

## Women's football in Brazil and England's national football museums

O futebol feminino nos museus nacionais do futebol do Brasil e da Inglaterra

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**ABSTRACT:** The challenging trajectory of women's football in Brazil and in England is discernible with reference to its gradually shifting prominence within heritage and museums. Nonetheless, the persistent differences regarding visibility and recognition, and negative associations women's football is attributed, have contributed to the underrepresentation of women's football heritage at both the Museu do Futebol in São Paulo, Brazil and at the National Football Museum in Manchester, England. This research identifies temporal milestones related to the presence of women's football in these national museums, as well as the proactive measures undertaken to ensure the inclusion of women's football items into their respective collections since 2015. Combining theoretical references with exploratory research, we aimed to identify connections between the factors which stimulated the appreciation of women's football within these museums, contributing to discussions about the musealization of football. We conclude that women's football has been addressed progressively by the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum through the exhibition of its successes and milestones but we also consider the challenges of the past and the present, in a context in which demands and commitments have to be balanced.

**KEYWORDS:** Sporting heritage; Sports museums; Musealization; Women's football.

**RESUMO:** A conturbada trajetória do futebol feminino no Brasil e na Inglaterra reverberou no patrimônio e nos museus, resultando em desproporcional espaço físico e simbólico nos museus especializados em futebol. As persistentes diferenças de visibilidade e de reconhecimento entre o futebol feminino e o masculino, além da associação dessa modalidade a fatos negativos, contribuíram para que o patrimônio ligado ao futebol feminino estivesse sub-representado nos museus nacionais do futebol – Museu do Futebol (São Paulo, Brasil) e National Football Museum (Manchester, Inglaterra). Nesse cenário, identificamos, desde 2015, marcos temporais relativos à inclusão do futebol feminino nessas instituições museológicas nacionais, assim como ações que foram empreendidas para tal inclusão. Combinando referências teóricas à investigação exploratória, objetivamos identificar conexões entre os fatores que estimularam a valorização do futebol feminino no âmbito desses museus, contribuindo para as discussões a respeito da musealização do futebol. Concluímos que o futebol feminino vem sendo abordado pelo Museu do Futebol e pelo National Football Museum por meio da apresentação de suas vitórias, mas também considerando os desafios do passado e do presente, em um contexto em que demandas e compromissos de diversas naturezas vêm sendo equilibrados.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Patrimônio esportivo; Museus do esporte; Musealização; Futebol feminino.

## INTRODUCTION

Women's football is affected by issues related to the participation of women in societies and their insertion in the universe of sports. These issues, which in the past resulted in vetoes on female participation in this sport,<sup>1</sup> continue to wield influence in the present in the form of lesser recognition, lesser visibility and significantly lower wages in relation to men's football, as well as in persistent prejudices.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they also reverberate in the heritage side of football, which is materialized in sports specific museums, which conserve a portion of sports heritage assets understood as supporting of memory and as representatives of the history of football.

This article deals with the participation of women's football at two national football museums: the Museu de Futebol (São Paulo, Brazil) and the National Football Museum (Manchester, England). It deals with the physical and symbolic spaces that have been dedicated to women's football, as well as listing a number of initiatives that have been undertaken to value women's football at both museums which, in addition to having their national and international relevance in common, are both located in countries where football has long held a considerable cultural capital and social status in a way clearly exclusionary towards women.

Taking as a premise that museums dedicated to sport – among them, football – tend to be aimed at celebrating great achievements, moments and heroes,<sup>3</sup> we analyse aspects of the musealization of women's football at both sites. From the identification of temporal milestones related to the inclusion of women's football at the Football Museum and in the National Football Museum, we observe the treatment of women's football, notably, the themes that have been associated with it through communication actions.

This research, then, aims to contribute to discussions about the complexity involved in the musealization of women's football and the key factors which affect

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<sup>1</sup> GOELLNER. Nós convidamos a CBF a trazer reformas de igualdade de gênero para o Brasil; FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION. *History. Women's & Girls*.

<sup>2</sup> JANUÁRIO; KNIJINIK. Liberdade, ainda que tardia: a revolução feminina no futebol brasileiro, p. 11-32.

<sup>3</sup> MITIDIARI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus: os museus do esporte e a comunicação celebratória do patrimônio esportivo musealizado*.

this process, considering the contextualization of football museums within the environment of both heritage and museums, as well as their status as contemporary cultural institutions. For this, we carried out both a bibliographical and exploratory analysis, which includes formal documentation, informal data, as well as visits made to each of these institutions in 2019.

