

## **From ‘Black Kaká’ to gentrification: the new motilities of expatriated Brazilian Football Players**

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Sport is a field that has been little explored by social scientists and specialists in the studies of globalization, transnationalism and migrations. Of the occasional articles that do appear, many focus on political conflicts generated by mega sporting events such as the World Cup or the Olympic Games, their impact on the host cities, population shifts and the use of new security measures. Nevertheless, historians have demonstrated deep connections between the development of sport – particularly football (soccer in American terminology)<sup>1</sup> – and the processes of economic and cultural globalization. The globalization of football began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: ‘as the “games revolution” colonized British imperial outposts (e.g. cricket in Asia and Australasia), the “global game” of football underwent mass diffusion along British trading and educational routes (in Europe, South America), and distinctive indigenous sports were forged as part of the invention of national traditions in emerging modern societies (e.g. baseball and American football in the United States)’ (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007:108).

As Pascal Boniface (1998) noted: ‘Football is certainly the most universal phenomenon today, far more than democracy or the market economy, which are said to have no boundaries, but are not as widespread as football.’<sup>2</sup>

Football today ‘is an economically significant, highly popular, globally networked cultural form’ (Smart 2007). It is an integral part of the consumer culture

and 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 most widely watched events in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Sports stars are elevated to an iconic global celebrity status, while they continue to represent local and or national communities. As Smart (2007: 22) puts it: ‘The celebrities serve as role models, as objects of adulation and identification, but also increasingly as exemplars of consumer lifestyles to which spectators and television viewers alike are enticed to aspire’. Synthia Sydnor (2000) also offers some interesting reflections on celebrities in sport, showing how they deeply affect the lives of their fans. As Morin (2007) observed, they are capable of breaking this prison-world into pieces.

Football presents features found elsewhere and has been subject to the same process that has influenced sports since the 1970s in the developed capitalist economies and liberal democracies of Europe and America, which has been called the second globalization (Giuliannotti and Robertson 2007). One of the central characteristics of this second globalization of football is the adoption of global player recruitment strategies with a consequent growth in the transnational circulation of players.

In recent years, I have been studying the transnational circulation of Brazilian football players, many of whom are celebrities. In this chapter, my goal is to inquire about the homogeneity or heterogeneity of this flow. To do so, I ethnographically analyzed three groups of Brazilian expatriated players: celebrities who work in global clubs, the unheralded (obscure or ‘infamous’ in Foucault’s sense<sup>4</sup>) players who circulate among second tier clubs in distant countries, and the players performing in

the U.S. Major League Soccer (MLS). I conclude by emphasizing the heterogeneity of this circulation, a mobility that reveals a variety both from the point of view of the involved subjects (in terms of their social origin and cultural capital) as well as their real experiences in the destination countries, especially in relation to the local, i.e., how they are inserted in the daily life where they live. For many of them, life abroad takes place in protected ‘bubbles’, where the relations of the protagonists are more translocal than transnational. Among the important factors that determine a greater or lesser permeability of this ‘bubble’, their insertion in the local, is the rank of the destination club in the hierarchy of the football system, the age of the player when he left, his cultural capital, time of permanence abroad and whether he has children living with him.

Among the nearly 3 million Brazilians living abroad as immigrants<sup>5</sup>, nearly five thousand are football players. The number of people who have left Brazil to play football has been above one thousand for a number of years – and in 2013 exceeded 1,500 (Chade 2013). The number of countries of destination for these players is also growing: it was 71 in 2002 (the year that the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) began to divulge its statistics) and reached 95 in 2008.<sup>6</sup>

Brazil is not the only large exporter of football players. In Latin America, Argentina and Uruguay export more players per capita, while Brazil leads in absolute numbers. As Cornelissen and 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.’

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 European clubs or the MLS in North America. Even countries that are unlikely destinations for Brazilian workers have received football players, like India and Saudi Arabia. So much so that Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations recently prepared a pamphlet to warn football players 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 reality, I have been to all those mentioned (with the exception of Armenia) and, did not find anything that could be characterized as human trafficking.<sup>7</sup>

The dissemination of Brazilian football players throughout the world, 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 colonization of masculine imaginations. In addition to the player-celebrities at global clubs in Europe, there is also a numerically significant flow of non-famous players who look for work in countries that are unlikely destinations for other Brazilian emigrants, such as Russia, China, India, Korea and Morocco. There is also a nearly invisible flow of Brazilian women football players who seek the United States and northern European countries to practice the sport in which they have been historically discriminated against (Rial 2014a).

