

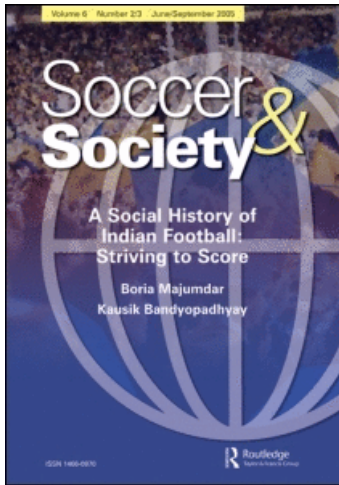
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The Paradox of the Portuguese Game: The Omnipresence of Football and the Absence of Spectators at Matches

João Nuno Coelho and Nina Clara Tiesler

Without doubt, football is omnipresent in the Portuguese public (and private) sphere. Some speak about the ‘footballization of Portuguese society’, and criticize the hegemony of football in Portuguese culture, along with its close (and sometimes dangerous) connections between football and politics. What is so interesting about this phenomenon is that it is juxtaposed with other facts, such as stadium attendance being surprisingly low. The essay brings to the forefront the particularities of the Portuguese football social formation case by taking these two current realities as a point of departure. In analysing stadium attendance over three decades against specific historical backgrounds, the authors present six different factors which explain the paradox and come to the conclusion that both realities are not contradictory – but partly determining each other.

Someone was saying yesterday that Norway is the top-ranking country in human development; (...) that it’s a fantastic country and so on and so on (...) But here’s back at them. Portugal is at the top of its group and all it needs is a draw to qualify for the World Cup while Norway is five points behind the leader of its group! (...) Ha ha ha![1]

Introduction

Although Portuguese football is reasonably well-known to international football fans, at least since Benfica and the national team of Eusébio & Co., the general idea abroad that Portugal is a ‘football country’ is much more recent (Euro 2004). It seems that, today, the country is known elsewhere particularly for its football and football celebrities. However, people who live in Portugal, even if they don’t share an interest in or taste for the sport, have long been aware from personal experience of football’s social

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importance in the country. Television ratings, sports newspaper sales or the omnipresence of the subject in everyday conversations leave no doubt whatsoever as to the social impact of football on Portuguese society.

Although this popularity dates back to the mid-twentieth century, the recent trend towards the 'footballization of Portuguese society seems to have increased'. [2] Football can always focus public attention, thanks in great part to the media, which obviously do their best to exploit its commercial power. Football players and other protagonists in the game, such as managers and directors, figure among the nation's most important celebrities. At the same time, there are plenty of examples not only of an unusual connection between football and the powers that be (local but also central government) in discourses promoting identification between national/local representation and the game, but also in the management of clubs, the construction of stadiums, the clubs' relations with state institutions and political powers.

Particularly significant of this 'footballization' of the country is the generalized use of typical football words and expressions, often called 'footballese', a kind of oral tradition that has been developed in written and spoken sports journalism and is used in everyday language by politicians and in the media and a wide variety of social dimensions, including people's private lives, to refer to different states of mind, emotions and feelings.

Football seems to be everywhere in Portuguese society. Because of this, there is an urgent need to research an apparently paradoxical reality characterizing football in Portugal: the small number of spectators who actually go to the stadiums, considering the centrality and omnipresence of the sport in society.

This essay looks into this paradox while sketching a picture of the social formation of Portuguese football. We have used some basic data and lines embodying and characterizing this contradictory situation and then reflected on the reasons behind it.

The Passion and the Paradox

In Portugal, football is not only the national sport but also a passion shared by many millions. It is much more unusual to find a Portuguese who does not like or 'is not bothered' about football, which is normally an expression of rebellion, a deviation from the norm, a refusal to belong to the sociological majority, than one who makes it the central issue of his or her life. It is one of the main topics of conversation and everyone seems to have an opinion about it. Football is the subject that sells most newspapers and television programmes in Portugal: that there are three daily sports papers and that 90 per cent of their pages are devoted to the king of games. Moreover, in a country with a very low reading index, the three dailies, *A Bola*, *O Record* and *O Jogo* together sell between 200,000 and 300,000 copies a day and they are all among the top five most sold newspapers. [3] During major international competitions in which a Portuguese team is taking part, *A Bola* has managed print runs of 250,000 copies a day [4] and even then has sold out.

The figures for television are even more expressive and hardly a year goes by without televised football matches leading the ratings in Portugal. In 2002, for example, the

six most-watched programmes on Portuguese television were football matches. The Portugal-Brazil match before the 2002 World Cup was watched by an astounding four million viewers in Portugal. The matches played by the Portuguese national team in the 2002 World Cup were not far behind, even though they were broadcast in the morning.[5] So far as club football is concerned, the figures are also impressive. In 2003, for example, nine club football matches were among the ten most-watched programmes.[6] Matches between the so-called big teams, Porto, Benfica and Sporting, and those played by any of them in European competitions, invariably achieve undisputed top positions in national television ratings.[7]

A valuable indicator of the social and media importance of football is the time devoted to it in the newscasts of the three 'open' Portuguese channels. In a study by Nuno Brandão, which analyses 'general newscasts on Portuguese television as important everyday encounters with the news and for the social construction of reality', football is one of the main matters covered, immediately after national politics.[8]

Broadly speaking, according to this study, about one in every ten news items is devoted to football. They are used to attract viewers, according to the battle for ratings that determines the line-up of newscasts.[9]

However, the importance of football in Portugal cannot be understood only from the point of view of its objective size, statistics or the space it takes up in the media or in everyday conversations. The profound social impact of football also has a crucial symbolic dimension, given that most Portuguese seem to regard football, and its results, involving club teams and the national, as a safe indicator of the 'quality' and 'competence' of the country and its inhabitants. This idea is clear in the treatment of football news by the sports press. Any superficial analysis of the contents of *A Bola*, *O Jogo* or *Record* or television and radio broadcasts of matches or football discussion programmes shows that an entity called 'Portuguese football' is mentioned all the time. This is a more or less vast entity that includes everything related to football activities, competitions and institutions in Portugal. This entity is a kind of functional equivalent of 'Portuguese theatre', 'Portuguese cinema', 'Portuguese agriculture', etc., though it seems to be clearly in competition with other countries and, perhaps because of this, Portuguese football is 'produced' as something extremely significant and representative of Portugal's value in the world. For the same reason, we often hear the idea that it is essential to defend and develop the quality and prestige of 'Portuguese football'. [10]

It is not only in Portugal that football plays an important role in the construction, reproduction and imagination of the so-called national identity and it is not easy to recall any places or moments other than football stadiums where the national anthem is sung with such fervour. This has played a very important part in terms of the production and celebration of the nation all over the world, and international football competitions hold all the television rating records worldwide.[11] Even so, Portugal is highly significant in this particular as it is one of the countries in which the production of the so-called national identity is clearly focused on football, as we were able to see during the 2004 European Championship held in Portugal. Regarding style of play, results and classifications, the ups and downs of the national team and Portuguese clubs in international competitions, we get a glimpse of traits in the collective character

or personality, certain versions of the country's history are promoted and the country's value and capacity are represented, establishing its position in the framework of nations.

