

Maçaranduba!

Organized cheer and Police in Brazil

Marcos Alvito[1]

*For Simoni Lahud Guedes, an expert at the NEPESS
(Center for the Study and Research on Sports and Society),
and a pioneer of soccer anthropology in Brazil*

Abstract

The first part of the article presented a bibliographic analysis of groups of soccer fans that are called “*torcidas organizadas*” in Brazil. The second part was dedicated to a critical comparison between what the bibliography states about policing and the lessons of fieldwork in Brazil.

Keywords: soccer violence; soccer fans; policing.

Maçaranduba neles! Torcidas organizadas e policiamento no Brasil

Resumo

A primeira parte do artigo analisa a bibliografia acerca das torcidas organizadas no Brasil. A segunda examina as contribuições da bibliografia à luz de uma pesquisa etnográfica desenvolvida a respeito do policiamento no Brasil, contrastando de maneira crítica os resultados com as observações da bibliografia atualmente existente.

Palavras-chave: violência no futebol; torcidas organizadas; policiamento.

¡Maçaranduba en ellos! Torcidas organizadas y policía en el Brasil

Resumen

La primera parte del artículo analiza la bibliografía acerca de las *torcidas* organizadas en el Brasil. La segunda examina las contribuciones de la bibliografía a la luz de una investigación etnográfica desarrollada respecto al control policial en el Brasil, contrastando de manera crítica los resultados con las observaciones de la bibliografía actualmente existente.

Palabras clave: violencia en el fútbol; *torcidas* organizadas; control policial.

Maçaranduba! Supporters organisés et la Police pour le football au Brésil

Résumé

La première partie de l'article est dédiée à une analyse de la bibliographie sur les ultras au Brésil. Dans la seconde partie j'examine les contributions de cette bibliographie sous la lumière d'une recherche ethnographique à propos du maintien de l'ordre au Brésil, en confrontant de manière critique les conclusions de cette étude avec les observations de la bibliographie actuelle.

Mots-clés: football et violence; ultras; maintien de l'ordre.

Entering the field

It was a triumphal arrival. The two buses of cheering crowd A,¹ duly escorted by a vehicle from the Grupamento Especial de Policiamento em Estádios (Special Group for Policing in Stadiums - GEPE),² approached the stadium surroundings to the sound of fireworks lighted from the bus windows. As soon as they parked, the buses were surrounded by GEPE policemen led by their commander in chief. Right away, the *morteiros* (fireworks) were confiscated, and an argument ensued between a soldier and a tall and strong young man. The officer interrupted shouting that he was the boss there. With a commanding voice, he sent the fans that had already left the bus back inside. Only the fans that had purchased their ticket were initially allowed to exit the bus. One by one, they stepped down, lifted their shirts, and underwent an inspection of their bodies and belongings. The unsuspecting anthropologist started taking pictures of the whole process, and was alternately mistaken for a reporter or, which is much worse and more dangerous, a police spy. This, in turn, caused some soccer fans to gesticulate in a threatening way, and others recommended that I took pictures of the other team. And thus began, inauspiciously, my field work with one of Brazil's oldest organized cheering crowds, and, as in their own say, "the most feared".

After four months, it was possible to invert my position towards that cheering group. Now I embarked on one of their own buses headed to Volta Redonda for a "classic" match.³ After hours waiting, two of the rented buses had not arrived, or better yet, the driver had left as soon as he noticed that he was dealing with an organized cheering crowd. A third bus appeared, with some members of the crowd who had come from Niterói, and we travelled on it, duly followed by a GEPE vehicle. A former director of the cheering crowd – one of the people that had showed me their middle finger some months before – explicitly urged me to sit on one of the bus front seats: "sit down at the front, professor, go at the front". Wise suggestion. As soon as I entered, a young man sitting behind me put his face out the window and proceeded to curse at everyone, addressing the men with scurrility, and the women with obscene comments. What admired me the most was the anger he demonstrated, the veritable fury with which he verbally attacked the passersby. Then, all the fans in the bus started singing:

*Crazy crowd,
Inhales, inhales, inhales,
Inhales nonstop,
Smokes, smokes, smokes,
Smokes nonstop,
Crazy crowd.*

¹For reasons that will be obvious in the text, I named this cheering crowd A. All that can be said is that it is one of the main cheering crowds of one of the four big clubs of Rio de Janeiro. The match took place at Cidadania Stadium, Volta Redonda, in September 2005.

