

**Rial, Carmen. "Circulation, Bubbles, Returns: The Mobility of Brazilians in the Football System". In Richard Elliot e John Harris (org) *Football and Migration*. London and New York, 2015: 61-75.**

This chapter deals with the transnational circulation of Brazilian football players, many of whom are celebrities, and their lifestyle abroad, which is characterised by the experience of life in an institutional bubble, which serves to keep them away from local cultural contexts. The ethnographic study was conducted in more than 15 countries. It concludes that the permeability of the bubble varies according to an athlete's age, original social class, the ranking of his or her club in the football system, and the time of their stay abroad. As studies of other transmigrants have found, the experience abroad led many of the footballers to have a sharper political awareness.

Football today 'is an economically significant, highly popular, globally networked cultural form' (Smart 2007: 114), it is an integral part of consumer culture and is focused on celebrities. The global expansion of football is linked to growing interest by the media in the sport and to the development of media technologies, such as satellite TV and the Internet. Football games are the world's most widely watched events. This mediascape hegemony (Appadurai, 1990) fosters a global circulation of people and money, in which Brazil is one of the top protagonists, given its football dominance in recent decades. Brazil is the only country with five football World Cup titles, the only one that took part in every World Cup, the country that has led the FIFA ranking for the longest time in recent decades, and whose athletes have received the most FIFA best-player awards (men and women). Brazil is not the only large exporter of football players. In Latin America, Argentina and Uruguay export more footballers per capita, but Brazil leads in absolute numbers.

Sports stars are elevated to an iconic global celebrity status yet still represent local and/or national communities. "The celebrities serve as role models, as objects of adulation and identification, but also increasingly as exemplars of consumer life-

styles to which spectators and television viewers alike are enticed to aspire” (Smart, 2007: 22).

Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1987) notion of *field*, I use the term *football system* to refer to the assemblage of various fields related to the practice of football, whose origins date back to the nineteenth-century (Bottenburg, 2001; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Guttmann, 1978). The football system includes the football field, which ranges from amateur football in schools for children and makeshift fields, to the spectacle of professional football. As a transnational institution, FIFA plays a central role in the system by acting through regional federations and national confederations to organise, oversee and regulate its practice. But the football system is not limited to the football field, as it includes others such as the *journalistic field* and the *economic field*. Drawing on Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1987), we can consider football capital the sum-total of knowledge particular to the football field, be it corporal (to know how to deploy one’s body during football performances), social (to know important people who will help a player to ascend in the field), or economic knowledge (to know how to manage contracts and capital expenditure).

Since 2003, I have been studying the transnational circulation of Brazilian football players, many of whom are celebrities. My research has led me to conclude that a product valued in the football field does not necessarily have the same value in the football system, as in the latter the journalistic field plays a major role. For instance, few fans in the world are able to recall the names of the players on the national teams playing in the 2004 European Cup but many know Real Madrid’s 2005 starting line-up, even though the club had not won a title in many years. The value of the Greek footballers who became European champions in Portugal is a far cry from that of Real Madrid’s ‘galactic’ stars. In the ‘star system’ (Morin, 2007) that characterises the current football system, victory in a major competition does not necessarily mean placement at the apex of the football systems hierarchy.

Of the approximately four million Brazilians living abroad, four thousand<sup>1</sup> are estimated to be football players. This emigration is highly visible in the global media.

Ronaldinho, Pelé, Ronaldo and Neymar are certainly among the world's best-known Brazilians.

The global dissemination of Brazilian football players, even if not recent, has heightened in the 21st century, presenting a large symbolic impact given football's strong presence in the global media and its colonisation of masculine imaginations. In addition to the player-celebrities at global clubs in Europe, there is also a numerically significant flow of non-famous footballers who look for work in countries that are unlikely destinations for other Brazilian emigrants such as Russia, China, India, Korea, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. There is also a nearly invisible flow of Brazilian women football players who seek the United States of America (USA), northern European and even African<sup>ii</sup> countries to practice the sport in which they have been historically discriminated against (Rial 2013). These men and women are unknown in Brazil, and if they remained in the country would probably have had contracts at the minimum wage<sup>iii</sup> and of short duration with local clubs, which would require them to spend part of the year unemployed, given the schedule of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF). I found that some of them are (or were) living lives abroad with a certain economic precariousness, but in a better economic situation than they had in Brazil, and the large majority earn far less than the millions of dollars in annual income as the celebrities I initially contacted.

