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# The Football Supporter in a Cosmopolitan Epoch

## Abstract

Arguably, the later process of globalization served to reshape how socializations are fostered and maintained across time and space. Additionally, in the last fifteen years a new phenomenon that reinvigorated time and space compression has emerged: social media. Moreover, it is argued that the conjunction of those processes can be seen as taking place on a distinct Age - the Anthropocene or the cosmopolitan epoch. Arguably those processes have the capacity to alter the way individuals enact their football fandom. In this light, this paper seeks to conceptualize one particular football support identity that takes into account this fragmented period. Based on an 18-month ethnographic research with supporters of one English Premier League, this paper conceptualizes the football fan in the Anthropocene as the cosmopolitan *flâneur*. I conclude by pointing out to some prospective avenues for future research based on a cosmopolitan imagination.

## Introduction

It is argued by different social commentators that even globalization not being a new phenomenon it had a profound impact during the last hundred years on how socializations are fostered and maintained (see Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2000b; Robertson, 1995, 2011; Tomlinson, 1999). Myriad social commentators argue that, despite the longstanding nature (or historical longevity) of globalization, the last century has witnessed this phenomena profoundly impacting how socializations are fostered and maintained. Sport, and particularly Association Football (hereafter football), as an ubiquitous element of the late cultural globalization of our social lives (see Hobsbawm, 1983), has been a locus for social researchers in search for understanding how the repercussions of homogenization and heterogenization animated this phenomenon. Football has been a site for understanding migration (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007a; Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Magee & Sugden, 2002; McDowell, 2012; Poli, 2010; Taylor, 2010), commodification (Giulianotti, 2005) homogenization (Farred, 2002; Giulianotti, 1999), glocalization (Ben-Porat, 2000; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004, 2007b, 2007c) and social movements (Harvey & Houle, 1994; Millward, 2008, 2011a, 2012) between other phenomena associated to this late globalization.

In the last fifteen years a new socio-cultural phenomenon has emerged: social media. WhatsApp (launched in 2009), a direct message platform owned by Facebook Inc. reached 900 million users in 2015 as reported by Fortune (Rao, 2015). Instagram (launched in 2010), a photo-sharing platform also owned by Facebook Inc. has over 400 million active users, sharing 80 million photos daily and giving over 3.5 billion likes a day (Instagram, 2016). Facebook Inc., which was founded in 2004 and it is valued over 300 billion dollars (NASDAQ, 2016), reached 1.19 billion active monthly users in 2014, and has seen a growth from 526 million daily active users in 2012 when it launched its stocks into the market to 890 million daily active users in December 2014 (Facebook, 2015). The widespread use of social media has been under the sociological radar and was documented and analyzed in different contexts, from political participation (see Bernal, 2006; Panagakos & Horst, 2006; Parham, 2004), family and love relations (see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014), and particularly sport (Cleland, 2014; Gaffney, 2015; Hayhurst & Szto, 2016; Kassing & Sanderson, 2015; Millward, 2008; Tamir, Galily, & Yarchi, 2016). Alongside globalization and its theorizations, it is argued by different authors (see op. cit) that social media had repercussions on how we understand, enact and maintain socializations, especially those which crisscross nation-state political boundaries. In this sense, it becomes fashionable to claim that nation-states become Zombie categories (see Beck, 2001) and thus the sociological imagination emanating from a nation-state perspective is inadequate in apprehending those socializations. As argued by Beck and

collaborators (Beck, 1994, 2000a, 2004, 2007; Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003; Beck & Grande, 2010; Beck & Lau, 2005; Beck & Sznaider, 2006) sociology is in need of an imagination shift, moving from a national to a cosmopolitan perspective in order to comprehend the intertwined social facts that were obscured by methodological nationalism. Moreover, as Beck (2016) argues those concomitant and unintended processes can be seen as metamorphosing our lived experiences, where the monopoly of the nation-state in determining our views of temporality and future is eroding (Beck and Levy, 2013). As such, this distinct cosmopolitan epoch can be seen as the pinnacle of the pluralization of concomitant narratives, being those personal/collective narratives more fragmented and individualized (Beck and Levy, 2013).