Based on multi-site ethnographic research conducted since 2003, I have been questioning categories such as frontier, migration and immigrant/emigrant to see if they still apply to the new mobilities such as those of male and female football players. Like the trajectories of other professionals (such as diplomats, intellectuals,

and students) football players *circulate* across state borders with periodic returns to their country of origin.

### **First scenario – living in a bubble**

Naldo<sup>8</sup>, whom I met at a Dutch football club, has a special function: he is the ‘secretary’ for Berto, a young and talented Brazilian player, who as a three-year-old child sold spices from his mother’s garden in the street’s of Fortaleza to survive. As Naldo explained to me, his work is similar to that done by another ‘secretary’ who accompanies a world famous Brazilian player, and has been part of his life, for ten years:

You know how difficult it is for a Brazilian player when he leaves the country to go abroad. First the language: it’s always a very big barrier. The issue of communication is terrible because in Brazil it is not like Europe. Here, the (European) players have the opportunity to study and learn English. In Brazil, some players did not even go to elementary school, so they can barely speak Portuguese. And as a consequence of the communication issue, the cultural conditions (of the host country) are usually completely different from that of Brazilian culture. People have another type of education, everything is different, it changes everything. Usually they do not come with their family. So it's complicated, sometimes a player with great potential, in Brazil stands out, and when he goes abroad, he ends up not performing what is expected of him because he is lost, he is isolated at home, he has no one to be with him, he does not know how to organize things, he cannot communicate. So, precisely to avoid this kind of problem we were inspired by the work that was done with Silvio, which was successful ... And my role

here is exactly to provoke his adaptation so that it is focused only on training and on games, and he does not have any other kind of concern.

Living in Berto's house, being his driver, his translator, accompanying him when he travels for games, mediating his relationships with other players, with the manager, with the medical staff and with any stranger that approaches him, and writing a daily report (that includes images) to his agents located in Switzerland, Naldo's panoptic view delivers a service that blends labor, supervision, and friendship, and dissolves the boundaries between work and personal life.

Berto is a good example of the form of human resources administration that led me to characterize the daily life of these athletes as being realized in a *bubble* (Rial 2012) within which athletes are isolated from local social connections - luxury hotels, training centers, physical therapy clinics, residential condominiums. Contact with local common mortals is minimal. Bertos' eight-year-old son studies in a local school and is the only one in the family able to say a few words in Dutch. When I accompanied Berto's mother and his aunt on a shopping walk, he insisted on translating dialogs with vendors. His other child, a three-year-old girl, was still living with her mother in Brazil (the couple are separated), but will come to live with Berto when she is old enough to go to school.

During my visit to their house, I was served a good Brazilian meal, made by his aunt, with some imported ingredients, which is quite common among the expatriated Brazilian players I met in the Netherlands and other countries, whether they are stars or not well known (Rial and Assunção 2011). Brazilian restaurants are preferred, and when they do not exist, those which may serve dishes considered similar are chosen instead. With this consumption pattern, Brazilians express a banal

nationalism as described by Billig (1995): the presence of their original place is omnipresent in their daily lives.

Berto is perhaps an extreme case of a *bubble* construction (Rial 2014b), so common among the players who are celebrities - the *happy few* who inhabit the global-clubs.<sup>9</sup> We find examples of similar bubbles in other professions, such as movie stars during film shooting, and in the higher echelons of politics. Once their credentials are in hand, the subject enters the bubble and becomes isolated from other mortals, only coexisting with other subjects who have the same credentials. Their movements are monitored by security agents who encircle the group. They travel in special aircraft, areas of airports are closed-off for them. Their food needs, transportation, and accommodations are all provided for.

Players in global clubs receive similar treatment on many occasions. To move from one country to another, once in the bubble, they do not need a plane ticket or to exchange currency. There will be someone, provided by the club or by their impresarios (as in the case of Naldo), to take care of all the ‘minor’ details. These mediators wait at the airport when they do not accompany them on the journey, get visas, negotiate with local authorities, open bank accounts, look for homes in enclosed estates (usually those where other Brazilian footballers already live), take their children to the doctor, read restaurant menus for their first meals in the new country, lead them to the training center until the path is familiar, serve as chauffeur until they get a driver’s license, help get a car (some do not even need to buy one: the global clubs have contracts with luxury car manufacturers that provide ‘free’ automobiles to their stars).