#### *A background to the contemporary emigration of football players*

Although portrayed by the media as unprecedented, the emigration of South American football players<sup>iv</sup> is not a recent phenomenon. The first wave took place in the 1930's, after the first World Cup, which was held in Uruguay. The main destination for Brazilians was Italy, the homeland of the ancestors of many of the emigrating players, which in a way turned this displacement into a homecoming return.

Though it has occurred since the early decades of the twentieth century, this emigration has intensified in the last few years, partly as an effect of changes in European legislation because of what is known as the Bosman ruling (which in Brazil took shape as the so-called Pelé Law of 1998).<sup>v</sup>

The new law made this relation more ‘flexible’; footballers became workers with control over their own labour, the right to choose where to play, control over transfers from one club to another, and so forth. This control was to be regained at the end of each contract with a club, thus favouring the circulation of players between clubs within the same or among different countries. It also favours short contracts and therefore the unemployment of footballers at regional clubs. The athletes have more ‘freedom’, but this means that they no longer continue to receive a salary and medical assistance as they previously did at the end of a contract.

One of the consequences of the Bosman ruling was that, since the barrier of national origin for European players was partially removed, economics became the primary factor in the player circulation among countries and favoured importation. Talents became increasingly concentrated in wealthier global clubs<sup>vi</sup> in Europe to the point that some teams are now made up almost exclusively of foreign athletes.

In the first period of 2013, Latin American countries shipped off about 5,000 footballers worth over US \$1.1 billion. Argentina and Brazil alone exported over 3,000 football players, or over \$400 million in talent. Latin America as a whole exported more value in football players in the first half of 2013 than live animals in the entirety of 2011 (Ferdman and Yanofski, 2013).<sup>vii</sup> The export of Brazilian players has yielded over one and a half billion dollars since 1993, when Brazil’s Central Bank began to account for the transfer of players under the category of ‘services’.

The entire value of some of these transactions may not be officially recorded, since funds can be directly channelled to bank accounts in fiscal havens such as Switzerland, but these are likely to be minor deviations. The largest share of foreign remittances to Brazil from emigrants comes from this group of players. Since much of the players’ salaries return to the country and since those who emigrate do so for pay higher than they would earn in Brazil, this emigration clearly entails significant financial contributions. This is true even if only a few players earn 10 million Euros a year as do some celebrities at the wealthiest clubs, where their salary is complemented by ‘image rights’ (paid by the club for the right to use the player’s image commercially) and by advertising contracts.

While this migratory flux has some impact on the national economy (even though much smaller than its symbolic impact), its economic relevance for Latin American clubs is substantial. Player transfers have become a vital source of financial support, without which clubs would not be able to maintain the current high salaries paid to other professionals. This situation has been changing since 2008, in part because Europe and the European clubs were harder hit by the global financial crisis than Brazil, which provoked a wave of returns of Brazilian emigrants to the country. But also because many of the players who had gone to Europe and had successful careers had reached retirement age and returned to play a few more years for clubs in Brazil.

As Poli and Besson have shown in their analysis, Brazilian players are found in most of the 208 countries and territories where football is controlled by FIFA, in social, political and sporting contexts that often do not have the same security offered by clubs in Europe or North America. Even countries that are unlikely destinations for Brazilian workers have received football players. So much so that Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations prepared a pamphlet to warn football players<sup>viii</sup> about potentially dangerous ties with unscrupulous managers in countries such as Armenia, Singapore, South Korea, China, Greece, India and Thailand.