If we accept that this ontological discontinuity is taking place, as from national to cosmopolitan epoch (Beck and Levy, 2013), it should be expected that an epistemological break also occur. In this light, Beck (2010) proposes a cosmopolitan imagination that is centered on an ambivalent perspective that looks at the intertwined social trajectories that crisscross the modern nation-state boundaries. As such, the aim of this paper is to look at supporters' ontological social trajectories through a cosmopolitan epistemological imagination (Beck, 2010; Delanty, 2009). This cosmopolitan epistemological approach would become basilar for proposing a distinct conceptualization for one particular supporters' identity that takes to the fore ideas of pluralization of narratives, fragmentation and multiple belongings. In order to avoid the possible pitfalls of completely dismissing 'modern nation-state' centered theorizations (see Inglis, 2009), especially by seeing this epochal shift as a complete discontinuity break to our shared past, I will turn my attention to a particular identity theorized in the heights of European modernism - the *flâneur*. By turning back to this peculiar 'modern character' my aim is of highlighting the ambivalent potential of a cosmopolitan epistemology that seeks to readdress what was once blurred by nationalist lenses (see Beck, 2010). Thus, the paper will follow with what cosmopolitanism entails under Ulrich Beck's theorizations and how we should understand it not solely as banal (cultural) cosmopolitanism, but also as a political and ethical project for the Anthropocene. The method and the site of the ethnographic-inspired research will be discussed second, for then to depict the contemporary *flânerie* (the individual and social trajectories of being a *flâneur*) in order to provide in a final moment the distinct conceptualization of the cosmopolitan football *flâneur*<sup>i</sup>. I will conclude by providing prospective avenues for future researches under a cosmopolitan sociological imagination.

## Cosmopolitanism and Individualization

Different social commentators posit that most of the contemporaneous Western world is under a distinct set of social and cultural circumstances than the one conceptualized and analyzed by classical sociologists. Those different social commentators have termed this distinct world as network society (see Castells, 2000), late capitalism (see Jameson, 1992), mobile society (see Urry, 2000) or broadly postmodernism (see Lash, 1990). A contrasting perspective was offered by Ulrich Beck as risk society (see Beck, 1992), where what is seen and experienced is not the demise of modernity and modernization but the victory and its associated unintended consequences (Beck & Lau, 2005). To this end, Ulrich Beck sets forth the notion that contemporaneous society is better understood as existing under second modernity, or being reflexive modernized from within (Beck, 1994; Beck et al., 2003). Reflexive modernization for Beck & Lau (2005) presupposes both a continuity of the basic modern principles of socialization as statehood and a discontinuity of modern institutions as the nation-state. In this sense, forms of socializations based on a shared notion of statehood continue to operate while what the nation-state entails both sociologically, military, politically and economically are under structural breaks. For Beck et al. (2003) four interconnected processes have contributed unintentionally to shape those new institutions under a second modern perspective. In this paper I will focus particularly on two of those processes, namely

globalization/cosmopolitanization (Beck, 2000b, 2010) and individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) as they have unintentionally reshaped socializations within football fan's culture and our own understanding of the football supporter in a cosmopolitan epoch.

In sociological terms globalization carries different connotations, often assuming either a cultural homogenizing or heterogenizing stance (Petersen-Wagner, 2016). Ulrich Beck (see Beck, 2010) bypasses this dichotomy by employing a different concept to understand the intersections of time and space compression: cosmopolitanization. For Beck (2010) cosmopolitanization refers to the acceptance of a both/and approach, meaning that both heterogenizing and homogenizing co-exist. Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism continues to be a contested term within sociological analyses (see Beck, 2007), normally referring to a general allegiance to a worldwide society (see Nussbaum, 1996), or an individuals 'feeling at home' whilst being corporeally mobile (see Hannerz, 1990; Holton, 2009), or the possibility of having multiple loyalties through an increasing diversity of forms of life (Beck, 2010). Furthermore, as stressed by Delanty (2009, p. 53), cosmopolitanism should be understood not only as a phenomenon that exists or not, "[...] instead be seen as an ethical and political medium of societal transformation that is based on the principle of world openness". In this sense, Vertovec and Cohen (2002) argue that cosmopolitanism refers not only to a socio-cultural condition derived from time-space compression (i.e. mobility and glocalization), but especially to a political project that builds transnational institutions/solidarities and recognizes the existence of multiple identities. Regarding the socio-cultural condition of cosmopolitanism, Szerszynski and Urry (2002) argue that it originates from: (a) an extensive mobility of individuals; (b) a capacity to consume many places at the same time; (c) a curiosity about different places and cultures; (d) a willingness to take risks by encountering the 'other'; (e) an ability to understand one's own society and culture; (f) semiotic skills to understand the 'other'; and (g) willingness and openness to the 'other'. Between different studies, the cultural (banal) cosmopolitanization of football has been investigated through the mobility of players (Lanfranchi & Taylor, 2001; Poli, 2004; Taylor, 2010), the consumption of different places at the same time (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009; Rookwood & Millward, 2011), and the willingness and ability of encountering the 'other' (Millward, 2011b; Skey, 2015). Furthermore, Beck (2010) argues that the cultural cosmopolitan condition is permeated by individualization (see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1993; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), a process that should be understood in contrast to individualism. For Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1993, 2002) individualization should be comprehended as an institutionalized individualism in respect of the multiple choices individuals face during their lives in regards to which institutions to adhere to and for how long to be adhered to. Nevertheless, this cosmopolitan individualization should be seen as leading to a position of precarious freedom (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) where the freedom to choose comes with the obligation of choosing. For Beck (2001, p. 202) individualization liberates individuals from pre-defined associations and provides the chance of joining different leisure activities or club memberships that their social class/nationality would have otherwise culturally imposed.

