

MOORINGS AND MOVEMENTS:
THE PARADOX OF SPORTING MOBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper advocates for sport to be a feature of mobilities research. Although largely overlooked by proponents of the ‘new mobilities paradigm’, we contend that the sporting realm is a rich site of analysis into rapidly shifting conditions of movement, communication, identification and governance. We suggest that scholars consider how sporting movements are differentially constrained, and how those on the move can be variously positioned by, and indeed have the potential to (re)position, political, economic and cultural formations. In this way, we argue that in the context of neoliberal globalisation, the sporting body offers an important paradox of mobility whereby freedom of movement for moving/sporting bodies across global culture- and capital-scapes (as migrant athlete labourers, as tourists, as global celebrities or sporting brands) simultaneously produces immobility, as individuals are increasingly constrained by the logics of the market (as hyper-regimented athletes, as sweatshop labourers in Nike factories, etc.). In so doing, we point to various research themes that that can both inform contemporary understandings of sport, but also enrich broader mobilities scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

The principal architect of the ‘mobilities paradigm’, John Urry, argues that this new platform of inquiry, apparently unlike (or at least more so than) its predecessors, provides a necessary shift away from the ‘stasis, structure and social order’ that has often dominated social inquiry. It does so, he argues, in favour of ‘a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering’ (Urry, 2007: 9). This mobilities paradigm seems a fertile intellectual space from which to further explorations of the spatio-temporal effects of globalisation and its concurrent time-space compressions, as well as new transportive modalities, fluctuating ‘global markets,’ intensifying touristic flows, and various

other forms of movement. Urry makes clear in his summative book *Mobilities* (2007) that such an emergent field is not limited to the study of macro-level movements, but also encompasses more nuanced forms of local, physical kinesis – as well as the connection between the two levels of mobility. He writes that along with more familiar inquiries into ‘social mobility’ or ‘migration or other kinds of semi-permanent geographical movement,’ such generic mobilities also include ‘various kinds and temporalities of physical movement, ranging from standing, lounging, walking, climbing, dancing, to those enhanced by technologies, of bikes, buses, cars, trains, ships, planes, wheelchairs, crutches’ (Urry, 2007: 14).

However, many of us who locate ourselves and our work within the disciplinary boundaries of physical education, health studies, sport studies, kinesiology, and related fields have found the active human body – and particularly as it exists in various sporting contexts – to be conspicuously absent from early deliberations on mobility. Urry and others argue that this new mobilities paradigm focuses on movement, the corporeal, speed, competition, transference, pleasure, coverage, fluidity, bodily power, and affordance. Yet, mobilities scholars have up to this point overlooked, or avoided, a cultural formation that vividly encapsulates these core logics of mobility – sport.¹

This paper advocates for the analysis of sport to be a feature of mobilities research. First, we contend that although hitherto overlooked by proponents of the ‘new mobilities paradigm,’ sport is a rich site of analysis into the rapidly shifting conditions of movement, communication, identification, and governance that characterise contemporary life. Following James Clifford (1997), we suggest that social scientists must consider how sporting movements are differentially constrained, and how those on the move can be variously positioned by, and indeed have the potential to (re)position, political, economic and cultural formations. Second, we call for explorations of the consequences of how new cultures of sports-related mobility are emerging, as people enact, perform, and create mobility; but also how new constraints characterise the contested nature of mobility.

In making this case, we also suggest that thinking about sporting mobilities might offer new ways of considering the *mobility of movement*, or rethinking the dialectics of physical movements within broader circuits and flows of human bodies, capital, power, and culture. In their writing, Urry and his contemporaries tend to focus on the transport of bodies (car driving, flying, etc.), transported bodies, or transportable bodies, rather than *bodily movements*. In other words, they centre their analyses on things that make the body mobile,

or patterns of body relocation or displacement, rather than the body as a locus of spatio-temporal movement. In so doing, they often obscure how micro-level movements (local, concentrated, embodied) are inextricably linked to macro social and geopolitical movements (or lack thereof).

By contrast, we argue that in the context of what scholars often refer to as neo-liberal globalisation (see Wallerstein 2008), the moving sporting body offers insights into the *paradox of mobility*. In other words, we argue that sport helps us understand how mobility and mobility systems – as conceptual frames for thinking about how and why people and things flow across dimensions of time and space – can only be understood within broader contextual matrices. Building upon the likes of David Harvey, Arjun Appadurai, John Urry, and others, we suggest that the bodily movements unique to sport – those of the aspirant youth athlete or the international superstar, the entrepreneurial sport marketer, the globetrotting sport consumer-flâneur, the sporting goods sweatshop worker, or the sex-worker at a global sporting mega-event – operate in dialectic rhythm with broader circuits of capital, culture, and politics.