However, it is in terms of inter-club competitions and rivalry that football enjoys most popularity and social centrality in Portugal, through the 'symbolic power' of the three main clubs FC Porto, Benfica and Sporting, historically the 'big three' of Portuguese football. Supporters (and non-supporters) are all divided among these clubs, making it difficult to remain neutral. Many children learn to distinguish between blue, red and green from the colours of the big three. Any resounding victory or crisis at these clubs usually features largely in the media and dominates everyday conversation, such is the weight of these centuries-old social institutions that enjoy incomparable popularity in Portuguese society, embodying vast significance extending to the most secluded corners of sociability and social interaction.

Football is experienced intensely in Portuguese society and awakens passions and triggers sociability in almost all social areas, except where you would expect it to be easiest – in the stadiums. Football arouses visible emotional reactions and a strong commitment and devotion in a substantial percentage of Portuguese people, but it cannot get its fans to come to the stadiums regularly. They prefer to experience their passion for the game indirectly on television or in other media or through other forms of sociability around the subject. Although many proclaim their passion for (and knowledge of) the game and their clubs and say that they spend a lot of time watching, listening to and discussing football, paradoxically most of them do not participate actively as supporters at the stadium and do not practice what they preach.

Crowds at Portuguese Stadiums after 25 April 1974

Why is it that Portuguese fans stay away from the stadiums, supposedly the ideal place for football, if they like football so much and consider it so important?

Let us start by looking at the figures. Our analysis focuses mainly on the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, though it is important for us to be able to make comparisons with earlier years and situations abroad. Broadly speaking, we can say that the gates at First Division football matches in Portugal after the democratic revolution on 25 April 1974 began to drop sharply in the early 1990s, after averaging some 20,000 spectators a match in the late 1970s and in the 1980s.

1970 and 1980 – The Good Old Days

While the Portuguese Football Federation has no accurate, systematic data on the average number of spectators in the 1970s and 1980s, although it organized the professional soccer championships at the time, we were able to gather quite comprehensive information from contemporary sports newspapers [12] about the general trends in gates at First Division matches.

These sports newspapers usually include photos of full stadiums, especially in the standing areas behind the goals, where tickets are cheaper, and references to sell-outs

Table 1 Comparison of Average Gates per Match (and weight of big three home matches) in the First Division in 1985/86, 1995/96 and 2003/04

Season	Average gate	Weight of big three home matches
1985/86*	Around 20,000	Just under 50%
1995/96**	6,566	Just over 50%
2003/04***	9,558	82%

* Results estimated (from *A Bola* and *Record*)

** Data from *Público* newspaper, 4 February 1997.

*** Data from *As Finanças do Futebol Português – 2003/04* Annual, joint publication by Deloitte & Touche, *A Bola* and the LPFP (Portuguese Professional Football League).

at matches between two of the big three or at their away matches and good or reasonable gates at other matches.[13]

This trend continued throughout the 1980s and we were able to see from a systematic analysis of the information in *Record*, which always included an estimate of the gate in its review of each match, that the average number of spectators at First Division fixtures was some 20,000. On the basis of these estimates in *Record* and taking the first quarter of 1986 as a random example, we reached an average of 20,900 spectators per match (Table 1). Some aspects stand out when we look at the gates at First Division matches at this time. Firstly, the big three were clearly the main attraction for getting spectators to the stadiums and a match involving other clubs rarely attracted 20,000 supporters. The big three regularly managed home gates of 50,000 and attracted thousands of fans to their away matches, almost always more than 10,000, and sometimes 20,000 or 30,000. Secondly, Benfica was the club with the largest home crowds, sometimes contributing more than 100,000 spectators in one match (against Sporting or Porto) to the statistics. Thirdly, at no time in our research did we find a crowd of fewer than 5,000, a figure which was quite normal in the 1990s, when most clubs averaged below 5,000 per match. Finally, in spite of the preponderance of the big three in the figures, this led to a much more balanced situation in the 1980s than in later years, as small and medium-size teams, even when playing each other, attracted much larger crowds than in the 1990s and today. From an average of 10,000 a match in the stadiums of non-big three clubs in the time frame in question, average crowds went down to 3,700 in 2003/04 and 2,330 in 2002/03, for example. Also in the mid-1980s, we can easily see matches between certain clubs whose gates would be unthinkable today,[14] except in extraordinary circumstances like a decisive match or one played under special conditions.

The 1990s – Deserted Stadiums and Crisis

The figures for the mid-1990s show a very different situation from the previous decade, with a clear drop in the number of spectators at Portuguese stadiums and a general trend towards crisis.

In the first quarter of 1996, the average gate at First Division matches was around 6,500 and throughout the 1990s the figure was never more than 10,000, which is clearly

Table 2 Comparison of Average Gates per Match (and weight of big three home matches) in the First Division in the 1990s (1995/96, 1996/97, 1997/98, 1999/00)*

Season	Average gate	Weight of big three home matches
1994/95	9,490	Just under 50%
1995/96	6,566	Just over 50%
1996/97	7,434	Just over 50%
1997/98	7,060	Just over 50%
1999/00	4,639	Just over 50%

* Data from *Público*, 4 February 1997, 13 February 2000.

lower (about half) than in the 1980s. Compared to the 1986 data, some aspects stand out in an analysis of 1996. Firstly, there were many matches with gates under 5,000, which was not the case in 1986. A considerable number of clubs in the First Division at the time, such as Estoril, Chaves, Paços de Ferreira, Tirsense, Estrela da Amadora, U. Leiria, etc., only reached 5,000 spectators or more at home matches against one of the big three; otherwise they managed 2,000–3,000 spectators. Secondly, few home matches not involving one of the big three reached 10,000 spectators, a normal figure in the 1980s. Finally, the big three no longer managed regular sell-outs at their stadiums. Gates of 50,000 for Porto or Sporting or 100,000 for Benfica, which were common in the 1980s, became sporadic or practically non-existent.

Based on data from *Público*[15] (unofficial as there were no official records, according to the newspaper), the big drop in the average number of spectators in First Division matches occurred in 1995/96 (only 6,556), since the average gate at First Division matches in 1994/95 was 9,490 spectators. In other words, there was a loss of 35 per cent. Although there were some unimportant variations in average gates at First Division matches in the rest of the 1990s, the figures were always around 7,000 fans per match. This reflected a real reduction in spectators at Portuguese stadiums to

Table 3 Average Gates, Weight of Big Three Home Matches and Occupancy Rate of Stadiums in the First Division in the First Four Seasons in the Twenty-first Century – 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04*

Season	Average gate	Weight of big three home matches	Occupancy rate of stadiums
2000/01	5,273	52%	27%
2001/02	6,765	64%	33%
2002/03	6,137	62%	34%
2003/04	9,588	82%	40%

* Data from *As Finanças do Football Português* – 1999/00, 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04 Annuals, joint publication by Deloitte & Touche, *A Bola* and the LFPF.

Table 4 Main European Leagues – Average Gates and Ticket Prices in 2005/06*

League	Average number of spectators	Average price of tickets (in euros)
Germany	37,314	18.71
England	33,900	44
Spain	27,800	25
Portugal**	10,000	20

* Source: *Record*, 25 January 2006 (based on figures published by the German Football Federation).

