

## **RODAR: THE CIRCULATION OF BRAZILIAN FOOTBALL PLAYERS ABROAD\***

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### **RESUMO**

Entre os milhões de brasileiros que atualmente residem no exterior, cerca de 5 mil são jogadores de futebol atuando em instituições reconhecidas, os clubes de futebol. O artigo aborda em uma perspectiva antropológica os processos migratórios desses jogadores brasileiros com carreiras de sucesso no sistema futebolístico contemporâneo, buscando compreender as características dessa circulação mundial particular de pessoas e de dinheiro, que apresenta enorme impacto no *mediascape* (Appadurai, 1990): de todas as “exportações” e de todas as emigrações brasileiras ora em curso, a de jogadores de futebol é a que apresenta maior impacto simbólico, tanto aqui como *lá*. Abordo os projetos, consumos e estilos de vida desses jogadores a partir dos dados de etnografia realizada na Espanha (Sevilha) e na Holanda (Eindhoven), e da interlocução com mais de 40 jogadores brasileiros vivendo ou tendo vivido em países no exterior, em contatos realizados no Canadá (Toronto), Holanda (Almelo, Groningen, Alkmaar, Roterdã, Amsterdã), Japão (Tóquio), França (Lyon, Le Mans, Nancy, Lille), Mônaco, Bélgica (Charleroi) e também no Brasil (Fortaleza, Salvador, Belém). Exploro as intersecções com idade, origem social e religião, constatando a forte presença de caçulas entre os jogadores (o caçulismo), a proveniência majoritária de camadas sociais subalternas e a adesão predominante a cultos evangélicos. Constato também uma crescente juvenilização desse fluxo emigratório. Concluo que a constante troca de instituição de trabalho (“clube” ou “clube global”), de países e o grande número de “repatriados”, caracterizam como uma circulação esse movimento migratório: é o “rodar” de que falam os jogadores, atribuindo a essa noção um valor positivo de propiciar experiência. Essa circulação dá-se em zonas protegidas, onde um nacionalismo banal (Billig, 1995) é constantemente ativado. Mesmo depois da obtenção da cidadania legal continuam sendo vistos e percebendo-se como estrangeiros; a nacionalização tem assim um propósito estratégico (Sassen, 2008). Concluo que cruzam fronteiras geográficas sem ingressarem em países, pois suas fronteiras são os clubes e não os países.

**Palavras-chave:** clube global, emigração, futebol, nacionalização.

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## ABSTRACT

Of the millions of Brazilians who currently live abroad, nearly 5 thousand play football in the world's top clubs. This article draws on the anthropological perspective to analyse the migration of these successful Brazilian players in order to understand the characteristics of this particular global circulation of people and capital which has a huge presence in the *mediascape* (Appadurai, 1990). Of all 'exports' and emigrations currently underway, that of football players has the greatest symbolic impact, both in Brazil and abroad. As the brain drain resulting from the emigration of scientists, this could be framed as an instance of 'fleeting feet'. I look at the plans, consumption and lifestyle of these players based on ethnographic data gathered in Seville, Spain and Eindhoven, Holland, as well as through conversations with more than 40 Brazilian players living or trying to live in foreign countries. These contacts took place in Toronto, Canada; Almelo, Groningen, Alkmaar, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam in Holland, Tokyo, Japan; Lyon, Le Mans, Nancy and Lille in France, Monaco; Charleroi, Belgium; and in Fortaleza, Salvador and Belém, Brazil. I explore the intersections of age, social origin and religion, and note that many of the players were the youngest siblings in their families. The large majority are low income, and attend evangelical churches. I also found that these immigrant athletes are increasingly younger. I conclude that the constant change of employer (club or global club), countries and the large number of 'repatriates' characterise this migratory movement as a circulation. It is what the players call 'rodar', cast positively as an opportunity for amassing experience. This circulation takes place in protected zones, where a banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) is constantly activated. Even after obtaining legal citizenship, they continue to be seen and to perceive themselves as foreigners. In this case, therefore, nationalisation has a strategic purpose (Sassen, 2008). I conclude that these players cross geographic borders without really entering the countries, because their borders are not national but those of the clubs.

**Keywords:** emigration, football, global club, nationalisation.

*Ronaldo de Assis Moreira, bautizado para el mundo del fútbol Ronaldinho Gaúcho, es desde ayer un ciudadano español y de la Unión Europea. Cuando afronta su quinto año de residencia en Barcelona, el que fuera mejor jugador del mundo hace dos temporadas consiguió los papeles que tantos residentes extranjeros persiguen con ahínco (y con menos suerte). La condición de comunitario convierte a Ronaldinho en otro tipo de contribuyente para el fisco español, mientras que su quinto año de estancia en el Barça lo coloca en situación ventajosa para una posible marcha a final de temporada, de acuerdo con lo establecido en el Reglamento del Jugador de la Fifa(...). El Ronaldinho español tendrá que aportar ahora el 43 por ciento de sus ingresos a Hacienda, lo que, si sigue con las ganancias del pasado ejercicio, podría rondar los diez millones de euros en su declaración fiscal. El asunto no agrada a los hermanos del crack, su agente Roberto de Assis y la responsable de su agenda diaria, Deisy. Según adelantó AS el pasado domingo, Roberto se ha acercado al Chelsea para intentar un traspaso millonario (Ortiz, 2007).*

*Ronaldo de Assis Moreira, baptised Ronaldinho Gaúcho in the world of soccer, is since yesterday a Spanish citizen of the European Union. In entering his fifth year of residency in Barcelona, he who had been appointed the world's best player two seasons ago finally got the papers that many foreign residents so doggedly, and less luckily, pursue. Membership in the community turns Ronaldinho into another kind of Spanish taxpayer, at the moment when his fifth year in the Barça club puts him at a good position to leave as the season comes to an end, according to Fifa's Player's Regulations (...). The Spanish Ronaldinho will have to contribute 43 percent of his income to the Treasury – which, extrapolating from previous trends, might amount to something like ten million Euros in his next income tax statement. The topic displeases the star's siblings, his Agent Roberto de Assis, and Daisy, who is responsible for his daily schedule. As advanced by AS last Sunday, Roberto has already approached Chelsea to attempt a millionaire transfer (Ortiz, 2007).*

The subject matter of this article does not require any lengthy introduction. As numerous studies have shown, football is a universal referent (Bromberger, 1995, 1998, 2001)<sup>1</sup> with considerable impact on the media.<sup>2</sup> Every four years, the Football World Cup breaks records as the most widely watched event in the planet (Rial, 2003). This hegemony in the mediascape (Appadurai, 1990) fosters a global circulation of people and money, in which Brazil figures as a top protagonist, given its dominance in football during the last decades.<sup>3</sup> This has increasingly valued its players in the international

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<sup>1</sup>One of the few elements – if not the only one – of a world male culture, something that becomes evident to anyone regardless of the region, nation and generation to which one belongs' (Bromberger, 2001). (Uno dos pocos elementos – cuando no el único – de una cultura mundial masculina, algo que resulta evidente para cualquier persona al margen de la variedad de regiones, naciones y generaciones a las que pertenezca.)

<sup>2</sup> By 'media' I refer to electronic communication media influenced by the journalistic field (Bourdieu, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Brazil is the only country with five football World Cup titles, the only one that took part in all World Cups, the country that has led the FIFA (International Football Association) ranking for longest during the last decades, and the one which has received the most FIFA best-player awards. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1987) notion of field, I call 'football system' the assembly of various fields related to the practice of football, whose origins date back to the nineteenth-century (Bottenburg, 2001, Elias & Dunning, 1986, Guttman, 1978). The 'football system' includes the football field, which ranges from amateur soccer in schools for children and *várzeas* (makeshift fields) to spectacle pro football. As a transnational institution, FIFA plays a central role in it by acting through regional federations and national confederations, in order to organize, oversee and regulate its practice. But it is not limited to it, as it includes other fields such as the *journalistic field* and the *economic field*. Toledo (2002) has explored the relations between these fields. My own research has led me to conclude that a product valued in the football field is not necessarily so 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 European champion players in the teams playing the 2005 Eurocupa. 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 players who became Eurocupa champions in Portugal is a far cry from that of Real Madrid's galactic players. In the 'star system' (Morin, 2007) characterizing today's football system, victory in a major competition does not necessarily mean being at the apex of the football system's hierarchy. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1987, 1989, 2000), I call football capital the sum-total of knowledges particular to the football field, be they bodily (to know how to deploy one's body during

market, fuelling the onset of a continuing migratory flux of Brazilian players abroad, especially toward Europe, Asia, and North America. ‘In brief: who doesn’t know Ronaldinho Gaúcho?’ But the question this paper will tackle is another one: are Ronaldinho Gaúcho and his Brazilian profession-mates emigrants-immigrants? If so, could they be characterised as trans-migrants, that is, ‘immigrants who develop and sustain multiple relations – family, economic, social, organisational, religious and political – that traverses borders’ (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc, 1994: 7)? What does the ‘nationalisation’ of players shown in the epigraph mean? Before getting to that, a detour is necessary in order to understand the circulation of these players within a particular space: the contemporary football system.<sup>4</sup> Here as in other instances, it appears as a forerunner of other social movements and formations.

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

Even though portrayed by the media<sup>5</sup> as unprecedented, the emigration of Brazilian football players<sup>6</sup> is not a recent phenomenon. The first such wave took place in the 1930’s, in the aftermath of the first World Cup, in Uruguay. The main destination was Italy, homeland of the ancestors of many of the emigrating players, which in a way turned this displacement into a homecoming return. Only recently has Brazil shifted from a net receiver of working immigrants into a country that cedes more than receives them. The outward direction of the movement of Brazilian players therefore anticipated that of other Brazilian emigrants.

Although numerically modest, the press has already shown concern with the outflow of players abroad, which some newspapers have even described as an ‘exodus’.<sup>7</sup> Even though occurring since the early decades of the twentieth century, such emigration intensified during the last few years, partly as an effect of post-Bosman changes in European legislation (which in Brazil took shape as the so-called Pelé Law). The Bosman ruling, enacted by the European Court of Justice on December 15, 1995, abolished quotas for European players in clubs from the European Union’s 27 nations or

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football performances), social (to know important people who will help climbing up the field’s ladder), or economic knowledge (to know how to manage contracts and capital expenditure).