The results that have been obtained are suggestive of the diverse forces, both internal and external, which affect how the musealization of women's football plays out. They indicate that the two analysed institutions, even considering their distinct institutional backdrops, actually have a remarkable number of similarities when it comes to how women's football is represented. Both have a history of the predominance of professional men's football in their collections and communication, as well as having in common the implementation of a series of actions that, in the last ten years, have been intended at lending visibility to the women's game. Within their different communicational operations, they face similar challenges, while proposing similar communicational approaches, insofar as they try to celebrate the achievements of women's football and share its history and the issues that continue affecting women in the present.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN BRAZIL AND ENGLAND**

Since this is not the focus of this article, it is not our objective to sketch out in detail the history of women's football in Brazil and England. However, some considerations about its troubled trajectory in these countries, where the museums here analysed are located, are worth mentioning. From different justifications and meeting political and economic interests, the practice of football by women was curtailed for decades both in Brazil and in England.

In Brazil, the practice was banned after the publication of Decree-Law No. 3,199 of 1941 (art. 54) during the government of Getúlio Vargas, with justifications that cited both biological and moral aspects related to the practice of certain sports by women. In 1965, the National Sports Council issued deliberation CND nº 07/65, naming soccer, beach soccer and indoor soccer as sports in which women's practice would not be allowed. In 1979, this decision (nº 07/65) was revoked.

However, while the practice of sport by women continued to be a leisure option, “the activity remained marginalized: the games could not take place in official fields, nor be arbitrated by federal judges”. In the view of Brazilian researcher Nathália F. Pessanha, women's football was “left in a state of limbo for four years which, despite being released and not being regulated, did not have much support from clubs, entities and official competitions”.<sup>4</sup>

This scenario began to change when, in 1983, the regulation of women's football in Brazil took place, meeting a requirement of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international governing body of football.<sup>5</sup> At that moment, “the first women's football teams with greater national projections began to form”,<sup>6</sup> championships and official matches were organised. In 2016, the establishment of gender parity in world football by FIFA, accompanied in this decision by the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL), contributed to the promotion of women's football in the country based on determinations which involved, among other aspects, the mandatory establishment of women's teams within the scope of the clubs interested in participating in championships.<sup>7</sup>

In recent decades, however, supported by significant victories and by internationally renowned characters, such as Marta, women's football has been gaining much greater recognition and visibility in Brazil. According to Brazilian researchers Soraya Januário and Jorge Knijnik, “it is undeniable that in recent years it has been possible to notice the growth of women's football in Brazil, whether in the number of professional teams and athletes, or in the social debate about women in the sport”. Despite this, it is worth remembering that the treatment given by specialised national media and also by the Brazilian Football Confederation is far from equivalent to men's football in terms of its visibility, the attraction of sponsorships and the remuneration that is allocated to athletes, among other aspects. According to Januário and Knijnik, “the history of prohibitions and removals associated with biologizing premises, based on the

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<sup>4</sup> PESSANHA. *Mulheres em campo*, p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> ALMEIDA. O Estatuto da FIFA e a igualdade de gênero no futebol.

<sup>6</sup> LIMA; QUADRADO; KNIJNIK. Por um futebol universitário praticado por mulheres, p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> ALMEIDA. O Estatuto da FIFA e a igualdade de gênero no futebol.

'condition of a woman' and the so-called 'feminine nature', has had a greater influence on the difficulties that are faced by the women's game up to the present day".<sup>8</sup>

In England, women's football matches held in spaces affiliated with The Football Association (FA) – the highest entity of English national football – were banned for over 50 years, between 1921 and 1972. There, women's football was flourishing at the beginning of the 20th century with organized teams – among which Dick, Kerr Ladies stood out – competing in matches and national championships. With the end of World War I, there was an increase in international matches, which attracted large audiences. These events generated the gathering of significant amounts whose destination was not entirely clear, since women's football, since the War, had been associated with charitable causes. Furthermore, they revealed the potential of women's football, which was outside the jurisdiction and control of the FA, as being capable of mobilising tens of thousands of football fans.

In this context, economic issues appear to have underpinned the restrictions imposed by the Football Association on women's football. In addition to having no control over the collection of matches, the FA perceived this activity as a potential threat to the viability of some championships and ultimately to men's clubs. So, a year after a memorable international match in January 1920 attracted over 50,000 paying spectators, the FA voted to ban women's football at professional grounds. As it did not have the power to prohibit women from playing, it decided to ban matches on the soccer fields of the clubs affiliated to it, based on the justification that soccer was inappropriate for women and thus should not be encouraged. In this environment, although athletes and their teams continued to play, the effect of the ban was felt, since the matches took place in inappropriate places. According to Wrack, "Without the opportunity for the masses to watch the games regularly in large capacity venues, levels of interest naturally waned".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> JANUÁRIO; KNIJINIK. Novos rumos para as mulheres no futebol brasileiro, p. 434-435.

<sup>9</sup> FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION. *History. Women's & Girls*.