In this light, we make the case that freedom of movement through the proliferation of moving/sporting bodies across global culture- and capital-scapes (as migrant athlete labourers, as tourists, as global celebrities or sporting brands) also creates *immobility*. This arises as individuals operate within a politicised, mediated and hyper-corporatised global sporting system that is imbricated in hetero-patriarchal, ethnicised, racialised, classed, and neo-colonialised cultural politics. In this context, actors are increasingly subjected to, and constrained by, various spatial limitations (for example, as hyper-regimented athletes, as sweatshop labourers in Nike factories, or as taxpayers financing media-spectacle sports events). Our appeal in this paper is for sports studies writers to consider the scope of mobilities approaches, and, in turn, for mobilities researchers to consider the oft-overlooked, unique and contingent world of sport as a rich site of enquiry.

THEORISING SPORTING (IM)MOBILITY

Most of the work exploring sporting movements has focused upon *moving bodies* rather than *bodily movement*.² Much has emerged from within the migration paradigm centred upon the 'push' and 'pull' factors that lead to migration. Accordingly, the term 'sports labour migration' has hitherto dominated in the literature (see Bale & Maguire, 1994; Maguire & Falcous, 2011) and such work has tended to focus upon movements of athletes (and fans to a lesser extent).

The emerging ‘new mobilities’ paradigm (see Sheller & Urry, 2006) promises to considerably broaden the ways of viewing the social dynamics of sporting movements.³ This ‘mobility turn’, Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006:1–2) suggest, is ‘placing new issues on the table, but also transcending disciplinary boundaries and putting into question the fundamental “territorial” and sedentary precepts of twentieth-century social science’. We believe there is a need for sports scholars to respond to this agenda. Furthermore, mobilities scholars may benefit from engaging the ways in which movement, both in a spatio-temporal and embodied sense, is conceived and enacted in and through sport.

First, sporting praxis⁴ and mobilities paradigms share common impulses of movement and flow. The emphasis on mobilities within the social sciences, Sheller and Urry (2006) note, arises from critiques of existing approaches that tended to see cultural and social activity as abstract, static, or fixed. In this regard, the mobilities paradigm challenges the way in which much social science research has been ‘a-mobile’, seeking to go beyond stability, meaning and place as basic units of research and instead emphasising the mobilities that course through them. Again, drawing upon the work of Urry (2007: 48), the body – and specifically its capacity for movement – holds a central place within a mobilities paradigm. He notes:

Bodies navigate backwards and forwards between directly sensing the external world as they move bodily in and through it, and discursively mediated sensescesapes that signify social taste and distinction, ideology and meaning. The body especially senses as it *moves*. It is endowed with kinaesthetics, the sixth sense that informs one what the body is doing in space through the sensations of movement registered in its joints, muscles, tendons and so on. (emphasis in original)

As a significant site of (heightened) sensory corporeality and physical movement, sport *produces*, and is a *product of*, various formations and praxes of mobility.

Yet the mobilities approach is not merely an acknowledgement of the (increasing) significance of movement and encounter, but also arises from a critique of approaches to globalisation that have posited freedom or liberation from space and place as inherent to ‘new’ global interconnectedness (Urry, 2007). That is, it also departs from conceptualisations of *deterritorialisation* that (over)emphasise post-national ‘fluidity’ characterised by speed of movement of people, money, commodities, images and information. Specifically, the paradigm seeks

a balance between acknowledging freedom, communication and mobility with the role of material and institutional infrastructure that simultaneously limit and regulate mobility. The new paradigm, Sheller and Urry (2006: 210) note, emphasises how all mobilities 'entail specific often highly embedded and immobile infrastructures'. The mobilities paradigm then promises to navigate a course between, on one hand, overly static, structuralist approaches and, on the other, overly agentic formulations of sporting movements.

Thus far proponents of the new mobilities approach have neglected sport in their analyses.⁵ On the rare occasion when sport scholars themselves *have* taken up mobility frameworks, such as in Burke and Woolcock's (2009) study on sports stadia and transit development, they have done so in ways that offer a cursory, almost caricaturised interpretation of the core debates within mobilities scholarship. Moving forward, we argue that sports scholars need to critically explore how their own subject content can be elucidated and in turn may test, stretch and add layers to the new paradigm.