** Estimate

an unprecedented low in the history of football in Portugal. The (small) variations in the late 1990s (which continued into the early twenty-first century) can be explained by circumstantial factors like the poor seasons of one (or two) of the big three,[16] which together were still responsible for more than half the tickets sold, with Benfica the real 'box office champion' at the time.

As of 1999/2000 we have official data (from Deloitte & Touche, commissioned by the Portuguese Professional Football League – LPFP[17]). This season was marked by what we dare say was an all-time low in First Division gates, with an average per match of around 5,000 spectators. The big three were unable to achieve averages of 20,000 spectators and this affected the final average, as they continued to be responsible for more than 50 per cent of ticket sales. There were some significant cases. One club, Campomaiorense, fell below 1,000 paying spectators per match with 442; of the 18 First Division clubs, a vast majority (11) did not reach an average of 3,000 spectators. Only the big three went over 10,000, while only Braga and Guimarães passed the 5,000 mark in this season.

The Early Twenty-first Century – the Attraction (of some) of the New Stadiums

After live football in Portugal hit rock bottom in terms of crowds at the end of the 1990s, things could only get better.

The improvement was not immediate, as the figures for 2000/01 were much the same as those in 1999/00. However, in 2001/02 there was a slight growth (average of 6,765 spectators a match), though this was due completely to the big three, all of which managed to go over the 20,000 barrier, increasing their share in the total number of tickets sold (64 per cent). In this season, three clubs did not manage to sell an average of 1,000 tickets per match (Santa Clara, Beira-Mar and U. Leiria). Only eight of the 18 First Division clubs averaged more than 3,000 tickets sold while only six went over 5,000 (the big three plus Guimarães, Boavista and Marítimo). The 2002/03 data showed the same trend as the previous season, in spite of the added difficulties in selling tickets due to construction work at many Euro 2004 stadiums, forcing several clubs to play at borrowed home grounds for all or part of the season. All the clubs sold fewer tickets than in the previous season, with the exception of FC Porto, which passed the 30,000 barrier, something that had not happened in Portugal for more than

a decade. The club's national and international success no doubt contributed to this (league champion, Portuguese cup winner and UEFA cup winner). Finally, the figures for 2003/04 show a substantial rise in average tickets sold per match (9,558), representing an increase of some 30 per cent on the previous season (the limitations imposed by the construction of Euro 2004 stadiums must be taken into consideration in 2002/03). This increase in the number of spectators can be attributed to four clubs: Vitória de Guimarães (which, after an average of 643 spectators per match 2002–03, due to the reconstruction of its stadium, went up to 10,650) and the big three with very high averages per match, something that had not been seen for a long time in Portuguese football, due mainly to the enthusiasm aroused by their new stadiums (Porto – 42,827, Sporting – 38,234 and Benfica – 35,430). Needless to say, dependence on the big three increased even further, as they were now responsible for more than two thirds of ticket sales.

Generally speaking, the numbers of spectators at matches in 2003/04 and 2004/05 point to a substantial increase in average gates (close to 10,000 paying spectators per match), which was not the case some ten years before (a decade in which there was an average of between 5,000 and 7,000 paying spectators per match). The fact is that this is completely due to the big three's ability to attract crowds to their home games (with more than 80 per cent of all spectators), as the other clubs still had not increased their average gates (at least not significantly), even those with new stadiums (like Académica de Coimbra, Beira-Mar and, especially, União de Leiria). We can also say with some certainty that the current figures are still far from those in the 1970s and 1980s and extremely far from what one would expect in view of the social and media importance of football in Portugal. Examples of other countries, like France (average of around 21,000 spectators per match), Italy (around 25,000), Spain (over 28,000), Britain (some 34,000) and Germany (almost 38,000) in 2004/05,[18] show completely different situations, because their occupancy rates are much higher than in Portugal, where grounds only reach 40 per cent capacity and even then only because the big three account for more than 80 per cent of the spectators.

The Reasons behind the Paradox

How can we explain this change in gates at matches in Portugal, leading us to talk of a paradox in the relationship between Portuguese fans and the game that excites such passion? What are the different reasons that combine to explain the tiny number of spectators at Portuguese stadiums, in spite of the growing social importance of football?

Using some of the dominant discourses on the issue as a reference, while assessing the relative weight of certain characteristic traits of football and Portuguese society in this situation, we have identified six reasons behind the paradox that inspired this research.

We used material gathered from the sports press, the internet (especially the emerging, seething football blogosphere) and a number of informal interviews in stadiums, cafés, public transports, etc. with people who identified themselves as football fans.[19].

The 'Economic' Argument: Expensive Tickets

Taking into account the dominant arguments about the reason for the absence of larger crowds at football matches in Portugal, today the analysis inevitably begins with 'ticket prices'. This is the most popular way of explaining the lack of spectators at the stadiums. Football tickets are generally considered very expensive for the Portuguese standard of living, added to the difficult economic situation of many Portuguese, who are in increasing debt to banks, in a country where the unemployment rate has been rising. In confirmation, we have several examples of clubs (such as União de Leiria, Belenenses and Beira-Mar) that tried opening the gates of their stadiums free of charge for certain matches as a way of attracting spectators. The response almost always left little room for doubt, with full stadiums.

Fans and the so-called 'men of football' (not club directors), mainly journalists and team managers, often accuse the directors of scaring off the real fans from Portuguese stadiums by charging so much for tickets. Carlos Carvalhal, FC Belenenses manager at the beginning of 2004/05 said, 'There are fewer people at football matches because of ticket prices. It's making football an elite game. Football has been taken away from the people.'^[20] His opinion was widely reported in the newspapers and received explicit, visible support at some Portuguese stadiums, where some groups of supporters displaying signs agreeing with Carvalhal and demanding cheaper tickets. In Britain, José Mourinho also agreed with Carvalhal and said football in Portugal was a 'sport for the rich (...) A fan who wants to go to a match with his family has to pay more than 100 euros. If that's not a luxury, what is? (...) The empty stadiums seem to be explained in part by the fact that 100 euros is too much for a lot of people.'^[21] At the same time, the journalist José Manuel Delgado^[22] classified tickets to Portuguese football as 'daylight robbery'.

But are Portuguese First Division tickets really so much more expensive than in the some of the main European football leagues? By researching on the sites^[23] of Portuguese First Division clubs we were able to estimate the average price of 'non-member' tickets for First Division matches in Portugal. Although this estimate lacks statistical accuracy, the resulting figure was around 20 euros. If we compare average salaries in Portugal with those in the above countries, we find that the average price of Portuguese First Division football tickets is, in fact, high, at least when compared to Germany and Spain, where prices are similar to those in Portugal.

Table 5 Comparison of Average Salaries in European Countries in 2002 with those in Portugal*

Country	Comparison with Portugal
Germany	281% higher
United Kingdom	240% higher
Spain	167% higher

* Source: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat>

Table 6 England – Total Number of Spectators at First Division Stadiums*

Season	Spectators	Difference from previous season
2003/04	19.9 million	
2004/05	13.3 million	– 6.6 million
2005/06 (forecast)	12.3 million	– 1 million

* Source: *Record*, 23 October 2005.