We know that immigrants (lawful or unlawful) rarely venture without the backing of a known network (Machado 2005) that guarantees basic support in the

early days abroad. However, in the deterritorialization process very few of them have the same facilities given to the players of the global clubs.

For the majority of the 232 million<sup>10</sup> people worldwide who in 2013 did not reside in the country where they were born, crossing a border may create a region of opportunities, where they can reinvent themselves and leave behind the burden of a legacy. Simultaneously, the border represents a risk and a progress area, a space of opportunities in new social and political contexts (Hannerz 1996). But not for players inside a football system controlled by FIFA. Their travel involves identified certainties, rather than risks.

The circulation of Brazilian players abroad is carried out in an area (a bubble) consisting of homogenized spaces that are monitored and protected by restricted access. These include airports, stadiums, hotels, training centers, medical clinics, physiotherapy clinics, saunas, which could be designated as globalized non-places (Augé 1992), and places (home, restaurants) marked by Brazilian consumption and lifestyles (Rial and Assunção 2011).

The permeability of the bubble, that is, the degree of ‘protection’ (an ambiguous term that also involves monitoring) and the quality of the services that are provided, vary greatly depending on the place occupied by the player and the club in the hierarchy of the football system. Nevertheless, even a young unknown player like Nandinho, who played in Denmark, receives special attention: ‘My Danish teacher was waiting for me at the airport, and showed me the city. I lived in an apartment that the club gave me. I was very tranquil there, thanks to God.’ In fact, the celebrity players abroad are a small group among the about 500 who work in Europe. Many others are spread across other continents.



## **Second scenario - Kaká Noir**

In the first half of 2013, Latin American countries exported outside the continent about 5,000 footballers with a total value of over US\$ 1.1 billion. Argentina and Brazil alone exported over 3,000 football players, or US\$ 400 million in football talent. ‘As a whole, Latin America exported more soccer players in value in the first half of 2013 than in live animals throughout the year 2011’ (Ferdman and Yanofski 2013). Since much of the players' salaries return home in bank transfers, emigration clearly involves significant financial advantages. Player transfers have become a vital source of financial support, without which clubs would not be able to maintain the high wages paid to their other professionals. It goes without saying that the salaries of the celebrities change enormously when they are transferred abroad..

Alongside these celebrities, there are about five thousand other players in marginal countries of the world football system, like those I met in India, Canada, Belgium, Morocco, China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Uruguay, who often receive little more than two times the Brazilian minimum wage. These are the unheralded and ‘infamous’ players who each year include an increasingly significant quota of women who leave Brazil to practice a profession in which they have been discriminated against. Many of them live with a certain economic precariousness, and all of them fall far short of receiving the millions of dollars in annual income enjoyed by the celebrities that I initially contacted. They circulate in secondary circuits of the global football system, often receiving little more than two times the Brazilian minimum wage.

Who are these Brazilians who now live in over a hundred different countries, in cities where the presence of other Brazilian immigrants is minimal or non-existent?

They came to the Kawba Training Center walking together. Kerson, less bulky, light brown hair, green eyes, looking very lively and intelligent, spoke to me with self-confidence, but without pretension. He was wearing plaid shorts that reached below his knees, a red T-shirt with black squares, and had a small backpack, which probably carried his uniform. He was like a young tourist, similar to the many that wander around the Jeemaa Al-Fadar square at dusk, when the world's largest open-air restaurant begins to mount its tables and their kitchens. Kerson is not a typical player: he comes from a family from the interior of Paraná State whose father 'worked with yerba mate, had a good income, a simple life, but honest.' The family was never lacking necessities, a category so often evoked among the player-celebrities who I had contacted. 'Food, fruit [were never lacking], at home, it was a German house...'. Kerson finished high school and it was only then that he had to choose between two options, go to college or begin a professional football career. Kerson was almost the opposite of Heison (who is muscular, with closely shaved hair), whose profile is similar to most of the players I had contacted. Heison came from a 'humble' family in Rio de Janeiro. He had already played in México, Uruguay, Tunisia, Togo and Malaysia before arriving in Morocco. He had 'spun around', as they say in Brazil, that is, he had circulated through many clubs, which is considered a way of gaining 'experience', football capital. 'At home we are seven and I am the youngest male,' he said, confirming another feature common to many of the players: that of being the youngest in the family (Rial 2008).