In some ways, this might necessitate a (re)turn to other key sociological and anthropological conceptualisations of mobility and movement. For instance, anthropologist James Clifford's (1997) book *Routes* – often overlooked by mobilities scholars – reminds us how the intensified global flows of people and culture imbricate localised, embodied, and practised human movements. Thinking beyond Appadurai's (1990) analyses of 'ethnoscapes,' which he suggests create new 'contact zones' across national groups and cultures and thereby lead to their deterritorialisation, we might see how complex interconnectivities produce new bodily movements – both in the macro and micro sense. More to the point, bodily movements in various local contexts can only be understood in relation to broader mobility systems. For example, bodies moving about the plantation fields of southeast Asia are linked to, if not productive of, broader capitalist relations of the global food industry; warring bodies are linked to both the death they seek to exact and the political regimes and military-industrial-complexes those deaths service; and sex-labouring bodies in, and transported from, conditions of poverty can only be understood in relation to the power relations they traverse.

Our understandings of 'moving cultures' (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), then, cannot simply be confined to studies of tourism, fashion trends, commodity logistics, labour migration, etc. – but also must be of the bodily praxes that activate, and are acted upon by, these mobility systems. In other words, and following Sven Kesselring (2006), we must excavate the enactors and inhibitors of mobility potential, or *motility*, within various sport formations.⁶ Perhaps most

importantly, we must endeavor to better understand how motility is embodied, performed, and negotiated – and how the cultures of movement within sport influence, and are influenced by, broader ‘mobility systems.’

SPORTING MOBILITY

Following this logic, we can surmise that running, throwing, kicking bodies on the sporting fields of São Paulo or Manchester – on *favela* streets or inside giant stadia – are not isolated from the political, cultural, and economic contexts within which they perform. Rather, by way of their very physicality they (re) produce the global sport spectacle (and its ancillary media networks, celebrity culture, commodity forms, and forms of exploitation). Sport, unlike other cultural fields, situates the moving body as both product and producer of capital – as the principal commodity form of mass-mediated sporting spectacle and as the labouring, subjective utility from which surplus capital is extracted. Critical sports scholars have for years made this fundamental contradiction between exploitation and subjectivity clear, at lengths that we cannot summarise here.

Yet within popular discourse, sport tends to be highly romanticised, frequently posited as a site of unlimited mobility, equity and freedom. The messages within popular discourse, from sports administrators and some sport scholars is that sport’s professional, commercial, and global turns have resulted in *otherwise unachievable mobility* for many athletic labourers (Kahn, 2000; Onody & de Castro, 2004; Weistart, 1984; Zimbalist, 2001). This discourse connects with longstanding myths of sport as accessible, inclusive and fair to all – as the archetypal ‘level playing field’. In such terms, sport is widely understood as a meritocratic site of social, economic, and spatial mobility, replete with ‘rags to riches’ mythos and ‘escape from the ghetto’ rhetoric.

The circulation of people, commodities, images, technologies, ideologies, and capital are key – indeed accelerating – features of the global sportscape. For those who ‘make it,’ sport becomes a means to accumulate wealth, and thus in the context of a global free-market, a way toward freedom (Kumar, 1997). The ideals of such spatial mobility are reinforced by the barrage of images of the exploits and narratives of mobile, globetrotting sports stars which are beamed into homes from all corners of the world. However, as critical sports scholars such as Maguire (1999, 2005), Miller, Lawrence, McKay and Rowe (2001), and Andrews (2006) have argued, whilst the interconnectedness of the global sportscape is intensifying, it is highly uneven and contested in multiple ways. A small minority of athletes and administrators experience financial and geographical mobility. Yet, as Miller, Rowe, McKay and Lawrence (2003: 429–430)

caution, these privileged sports ‘labour cosmopolitans’ are contrasted sharply with ‘a huge army of labor and ancillary workers that is subject to massive exploitation.’

Global sport – and particularly the mutation(s) that have come to define the era of free market capital – then offers something of a *paradox of mobility*. For a minute few, global sport is a site of freedom, unfettered mobility and opportunity; for others it entrenches the limits of mobility and is a site of exploitation and exclusion. In this way, workers in the sport sphere are not that dissimilar to those labourers depicted in Andrew Herod’s (1997) study of labour geography. Through their active pursuit of mobility – through an attempt to access the social and economic ‘freedom’ in a capitalist system – they actively reproduce the very economic systems and scales which created their original class fixity within this geography of labour.

We would suggest then that for mobilities scholars the global sporting field (we use the term ‘field’ in a Bourdieuan sense) is a rich and highly visible site which actively informs cultural understandings, moralities, economies, and body cultures in highly, and often uniquely, contested ways. The global sporting field offers a host of evocative histories, contexts, and figures within the global cultural economy that frequently feature prominently in popular culture and public discourse. As a result, the global sports system throws up a host of unique issues and questions for mobilities scholars. We now detail a series of examples that point to more specific ways in which sport introduces particular problematics to mobilities debates.