Knowing that in 1983/84 the average price of Portuguese First Division tickets [24] was 322 escudos (just over €1.50) we realize that in about 20 years there has been an astronomical increase (some 1600 per cent). According to some authors[25] this may also be a sign of ‘product qualification’, by which the club directors wish to represent football as a cultural event (for example, stadiums in the First Division must have numbered seats).

What also seems to constitute a serious problem is the fact that the organizer of the two main professional football championships in Portugal, the Portuguese Professional Football League, has not established any guidelines on prices charged by the clubs on the basis of the importance of the match. Unlike before, in the 1980s, for example, when the Portuguese Football Federation (which used to organize the First Division championship) set a maximum of 950 escudos (around €3.00) for tickets,[26] there is no ceiling for prices and so clubs often charge extremely high prices to keep the other side’s fans away, to take revenge on the directors of another club or simply to take advantage of a particular sports situation.[27]

There can be no doubt that prices charged by football clubs (condoned by the organization that manages professional football in Portugal) are totally inappropriate to the social condition of potential spectators, and this makes a decisive contribution to the present state of affairs. We even dare to say that, rather than an attempt at ‘product qualification’, the club directors are incapable of realistic practices when it comes to ticket prices as they are often apparently ‘intoxicated’ by the famous popularity of football in Portugal, which places them in a position of power, at least in their own eyes.

The ‘Football on Television’ Argument: The Other Game

This second argument, which is directly connected to the first and following reasons, is also one of the most commonly used to explain the empty stadiums in Portugal. The large number of televised First Division and international football matches supposedly keeps thousands of fans away from the stadiums.

There can be no doubt that the main drop in numbers of spectators at matches in the early and mid-1990s coincided with an increase in the broadcasts of First Division games. From a scenario in which live television coverage of football in Portugal was sporadic (it was rarely possible to watch a First Division match on TV in the 1980s), we move to regular coverage, first at least one championship match a week and then exhaustive coverage from the late 1990s with the arrival of SportTV in 1998. At the end

of 2004, this Portuguese cable channel, devoted to sports in general and football in particular, had around 500,000 subscribers in private homes and commercial establishments.[28] It immediately began broadcasting three or four First Division matches a week plus a number of games from other national and international championships. Today, anyone with SportTV (for about 20 euros a month) has access to four of the nine weekly First Division matches (plus a fifth televised on an open channel), in addition to a vast number of international matches, including the Champions League, the Spanish, English and Italian leagues, national team matches, etc.[29] The impact of this intensive football coverage is unquestionable. Recent data point to the fact that, in several countries, football television ratings have risen, while crowds at the stadiums have shrunk, including very different settings like Britain and Brazil.[30]

The fact that the calendars and times of the matches are defined by the television channels also contributes to this situation, often imposing decisions that clearly go against the interests of fans going (or who would like to go) to the football. As Nuno, one FC Porto fan and club member, argues:

How am I supposed to go to matches at 9.30 on Sunday nights? I have to come from Valongo, if I can get a lift with a friend. We have to park miles from the 'Dragão' and walk to the stadium. When the match ends at 11.30, we have to walk miles back to the car and drive home. I get in at 1 a.m. and have to get up at 7. That's why I prefer to stay in and watch the match on TV. And I've had a season ticket since 1999.

Because of the television channels' preferences, the most popular matches are always played in the evening, some of them on Sunday, others on Friday or Monday. Most of the year, this also means inclement weather for those going to the stadiums, in addition to all kinds of logistical difficulties when spectators want to go to watch their team playing away. The drop in the number of away fans at the stadiums is therefore not surprising for those who usually go to the football:

I really miss the matches at 3 in the afternoon, in the sun, with that festive, Sunday afternoon atmosphere. How many years has it been since I had the chance to see a home or away match on a Sunday afternoon? I can't remember! Like the old days, when my family and I used to go to Penafiel, Vila do Conde or Guimarães. We'd all go out to lunch and then I'd go to the football with my dad. Everybody had a great time and the stadiums were full. Now the football's always in the evening and the attraction's gone. (Rui, 28, FC Porto fan and club member)

One of the trends in globalized football is the clear choice of television over the live show. Traditions, calendars and schedules are sacrificed at the altar of TV broadcasts. The game is sold as a television show, trying to get viewers instead of spectators. To such an extent that we see new stadiums with multicoloured seats to make it look as though the stands are full even when they are really empty. Television takes priority over everything else. Álvaro Magalhães, the writer and chronicler wrote in an article on the subject:[31]

We already knew that the television that breathed more life into the game would later claim its soul (...) Fans are gradually being converted into viewers, leaving the few who are still prepared to pay for something they can see free at home and brave the weather, long journeys, queues, body searches and pushing and shoving.

Recent signs suggest that the clubs' dependence on the revenue from broadcasting rights may have dramatic medium-term effects on the football industry. After a period of some euphoria, the amounts paid for broadcasting rights have been falling. In Portuguese football, limited from the start by a very small market, it seems that most club directors have not yet realized that the 'crock of gold' of television broadcasts that paid for all their extravagances and madness in buying players can't last for ever and that it may be too late to reverse this dangerous course of events.[32] Football's almost total domination by the interests of television is a practice aimed at immediate results and not concerned about maintaining or creating spectators. At the same time, television has brought a whole new way of experiencing football – couch football, as the British call it. Fans' actual relationship with the game has changed and, often, spectators who go to the stadium for the first time (or go back after a long absence) have difficulty adapting to this other (traditional) way of watching football.

Now when I go to the football from time to time, it doesn't give me as much pleasure as it used to. I don't like it as much as watching it on TV. I can't see what's happening on the other side of the pitch. I miss the action replays, seeing the details of what's going on, the players' reactions. Another thing that annoys me is the swearing, the rudeness, people hurling insults at the referee, the other team and even players on their own side when things go wrong. And there are the people who chain smoke with no respect for those sitting next to them. That's why I prefer to stay at home, relax and watch the match sitting comfortably on my sofa. If it wasn't on the TV I might go, but if it is I'm much better off at home and I prefer watching the football on TV. And if it's raining or cold. (Francisco, 62, FC Porto fan).

This shows how important the 'comfort' factor is in the choice of watching a football match on TV, a more individualistic experience if we consider that each viewer defines some of its parameters (surrounding conditions, company, listening to the commentators or not, etc.), but also more massified, as the viewer can only see the match from the point of view of the broadcast, and cannot see the whole pitch at one glance. In fact, the televised version of football involves a whole different visual language, a different way of watching to which viewers are becoming accustomed. The 'real' experience of watching a match at the stadium is often uncomfortable or at least strange and not always pleasant.

For a lot of fans this 'other game' on television is the only one and involves more specific forms of perception and comprehension than at the stadium, as they depend entirely on the mechanical, technological broadcasting process. It involves a radically different form of watching football,[33] in addition to helping redraw the map of club preferences (as we will see below) and 'revolutionizing' the spectrum of ratings and economic interests surrounding the competition.[34]

The 'Quality of the Football' Argument: no 'Beautiful Game'

A third argument often used to explain the lack of spectators at Portuguese stadiums uses reasons that identify with the 'diagnosis of the crisis' by Co Adriaanse, FC Porto's Dutch manager.