They talk about their lives naturally, without embarrassment, answering my questions with my little camera almost glued to their faces to better capture the sound, happy to speak to a Brazilian. Other players (apparently Moroccans) rushed into the Training Center, already wearing the red uniform of the Kawkab Athletic Club of

Marrakech (KACM), a club founded in 1947, which has the honor of being a four-time national champion and six-time winner of the King's Cup (Coupe du Throne). Nevertheless, I was completely unfamiliar with the club, because it remains isolated from the hegemonic global football community. Thanks to the team's good performance in the national championship, Kerson can send his entire salary to Brazil and get by on the monetary compensation for victories. Part is used to support his family, part is placed in a savings account 'to earn a little interest'. He does not earn a high salary, but one that would require 'hard work to get in Brazil', he told me later while sitting on the couch of the apartment that the club offers him, beside Eliana, his young wife, who recently graduated with a degree as a pharmacist, and his 15-month old son, who were visiting him for the first time, after one year.

The Moroccan players heading to the locker room stopped to greet them, jokingly, in French, but mixing some words in Portuguese ('Tudo bem?', 'Legal'). One of them caressed Heison's bald head: 'C'est notre Kaká noir', he tells me, resting his head affectionately on Heison's shoulder. I think the phrase ('He is our black Kaká') is doubly revealing. Partly because much of the charisma of players like Heison, scattered among small clubs throughout the world, depends on the success of Brazilian players and mediascape-celebrities like Kaká. Also because in some way, they are similar to their black ancestors who had traversed the Atlantic to labor in precarious conditions. In the football spectacle, they are the ones who work for low wages, those living in the worst conditions, those who remain unknown to an audience beyond the places where they perform. (Marrakech, November 2009).

Morocco, an unlikely destination for other migrants, is also not an important destination for football players. Only 17 Brazilian players moved there between 2002-2008.<sup>11</sup> Because of its subaltern status in the global football system, Morocco is part

of an alternate circuit of exchanges that often includes local clubs vying for secondary championships, which could be designated as part of a non-hegemonic globalization (Ribeiro 2010).

Indeed, most Brazilian expatriated players do not come from first division clubs. For instance, among 1,017 Brazilian players who moved abroad in 2009, less than 15% came from clubs in the A Series or top division. Surprisingly, over 64% of the players were transferred from clubs that do not even dispute Brazil's fourth division championship series. This was also found in India. According to the Brazilian consulate in Mumbai, which I visited in 2011, there were only 64 Brazilians in the large region of southern India. None were laborers, but engineers and technical specialists who usually sojourn for one to three months transmitting technology. They come and go without maintaining ties with the country. 'There are no immigrants here,' a consulate diplomat explained to me. 'India has one of the world's cheapest labor forces, cheaper than the Chinese. What would they do here?'

And yet, they do come to play football, dozens of them, the only Brazilian residents in India visible in the media. The Brazilian players here do not enjoy the same weight as those in Morocco, as confirmed to me by the president of the Western India Football Association, because football is still a sport 'that is growing rapidly in public popularity' but positioned far behind cricket (the colonial sport introduced by the English, in which in an example of complex post-colonial relations, India now has supremacy over its former colonizers).

Why do the Brazilian players accept the 'sacrifice' (as many described their situation) of living in distant places, far from family and friends, without mastering the local language, for a salary that is not as high as they could earn at home? The first response would be to have a professional football career that would be threatened

by the lack of space in the four main divisions in Brazil, or restricted to semi-amateur clubs, and playing only on weekends.

In short, they are following a dream of becoming celebrities. And on this difficult quest, some places offer better ‘windows’, as they say, than others. ‘The Moroccan championship is broadcast in the Arab countries,’ Kerson told me, seeing his stay in Marrakesh as a springboard for a millionaire market. ‘Uruguayan football is followed closely by European clubs, they think the players here are more accustomed to the climate and to their robust style. Often, impresarios come to watch the practice,’ one of many Brazilian players I met in Montevideo told me. Many of them play three months of the year in local clubs of the second division in nearby Southern Brazil, six months in Uruguay and are unemployed – or, as they put it, ‘working at home’ – the other three months waiting for a phone call to guarantee another three-month gig the next year.

These Kaká noirs, i.e., the players under contract on foreign clubs situated on the lower levels of the global football hierarchy, expose an important feature in the global consumption of South American players: the celebrities exude an aura that casts its light onto unknown players, causing their value to rise in the market as if their national origin give them an ethnic guarantee of good performances.

In a new dynamic created by capitalism in the football system, most of these players were originally under contract with clubs formed with the main purpose of selling them, clubs that do not compete for championships – they are exclusively training centers run by impresarios and geared to export. The real Kaká, who played for global clubs in Europe, made a speedy return to his former club in Brazil in 2014, and then took a path that would be improbable for famous players until a few years ago: he signed with Orlando in the MLS.