From the moment the FA ban was lifted in 1971,<sup>10</sup> women's football has resumed its development in England and, according to FA data, football has been, since 2002, the main sport played by English women and girls. Its popularity is boosted by major tournaments and recently with significant wins.<sup>11</sup> However, English athletes still fight for recognition and for equality in sport.<sup>12</sup> Although the conquests of the last decades have been significant, in England, as well as in Brazil, the attribution of lesser value or secondary importance persists, compared to the men's game.

### FOOTBALL MUSEUMS AS CELEBRATORY SPACES

Based largely on the conversion or incorporation of private collections into museums, sport museums have developed significantly since the 1960s.<sup>13</sup> They have their historical trajectory strongly connected to sports clubs, private collectors, trophy rooms and to halls of fame as the primary conservers of sports heritage.

As a fundamental moment of the trajectory of these institutions, we can highlight the approximation, since the 1980s, between museums and the consumer market. This has spurred on the multiplication of private sport museums founded by sports entities with the aim of facilitating the preservation of private collections, but also of fostering greater commercial opportunities and supporting marketing initiatives. This numerical increment has resulted in a universe in which thematic segmentation predominates, with those museums dedicated to a specific sport, to a sport organisation, to a person of relevance or to a specific event being prevalent, such as Olympic museums, for example.

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<sup>10</sup> FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION. *History. Women's & Girls*.

<sup>11</sup> Playing in the European final and two World Cup finals for the national team, for example.

<sup>12</sup> FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION. *History. Women's & Girls*.

<sup>13</sup> It is pertinent to point out that the first half of the 20th century saw the creation of the first sports museums. For Vamplew (1998), the museums founded in Switzerland (1945), Sweden (1947), Poland (1950) and Bulgaria (1956) would be some of the oldest sports museums in the world.

In this way, we can safely assume that the worldwide popularity of football<sup>14</sup> reverberates in the universe of sports museums, making football museums more numerous than other sports, with museums founded and managed by sports institutions being prevalent – notably clubs. This contributes to the image of football museums being linked to a celebratory museum format, which works as an unfolding of the former trophy rooms of the clubs.<sup>15</sup>

With this backdrop, our research indicates that the musealization of sports heritage assets within the scope of football museums has been converging with the interests and scales of values that have been established by the groups and sports entities which tend to be the managers of these museums. It also indicates that, based on the attribute of the museum as an entity that legitimizes heritage and ideas, the musealization of football-related assets “has resulted in monotonous and celebratory communication, which presents a partial and decontextualized view of sports history”.<sup>16</sup>

Linking the *modus operandi* of football museums founded and operated by private sports entities to the aforementioned factors underlies the notion that museums financed (fully or partially) and managed by “non-profit” entities would be more “independent” with regard to the choice of parameters that guide the musealization of assets. However, its processes are subject to other factors, which deserve to be devoted further attention here. Among them are those that refer specifically to the intersection between football and heritage and museums.

First, it is necessary to consider that football museums operate within the scope of heritage, which, historically, has a celebratory quality, being neither neutral nor impartial. Heritage differs from history, since the selection processes of heritage assets reflect a look from the present on an idea of the past, guided by abstract values and by intangible notions of authenticity. Heritage “is linked to

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<sup>14</sup> According to the international consultancy Nielsen, except in countries such as the United States, Australia and Japan, football is the most popular sport (NIELSEN, World Football Report, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*, p. 195.

<sup>16</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*, p. 196.

value criteria and legitimation systems established by groups and institutions that, in turn, are subject to a range of influences and pressures".<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the historical trajectory of museums as a specific model of institutions indicates that they are not neutral spaces. "They are, historically, spaces of dispute and vehicles for sharing, affirming and reaffirming ideas and ideals".<sup>18</sup> The scientific process of the musealization of assets implies a set of actions, with a selective and interpretative character. In addition to this, "it is a process subordinated to the political, ideological and aesthetic dimensions of the museum – represented by its managers –, permeated by the values of the present time".<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it is imperative at this point to highlight that, as specialised museums, it is up to the sport museums themselves to incorporate all of the facets of their central theme, which, in the case of sport, involves both emotional and celebratory aspects. Sport, although it is also associated with defeats and affected by issues understood as being "negative", has a "close connection with leisure time, with joy, with healthy competition and with the celebration of achievements". The sports environment is permeated by emotion and by the cult of "heroes" and iconic characters. This is to say that sports culture is iconoclastic.<sup>20</sup>

The two institutions that we focus on are located within this complex environment. As "exceptions" in their countries, in which "club museums" prevail, these national museums have in common the notion of portraying national football in a broader way, contemplating all of its facets, and contextualizing it both in the national and international scope of sport and history. They have in common the fact that they are museums which are strongly supported by their respective governments, while at the same time being private and non-profit entities, which obliges them to seek their own additional financial resources. Both have professionalised organisational structures and, as we will see, have been making considerable efforts to balance the male and female forms of football within the museum environment.