The matches are very boring and we need exciting games like FC Porto against Glasgow Rangers, to satisfy the fans and bring them to the stadiums (...) It's hard to see so many empty stadiums (...) It's unacceptable.[35]

Adriaanse feels that the lack of quality of matches in Portugal, the teams' inability to entertain spectators, unspectacular football with too many fouls and stoppages are the main reasons for the small crowds.[36]

To these negative aspects, we could also add the fact that most of the best Portuguese footballers play in other countries in championships with more media attention where the players' salaries are much higher. In this respect the major drops in average gates at matches also coincided with the first wave of massive emigration from Portuguese football, with important names from Porto, Sporting and Benfica, like Fernando Couto, Figo, Paulo Sousa and Rui Costa, leaving for Italy and Spain in 1994. This trend continued massively and irreversibly after that. Today, the vast majority of players in the Portuguese national team play abroad.[37] Anyone wishing to watch Portuguese football stars can only do so on television, so their absence from the Portuguese grounds represents an obvious loss of quality in the football played and the power of attraction of the show itself.

However reasonable it may be to say that 'there is no good show without good artists', can we say that a good show is what the fans want to see at their club's stadium? This is an old question that is rarely answered, one of the problems being the definition of what a good game of football actually is. Is it an aesthetically 'beautiful game'? Is it an exciting match? Is it one with lots of goals? Is it an interesting battle of tactics? Or is it quite simply our team winning?

In an editorial, Álvaro Magalhães disagrees entirely with Co Adriaanse:

The diehards who have not yet been won over by television don't go to the stadium to be entertained, but for the spiritual, irrational, mindless experience that football provides. And of course, all they want is for their team to win.[38]

Most fans who are truly committed to their clubs seem to fit in with Magalhães's vision. In an episode that many still remember, a reporter asked Artur Semedo, the Portuguese actor and director and a fervent Benfica supporter, before an important match whether he expected to see a good show. The actor retorted, 'Show? What show? What I want is for Benfica to win!'[39]

When asked about this, the vast majority of committed fans say the same as one of our respondents:

If we can win by playing well, better, then fine! But the most important thing is to get the three points! What's the point of playing well if we lose? None at all. I think it's even worse than if we play badly, because we are left with the thought that we should have won. (Rui, 28, FC Porto fan and club member)

Looking at the examples taken from our statistical analysis of the average gates of the big three clubs in Portuguese football in the last few seasons, the trend is for clubs with poor results to immediately lose spectators at their stadium, regardless of how well they play. Look at Benfica, the traditional home box-office leader in Portugal. In the last few years, the occupancy rates at its stadium have gone down substantially several times (to

often distressing numbers in view of the size of its ground) due to poor results, leading to ten 'lean' years in terms of national trophies.

Even so, we cannot deny that the Portuguese First Division is not among the most rated in the international scene, while it has trouble attracting world-level players. At the same time, it is a matter of public record that the average number of fouls per match in the First Division is very high, with obvious effects on the quality of games and actual playing time.

The 'Concentration of Power' Argument: the Big Three's Social and Sporting Hegemony

The fourth argument used to explain the empty stadiums is the idea that there is a kind of dictatorship of the big clubs in Portugal, which prevents other clubs and football itself from developing. This idea is often defended by those who say that what Portuguese fans love is their clubs (almost always one of the big three) and a good argument in the café about the pettifogging details of the match, not football per se:

More than 80% of fans support one of the big three and not even half live in the cities where these clubs are based. We have lost local loyalties. Love for a standardised symbol of tastes and ways of experiencing football has been massified. Early on, fans are agglomerated into a closed circuit of three emblems. This process is unsustainable in my opinion. With the exception of Guimarães and Coimbra, although to a lesser extent, the other cities have clubs that are only supported by a few hundred fans (like me) who are devoted exclusively to their clubs. I hope their fans will forgive me for saying that they are basically Portuguese football's main problem and the cause of this desertification. The gap is huge and the 'system' is designed not to change ... whether or not these three important institutions are to blame. ('João C.', Rio Ave fan, in the blog 'Terceiro Anel')[40]

The fact that the loyalties of almost all fans go to one of the big three, resulting in their social and sporting dominance, makes the lives of the other clubs very difficult all round. This obviously includes market-related aspects. If we look at the average First Division gates in 2003/04 we can see why. More than 82 per cent of the spectators were concentrated in the stadiums of FC Porto, Benfica and Sporting. As we have already mentioned, the slight improvement in First Division gates in the last two seasons is partly 'false', as it is found practically only in the big three's stadiums. In other words, there seems to be no-one going to the football outside the framework of the top three clubs and, worse still, in inland areas and outside the main Portuguese cities. The truth is that, if we don't count Oporto, Lisbon, Braga or Guimarães, very few thousand fans go to First Division football matches in Portugal.

In a country where only the big three have really strong social support,[41] where membership has direct effects on operating budgets, on available resources for sports competitions and on the animation of the football market in Portugal, the dominance of these three clubs has increased, along with their ability to generate income, investment, fans and club members, digging a huge hole for the other clubs, which are incapable of attracting crowds. The inequalities between the clubs are increasing more and more, for one thing because television revenue is divided on the basis of these huge differences. For all these reasons, crisis has taken hold of the universe of Portuguese

football, with many clubs declaring insolvency or coming close, as they are unable to find effective answers to falling income and rising players' salaries.

The importance of the television factor in this growing inequality of power between clubs, which Rodrigues and Neves call the 'competitive bottleneck',[42] may also explain the concentration of fans' loyalties in the most powerful clubs. Among young fans, the trend is increasingly for them to support the most successful and well-known clubs with the best players, that is, the emblems that they see regularly on television, which enjoy the best media exposure, rather than their local team, which is not their local team at all any more, with which they can only relate directly by going to watch matches at the ground. This is also one of the reasons for the growing concentration of power in the most influential teams, even though they are often emblems of other countries, full of stars and trophies, in a typical process of globalized football.

The actual results are responsible for this situation and are fed by it, in a vicious circle. In the history of the most important Portuguese football competition, the First Division Championship, now over 70 years old, the final winner has not been one of the big three only twice. Belenenses in 1946 and Boavista in 2001 were the exceptions to the rule. Even more 'worrying' is that the champions, including the two outsiders, were all from Oporto or Lisbon, which shows the geographical concentration of football power.[43]

Comparing the history of the Portuguese championship with other European national championships,[44] we realize that Portugal's has one of the poorest records in terms of competitiveness and internal balance, with one of the narrowest ranges of different champions. Portugal has the highest percentage of championships won by the big three (97 per cent). In European terms, the dominance of the big three in Portugal is only matched by the Greek and Turkish leagues, which have similar results.[45] The data on the Portuguese Cup winners do not lie either, although one might expect the history of this type of competition to be very different in terms of competitiveness. There is naturally more variety in the winners. There were 11 different clubs in 65 cups. Even so, the big three have won the cup 49 times (75 per cent of the total): Benfica 24 times, Sporting 13 and Porto 12, and only 17 (25 per cent) divided among eight clubs[46].

The 'Poor Management' Argument – the Problematic Organization of Football in Portugal

Permanently involved in conflicts and controversy, the structures and agents responsible for organizing football in Portugal, including the clubs, are regarded by most fans and specialists as being largely to blame for the deserted stadiums. Indeed, most of the club directors and organizing institutions have not yet managed to make the leap to rational strategies for attracting spectators. In spite of some 'good intentions', there is a lot to be done in this regard, such as promotions for club members' guests, group tickets, family stands, agreements with schools, ways of attracting female spectators, etc.