<sup>4</sup> Data from the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) show that in 2002, 665 players were transferred abroad; in 2003, 858; in 2004, 857; in 2005, 804; in 2006, 851 and as of August 2007, 694 had been transferred. Last year’s 851 athletes moved to clubs from 86 countries, including some with weak football tradition such as Libya, Uzbekistan, Faroe Islands, Cyprus, Vietnam, and Thailand. According to Brazil’s Central Bank, sales last year have amounted to US\$ 131 million (an average value of US\$ 15.4 thousand).

<sup>5</sup> Other secondary sources in my research were the newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Estado de S. Paulo*, *Zero Hora* and *A Notícia* (SC), as well as the TV shows *SportvNews*, *Redação Sportv*, *Expresso da Bola*, *Arena Sportv*, *Bem Amigos* (all from Sportv), *Bate-Bola*, *Loucos por Futebol*, *Pontapé Inicial* (all from ESPN), besides the newspapers *Marca* and *As* (Spain), *Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), *L’équipe* (France), *Placar* and *Globo Esporte* (Brazil). These were checked almost daily on the web during the last five years, besides the *Revista Cruzeiro* and various newspapers from previous decades belonging to the archives of football historian Airton Fontenelle, located in Fortaleza, Brazil.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Football player’ or footballer is used here to denote the professional player of field football. Amateur and futsal players have also emigrated. The world-champion Spanish futsal team, for instance, was basically made up of nationalised Brazilians. Spain’s main sports newspaper, *A Marca*, has referred to it as ‘Brazil B’. Futsal players are considered here only when they transit between the field and indoors, as is the case of some players I have met in Toronto, Canada. These players are generally situated at the lower income layers of my research sample, and some of them in fact associated their work as football players with jobs in civil construction.

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Brazilian historian Airton Fontenelle, owner of one of the most complete football libraries in Brazil, for granting me access to news stories about football published in Brazilian newspapers from the 1930’s on.

from the European economic area (which also includes Norway, Iceland, and Luxembourg). Moreover, after the Bosman ruling, agreements were signed with Russia's Federations, former Soviet republics, and African and Caribbean countries clearing the free movement of players in these (and especially from these) countries. In Brazil, the Law number 9.615/03/1998, also known as Pelé Law, revoked the 1976 Law number 6.354 and determined the end of the *passé* (pass), which bound football players to clubs as their property. The new Law made this relation more 'flexible'; the player became a worker with control over his own labour, the right to choose where to play, control over his own transfer from one club to another, and so forth (Bittencourt, 2007). 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.

One of the consequences was that, as the barrier of national origin was removed, the economic aspect jumped to the forefront of player circulation between countries. Talents became increasingly concentrated in wealthier global clubs in the European Union, to the point that some teams are now made up almost exclusively of foreign players.<sup>8</sup> Of the approximately five million Brazilians living abroad, four thousand<sup>9</sup> are estimated to be football players. But even though a quantitatively non-significant migratory flux – in Japan alone, for instance, there are a hundred times as many Brazilians –, such emigration is highly visible in the media. As other studies have shown, all major media outlets in the world today dedicate space to football and its protagonists, the players (Bittencourt, 2005; Ollier, 2007; Rial, 2003; Silk; Amis, 2000; Silk; Andrews, 2001, Toledo 2002; Yonnet, 2007). Ronaldinho, Pelé and Ronaldo are certainly among the best-known Brazilians and individuals in the world, and lead popularity surveys in different countries.<sup>10</sup>

Even though not as influential in the world's finanscape as in the mediascape (Appadurai, 1990), such emigration has somehow significant consequences for national finances. It is known that the export of players has yielded over one billion dollars since 1993, when Brazil's Central Bank began to account for the transfer of players under the category of 'services'.<sup>11</sup> It could be that part of the capital made in such transactions is not officially recorded, as it is directly channelled to bank accounts in fiscal heavens such as Switzerland.<sup>12</sup> But these are likely to be minor deviations. The largest share of

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<sup>8</sup> This is the case of British clubs such as Chelsea or Arsenal.

<sup>9</sup> It is hard to know for sure, as the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), which records both the influx and efflux of players, publicises data about returns only from 2005 on. In 2005, 465 players returned; in 2006, 311; and until August 2007, 375 players had returned to the country (cf. <http://www.cbf.com.br>). The four thousand figure came up during informal conversations with members of conference panels on Anthropology and Sport (in the Brazilian and Mercosur Anthropology Meetings), and especially with the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul's anthropologist Arlei Damo. I thank these scholars, as well as the participants in the Symposium on Transnational Circulation, Frontiers and Identities (organized by University of Campinas's professor Bela Feldman-Bianco, in Campinas, Brazil, Sep 2007), for their comments. Recently in the press (Souza, 2007, p. 45), one of CBF's directors of record, Luiz Gustavo, has also estimated as four thousand the number of Brazilian players abroad.

<sup>10</sup> Even in France, where the population's cultural capital is higher than elsewhere, opinion polls show Zinedine Zidane as the Frenchman who draws most admiration by his countrymen, side-by-side with Bishop Pierre, who founded the charitable entity Emaüs. Ronaldo led a poll carried out right before the 1998 World Cup which asked who was the best-known individual in the world.

<sup>11</sup> According to data from the Brazilian Central Bank, player transfers yielded U\$159.2 million in 2005. Last year, this total dropped to U\$131 million. What is certain is that 'during the last two years (2005 and 2006), transfer of Brazilian football players abroad provided more dollars to the country than traditional export items such as banana, melon, papaya and grapes' (Nery, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> As the Brazilian club Corinthians and its transactions of players (such as Carlos Alberto) have recently shown.

foreign money flowing into Brazil through emigrants comes indeed from this group of players.

In contrast to other Latin American countries,<sup>13</sup> in the case of Brazil a considerable portion of these remittances takes place via the banking system itself. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) calculated remittances by Brazilians in 2004 as 5.6 billion dollars; 6.4 billion in 2005; and 7 billion in 2006. In Latin America, Brazil only lags behind Mexico in terms of monetary remittances sent home by its emigrants.<sup>14</sup> Since much of the players' salaries return to the country in this form, and since those who emigrate do it for pays higher than they would get in Brazil, it becomes clear that this is a kind of emigration entailing significant financial contributions. This is true even if few players make 20 million Euros a year (as in the epigraph). Their club salary is complemented by 'image rights' (paid by the club for the right to explore the player's image commercially) and by publicity contracts.

If this migratory flux has some impact on the national economy (even though much smaller than its symbolic impact), its economic relevance for Brazilian clubs is unswerving. 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 their other professionals. Internacional and Grêmio, for instance, are clubs that play in Brazil's premier league and show good international performance. In both cases, their transfer of players abroad during the last six years has meant an average annual income of R\$20 million to Inter and R\$15 million to Grêmio. These figures are higher than last year's average earnings obtained with the sale of club image rights to television (R\$15 million) and funds inflowing from the club's social membership (R\$12 million). Player transferences are thus the main source of income in both club's R\$36 million annual budgets (Carlet, 2007).

Larger than the financial impact, however, is its symbolic meaning. Who in Brazil would recall reading in the papers a story about the exports of medical equipment – also accounting for over a hundred million dollars in the country's international trade during 2005 and 2006?<sup>15</sup> In effect, of all 'exports' and ongoing emigrations, that of football players entertains the highest symbolic impact, both *here* and *there*. Their football performances continue to be regularly followed by the mediascape in Brazil, through TV broadcasting of matches from various national and European competitions, as well as through constant news about players' daily lives.

In contrast to other migration waves, where subjects are made invisible and turned into statistical numbers until some anthropologist shows interest and rescues them from anonymity (or not, as in ethnographies names are frequently altered), our interlocutors are well-known. Their emigrations are announced by the media even before becoming a fact, appearing officially registered in the CBF (Brazilian Football Confederation) website (<http://www.cbf.com.br>), along with their names and places of origin and destination. Moreover, players are thrown farewell parties which may involve hundreds of people *here*, and are received with more ballyhooed celebrations when they get *there*.

Football players are a quantitatively and economically significant group of emigrants, who emigrate with assurance of institutional shelter. The transfer to another country takes place within the institution itself, as with the *bichos-de-obra* (worksite

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<sup>13</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean head the world reception of remittances: a total of 53 billion and 600 millions in 2005, even outpacing foreign investment in the subcontinent. See the IADB website (Remittances to Brazil, [n. d.]).

<sup>14</sup> See in the IADB website: Integration... ([n. d.]) and Remittances... (2006).

<sup>15</sup> According to Nery (2007), medical equipment and instruments exports totalled US\$ 104.146 million (2005) and US\$ 119.175 million (2006), a little less than the export of players.

animals) approached by Gustavo Ribeiro (1992), the transnational professionals analysed by Alain Tarrus (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 in the U.S. Silicon Valley, which assembles communities of intellectuals of different ethnic origins to work in computer and electronics firms). But Brazil has provided to major countries specialised labour of a special kind, which may be referred to as *pés-de-obra*<sup>16</sup> (Damo, 2007): football players which move abroad in the hope of ascending socially, thanks to their talent in the sports field (Bourdieu, 1980; Nery, 2007; Toledo, 2002).

Furthermore, football players are special emigrants in the sense that they are both labour force and commodities alike (Marx, 1978). As many studies have shown, players concentrate in themselves others' labour and circulate as commodities; in doing so, they render profits to third-parties. Although the football lexicon echoes more that of a slavery model ('to be sold', 'to belong to a club' are phrases very much present in the media, and in some countries players may even be held by immigration depending on the circumstances<sup>17</sup>), as Bittencourt (2007) has shown there is no doubt that the exchange of players is fully incorporated into late capitalism models, and that their circulation is analogous to that of money (Simmel, 1977).

Today's global circulation, however, creates nodes that are more important than others: where the main clubs and players are concentrated. To make an analogy with Sassen's global cities (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 clout, such as Seville, Eindhoven and Munich, show 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 crossing national borders. It is to these global football cities, or more precisely, to the global clubs they harbour, that the 40-odd Brazilian players I have spoken to aim to migrate. Their professional project is representative of most footballers in the world today.