Despite the brochure's good intentions, and the fact that each of these countries has a different social and cultural reality, I have personally been to all the countries mentioned except Armenia, and although some footballers had problems in Saudi Arabia, I did not find anything that could be characterised as human trafficking.<sup>ix</sup>

Football players as specialised workers are a quantitatively and economically significant group of emigrants, who do not consider themselves to be emigrants or immigrants and are not considered to be so in their places of origin or in their destination. They emigrate with assurances of institutional support (the clubs take care of their work visas, airfares, hotels and help them to find housing, at times providing a translator and other services). If they are transferred to a club in another country, the clubs take care of the travel and work documents, as occurs with the workers studied by Gustavo Ribeiro (1992), the transnational professionals analysed

by Alain Tarrius (1992) and the skilled, student and expert workers focused on by Adrian Favell (2006). Studies on the migration of specialised workers tend to focus on intellectual labour: the so-called brain drain (such as that to the USA's Silicon Valley, where communities of intellectuals of different ethnic origins work in computer and electronics firms). But countries like Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina have provided wealthy (and not so wealthy) specialised labour of a particular kind such as football players who move abroad in the hope of ascending socially, thanks to their talent in the sports field.

Furthermore, football players are special emigrants in the sense that they are both a labour force and commodities alike (Marx, 1978). As many studies have shown, footballers concentrate in themselves others' labour and circulate as commodities; in doing so, they render profits to third-parties. Although the football lexicon echoes that of slavery ('to be sold', 'to belong to a club' are phrases very much present in the field) there is no doubt that the exchange of athletes is fully incorporated into late capitalist models.

Today's global circulation creates some nodes that are more important than others where the main clubs and players are concentrated. To draw an analogy with Sassen's work (Sassen, 1991, 2003), global cities in the contemporary football system are those where global clubs are located: Madrid, London, Milan and Barcelona. On the other hand, cities with little political-economic power, such as Seville, Eindhoven and Munich, have a more significant position in the football system than New York, Paris, Berlin or Los Angeles. As global cities, global football cities are less domestic territorial units than nodes of fluxes that cross national borders. It is to these global football cities, or more precisely, to the global clubs they harbour, that the 60-odd Brazilian players I have spoken to aim to migrate. Their professional project is representative of most footballers in the world today.

The constant change of institution (club) and country, and the large number of footballers who are 'repatriated' (about one third of those who leave return to Brazil after one year and very few remain abroad when they retire) characterises this migration movement as circular. Brazilian players speak of their circuitous paths as

the ‘rodar’, while attributing to it the positive value of gathering ‘experience’ and learning (‘football teaches us’, as many have told me).

### *The value of football players*

Playing football is not an occupation typical of the extremely poor. Certain resources are needed for a young player to become a professional (football boots, contacts with clubs, bus tickets, days off from work). It is not typical of the upper social classes either, whose projects (Schütz, 1987; Velho, 1981, 1999) for reproducing social capital prescribes that their heirs – preferably sons – take up leadership positions in business. Football is thus a possible project for a broad stratum of the Brazilian population, the subaltern classes, which range from the poor to the lower middle classes. Indeed, most of my interlocutors came from these layers and their parents were workers in the greater São Paulo metropolitan region with backgrounds as rural workers, locksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, street vendors, domestic maids, re-sellers of goods and sailors. The stories I heard have many commonalities. They are life histories of families who, as they themselves acknowledge, did not starve, but could barely make ends meet.

Thus, a pattern for the displacement of Brazilian footballers may be sought in terms of their placement in social hierarchies, information elicited by asking about the occupation of their parents and sometimes grandparents. Most of the migrating players come from the subaltern classes (among my interlocutors, this was true of 90% of all cases). Some came originally from the lower middle classes (around 9%: the sons of a police detective, a nurse, some teachers), and only one of the footballers I have contacted directly in Europe came from the middle class (his father was a doctor). In this respect, they are not very different from other Brazilian emigrants, for here, too, it is not the poorest who migrate.

Most footballers I interviewed had only attended elementary school, around 10% had been able to finish high school, one had applied for college (and dropped out when he moved abroad), and only one had a higher education. This was also the case of only two of their wives, although there is a general tendency for the wives to have higher schooling than the athletes.

Literature about emigration has demonstrated the inappropriateness of thinking about this population in terms of poor or lower class individuals who migrate mainly as a strategy for working out economic problems (Kearney, 1995, 1996). These studies have shown that emigration is a collective project of social mobility, mainly by families who choose from among their members those who are regarded as better fit for the adventure<sup>x</sup> of migration.