While having great difficulty in drawing new spectators, the Portuguese clubs do not seem to give their most loyal fans the attention they deserve, maintaining a great distance and impersonality in their dealings with them, regarding them increasingly as mere consumers. They are thereby ignoring crucial aspects of the eminently affective,

emotional ties that fans develop with their clubs.[47] Many clubs' lack of effective strategies for attracting fans, especially the ones with regularly empty stadiums, may contribute at medium term to difficulty in developing the loyalty of young supporters and spectators, who will probably find other forms of entertainment or merely watch matches on television. Going back to the opinion of manager Carlos Carvalho:

I got used to going to the stadium with my dad. I was four or five (...) Now this is becoming another problem, because people don't take their children to the football any more as they have to buy a full ticket. And it's not when these kids are 14 or 15 that they're going to start going to football matches (...) Is there anyone thinking about football at the moment?[48]

Club directors are often accused of showing little respect or consideration for the most loyal fans (almost always the most socially disadvantaged), with regard to ticket prices, match times, the way they favour other 'actors' in the club's life, for example reserving the best seats in the stadiums for luxury boxes for their own guests, sponsors guests and so-called VIPs.[49] Managing football as if it were just a business subject to the neo-liberal principles of total commercialization and business rationalization, using (or rather exploiting) *ad nauseam* the profound, intense, affective and emotional relationship often developed over decades on end between fans and their club has often led thousands of 'first class' fans (that is, the most faithful and loyal ones) to abandon their places in the stadium as they are sick of being treated as mere consumers, and 'second class' ones at that. According to Kumar, one of the most democratic traditions of sports associations had to do with equal access to matches for club members.[50] In exchange for a monthly membership fee, they could go to most matches free of charge. However, with the generalization of new forms of so-called professional and rational management of clubs, 'members' ticket prices vary on the basis of the (annual) seat, which means that many fans of more lowly origins are denied access to the best seats, introducing social endogamy on the stands.[51] This change, which was one of several processes of 'elitisation' of fans' access to, and participation in, football and the club's life, which increased in the 1990s due to the new mercantilist imperatives (becoming redundant with the advent of sports PLCs and concentration of powers of decision in the clubs' shareholders) has been reducing ordinary fans' chances of having a voice in the management of their clubs and has been gradually pushing many of them away.

Did you know that Benfica was once a great example of democracy in this country?! In Salazar's time, it was the only place where there were free elections, with thousand and thousands of people voting and defending their opinions at general assemblies. Today the club members have no authority whatsoever. The people's club has died. They don't need us at all. Why don't I ever go to the stadium? I'm not necessary; I make no difference; I can't influence what happens to the club. Now it's for people with shares, with money. (Jorge, 56, Benfica fan)

In terms of the management of the clubs and the institutions that govern Portuguese football, there are other dominant practices and strategic options preventing the creation and establishment of a credible world of sport that is attractive to the public. An example is the transparency of the processes involving referees and respect for the truth in football. The doubts and 'grey areas'[52] here certainly make a decisive

contribution to the many deserted Portuguese stadiums. The same can be said of the open conflicts between club directors and the heads of other football institutions in the last 20 or 30 years, often extending to the matches themselves, especially those involving the big three.

The 'Cultural Change' Argument: Portuguese Society after 25 April 1974 and Accession to the European Union

The sixth and final factor explaining the desertification of Portuguese stadiums is more 'extrinsic' to the game itself, focusing on recent social formation in Portugal. Twenty years ago, in 1985, the journalist Carlos Miranda wrote in *A Bola*[53] that Portuguese football as paid entertainment was suffering the impact of important social changes, such as in relations between men and women. Women were increasingly unwilling to stay at home or sit and knit in the car while their husbands went to the match.[54] But it also had to do, for example, with democratization of access to television and cars. Today it is easier to understand the social effects of the profound, intense diversification of available entertainment, of the expansion of a wide variety of culture and leisure industries, of telecommunications and transports, etc.

Today, football has to compete increasingly with a vast array of entertainment and leisure activities, ranging from television to computers (and their games), from consoles to the internet, and including shopping centres, which offer not only a purely commercial facet (shops), but also entertainment (cinemas, bowling alleys, etc) and a wide variety of meeting points and activities. At the same time, people have access to domestic and foreign travel, they practise other sports and they have developed an interest in the arts, for example.

It is easy to see that, after decades of habits characteristic of a closed, stagnant society (also in terms of culture and recreation) like the one in Portugal until 1974 (or even until the mid-1980s when Portugal joined the European Union), the last 20 years have been marked by a new 'world' of opportunities for free time, entertainment and leisure, new forms of sociability and individual and collective activities. As one fan argues:

In my opinion, they were different times. In other words, when I started going to the football in 82/83, the Barreiros ground was chock-a-block and there were no seats behind the goals. At the time, on Sundays people either went to the match or to mass or else they'd go round to the in-laws with the family. It may sound silly but I don't think that it was such a bad thing. Today everyone's got Internet, cable TV and home cinemas. We've got shopping centres, we've got huts where we go for a barbecue with the guys, etc. What I mean is that there are other ways for people to spend their time, and football is not enough to get their backsides off the sofa and into the stadium. ('Astrosapiens', Marítimo fan, on the official C.S. Marítimo website) [55]

Moreover, the transformation of football into a televised show in the mid-1990s changed the fans' relationship with the game and their way of watching it. Today, the act of watching football is almost always synonymous with watching television, making it understandable why people in general and young people in particular prefer other forms of entertainment when they are not in front of the small screen.

Conclusion

For us to understand a reality as complex as that which we have called the paradox of the Portuguese game, the social omnipresence of football and the absence of spectators in the stadiums, it was essential to establish connections between the reasons for the paradox. When doing so, our idea was to draw a kind of portrait of the particular social formation of football in Portugal, which is both the cause and consequence of the ambivalence.

In short, we can consider that this social formation is characterized, above all, by a huge social popularity, which places football at the centre of the country's life, albeit mostly in the media. Football plays an important role in the lives of most Portuguese. It occupies a key place in social relations and sociability, though not as a participative phenomenon *in loco*. The absence of fans in the stadiums has contributed considerably to this, obviously as a result of a conscious choice on their part, irrespective of their affective ties to the game.

The reasons for this choice seem to be monetary (lack of purchasing power to regularly buy tickets, almost consensually considered too expensive for the Portuguese standard of living), together with intense television coverage, meaning that everyone can watch most matches (especially the most anxiously awaited ones). The generalization of this 'other, televised football' has helped bring a substitute individual and collective experience, often chosen over the original 'real' experience. However, other characteristics of the social formation of Portuguese football make a decisive contribution to the absence of fans in the stadiums, such as the concentration of power and loyalties in only three clubs, preventing others from developing further, fostering growing competitive inequality and exacerbating the effects of the reproduction of an imbalanced, hegemonic map of club loyalties.

