

*Fútbol y sociedad en América Latina—Futebol e sociedade na América Latina.*

Edited by THOMAS FISCHER, ROMY KÖHLER, and STEFAN REITH. Americana Eystettensia. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2021. Photographs. Figures. Notes. Bibliographies. 506 pp. Paper, €44.00.

This collection serves as a useful and invigorating introduction to the state of the field of soccer studies. Thomas Fischer, Romy Köhler, and Stefan Reith have compiled 30 essays by scholars from many countries, disciplines, and career stages, organizing these into one introductory section and seven thematic ones. Together, the authors included explore social, cultural, and political facets of the “footballization” of Latin America, giving particular attention to the early twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

One of the welcome features of this volume is the recognition that “Latin American soccer” and, indeed, all purported national styles of the game exist merely as narratives created and used for varying purposes. The six essays that comprise the first two sections make vital contributions in this regard. The works of Aldo Panfichi and Pablo Alabarces, two sociologists who are among the most influential figures in the field of soccer studies, stand out here. Panfichi examines the political projects that sought to make use of soccer in Peru and other Andean nations. While modernizing urban elites attempted to impose social order through the sport, political leaders sought to overcome past diplomatic tensions—including the War of the Pacific’s legacy—by shoring up ties through football. While also introducing later essays in the volume, Panfichi makes a simple point powerfully: the spread of soccer created “an unprecedented social space” in which members of politically excluded groups could gain a sense of being recognized in the nation (p. 68). Alabarces builds on similar ideas, with a focus on Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. With admirable concision, he demonstrates how “playing styles” provided unifying visions of the nation, at least in class and racial terms and only for men; women continued to be denied participation in organized leagues (famously suffering a legal ban from soccer in Brazil from 1941 to 1979) and, more broadly, in the nationalisms fostered through the sport (p. 96).

Many pieces in the collection turn away from the nation as the primary unit of analysis. Some of the most intriguing combine the local and the transnational. Karmen Saavedra Garfias, for instance, traces the emergence and diffusion of identities among supporters of Club Deportivo San José, based in Oruro, Bolivia. Significantly, support for San José provides opportunities for experiences of collectivity and community, perhaps most strikingly among members of the Oruro diaspora who have relocated across Bolivia and in Argentina, Brazil, and other countries. As Saavedra Garfias argues compellingly, these are not processes of re-creating old notions or feelings; the identities that supporters embrace take shape as they travel with their team, attend matches, and in other ways support their San José. Nicolás Cabrera offers a fascinating ethnographic account of the organized fan group (*barra brava*) known as Los Piratas, who navigate logistical challenges to follow Club Atlético Belgrano de Córdoba. Cabrera explains not only the strategies these supporters employed to infiltrate games from which they were banned but the importance of “traveling” with Belgrano across Argentina and beyond to the formulation of collective identities and their limits (pp. 226–27). Essays by Kevin Roza Rondón and Renzo Miranda Cerruti take on the meanings of European clubs among transnational supporters in Latin America, while Arturo Córdova Ramírez shows how the soccer and *ecuavoley* (an Ecuadorean variant of volleyball) matches set up by Latin American immigrants in public parks in Bonn, Germany, illuminate the political and ethnic “reterritorialization” of that city (p. 220).

The authors who address national questions do so in innovative ways. Flavio de Campos discusses the processes by which the men’s national team in Brazil and the green and yellow of its uniform came to be contested symbols in struggles between formal democracy and an antidemocratic New Right. Other essays likewise focus on very recent events—sporting and political—and hint at the usefulness of social media sources. Peter Watson, for one, employs a thoughtfully focused set of Twitter data to demonstrate

Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos's attempts to couch his political projects in footballing terms, as well as reactions to his efforts. Carmen Rial traces the troubled relationship between women in football and feminist movements in Brazil; she posits that in the 2010s these two shared greater common ground in denunciations of sexism and abuse.

The final sections—on Indigeneity, media, and the arts, respectively—contain valuable offerings. The first of these sections—with the exception of Juliane Müller's intriguing essay on the “escuela-ayllu” in Warisata, Bolivia, and relations between the state and Indigenous communities in 1900–1940—is not particularly well integrated into the collection. The others fit more easily into the whole, however, and feature important contributions (to name just two) by David Wood, whose essay (with the delightful title “Cien años de goledad”) proposes a novel periodization of literary treatments of soccer and race over the past century, and Nicolás Campisi, who highlights the foundational role of the writer Borocotó in defining an Argentine playing style.

Originating in a single conference (the 2018 meeting of the Asociación Alemana de Investigaciones sobre América Latina), the collection is not of course exhaustive: gender studies are underrepresented, and economic matters are noticeably absent. The breadth of scholarship included is nevertheless impressive, as is the overall quality of the essays. By bringing these works together, Fischer, Köhler, and Reith have done a great service to readers who want to acquaint themselves with the study of football and to sport historians who want to read in other disciplines.

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