As aforementioned, cosmopolitanism should not be seen solely as a socio-cultural condition that individuals face in contemporaneous society, but above all as a political and ethical project of societal transformation (Delanty, 2009). One example of the political project associated with cosmopolitanism is the acceptance of distinct forms of knowledge within the sociological lexicon, as pointed out by Santos (2014), Mignolo (2000, 2009) and Petersen-Wagner (2016). In this sense, the aim of this paper is to provide a distinct ethic and political reading of a particular football spectators' identity - transnational supporter - by departing from a both/and cosmopolitan sociological imagination that welcomes multiple loyalties and mediated socializations as neither superior or inferior in relation to supporters' authenticity (see Millward, 2011a). As such, this paper aims to utilize the cultural (banal) cosmopolitanization of football fandom as canvas for discussing the political and ethical project of cosmopolitanism.

## Methodology

In order to construct the ethical and political arguments for distinctively imagining the transnational football supporter as the cosmopolitan *flâneur*, this paper followed an ethnographic-inspired approach (Denzin, 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Markham, 1998, 2013) where supporters from one English Premier League (hereafter EPL) club - Liverpool FC (hereafter LFC) - were followed in both 'online' and 'offline' situations during 18 months (from early 2013 to the end of 2014). If we understand Internet - and in particular social media sites as Facebook - as 'just' another space - as work or home - where individuals experience their daily lives, it becomes imperative that ethnographic-inspired research focus on both 'real' and 'virtual' situations (see Miller et al, 2016). As such, the methodological approach espoused here avoids creating distinctions between 'real ethnography' to 'virtual ethnography' (see Hine, 2000) or 'netnography' (see Kozinets, 2009) and treats those spaces solely as distinct places of socialization (see Boyd, 2009). To draw the arguments from the banal cosmopolitanization of transnational football fandom, [first author] joined the Facebook group pages of two official supporters club (Brazil Reds and Switzerland Reds<sup>ii</sup>) and conducted online participant observation (Hine, 2000; Markham, 1998, 2013). Moreover, [first author] conducted twenty in-depth interviews with Brazil Reds' members<sup>iii</sup> through the Facebook chat facility in Portuguese, and attended five different matches (in pubs and at Anfield Stadium - LFC's home ground) in both Switzerland and Liverpool with Switzerland Reds' members<sup>iv</sup> where 'offline' participant observations were conducted in French. Supporters in Brazil and Switzerland represented a range of demographic characteristics in terms of gender, social class and geographical location within the respective nation-states<sup>v</sup>. Field notes and interviews transcripts generated more than 100.000 words of data which was analyzed through a critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989, 2010). This analysis followed Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) four stage approach: (1) focus on a social wrong; (2) identify the obstacles to address this social wrong; (3) consider if the social order needs the social wrong; (4) and finally consider if there are possible ways to bypass this social wrong. As previously argued, cosmopolitanism should not be understood solely as a cultural (banal) phenomenon, but rather as a political and ethical means for societal transformation. In this light, by espousing a cosmopolitan epistemology that departs from an ambivalent perspective it is possible to shed light on one possible social wrong emanating from a methodological nationalist frame of reference: previous theoretical conceptualizations that regarded football supporters 'authenticity' confined to a loosely defined group of local, white, working class men (see Millward, 2011a). As I argued previously (Petersen-Wagner, 2016, p.3):

"Questions about the authenticity of fandom are not questions about the injustices of poverty, law, religion or death but are injustices about life-world cultural consumptions that are subjectively important to those supporters I have researched".