### **Third scenario – the USA: a singular case**

Although the United States continues to be the preferred destination for Brazilian emigrants in general, with 60% of them living there, it has never been a destination coveted by male football celebrities.<sup>12</sup> This has changed slightly in recent years, with the consolidation of Major League Soccer (MLS), which is attracting an increasing number of world football stars, even if most are close to retirement. The MLS seems to have enticed a special kind of Brazilian player that I rarely met elsewhere: middle-class players attracted to the United States by recruitment agencies that combine sports and high school or college education.

As I approached the United States ethnographically, I thought that I would find Brazilian players over protected by clubs and managers, and subject to rigid hours and discipline, like those in Europe. I expected to find that they would have a lifestyle marked by the consumption of Brazilian products and images, strong nationalist sentiments, and that their transnational circulation, like that of many diasporic groups, stimulates national feelings expressed by the display of the national flag in celebrations and by the consumption of common products from ‘home’ (Rial and Assunção 2011). I also imagined that they would have the same strong religious values that I found among Brazilians in other countries and that the presence of neo-Pentecostalism would be hegemonic (Rial 2012). I did find these characteristics in the United States, but I also found a pronounced local insertion among Brazilian players in the United States.

Finally, I expected to find athletes from the humble social origins that are common to the large majority of players with whom I had previous contact,

celebrities or not. Nevertheless, to my surprise, I found a considerable number of players from middle-class families, which I did not find in any of the other countries where I conducted research. These are the specificities in relation to the global circulation of players that I would like to explore now.

Football does not enjoy the same popularity in the United States as it does in most of the planet, even if the audience for the 2014 World Cup reached unprecedented levels.<sup>13</sup> However, professional football in the United States has a long history and has enjoyed several moments of popularity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Professional soccer leagues were founded in the United States nearly at the same time as football became a sport in England (Elias and Dunning 1986), some as early as the 1890s. Nevertheless, the sport has never caught fire at the professional level in the United States. Soccer leagues have not only been in the shadow of baseball, football, basketball and ice hockey, but with the exception of Major League Soccer (MLS), a newcomer on the mainstream sporting scene, all of the previous soccer leagues folded within a couple of decades. MLS is in part supported by the tastes of the immigrant population (Apostolov 20012), which is altering the country's social and political landscape.

In contrast with its strong global leadership as a sport, in the United States soccer has a long way to go to catch up with the popularity of UFC fights, car racing, baseball and American football. The U.S. sports scene dialogs with the rest of the world but maintains a strong local accent. It has an ethnocentric trait, imaging itself as being global – the annual baseball championship in the United States even dares to call itself a *World Series*.

From a foreign point of view, there are many interesting particularities that distinguish football in the United States such as the large popularity of women's

football, the close relation between clubs and ethnic communities and the inclusion of foreign clubs (Toronto F.C. and Vancouver F.C.) in a national league. But here I will focus on only two features related to the transnational circulation of Brazilian players: the huge importance of academic sports and the large presence of expatriate players.

In fact, the numbers in the MLS<sup>14</sup> are astonishing: in 2010 there were more than twice as many foreign players (454 of whom twenty-one were Brazilians) than U.S. players (219). This decreased relatively by 2015 when there were 236 foreign (of whom nineteen were Brazilians) and 323 U.S. players. Although it would be easy to find other professions in the United States that include many foreigners (gardeners, home caretakers, taxi-drivers in New York, etc.) it is unlikely that there are any with as wide a variety of foreign nationalities involved (sixty-eight in 2010; fifty-two in 2015), ranging from Norway to Uganda, and a wide range of salaries, with the top talents earning millions.

Not that the United States is different from other countries in terms of the importation of football talents. Studies conducted in Europe's five major football leagues indicate an increasing migration of football players from outside Europe, mainly from South America and Africa (Poli and Besson 2014). This cosmopolitan trend of accepting foreigners prevails mainly among the large clubs in the North, although the issue of national quotas is still present (Gardiner and Welsh 2009).

But let's return to the MLS. As we mentioned, Brazil was the country with the second highest number of foreign players in the MLS in 2010<sup>15</sup> (behind Colombia), and the third in 2015 (behind Argentina and England). The strong presence of Brazilian players in U.S. football is not exceptional. They are also found in Europe, where Brazil has been the country of origin of the largest contingent of athletes



disputing the European Champions League, the world's most important club competition.