²GEPE is a special deployment of the Rio de Janeiro's Military Police, created in 1991, and currently subordinate to the Battalion of Shock Police, with approximately 70 men.

³A game between two prominent groups that have been rivals for a long time. Although there are exceptions, in Brazil the most important classic matches usually happen between clubs from the same city or, at the most, from the same state.

On the road, the newbies of the group were taken to the back of the bus and went through a “baptism”, composed alternately of slaps and yelling, in addition to trips to the washroom, where many teenagers were piled up.⁴ One of them, upon leaving that place, seemed to have a broken arm, and spent the rest of the trip with a terrorized expression of suppressed cry. He improvised an arm sling with his own coat.

Yelling, somebody ordered the driver to turn on the television. Upon learning that the TV did not broadcast any channels, it only read DVDs, the person sitting next to me tried to yank it off, but was advised to do so “on the way back”. It was also said that that was the only transportation company that currently rented their vehicles to the group, which seemed to dissuade the young man of his purpose. At Baixada Fluminense, the bus stopped in front of Favela do Lixão (The Garbage Slum), and other 30 members hopped on, worsening the overcrowding. The veterans started collecting “voluntary” contributions from the novices (and also from the ethnographer) in order to purchase beer. By means of roaring, the driver was ordered to stop at a gas station. In addition to *Cannabis*, beer was also consumed. Besides that, a person decided to throw a beer can at a transvestite who displayed his gifts by the side of

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the road. There was also a traffic jam. Every once in a while, a song animated the environment: “group A, killing is the order of the day”.

On the course of the trip, which lasted twice as long, it was impossible to hear any comments about that night’s game, the club’s position in the championship or about a certain player. Thus, I did not hear anybody talk about soccer in over three hours. Stories about other excursions were told, such as the one that had happened a few weeks earlier: they couldn’t make it to Santos (the buses were detained by the police), but “we stole everything, we ate like fuck!”. Another individual detailed his sexual adventures and feats, and some recalled a true anthology of the worst moments of police violence.

However, what strongly mobilized all of them were stories of conflicts with other organized cheering crowds. The main antagonist of that day was crowd B, regarded as a “playboy” crowd, that is, white middle-class young people whom they called “Bambis”. Somebody claimed to have seen crowd B’s escorting car with hired policemen that showed their “pieces” (that is, guns). There was an intense debate about how and when there would be a confrontation

⁴For an analysis of the trip as an exceptional moment of loosening of the rules and about the “baptism”, see Rosana da Câmara Teixeira, *Os perigos da paixão: visitando jovens torcidas cariocas*, São Paulo, Annablume, 2003, p. 116-119. From a less ethnographic perspective and more in the vein of a bibliographical analysis (including international) about the cheering crowd members’ trips, see “Da aventura: caravanas e narrativas de viagem”, in: Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda, *O clube como vontade e representação: o jornalismo esportivo e a formação das torcidas organizadas de futebol no Rio de Janeiro*, 7 Letras, 2009, p. 407-485.

with “the playboys”. At a certain point, a young man believed that somebody went through his backpack and began to threaten another crowd member. With the exception of a terrified ethnographer, everyone took sides, and a few got up from their seats, crowding the aisle with young men threatening one another, at the verge of a general conflagration that would have been tragic under those circumstances. A saving voice, belonging to the only woman among about 80 men, was raised in the turmoil of voices: “We’ve arrived! We’ve arrived!”. Immediately, everyone started singing their song animatedly, as if nothing had happened.

Once again, we encountered the SGSP policemen waiting. Concerned about avoiding the possibility of a confrontation with the opposing crowd’s members, the commander in chief placed us in the stadium, where we were inspected separately. The first half of the game had already ended, and their club was losing with a score of one-nil. Upon arrival at the bleachers, I was impressed with the energy with which cheering crowd A sang their songs:

*Illuminated path, good blood,
I belong to crowd A,
I belong to team A’s crowd*

Crowd A’s arrival “ignited” the stadium, giving the club’s cheering crowd a new liveliness. The lyrics of the songs established bizarre associations, referring to the Peruvian guerrilla or with a punk-style choreography of bounces, pushes, and punches simulated among themselves: “An, an, an, crowd A is Taliban”. There are certainly worse ones, affirming that crowd A “whacks everyone”, it is “Rio’s terror”. There are even those who ironically defy the opposing cheering crowd: “Tiny cheering crowd B, fits in a tiny kombi” or obscenely challenge: “Crowd B, come suck my dick”. But the ethnographer was surprised and became emotional when hearing crowd A sing:

*Oh, club A is my life,
Club A is my history,
Club A is my love*

First half: death as a challenge

The possible analysis of the “trip” as a rite of passage for the novices, and as an exceptional moment of rule-bending and affirmation of hierarchies within the cheering crowd will not be discussed here.⁵ I believe that this episode demonstrates the complexity of studying organized cheering crowds.