For this research, the obstacles are related to the methodological nationalism epistemology, which by taking an either/or perspective assumes that the political borders of nation-states (re)-create divisions for 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'. On the third stage, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) ask if the social order needs the social wrong to maintain itself, and for the argument being constructed in this paper I argue that sociology's strong reliance on the nation-state as an unit of study or comparison (i.e. comparative sociology) ends by reinforcing those political borders as obstructers of 'authentic' socializations. As such, if the ethical and political project for societal transformation is the primary aim for understanding spectators' identity as the *flâneur* character, the last stage in Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) can be understood as a necessity to embrace a cosmopolitan sociological imagination within sport sociological studies. In this sense, the argument constructed in this research refers not only to the political and ethical project of

cosmopolitanism as described by Delanty (2009), but also to the associated need for an epistemological shift in sociology as asserted by Beck (2007, 2010).

### *Flânerie* in a Cosmopolitan Epoch

The *flâneur* as originally conceptualized by Benjamin (1999) could be regarded as a stroller who wandered in non-places without a clear intention of engaging with others. In the sport studies literature, the *flâneur* was theorized as the doppelgänger of the supporter (see Giulianotti, 2002), by his/hers cool attachment to a group of 'like-minded' individuals that led to a thin solidarity amongst the group. For Giulianotti (2002) those football *flâneurs* would stroll and window-shop particularly in non-places (see Augé, 1995) that are permeated by virtual reality and commoditized meaningless objects. From the interviews [first author] conducted with Brazil Reds' members, it is possible to see how those 'non-places' (i.e. Internet forums as Facebook groups) become places where hot solidarities can develop as both Beto<sup>vi</sup> and Bernardo (quotes below) testify:

"I see this way, as a necessity. The interaction with a group of supporters of your team is fundamental [...] That feeling, to talk to someone who is really a Liverpool supporter is the same when I meet someone to talk about Nietzsche. It is euphoria, mate" (Beto)

"lol [laughing out loud], yes you can [talking about if it was possible to know others even without meeting face-to-face]. Because it is a daily contact, and you start knowing other supporters and their manias [...] So, with time, you can predict the reactions of each one" (Bernardo)

As such, Internet-mediated solidarities that evolved between those LFC supporters in Brazil can be said to overcome this apparent duality (either/or) between non-places (cool-mediated) and places (hot-direct) that a non-ambivalent epistemology would have sociologically imagined. Moreover, taking Beto's quote above is worth highlighting in to for two respects: first his apparent normalization of mediated communications when he refers of talking to someone instead of Internet-chatting to someone; and second, the deepness of the online communication that unfolds between LFC supporters that can be compared to discussing Nietzsche's oeuvres. As such, it is possible to see how Internet permeates those supporters' daily lives (see Miller et al., 2016), enlivening what was once considered as a cool-media and emphasizing the argument that ethnographies should take both 'online' and 'offline' spaces into consideration. Additionally, the quotes in question point to a second argument in Miller et al. (2016, p. x) of the inability to separate the 'online' from the 'offline' world. This is elucidated in the below quote from Flávio when he describes how he watches LFC games.

"I watch the games by myself at home, but always connected to Facebook and Twitter so I can comment and debate with other colleagues, and depending the time of the game I stay hours after the game talking to others" (Flávio)

Flávio's quote find resonances in what Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2014) once described as living-apart-together and living-together-apart, in the sense that the physicality of relations is not a precondition for the existence of hot solidarities. It can be said that Flávio is physically by himself yet never alone as he constantly communicates with other supporters via Facebook or Twitter. Moreover, taking Urry's (2008, p. 13) argument that sociology strongly relied on the 'metaphysical of presence' to basis the existence of social relations and thus shadowed distant non-physical relations from its analysis, it is possible to gain an understanding as to why mediated-solidarities could have been considered as generating thin/cool solidarities (see Giulianotti, 2002). Nevertheless, the supporters [first author] interviewed and observed throughout the ethnographic-