The football hierarchy and the political economy of nations are not in perfect correspondence. In the world of football, countries like Greece or Turkey have a better classification than the United States, Canada or Australia. In fact, in the FIFA ranking<sup>16</sup>, the United States is in twenty-eighth place among the male squads and that might be one of the reasons for its absence among the preferential destinations of Brazilian football stars. The U.S. market is still seen by Brazilian football players as a good place to end or begin their careers, although this has been changing in recent years, after the contracting of football celebrities who would still be marketable in Europe.<sup>17</sup>

Of the nineteen MLS clubs in 2010, twelve have at least one Brazilian player and of the twenty clubs in 2015, thirteen have at least one Brazilian player. They are usually quite successful. Two of them were nominated in 2010 for MLS's 'Best Latino' award, although no Brazilian would spontaneously identify him or herself as Latino.

There is great similarity among the careers, trajectories, projects and lifestyles of the Brazilians in the MLS and other Brazilians who circulate in the global football system. I would like to emphasize here factors that initially appeared to be distinct and particular in the MLS, notably the gentrification of the recruitment process.

A significant portion of the players (nineteen per cent in 2010) are college graduates who passed through high school and university teams before joining the MLS teams. While the sample is small and this is only four athletes, it is four more than in all of Brazil, where there are thousands of football players. Most of the players

I interviewed in Europe, Asia and elsewhere in the Americas had only attended elementary school.

Most of the Brazilian players in the MLS reached the United States in the past two years, but there are players who have been here for nearly 10 years – those who were in colleges and universities.

Their place of origin is quite restricted. More than half the Brazilian players in the MLS in 2010 were born in the state of São Paulo, and of these seven come from small cities in the interior of the state. Four were born in the state of Rio de Janeiro and two in Paraná. That is, of the twenty-one Brazilian players in the MSL, eighteen were born in Brazil's south and southeastern regions, which are the most economically developed in the country. There is no player from the municipality of Governador Valadares in Minas Gerais State, the largest source of Brazilian emigrants to the United States. And there are none from Criciúma in Santa Catarina, which has recently become another important source of emigrants.

A surprisingly large number of players, ten in 2010, were either completely or partially trained in the farm clubs of a single Brazilian team, São Paulo FC, which leads me to the hypothesis that this club has a business connection with the MLS. It also appears to be important that Kaká, one of the most popular Brazilian players in the United States began his career in São Paulo.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Kaká's younger brother Digão was in the MLS, as was Marcelo, who wrote a biographical note that appears on the team's website:

(Marcelo) is a devoted Christian, and likes the music of Michael W. Smith...while they were together at Sao Paolo, Marcelo lived with Brazilian and Real Madrid star midfielder Kaká and his family ... their friendship has remained strong as each served as each other's best man in their respective

weddings ... while at Sao Paolo, met his wife Carolina, who was a volleyball player at the club ... the couple have a son, Matheus.

Other players' biographies mention that they played with Kaká in São Paulo – but did not say that this was when they were on the youth teams. For most of the Brazilian players in the MLS in 2010, the United States was not their first destination outside of Brazil. Many had worked on foreign clubs in countries like Mexico, Honduras, Portugal, Spain, Italy, England, Turkey, Greece, Tunisia, Libya, Israel, Switzerland, Malta, South Korea, Russia and Croatia. Some were in youth divisions (U-19) in Europe. As generally occurs with these players, many left their families and Brazil when they were still boys.

Most of the players transferred to the States from a Brazilian club that was in the second or third division, with the United States being the peak of their careers until now, or started their professional career when they were already abroad. Nevertheless, there are two players (Fio Tilliarz and Kevin Diogo, whom I contacted) who had played for European clubs. They are the oldest, older than 32, and appear to have chosen the United States to end their careers (which was the case of the first player but not the second, who returned to play in an important Brazilian club).

I observed a great proximity between the players in Europe, in other parts of the world and those in the United States. But I also noticed some marked distinctions of tastes and lifestyles. For example, in the USA, they did display national consumption preferences but not exclusively. Along with expressions of nationalism and patriotism, I also found expressions of a cosmopolitan taste – social media posts in other languages, references to U.S. music, to Mexican food and American brands (Ben&Jerry's, The Juice Factory), attendance at basketball games and bowling, which in this case appear to correlate more with the player's original social layer (Bourdieu

1979) than with the country where he is found. These tastes are those among the young players who studied in the United States and who certainly come from the middle class. We can thus consider them what Appiah (1997) called ‘cosmopolitan patriots’<sup>19</sup>: usually middle-class individuals in their nation of origin who become cosmopolitan without losing their national attachments.