From our statistical analysis of gates at First Division matches since 25 April 1974, we realized that, as of the early to mid-1990s, the three reasons mentioned above resulted in a general exodus of fans from Portuguese stadiums, though the popularity and social centrality of football continued to increase. We are led to believe that a series of social factors extrinsic to the game, such as the profound cultural changes in Portuguese society after the 1974 revolution, accession to the European Union (1986), the democratization of access to television, cars, travel and tourism and the rise and generalization of new spending and leisure practices played an important part in the development of the paradox of Portuguese football.

Unlike other European countries, football authorities and directors in Portugal do not seem to have been able to draw up effective strategies for reacting to these factors keeping fans away from the stadiums. They are unable (or unwilling) to reverse the rise in prices, to use alternative, creative ways of attracting spectators or make football more competitive, credible and transparent. The football authorities and directors do not seem to have accepted the fact that going to the football is a dying habit in Portuguese society and that there is a growing diversification of cultural and leisure activities vying for attention. If there are no joint policies by the clubs and the institutions that govern football in Portugal in terms of ticket prices, times of television broadcasts, the quality

of football, greater competition between clubs and respect for the most devoted fans, the situation may well get worse.

Curiously, the attitude of most authorities and directors in Portuguese football seems to be one of overconfidence, sometimes to the point of arrogance, in the popularity and social centrality of football in Portugal. Too sure of the size and intensity of 'the Portuguese passion for the game', which we addressed at the beginning of this essay, they have not developed or used ways of attracting (and keeping) spectators, of encouraging them to participate in the life of their clubs, of restoring supporters' special relationship with football at the stadium as opposed to football in the media. As a result, largely by fault of these agents, the actual popularity and social centrality of football in Portuguese society is the indirect 'reason' for the lack of fans in the stadiums, when it should be the fundamental reason for exactly the opposite.

In this regard, thanks to the recent efforts of a number of German entities, their football today has the best average crowds in Europe, as we saw in Table 4. The fight against the desertification of stadiums, in this case also due to expensive tickets and match times dictated by television, took the form of strict regulation of admission prices (average 18 euros) and of television broadcasts (now very limited, with most matches played at 4 p.m. on Saturdays) and a search for ways of encouraging fans' involvement in the management of the clubs and football itself.[56]

These are the measures that can help prevent or mitigate the effect of deserted football stadiums in Portugal, bringing many more socially disadvantaged fans back to the matches, while others, driven away by the extreme media coverage of the sport, will develop or recover a taste for going to, and participating in, the Portuguese game.

Notes

- [1] 'Bartoon' cartoon, *Público*, 9 September 2005, 4.
- [2] Coelho, 'Ondulando a bandeira: futebol e identidade nacional', 12.
- [3] Data for the first half of 2005 – readership percentages of the main general and sports newspapers: *Jornal de Notícias* – 12 per cent, *Correio da Manhã* – 10.6 per cent, *A Bola* – 9.1 per cent, *Record* – 8.1 per cent, *O Jogo* – 6 per cent, *Público* – 5.1 per cent, *Diário de Notícias* – 3.8 per cent, *24 Horas* – 2.4 per cent. (data from markttest: www.markttest.com).
- [4] As was the case during Euro-2000; for details see Coelho, *Portugal, a Equipa de Todos Nós, Nacionalismo*, 181.
- [5] Markttest: www.markttest.com.
- [6] *Público*, 3 January 2004.
- [7] Merely as an example, from 8 to 14 March 2004, the matches between Benfica and Inter Milan and Manchester United and FC Porto were the two most-watched programmes on Portuguese TV with 60 per cent of viewers (<http://www.mediamonitor.pt/newsletter/ver.php?id=429>).
- [8] On the basis of the importance of the ratings achieved by these TV programmes, with a daily average of three million viewers of RTP1, SIC and TVI news, this study analyses the line-up of these news programmes, that is, the organization and layout of the news, concluding that they are conditioned by ratings. The results show that football (or rather 'sports', though more than 90 per cent of the sports news is about football...) is the second most addressed subject in the news with 10.75 per cent, after national politics (14.55 per cent), ahead of international

- politics, society, art and culture, education and the environment (Brandão, 'As Categorias Temáticas Dominantes nos Telejornais' (The dominant thematic categories in TV News).)
- [9] According to this principle, the commercial break is a crucial point in newscasts as football is usually used (22.2 per cent of times) to open the second part (Brandão, 'As Categorias Temáticas Dominantes nos Telejornais').
- [10] Coelho, *Portugal, a Equipa de Todos Nós, Nacionalismo, Futebol e Media*, 63–4.
- [11] More than half of the ten televised events worldwide with the largest ratings are football matches between national teams (Coelho, *Portugal, a Equipa de Todos Nós, Nacionalismo*, 35).
- [12] *A Bola* and *Record* newspapers.
- [13] Take a Vitória de Setúbal–Sporting match in 1977 for example, in which there were incidents (broken fences) as there were too many spectators in the stadium, or a match on 7 January 1977 between Portimonense and Varzim, which *A Bola* said was almost sold out although it was mid-week.
- [14] Just as an example, in 1985/86 Belenenses managed to attract 18,000 spectators to its stadium against Boavista and 15,000 against Desportivo de Chaves. In 2003/04, Belenenses had an average of 4,433 spectators at home matches. In turn, in 1985/86 Boavista attracted 20,000 supporters when it played Sp. Braga and 15,000 against Desportivo de Chaves. However, its average in 2003/04 was 6,541 spectators per game. Finally, Penafiel, which had 10,000 spectators in 1985/86 against Desportivo das Aves and 15,000 against Vitória de Guimarães, had no more than 500 spectators per match in 2002/03 (in the Second Division).
- [15] *Público*, 4 February 1997.
- [16] Sporting and Benfica had some seasons with unusually bad results in their history: Sporting, fourth place in 1998 and 1999, Benfica, sixth place in 2001 and fourth in 2002.
- [17] *As Finanças do Football Português* – 1999/00, 2000/01, 2001/2, 2002/03 and 2003/04 Annuals, joint publication by Deloitte & Touche, *A Bola* and the LPFP.
- [18] Data taken from 'Desporto do povo?', published by Gonçalo Lopes on <http://www.jornaldeleiria.pt/> on 10 March 2006.
- [19] The only criterion for selecting the respondents for interviews was that they were talking about football or reading a sports paper. The 50 interviews were conducted between June and October 2005. The only three questions were 'Are you a football fan?', 'When was the last time you went to a match?' and 'Why do you (or don't you) go to the football regularly?' Our heartfelt thanks go to those who helped us.
- [20] *Diário de Notícias*, 23 September 2005.
- [21] Gonçalo Lopes, 'Desporto do povo?' (People's Sports?), <http://www.jornaldeleiria.pt/index.php?article=3075&visual=1>, 10 March 2006.ää
- [22] Bruno Ribeiro, 'Preço dos Bilhetes despe estádios', published in the blog 'Terceiro Anel' available at www.terceiroanel.weblog.com.pt, 2 December 2002.
- [23] With links from the Portuguese Professional Football League website: www.lfpf.pt.
- [24] *A Bola*, 12 January 1985.
- [25] Rodrigues and Neves, 'Do Amor à Camisola' (About the love for the Clubshirt).
- [26] *A Bola*, 12 January 1985.
- [27] For example, in the last match in 1999/00, which would decide who was national champion, SC Salgueiros played at home to Sporting CP, then at the top, and the directors of the home side set non-member ticket prices at between 100 and 150 euros.
- [28] Data from www.sporttv.pt.
- [29] During the season, there are many weeks when at least one live football match a day is broadcast, as there are First Division games from Friday to Monday, to serve the interests of television. If we add the European club championship matches on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, we have absolutely exhaustive television coverage. Not to mention a large number of football programmes on the different channels, where matches and football-related events are discussed and analysed.