inspired research described some moments where they physically encountered other supporters. During the participant observation in Switzerland, [first author] attended three different games at three different cities (Geneve, Lausanne, and Neuchatel). Mostly the same group of supporters attended those encounters even taking place in those different cities. Upon asking why they organized those games in different places, Edgard and Adele explained to [first author] that they thought it was unfair to keep those physical meetings just in one place or just in the big cities and as such tried to decentralize and rotate places. For both Edgard and Adele the main rationale behind the rotation was of increasing the possibility of meeting fellow LFC supporters who were based in different regions of Switzerland. Those meetings were historically organized through their Internet-forum, which moved on to be 'hosted' on Facebook as open events. One example of how those open events attracted different individuals occurred during the meeting at Lausanne when a young man approached our table and asked if he could join us as he saw the event on Facebook and decided to come and meet fellow LFC supporters. Meeting others for watching LFC games also takes place within the Brazil Reds supporters group as Luis testifies below:

“Both meetings in Rio de Janeiro [upon showing [first author] some pictures], one in 2007 in the Liverpool vs Milan [Champions League] final, that Liverpool lost. And the other was Liverpool vs Manchester City. I was in both, against City was in 2008. Nationally [talking about those meetings] just those two that I can remember [...] those were the largest, at least at that time. Myself, I am 400mi distant from Rio de Janeiro, I live in Assis in São Paulo state countryside [...] Both times I went by bus [to Rio de Janeiro], so 12 hours to go, and 12 hours to come back.” (Luis)

Luis' quote provides a counterpoint to the notion of *flâneurs'* lack of attachment to 'reality' (see Benjamin, 1999), by showing a growing commitment to this particular 'reality' they were experiencing (supporting LFC) that even involved a second 900mi return journey to watch a game with fellow supporters. Moreover, as I argued somewhere else (see Petersen-Wagner, 2016), those endured difficulties constitute one of the aspects for understanding this mediated long distant love for a football club. Those adversities are not only physical as the one described by Luis, but also relative to language barriers those supporters need to overcome to appreciate the club they love. Moreover, the ability to speak the English language was perceived by both Switzerland Reds and Brazil Reds as paramount for fully engaging in a community of supporters that is spread all over the world - LFC has over 200 official supporters club worldwide (see Petersen-Wagner, 2016). In this light, the *flânerie* as described by those LFC supporters involves a long-term emotional and physical investment to the point where they can feel comfortable with a love that is not innate. As such, spaces that could be initially considered as non-places started to be vested with meanings, as the below quote from Maria attests:

“We [herself and Marília] started going to the pub last year because just over-18 can enter, and she just turned 18, so we go there all the games to watch [...] that is the thing I love most doing in my life, really, the feeling of being together with other supporters celebrating is amazing, feeling the same emotions. I love doing that, really” (Maria)

Both Maria and Marília described in different pictures - posted on Instagram but shared on Facebook - that the pub Maria refers to in this quote as their 'home away from home'. As such, spaces of *flânerie* that could be once characterized as non-places by the “[...] devoid of tophilic meaning [...]” (Giulianotti, 2002, p.40) become charged with deep meanings that were invested over a period of time. For instance, Maria and Marília considered this particular pub as their home, while other supporters preferred supporting-apart-together by engaging with just a few others through Facebook or Twitter - investing meanings into those 'virtual' spaces. As the *flâneur* depicted by Baudelaire (2010) - and later sociologically analyzed by Simmel (1950) and Benjamin (1999), and introduced by Giulianotti (2002) in the sport fans study literature - as an idle wanderer, what was

encountered in the ethnographic research was that this wandering was in search of meaningful belonging to a group of like-minded individuals. In that regard, Brazil Reds and Switzerland Reds' members-when explaining why they supported LFC followed a similar route as the one Bauman (2003)-described as one of the most recurrent topics of love relationships: the (hi)story of falling in love. As such, contrary to a common understanding of the *flâneur* as purporting transferable loyalties (see Giulianotti, 2002), Brazil Reds and Switzerland Reds when idling around 'non-places' were actually searching for the beginning of a meaningful and long-lasting relationship. This is evident in the following quotes from two Brazil Reds' members:

“Well, I can't remember when I became a Scouser [...] I can't remember when I really started following the club [...] I didn't become a kopite because of trend as it happens with the likes of [Manchester] United, Chelsea, [Manchester] City or Arsenal. It was by chance, even more because we haven't won anything in ages” (Vicente)