<sup>17</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*, p. 190.

<sup>18</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*, p. 192.

<sup>19</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> MITIDIÉRI. *A experiência esportiva nos museus*.



### **THE MUSEU DO FUTEBOL (SÃO PAULO) AND THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM (MANCHESTER)**

The Museu do Futebol (São Paulo, SP) was inaugurated in 2008 and is installed in the Pacaembu Stadium, in an area of almost 7 thousand m<sup>2</sup>. It was founded from the elaboration of a project led by the Municipal São Paulo legislature.<sup>21</sup> It has the legal format of being a Social Organization (OS), administered by the Social Organization of Culture ID Brasil Cultura, Educação e Esporte, a private non-profit entity. The necessary resources for its operation come from the State of São Paulo, but also from funding which is carried out by them, from ticket sales, sponsorship funds and other commercially derived revenue.<sup>22</sup>

This museum, among the most visited in Brazil, is peculiar – especially for sports museums, which are usually full of material cultural objects. It is a museum wishing to communicate the history of Brazilian football with the support of image, sound and scenography resources – although it is possible to find objects on display throughout the visit. The Museu do Futebol has housed the Brazilian Football Reference Center (CRFB) since 2013, a centre for documentation and research that has, among its attributions, subsidising the communication conveyed by the museum. The purpose of this museum involves the preservation and communication of national football, considering its dimension beyond sports events. Its vision encompasses a commitment to “be an environment of empathy, inclusion, coexistence and dialogue with various publics, with a regard for cultural diversity”.<sup>23</sup>

The National Football Museum, on the other hand, has been located since 2012 in the city of Manchester, having initially operated between 2001 and 2010 in the city of Preston, inside Preston North End's Deepdale stadium. Closed in 2010 due to funding issues, it was reopened in Manchester, housed in an iconic local building as part of an urban revitalisation project, after obtaining funds to subsidise its operation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In partnership with the Roberto Marinho Foundation, as the project's developer.

<sup>22</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, Gestão.

<sup>23</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, Missão, Visão, Valores.

<sup>24</sup> The museum's Technical Reserve and Research Center remain housed in Preston, at the museum's former address, Deepdale Stadium.

Its establishment was the result of a previous collaboration, in the legal format of Charity Company, as a non-profit company.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the Brazilian Football Museum, the National Football Museum is built around a collection that has more than 140,000 items,<sup>26</sup> composed of objects, textual documents and diverse iconography. This collection, under permanent re-construction, is the result of bringing together different collections and was initiated from the acquisition of the "FIFA Collection" through public funding.<sup>27</sup>

The museum's mission is to "share stories about football"<sup>28</sup> and lists, among its objectives, its consolidation as "a centre of excellence for football heritage through exhibitions, collections and fully representative research" and its commitment to building an inclusive program.<sup>29</sup>

#### **SPACE FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AT THE TWO MUSEUMS**

Over the last ten years, the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum have developed formal projects, as well as undertaking practical actions with the aim of balancing the physical and symbolic space of women's football in their environments, in relation to the men's game. Considering its fundamental differences with regard to its football's collections of material goods as a basis for its operation, initiatives related to women's football were observed with context in mind. The Museu do Futebol began to include women's football in 2015, seven years after its inauguration, based on the perception that a "collection of countless objects from the world of football rarely reminds us of the women who were part of this process".<sup>30</sup> This inclusion was also due to demands from the museum's visitors and to the perception of an increase in FIFA's actions in relation to the women's sport, as well as an initiative aimed at expanding and diversifying the museum's audience.

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<sup>25</sup> Common in England, in non-profit cultural institutions

<sup>26</sup> ART FUND, Museums and Galleries, National Football Museum.

<sup>27</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, Collection.

<sup>28</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, Mission.

<sup>29</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, Mission.

<sup>30</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, Visibilidade para o futebol feminino.

"The public has been asking for information about women's football for a long time", explains Daniela Alfonsi, the Director of Content for the museum. She says that the opportune moment has arrived: in addition to it being the year of the Women's World Cup, FIFA determined that the CBF ought to invest 15% of its earnings from the 2014 World Cup into women's football. "[...] We have noticed a greater movement in the sport". The action also aims to attract more women to the museum. "When we opened, the public was 70% men and only 30% women in terms of visitors", says Daniela. "[...] We did a survey in 2013, and the difference remains sizable: 60% to 40%".<sup>31</sup>

The starting point was the project "Visibility for Women's Football", which aimed to "stimulate a discussion about our way of telling the history of Brazilian football" with the participation of athletes, referees and journalists respectively. The project materialized in the form of incorporating documents into the collection of the Brazilian Football Reference Center (CRFB), which now hosts "the largest reference collection on the sport in the country. These collections are today the most important clues for beginning to understand the history of women's football in Brazil".<sup>32</sup> Afterwards, the museum organised a virtual exhibition<sup>33</sup> which presents the results of the project, through both texts and images.