STADIA, SPORTING SPECTACLES, AND MOBILITY ENCOUNTERS

Urry (2007:37), drawing upon the work of Hajer and Reijndorp (2002), identifies a number of social spaces where face-to-face mobile encounters take place, specifically pointing to stations, hotels, motorways, resorts, airports, corners, malls, subway stations, buses, public squares, leisure complexes, cosmopolitan cities, beaches, galleries, and roadside parks. In his earlier work, Urry (2002) similarly conceived the congregative implications of mobility along these lines, whereby the proximity of mobile bodies and the ability to generate ‘co-presence’ produce not only experiences, but forms of capital (namely symbolic and social) and thus relations of power within these spaces. While again overlooking sport, Urry and his contemporaries would surely find it hard to argue against the analytical potential of framing the sports stadium as ‘mobility space’, and the sporting event as a spectacle of mobile bodies. In the stands, tens of thousands of socially, economically, and physically mobile bodies congregate, and

in doing so spectacularise the logics, aesthetics, and systems of mobility. Mobilities scholars such as Hannam *et al.* (2006) have tended to focus on ‘places of movement’: moving bodies through space (i.e. the physical human body), ‘mobility nodes’ such as the train station or airport, or transportive apparatuses such as the airplane or automobile. Yet, whilst spaces such as sporting stadia might not on the surface seem to be mobility spaces – in that they are not principally conceived in the geometries of transportation – a host of issues surrounding stadiums as mobility spaces emerges when we consider how images, people, ideas, identities, and capital move about these spaces.

Take, for instance, the recently held 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa – an archetypal mega-event demonstrative of the types of mobilities central to global sporting systems. It was forecast by organisers that up to 450,000 fans would visit South Africa during the month-long tournament (see Duval-Smith, 2009). However speculative such figures may be, they represent significant movements that raise numerous issues relating to cultural encounter and identity, social equity, impacts on the environment and the economy. For instance, how does movement on the pitch – enlivened by national and corporate signifiers – generate mobility (commercial, touristic, mediated, or professional)? Furthermore, whilst mobile tourists may enjoy comfortable, state-of-the-art stadia, largely immobile locals continue to live without clean water and electricity in a deeply unequal South African society. Indeed, tax-paying locals who pay for the infrastructure of such sporting-media spectacles are left with the economic and environmental consequences long after the circus has left town. Even more paradoxically, many of these taxpaying residents, particularly in the poorest parts of the country, were forcibly *made mobile* – displaced from their homes via compulsory purchase and gentrification policies enacted specifically for the World Cup spectacle.

The contrast between the mobilities enjoyed by the privileged, globetrotting few and the immobilities of the South African masses extends way beyond the stadia in Johannesburg or Durban. For the peasant labourer who stitched Adidas’s much-publicised Jabulani soccer ball used at the event, or the displaced Chinese peasant who moulded the plastic seats that jet-setting elites temporarily positioned their backsides upon in conspicuous support of their nations, the event held wildly differing prospects and meanings. The event was sold in public discourse through a welter of public relations, corporate-entangled press releases and advertising as a humanitarian good (see Giardina, 2010), as affirmed in the slogan ‘*Ke Nako* [It’s time]. *Celebrate Africa’s Humanity*’. However, critically examining the multiple and profoundly unequal mobilities surrounding the event reveals the thin facade and fatuous idealism of

such rhetoric.

MOBILITY GOVERNANCE AND PATRIOTS AT PLAY

As noted above, the global sport system is premised on the constant but uneven circulation of images, athletes, fans, myths and commodities. Yet, simultaneously it is characterised by profound moorings to place and identity: civic, regional, ethnic, and national. Thus, there is a need to develop a broad reaching research agenda that confronts simplified readings of sporting flow(s) by accounting for the co-existence of fluidity and movement with the moorings of global sport. In this sense, the economic dimensions of labour mobility are entwined with identity politics, where issues of attachment to place, eligibility and allegiances are significant. Nationalism, in particular has been a cornerstone of modern sport. Yet as the place of the nation within global processes is simultaneously challenged and usurped, strengthened and pluralised, fragmented and entrenched in a bewildering combination of ways, new sporting mobilities and issues are emerging.