How can it be explained that Brazilian middle-class youth are practicing a profession in the United States that in Brazil (and in the rest of the world) is mostly occupied by youth from the lower classes? Part of the answer is the way that they were recruited in Brazil. Contrary to the common use of scouts to find players, some of these players were registered in ‘exchange’ programs for students that sought to place them in U.S. schools where they could practice the sport and receive a grant to do so.<sup>20</sup>

This form of recruiting young Brazilian players, because of its form and costs, basically affects the middle classes. 2SV, one agency, operates primarily over the Internet, a tool that still excludes access by large contingents of the Brazilian population, although its use is growing rapidly in Brazil. It is common for middle-class Brazilians to dream of sending their children to the United States, yet for most the only way to get a visa is through a study program. But studies in the United States are expensive, usually undertaken only by youth from Brazil’s economic elite, rarely by those from the middle classes. When they do go, it is through exchange programs.

Some of these student athletes are able to find a place on professional teams in the MLS. Ricardo, from Real Salt Lake, was one of those recruited by 2SV. Others return to Brazil to play football, as did Caio – who was unknown in Brazil because he lived in and became a player in the United States, but returned to Brazil, where he

played on first division teams like Botafogo and Internacional (and in 2015, was playing for Al-Wasl, in Dubai).

The existence of youth training centers in the global South dedicated to preparing athletes for the North is nothing new (Darby 2007). This is one of the forms of recruitment of new players in the second globalization phase (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007). Many of the large European clubs have *soi-disant* philanthropic centers in their former colonies (especially in Africa but also in Indonesia). Because laws in the South are less restrictive than those in the North concerning required schooling, these centers are able to more quickly develop athletic bodies and a player *habitus* (Mauss 1968) among poor youth. With more ‘free’ time not in school, they can train many more hours. The novelty I found in USA is the existence of centers aimed at the middle classes.

### **Final Considerations**

There is a lot in common between the situation, context, lifestyle, and values of Brazilian players abroad, e.g. a strong presence of Brazil in their daily life, as if they were permanently divided between two worlds, as often occurs with transmigrants (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton 1994). But the heterogeneity of the flow of the transnational circulation of Brazilian players is clear. Even if they all move to do similar work, even if they all move within a football system controlled by FIFA (and therefore are always documented immigrants), the salaries, contracts, and club facilities vary enormously from one subject to another. I identified three broad groups of expatriated players: the celebrities, the unheralded ‘black Kaká’, and the middle-class players of the MLS. Each of which has a different relation with the experience of living abroad.

For the celebrities, life abroad takes place in protected ‘bubbles’ with few contacts with the local culture. These bubbles are sanitized, controlled, predictable, repetitive and monotonous. Protected, safe and often comfortable, the star players cross national borders without the emotion experienced by common migrants. But the bubble also exists for other players. It is a characteristic of the football system today, with a permeability that differs according to various factors including the age of the player, their cultural capital, time of permanence abroad, and the presence of children. Those who left Brazil at an earlier age, those who had a formal education and those with children establish local ties.

The large majority of expatriate players come from the subaltern classes. However, in a new dynamic of the global football system, there are also players from the middle classes who were captured as youths in Brazil with an educational alibi. The United States appears as a place for ‘wealthy’ Brazilians to come train to play football. They must have the financial resources to pay for their travel to the place of the try-outs and if approved, for their initial stay in U.S. high schools or universities. It thus appears not only as a new possible destination, but as a destination with unique characteristics, promoting a sort of gentrification in the transnational circulation of Brazilian players.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Following the advice of the International Football Association (FIFA), I use “football” to refer to what is usually called “soccer” in the United States, thus using the name accepted worldwide. Soccer is not slang or an idiomatic term for football. It’s simply a contraction of the word association – as in association football - and refers to the game regulated by FIFA, a super-national organization that now has 208 member countries and territories. I use the term American football to refer to the game derived from rugby that is played in the United States

<sup>2</sup> Le football est certainement le phénomène le plus universel aujourd’hui, beaucoup plus que la démocratie ou l’économie de marché, dont on dit qu’elles n’ont plus de frontières, mais qui ne parviennent pas à avoir la surface du football.