The intensified evasion of Brazilian players in the last years has prompted the media and other agents of the *football system* to denounce an 'exodus' situation. This phenomenon is unanimously regarded as a 'loss' for the country, and as an evil potentially impacting not only national sports performances but the very image of the nation that circulates globally, as it supposedly weakens Brazilian clubs and its famed national football team. This is thus about a special kind of emigration which can hardly be aligned with other labour emigrants. If brain drain refers to the emigration of scientists, perhaps in this context we could speak of 'fleeting feet'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Translator's note: the term *pés-de-obra*, a neologism in the Portuguese original, derives from the common phrase *mãos-de-obra* ('manpower', 'labour power'), where 'mãos' (hands) is substituted for 'pés' (feet) to highlight the 'labour' facet of playing football.

<sup>17</sup> I have found media reports about players in Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, who declared they had their passports withheld, their residential water and light cut off, and so forth.

<sup>18</sup> Even though Brazil is still hegemonic in the contemporary football system, both in the football and journalistic fields, Brazilian players do not lead the world's most expensive football transactions. In a top-ten list, Ronaldo is the first to appear, in a modest eighth position (he cost 45 million Euros when transferred from Milan's Inter to Real Madrid), below Zidane (75 million Euros in 2001, from Juventus to Real), Figo (61 million Euros in 2001, from Barcelona to Real), Crespo (51 million Euros in 2000, from Parma to Lazio), Vieri (48 million Euros in 1999, from Lazio to Inter), Mendieta (48 million Euros in 2001, from Valencia to Lazio), Buffon (47 million Euros in 2001, from Parma to Juventus), Ferdinand (47 million Euros in 2002, from Leeds to Manchester). Shevchenko (45 million Euros in 2006, from Milan to Chelsea) and Verón (42.5 million Euros in 2001, from Lazio to Manchester) complete the top-ten list

Finally, as will be seen below, the constant change of institution (club), of country, and the large number of ‘repatriated’ (about one third of those who leave) characterise this migration movement as circular: it is the *rodar* (to go around) of which players speak, while attributing to this idea the positive value of gathering ‘experience’ and learning (‘football teaches us’, as many have told me).

### **Emigrants to global clubs: strategic citizenship**

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).

The importance of Brazilian players for the global clubs can also be calibrated quantitatively: Brazil was the second nation in number of players participating in Europe’s Champions League in 2004, and the first in 2007. Obviously, there is no Brazilian club competing in this top European tournament. Brazilian footballers are not only numerically present but, most importantly, have a qualitatively pivotal presence. Not rarely, they occupy leading positions in their teams – they are the stars, be it as forwards (the role in which most outstanding Brazilian players have been historically acknowledged), be it as defenders (a more recent development, as defenders have rarely figured among a team’s main players).<sup>19</sup>

The market for foreign players in these global clubs is however restricted, since the group of players as a whole rarely turns thirty years old. Moreover, after the Bosman ruling, legal obstacles in most European countries have disallowed the simultaneous performance of four foreigners as starters in any given match.<sup>20</sup> ‘Nationalisations’ are therefore vital for this market to remain open. In this as in other aspects, contemporary emigration repeats the nationalisations pioneered by Italian-Brazilians during the exodus of players toward Italy after the initial 1930 World Cup. As descendents of Italian emigrants, players obtained Italian passports which granted them free entry to the country. Today, passports are still coveted, and remain the chief way to circumvent legislation controlling people’s access to football’s central countries.

Obtaining citizenship of the host country by no means implies gaining nationalist sentiments toward it, or even other identity than the Brazilian one. ‘Brazilianness’ remains the sole identity of ethnic belonging. The players contacted by my research, for instance, would 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, today mutated into the European Union). But this statement aptly encapsulates the motivation behind nationalisation: to circulate freely between the member countries of the European Union. The main reason for such demand lies not so much in the security it provides that players will be able to stay in the country (they are legal emigrants; the clubs have means to justify their presence), but rather in making

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of most expensive transactions, which is headed by a Frenchman and includes two Argentineans, two Spanish and only one Brazilian. Few were the transactions involving Brazilians which exceeded 30 million: Denílson (32 million Euros in 1998, from São Paulo to Bétis – at the time, the most expensive transaction ever made) and Robinho (30 million Euros in 2005, from Santos to Real Madrid).

<sup>19</sup> Such is the case of Lúcio, considered one of Germany’s principal players, and also of Gomes and Alex in the Netherlands, Luisão in Portugal, Pepe in Spain, among others.

<sup>20</sup> Among the exceptions is England, where Chelsea, owned by the Russian exiled millionaire Abramovich, has gone as far as playing matches with 11 foreign starting players.



room for another Brazilian to join the club (given the limits imposed by the football system's national legislations).

A new national passport indeed changes the legal status of the player, as he now becomes a full-rights citizen of that country. Legally, this is indeed about double citizenship, but it is hard to think of it in terms of two nationalities.

Therefore, nationalisation interferes with circulation not only by making 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 bracket of as much as 43% of earnings, as indicated in the epigraph). This is a strong stimulus for moving to a club 'abroad', preferably another global club. Thus, paradoxically, nationalisation into a European country could favour the evasion rather than the permanence of players in these countries, which is in stark contrast to other modalities of international emigration. It favours further circulation, as those 'nationalised' switch from the restrictive category of foreign commodity (subject to limits imposed by trade barriers against imported commodities) to European Union commodity (and therefore, in principle, freely circulating in the European 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. The closeness to the players' native country is constantly reaffirmed by them and, as I have been able to verify, by the daily consumption practices that compound their life style.

### **Who are these circulating emigrants? *Caçulismo*, family project and religious experience**

Professional careers (Hughes, 1993) which implicate the international displacement of its practitioners are neither extraordinary nor novel. For a few decades, they have been studied by scholars interested in the consequences of living in-between frontiers. But such careers have typically included social actors with high cultural capital (students, professors, scientists, diplomats, multinational corporations' executives, etc). Rarely this is the case of workers from the subaltern classes (for instance, employees in offshore oil-drilling rig platforms). For this reason, cosmopolitan identities have been extensively related to aesthetical and consumption habits (Hannerz, 1996) which are typical of an elite who traffics between global citizens 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 spend much of their lives in these environments.<sup>21</sup>

Since 2003, I have interviewed around 40 football players who were living or have lived and played abroad, oftentimes in more than two different countries. My ethnography was focused on the cities of Seville, in Spain (where I lived for four months, within a one-year interval) and Eindhoven, in the Netherlands (where I have been three times, within a two-year interval). I have also spoken with many of the players' relatives, friends, managers, coaches and various employees. I have conducted

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<sup>21</sup> Hannerz (1996, p. 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.'

interviews, watched practices, drills and matches, visited popular restaurants and some of their homes in Canada (Toronto), the Netherlands (Almelo, Groningen, Alkmaar, Rotterdam, Amsterdam), Japan (Tokyo), as well as in Brazil (Fortaleza, Salvador, Belém). Besides, I have had long phone conversations with players and their relatives in France (Lyon, Le Mans, Nancy, Lille, among other cities), Monaco and Belgium (Charleroi). The following notes are mostly based on such direct contacts, and seek to trace the profile of such special emigrants by probing into some of the dimensions that mark their life style.

In Brazil, to play football is not an occupation typical of the extremely poor. The sport demands minimal resources for a young player to become a professional (football shoes, contacts with clubs, bus tickets, days off work). It is not typical of 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 thus becomes 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 this layer whose parents were workers in the greater metropolitan area of São Paulo (ABC) (rural workers, locksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, street vendors, domestic maids, re-seller of goods, 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.

A pattern for the emigration of Brazilian footballers may be sought in terms of their placement in social hierarchies, elicited by asking about the occupation of their parents and sometimes grandparents. In this sense, most migrating Brazilian players came 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 son of a police detective, a nurse, some teachers), and only one of the players I have contacted directly came from the middle class (the father was a doctor and the mother, a teacher). In this respect, they are not so different from other Brazilian emigrants; here, too, it is not the poorest who migrate, as more naïve theories would have it.<sup>22</sup>

Literature dealing with emigration has demonstrated the inappropriateness of thinking about this population in terms of poor or lower class individuals, and that they migrate mainly as a strategy for working out their economic problems (Kearney, 1995, 1996). These studies have shown that emigration is a collective project of social mobility, mainly by families, who choose among their members those who are regarded as better fit for the adventure of migration. I say adventure (Sarró, 2007; Simmel, 1936) because this journey is many times 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 & Sales, 1999).

Curiously, I have found that the large majority of emigrants are among the youngest (*caçulas*) in their families, while firstborns rarely emigrate. Many had older brothers who also wished to play football, but were pulled out of this project in order to help support the family. This clustering around the youngest children shows that, in the family's division of tasks, they were the ones given the chance of trying the most desired project among Brazil's youth from subaltern classes (Futebol, 1998): to become

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<sup>22</sup> 'The idea that migration is driven by poverty is simplistic. Many other factors operate: work opportunities, expansion of communities of countrymen abroad, skills that are in high demand and that can be transferred. All these factors favour the middle classes as much as the poor,' explains Jeffrey Davidow, director of the Americas Institute at the University of California, San Diego (Millman, 2005).

professional football players. As will be seen, this has meant their exemption from early work in life.

This prevalent *caçulismo* among players substantiates the idea that the football player career is a family project (Damo, 2007; Rial, 2003, 2004), in which some economic surplus is a precondition for liberating one member of the family from paid work. Thus, the fact that the *caçulas* are the ones with the highest likelihood to engage in the project of becoming professional players can be explained by their release from the task, taken up by the eldest siblings, of securing the survival of the family through their work. Moreover, *caçulas* can count on a family member – an older brother, father, and many times the mother – to take them to the football school or training fields, something which may demand long commuting on public transportation.

This bias towards *caçulismo* emerged as a piece of statistical evidence since my earliest contacts. It became more evident to me, however, during conversations with a non-*caçula*, Luciano (Groening/Holanda), who was the eldest child in his family. He started playing football on the streets, ‘as all kids do’, until he was spotted by a grocery store owner who was a fan of Rio’s Vasco da Gama and, coincidentally, a supplier to the club’s president. This man was thus able to make an inside contact and negotiate the possibility of a test for the kid. Luciano went to Vasco, moved into the club’s training facilities, suffered with his isolation, and eventually returned to the small town where his family lived.