On one hand, it is undeniable that these organizations constitute a type of ‘fight club’ to the young people disposed to practice what José Miguel Wisnik called “a radical sport for the poor [...] for whom the inclusion in a cheering crowd and its emblems, in a field battle with the other crowd, makes more

⁵The ex-president of crowd A reported that the most common scenario would be the existence of two buses, the first only with the directors and the people who were more “disposition”, the so called “warriors”. The other would carry the newer members and/or “the fools”, people who are not especially inclined to fight.

sense than the symbolic tournaments of the game”⁶ On the other, the organized cheering crowds are the party engine at the bleachers, with their percussion instruments, their songs of encouragement to the team or provocation to the opponents,⁷ their choreographies, their flags of different sizes, themes, and special effects.⁸ Without them, the atmosphere in the stadium is significantly less vibrant. Moreover, it is important to highlight a few points in order to eliminate the idea that they are simply a “gang of criminals”, as they are usually portrayed by the media.

To begin with, it is necessary to remember that their emergence dates back to the end of the 1960s, a moment of great political effervescence for

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the youth in Brazil and in the world.⁹ Therefore, many of the first ‘organized’ crowds had the word ‘young’¹⁰ in their names and questioned the *status quo* of clubs and politics,¹¹ protesting against directors, vindicating a drop in the price of tickets or organizing boycotts to games. One of the pioneering intellectuals in research on organized cheering crowds and violence in soccer, sociologist Maurício Murad, affirmed that, within these crowds, “the violent, quarrelsome or rowdy” people are only 5% of the total of members.¹² Given that the game was outside Rio de Janeiro, two hours away by bus, only the most dedicated members of the cheering crowd were there, a sort of “shock battalion” of an admittedly and confessedly violent crowd.¹³ Therefore, this behavior must not be generalized to all organized cheering crowds.

⁶José Miguel Wisnik, *Veneno remédio: o futebol e o Brasil*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2008, p. 54.

⁷There are many songs: some are reserved strictly to moments when the cheering crowd is in a reserved space, without the presence of other cheering crowds; others are to be sung in the stadiums.

⁸Such as fireworks, luminous signs, whistles, smoke of different colors, balloons, plaques that form gigantic mosaics, colorful inflated balls, etc. Currently, many of these items (or even all) are forbidden in certain stadiums.

⁹For an exhaustive, erudite, and brilliant history of the formation of cheering crowds in Rio de Janeiro, with mention of other states (especially), see Holanda, *op. cit.* For a more summarized text, see “A festa competitiva: formação e crise das torcidas organizadas entre 1950 e 1980”, *In: Bernardo Buarque de Holanda, João M.C. Malaia, Luiz Henrique de Toledo, Victor Andrade de Melo, A torcida brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 Letras, 2012, p.70-121.

¹⁰In Rio de Janeiro: Young Cheering Crowd of Flamengo (1967, initially called Young Power), Young Cheering Crowd of Botafogo (1969), Young Force of Vasco (1970), Young Flu (1970); in São Paulo: Santos Young Cheering Crowd (1969), Young Cheering Crowd Shirt 12 (1971), and many others throughout the country, for instance, Young Cheering Crowd of Grêmio (1977). See Holanda, *op. cit.*, p. 50-52, and the second part of the book, entitled “O drama do *Jornal dos Sports* e a formação das Torcidas Jovens”.

¹¹In the second semester of 1978, when the campaign for Amnesty was in its early stages, the crowd Gaviões da Fiel performed its first public act during a match against Santos. After the fireworks, they unrolled a banner that read: “Amnesty, ample, general, and unrestrained”. The military police acted immediately, but the corinthians protected the banner by locking their arms.

¹²Maurício Murad, “Futebol e violência no Brasil”, *Pesquisa de Campo*, n. 3/4, Rio de Janeiro, 1996, p. 101. More recently, the same author updated these numbers to 5 to 7%, according to research conducted in 2009/10, see Maurício Murad, *A violência no futebol*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012, p. 30.

