

DISCONTINUITY IN WOMEN'S LEISURE IN PORTUGAL: THE CASE OF FOOTBALL AT THE *UNIÃO RECREATIVA DE CULTURA E DESPORTO DE COINA* (1981–1990)

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ABSTRACT: The observation of the adoption of women's football at the *União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coina* from 1981 to 1990 shows how any approach to the triangulation between leisure, landscape, and nature must be carried out with some meticulousness, taking the peculiar characteristics of the institution in question as primordial, and not always comparable to other territories. The adoption of football in Coina ended up shaping the entire regional territory and elevated a small peripheral toponym of Greater Lisbon to the mental map of the Portuguese followers of this sport. This case study shows how football entered the implementation strategies of women's right to leisure in Portugal and assumed different forms and variables in time and space.

KEYWORDS: Coina. Barreiro. Portugal. Women's football.

RUPTURAS NO LAZER FEMININO EM PORTUGAL: O CASO DO FUTEBOL NA *UNIÃO RECREATIVA DE CULTURA E DESPORTO DE COINA* (1981-1990)

RESUMO: A observação da adoção do futebol feminino na União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coina entre 1981 e 1990 mostra como qualquer abordagem à triangulação entre lazer, paisagem e natureza deverá ser efetuada com alguma meticulosidade, tomando as características peculiares da instituição em causa como primordiais, e nem sempre equiparáveis a outros territórios. A adoção do futebol em Coina acabou por moldar todo um território regional e elevou um pequeno topónimo periférico da Grande Lisboa ao mapa mental dos seguidores nacionais deste desporto. Este *case study* mostra como o futebol entrou nas estratégias de implementação do direito ao lazer feminino em Portugal e assumiu diferentes formas e variáveis díspares no tempo e no espaço.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Coina. Barreiro. Portugal. Futebol feminino.

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Introduction

The June 21, 1991, issue of local newspaper *Jornal do Barreiro* contained a small interview with an association leader and encouraged readers to take a closer look that transported them to the conjunctural difficulties of a small and peripheral local community association such as the *União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coina*. Even more so when, beyond the common complaints of any sports entity—from the precariousness of the facilities to the financial difficulties—the journalist inquired about the

success of its women's team, which honored not only the community association but also the parish of Coina and the municipality of Barreiro beyond borders, across Europe. He was even considered the Portuguese ambassador of our women's football².

The reading of this short excerpt coincided with the recent international media coverage of women's football, to which Portugal was no exception.³ In a way, the social conjuncture of the end of 2023 fostered a historical analysis of the genesis of the National Women's Football Championship, even more so when we assumed in advance the veracity of the newspaper excerpt mentioned above. Indeed, the *União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coina* (henceforth *União de Coina*) was one of the sporting clubs that founded the current national women's league. Unbelievably it has been a secondary

² UNIÃO Desportiva de Coina atravessa um período pouco condizente com o seu historial, *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro (Portugal), Jun. 21, 1991, p. 4.

³ The media attention to women's football in Portugal has grown in the last decade, even though parallel perspectives have been recorded. In 2023, for example, like in other countries, several media outlets focused, above all, on a case of possible sexual harassment between a leader and a player, to the detriment of the sports success of the Spanish national team against England, becoming known as the "Rubiales case" (MINISTÉRIO Público espanhol apresenta denúncia contra Rubiales, *Folha de São Paulo*. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/esporte/2023/09/ministerio-publico-espanhol-apresenta-denuncia-contra-rubiales.shtml>). Accessed on Sep. 08, 2023). Even so, women's football has sparked the interest of the leading Portuguese television networks, with the live broadcast of several matches. The theme has also reached other fields, even humor. Several Portuguese humorists have used this media case to criticize some political personalities who held somewhat misogynistic positions on the subject (<<PORTUGALEX. Pedro Arroja e as mulheres no futebol>, RTP Play. Available at: <https://www.rtp.pt/play/p293/e671675/portugalex>. Accessed on Apr. 30, 2024).