<sup>3</sup> Billions of people watched the World Cups, but even a single game of the global clubs can reach huge audience. In 2015, the Spanish derby between Real Madrid and Barcelona was broadcasted to 145 countries.

<sup>4</sup> Freely inspired by Foucault’s text (1977), by ‘infamous’ I want to highlight the condition of anonymity, at least in Brazil, of those that circulate in the secondary circuits of the global football system.

<sup>5</sup> Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Relations estimated in 2012 that 2,801.249 Brazilians were living abroad, 30% fewer people than in 2008. The figures are imprecise (except for Japan) because they are based on reports sent by its foreign offices, based on estimates. For the numbers by country, see:

<http://www.brasileirosnomundo.itamaraty.gov.br/a-comunidade/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades-brasileiras-no-mundo-2013/Estimativas%20Brasileiros%20no%20Mundo%202013.pdf>, accessed 4 June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.cbf.com.br/php/transferencias.php>, accessed in November 2009.

<sup>7</sup> The folder is also aimed at models, capoeiristas and Brazilian barbeque cooks, which are professions thus curiously associated as posing threats to Brazilian emigrants.

<sup>8</sup> Although I have their authorization to publish the names of the players, agents and family members that I had contact with, to protect the identity of my interlocutors, all names have been changed. I use the real names of players whose information I found on the Internet.

<sup>9</sup> In an analogy with the category of global city (Sassen 1991, 2003), I mean by global clubs those that transcend the boundaries of their communities, regions and even their nation state. They are nodules of economic, human, media and symbolic global flows, concentrating capital that circulates globally, employing players from different parts of the world. They bring together supporters scattered throughout the world, colonizing the imagination of a planetary, yet mostly male, population. As imagined communities bringing together supporters scattered throughout the world, one could see them as nations (Weber 2009) with their anthems, flags and a strong sense of belonging.

<sup>10</sup> These international migrants account for just over 3% of the world population (*International Migration Report 2013*).

<sup>11</sup> The Brazilian Football Confederation (the national FIFA affiliate) currently does not provide open access to its database.

<sup>12</sup> Pelé played for the NY Cosmos in the 1970's but this was an unrepeated exception.

<sup>13</sup> This was higher than the National Basketball Association finals.

<sup>14</sup> <<http://www.mlssoccer.com>>, accessed November 2010 and June 2015.

<sup>15</sup> I do not consider Canadians to be foreigners, since there are Canadian teams in the MLS, given the particular political geography of sport that does not always respect national geo-political borders.

<sup>16</sup> < <http://www.en.fifaranking.net/ranking/>> . accessed 4 June 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Like Beckham, the world's highest-earning athlete according to Forbes magazine in 2010, or David Villa in 2013, Kaká in 2014, or Lampard in 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Although Kaká was paying for Real Madrid in 2010 and arrived in USA only in 2014.

<sup>19</sup> 'The cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people. The cosmopolitan also imagines that in such a world not everyone will find it best to stay in their natal patria, so that the circulation of people among different localities will involve not only cultural tourism (which the cosmopolitan admits to enjoying) but migration, nomadism, diaspora' (Appiah 1997:618).

<sup>20</sup> One of the channels that mediates trips to the United States is the 2SV, an 'exchange' agency for Brazilian youths to U.S. schools where I found various Brazilian football players in the United States playing as 'amateurs'. The agency said it had the support of Disney and ESPN. It recruits youths through an

Internet questionnaire, and football is one of various sports it offers. After undergoing athletic tryouts, youth who pass are registered in U.S. high schools or universities, where they hope to win a place on the school team. The 2012 selection chose 'more than 100 student-athletes'.

### Abstract

Among the nearly 3 million Brazilians living abroad as immigrants, nearly five thousand are football players. For many of them, life abroad takes place in protected 'bubbles', with greater or lesser permeability depending on the rank of the destination club in the hierarchy of the football system, the age of the player when he left, his cultural capital, time of permanence abroad and whether he has children living with him. The (b)rics countries, specially Russia, China and recently India, as well as Africa countries like Morocco represents new markets for the Brazilian players anger to expand frontiers. This chapter inquire about the homogeneity or heterogeneity of this flow analyzing three groups of expatriated players: celebrities who work in global clubs, the unheralded players who circulate among second tier clubs, and the players performing in the U.S. Major League Soccer. I conclude by emphasizing the heterogeneity of this circulation, view positively as an opportunity for amassing a football capital.

Key words: Sport, capitalism, consumption, celebrities, football, global clubs, frontiers, bubble, migration, Brazil, MLS.