- [30] See essay by Marcos Alvaro in this volume.
- [31] www.record.pt, 16 September 2005.
- [32] In Portuguese football, television revenue is the clubs' 'social security cheque' as they are increasingly dependent on television money in a scenario of diminishing crowds. For example, in 2001/02, the four largest clubs (the big three plus Boavista) were paid more than 102 million euros (two-thirds of the First Division total). The income from selling television rights accounted for more than 30 per cent (38 million euros). Only after that do we have sports income (35 million), capital gains from players (24 million), advertising (21 million) and, finally, memberships fees (14 million). (*As Finanças do Futebol Português – 2001/02 Annual*, joint publication by Deloitte & Touche, *A Bola*, LPFP.)
- [33] According to Kumar, 'Two of the most fundamental marks of televised football are the suspension of time and ubiquity resulting from zapping and the possibility of watching the same shot from different angles in replays and in slow motion. (...) The relationship between television football fans and the game is characterised by its fragmented, dependent nature, as opposed to the concentrated, participative involvement of fans on the stands.' Kumar, 'Da Bancada aos Sofás da Europa' (From terraces to the armchairs of Europe), 256.
- [34] *Ibid.*, 255.
- [35] www.record.pt, 16 September 2005.
- [36] This is a discussion that has also dominated English football recently, with managers Arsène Wenger (Arsenal) and José Mourinho (Chelsea) on opposite sides. Wenger says that a manager's main job is to put on a good show for the spectators, while Mourinho's opinion is that the only important thing is for his club to win.
- [37] The basic Portuguese national team in September 2005 was Ricardo (Sporting), Paulo Ferreira (Chelsea), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Jorge Andrade (Deportivo Coruña), Nuno Valente (Everton), Costinha (Dynamo Moscow), Maniche (Dynamo Moscow), Deco (Barcelona), Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United), Figo (Inter Milan) and Pauleta (Paris SG). So there was only one playing in Portugal.
- [38] *Jornal de Notícias*, 25 September 2005.
- [39] Coelho, *Paixão FC* (Passion FC), 35.
- [40] www.terceiroanel.weblog.com.pt, 2 December 2005.
- [41] An analysis of the number of members of the Portuguese clubs showed that the big three had 2/3 of the First Division clubs members (in 2003/04) – data from *As Finanças do Futebol Português – 2001/02 Annual*, published by Deloitte & Touche, *A Bola*, LPFP
- [42] Rodrigues and Neves. 'Do Amor à Camisola', 174.
- [43] This hegemony of FC Porto, Benfica and Sporting represents not only a clear dominance by teams from the country's two largest cities, but also a predominance of football on the coast in Portugal, which has become more accentuated in recent years. According to Jorge Gaspar in *Transformações recentes na Geografia do Futebol em Portugal*, in 1970/71 the First Division clubs were concentrated around Oporto and Lisbon. We can find 86 per cent of all the First Division clubs in a radius of 50 kilometres from the two cities, and 60 per cent of those in the Second Division. And there was not a single representative of inland Portugal. Today, over 30 years later, the situation is the same, with not a single First Division club more than 40 kilometres from the coast. In these more than 30 years, there are very few exceptions to this 'inland desertification' of which football is just another example: Desportivo de Chaves, Académico de Viseu, Covilhã, Elvas and Campomaiorense (almost all with fleeting stays in the First Division)
- [44] Data taken from www.rsssf.com.
- [45] In view of these data on Portugal, Greece and Turkey, it seems plausible to say that power concentrated in the hands of a small number of clubs has more to do with social contexts than with the tradition and quality of football. Portugal, Greece and Turkey share much more than just loyalties focused on three or four clubs. They are countries more backward than the European average, with great difficulties in their economic and sporting development, which

lived under dictatorships for a long time, with extremely central political and social models and characterized by huge social inequalities. An important detail is that they are also countries where football is extremely popular, in fact a 'national passion'.

- [46] Of 65 Portuguese cup finals, only seven have not involved one of the big three (who have therefore been in more than 90 per cent of the finals). On 22 occasions (over 30 per cent) the final was between two of them.

Among the other cup winners, the outsiders or 'medium clubs', Boavista (5 wins), V. Setúbal (4) and Belenenses (3) stand out again, followed by Académica, Beira-Mar, Estrela da Amadora, Leixões and Sporting de Braga, all with one win.

So we can see that only Setúbal, Coimbra, Aveiro and Braga (in 9 finals) took the cup outside Greater Lisbon and Greater Oporto. Even more significant is the fact that not a single inland club has won the cup or the league.

- [47] A simple but extremely significant example is that, today and since the beginning of the commercialization of Portuguese football in the 1990s (coinciding with the big drops in spectators in the stadiums), the clubs make children buy a ticket to get in, which was not the case before. How many of us fans over 30 began to go to the football free with our parents or asking a 'surrogate father' at the gate (this was common practice in Portuguese stadiums until the 1990s and dozens of children up to the age of around 14 asking men going into the stadium, 'Take me in with you please. Tell them you're my dad!').

- [48] *Diário de Notícias*, 23 September 2005.

- [49] A blatant example of this lack of respect and consideration for the most devoted fans was when the management of FC Porto put only part of the tickets for the finals of the 2003 UEFA Cup and 2004 Champions League on sale and kept a large share to give to sponsors, guests, including Portuguese political figures and personalities, most of whom had no ties to the club, preventing thousands of diehard fans from accompanying their club at high points in its history.

- [50] Kumar, 'Da Bancada aos Sofás da Europa', 249.

- [51] *Ibid.*, 250.

- [52] The famous 'Golden Whistle' case comes to mind here. It still has not gone to trial and involves dozens of referees and directors of clubs and institutions at different levels (including the President of the Portuguese Professional Football League, the former head of its Referee Board, the President of FC Porto, etc.) all accused of corruption.

- [53] *A Bola*, 12 January 1985.

- [54] This was usual among the wives of football spectators on Sunday afternoons in the 1970s and 1980s.

- [55] www.maritimomadeira.com/index.php?option=com_

- [56] áá 'In the early 1990s, this effort was aimed at responding to growing disturbances around the organised groups of German fans, especially the alarming increase in violence and xenophobia. The interaction between institutions, supporters' groups, municipal authorities, local clubs, law enforcement agencies, sociologists and civil associations resulted in a network of fan projects all over Germany. The results are an impressive example of citizenship on the part of fans, who mix with rival supporters from the same city without diminishing the vibrant, burning rivalries rooted by force of a popular phenomenon (...) fáá, have also been real stepping stones in the defence of fans' rights (...) Germany is certainly the most advanced example of the power of fans' citizenship, fighting for their rights, which, when all is said and done, are those of their clubs and the defence of football itself.' Available at <http://www.torcidav-erde.pt/main.php?modulo=mentalidade&op=footballnegocio>.

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