¹³During a visit to the headquarters of crowd A, one of the members of a subdivision complained about the lack of quarrelsome people, i.e., “we only have 20 warriors on the floor, the rest are fools”.

Reducing the phenomenon of cheering crowds to violence results in an impoverishment of understanding. In a meticulous and sensitive ethnography, anthropologist Rosana da Câmara Teixeira shows the web of reciprocity that exists among these young people, who experience their belonging to an organized cheering crowd as a passion, in the sense of a generous and total surrender, anchored in feelings of loyalty and dedication to the group.¹⁴ The fight, in this case, unites the group against their opponents and serves as a test representing ‘moral obligation.’

Author of another remarkable ethnography, this time focusing on the cheering crowds of São Paulo, Luiz Henrique de Toledo had already reached a similar conclusion, namely: in soccer, and, above all, among the cheering crowds, sociability and conflict are two sides of the same coin. In his words, in terms of sociability, soccer “opposes and gathers, cheers up and saddens, unites and separates, establishes differences and similarities, and creates situations of socializing and conflict that surpass the perimeter determined by the lines of the field.”¹⁵

It is fundamental to perceive violence, beyond common sense, as a constituting element of soccer, which in the manner of Bali’s cockfighting, is a way of “playing with fire, but without the risk of being burned.”¹⁶ Arlei Damo, one of the many researchers of soccer to approach Geertz’s text, highlights the fact that the “spectacle-soccer”¹⁷ is a disjunctive game that aims at establishing winners and losers,¹⁸ but not only that: “Neither is the victory, pure and simple, what interests soccer fans. What captivates them is the drama inherent to the possibility of winning and losing alongside the team linked to the club, which represents an affective community.”¹⁹

Love for the club is the mainspring that functions as a ‘social mask.’²⁰ This identity linked to the club is contrasting and, therefore, intrinsically conflicting, although, ideally, it is a confrontation marked only by symbolic, not literal, violence. The symbology has a strongly male connotation, supposing

¹⁴Rosana da Câmara Teixeira, *Os perigos da paixão: visitando jovens torcidas cariocas*, São Paulo, Annablume, 2003, p. 178.

¹⁵Luiz Henrique Toledo, *Torcidas organizadas de futebol*, Campinas, São Paulo, Autores Associados, ANPOCS, 1996, p. 103. For more recent ethnographies, including a few dealing with the formation of groups of soccer fans that deny the qualification of organized cheering crowds, see two interesting dissertations: Isabella Trindade Menezes, *Entre a Fúria e a Loucura - Análise de duas formas de torcer pelo Botafogo Futebol e Regatas*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Memória Social, Rio de Janeiro, UNIRIO, 2010; Francisco Carvalho dos Santos Rodrigues, *Amizade, trago e alento: a Torcida Geral do Grêmio, da rebeldia à institucionalização*, Dissertação de Mestrado em História, Niterói, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2012. Other works are also worthy of mention: Tarciane Cajueiro Santos, *Dos espetáculos de massa às torcidas organizadas: paixão, rito e magia no futebol*, São Paulo, Annablume, 2004; Carlos Alberto Máximo Pimenta, *Torcidas organizadas de futebol - violência e auto-afirmação*, Taubaté, Vogal Editora, 1997. Although he does not dedicate many pages to organized cheering crowds, the second part of Hilário Franco Jr.’s book is important for their contextualization, see “Parte 2. Futebol, metáfora do mundo contemporâneo”, *In: A dança dos deuses: futebol, sociedade, cultura*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2007.

¹⁶Clifford Geertz, “Um jogo absorvente: notas sobre a briga de galos balinesa”, *In: _____. A interpretação das culturas*, Rio de Janeiro, Guanabara, p. 308.

¹⁷He distinguishes four matrices of soccer: school, community (unofficial championships), ‘bricolada’ (games with rules agreed upon *ad hoc*), and spectacle, which happens to be professional soccer. See Arlei Sander Damo, *Do dom à profissão: a formação de futebolistas no Brasil e na França*, São Paulo, Aderaldo & Rothschild, ANPOCS, 2007, p. 33-51.

¹⁸Even when there is a tie in the score, there is unending discussion among the fans to point out the team that should have won or, at least, that left the conflict in advantage (which is the case of teams that tie the score of a game they were about to lose until almost the last second).