“I always tell everyone, when they ask me that [why she supported LFC], is that I haven't chosen Liverpool, Liverpool chose me by destiny. It was simple, I was watching the Champions League final in 2007, I liked football, but didn't follow much, well I was watching the game and Liverpool fascinated me so much that at the end of the game, when we lost, I was crying my eyes out and didn't know why.” (Maria)

As Vicente attested, he was not in search of a current winning brand, but similar to what Bauman (2003) described in relation to human love relationships, explaining why he loved LFC could only be understood as a rationalization of some unconscious decision. This later aspect of falling in love is illustrated in the quote from Maria, when she mentions that she cried after LFC lost the Champions League final, however she could not rationalize the reason, because at that moment Maria had not yet fallen in love with LFC. Moreover, this *flânerie* in a cosmopolitan epoch reaches a point where the relationship between club and supporters can be seen as inverted - those supporters did not decide to fall in love with LFC, on the contrary, LFC fell in love with the supporters but on the contrary, is LFC who is picking them. As such, the supporters I met were not cool rationalist individuals in search of a winning side to show their cosmopolitan badge of conspicuous capital, rather they were individuals driven by passion and emotions in search of a true, long-lasting love relationship. Beyond a doubt, Carla's (Brazil Reds) quote below summarizes the distinctiveness of what I have been theorizing as the *flâneur* in a cosmopolitan epoch.

“[...] you will reach the conclusion, if you haven't reached yet, that football we cannot explain why we support a team, [...] we [just] feel [...] football and love are the same. We get beaten but we continue to love it.” (Carla)

### The Football Flâneur in the Cosmopolitan Epoch

Beck (2007) argues that normal sociology, including postmodernism and critical theory carries a foundational nostalgia and 'kulturkritischer Pessimismus' that should be counterbalanced by a New Critical Theory with a sociological imagination to both future and past. In order to achieve this distinct sociological imagination, Beck (2010) proposes an ambivalent approach where a both/and perspective is favored. As such, what I propose is a re-interpretation of Simmel (1950) and Benjamin (1999) - an eye in the past - based on the aforementioned *flânerie* that is enacted at the same time 'online' and 'offline' - an eye in the future. Furthermore, I am taking Augé's (1995, p. 11) rhetorical question to the fore when he asks if what we are really seeing in our contemporary Western world is an inability for symbolization by individuals, or if by the pessimistic perspective practiced by Western sociologists this symbolization becomes hidden on different critical



theorizations. This re-reading would allow for the ethical and political project of cosmopolitanism to reconcile with the epistemological shift project.

The contemporaries (see translator's forewords in Benjamin, 1999) Georg Simmel (1950) and Walter Benjamin (1999) were interested in the transformations of urban Western Europe in the wake of the 20th century. Benjamin (1999) attempted to understand through the analysis of one particular location - the arcades - how the influx of new inhabitants to Paris impacted society. For Benjamin (1999) the arcades became the site of the *flâneur*, a place in between work and dwelling, somewhere they would not feel either at home or in a strange surrounding. The arcades by its architectural design allowed the *flâneur* to wander safely by seeking refuge in the crowd, avoiding being the center of interest for his/her apparent strangeness. For Benjamin (1999) those *flâneurs* would be idlers, not 'producing' anything for society by their unserious and constant superfluous wandering through the arcades. On a different approach, a more balanced and ambivalent reading of Benjamin's (1999) *flâneur* can derive initially from a rapprochement with the original conceptualization of the *flâneur* by Baudelaire (2010). Contrasting to Benjamin (1999), who espoused a Marxist perspective of class relations (see Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991), Baudelaire's (2010) *flâneur* was not a dispassionate wanderer as the *dandy*, but on the contrary the *flâneur* was able to "[...] merge with the crowd [...] to be away from home and yet feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world" (Baudelaire, 2010, p. 22). The *flâneur* in Baudelaire's (2010) conceptualization would be - as a child - able to see through those wandering the beauty of the world, in the sense that they could have a dispassionate perspective in order to fully appreciate love and passion. To this point the 'original' *flâneur* comes closer to Simmel's (1950) conceptualization of the stranger. From his side, Simmel (1950) was interested in discussing one particular characteristic of this 20th century wanderer that differed from past understandings: rather than leaving, s/he will come and stay. The stranger for Simmel (1950) was an individual who even being an integral part of a group would still carry a degree of strangeness by the fact that they have not belonged to that group from the beginning. Moreover, this stranger for Simmel (1950) would have an inherent degree of mobility for the fact he or she could not be the 'owner of the soil' in both physical and figurative terms. For the latter, Simmel (1950) was particularly interested with the idea that the life trajectories of those strangers would not be spatially fixed, giving a certain degree of freedom for them to come, stay, and be a potential wanderers in the future. As with Baudelaire's (2010) *flâneur*, the stranger in Simmel (1950) is freer by his/her ability to survey the world without being constraint by habit, piety or precedent. Rather than approaching the *flâneur* or the stranger through a kulturkritischer Pessimismus that would have unavoidably led to an understanding of this particular football identity as someone who does not want to become an organic member of a group, or who wants only to window shop in the safeness of the impersonal virtual world, I understand that a more ambivalent perspective should be espoused.