Everything could have ended there, since he knew the family needed him to help with their tight household budget. His father was a coffee farmer, and his mother was a babysitter: ‘I was the eldest, I had to help. But my father said that if I really wished to be a football player, I should go on, he would manage somehow. And thanks to him, I carried on. But the right thing would have been for me to quit football and go to work’. The ‘right thing’ is what is socially prescribed and expected, especially of a firstborn, a commitment from which younger siblings seem freed. Luciano was not completely freed from work, but was able to reconcile an afternoon job at the Vasco supporter’s grocery store (until 8pm) with the town’s football club – ‘my family needed it, I had to work there even if I was too tired’. For the eldest, then, an extra test is required in pursuing a football career: they have to work simultaneously and be thankful for being able to go on playing, as the ‘right thing’ would have been in fact to work two shifts.

Players need strong family support in the beginning. They need to be freed from the task of contributing to the family’s income, at an age in which older siblings are already working. Moreover, the profession entails costs with sports material (and many are the stories involving working extra hours so that the family could afford the first pair of football shoes), as well as with transportation between home and the training field. Since in some cases beginners play in more than one club, in order to enhance their chances of being noticed by an *olheiro* (scout) and becoming professionals, a lot of time is spent in these journeys, in which they are often joined by an older relative. Such family support may persist throughout their professional careers, as in the epigraph where siblings appear in charge of important professional positions.

Even though less frequent than *caçulismo*, another recurring feature among Brazilian players in global clubs is their origin in single-mother families, where she lived either with maternal grandparents<sup>23</sup> or just with the children – a common configuration in Brazil’s subaltern classes (Fonseca, 2000).

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<sup>23</sup> This is the case of Júlio Batista (Seville, Spain), Ricardo Oliveira (Bétis, Spain), and Leandro (Ajax, Netherlands). The clubs and countries under parenthesis are those at the moment when the interview was carried out. Given the broad circulation in the football system, many of the players interviewed have

Most players 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 show higher schooling than the players.

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: ‘Everything I am, I owe to God’, ‘That’s God’s will’, ‘Thank God’ are common phrases punctuating their speeches 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 underscored – is a central value in their lives. Most players are evangelicals, and some are Catholics. The Bible is read and taken along in trips. Some get together to read it at each others’ homes along with their families or in the training facility. The search for an evangelical church becomes a reason for short trips.<sup>24</sup> Belief in God has a fundamental role in consolidating a righteous personal ethics (‘God helps to sort out evil from good’; ‘before, I used to drink and do wrong things’, admitted Ricardo Oliveira). 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).<sup>25</sup>

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changed clubs various times during the five years this research lasted. In this case: Júlio Batista (Seville/Spain - Arsenal/England - Real Madrid/Spain), R. Oliveira (Bétis/Spain - Milan/Italy - Zaragoza/Spain), Leandro (Feyenoord/Netherlands - Ajax/Netherlands).

<sup>24</sup> Gomes, Alex and their families travel from Eindhoven to Amsterdam to attend cults at an evangelical temple. Also, players from the Celtic of Vigo – Edu (when he played there), Roberto, Iriney, and Fernando Bahiano – used to meet at Anderson’s place to pray. Hélio, who is not an evangelical himself, would frequent the Toronto temple in order to meet other Brazilians. Ricardo Oliveira and Fabiana went to the temple in Seville and, as with Gomes and Flávia, did not like the foreign temple’s style – even if, curiously, for opposite reasons. While Gomes’ wife explained she did not like it because in Amsterdam they were ‘too serious’ in contrast to Brazil, where it is ‘more cheerful’, Ricardo Oliveira’s wife thought the opposite about the temple she visited in Seville. The internet has also encouraged this: for instance, during the 2006 World Cup, Kaká would make daily visits to the website of his church, Reborn in Christ, from where he received special prayers from their two leaders; Kaká himself has plans of becoming a pastor when he quits football. Müller, a player in the national team, has dropped football altogether to become a pastor while another one, Jorginho (direct assistant to the current head coach of the Brazilian team, Dunga), has opened a temple at Munich’s main square (personal communication from anthropologist M. Amélia Dickie, Federal University of Santa Catarina). As I soon realized, like restaurants popular among Brazilians, to look for evangelical churches is a good strategy for meeting players in foreign cities.

<sup>25</sup> The following transcriptions illustrate this topic:

(i)

‘In Brazil, we would meet the day before the matches to sing anthems, read the Bible and use the word. This was one day before, and on the day of the match we would pray before entering the field. Here no, because here most of them are not religious, then it becomes a little harder. But I think we can’t judge the others, each person has his own religion and we have to respect it. It is like the Bible says, “God gave everyone free will, so we are free to do whatever we want”. So who am I to judge?’ (Adriano, Seville).

(ii)

‘I’m more religious, I’m evangelical, a believer’, says Denílson (Bétis), during a joint conversation with him and his teammate Assunção. ‘I don’t, I accept anything, if you invite me to go to church I’ll go. [laughter] Taste and religion can not be argued with. Each one has his own taste and religion, we have to respect. I’m a Catholic and you’re a *crente* [evangelical]’, says Assunção. ‘The importance of God. I think nothing happens by accident and everything has an answer: this answer can only be given by God. I pray all the time. Because there is evil, and if you don’t pray evil will take hold of you. I pray all the time, I ask for things, neither too much nor too little. It is like a fight, you know, between good and evil’, replies Denílson. ‘I try to thank Him for everything He gave me. Thanks to Him I have a good life, even though I’m not [religious]’, Assunção concludes.

Virtually all interviewees used the first significant income they got to buy a house for their mother, or to reform the one she had in case she did not wish to move somewhere else. In making a dream come true, they reciprocate some of what they claim to have received. The 'house for the mother', for the family, is the first goal of players during their early careers. Such was the case with players from different generations. A house is indeed the aspiration of many emigrants from the subaltern classes; it resonates less with the idea of ostentatious consumption than with security and the construction of social networks (Machado, 2008). Behind this desire to 'give the house' to his mother lies the idea that, through the house, the player would be able to rescue the family from the realm of necessity, thus providing it with lasting, daily safety. Luciano, who spent his childhood in a two-bedroom rented house ('my parents used one, and me, my brother and my sister, the other') with bathroom in the backyard, had always dreamt about the day he would finally go back to Brazil and buy his family a house with the income received from a Belgian club. 'It was moving, I cried, my dad cried... to me that was everything'. At that moment, Luciano could not imagine that, some years later, the money earned from subsequent contracts would allow him to construct a new, much larger house in place of that one, where he would henceforth spend the short, twice-a-year vacations granted him by the club. Neither could he imagine that he would end up living in a six-bedroom house of his own, in an upper class neighbourhood in the distant Groningen. The house for the mother thus appears as a mandatory counter-gift (Damo, 2007), among the many others deriving from the remittances.

To study successful trajectories render the focus on income problematic. Income is taboo in Brazilian society (as in many others); it is even easier to deal with more intimate personal issues. Income and sex were indeed taboo topics for these groups, and I have rarely brought them up directly. It is worth recalling that these players enjoyed some high income during a relatively short period of time, sometimes unofficially. It is

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(iii)

'I've converted and I'm evangelical since 1996, after my marriage. You ask me if I'm religious, and what I think is that God doesn't like religion. He likes you to give yourself wholeheartedly, so regardless of religion I think the important thing is that we search for God. God is the touchstone, the basis of everything in our life. That's how I think, and we always have meetings here in the Bahia [club]: me, Neto, Luciano, those who are Christians. Now Marcelinho has arrived, who's also a Christian.'

Dill (Bahia), has played in France and Switzerland.

(iv)

Alex (PSV): 'To me it's super important. I got to know it when I was 14 at an aunt's birthday. My mom invited me to the church, and I liked it. To me God is what in my life gives me strength. He has put me here, and I thank God everyday for his support, His help so I could get here. It's not enough to rely on God; one has to struggle.'

I: 'And do you go to a church here?'

Alex: 'Sometimes I go to Amsterdam, but it's kind of far, then I go with my wife and our daughter, too.'

I: 'And is there another player who goes to this church?'

Alex: 'No. There are very few players here in the Netherlands. There are some in Munich, Zé Roberto and Edmilson. In Lyon, Edmilson would always guide [the prayers], but here it's slow, there aren't many players.'

I: 'And how did you learn about that church in Amsterdam?'

Alex: 'I saw it on the website of "God is Love", it's [www.deuseamor.com.br](http://www.deuseamor.com.br), it's from Brazil. I called and spoke to the pastor. They are also in Belgium, Switzerland, England, I always go there. To me, it's fundamental.'

I: 'And do you have friends who go to the church? Are there many Brazilians, or there are more Dutchmen?'

Alex: 'Most are Brazilian, the pastor is also Brazilian. He doesn't speak Dutch, it's all in Portuguese. We talk to people there, they're not players, but we cultivate some friendship'.

known for instance that it is common for players to receive bonuses (*bichos*, as they are called in Brazil) for winning a match. Many such bonuses are delivered in cash and at times in person, when a player goes to the president's office in order to receive it. This is the case, for instance, with the Spanish club Bétis.

But although shrouded in mystery by players and managers, these figures appear repeatedly in the press. Since most of these players are football stars, they are continuously exposed in the media, an exposition which often includes their salaries. Based on media information, I estimate that in general the players I have interviewed in Spain and the Netherlands make between 400 thousand and 3 million Euros a year.<sup>26</sup> To this should be added bonuses for performances and publicity contracts, which in some cases outvalue the salaries themselves. Whenever I approached this topic, I did it only indirectly, citing sources and figures relative to other players; this way I was able to obtain approximate estimates of their revenues.<sup>27</sup>

More than concerns with taxes or with kidnapping,<sup>28</sup> I believe what was at stake in such secretiveness is the fact that these players are subjectively constituted as providers for their families, that is, as *donors*. In this respect, core values linked to religion, gift, and family support are central. Questions related to income or consumption thus become a slippery terrain, as wealth and consumption are values that are not socially emphasised by the group. Regarding themselves as providers and donors, as well as instruments of divine power, these players do not regard capital accumulation or consumption as core life goals.