¹⁹Arlei Sander Damo, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

²⁰Arlei Sander Damo, “Futebol e estética”, *São Paulo em Perspectiva*, vol. 15, n. 3, 2001, p. 87-88.

sexual submission from the opponent expressed in innumerable songs and phrases.²¹

It is worth mentioning José Miguel Wisnik's essential contribution in remembering that "ball games catalyze accumulated and potential violence, calling on it, now exacerbating it, now diluting it".²² Since it is a game open to the investing of meanings, soccer is useful to express opposition and rivalry of varied natures: political, religious, social, ethnical, cultural, etc. In Wisnik's words:²³

soccer is an instrument for the elaboration of differences, a festive and polemical field of non-verbal dialogue, projected on the terrain of ludic dispute, which actualizes the need for another so that I can be, the need for another to affirm me by denying me.

For the author, in the case of organized cheering crowds, the "symbolic mediations" would disappear, and the "other", instead of being a contrasting condition of my existence (cheering for one soccer team is being another's rival), is denied with the purpose, *in extremis*, of its elimination (which sometimes literally occurs).²⁴ It is appropriate to recall one of the most famous chants of a well-known carioca cheering crowd: "To cheer, to fight, to massacre the enemy". During a visit to crowd A's headquarters, I noticed a piece of plastic glued to the window, with the motto of an allied group: "We want war, because only war will bring peace with the destruction of our enemies". In the mural, there was the following message: "Our morale is superior, we accept death as a challenge".

Although I returned physically safe from my ethnographic incursion, I have to mention that two years later one of the young men on that bus was beaten up on the streets by two rival crowds, dying of head trauma.

Anyway, instead of perceiving the violence of the cheering crowds as a product of individual and collective pathologies, it is necessary to understand it as a language and inquire about the reason why thousands of young people choose to belong to these groups in Brazil. Murad relates the violence in the stadiums (and around them) to the high degree of illegality existent in Brazilian society.²⁵ Rosana da Câmara Teixeira believes that "the borderline situations of violence might indicate society's dissatisfaction, which reveals certain views about itself through these individuals". The same author proposes to understand the fans' violence "articulated with a reflection about the different practices of violence existing in our society".²⁶ Wisnik considers that "in this simulated or real fight to death in which the attack against the enemy is

²¹"We put five in them", "they lost on all fours", "the ball is in there", and many other unpublishable sentences are parts of songs of organized cheering crowds in which there is a true obsession with the opponent's sodomization. The other side of the coin is that soccer is one of the few spheres of social world where men can gather "in a mixed atmosphere of complicity and dispute", "diffusely homosexual" according to José Miguel Wisnik, *Veneno remédio: o futebol e o Brasil*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2008, p. 59. Journalist and feminist critic Julie Burchill goes further. She believes that the fans' hatred towards to players' women is due to a "homoerotic desire" for their idols. *Burchill on Beckham*, London, Yellow Jersey Press, 2001, p. 90.

²²José Miguel Wisnik, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

²³*Ibidem*, p. 51.

²⁴*Ibidem*, p. 53. Mauricio Murad points Brazil as the world champion of fans' deaths: 42 between 1999-2008, an average of more than four dead people per year. *A violência no futebol*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012, p. 37.

²⁵Maurício Murad, *A violência no futebol*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012, p. 29s.

²⁶*Ibidem*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

an outrage to the very precariousness of a self-image”, one can recognize “the living mockup of a state of things that the world presents to us in many forms, in many levels, and in many areas of existence”.²⁷

Second half: surveying the passion

Bibliography on the policing of cheering crowds is scarce and almost non-existent.²⁸ The pioneering and most important contribution was Mauricio Murad’s work. Although the first studies and research have been conducted by him since the first half of the 1990s,²⁹ I will dialogue with two books he published recently which contain his main conclusions on the topic. Only the excerpts that deal with policing and legislation will be commented on, for these are intimately related.

In *A violência e o futebol (Violence and Soccer)*, after a comparison to what has happened and still occurs in other countries (England, Italy, Spain, Portugal, among others), Murad offered a series of proposals to decrease the violence related to soccer. In regards to policing, they are the following:

- Recurrent meetings between the police and the organized cheering crowds;
- Mobile police station in the stadiums;
- Specific laws with severe punishment for offenses committed in and around the stadiums;
- Internal surveillance;
- Undercover police officers infiltrated in the crowds;
- Creation of specialized police forces (such as the GEPE);
- Thorough and permanent inspection of fans;
- Penal accountability of parents or responsible for underage transgressors;
- Prohibition of attendance of violent fans;
- Multiplication of alternative penalties and re-educational work;³⁰

It is worth noting that in addition to the proposals, many of them already implemented in the stadiums, the book was not dedicated to an analysis of concrete actions by the police, which in fact exist.