With regard to the physical space of the museum, the theme has since been included in educational activities – such as the publication of booklets and actions to mediate visits –, as well as in events which are hosted or co-organized by the museum, such as the "International Symposium of Studies on Football" (2022). Also in 2015, communicational and promotional actions were implemented, such as offering free admission to women on International Women's Day and placing banners with images of prominent female sports characters on the museum's façade. At the same time, women's football was incorporated into the long-term exhibition environment. This was achieved through the inclusion of facts and characters within the existing spaces and thematic sections, as well as through the creation of a space which is dedicated to women's football "pioneers". We can cite as examples: the inclusion of athletes Marta and Formiga in the "Anjos Barrocos" room (Hall of Fame), dedicated to the great heroes of national sport; the inclusion of information regarding the participation of the Brazilian women's team in the

<sup>31</sup> WOLF. Futebol feminino terá espaço no museu do Pacaembu.

<sup>32</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, Visibilidade para o futebol feminino.

<sup>33</sup> Disponível na plataforma *Google Arts and Culture*.

World Cups in the “Sala das Copas” (Word Cups room); and the inclusion of objects linked to female practice in the “Grande Área” (Main Area) space, among others.

From these first initiatives, the Museu do Futebol continued to carry out further actions aimed at women's football and its recognition, such as temporary and virtual exhibitions, book launches, the publication of articles and collective funding campaigns. In 2019, the exhibitions *Women, Disobedience and Resilience* (virtual) and *Counter-attack* (temporary) were inaugurated. That same year, the ‘Offside’ project was implemented, gathering testimonials and iconography regarding the participation of women in football over the years in which the practice was prohibited. In 2020, the “My Voice Makes History” campaign raised funds for the production of an audio guide on the 100 years of women's football in Brazil.

Since 2015, the Football Museum has been dedicated to portraying, researching and celebrating women's football in Brazil. Along this path, two temporary exhibitions have already taken place – ‘Visibility for Women's Football’, in 2015, and ‘Counter-attack! The Women of Football’, in 2019 –, seven virtual exhibitions, an audio guide, three editions and many cultural events on the subject. In addition to these efforts, at the beginning of 2022, the first edition of the Call for the Selection of Young Researchers was launched, aimed at recent graduates or postgraduates, in order to produce knowledge about women's football and women's football in Brazil.<sup>34</sup>

In April 2023, driven by the expectations regarding the ninth edition of the Women's Football World Cup, the museum inaugurated the temporary exhibition ‘Queens of the World Cup’. Curated by Aira Bonfim, Juliana Cabral, Lu Castro and Silvana Goellner, the exhibition aims, to celebrate the achievements, and also highlight the difficulties faced by the Brazilian women's football team. In this context, in May 2023 the “Mulheres na arbitragem” (Women Refereeing) exposition takes place.<sup>35</sup>

At the National Football Museum, the year 2015 was equally decisive with regard to actions aimed at the inclusion of women's football. Since its founding, the museum has had an insignificant “female collection”, “affecting its ability to produce interpretations and permanent exhibitions on female participation in

<sup>34</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, Notas sobre coleções de mulheres no acervo do Museu do Futebol, s/p.

<sup>35</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Rainhas de Copas*, exposição temporária.

football”.<sup>36</sup> In the view of the curator dedicated to the theme, since 2017, Belinda Scarlett, the gaps in the collection and the incipient information about objects related to women's football led the museum to presenting the history of the women's game based on the parameters and thematic segmentations established for men's football.

Thus, this museum, which has its narratives built from the objects in the collection, acquired in 2015 a large collection of goods related to women's football.<sup>37</sup> Lacking the means for documentation and research, in 2017, through a partnership with the public body Arts Council, it carried out the project “Unlocking the Hidden History of Women's Football”. This allowed the existing women's collection records to be updated and made it possible to carry out “a series of activities to expand access to the collection, including an academic conference, the project's blog and community activities”, in addition to campaigning to encourage donations. The project was also the basis for actions carried out in the museum space aimed at expanding female participation in the long-term exhibition. According to Scarlett: “In 2019, the project had a significant impact in the redevelopment of an area of our permanent gallery, where we were able to increase our representation of women in football from 7% to 20% overall, and in some areas we were able to reach over 40% representation”.<sup>38</sup>

Since 2019, as a long-term project linked to the new assets in the collection and the increase in initiatives aimed at women's football, the museum has included in its planning until 2022 the notion of equating women's sport with men's, both in the collection and in the exhibitions. “One of the main goals of the museum is to reach 50% representation of women's football, with the aim of ensuring that the story of women's football is told in all of its galleries, rather than being merely displayed in isolation as a sub-area”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> SCARLETT. *Unlocking The Hidden Story of Women's Football*.

