural traditions. While this may not constitute the sort of critical pedagogy advocated by Paolo Freire (1970), it does have the potential, along with the ‘giving back’ contract, to help produce the sort of transnationally minded migrants who see their longer-term future either in or closely connected to Ghana and who reinvest the financial, educational and social capital that they accrue through their association with the academy back into Ghanaian society.

Two contrasting development philosophies are clearly at play within RtD. As its development focus matures, it remains to be seen whether one will come to the fore or if they will continue to overlap. What is clear however is that when considered as a part of the chain that produces Ghanaian football labour, RtD has emerged as a unique node, one that reveals the potential for value, of a social, educational, and economic nature, to be captured and utilised in ways that might empower individual actors in the developing world and benefit the communities that they come from. Clearly, the GVC approach to governance which adopts a linear, overly simplified view of the distribution of power within the global economy offers little in the way of analytical value in understanding RtD, its place in the trade, how it operates and in whose interests it functions. Rather, this academy, perhaps more than any other element in the Ghanaian football chain, highlights the complex, multi-directional configurations of power that we see in the GPN literature.

6. Conclusion

Over the last two decades, Ghanaian football players have increasingly featured in a range of leagues beyond the borders of the West African nation. This process is a reflection of the globalisation of the market for football labour which has seen clubs primarily, but not exclusively based in Europe, scour the world in search of highly skilled talent. It is also a consequence of the development of a global value chain and production network that connects Ghana to a range of international settings and encompasses the identification, training, export and consumption of football talent. Since the early 1990s, Ghanaian players have become much coveted and valued and this has contributed to the emergence of formal and informal recruitment channels that facilitate the export of the most highly skilled overseas. European clubs have been active in establishing linear, transnational chains that they control and from which they benefit disproportionately. However, as this paper reveals, the football landscape in Ghana has adapted to its positioning in the global marketplace for talent and it has not passively acquiesced to the neoliberal recruitment practices of European teams. These adaptations have coalesced around a whole host of actors, entities and interests ranging from local football clubs and the GFA to micro-entrepreneurs, youth team coaches and individuals or consortia with grander ambitions to insert themselves more centrally into the trade in the game’s most highly valued commodity. There have been other unexpected turns that have seen significant organisations shift their mission beyond producing and extracting talent to an aspiration to invest in Ghanaian communities. The result is a complex, contested and multi-faceted field which is not amenable to tidy or succinct analysis.

While there are elements of this field that fit with the sorts of core-periphery asymmetries evident in the global economy, there are segments that are at least suggestive of the capacity of Ghanaian interests to be served in and through the production and export

39 Interview with Vernon.
40 Interview with Daniel, New Akrade, 30 May 2012.
41 Interview with Thomas, New Akrade, 30 May 2012.
42 Ibid.
43 Interview with Thomas, New Akrade, 30 May 2011. Daniel is former Development Manager at Right to Dream.
44 Field notes. For example, at various points during 2012 RtD held events celebrating African literature and political leaders.
of football labour. The question that arises from this is how can this complexity be best framed, understood and theorised? This article contends that a cross disciplinary approach that fuses GVC and GPN perspectives offers significant potential in this regard, both heuristically and analytically. The chain metaphor provides a broad skeletal framework that helps structure our view of production, sensitises us to the local, national and international contexts within which this process is embedded and maps the geography of the trade and the dispersion of players overseas. GVC orthodoxy on governance which sees the production and export of commodities controlled by lead firms based in the global North also aligns with segments of the trade in Ghanaian football talent, particularly those initiated and coordinated by European clubs. However, as this paper demonstrates, the focus on lead firms and a top-down, uni-directional, linear view of production, limits the value of the chain approach in analysing how power plays out in the trade, by whom it is wielded and where benefits accrue.

While this study heeds the broader critique of the GVC perspective outlined earlier in this article, it does not eschew this approach in favour of the network analyses that economic geographers pose as an alternative. Rather, it acknowledges the complementarity of chain and network research (Sturgeon et al., 2008; Henderson, 2005) and fuses the chain analogy to networks in order to make sense of the complex webs of interdependent relationships that constitute the trade in Ghanaian football talent. Drawing on the GVC model helps us understand how the various elements of trade are structured transnationally while the GPN approach facilitates a bottom-up perspective that allows a focus on the Ghanaian context and how local actors have responded and adapted. Crucially, the GPN approach avoids monolithic conceptualisations of power and helps to demonstrate that power relations between local Ghanaian interests and global or at least European, sports entities are complex, multi-directional and manifest themselves in heterogeneous ways. This helps us understand the ways in which the trade in football labour is both extractive, serving the interests of the developed world and allows value to be accrued by a range of actors and stakeholders located in the developing world.

This is not to suggest that Ghanaian football actors compete on anything approximating an equal footing with their European counterparts and indeed, the power calculus remains skewed in favour of the latter. However, as this article has shown, the insertion of Ghanaians into key producing nodes in the trade and the emergence of more ethical approaches to producing players for export may in the longer term help to recast the core-periphery asymmetries associated with the migration of football labour from Africa to Europe. The inclusion of Ghana in the international football labour market is in its early stages and clearly needs to be tracked and analysed in more detail. At this stage, it might be somewhat of a stretch to place this study within the more optimistic geographies of commodity exchange and circulation that reveal challenges to the neoliberal ‘landscape of capital and power’ (Hughes, 2005: 496). As at the very least, by focusing on athletic labour as the commodity under investigation, the article extends the scholarship on commodities by taking GVC and GPN models into new empirical territory. There is much merit in continuing to connect GVC and GPN literatures to this unfolding industry. For example, recent work in the GPN canon, which calls for a focus on labour and the ways in which the agency of workers allows for resilience, a reworking of or resistance against the capitalist status quo (Coe and Hess, 2013; Carswell and De Neve, 2013), offers considerable promise in helping to focus on the subjectivities of Ghanaian players, both those in football academies and those who have become mobile. Seeking to account for the decisions, behaviours and agency of players and how these articulate with the interests of European clubs would help fill a considerable gap in our understanding of the mobility of African football labour.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of those who took the time to speak with me and share their views and experiences of football in Ghana. I presented preliminary findings and early versions of this paper at conferences and symposia at the Universities of Maastricht, Aarhus, Basle, Loughborough, Edinburgh and Glasgow Caledonian as well as at George Mason University in Washington and am grateful for the constructive comments received along the way. I am also grateful to Alan Klein and Katie Liston for reading drafts of this paper and for the fruitful conversations. I appreciate the constructive criticisms of the journal editor and three anonymous reviewers of this paper. This project was supported by the ESRC (RES-000-22-2617).

References


46 See Carter’s (2011) critique of existing research in sports labour migration that he argues neglects the lived experiences of athletes as they navigate and negotiate their way through sending and receiving contexts.

45 See for example Winter, 2004; Renting et al., 2003.