It was easier to talk about consumption with the players' wives. Their public discourse was not as controlled, and most of the time they enjoyed revealing what they bought. To master brands, regardless of price, and the best and most prestigious options are a kind of cultural capital these women pursue. It is clear that their role in the family is not limited to mediating between the world of goods and the home; it is in fact much broader, as they provide the players with emotional and affective support. This is something very seldom addressed by the press, which prefers to portray them as futile women, performing a trivial role.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> According to the magazine *Placar*, Robinho received an annual 3 million Euros (250 thousand per month). This salary, inferior to Denílson's, would be the same as Ricardo Oliveira's (3 million Euros per season) according to the July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 issue of *La Gazzetta del Sport*. According to the newspaper *As*, Émerson will make 3.5 million Euros for each of the three seasons he contracted with the Milan A.C. He will earn a little more than Júlio Belleti, who will get over 3 million Euros for each of his three seasons in the Chelsea club. Daniel Alves would get 6 million Euros for each of five seasons in the same club, but eventually he was not able to transfer as the Seville would not accept any deal inferior to 42 million Euros (Ribot, 2007). Alex, lent to PSV, would make a monthly 80 thousand Euros, and probably much more now that he has returned to English football. Seemingly high, these salaries are in fact quite inferior to those of certain English coaches, such as Mourinho, who, according to *Redação Sportv*'s journalist Décio Lopes, would earn over 3 million Euros each month.

<sup>27</sup> As an illustration, I reproduce a tense piece of my interview with Maycon (Monaco, playing in the French league), with whom I joyfully talked for over an hour. I asked, 'Can you tell me your salary?', to which he immediately answered: 'Oh no. No!'. I replied: 'It's confidential. No? Ok. No problem. I know for instance that PSV's Alex makes around 85 thousand Euros, and player X makes 30 thousand. Are you somewhere between these?' Calmer, he answered: 'Yes. Between these'. Today, in Milan's Inter and in the Brazilian national team, Maycon should make much more than what he did in Monaco.

<sup>28</sup> While this research was being carried out, Ricardo Oliveira, Robinho and Luis Fabiano had family members kidnapped.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, one day after Brazil lost the World Cup, the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* brought a first page story by Mônica Bergamo (2006) on the wives of some of the players. The story needs to be contextualised, since it was published precisely in the aftermath of the unexpected demise in Germany. In Brazil, indignation mounted against the players, who came to be seen as disinterested in the results in the field and distant from the passions stirring the fans' imaginary community, who at that

Moreover, I came to realise that football performance and wages are not always in direct correlation in the football system. Wages depend on many factors, the most decisive of which are contract negotiations – thus the importance of being aided by agents or, in the case of more experienced players, by *ad hoc* attorneys. This gap between performance and wages is getting wider; it is common to find a player in technical decline receiving a higher salary than when he was at the height of his career.<sup>30</sup>

### **Cosmopolitanism and national identity: consuming Brazil abroad**

Many have approached consumption as an aspect of broader cultural strategies of identity and personal upkeep. Some have even asserted that ‘the sum of products consumed expresses what I am’ (Friedman, 1990). We do not need, however, to go that far to acknowledge that taste and consumption can be a good entry into people’s lifestyles and dimensions of national belonging, cosmopolitanism (Hannerz, 1996) or social agency not only in relation to class, as emphasised by Veblen (1974) and Bourdieu (1979).

In contrast to the image portrayed by part of the press, the high salaries enjoyed by players in Europe and Japan do not usually translate into ostentatious consumption. In fact, their consumption habits are closer to those of an upper middle class than of millionaires – which they actually are. For instance, they do not travel in private jets, do not own yachts and submarines, do not spend their vacations on private islands, are not assiduous patrons of luxury restaurants. They do live in spacious houses in noble neighbourhoods<sup>31</sup> – usually those concentrating a larger number of football players – but I did not notice any extravagance in their interior décor. They still dress like other people their age (sneakers, jeans and t-shirt, even though from expensive brands), eat at home or in restaurants serving food similar to the Brazilian diet, and have fun with online chat rooms (where they relate with family, friends and other football players), Brazilian music CDs and DVDs, Globo TV International, and electronic games (especially FIFA’s Playstation, also available in any Brazilian lan-house). During vacations, they prefer to return to their hometowns in Brazil, even when, in the case of Iriney (Celtic, Spain), this means penetrating the hinterlands of the Amazon. The only luxury consumption (Bourdieu, 1979) repeatedly noted among them were brand new luxury cars (which are sometimes provided by the club), diamond earrings and the ubiquitous Louis Vuitton *trousses de toilette* (toilet kits).

Contact with Brazil takes place at the most common spaces in their daily routine: the house, the car, the stadium, the restaurant, the evangelical church. Every time I rode

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moment were also the country’s citizens. Indignation took the shape of criticisms of the players’ lifestyle, made manifest in the media as luxury consumption. In the story, the society columnist addressed the relations between players and their wives and girlfriends in terms of luxury consumption. Suzana Werner, a former journalist and ex-girlfriend of Ronaldo in 1998 (today the wife of goalkeeper Julio César), is quoted as having engaged in a shopping-spree marathon with actress Daniela Escobar: ‘Dani, look at this! A store named Baby Dior, what a luxury!’ ‘I’m totally thrilled with Munich, there are such wonderful galleries here’ – of art? – ‘no, of shops, amore. I just left Zara with a bag full. And I’ve only spent 200 Euros [around 560 Reais]! Very cheap. I’m loving it!’ (from the wives of Cafú and Zagallo).

<sup>30</sup> Beckham enjoyed greater football prestige when he was captain of the English team and played for Real Madrid, a global club. Today, he earns almost ten times as much to play in Los Angeles, where he negotiated a contract with an unknown U.S. club for 50 million dollars a year.

<sup>31</sup> Edu has paid 600 thousand Euros for his, and those of Ricardo Oliveira, Denílson and Assunção have probably cost more. These houses are a far cry from the minimal spaces generally occupied by Brazilian emigrants in global cities (Rial & Grossi, 1999).

in a player's car, CDs played Brazilian music and, in two occasions (Ricardo Oliveira and Edu from the Bétis club, in Seville), Brazilian evangelical music. On TV, Globo International (a channel rebroadcasting the Brazilian networks Globo, SBT and Record) is watched daily and intensively. Even from afar, they follow up the news through *Jornal Nacional* (daily news), and especially the *novela das oito* (a primetime soap opera) as well as the Sílvio Santos show. This way, their ties with Brazilians are remade on a daily basis. Those who have not had the chance yet to access this satellite broadcast feel sorry about that (Rafael, Lille). Those who can, but do not do it, are regarded as 'foreigners'.<sup>32</sup>

A modality of consumption very much emphasised is Brazilian food. This is a pervading Brazilian presence in Spain, France and the Netherlands, as well as in China, Korea and Japan.<sup>33</sup> It was mentioned as one of the highest needs to be met while abroad. These emigrants choose to eat 'Brazilian food', a native category which in some cases includes *bobó de camarão* (prawn in manioc cream), in others *pão de queijo* (cheese roll) from Minas Gerais, and in all cases, rice with beans and beef. The restaurants they go to almost every day are either Brazilian or serving food which is similar to Brazil's. Each time they visit the country,<sup>34</sup> many products are brought back in their luggage, and many others are obtained through importers<sup>35</sup> or brought by guests (relatives and friends). In an analysis of players' regular consumption patterns, the national identity dimension is the most salient. Television, Brazilian music DVDs and cassette tapes, and also the web<sup>36</sup> bring them daily back to Brazil – or, if you prefer, keep them there. They

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<sup>32</sup> Túlio did not know about the existence of this channel in France: 'I didn't have it before, but when they [other Brazilian players] came here they told me. I didn't even look Brazilian, I spoke French already, would eat foods from here. Then we began to watch [the evening soap opera] every day in their place'. Leandro (Ajax), in the Netherlands since he was 12 and partner of a Dutch woman, showed no interest in acquiring it.

<sup>33</sup> This topic will be developed in another occasion. An index of the importance of foodstuffs in consumption by Brazilians living abroad is that, of the 500 million dollars of Japanese imports from Brazil, 200 million are food for the community of 300 thousand Brazilians living in Japan. This has curious reflexes on the Brazilian food industry. For instance, in order to be exportable, Lacta chocolate company had to import milk from New Zealand (along with Switzerland, one of the few countries whose milk is allowed into the Japanese market). Lacta began producing a *brant*, for which it had to stop their machines from time to time in order to replace the Brazilian milk, barred by the Japanese for arguably showing a high level of faecal coliforms (personal communication from Councilman Sérgio Azevedo, from the Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo). Also in the Netherlands, where I did fieldwork in February, 2005 and then again from December, 2007 to March 2008, Brazilian imports are significant. I learned from Flávia (Gomes's wife) and the player Alex that, for the store-website *Finalmente Brasil* only, eight containers arrive from Brazil every year. Much of the cargo is foodstuff, destined to immigrants living in the Netherlands and neighbouring countries.

<sup>34</sup> Items regarded as 'national' are not limited to the likely beans, manioc flour and other consumption items; also, Tang juice (according to Edu's wife) and various medicines (Gomes's wife).

<sup>35</sup> Players interviewed were unanimous in affirming that they rather consume Brazilian products, and that they do have easy access to them. In the Netherlands, even Brazilian steel wool may be purchased online, through the website *Finalmente Brasil* (Finally Brazil), which also provides mail-in orders to other European countries. A store in Amsterdam is supplied yearly with eight containers of Brazilian products (shampoos, Minâncora ointment, cheese roll, beers, Fanta Uva grape soda, meat, and so forth). The father of Feyenoord's player André Bahia invited me once to eat *bobó de camarão*, made possible by Rotterdam's 'Suriname market'. I had rice, beans, and *picadinho de carne* (beef hash) at Ari's, supplied by the 'Turkish'. In Japan, I have been at a large roving lorry which alternates between the Brazilian Embassy, *Banco do Brasil* (Brazil's Bank) and other spots; clients find in its shelves Perdigão chicken, Phebo soap, barbecue sausage, and even rice and Brazilian Playboy magazines.

<sup>36</sup> I noticed that the younger were more familiar with using internet tools, including phone. Those over 24 did not use it as often, and preferred the regular telephone. All of them gave me their email addresses, and I have exchanged messages with some players, therefore attesting to their intensive use of the web.



lend meaning to the players' life experience, allowing them to share that imagined community (Anderson, 1989) even while abroad. The set of commodities they consume thus continuously reasserts their national identities. This is also the case of most explicit signs of national belonging, such as the flags that adorn the entrance hallway of Gomes's (PSV/Eindhoven) house, and which they often wave when celebrating their clubs' titles.