<sup>37</sup> Through a donation from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the museum acquired the Chris Unger History of Women's Football Collection, a private collection of over 5,000 objects and textual documents.

<sup>38</sup> SCARLETT. *Unlocking The Hidden Story of Women's Football*.

<sup>39</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, *Annual Report*, p. 6.

To take this idea forward, the National Football Museum has been both raising grants and establishing partnerships.<sup>40</sup> In recent years, it has expanded its exhibition space dedicated for women, as well as holding temporary exhibitions and actions that are aimed at sharing the knowledge obtained. In the words of Tim Desmond, the Director of the museum, the objectives of the museum and the path taken until 2022 are as follows:

“We are standing up for diversity and for equality in football,” says Desmond. “Three years ago we decided to rebalance our collection and programs to be 50% represented around women in football; 100% of our views during the Euro 2022 women's [championship] were about women in football and that was very positive. In the Hall of Fame, 50% of inductees are represented by women's sports. It wasn't difficult to do, and our female visitors has duly increased.”<sup>41</sup>

Among the partnerships and events held, we can also highlight the initiatives which are related to the 2022 Women's Euro Cup. That year too, in collaboration with the municipality of Manchester<sup>42</sup> and with the National Lottery, the museum organized various events aimed at building a collection and at recording the history and memory of the Women's Euro Cup. In June of this year, the temporary exhibition ‘Crossing the Line: The Story of Women's football’ was inaugurated.<sup>43</sup>

#### **CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MUSEALIZATION OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN THE TWO MUSEUMS**

Women's football, as we have seen, has had a deeply troubled history in both Brazil and England. Once the legal difficulties for its exercise in both countries have been overcome, intangible barriers remain which, in practice, may result in difficulties related to its musealization. This scientific process encompasses a set of actions that affect heritage assets, involving acquisition, documentation, research, conservation and communication and, as we have seen, is subject to pressures and influences both internal and external to the museum.

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<sup>40</sup> In the annual report (2018), there are mentions of partnerships with the FA, in order to collect goods related to the national team. There is also mention of establishing working relationships with FIFA and Manchester City Council.

<sup>41</sup> GILLING. Raising the game.

<sup>42</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, *Women's Football Exhibition*.

<sup>43</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, *What's on*.

In this context, it is possible to state that the historical trajectory and the supporting role of women's football has led to a certain patrimonial “invisibility”. The absence of championships and official teams for many decades, the lesser popularity of the sport and the persistent perception of “lesser value” – compared to men's soccer – have resulted in a restricted universe of assets that, for the most part, were safeguarded by individuals involved with the sport. These collectors were (and remain) fundamental to the acquisition and research processes undertaken by the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum.

In the case of the Museu do Futebol, within the scope of its project “Visibility for Women's Football”, there was a collection of documents (textual and iconographic) that was kept by private collectors, and which were incorporated into the CRFB's collection. According to information published by the museum in 2015, “the biggest challenge to start putting together the pieces of the puzzle that is the history of women's participation in football was the absence of research sources in official bodies and archives”.<sup>44</sup> The museum continues to collect donations to expand its collection and research on women's football.

From the efforts which began in 2015, the CRFB has become a central hub for information and for research on women's football, which is subsidised by the museum's communication initiatives. To this end, the museum has “established partnerships to investigate the history of women's football and also to gather the memories of players and other professionals involved in the sport”.<sup>45</sup>

When it comes to the National Football Museum, in line with its institutional proposals, efforts to expand the collection were just the first step. Throughout the “Unlocking [...]” project, the National Football Museum team promoted campaigns to encourage donations and loans of assets previously kept by sports institutions and private collectors. This resulted in a varied collection, in which a significant portion of the assets were donated by players, clubs and fans. In addition, as we have seen, the project allowed for a documentation effort that was aimed specifically at collections of women's football assets that, until 2017, had not been properly documented.

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<sup>44</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Visibilidade para o futebol feminino (exposição virtual)*.

<sup>45</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Exposição de longa duração*.

With regard to the predominant typologies of collected objects, although our research did not access complete information about each of the collections, we can state that, by incorporating assets from private collections, museums have gained access to a universe of pre-selected goods, reunited according to criteria and value scales established by private collectors. This results in a set in which the symbols of “good times”, victories and winners tend to prevail. Likewise, assets related to teams and athletes who work in organized or professional sports also prevail. “Official” documents (from clubs, federations) predominate, as well as clippings from journalistic articles.

However, even if the objects, textual and iconographic documents point to the “celebration” of women's sport, our research indicates that the themes that have been associated with the women's game within the scope of the museums here considered are not restricted to the exaltation of victories and victorious women, although this tends to be emphasised in museum communication.