In *A violência e o futebol*, there are more mentions to the police: the corruption in police force, and the discredit of the Military Police in Rio de Janeiro.³¹

²⁷Maurício Murad, *A violência no futebol*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012, p. 54. In this regard, we could use the concept of ‘structural violence’ present in the contemporary world, characterized by Milton Santos: “structural violence results from a group’s presence and manifestations, in this era of globalization, of money in pure state, of competitiveness in pure state, and of power in pure state, whose association leads to the emergence of new totalitarianisms and allows for the thought that we live more in an epoch of globalitarism than of globalization”. Milton Santos, *Por uma outra globalização – do pensamento único à consciência universal*. 6. ed., Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Record, 2001, p. 55.

²⁸Maurício Murad’s work mentioned in footnote 25, and a previous book by the same author (*A violência e o futebol: dos estudos clássicos aos dias de hoje*, São Paulo, FGV, 2007) are the main references. More recently, a PhD thesis in Anthropology that briefly approached the topic was defended: Martin Christopher Curi Spörl, *Espaços da emoção: arquitetura futebolística, torcida e segurança pública*, Niterói, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia e Ciência Política, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2012.

²⁹Murad created the Center of Sociology of Soccer at the Rio de Janeiro State University in May 1990, and released the zero issue of the magazine *Pesquisa de campo (Field Research)* in July 1994.

³⁰Maurício Murad, *A violência e o futebol: dos estudos clássicos aos dias de hoje*, São Paulo, FGV, 2007, p. 63-64. For a similar book, in which there are proposals of security measures to be taken in order to restrain violence in the stadiums, drawing on a comparison to the Spanish case, see Heloisa Helena Baldy dos Reis, *Futebol e Violência*, Campinas, Armazém do Ipê, Autores Associados, 2006.

³¹Maurício Murad, *A violência no futebol*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 2012, p. 43-45.

Even so, it is possible to affirm that, for the author, the police force is a factor in decreasing violence, by means of repression and dialogue. Highlighting Murad's pioneering stance and his enormous contribution to this debate, a complementary possibility may be proposed: that of the police as the feeder and, many times, the causer of violence in and around the stadiums. It is necessary to study how laws and proposals are put into practice in the effective relation between police officers and cheering crowd members.

Drawing on the field work developed in the project *A Paixão Viglada: o policiamento de torcedores no Brasil e na Inglaterra (Surveying the Passion: the policing of soccer fans in Brazil and England)*,³² we emphasize the conclusions regarding the Brazilian portion, but offering brief comparisons to what was observed in England.³³

The field work started with a trip to the GEPE and contact with its commander, Major Marcelo Pessoa, who authorized the research and accepted to be interviewed two weeks later.³⁴ At that time, he had been responsible for the GEPE for three years already. According to him, when he took charge, the group was problematic, filled with violent policemen who regarded the soccer fan as an enemy, and vice-versa. The policemen "really beat up people" and there were confrontations increasingly more violent among the cheer-

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ing crowds, and between these crowds and the police. His mandate started with a "shock", since he removed ten men from the force (between cops and officials) and proceeded to recruit others with a clean record and willing to work in accordance with his philosophy: "less beating up and more operational results" (detention, indictments, apprehensions). He admits, however, that sometimes it is necessary to "use the baton" to enforce the law.

Next, Pessoa affirmed that the GEPE became so respected that there was a list with 500 names of officers who wanted to join it. He complained about the

³²The part that refers to Brazil was conducted between 2005 and 2007. For 2007, three researchers with scientific investigation scholarships helped: Flávio Amieiro, Isabella Trindade Menezes e Natasha Schumack. Each researcher was in charge of conducting field work amid the cheering crowd of one of the four main carioca clubs: Flamengo, Vasco, Fluminense, and Botafogo. Research in England, Scotland, and Wales took place during the 2007/2008 season. This stage was financially sponsored by Capes (Coordination for the Improvement of Undergraduate and Graduate Personnel), which I thank. Some research results were published in an article entitled "O esporte que vendeu a sua alma" ("The sport that sold its soul"), *Revista Piauí*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 15, dez. 2007, p. 66-71, available at <<http://bit.ly/MrAewE>>, access 5 January 2012.