topic in the sports history of the municipality of Barreiro, a city near the capital of the country. Several questions were soon imposed: How would it be possible for a small club such as *União de Coina*, with less than two hundred members nowadays and without any infrastructure for its weekly matches, to be at the base of the main Portuguese league? How could a locality such as Coina have been a bastion of the genesis of the national women's football few years after the 1974 military coup that opened the country to democracy? Still a small peripheral Portuguese village, part of the municipality of Barreiro, on the outskirts of Lisbon, naturally separated from the capital solely by the course of the river Tagus. Even more so when—and considering the human-geographical context of the time—the village of Coina was a population cluster with around 2,000 inhabitants and was not exactly a place of easy access, whether by private vehicles or public transportation. For those traveling from Lisbon, the car journey would require crossing the bridge over river Tagus via National Road 10, on a route that would take at least forty minutes. Moreover, if someone opted for alternatives such as the bus, there was only one available per hour and with an average journey time always over sixty minutes. Alternative options, such as the riverboat to Barreiro, and then followed by a bus, would transform it into a two-hour journey (with the aggravation of the limitation of bus schedules after 7:00 p.m.). These particularities of mobilities inevitably intersect with any interpretation of the historical period in question.

From these questions, we chose for the extensive reading of the local newspaper *Jornal do Barreiro*, and for several reasons. The first one because the analyzed excerpt was extracted precisely from this periodical. It would be convenient to observe whether *Jornal do Barreiro* contained any interviews, reports, or other pertinent information that elicited a more qualitative analysis. Which was indeed what happened! Apart from this, we were unable to access the club's historical archive. *União de Coina* has known some

leadership instability in the last decade and still has no a minimally consultable archive. Besides the recurring financial challenges of any sporting club, with an internal policy directed to its daily maintenance, there was also the unavailability of its leaders to manage to reconcile their personal and professional lives with a physical presence at the club in a voluntary capacity.⁴ Hence and thus limited, we opted to observe the historical path of this institution and the social impact of these young female players in all issues of *Jornal do Barreiro*, ending up tracing a football trajectory to only one decade.⁵

The limiting factor of being a micro-population agglomeration located on the municipal boundary and characterized by hosting a women's football team in the 1980s invited a meticulous analysis of the means of access to leisure in lesser-known Portugal. These axes still intersect today and open enough questions to the collective memory itself. For example, not all municipal bulletins nor the generality of the press of the time highlighted any social impetus of this sports discipline or any sporting path of these young women, which partly justifies their marginalization in memory. In fact, contrary to what occurred at the center of the municipality, it is quite easy to find people in the village of Coima (in the age group over 40 today) who recall some of these golden moments of women's football. However, once asked about the end of the activity, the answers ended up being vague or contradictory, denouncing some institutional obstacles to this access to leisure or even calling into question the very natural essence for the young players to

⁴ We thank President Inês Miranda for her willingness to provide us with some information and graphic documentation that complement narrative commissions in the reading of the periodicals.

⁵ In the 1980s, the municipality of Barreiro had only two media outlets: *Voz do Barreiro* (of secular and pro-communist inspiration, which translated into evident support for the Portuguese Communist Party, which had led the municipality since the first elections in the 1976 democratic period) and *Jornal do Barreiro* (of Catholic affiliation and close to the Socialist Party, in the opposition). The latter periodical was the only informational outlet to report on some activities of the young women, and rather meagerly, with many gaps regarding the rounds, results, or team selections, for example. However, its consultation ends up being indispensable and it opens a series of questions about these "peripheral" outskirts. If, on the one hand, the news about the village of Coima was quite limited, the news about the football matches played by women lacked even more information. Even more so when the only newspaper publicizing their presence favored the minority political opposition.

be able to compete with their male counterparts. Even so, by combining some proposals indicated in the final bibliography with the attentive reading of the press of the time, it is possible to obtain a singular aspect less addressed in the specialized historiography (DONOSO PÉREZ; REINA GIMÉNEZ; ÁLVAREZ-SOTOMAYOR, 2023; LIMA, 2013; NETO; CAMPOS; SILVA, 2013; SALVINI; MARCHI JÚNIOR, 2013). From the outset, the approach to a "landscape" of women's football, based on the concept proposed by Jean-Marc Besse and how this geographer broke with the classical semantics of what a landscape is, in a perception that extends to the territory as a laboratory of social and individual experiences (BESSE, 2006, p. 13). Its use allows observing how the experience of *União de Coima* shaped the constitution of the current national championship, and the need to rescue this past becomes paramount. The history of women's football in the municipality of Barreiro faded and ended up disappearing from the institutional narrative, without any official mention of their presence today (or even unofficial).