When we observe the communicational actions of the Museu do Futebol, we see that, in the environment of the museum and its permanent exhibition, a celebratory narrative prevails and is expressed, among other aspects, in the cult of great characters. As we have seen, facts and personalities of Brazilian women's football were incorporated into the course of the long-term exhibition, within the pre-existing organizational logic and narrative tone. Text published by the museum states that:

Sala Anjos Barrocos creates the ethereal dimension of the idols that helped build the history of Brazilian football. As if floating in space, to the rhythmic sound of drums, 27 players of all time are honored. Among them, Julinho Botelho, Didi, Zagallo and Gilmar. Since 2015, the Football Museum has also included great Brazilian players: Marta, Formiga, Sissi and Cristiane Rozeira are also among the baroque angels.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, the text that describes the “Origens” (Origins) room highlights the moment when the practice of sport by women “[...] was brutally interrupted from 1941, when a Decree-Law of the dictatorial government of Getúlio Vargas, prohibits women from practicing sports”,<sup>47</sup> indicating that the

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<sup>46</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Exposição de longa duração*.

<sup>47</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Exposição de longa duração*.



negative facts related to the history of women's football are also addressed throughout the long-term exhibition.

However, it is in educational activities and virtual and temporary exhibitions that these “negative” issues and challenges surrounding women's football acquire prominence, with the association of sports practice by women with prejudice, struggle for equity and patriarchy, among others. In this context, the history of women's football and the trajectory of its great personalities are the starting point for the museum to foment discussions that go beyond the universe of sport.

We can cite as an example the booklet “Their Football” (2022), aimed at teachers. The successful career of the athlete Marta is the starting point for other discussions to be proposed around female participation in sport. The final text of the material, which “addressed the presence of women in a sport that still presents a lot of resistance to female performance”, invites teachers to debate with students about the professional barriers faced by women. We can also mention the temporary exhibition *Contra-ataque (Counter-attack)* (2019), which, in the words of its organizers, “was more than an exhibition. It was a manifesto for equality on the pitch”<sup>48</sup> and “told how women had to fight to win the right to play, to uniforms that fit their bodies, to participate in sports management, refereeing, in the press and also the right to free movement in the stands”.<sup>49</sup> In the same direction, the temporary exhibition *Rainhas de Copas (Queen of World Cups)* highlights the “players’ fight for equality”.<sup>50</sup>

When we examine the communicational actions of the National Football Museum around women's football, we observe that they are in keeping with the communicational tone adopted by this museum, in which the celebratory narrative prevails. We can cite, as an example, the text published to promote the guided tour “Women’s Football Tour” (implemented in 2018). Although it mentions the historical difficulties of the practice, the text privileges the positive facts and also exalts the resilience of this practice.

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<sup>48</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Contra-ataque! As mulheres no futebol*.

<sup>49</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Contra-ataque! As mulheres no futebol*.

<sup>50</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, *Rainhas de Copas*.

Learn how women's football grew during the First World War, attracting huge crowds in the early 20th century. Hear the story of Dick, Kerr Ladies, one of the sport's most successful teams, and discover why that popularity and success didn't stop the FA banning women's football in 1921. Trace the game's progress and rebirth through kits, memorabilia and artwork, featuring many fascinating items from our collection.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to this, it is possible to observe in the environment of the long-term exhibition the cult of prominent female characters, who are exalted through the incorporation and presentation of objects linked to their victorious trajectory, the placement of monuments<sup>52</sup> and the inclusion of their names in the “Hall of Fame”, which concludes the visit to the museum. In this respect, as well as in the Museu do Futebol, the pre-existing narrative logic prevails, formulated from the protagonism of professional men's football, with women's football “embedded” within pre-existing physical and symbolic spaces.

However, within the scope of its various communication initiatives around the history of the women's game, the celebration coexists with the presentation of “bad” moments, with the collection's assets being associated with a wide range of themes – especially when it comes to actions parallel to the museum's main exhibition. We can mention the “Upfront and Onside” conference, organized in March 2018, which had the aim of approaching the development of national football in the context of “a series of issues faced by women's football, addressing questions about sexuality, gender roles, religion and culture”.<sup>53</sup> We can also mention the series of podcasts ‘Quite Unsuitable for Females’ (2022), about which the museum states that “Prohibition is just one of the discussion points addressed. The team will look at the game's pioneers, international representation, uniforms through the ages, drawing parallels with the modern game”.<sup>54</sup> Finally, it is worth mentioning that, within the scope of the ‘Crossing the Line’ project, there is a

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<sup>51</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, Women's Football Tour.

<sup>52</sup> In 2019, a statue of player Lily Parr, who became the first England women's football player to be honoured with a statue at the National Football Museum, was unveiled.

<sup>53</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, Upfront and onside.