The place (Seville, Lille, Eindhoven, Le Mans, Marseille, Brussels, Alkmaar, Tokyo, Toronto, Almelo) seems to count little for players. Even though they might purchase real estate and have kids there, they live with the permanent possibility of switching to another club, in another city or country. 'Here is just like Sweden', told me Paris, an aunt of Ari (Az). She referred to the pleasant city of Alkmaar in the northern Netherlands where they live today, after a successful season in the Scandinavian country. Therefore, what would seem like a cosmopolitan consumption connecting them to elsewhere (cable TV, internet, other electronic media) is in fact an instrument of approximation with Brazil. It keeps them integrated with their original national community. Their consumption therefore manifests what Michael Billig (1995) has dubbed *banal nationalism*: their quotidian practices repeatedly, and almost unconsciously, reaffirm their Brazilianness, bringing them together while demarcating frontiers vis-à-vis the local 'others'.

### **Circulation within the football system**

As Damo (2007) has shown, the construction of a sportsman habitus (Bourdieu, 1987; Wacquant, 2000, 2002), indispensable for standing out in the sports field, begins playfully by kicking cans or sock-stuffed balls. Players actually initiate their regular, systematic and disciplined learning very early, in places not by chance called *escolinhas* (little schools). These contrast with the true school – harsher, less fun, and which many in fact end up quitting. Since training takes up a considerable share of the day, it becomes difficult to pursue their studies. Most often, studies are altogether abandoned when the player is able to *federar*, that is, to be officially registered as a player in a club, oftentimes while still a minor league junior.

All enter the football system early. They practice football regularly since childhood, in *escolinhas* or amateur teams. Many times, their fathers also practice amateur football and some were even professionals. And when that is not the case, commonly there is some other male figure connected to football – an uncle, neighbour, grandfather – who serves as initiator and/or broker for the beginner during his formal entrance into the football system.<sup>37</sup>

The football career is a family project, many times even predating the future player's birth. A story told by Maicon (Milan's Inter) brings in its narrative the weight of a myth:

When I was born, my dad took our [his and his twin brother] umbilical cords to the Novo Hamburgo field, right to the middle of it. He took our umbilical cords, mine and my brother's, and buried them there. He looked up to the sky and said: 'God's will shall be done, one of them will have to succeed'. And that turned out to be me.

Even though sometimes framed as part of some divine design, entry into the football system takes place by different avenues. Most commonly, players perform in

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<sup>37</sup> I will not dwell here in the training of football players and their initiation in the football field. This has received enough attention in other works (Futebol, 1998; Rial, 2004), especially Arlei Damo's (2007).

screening tryouts organised by clubs or let themselves be observed by a club scout – an expert in spotting talents. To be authorised to live in the club’s living quarters (*concentração*<sup>38</sup>) is among the first victories scored by a beginner. Indeed, when I started this research I expected moving abroad to be the most significant landmark in their biographies. But I soon realised that their milestone break occurred at an earlier moment, while still in Brazil: when they first left home – in the case of some players, during adolescence.<sup>39</sup> This event ushers in their circulation, the beginning of their *rodar*, where the first frontier overcome is that of the family and neighbourhood circles.

Such displacement usually takes them to a larger regional city, but it is not uncommon for some to move very far from home, in another state or even region. Circulation moves in a periphery-to-downtown direction. This moment of rupture is experienced as being very significant, as it implies a radical change in lifestyle. It is seen by many players and their families as a sign that the project of a career in football is indeed moving forward. On the other hand, such rupture indicates that this project, if successful, will result in the player’s physical distance from the family and neighbourhood circles. In other words, such distancing is painful, at the same time it is filled with great expectations of professional success.<sup>40</sup>

Entry into and traffic within the football field is always mediated by other social agents, be it through personal or professional relations. Many players rely on a broker who had first opened the doors of a large club during their adolescence – the fastest way toward ascending to the junior national team. Brazil’s national team is the chief propeller driving players to the international market. It is indeed the major guarantor of the player’s quality to foreign clubs. Today, hardly a player has performed in the Brazilian team, even in its junior ranks (sub-20, sub-23 age brackets), without being eventually transferred to a foreign club. This is the best ‘window’, as players would put it, which seems to have replaced the previous dominance of road trip ‘excursions’, when top Brazilian teams used to play abroad.<sup>41</sup>

Contact with these successful players showed me that to be hired by a large foreign club entails an early initiation into the football system, supported by a family project,

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<sup>38</sup> *Concentração* (literally, concentration) designates the space (and time) where players are assembled during the days preceding a match, where they are kept at bay from the temptations of mundane life. There, in the absence of relatives, alcohol and sex, it is believed that they will be better focused on the tasks to be carried out during the match. Many clubs in Brazil maintain residential buildings for their players which also carry this name. In large clubs, where salaries are higher, such places are destined to junior players. In smaller clubs, where players make less money, housing is also provided for professionals coming from out-of-town. New provisions in Brazil’s Minor Statute have prevented many clubs from lodging boys under fourteen. A common strategy to circumvent this has been to host them in the club directors’ own homes.

<sup>39</sup> Adailton, son of a medical doctor, tells that when he was fourteen he moved to live alone in Belo Horizonte in an apartment rented by his family. The other players – Renato, Gomes, Alexandre, Edu, etc. – lived from the outset in the abovementioned club facilities known as *concentrações*. This also guaranteed their meals. As Gomes told me: ‘I became friends with the cook who would always give me something with which to make a sandwich in the evening, since they only provided lunch. During the weekends, when there was no cook, I ate bread with bread.’ Also, Renato: ‘I went to Campinas [at age fourteen] along with a boy who played with me in Gracena. I stayed with him, he was pretty much my best friend there of all the fifty boys in the lodging. Then I got to know other people.’

<sup>40</sup> This was the case of 13-year-old David, whom I guided through the Congonhas airport. He was about to make his first visit to his hometown of Belém since he had moved to the interior of São Paulo state to play soccer. The trip had been prompted by the death of his grandmother.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to the fact that their matches are more frequently broadcasted abroad, the Brazilian team itself plays outside Brazil. Its contract with the sports gear provider prescribes six matches per year, in the so-called ‘FIFA dates’ (i.e., dates earmarked in national competitions’ calendars for games between national teams, that is, international matches).

and some playing experience in the Brazilian team. On the other hand, to successfully *remain* abroad would entail marriage, if possible children, and belonging to a religion, preferentially evangelical, as their religious principles help support the discipline imposed by a career in football (described by players as ‘suffering’).

At the moment of emigration most of my interlocutors were players at clubs in the premier league of Brazilian football. They were therefore employed as football players at the time of their transfers, which takes place within an institutional framework involving two clubs and at least one manager (a FIFA-approved agent<sup>42</sup>) and the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF).<sup>43</sup> The best paid players among those whom I have contacted in Europe had already stood out in their clubs as well as in important competitions, besides having played in Brazilian junior national teams. This shows there is a possible trajectory with clear-cut stages during one’s footballer career.

At this point a parenthesis is need for highlighting a recent phenomenon which points toward a new direction: the juvenilisation of emigration. I found that this announced destiny changed during the last years, coming to encompass younger age groups. Emigration of youngsters has in fact being the object of concern by Brazilian clubs, which do not feel protected from the freedom of circulation instituted by the Pelé Law. This piece of legislation is indeed altering the players’ expected professional trajectory. Before it, young players would emigrate from large clubs, having already passed through the national team. Ronaldo, who went to Holland’s PSV when he was seventeen, is paradigmatic of this: he had already played in Flamengo, Cruzeiro and the main Brazilian national team. Many players I interviewed had already made trips abroad before emigrating. Recently, however, European clubs seem to have changed their strategy toward hiring players even before they are nationally known or have played in large clubs. This way, the exodus of adolescent players is becoming more common.

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<sup>42</sup> Only FIFA-authorized managers are allowed to broker international transactions. A manager who wishes to become a FIFA agent will have to undergo a knowledge test. His share in transactions averages 10 percent. The growing importance of such managers has prompted some to suggest that today they are the key political actors in Brazilian football, even more than club directors. They also appear as parallel institutions, assembling under their umbrella players from different clubs which would otherwise be kept apart. It is not surprising then that an office in Porto Alegre published in the *Zero Hora* newspaper a short ad congratulating the goalkeeper Gomes, who plays in the Netherlands’ PSV, when he was called to Brazil’s national team. Gomes never played in Rio Grande do Sul, and has no relation whatsoever to this state – other than the fact that he is one of the players managed by this office. Successful FIFA agents move around the globe to manage their clients’ relations to their clubs. Not rarely, players contract FIFA agents *ad hoc*, and then hire other national professionals like lawyers and local managers. The fact, however, is that most of the time relations between players and managers overspill the professional dimension. Many of my interlocutors have referred to their managers as ‘family’, a person for whom they sustain bonds of debt and gratefulness. I had the chance to talk to managers in three occasions, during quite different situations: a lunch at Edu (Bétis) and Fabiana’s place (Bétis) (a Spanish manager); the Portuguese restaurant *O Bola* in Toronto, popular among Brazilian players (a Greek manager); and with Márcio Cruz, a young Brazilian representative of a group of Swedish managers (in the Az’s headquarters in Alkmaar, the Netherlands).

<sup>43</sup> An exception is Alexandre (Lens), who moved to France when he was fourteen brokered by a representative from Nantes who by chance saw him playing amateur football. Leandro (Ajax) was discovered by Dutch managers when he was twelve, through a documentary film about the life of boys living in a Rio de Janeiro slum. The transfer of players under eighteen or playing in junior categories has been increasingly frequent in Brazil. Well-known cases were those of Anderson (from Grêmio to Portugal’s Porto, who is today in England’s Manchester United) and Alexandre Pato (from Inter to Italy’s Milan). But I have also met many young Brazilian players in the Netherlands in 2008, something which had not been the case during my first visit to that country in 2005.

This strategy of targeting increasingly younger players is not only limited to Brazil, Africa or Latin America. Nor is the loss of young players a problem afflicting only clubs in peripheral countries. As a director of PSV, Pedro Salazar, has pointed out:

We face the same problem. Three of our players, who were trained here, are today in British football. That is, they have not given back to the club what we expected from them.