The Construction of a Women's Sports Landscape

The analysis of the path of women's football in the municipality of Barreiro in the 1980s requires a diachronic reading of the previous logic and practices of body framing that date back to the Constitution of the António Salazar's dictatorial regime in 1933. Let us recall only some examples: during the Spanish Civil War period (1936–1939), the Barreiro Table Tennis League organized at least two championships intended solely for girls⁶ (SILVA PAIS, 1969, p. 349). Other initiatives emerged since then, such as the spread of basketball (already in the context of the Second World War), which allowed several community associations in the municipality to compete on a national scale under the financial sponsorship of large companies such as the giant *Companhia União Fabril*,

⁶The noun "rapariga" in Portugal has no pejorative connotation; it is a synonym of "young lady" or "girl."

the sports group of which would end up becoming one of the leading teams of the country. According to the political canons of that time, the men's success boosted some tolerance for the women's aspect. Several local young women were selected to represent Portugal in a tournament between the two Iberian state agencies—*Fundação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho* (on the Portuguese side) and *Obra Sindical Educación y Descanso* (on the Spanish side)—with the latter being crowned champion (SILVA PAIS, 1969, p. 350). Simultaneously, another local team, *Futebol Clube Barreirense*—known for training and providing several human resources to the main national men's football teams in the 1960s and 1970s (DOMINGUES, 2004; KUMAR, 2017, p. 252)—also ended up promoting its women's gymnastics section in 1956 and founding the Women's Sports Initiation School for adolescents shortly after.

These small initiatives ended up leading to the *Jogos Juvenis do Barreiro* ("Barreiro Youth Games"), a municipal project organized in 1964 and intended to promote football, basketball, badminton, table tennis, rowing, or gymnastics (VALEGAS, 1970). The success of those Youth Games owed much to its primary function, serving as a psychosocial pressure escape valve for the youths destined for the African war stages of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique in the context of maintaining the Portuguese Colonial Empire. The possibility of being able to compete in several sports disciplines ended up distracting them from the eminent mobilization and possibility of dying early in a distant territory, in anachronistic political molds "for the good of the nation." Despite of political censorship purposely had erased these controversial details in the local press, it is not difficult to understand the political

management of leisure as another means of youth framework, surpassing the fall of the regime, with the last edition of the Barreiro Youth Games being in October 1975.⁷

A careful look at the personal registration of young candidates in the Youth Games allows following the diachrony of sports opportunities also offered to young women, which *Jornal do Barreiro* would occasionally complement with reports. In this context, for example, the interview with young Júlia Moisés, who was only 15 years old in 1971 and an athletics practitioner in the sporting group of *Companhia União Fabril*, ended up being a good reference for the materialization of leisure as a complement of any human activity in an inherently corporatist ecology. Born in Beja in 1956, a city 150 km away in the south of the country, the athlete would end up settling in Barreiro at only six years old because her father was a construction worker. In the political aesthetics of the Portuguese Dictatorship, young Maria Júlia Honório Inácio Moisés would end up transformed into an expressive and model icon of "successful" integration, precisely at a hyper-industrialized urban center such as Barreiro, where ethnicity served as a differential marker in her sports qualities.⁸ Also added was her professional dedication to her company as a "dressmaker apprentice because she did not want to continue her studies beyond fourth grade," thus being not only a model of labor virtues but of companionship. The newspaper said that

in December 1969, thus a little over a year and a half ago, under the influence of Helena Duarte, another excellent athlete of Companhia União Fabril (CUF), who is her friend and work colleague, she started attending the training sessions of the Athletics section of the CUF sporting group (our translation)⁹.

⁷ ENCERRAMENTO dos 11º Jogos Juvenis do Barreiro. Teledesporto – Rádio Televisão Portuguesa, Lisbon, Oct. 27, 1975. Available at: <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/encerramento-dos-11o-jogos-juvenis-do-barreiro/>. Accessed on Mar. 16, 2024

⁸ "É uma simpática rapariga, morena de negros cabelos, tem lindos olhos pretos e um permanente, alegre e esfusante sorriso. É uma autêntica alentejana, de genuíno tipo latino» ("She is a nice girl, dark-skinned, with black hair, beautiful black eyes, and a permanent, joyful, and radiant smile. She is a true Alentejana, of a genuine Latin type") ("ATLETISMO", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jul. 08, 1971, p. 3).