³³A comparative article about policing practices in Brazil and England was elaborated, to be published in the annals of the "Second International Symposium about Hooliganism and the 2014 Cup", which took place at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro on April 24 and 25. It will be titled "A madeira da lei: gerir ou gerar a violência nos estádios brasileiros? ("Law's wood: managing or generating violence in Brazilian stadiums?"), to be published in Heloisa Baldy dos Reis, and Bernardo Borges Buarque de Hollanda (orgs.), *Hooliganismo e Copa de 2014: anais do II Simpósio Internacional*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 Letras, 2013.

³⁴The interview happened on 17 May 2005. Conversations with the major, however, happened before and after the interview, and the excerpts were obtained in different situations: in dialogues in and out of the GEPE office; before, during and after the matches in which I conducted field work. I would like to thank Major Pessoa for his warm welcome towards me and my research, and for the permission to conduct field work alongside GEPE's troop.

active staff of only “70 men and 4 officials”; when at least 250 would be necessary, given that the group had other tasks such as escorting the buses.

He declared, in addition, that the first meeting he scheduled with the cheering crowds was a disappointment, because they “beat each other up”. He then started to summon the groups that cheered for the same team, but he did not obtain a good result either: two of them fought with each other. From then on, he began to talk to each of them separately. He began to register them, and asked them to provide their names, identity cards, social security cards, and photos. Next, he established punishments related to the festive character of the organized cheering crowds: if an infraction (a violent act) was committed, they would lose the banner, then the instruments, then the flag, etc.

In regards to his work philosophy, he affirmed that there was a great transformation in relation to what existed before:

The GEPE was regarded as a police of shock, of shock force, of combat, and we implanted a system of community policing, which was a different idea: within a repressive troop we put a preventive officer, we transformed a repressive officer into a preventive one.

According to him, the implantation of community policing aimed at solving the innumerable problems of abuse, aggression, and violence by authorities. He examined the profile of each of his subordinates, charging the most violent ones with smoother jobs, avoiding them in the stadium, a task considered stressful. He scheduled policemen who cheered for a certain team to be off when it was playing, because, previously, these professionals used to beat fans of opponent teams and thought: “Ah, they root for Vasco (or Flamengo, or Fluminense, or Botafogo)”

The result was the establishment of a trust relation among fans and the police, and the absence of severe incidents over the last two years. Evangelical, as he claims his entire family to be, he has a copy of the Bible on his desk, open on Psalm 91, whose verse seven he insisted on reciting to me: “Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand die at your right hand, these evils will not touch you”.

The GEPE’ work supposedly has two pillars. On game day, there would be four policemen with each cheering crowd, functioning as a thermometer, surveying it and calling for immediate imprisonment or reinforcement when necessary. They would be the “nervous cell”, composed of “community policemen”, known and respected by the crowds and carefully chosen by the major from among his most levelheaded men, with the best profile. The other pillar rests on informers that seek to learn about confrontations beforehand.

I confess that I headed to field work with the best impression about the GEPE’s work. Unfortunately, in practice, the reality is different, and what I encountered differed greatly from the intentions and evaluations put together by the unit’s commander.

The policemen’s work conditions were quite bad. The GEPE’s bathroom, when I was there, was nauseating. In their talks, the topic of low salaries and a possible strike were constant. One of them commented that policemen join the corporation based on a lie: a salary of R\$1,203.00 is advertised, but only R\$800.00 are actually paid. On another occasion, a policeman of the GEPE complained to

his colleagues that he didn't have money even to buy "a shed" in a slum very far from the city center. When I asked them how to find a place to live without being a policeman, he gesticulated using his hands to cover his eyes, ears, and mouth successively. They affirmed that they pass by "the guys", that is, the criminals, and greet them with a "good morning", so as not to talk. They also complained about the corporation's hospital, affirming that it is necessary to arrive hours earlier in order to be able to schedule an appointment. Another favorite topic: rifles and guns, with unending discussions about the classification and characteristics of each of them, not to mention each one's preference. They also complained about corruption in politics and in the police's high hierarchy.

One of these professionals did not stop making fun of his colleagues, satirizing their condition, saying that a policeman's child is always 'crying and with a runny nose'. Changing his tone, he praised Israel's feared police, which, according to him: "just kills everyone when there is a kidnapping, even if civilians have to die. This way, the terrorists get scared of kidnapping". Nevertheless, he claimed to know that it cannot be that way in Brazil.

