***Application DGSKA Konferenz Koblenz***

***panel 5. Sport, mobility and (the end of) negotiations of belonging***

***Andre Thiemann: Football, return migration, and transversal rebellion***

***Short abstract***

This paper tests classical political anthropology debates on the frailty of authority, by engaging with the mobility and fixity provided by football in the Serbian province. My case study of a local vet, football activist and politician elaborates a new modality of politics – transversal rebellion.

***Long abstract***

Serbian politics is surprisingly strongly embedded in football voluntarism – an indigenous civil society organization since Yugoslav socialism. My case study follows a politician who, born in the village, had studied in Belgrade veterinary medicine, and played for 20 years in the first team (travelling often 200km per game). Upon graduation he settled in the municipal centre nearby but opened his veterinary station in the village. He and other fathers revived the Youth section of the club so that their sons “become people”. Mladen then ran on the ticket of a liberal party as “village deputy” for municipal parliament. Rising in power, the vet-politician soon navigated the double pull of politics – representation and governing. During a common work action at the football pitch modelled on socialist shock-work, disenfranchised rural club members levelled corruption allegations against the vet and his allies from the village council. I follow the bantering, teasing, and the reactions of the vet and other officials to distinguish four modes of dealing with the frailty of authority embedded in village football: resign, conform, work in self-interest, and rebel transversally.