If juvenilisation is a more general phenomenon impacting various sports other than football, in the case of the latter there are important peculiarities. Among these are the announced changes in the Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) regulations toward limiting the presence of nationalised players in national teams of their non-original countries. In order to shore up some national representation in European competitions, UEFA intends to pose obstacles to the international circulation of players. In fact, clubs seem to be acting in anticipation to the likely enactment of new laws capping the number of foreigners in European teams, which will limit participation to 'foreign' players who have been trained by the club for at least three years.<sup>44</sup>

Even though the national team is surely the shortest path, not all 800 players who will leave Brazil this year have played in it. Other 'windows' exist, among which local competitions, junior leagues, the São Paulo junior cup, the Sub-20 Cup, excursions abroad and the Brazilian premier league itself. The latter, while not receiving the same highlight coverage in the world media as the European national leagues, has been followed closely by football experts, scouts and professionals (through agents who live in Brazil or are sent there, or videotapes and DVDs recorded *ad hoc*<sup>45</sup>). They screen the best players in the league's various categories before they reach the national team and accrue to a higher market value.

Brazil's football market therefore shows a clear trend toward exporting increasingly younger players.<sup>46</sup> Many end up unknown in their own country of origin, and become known to Brazilian fans only through TV broadcasting of European football matches. Some even become citizens and play for other countries' national teams.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Its alarmist and exaggerated tone notwithstanding, the Brazilian media has not failed to note this phenomenon: 'Not to mention the hundreds of boys who leave the country, taken by managers or even by their own parents, to play in clubs scattered through countries ranging from Turkmenistan to Vietnam. They do not even get to play for the [Brazilian] clubs, therefore there is no record of their exit in CBF's files. They are amateurs, and no one is able to estimate their numbers. We only hear about it when one of them appears in some foreign club or national team, and we find out that he was in fact born in Brazil. This is the case of forward Denny Seilhaber from the United States national team who is competing on the Sub-20 World Cup' (Souza, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> I visited a DVD editing enterprise which operated in a small back room of the restaurant *O Bola* in Toronto. I watched several of its footages, paying heed to the editing strategies deployed. Besides the usual (goals, dribbling), I noticed, and they confirmed, that the player should be shown in scenes shared with many fans in a stadium, where he appears in TV broadcast, and other techniques for constructing the image of a subject acting outstandingly in a large club. In the players' profile accompanying the DVDs, their weigh or height are sometimes altered.

<sup>46</sup> Some clubs acquire players but keep them in Brazilian clubs until they mature. This was the case of a young player from Santos, bought by Real Madrid. Others are taken abroad to play in junior leagues. I interviewed two of these: Túlio Mello, trained in Nantes and currently playing for Le Mans, was taken to France when he was fourteen, alone and without speaking French; and Leandro, who has been training since age twelve in the Feyenoord club (Netherlands).

<sup>47</sup> Neither is this an unprecedented phenomenon. The first Brazilian to win a World Cup, Amphilóquio Guarisi (Filó), did it while playing for Italy in 1934. Mazzolla, almost thirty years later, was a world

*Rodar*, as seen above, is mostly ascribed a positive value by the players themselves; but they also remark that such ‘transfers’ should take place between large clubs.<sup>48</sup> The number of players who return to Brazilian clubs, permanently or not, is increasing. Brazil has thus become a possible provisional or permanent destination for exported players. When a player returns to Brazil at the height of his career, this is usually a sign of mal-adaptation abroad (to be ‘homesick’, not being able to stand the ‘suffering’). But other motivations are possible, such as physical and psychological recovery, proximity to the national team’s coach with the hope of being called by him, and even to provide their children born abroad with some life experience in Brazil.<sup>49</sup>

Due to their offer of high salaries, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are also possible destinations, albeit more likely at the twilight of one’s career. Such a path was taken back in the mid-late 70’s by Pelé, who played for the New York Cosmos. But when asked about it now, players invariably show the desire to end their careers in Brazil, if possible playing in the clubs that made them known – as a last counter-gift – or, in the case of those who left at a younger age, the club they used to root for (and still do). Returning to Brazil at the onset of their careers has indeed been the rule, and it once again lends support to the thesis that this kind of emigration is in fact a closed-loop circulation.<sup>50</sup>

The football system, through its prestigious sphere of spectacle football (see footnote number 3), assumes the traffic and transitoriness of relations between individuals and their clubs. In this context, circulation is an index of success. The category employed to refer to this circulation is, as seen above, *rodar*. A *rodado* player is regarded as an experienced journeyman. Football capital is amassed during this circulation which, in the occasion of a transfer, may add a higher value to new players.

More than in a country or city, they are in a club. And after a certain threshold in the football system hierarchy, there is some homogeneity among clubs in terms of spaces and practices – the particular place they are located notwithstanding. In all cases, they should train at least once a day in training centres and stadiums which are very alike one another. When they travel to play, they transit in similar hotels, weigh rooms, airport halls, press rooms – in other words, they move from a non-place (Augé, 1992) to

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champion for Brazil in 1958 and later on played for Italy as Altafini. There are many other Brazilians playing in foreign national teams, some well-known (Deco, who plays for Portugal), some unknown in Brazil. Examples of the latter include: Eduardo da Silva, a naturalised Croatian, was top scorer of Croatia’s national team during the 2006 Eurocopa qualification phase; Dos Santos and Clayton, naturalised Tunisians; Mehmet Aurélio, former Marco Aurélio, the first foreigner to play for Turkey’s national team; Kuranyi and Paulo Rink (Germany); Marcos Senna and Donato (Spain); Zaguinho and Zinha (Mexico); Alex, Rui Ramos and Wagner Lopes (Japan). It is worth highlighting that Senna became the first Brazilian to win the Eurocopa in 2008, besides being elected for the European team by UEFA specialists.

<sup>48</sup> Maycon: ‘The deal is to circulate (*rodar*), it’s good to circulate in large clubs. Because if you circulate in small clubs, it’s the same as staying put. But if you play in many clubs, get to know different languages, this is exceptional. But as for me, I feel good here, I’m ok here. If I’m to stay here for ten years...’

<sup>49</sup> This was the case of Ricardo Oliveira and Adriano, who physically recovered in the Refis (São Paulo’s training centre) and then played in the club for one season. Also Nilmar and Adailton hoped to raise their stakes for being called for the national team. Zé Roberto, whose children were born when he was already in Germany and had never lived in Brazil, took this into account in his decision of spending a year in Santos.

<sup>50</sup> A few players ended up settling abroad: this was the case of Sonny Anderson (Lyon, France), who opened a Brazilian restaurant in Lyon; Hugo (Groningen, Netherlands), who became a coach in the club’s junior ranks; and Leonardo (Milan, Italy), who is currently one of the club’s directors as well as its head coach.

another. Above all, they should abide by the strict conduct regulations which, in cases such as the Netherlands', hardly find parallel in professions other than the military. These include rigid scheduling of both work and non-work, dressing discipline (to go to the stadium wearing suit and tie, different garments to be worn before the match when they are in the club's own stadium versus in visiting stadiums, no cell phones on the way over – but not on the way back – nor during the match and in the dressing rooms, set places to sit at the table, fixed order to be served during meals, prohibition of changing jerseys with contenders after the match, strict punctuality demanded in drills and in all meetings, and so forth). The players' daily routine is thus rigidly controlled, and punishment for breaching the rules – from fines to exclusion from the team – makes sure players are interested in complying.

Furthermore, to travel across borders does not necessarily mean players get to know the countries they visit. Routine in these trips is predesigned by the club and highly controlled. There is not much time left for them to freely explore the cities, and actually get to know them. When I asked Denílson whether he knew many countries, his ironic answer was, 'yes, the hotels; we know the hotels and airports very well'. But to visit other countries is not a hegemonic aspiration. As with other dimensions, generation and the age at which they left the country mark a watershed: this is a stronger desire among younger players who left Brazil earlier.<sup>51</sup>

Although they wish to, Brazilian players in Europe are not able to come to Brazil too often, as national leagues and European tournaments take up almost the entire year. When they are called to the Brazilian national team (and almost all of those whom I have met in Seville and Eindhoven were), they cannot find time to see friends and relatives – their stay is predetermined hour-by-hour by the Brazilian Football Confederation.<sup>52</sup> During vacations, the longing to be in touch with Brazil, and the fact that they live in two places at once, become evident. To go on vacations somewhere else is unthinkable. In all cases, the destination is their hometown, where they frequently stay in their family homes – which are often the abovementioned 'mother's house', bought for relatives and closer people and where their first substantial gain is invested: the first counter-gift preceding many others (Damo, 2007).

I heard of players who went to Brazil during a three-day break, and those who invariably spend their vacations in small rural towns. I have met players who include in their contracts special provisions allowing travel in the event of emergencies.<sup>53</sup>

Brazil is a pleasant and safe haven, where players go when they are sick or need some other kind of medical treatment. The Brazilian health care system is unanimously regarded by players as more efficient.<sup>54</sup> During a conversation with doctors from a clinic in Seville which provides care to players (but not exclusively; it also treats work

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<sup>51</sup> Of the players I have contacted, only those who arrived in Europe at a very young age placed travels abroad as priorities of their life projects. This was the case of Adriano (Seville) ('I want to know Greece, other countries'), Túlio (Le Mans) and Leonardo (Ajax). Those living close to Paris – in France or in the Netherlands – admitted visiting the city whenever possible. Their favourite destination is the Champs-Élysée, and, on it, the Louis Vuitton store.

<sup>52</sup> Clubs however are quite rigorous about these trips. Global clubs such as Real, Barcelona and Milan go as far as renting jets so players return faster.

<sup>53</sup> This was the case of Renato, who included a provision allowing him to travel for the birth of his first child. Others would like to do it but are prevented, as when Ricardo Oliveira's sister was kidnapped. To be cleared for Carnival is no longer part of such contracts – this is about 'good boys', as I was told once: 'the era of the bad boys is over, no club would take them'.

<sup>54</sup> This was the case of Ronaldo, Kléberson, Ricardo Oliveira, Cris, Kaká, Leonardo, Eduardo, and a long list of players hired in different countries who, when hurt and in need of long-term medical treatment, chose to undergo it in Brazil.

accidents involving trauma), I noted complaints about Brazilian players being ‘too spoiled’, that is, demanding more attention than other patients. In Brazil, on the other hand, a similarly large club would hardly send its athletes to a public clinic geared toward workers in general. As Bittencourt’s (2007) ethnography in the Atlético Paranaense club has shown, from notorious stars to beginners, all players are cared for by the club’s well-equipped medical departments; they are rarely referred to external facilities.