As described in the previous section, those LFC supporters - as Baudelaire's (2010) *flâneur* - were initially strolling both physically and metaphysically through different football cultures without a clear end point. This apparent dispassionate wandering was not an eternal condition to those supporters, but something transient until they could find their real love as the quotes from Vicente and Maria attest. Moreover, as I argued somewhere else (Petersen-Wagner, 2016), LFC was not the first 'distant' football club they had contact with, but it became their last. As such, those individuals while searching for their ultimate love were actually enacting their precarious freedom condition (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) that 'liberated' them from what habit and culture would have dictated them to do. Nevertheless, this apparent freedom comes with further constraints, not only by the fact that they became obliged to choose to support LFC - Beck & Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) interpretation of the precarious freedom condition - but by starting to follow the club they became entangled in this new love relationship. The precariousness of their freedom comes by the new necessity of having to follow LFC not only in the good moments, but also in the bad moments

when the team loses. As such, distinctively from Giulianotti's (2002) *flâneur*, this cosmopolitan *flâneur* is not a complete dispassionate or rational chooser that would abandon their new love when faced by challenges, but on the contrary s/he will stay wedded for longer. Moreover, as attested by Maria and Luis in relation to physical meetings, or Flávio and Bernardo to more metaphysical ones, choosing to become a LFC supporter entailed afterwards a necessity for constant interactions with like-minded individuals. As such, their apparent initial freedom was handed back to this new love - or it became precarious.

Another aspect arising from an ambivalent reading of the *flâneur* and the stranger is the possibility of witnessing symbolizations taking place where it was once assumed to be a cool and inhospitable non-place - the Internet. As presented in the previous section, supporters conflated both 'online' and 'offline' realms by their apparent normalization of the former by using the latter's language in their discursive praxis. While Giulianotti (2002) understood the Internet as the primary site for the football *flâneur* as a non-place (see Augé, 1995), the ambivalent reading I espoused here sees non-places/places not as an opposing duality but as the two-sides of the same coin. This approach comes from the understanding that the individual production of meaning (see Augé, 1995, p. 37) - or the individualization of references - becomes increasingly more important for understanding collective signification. In this manner, both non-places and places can be said to be constitutive of each other, one being the half empty glass, while the other is the half full glass - one empty of meaning and the other full of meaning and signification. Similarly to Benjamin's (1999) *flâneur*, the traveller in Augé (1995) wanders meaningless in non-places, but the cosmopolitan football *flâneur* while sharing this initial characteristic soon becomes as the stranger - or the passenger for Augé (1995) - fixed to a meaningful place. Due to their impossibility for rationalizing why they started loving LFC, it can be said that they were strolling physically and metaphysically in non-places until they knew they were supporters of the club. The abundance and proliferation of events, images, space and time allows individuals to discover throughout their journey where spaces cease to be non-places to become places full of signification (see Maria's quote about when she cried after the game). The possibility of encountering others who share the same passion and love, and the chance to engage in meaningful conversations - online and offline - that can be compared to discussing Nietzsche demonstrates how an apparent idler can become a settler. As such, non-places and places should be understood ambivalently as part and parcel of spaces, as long as those wanderers are seen as strangers (see Simmel, 1950) looking for a meaningful destination, rather than travelers (see Augé, 1995) or *flâneurs* (see Benjamin, 1999).