Once, while I travelled on a bus with the officers, I was surprised because the policeman who was sitting next to me jumped towards the window with his gun ready, and asked his colleagues to lay low. We were passing a slum. But

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the episode was marked as a symbol of what it means to be a policeman in Rio de Janeiro or in the SGSP: it means living under fierce and uninterrupted tension.

One of the soldiers with whom I spoke before a game was a young man about 20 years old, good humored and known among his colleagues as an individual who "doesn't heat up for anything". For him, the problem of the cheering crowds would be the young people aged 15 to 17: "they're full of themselves and they want to hit people, but then", he said smiling, "we beat them up and they calm down". In this regard, he arrived at the GEPE's headquarters one day, bragging about having ordered a baton made of a special type of wood called *maçaranduba*: "it hurts like hell" (Figure 1).

In addition to direct dialogues, I also overheard important conversations, such as a sergeant bragging about his 'severity'. According to him, when he was in charge of the GEPE, he warned the leaders of the organized cheering crowds during a match between Flamengo and Vasco in the junior championship: "if you mess up, I'll screw you and you". The group members' complaints were useless: the sergeant simply forbade 'everything': banners, instruments, flags, etc. When they requested to speak with Major Marcelo, he told them to get his phone number and call him themselves, because he would not do it over the radio. This professional was commenting on a possible match between Flamengo and Vasco in São Januário. There would be no problem for him, all he had to do was use his "tough" politics.

If the distance between the theory and practice of policing is long when one leaves the commander's room, it is even longer when one examines the relations among policemen and cheering crowd members from the latter's viewpoint.

Being myself a frequenter of stadiums for many years, I have the impression that the police deal with the fans as if they were in charge of cattle. Not only in Rio, but also in São Paulo, for instance. When I went to Morumbi to watch a Corinthians versus Palmeiras game in March 2007, our research team was outside the stadium next to some food tents where barbeque and similar food was sold. Since there was an agglomeration of famished soccer fans, people ended up occupying part of the street. The Military Police's solution was to send soldiers on horseback who threw themselves against the crowd without warning. We had better get out of the street as quickly as possible (Figure 2). Around Maracanã, in similar situations of people being on the streets, one can observe military policemen poking soccer fans with baton butts. An even more shocking example, experienced by me, happened after the end of the 2007 carioca championship between Flamengo and Botafogo. Given that Flamengo was the champion, its cheering crowd was joyful and happy, and it was understandable that they lingered around the stadium. The festive atmosphere quickly dissipated when the police proceeded to use horses, pepper gas, and batons to disperse the terrorized fans among shouts and people on the run.

Worse accounts were collected from the organized cheering crowds. A member of crowd A revealed that, upon hearing the Major's name, his knees



Figure 1. Standing before part of the GEPE's troop, Major Marcelo gives the last instructions before a match between Flamengo and Fluminense. Cidadania Stadium, Volta Redonda, May 29, 2005. Author's photo.

shake, and he explained why: the GEPE policemen usually beat the back of the knees with their batons, causing a person to bend forward and be vulnerable. Another one accused the Major of having two “faces”: before the media he preached peace, but otherwise he ordered his soldiers to “beat up”. The same member claimed to respect the officer because he is a good fight, “a male guy”. It sounds like a contradiction, but it revealed a shared logic of violent masculinity. The soccer fans presented bruises and scars obtained in confrontation with rivals or policemen.

*Dantesque scenes were witnessed:
a member with his back swollen and purple
with bruises made by batons; another one
bleeding, struck on the head by a policeman*

They reported stories of civil and military policemen who sell themselves to rival cheering crowds, acting as “security personnel”, according to what was observed in the episode that opened this article. São Paulo’s officers would be equally brutal: they hit and poke with their batons, asking “Which police beats up more: Rio’s or São Paulo’s?”. Another patrol approaches and the officers say, “we’re provoking so we can beat them up”: “You’re a fag”. There are also reports of feuds among certain policemen and some fans, who are “sworn” by the first.



Figure 2. The Military Police’s cavalry disperses soccer fans without notice around Morumbi Stadium, before the game Corinthians versus Palmeiras. São Paulo, March 04, 2007. Author’s photo.

In our field diaries, there is a lot of information about the unreasonable use of violence against crowd members. Dantesque scenes were witnessed: a member with his back swollen and purple with bruises made by batons; another one bleeding, struck on the head by a policeman, and a third one fallen on the ground being kicked by a group of policemen. There are very few annotations about arrests, and I did not witness nor heard talk about investigations. It is a type of police that beats up above all. Soccer fans? Maçaranduba neles!