⁹ Journalist Paulo Figueira would continue with his promotional journey of women's participation in the several sports disciplines. The column was very enlightening about the political objectives of the dictatorial framework of youths through sports: "É de notar com muito agrado que, naturalmente, por virtude da boa 'figura' que as jovens 'cufistas' [de CUF – Companhia União Fabril] têm vindo a fazer esta época, têm

The participation of female athletes from the sporting group of *Companhia União Fabril* in external tournaments, such as the Barreiro Youth Games from 1964 to 1975, ended up shaping the entire (women's) sports landscape in the municipality. And, as mentioned before, the local press—in highlighting examples such as Júlia Moisés, one of the "athletics revelations"—opened a precedent in promoting gender in other activities. This particularity ends up equating to the path that other municipal clubs (of lower symbolic importance) would come to know in this political transition period from the end of the dictatorship in April 1974 to the consequent democratic consolidation in the following biennium.¹⁰ In addition, a light reading of the local press produced on the first democratic decade is enough to observe some organizational extensions in the entirety of the municipal landscape by mimicry. Yet, with the sublime difference of no longer being exclusively in the center of Barreiro, but just a little over the municipal area. It is easy to observe the appearance of new exclusively female teams practicing several sports disciplines, following logic identical to the *Youth Games* (which partially explains the official adoption of women's football by *União de Coia* in 1980).

Contrary to the suggestions of investigators as Sixte Abadía Naudí and Xavier Pujadas Martí (ABADÍA NAUDÍ; PUJADAS MARTÍ, 2013), the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Portugal did not cause an immediate sports shock. At least the Barreiro case shows that there was no significant rupture in April/May 1974. Of

afluído ao Estádio 'Alfredo da Silva', numerosas raparigas para se dedicarem, também ao Atletismo. Bem hajam, porque é bom para o clube que, assim, pôde aumentar o seu plantel de atletas, mas, principalmente, para elas próprias, praticantes que, desse modo, se desenvolvem melhor, fisicamente, e se tornam mais saudáveis e desenvoltas" ("It is pleasing to note that, naturally, due to the good 'figure' that the young athletes of Companhia União Fabril have been gaining this season, many girls have been flocking to the 'Alfredo da Silva' Stadium to also dedicate themselves to Athletics. Well done, because it is good for the club, which has thus been able to increase its roster of athletes, but especially for them, the practitioners, who hence develop better physically and become healthier and more agile."). ("ATLETISMO", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, July 08, 1971, p. 3).

¹⁰ Even more so when there was a social climate quite conducive to women's sports practice. Perhaps this was due to the achievements of Portuguese athlete Rosa Mota, the 1987 world athletics champion in Rome, who won Olympic gold in Seul the following year (BRASÃO, 2004, p. 381).

course, the dictatorial idealization of a "perfect" national women's sports landscape of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship from 1933 to 1974—with the clear aim of creating women fit to maintain homes and be future wives (PIMENTEL, 2011)—enhanced the adoption of (women's) sport in peripheral micro localities such as Coina. However, it is also true that some adhering clubs gradually distorted the state premises. And drawing on the arguments of Edward Shils, the foundation of the *União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coina* on June 10, 1971, ended up being a good example of how a peripheral organism consolidated and altered in itself the images emanated by the political center (SHILS, 1992).

The answer to emergence of the women's category at *União de Coina* can also be observed from the inclusion of two young women in the management of that community association in 1980, breaking within an exclusively male presence in leadership positions.¹¹ The two-headed female leadership of Rosa Maria and Vitália Ribeiro created enough internal pressure for more significant mutations to emerge precisely when this community association celebrated its tenth anniversary. And one of the priorities would be the formation of the first women's indoor football team, the only one in the entire district of Setúbal. The inexistence of opposing teams forced the Coina team to compete in the championship outside its district, ending up constantly traveling to Lisbon and finishing the year as district champions in someone else's territory (PEREIRA, 2007, p. 20). This momentary success opened enough space for them to become known in other administrative territories and participate in other tournaments and friendly matches—all outside the districts of Setúbal and Lisbon—being invited by teams such as the *Grupo*

¹¹ For example, Rosa Maria was the leading promoter of table tennis, and Vitália Maria Dias Ribeiro took on the position of vice-president of the Cultural Section ("NOTÍCIAS de Coina", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Aug. 15, 1980, p. 3).