For example, as Falcous and Maguire (2011) note, in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Craig Reddie, a senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) and British Olympic Association (BOA) member estimated that around 25 athletes had ‘swapped nationality’. In particular – and widely conveyed in Western media – some former East African runners opted to compete for some of the Gulf States, such as Qatar and Dubai, whose ‘petrodollars’, channeled into economic development and place promotion, are quite literally being used to reposition top Olympic athletes and shift their national allegiances. As Falcous and Maguire (2011) note, however, there is a certain irony in Reddie’s observations as the BOA themselves scour the globe for athletes to supplement British medal chances at the 2012 Olympic Games. Such trends promise to stimulate reactions from sports administrators who strive to govern and constrain mobile athletes who seek to exercise fluid national allegiances. These constraints, of course, allow for both 1) further exploitation of the national athletic labour force and 2) artificial limits to where, when, and often how the athlete can capitalise upon commercial ventures associated with the global sporting mega-event (e.g. the World Cup or Olympic Games).⁷

Typically the movement of athletes precipitates ‘encounters’ with features common to other occupational fields. The breadth and intensity of the movements and experiences associated with sports labour mobility, however, are diverse and shaped by differing pressures, rewards and interdependencies. These are patterned by questions of labour rights and barriers, recruitment and integra-

tion, cultural adjustment and dislocation (see Maguire, 1999). Fears concerning the effects of mobile athletes have resulted in protectionist immigration barriers, including quotas, residency clauses, selection limitations, and eligibility thresholds to assuage concerns. Alternatively, in some cases mobile athletes are courted, actively recruited and embraced in local contexts. Such patterns highlight the paradoxes and ambiguities in the recruitment of, and responses to mobile athletes.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, for example, the movements of rugby union players are patterned by imbalanced global rugby economies and protectionist governance schemes in complicated and dynamic ways. Specifically, the national governing body – the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) – imposes selection limitations on foreign-based New Zealanders as a means of ‘protecting’ the national team’s playing strength (and hence their own ‘cash cow’). Players subsequently are constrained in their ability to ply their trade in the most lucrative rugby economies of the northern hemisphere and Japan, without facing career inhibiting consequences. Yet the constraints are increasingly being pushed – as was recently revealed in the ‘sabbatical’ enjoyed by star player Dan Carter – in a constant struggle over who will benefit from player mobility. The acceleration of such ‘patriot games’ also provide a challenge to the global cultural economy – particularly to nationalism as a key organising principle of contemporary identities and sports systems. ‘New’ mobilities, in this sense, are challenging some of the longstanding ‘moorings’ of the global sporting system and present an emerging challenge to researchers.

TALENT PIPELINES AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPORTING MOBILITY

There is huge variation in the nature of mobility associated with global sport. For some, the movements are constant and encounters fleeting; for others they can be more permanent involving less transitory movements through fixed, physical space. The variable breadth and intensity of the movements and experiences associated with sports labour migration is captured in Maguire’s (1996) typology encompassing ‘pioneers’, ‘settlers’, ‘returnees’, ‘mercenaries’, and ‘nomadic cosmopolitans’. This ideal-type framework captures the notion that sporting movements and encounters are diverse and shaped by differing pressures, rewards, and interdependencies.

Beyond the myths, for those millions of aspirant athletes around the world who do not ‘make it’, sport can act in exploitative ways. In these contexts, coaches, parents, and ‘handlers’ facilitate young athletes, often from poor neighbourhoods, who frequently forgo education and free play in favour of intensive

skill and weight training regimes. At the extreme, 10 year-old children from Brazilian *favelas* are coerced to sign contracts with professional agents (representing the interests of European clubs) (Magee & Sugden, 2002). Similarly, Klein (2011) details how Dominican baseball players as young as age 12 are housed and trained by *buscónes* (handlers/agents) to intensively hone their skills for the slender chances of securing North American major league contracts. By being placed into the very pathways created for mobility (the training academies, youth development centres, etc.), these athletic bodies are situated not only within the sport's 'talent pipeline' but also within an accumulation strategy seeking to maximise surplus value through the exploits of the young, spectacularised athletic body. Moreover, as a microcosm of the dominant neo-liberal order, surplus labor creates conditions of further exploitation through a surplus of hyper-competitive labour power.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, we are seeing a significant outflow of young athletes seeking to 'capitalise' upon their labour value. Young New Zealanders, many from deprived Maori and Pacific Island communities, move annually to sub-urban Sydney with hopes of 'making it' to the top ranks of Australia's National Rugby League (NRL) (Greif, 1995; Walker, 1995). Yet their work-worlds can be precarious, violent, replete with 'racial' stereotyping, physically damaging, and often short. Such an example is symptomatic of the capacity for gendered and ethnicised patterns of mobility as they work through unique and particular sporting contexts.

Furthermore, whilst much of the sporting literature has focused upon the movements associated with elite – and hence, male dominated – sport, there is much to be revealed about those who are 'at leisure' rather than 'at labour'. Consider, for example, Thorpe's (2011) recent observations on snowboarding youth cultures. She illustrates how cultural values and styles are being communicated across borders, and how these global forces and connections are negotiated in local spaces and places.