<sup>54</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, *Quite unsuitable for females*.

concern with expanding the collection and research sources on women's football, with a view to consolidating gender parity in the museum environment.<sup>55</sup>

### **INSTITUTIONS BALANCING SUSTAINABILITY WITH SOCIETAL DEMAND?**

Observing the changes which took place within the scope of the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum, which resulted in greater availability of material and informational subsidies aimed at increasing the presence of women's football, are, as we have seen, associated with the transformations and social demands of recent decades, as well as the demands of the public that frequents these museums. They may also be related to issues related to the management of museums and their financial sustainability – notably when it comes to attracting audiences, which is reflected in fundraising and winning support for the museum.

Throughout our investigation, we observed that, in the case of the Museu do Futebol the inclusion of women's football was a "response" to the demands of museum visitors. It took place as an action aimed at capturing larger and more diverse audiences, considering that the museum's public until then was predominantly male. It took place in a broad context of national and international visibility of women's football, in a year (2015) in which the Women's World Cup was being held and from a time when the modality was flourishing and gaining visibility in Brazil and in the world.

The text published in 2019 on the occasion of the launch of the *Counter-attack* exhibition reinforces the link between the museum's initiatives and major sporting events,<sup>56</sup> underlying the notion that the museum's interest in women's football would be supported by the growing popularity of this modality.

Holding an exhibition on women's football was an old wish of the Football Museum team, but a combination of factors made it possible for it to happen in 2019. One of them was the Women's Football World Cup in France. Since the beginning of the year, it was possible to see that the modality would receive different attention. The feminist movement had received new impetus months before and even brands began to realize the competition's visibility potential.

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<sup>55</sup> NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM, *Crossing the line*.

<sup>56</sup> Copas do Mundo femininas de 2015 e 2019.

In fact, several marks were beaten this year: the Worlds had an audience of more than one billion spectators. For the first time, broadcasting on free-to-air TV enabled audience growth in Brazil, with a record 30 million people watching Brazil v France for the round of 16. There were attendance records in the stadiums, including in São Paulo, with 28,000 people watching Corinthians x São Paulo for the Paulistão women's final.<sup>57</sup>

In the case of the National Football Museum, it was not possible to clearly identify the justifications that drove the first actions aimed at expanding the participation of women's football since 2015. However, it is possible to assume that this museum, which works closely with the Football Association (FA), meets the demands of this entity, considering the growing national popularity of football among English women – who not only practice it, but are also part of victorious teams, at national and international level. Additionally, the words of Tim Desmond (museum director), previously reproduced, explain the link between women's football and the increase in the number of female visitors.

Thus, in addition to social pressures for representation, the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum have also been pressured by the need to raise additional funds and expand audiences. In this context, they perceived women's football as a tool capable of attracting a (female) audience that would be far from football museums, to streamline and diversify the museum's portfolio of activities, as well as to attract new financial support. They took advantage of women's football to reinforce their position as institutions in tune with current movements, associated with research and knowledge sharing and as open spaces for discussions that go beyond the universe of sport.

However, although challenged by the need to increase revenue, the museums considered here also have (to a greater or lesser extent) a relative “financial independence”, since the largest portion of their costs is financed through government funds. They have, moreover, the obligation to act in line with their institutional commitments, related to their quality as “museums”, as well as their proposal to be in tune with the changes that occur in the societies in which they are established. This is an opportunity that drives them to question paradigms and implement pioneering changes within the universe of football

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<sup>57</sup> MUSEU DO FUTEBOL, O ano dos recordes no futebol feminino.

museums, which are expressed, among other aspects, in the inclusion of women's football.

## CONCLUSION

Against the backdrop of the dominance of men's football, the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum saw their resources, processes and communication being directed, since their foundation, to the professional men's sport. However, throughout this research, we identified significant changes which occurred in the last ten years.

In both museums, the year 2015 was a starting point regarding the notion that women's football should have a physical and symbolic space equivalent to that dedicated to men's football. In line with a time when the practice of this modality gained popularity, being endorsed and supported by the consumer market, the media and the legitimizing instances of the sport, there is the inclusion and expansion of the space for women's football within the scope of the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum.

In this scenario, our research indicates that the combination of factors that allowed the museums here considered to dedicate their efforts to women's football, a few years after their foundation, resulted in the implementation of a multidimensional approach to the sports history, in line with the demands and pressures for financial sustainability and according to institutional commitments. Supported by the professionalism of their teams, by the available resources and acquired experience, the Museu do Futebol and the National Football Museum seem to have found solutions that allow them to celebrate talents and achievements, without neglecting the “defeats” that remain as an important part of women's football history.

In this sense, they also seem to understand that, by entering the museum through its great characters and symbolic objects of its great achievements, women's football “fits” into the pre-established standards around the men's sport and legitimizes itself as equally relevant. At the same time, even considering the long distance yet to be covered, they have been taking advantage of women's

football as a platform from which they can truly function as contemporary “museums”, being inclusive, fostering diversity and reflection.

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