Professional careers (Hughes, 1993) that involve the international displacement of their practitioners are neither extraordinary nor novel. They have been studied in recent decades by scholars interested in the consequences of cross-border living and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. But such careers have typically included social actors with high cultural capital (students, professors, scientists, diplomats, executives of multinational corporations etc.). This is rarely the case of workers from the subaltern classes (for instance, employees in offshore oil-drilling platforms). For this reason, cosmopolitan identities have been extensively related to aesthetic and consumption habits (Hannerz, 1996) which are typical of an elite who move among global cities as if they were in their own hometown, revisiting museums, art galleries, theatres and restaurants with the familiarity that is proper to those who have spent much of their lives in these environments.<sup>xi</sup> This is rarely the case of the players (or their families) I had contacted. More than consuming luxury or cultural goods related to an individualist attitude (Dumont, 1986), it was important to them to share earnings with their family and be close to friends. Family, friends and religion appear as central values in their lives.

All were aware that upward mobility in their lives would have only been possible through football. They impart to a divine will the fact that they have ascended, as if they had been chosen. Comments such as ‘everything I am, I owe to God’, ‘that’s God’s will’, and ‘thank God’ are common phrases punctuating their speech, which acknowledge that the talent for football, even while potentiality found in many, is only developed by a few. God – and not religion, as some have emphasised – is a central value in their lives. Most players are neo-evangelicals, and some are Catholics. The Bible is read and taken along on trips. Some get together to read it at each others’ homes along with their families or at the training facility. They take short trips to find neo-evangelical churches. Belief in God has a fundamental role in consolidating a



righteous personal ethic ('God helps to sort out evil from good'; 'before, I used to drink and do wrong things'). It establishes and consolidates friendship ties with other Brazilian players, and provides them with support in an extremely competitive professional field ('God is a friend who is always with me', declared Edu) (Rial 2012).

### *Transmigrants living in a bubble*

These footballers and their families seek to maintain contact with Brazil as much as possible. The visits of friends and relatives are frequent, their housekeepers are Brazilians, their friends are Brazilian footballers or other Brazilian (or South American) emigrants, they attend temples of Brazilian evangelical denominations and regularly consume foods similar to those that they had at home, thus reactivating with each meal, the link with their place of origin (Rial and Assunção, 2011). The club, in turn, provides them housing, and if they gain a certain status in the football system,<sup>xii</sup> translators, secretaries, cars, help to open bank accounts and anything that they may need to 'not have adaptation problems'. Their lifestyle focused on their country of origin, and the condition of being over-protected by clubs and managers, and subject to rigid hours and discipline led me to characterize the daily life of these athletes as being contained in a *bubble* within which athletes are isolated from local social connections - hotels, training centres, physical therapy clinics and residential condominiums. Inside the bubble, contact with common mortals is minimal (Rial, 2012).

'Here its just like in Sweden', the aunt of one of the football players who lives with him in Holland told me, an affirmation that in some way also appeared in other statements by footballers who had already circulated in different countries. Evidently, this bubble is more or less permeable to the local cultures, depending on factors such as the importance of the club (global clubs create thicker bubbles for their stars) or the salary, their ages, the country where they reside, the time of stay abroad, and the social class of origin. I found greater permeability of the bubble among the younger footballers, those who remained longer outside the country, those who had lower salaries, and those who came from the middle classes. Athletes transferred to Europe when they are very young tend to learn the local language, to have girlfriends born abroad, and thus, a greater opportunity to leave the bubble.<sup>xiii</sup> Athletes who have been

in Europe for more time, who send their children to school there, establish important local ties. And in the same sense, the football players with lower salaries, with less chances to bring Brazil to the places where they work, have greater permeability to the local contexts. In all the cases, this greater insertion to the local context, does not make them lose their strong sense of belonging to their place of origin.