Thus, those board riders who navigate the globe at leisure – chasing snow conditions or seeking the perfect wave – and their encounters with the environments they (re)shape are also worthy of exploration. Through a series of in-depth studies conducted across varying sites, we must seek to cultivate new accounts of the affects of global sport mobility on the experiences of people, from the privileged high-flyers to those within the world's most 'vulnerable' communities; thus highlighting the places where the myths and realities of the *paradox of mobility* collide in substantive ways.

SPORTING AUTOMOBILITY

Sport also provides new empirical spaces to understand not only embodied mobility, but also the ways in which notions of *automobility* are conceived and popularised. For example, Newman and Giardina (2011) – drawing upon the body of work on ‘automobility’ and that of Urry (2004), Raymond Williams (1997), Jeremy Packer (2008), and Donna Haraway (1991) – examine the automobile’s ascendant place within the twentieth century cultures of production and consumption in the United States. Their recent work on North American Stock Car Racing (NASCAR) explores the complex auto-centric politics of what they term ‘sporting automobility’, situating stock car auto racing within broader economic and cultural formations of consumer culture, fast capitalism, and mobility. They then discuss stock car racing’s role in producing these frames of ‘automobility’, whereby the control, manipulation, and acceleration of the automobile on the track became a central signifier of, and vessel for, human ‘autarky’ and a celebration of the logics of late-Fordist Era auto-individualisation.

Newman and Giardina (2011) conducted historiographic work on NASCAR’s role in shaping cultural citizenship and consumership. They trace NASCAR’s rise up the North American professional sporting hierarchy and how the politics of individualism, conservatism, and mobility act on and through these fast moving cars. All this then informs a much broader analysis of how the contemporary stock car spectacle – wrought with hyper-commercialism and discursive framings of neoliberal hegemony – produces the contradictions of ‘autonomy’ and ‘mobility’ that arise within a sport that at once gained its ‘hot rod’ popularity for rejecting regulation (outlaws breaking speed laws) and yet became the nation’s most highly regulated sporting enterprise. Newman and Giardina’s work problematises the ways in which political and corporate intermediaries have interceded stock car spaces, and in so doing subjected, if not immobilised, the over-represented working class fans of the sport to dominant formations of capital, social conservatism, and U.S. imperialist militarism.

From this work, we might surmise that much like other spectacles of accumulation, auto racing spectacles serve as microcosms (both in capital exchange and the glorification of its logics) of the heightened stages of what Ben Agger (1989, 2004) refers to as ‘fast capitalism.’ They are, as Paul Virilio might deduce, spectacles of (auto-)mobility and speed. Virilio, in his understanding of *dromology* (taken quite literally from the Greek word *dromos*, meaning ‘to race’), argues that the speed at which something happens likely changes its essential nature, and that those forces of society that move with great speed come to dominate those which are slower.⁸ For Virilio (1977/2006), power and

'progress' are not necessarily consequences of spatial arrangement or geometric conquest – as many scholars have suggested (e.g., colonisation, globalisation, empire) – but rather are more incontrovertibly produced by, and productive of, control over movement and circulation. He writes, 'there is no 'industrial revolution' but only a 'dromocratic revolution'; there is not democracy, only dromocracy; there is not strategy, only dromology' (Virilio 1977/2006). Put differently, power created through surplus value accumulation is firstly a matter of speed; of the immediacy of transfer, transport, exchange, volume, signification, hyper-mediation, and proliferation. As was the case with other means of power and accumulation (warfare, colonisation, serfdom, etc.) in previous epochs, autonomy is produced through the transference and mobility of capital in the contemporary global economy.

And perhaps nowhere in the public sphere are these logics more pronounced, or *accelerated*, than at a hyper-commercialised, sporting superspeedway. In their analysis, Newman and Giardina (2011) go to great lengths to illustrate the contradictory logics of neoliberal sport; pointing out how moorings of the social (whiteness, patriarchy, etc.) and the spiritual are juxtaposed on to performances of freedom (of the market, of the gun-owner, of the consumer, etc.) and how the context of stock car racing allows for accelerations of capital whilst smoothing over the glacial logics of paleoconservatism and American traditionalism. They paint NASCAR as a speedy sport where driver-celebrities hock commodity wares from late capitalism's foremost sectors, including the military-industrial-complex, the petrol and automobile industries, and various culture industries. The ability to move, and in this case move quickly, exacerbates, and is intertextually located within, a phantasmagoric largesse of American flags, military jet flyovers, conservative political stumpings, and religio-fundamentalist patriarchy. As such, the sporting spectacle produces mobility – and conceptions thereof – by linking the cultural politics of the nation to broader formations of subjectivity.