More than technology, the advantage pointed out by players is in the close attention bestowed on them by physicians, physical therapists and other health professionals. This is the positive version of the Spanish doctor’s complaint: yes, they are ‘spoiled’ indeed. The same holds true of their wives, who travel to Brazil in order to take their children to paediatric visits, or spend considerable time periods there during their pregnancies. This was the case of Gomes’s wife, Flávia, who left the Netherlands during the early months of pregnancy because she was malnourished and showing early signs of depression.<sup>55</sup>

When one cannot be in Brazil, Brazil is brought closer. While in the homeland, what counts most is to be able to see family and friends. The flux of visits to and from Brazil involving the players’ networks of family and friends is intense, and is not limited to vacations or emergencies. Although this did not show up much during my talks with players, it is quite common for them to have friends around.<sup>56</sup> This circulation of friends rarely appears in the press,<sup>57</sup> and suffers from legal restrictions. In Europe, where tourist visas only allow for a maximum of three months, fathers, mothers, friends and even maids are forced to go back and forth with some regularity.

When a friend is not brought along, the club itself encourages closer contacts among Brazilians by hiring groups of players. This has indeed been a characteristic of Brazilian players’ successful migration abroad: the constitution of networks of mates within a club, who share responsibility and a common language in and out of the field. It is possible that such role will be professionalised in the future. Ari’s (Az) managers, for instance, have hired a journalist (Márcio) who is with him at all times as an interpreter, driver, secretary, even living in his house. This practice mixes providing a service with surveillance and friendship, therefore blurring the boundaries between work and personal life.

The circulation of Brazilian players therefore takes place at a *zone* made up of *non-places* (airports, stadiums) and *places* (home), which is marked by Brazilian consumption and lifestyle. In a sense, thus, this kind of circulation is immobile, as individuals are displaced geographically but not symbolically.

### **Emigrants? Brasileños/brésiliens/brazilians/braziliaanse**

Regarded as emigrants whose departure incur in losses for their home country – this phenomenon is referred to as an ‘exodus’ of players, and one could just as well label it a diaspora –, players are not typically cast as ‘emigrants’ in the receiving

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<sup>55</sup> According to her, the moment she set foot in Brazil, her nausea went away.

<sup>56</sup> Denílson did not tell me about Marrom, a friend he brought with him to Seville. I heard about it from Marrom himself and from Ricardo Oliveira, for whom he worked when I met him in 2004.

<sup>57</sup> For instance, Ronaldo, who has his life minutely covered by the media, kept in his house a room for his friend César since he was first transferred to PSV at the age of seventeen. It continued during his first marriage, and was only dismantled during his second marriage – a demand from Daniella Cicarelli. When his friend got married, he moved to a house in Bahia he got as a gift from Ronaldo. This practice is no longer accompanied with rumours about homosexuality, such as those surrounding Falcão’s friend, journalist Roberto Moura, when he transferred to Rome in the 80’s.

countries. These players are never mentioned in press stories about immigration, and are invisible in newspaper articles addressing the question of immigrants in Europe (totalling today around 1 million people). In the press, immigrant is a negative category – one speaks, for instance, of ‘the immigrant problem’ – designating low income people, drug traffic networks, unemployed, illegal jobs, black markets, and so forth. Brazilian players do not fit into this profile, usually reserved for manual labour and often associated with crime and illegality.<sup>58</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that in the imagination of Europeans in the countries where I did fieldwork, Brazilian immigration evokes the arrival of prostitutes and traverstites – which is a fact – and rarely that of their football idols. Emigrant-immigrant are not native categories either, as players never refer to themselves as such, but as professionals working abroad for a limited period of time who will return home to undergo professional conversion or retire.

Also for Europeans, they continue to be foreigners, that is, *brasileños* / *brésiliens* / *brazilians* / *braziliaanse*. This category of course indicates national belonging, but it is also a value, a positive qualifying term in their profession. As if in a contagious magic reasoning, to be Brazilian and to play football is to be a good football player. The word ‘*brasileño*’ and its translations, which invariably accompany the players’ names, act as an adjective positively qualifying them as skilful with the ball, and negatively with respect to the clubs’ norms. *Brasileños* / *brésiliens* / *brazilians* / *braziliaanse* are regarded as rebellious, party goers, and sufferers from the ills of ‘*saudade*’ (homesickness). In other words, they continue to be seen as potential bad boys (a ‘*malandro*’ [rogues],<sup>59</sup> in football slang) (DaMatta, 1990), even though most of my interlocutors in fact showed the opposite behaviour, especially the evangelicals – an option not without consequences (Weber, 1996) for their daily practices and values.<sup>60</sup>

Contemporary capital mobility causes the de-territorialisation of many services that may be performed by workers from anywhere in the globe, as long as they have the necessary training and skills. This is often related to the mastery of a language and basic training – such is the case of customer service phone attendants, who have been concentrated in countries such as India (U.S. companies) and Morocco (French companies). Emigrants however are still needed in central countries, especially in global cities (Sassen, 1991), to perform subaltern tasks which are refused by locals even in contexts of unemployment (for instance, cleaning and maintenance services). Another

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<sup>58</sup> In Spain, ‘immigrants’ usually denote either Africans (both Maghrebians from North Africa and Subsaharians, as the press calls those who get to Tarifa in dangerous vessels or who try to jump over the six-meter high fences in Melilla) or workers from Spanish-speaking Latin America or Eastern Europe. Brazil is mostly associated with the immigration of prostitutes (Piscitelli, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Translator’s note: Neither *saudade* nor *malandro* have perfect correspondents in English. Even though semantically broader, *saudade* in this context denotes mostly homesickness. ‘Rogue’, on the other hand, is the standard term used in the English translation of the author’s reference (Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta’s *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes*).

<sup>60</sup> Sometimes these players are also referred to by the European media as ‘*carioca*’, as if *carioca* was synonymous with being Brazilian and not of being born in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This is especially common in Spain. Edu and Ricardo Oliveira, for instance, appeared as *cariocas* in stories in the newspaper *Marca* in 2004. One year later the paper apparently figured out the real meaning of the term and preferred to call them ‘*paulistas*’ (born in São Paulo). The bias toward regional designation is accounted for by the construction of national belonging in Spain which, in contrast to Brazil’s, passes through the regions. In other words, before being ‘Spanish,’ one is Basque, Catalan, or Andalusian. Even though some Brazilian players do bear the name of the region they come from – such as Ronaldinho ‘*Gaúcho*’ (from the state of Rio Grande do Sul) – it may happen that they refer to some other region, as with the *paulista* Fernando ‘*Baiano*’ (from Bahia), the *gaúcho* Mineiro (from Minas Gerais), among others.



possibility is functions that require a kind of bodily learning which is better developed in peripheral countries. This is the case of Latin-American and African players in global clubs within the football system.

The players approached by this research are an extreme example of this living-between-borders associated to emigrants by recent scholarship. Can they be characterised as trans-migrants? Their physical presence *there* notwithstanding, they still live in Brazil, both in terms of imagination and economic investment. In Brazil, they support relatives and keep houses, farms, cars, bank accounts, and multiple investments. In this sense, they are trans-migrants. Even after nationalising, they go on living as Brazilians and thinking of their future as in Brazil. To acquire legal citizenship is thus a strategic move, which does not mean incorporating some other national belonging. They are European citizens by right, who nevertheless feel and are perceived as foreigners. This ‘nationalisation’ – a clear instance of searching citizenship for strategic purposes (Sassen, 2003, 2008) – by no means implies de-nationalisation or re-nationalisation.

Spain, France, Netherlands, Korea, Japan – wherever the football system’s mobility may lead them to *rodar* – are just a passage, a job, a sacrifice, in exchange for professional and financial prestige. They live in voluntary exile, with all the pain that the word encapsulates. They still think of themselves as living in Brazil. Julio Baptista’s slip of the tongue was evocative of this feeling of living in two places at once: ‘I live in São Paulo’ – referring to a place 12 hours away by plane from his current residency without noticing the present verb tense he used. In the same vein, their consumption and lifestyles do not evince the cosmopolitanism typical of other professional categories. This is a far cry from the cosmopolitan individuals critically associated in a Western elite ‘who were the fullest expression of European bourgeois capitalism and colonial empires’ (Beck, 2002, p. 17).

*Rodar* – the transience of their sojourn in work institutions and foreign countries – characterises this kind of emigration as a circulation, and could account for the persistence of feelings of national belonging. This transitoriness has also been noted by other ethnographies of emigration, but in contrast for instance to Sayad (1992), the ‘provisional’ here is not a form of dissimulation.<sup>61</sup> As I have tried to show, such circulation operates in special zones and circuits which may encompass various nation-states without their borders being significantly relevant.

We can now return to our epigraph. Ronaldinho Gaúcho, as a Spanish citizen, has sworn by the Spanish constitution, flag, and monarchy, but he does not consider himself neither is considered by others as Spanish, neither in Spain nor in Brazil. He plays for Barcelona, a global club whose slogan is ‘mucho más que um club’ (far more than a club) as it had remained, during the Franco years, one of the few spaces for affirming Catalan identity, as well as a stronghold of the struggle for Catalonia’s autonomy. He is neither Catalan nor *gaúcho* – the nickname notwithstanding, an identity he does not claim for himself.

As young Jews (Majer, 2008) and waiters in ski stations (Dias, 2008), Ronaldinho and other players hardly fit the emigrant-immigrant profile. To refer to them like that is

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<sup>61</sup> One of the vital characteristics of the immigration phenomenon is that, some exceptions granted, it works toward dissimulating its own truth. In avoiding matching right to fact, immigration is condemned to engender a double contradiction: one does not know if it is about a provisional stage which is indefinitely deferred or, on the contrary, a more lasting state in which one prefers to live with an intense feeling of transitoriness (Sayad, 1992, p. 5).

to make use of what Beck (2002) has ironically called a 'zombie category.'<sup>62</sup> They are in the country just in passing, do not consider themselves and are not considered as immigrants. Their symbolic frame of reference is not national-local, but that of the club. They live in institutional bubbles shielding and controlling them, and mediating their relations with the outside world. They constantly move from one *non-place* (Augé, 1992) to another; the *place* has little impact on their lives (Feldman-Bianco, 2006, Sassen, 2008). They therefore cross geographic frontiers without entering the countries, as their borders are the clubs and not the nation-states. They nationalise without changing national identity. From one continent to another, these players are the ones who most forcefully embody Brazil in the imagination of today's world populations.

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<sup>62</sup> 'Zombie categories are living dead categories, which blind the social sciences to the rapidly changing realities inside the nation-state containers, and outside as well' (Beck, 2000, p. 23).

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