In fact, as a general rule, I found that although they circulate between many countries, these players were far from being cosmopolitan. To the contrary, they reveal an extreme ethnocentrism that at times emphasises the importance of their place of origin (the neighbourhood, the city, the region) more than a sense of nationalism. They tend to experience their stay abroad as a sacrifice to support their families, for which the daily reading of the Bible was an important consolation. And for this reason, they prefer to spend their holidays in their cities of origin, even when this is a remote place like the tiny village of Humaitá in the Amazon jungle. Because of their efforts to maintain contact with familiar foods and products, it was not rare for me to find curious cases such as the importation by footballers of rice to Korea, or of orange juice to Spain.

Although many recognise that they have had an important personal education by living outside Brazil, those I found with cosmopolitan tastes came from the middle classes, or were those who went abroad very young or those who were there for many years. In general, what I found is a strong sense of belonging (to family, place of origin) which is often not understood by journalists or fans, who imagined that the economic ascension is automatically reflected in radically different personal values.<sup>xiv</sup> The recent return of many stars indicates that they kept to the plan that they presented to me in interviews: to live in Brazil when they retire, if possible working at their original Brazilian clubs where they began their careers, even with salaries lower than they could earn in other parts of the football market, as a type of moral counter-gift (Mauss 1990) to the institution that helped them at the beginning of their careers.

### *Strategic nationalisations at the global clubs*

Global clubs are strongly internationalised institutions in the football system. They are dominated by international capital, and built upon the labour of emigrants

(footballers), who have a daily presence in the global media, and are the object of feelings of loyalty and belonging by individuals from various nation-states (their fans).

The importance of Brazilian players to the global clubs can be calibrated quantitatively: Brazil is the nation with the highest number of players in Europe's Champions League in 2013/14, as it was in previous years. Brazilian footballers have not only an important numeric presence but, more importantly a qualitatively pivotal presence. They often occupy leading positions on their teams – they are the stars, be it as forwards (the role in which most outstanding Brazilian players have been historically acknowledged), or as defenders (a more recent development, as defenders have rarely figured among a team's most popular stars).<sup>xv</sup> At the FIFA 2013 Club World Cup, held in Marrakesh in December 2013, Bayern Munich became champion with only one goal scored by a German. The tournament had many more goals marked by Brazilians from a variety of clubs: Bayern (2), Guangzhou Evergrande (4) and Atlético Mineiro (4).

The market for foreign players at these global clubs is, however, restricted, as is their time of stay, since players rarely play beyond the age of thirty. Moreover, after the Bosman ruling, legal obstacles in most European countries have prohibited the simultaneous performance of four foreigners as starters in one team in any given match.<sup>xvi</sup> 'Nationalisations' are therefore vital for this market to remain open. In this as in other aspects, the contemporary migratory flows repeat the nationalisations pioneered by Italian-Brazilians during the exodus of players to Italy after the 1930 World Cup. As descendants of Italian emigrants, players obtained Italian passports, which granted them free entry to the country. Today, citizenship in a European country is still coveted, and remains the prime way to circumvent legislation controlling access to clubs in the countries with the biggest football markets.

Obtaining citizenship in the host country by no means implies gaining nationalist sentiments toward it, or even an identity other than as a Brazilian. 'Brazilianness' remains the sole identity of ethnic belonging of the nationalised athletes. The footballers I contacted, for instance, did not speak of becoming citizens, but of 'being able to get a community passport' – a formula in itself legally impossible, since there

is no such thing as a community passport (the passport is granted by each member country of the European Community, now the European Union). But this statement aptly encapsulates the motivation behind nationalisation: the ability to circulate freely among the member countries of the European Union. The main reason for this lies not so much in the security it provides that athletes will be able to stay in the country (they are legal immigrants; the clubs have means to justify their presence), but rather in making room for another Brazilian to join the club (given the limits imposed by the football system's national legislations) and to be able to circulate freely between clubs.

Obtaining a new national passport indeed changes the legal status of the player, as he now becomes a complete citizen of that country. But it is merely a strategic nationalisation. While legally the footballers obtain dual citizenship, they continue to see themselves (and are seen) as only Brazilian.