CODA

By way of a series of detours through the sporting empirical context (admittedly piecemeal and selective), we have advocated for the analysis of global sports processes to be a feature of mobilities research agendas. Most specifically, we call for explorations of the ways that the sporting body creates a *paradox of mobility*: whereby freedom of movement – through the circulation of moving/sporting bodies simultaneously produces *immobility*. As noted above, these mobilities are bound to economic, political, and/or social interconnections, and often intersect the moorings of the individual to particular cultural

locations; denying one's 'freedom to choose or select a position in the cultural landscape' (Emmison, 2003: 213). While mobility tends to be conceptualised at a particular scale: the individual level (social mobility, upward mobility, etc.), the local level (the daily commute, the sidewalk, etc.), or the macro level (international travel, transport of goods across geographic boundaries, etc.), we have sought to elucidate how, in and through sport, mobility flows across these striations, rethinking along the way how concentrated physical movements produce spatio-temporal mobility and fixity. The sporting body presents a critical locus of movement from which we might better conceive mobility across various physical and geopolitical dimensions.

In the context of neoliberal globalisation, sport plays an important role in reconciling and perpetuating free-market capital's inherent contradictions; whereby the (labouring and consuming) sporting body acts along both sides of David Harvey's (2001, 2007) notion of a 'spatio-temporal fix'.⁹ First, the sporting body further extends the spatial relations of capital (via satellite television broadcast, international player migrations, nation-ambling sport tourism, etc.), the geographical scale and flexibility of sport as capital form, and perceptions of placeness and fixity that have come to define its industrial logics (pride in 'national teams,' 'homegrown' players, etc.). Second, the sporting body manufactures consent for flexible capitalism through the spectacle whilst obfuscating the lines of exploitation and inequality inherent in its making (and thus seemingly 'fixing' global capital's disjunctures). Of course, these spatio-temporal complexities are not unique to sport, but as we have endeavoured to make clear, through various sporting formations they are at times made uniquely consequential to our thinking on mobility. The sport-related body is a *spectacle of mobility*; at once a celebration of humanity's capacity for speed, power, and technique and a discursive formation which – in its mass mediated, nationalised, commodified, subjugated form – (re)authorises the physical and productive logics of neoliberal capital.

To this end, we suggest that sport and motilities scholars alike take notice of the ways in which the moving body – on the field or crossing geopolitical boundaries – is made political by, and often acts in the service of, the *unevening* order of things. It is not enough to simply map player migration patterns or to celebrate those few multi-millionaire athletes who used their sporting bodies to 'escape' poverty. This type of scholarship tends to work in the service of sport's mobility myths (upward mobility, sporting meritocracy, etc.) and glosses over the immobilities produced through the (commercial) sporting encounter. In our admiration of the body's capacity to master time and space, we must not forget how space and time are organised in ways that subjugate just

as they mobilise. And as sporting bodies change and ‘evolve’ – becoming faster and stronger (by natural and non-natural means) – we need to problematise not only the negative health outcomes (disease, injury, mortality, etc.) but also the pressures acting upon athletes to create more spectacular performances in order to make themselves more mobile.

With these directions in mind scholars will need to consider the potential for, indeed necessity of, the new and innovative ‘mobile methods’ advocated by Büscher and Urry (2009). The mobilities turn, they argue, necessitates ‘new forms of sociological enquiry, explanation and engagement’ (2009:99) which authorise a new methodological landscape. Specifically, that is one ‘on the move’ (2009:103). To this end they advocate the likes of ‘shadowing, stalking, walk alongs, ride alongs, participatory interventions and cultural biographies’ (2009:110). In the context of some of the sporting contexts we have highlighted above, the capacity of ‘mobile methods’ throw up intriguing possibilities as a means of shedding (new) light on sports worlds. For example, ‘cultural biographies’ of objects such as Adidas soccer balls, Nike sports shoes or licensed merchandise as they travel and are imbricated in the shifting accumulation of material and symbolic capital across differing sites, offers intriguing potential. Indeed, it is in their shifting value as they move that the complexities, inter-connections and deep inequities of the global (sports) system can be laid bare. Similarly, the likes of time-space diaries¹⁰ hold intriguing potential as means to reveal the lived nature of sporting mobility and mobility-exclusion within local lives. Sports scholars are faced with thinking innovatively about the possibilities and challenges of adopting such ‘mobile methods’ to enliven their field.