## Conclusion

To be sure, I am not arguing against Giulianotti's (2002) original reading of the *flâneur*, but rather, proposing a more nuanced understanding that builds up from this conceptualization by incorporating an ambivalent cosmopolitan imagination (Beck, 2010; Delanty, 2009). This ambivalent perspective allows for a more fluid and less mechanical understanding of the relationship between non-places and places, of 'offline' and 'online', and 'authentic' and 'pseudo-authentic' transnational fandom. This nuanced reading is derived from the unintended consequences of the success of modernization (see Beck et al., 2003), in particular to the reinvigorated compression of time-space through the rise of social media-based transnational solidarities (see Petersen-Wagner, 2016). Moreover, taking Durkheim's (2008) idea of totemism, it can be argued that those cosmopolitan football *flâneurs* while scattered in different territories (i.e. nation-states, regions, states, or cities) are all part of a same 'clan'. Nevertheless, belonging to a clan is not innate as described by Durkheim (2008) but is part of an institutional individualization process (see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) whereby individuals become creators of their own biographies (see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1993). In this sense, the re-reading of the football *flâneur* in this article seeks to overcome the apparent contradiction in Ulrich Beck's thought (see Beck, 2010), where on the one

hand he claims that reflexive modernity is the outcome of the victory of modernization, and on the other, he asks for the dismissal of modern sociological theorizations (see Inglis, 2009). The re-reading of classical canons as Simmel (1950) and Benjamin (1999), under methodological cosmopolitanism that demands an ambivalent perspective (see Beck, 2007), allows for recognizing the symbolization those supporters experience in mediated spaces.

The approach espoused in this paper highlighted the differences between individualism (a 'stable' condition) in the figure of Giulianotti's (2002) *flâneur*, and individualization, a fluid condition that emphasizes the social trajectories of becoming a supporter. As such, the *flâneur*-type of spectator identity proposed in this paper should be understood as originating from an institutional individualization process that empowers individuals into taking into their own hands the decision as to which club they should love. Moreover, those decisions even taking place through consumer market mediated spaces such as Internet and Television are not void of emotional-charged trajectories, which mimics human-to-human love relationships as the ones described by Bauman (2003). Furthermore, the proposed space of the cosmopolitan *flâneur* - social media sites as Facebook - can be said to resemble places (see Augé, 1995), where hot solidarities can emerge and be sustained over long period of time.

In this sense, if a main distinction between Giulianotti's (2002) *flâneur* and the proposed cosmopolitan *flâneur* should be highlighted is that - similar to Simmel's (1950) stranger and Baudelaire's (2010) original *flâneur* - those supporters I met are not in the search for a club to support to later abandon it, but on the contrary, they are on a journey to find their ultimate love and remain with it. This distinct reading of the *flâneur* within a cosmopolitan imagination prospectively leads to possible new research avenues in order to investigate how those transnational solidarities initiated through social media develop over time and in different spaces. Accordingly, it is important to ask how those *flâneurs* relate to what Giulianotti (2002, p. 40) termed as "traditionalists", and what are the implications of those relationships not only to the *flâneur*-type but also to the 'local' supporter. Moreover, this paper focused solely at the social trajectories from *flâneur*-type into supporter-type identities, leaving untapped the inverse processes. How individuals de-signify or divest meanings, passions, or love for a football club is yet to be discussed.

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<sup>i</sup> Giulianotti (2002) can be credited for using first the *flâneur* character to represent a particular football spectator identity. Nevertheless, the approach I am espousing here takes an ambivalent perspective to this *flâneur*-type of spectator by imagining it neither 'superior' or 'inferior' to the loosely defined 'authentic' supporter (see Millward, 2011a; Petersen-Wagner, 2016)

<sup>ii</sup> Both supporters groups' names have been changed to uphold participants' rights to confidentiality

<sup>iii</sup> Not all supporters interviewed were official members, nevertheless they were part of the Facebook group and considered themselves as members of the supporting community

<sup>iv</sup> One of the interviewed supporter lived in Switzerland, was of Swiss-nationality, but was a member of the French official LFC branch

<sup>v</sup> Supporters in Brazil came primarily from State capitals (ranging from Porto Alegre in the South to Fortaleza in the Northeast - 3200km distant apart on a straight line), while Swiss Reds' supporters came primarily from French-speaking Cantons

<sup>vi</sup> All interviewees' names have been changed to uphold their rights to confidentiality

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