Therefore, nationalisation interferes with circulation not only by making it possible for another foreigner to join the club, but also by granting the player some benefits and imposing some constraints. Among the latter, the most significant is probably that the player is required to pay income taxes in the host country (in Spain, this could mean a tax as high as 43% of earnings). This can be a strong stimulus to move, preferably to another global club in a country with lower taxes. Thus, paradoxically, nationalisation into a European country could favour the evasion rather than the permanence of football players in these countries, which is in sharp contrast to other modalities of international emigration. It favours the increased circulation of the footballers, since those who are 'nationalised' move from the restrictive category of foreign commodity (subject to limits imposed by trade barriers against imported commodities) to the category of a European Union commodity (and therefore, in principle, can freely circulate in the European Union market).

Nationalisation is not regarded by players as increasing their distance from Brazil. The same holds true for the increasing participation of Brazilian players in foreign national teams.<sup>xvii</sup> The athletes constantly reaffirm their closeness to their native country and, as I have been able to verify, particularly through daily consumption practices that compound their lifestyle.

For these reasons, even footballers who become citizens of other countries can be characterised as transmigrants, that is, “immigrants who develop and sustain multiple relations – family, economic, social, organizational, religious and political – that traverse borders” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994: 7).

*Local matters: the U.S. exception*

There is a great proximity between how players in Europe, other parts of the world and those in the USA maintain their ties with Brazil, but I noticed some marked distinctions in tastes and lifestyles, which in this case appear to relate more with the player’s original social layer than with the country where he is found.

In the USA, I expected to find Brazilian players living in the bubble, as those in Europe do. I expected that they would have strong religious values and that the presence of neo-Pentecostalism would be hegemonic. Finally, I expected to find athletes from the humble social origins that are common to the large majority of football players with whom I had previous contact, even those who had become celebrities. Nevertheless, to my surprise, I have found a considerable number of players from middle class families, which I did not find in any of the 14 other countries where I conducted research. And among many Brazilian athletes in the USA I also found a pronounced local insertion. These are distinctions in terms of the global circulation of players.

For example, along with expressions of nationalism and patriotism towards Brazil, I also found expressions of a cosmopolitan taste – posts in other languages, references to US music, to Mexican meals and American brands, attendance at basketball games and going bowling. These tastes are not common among the athletes I had been in contact with in Europe, Asia and Africa, and were more likely to be found among middle class students in Brazil.

Why are young middle class Brazilians practicing a profession in the USA that in Brazil and the rest of the world is occupied by youth from the lower classes? Part of the response is found in the way that they were recruited in Brazil. Contrary to the common use of scouts to find players, some of these athletes had registered in

‘exchange’ programmes that sought to place students in schools where they could practice the sport and receive a grant to do so.

This method of recruiting young Brazilian players, because of its form and costs, attracts the middle classes. It is common for middle class Brazilians to dream of sending their children to the USA, yet for most the only way to get a visa is through a study programme. But studies in the USA are expensive, usually undertaken only by young people from Brazil’s economic elite and rarely by those from the middle classes. When they do, it is through exchange programmes.

One of the programmes that mediates trips to the USA is the 2SV, an ‘exchange’ agency that arranges for young Brazilian’s to attend schools. Here I found various Brazilian football players playing as ‘amateurs’.<sup>xviii</sup> 2SV recruits players through an Internet questionnaire, and football (soccer) is one of various sports it offers. After undergoing tests of their athletic abilities (tryouts), the players who pass are sent to the USA where they are registered in high schools, colleges or universities, where they hope to win a place on a school team. In the selection for 2012, more than 100 student-athletes were chosen.

The existence of training centres for players in the Global South dedicated to preparing them to be athletes in the North is nothing new. This is one of the forms of recruitment of new footballers in the second globalisation phase (Giulianotti, 2007). Many of the large European clubs have *soi-disant* philanthropic centres in their former colonies (especially in Africa but also in Indonesia). As Cornelissen & Solberg (2007: 295) have shown “Africa is a primary source for football flows to Western Europe, an aspect that is mostly viewed as exploitative and an extension of neo-imperialist relations between the continent and its former colonial powers. Over the past decade, however, South Africa has emerged as an important alternative destination for many of Africa's departing footballers.” Because its laws are less restrictive than those in the North concerning required schooling, these centres are able to more quickly develop athletic bodies and a player *habitus* (Mauss, 1968) among poor young people. With more ‘free’ time not in school, they can spend many more hours training.