Ultimately our core appeal is to explore the scope of the mobilities paradigm for understanding and problematising sport in new ways. The deeper question, for us, is ‘*cui bono?*’ (who wins)? That is to say, central questions regarding the distribution of power, resources and influence must be at the heart of explorations of sporting mobilities. Indeed, Büscher and Urry (2009:109) have argued that *both* critique and engagement are integral to the multiple approaches which ‘chime together’ to constitute a ‘mobilities paradigm’.

With these issues and possibilities in mind, the embodied, symbolic, frequently potent evocations of sporting fields offer rich terrain to explore constitutive meanings and power relations. Crucially, sport offers up unique and revealing contexts and outcomes. Indeed, Bourdieu (1978:821) suggested that the *field* of sports cannot simply be understood ‘by relating them directly to the economic and social conditions of the corresponding societies’. Even when shaped by the weight of broader economic and social processes, he noted, the sporting field

is characterised by ‘its own tempo, its own evolutionary laws, its own crises’ Bourdieu (1978:821). While we have detailed a necessarily selective number of topics, the mobilities paradigm holds significant potential to shed light upon the vast field of sporting mobilities, in a number of fruitful ways. In addition, analyses of sport can add unique and rich layers of insight to broader understandings of mobilities. The research directions on ‘sporting im/mobility’ to which we have pointed are but starting points for this agenda.

NOTES

- 1 In their oft-cited essay ‘The New Mobilities Paradigm’, Sheller and Urry (2006) identify ‘sports stars’ as people living in/of mobility. This is a passing mention, and one of the very few in the key mobilities literatures. Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006:2) meanwhile provide a list of those who ‘criss-cross’ the globe: ‘tourists, workers, terrorists, students, migrants, asylum seekers, scientists/scholars, family members, business people, soldiers and guest workers’, yet omit to mention athletes and sports fans who do so in prolific and high profile ways.
- 2 Some work exploring movement within global sports processes to date has acknowledged the variable and interlocking ‘scapes’ (see Appadurai, 1990) that characterise the multiple flows and encounters of global sport (see Maguire, 1999; Miller *et al.*, 2002). Reading sport through Appadurai’s framework, we can see how the mobile body can be conceived as both fluid and moving on the pitch – and more importantly, as inextricably wound into broader circuits of global capital and culture. At the level of ‘ethnoscapes’, for example, the global migration of sporting personnel: administrators, coaches, athletes and ancillary staff, continue to accelerate. The flow of finance surrounding the international trade in personnel, prize monies and endorsements, meanwhile, is symptomatic of ‘financescapes’. In terms of ‘technoscapes’, the flow of sports, goods, equipment and technology in the form of artificial playing surfaces, equipment innovation and arenas is visible. The global transmission of images of global sport, by various media, meanwhile, is constitutive of ‘mediascapes’. Finally, at the level of ‘ideoscapes’, philosophies circulate (and at points clash) surrounding the organisation, marketing, and presentation of sport around the globe.
- 3 Sheller and Urry (2006) note the new paradigm includes work from anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies, science and technology studies, tourism and transport studies, and sociology. For details of some of the characteristics, properties, and implications of the ‘mobility turn’ within the social sciences see Sheller and Urry (2006) and Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006).

- 4 We use the term praxis here to refer to the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realised. 'Praxis' speaks to both the physical and ideological dimensions of something; in this case that sport is both a form of physical movement (practice), but perhaps more importantly an imagined space upon which politics are at work.
- 5 See Maguire (1993) for discussion of the neglect of analyses of sport within the broader social sciences.
- 6 Here we are referring to the debates engaged in Urry's (2007) *Mobilities* around the links between social and spatial mobility. The term 'motility' refers to the capacity/ability to be mobile.
- 7 Here it would be instructive to revisit Michael Giardina's (2001, 2003) re-evaluation of the international athlete as complex embodiment of the cultural and political dimensions of the formations of flexible forms of citizenship as developed in Aihwa Ong's (1999) book by the same name.
- 8 In the introduction to an updated edition of Virilio's (1977/2006) seminal work, *Speed and Politics*, Benjamin Bratton (2006: 8) describes the concept of dromology as the 'government of differential motility'.
- 9 For Harvey (2003: 115), this term has double meaning:

A certain portion of the total capital is literally fixed in and on the land in some physical form for a relatively long period of time (depending on its economic and physical lifetime). Some social expenditures (such as public education or a health-care system) also become territorialized and rendered geographically immobile through state commitments. The spatio-temporal 'fix', on the other hand, is a metaphor for a particular kind of solution to capitalist crises through temporal deferral and geographical expansion.

- 10 Time-space diaries record the locations, timing, sequence, duration and frequency of activities and movement.

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