Desportivo Concha Azul, from São Martinho do Porto, a village located about 130 km north.

The creation of a new interdistrict women's sports landscape allowed the definitive inclusion of *União de Coina* in the Lisbon Football Association. Recall that the vast majority of member clubs did not have any field for their matches (which required a constantly expensive rent, or even to borrow a pitch). A good example of this occupation of loaned spaces occurred precisely in the debut of *União de Coina* against *Académico de Sintra* for the District Indoor Football Championship of Lisbon, which the former won by 3 to 0 in a match played on the Tapadinha field in Lisbon. In turn, as the host team and lacking any sports fields, *União de Coina* would host the opponents at the manufacturing facilities of the *Rajal's* aluminum foil factory, which kindly made its workers' sports space available for the occasion.¹²

The transformation of indoor football into eleven-a-side football was almost automatic and increased the range of possibilities to play even further outside its sports hinterland, recreating a geographic perception that exceeded the borders established on those days. This strategy was not new and much less exclusive to the municipality of Barreiro; it is also observable in other Portuguese localities (BRASÃO, 2004, p. 394). Once more, in São Martinho do Porto, due to the St. Anthony festivities in 1981, the young women of Coina clashed against the known rival *Grupo Desportivo Concha Azul*.¹³

The absence of an exclusive field (unlike the generality of male counterparts) was paradoxically something that marked a void in the landscape. *União de Coina* never

¹² The sponsorship of local companies such as Indústrias Metálicas Rajal Lda. allowed them to also use a field in Quinta do Conde (about five kilometers) and the hire physical trainer Bilé ("10º aniversário da União Recreativa", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jun. 19, 1981, p. 3).

¹³ "FUTEBOL feminino. União de Coina nas festas comemorativas", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jun. 21, 1985, p. 4). São Martinho do Porto was one of the localities most sought-after within the geography of women's football. The same year, União de Coina would return to that locality to participate in the St. Anthony's festivities and play against União de Santarém, tying with two goals. The final result was decided by penalties, which União de Coina won by 4 to 3.

managed to build a grass pitch for its female players. The requirement of minimal financial resources to obtain a space suitable for football practice forced difficult choices between the acquisition of land and the continuous maintenance of the sports discipline. They chose the second route, which necessarily conditioned circumstantial adaptations, with the young women traveling constant distances to practice or play in other sports venues in the vicinity, such as Campo do Olival (in Santo António da Charneca, about six kilometers away) or Campo da Quinta Pequena (eight kilometers away), both with difficult access by public transportation. Despite the obstacles of never being able to play in their own home, the results against the rival teams were manifestly favorable to *União de Coina*.¹⁴ Successes that placed the small locality of Coina in the orbit of regional and national political actors, adding a new landmark to the (imagined) Portuguese sports landscape.¹⁵

The Establishment of a Women's Leisure Association Framework

The geographical emergence of several women's football centers throughout the country in the 1980s justifies that any analysis of such community associations involves a careful reading of the local press. Newspapers contain everyday details that complement data obtained from other historical documentation. Taking into account the methodology proposed by Nobert Elias and Eric Dunning, it is possible to observe in these media the

¹⁴ For example, in the 1983/1984 season and for the District Championship, the women from Coina beat *Sociedade Banheirense "O Real"* by 1 to 12 (5th round; Feb. 24, 1984); *União de Coina* 17 – B. *Liberdade* 1 (6th round); and *União de Coina* 9 – "O Real" 0 (7th round; Mar. 30, 1984). Also in the Complementary District Tournament, of which they ended up being champions, the women from Coina won the first round against the *Liberdade Sports Group* by 11 to 0 (Apr. 13, 1984), and the second round by 7 to 0 against "O Real" from *Baixa da Banheira* (May 25, 1984).