The novelty of the USA context is the existence of centres aimed at the middle classes, and that this recruiting occurs among middle class Brazilian youth. They are recruited in the southern portion of Brazil, where incomes are higher, through companies such as 2SV that operate over the Internet, a tool that still excludes access by large contingents of the Brazilian population, although its use is growing rapidly in Brazil.

A large majority of these student athletes return to Brazil once they graduate, but some are able to find a place on professional teams in Major League Soccer (MLS),<sup>xix</sup> and others return to Brazil to play football at good clubs.<sup>xx</sup>

### *Russian sailors? Final Considerations*

Brazilian players in Europe come from the subaltern classes, but those located above the poverty line. They seek, through transnational circulation, a salary to guarantee a better life for their extended families, and they maintain close emotional and material ties with Brazil remaining in permanent contact through Brazilian TV channels and social media on the Internet. Brazil, or more precisely their cities of origin, is where they spend their holidays, invest money; and if they can, they recover from serious injuries. Their attendance at Brazilian neo-Pentecostal churches located where they live, and the consumption of Brazilian products, are central to the constitution of a translocal daily life. I prefer this term to transnational, because the relations are established with the location of origin, even if they are small cities in the interior.

We can imagine that living in the bubble, the Brazilian footballers come and go unscathed, maintaining their ideas and cultural values intact, as the ethnocentrism of their statements indicate. Nevertheless, this is not always the case. Migration studies show that transmigrants can develop political organisations abroad with strong impact on their countries of origin, as was the case of Filipinos living in the USA who were central protagonists of the democratisation of the Philippines. In the case of Brazilian footballers, the experience in other countries and clubs transforms these athletes, despite the fact that they live in bubbles and prefer to speak only Portuguese and consume Brazilian products, or that is, maintain a lifestyle similar to that they had before they left. They do not study abroad, but their cultural capital grows with what

‘football teaches’ as many of them told me. They learn other languages, they are submitted to different disciplinary rules by the clubs, they meet footballers from other countries, they observe the trajectory of their children – who are more integrated to local cultural contexts - and change.

We had proof of this in 2013 with the organisation of a national movement in Brazil, the Good Sense FC, led by footballers who had lived abroad for many years, especially in Europe and the USA (Paulo André, Alex, Edu, Juninho Paulista, Dida, and others). The movement demanded that the Brazilian Football Confederation make changes, including the political participation of athletes in decision making. Their manifesto was signed by more than 300 footballers from large Brazilian clubs and sought changes in the Brazilian football calendar, vacations, a pre-season, financial fair-play (loss of points for clubs who do not pay salaries) and participation on the technical councils of entities that control football in Brazil.

The Good Sense FC was a surprise, because with rare exceptions, the Brazilian players have always been estranged from politics in the country or in the sport, or have adhered to conservative positions, even during the military dictatorship (1964-1989)<sup>xxi</sup>. Like farmworkers who had to become sailors to return to their country to lead a revolution in Russia, the footballers who circulated abroad and particularly to the global clubs as transmigrants, are today the main force seeking changes in the institutional framework of Brazilian football.

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<sup>i</sup> One of the Brazilian Football Confederation's directors of records, Luiz Gustavo, estimated that there are four thousand Brazilian footballers playing abroad (Souza, 2007: 45). But it is hard to know for sure, as the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), has only publicised data about from 2005 on.

<sup>ii</sup> As Martha Saavedra called to my attention, Equatorial Guinea's national team that won the 8<sup>th</sup> African Women's Championship in 2012 (making them the only African country apart from Nigeria to win this competition), had 11 Brazilians who had been naturalized among its 21 registered players. Guinea's national teams have had more than 30 Brazilian athletes, men and women in recently years.

<sup>iii</sup> The minimum wage in 2014 is 226 Euros per month.

<sup>iv</sup> 'Football player' or footballer is used here to denote a professional player in the football field. Amateur and futsal players have also emigrated.

<sup>v</sup> The Bosman ruling, enacted by the European Court of Justice on December 15, 1995, abolished quotas for European football players in clubs from the European Union's 27 nations or from the European economic area (which also includes Norway, Iceland, and Luxembourg). Moreover, after the Bosman ruling, agreements were signed with the Russian Federation, and African and Caribbean countries, clearing the free movement of players in these (and especially from these) countries.

<sup>vi</sup> Global clubs are strongly internationalised institutions in the football system. They are dominated by international capital, centred around the labour of emigrants (players), daily present in the global media, and are the object of feelings of loyalty and belonging by individuals from various nation-states (their rooting fans).

<sup>vii</sup> According to Euroamericas Sport Marketing, International Trade Centre. I thank Jeffrey Hoff for calling my attention to this article.

<sup>viii</sup> The pamphlet is also aimed at models, capoeiristas and Brazilian barbeque cooks, which are professions thus curiously associated as posing threats to Brazilian emigrants. I thank Maya Spandell for calling my attention to this brochure.

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<sup>ix</sup> I have found media reports about football players in Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, who declared they had their passports withheld, their residential water and electricity cut off, and so forth.

<sup>x</sup> I say adventure (Sarró, 2009; Simmel, 1936) because the journey of a common emigrant is often an illegal and risky activity – as is the case with Brazilians heading to the U.S. since the 1970's (Assis, 1995; Margolis, 1994; Reis and Sales, 1999). This is not the case for the football players. Their displacements are registered by FIFA and supported by the clubs.

<sup>xi</sup> Hannerz (1996: 168) came up with a more sophisticated definition: “A more genuine cosmopolitanism is, above all, an orientation, a willingness to commit with the Other. It upholds an intellectual and aesthetic attitude which is open to divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. To become familiar with more cultures is to become an enthusiast; it is to see these cultures as if they were works of art.”

<sup>xii</sup> Even players at smaller clubs, like those that I found in Marrakesh or Hong Kong received institutional protection from the clubs in the form of housing, healthcare, and at times private attendants to do their clothes shopping and make dental appointments, as I found on more than one occasion. One extreme case but which probably points to what will be the future of many, Ari in Alkmaar had a secretary hired by the owners of his rights who in addition to being a translator, and driver, each day sent a report to his manger about all of Ari's movements, in supervision that extended to the private domain, because he lived with the athlete.

<sup>xiii</sup> This tendency for footballers to leave at increasingly early ages appeared strongly with the change of rules at UEFA which pushed clubs to develop athletes within their own youth systems.

<sup>xiv</sup> The striker Adriano, a former member of the Brazilian national squad, was rumoured to have been kidnapped for three days in the favela where he grew up, and where he went to see childhood friends and family, some of whom are known drug dealers. The media could not accept that a millionaire would spend three days in a favela, and for this reason rumors spread that he had been kidnapped.

<sup>xv</sup> Such is the case of Lúcio and Dante, who played in Germany, and also of Gomes and Alex in the Netherlands, Luisão in Portugal, Pepe in Spain, Thiago Silva in France, David Luiz in England,.

<sup>xvi</sup> Among the exceptions is England, where Chelsea, owned by the Russian millionaire Roman Abramovich, has played matches with as many as 11 foreign starters.

<sup>xvii</sup> The dispute between Brazil and Spain for Diego Costa in 2013 was a good example. He chose to play for the Spanish national team, but when asked where he would like to live after retirement, he did not hesitate to indicate his hometown in Brazil.

<sup>xviii</sup> The agency said it had the support of Disney and ESPN.

<sup>xix</sup> Ricardo, from Real Salt Lake was one of those recruited by 2SV.

<sup>xx</sup> As did Caio – who was unknown in Brazil because he had lived in and become a player in the United States, but returned to Brazil, and was able to play on first division teams like Botafogo and Figueirense.

<sup>xxi</sup> The case of Didi Pedalada is famous. Upon retiring from football he became a torturer and participated actively in Operation Condor, a clandestine consortium of South American dictatorships that sought to Exchange information, techniques of torture and political prisoners. There were exceptions such as Sócrates or Afonsinho, who were against the military regime and rebelled against disciplinary rules such as the concentration before games or prohibition against the growing of beards.