¹⁵ The official reception to the champion team led to a simple convivial lunch being addressed by the *União de Coina* leadership to about 140 guests, including Mata Cáceres himself (Civil Governor of Setúbal), José Souza Magalhães (Presiding Judge of the Barreiro District Court), chief Mira (Public Security Police), representatives of the naval commandos of the Portuguese Navy, Republican National Guard, councilors of the Barreiro City Council, and several regional media outlets, among others ("FUTEBOL feminino. A equipa da União campeã distrital", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Nov. 02, 1984, p. 3).

emergence of some specific frameworks of women's leisure, not least due to the ambiguity between "free time" and "post-work time." (ELIAS; DUNNING, 2019, p. 207) It is precisely in this field that local social media outlets assume a primordial category in this type of investigation, even more so when the first national women's team was only constituted in 1991. In practice, little is known about its genesis (BRASÃO, 2004, p. 383). However, these historical backgrounds are not exempt from gaps or subjectivities, purposely omitting the participation of young women in the sports disciplines due to the weak interest of the reading public on this subject.¹⁶ For example, the number of photographs is clearly lower than that of the men, and the women were never presented in full activity, whether on the field against opposing teams or in practice, or showing any more personal aspects in the locker room (BRASÃO, 2004, p. 395; SALVINI; MARCHI JÚNIOR, 2013). The pose was always in formation, flanked by the coach, and aesthetically arranged for the photographer's lens before the start of the game (Figure 1). This detail is interesting insofar as it differs from other photographs published in the local press during the dictatorial period, such as that of Júlia Moisés in full stride on a tartan track.¹⁷ The contrast is manifestly observable in a 1985 issue, when the *União de Coima* players were the subject of a report, with the respective indication of their ages, playing positions, and professions. This particularity ends up being quite significant regarding the occupation of free time by the twenty women, whose median age was around twenty years. Although some of the professions were unknown, most of them combined professional life with the sports agenda: five students, four administrators, two factory

¹⁶ "FUTEBOL feminino", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, May 03, 1985, p. 4.

¹⁷ "ATLETISMO", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jul. 08, 1971, p. 3.

workers, two waitresses, one university student, one typographer, and one teacher (the oldest of all, at 24 years old).¹⁸

Figure 1: *Jornal do Barreiro*, Jan. 01, 1982, p. 3



Source: The authors

The journalistic writing was also characterized by some singularities that merited being analyzed diligently, such as the lack of spectators, for example. Amid the Complementary Championship of the Setúbal Football Association of 1984/1985, local journalist Abílio Ferreira complained about the lack of fans of both teams

Due to the transmission (very well) of the roller hockey game through *Rádio Televisão Portuguesa* (RTP), a match that was decisive for the national colors.

¹⁸ "A União de Coima Campeão Distrital da época 84/85 só com vitórias", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Mar. 29, 1985, p. 3.

However, the dignity and commitment of the women's teams demonstrated that sometimes it is better to play without spectators ¹⁹.

If the mental landscape of women's sports changed in the generality of the Coina population, paradoxically, the same never consolidated at the municipality level. The general disinterest in women's sports ended up becoming even more evident when *União de Coina* ascended to the National Women's Football Championship in 1984/1985, and several local media outlets continued with the same intermittent narrative coverage strategy. Not even playing at the national level and competing in the main stadiums of Lisbon or Porto did the sports landscape become more and better covered with information.²⁰

Despite these conditions, the mental sports landscape of women's football in Coina changed, mainly through entities outside the municipality and the country, and soon the first invitations appeared. First to the 1984 International Women's Football Tournament held in May, in Évora city (Portugal), in which *União de Coina* won against the French team from Rarullet-Saint-Étienne with the result of 12 to 0. Later, in Tróia—a tourist locality about thirty kilometers away—they competed in another international competition, this time against Swedish team *IFK Holmsund*, which they also beat by 5 to 0.²¹ Or even the Costa do Estoril Tournament (also an elite tourist destination in Portugal, the third event in the same month), but now with eight teams divided into two series, with the Coina women beating the *Matraquilhos* team by 5 to 0.²² And little after too, in the city of Oporto in December 1984, where they competed in the Quadrangular Tournament, in which the first district champions of the entire country presented themselves: *Boavista*

¹⁹ "FUTEBOL feminino. Campeonato Complementar", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, May 10, 1985, p. 4.

²⁰ The Lisbon and Porto teams would resort to the loan of fields by other local clubs to receive the visiting teams. For a matter of aesthetic-sports marketing, *União de Coina* resorted to the well-known *Futebol Clube Barreirense*, which would sporadically cede the Manuel de Melo pitch for this purpose.

²¹ "FUTEBOL feminino internacional", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, May 04, 1984, p. 4.

²² "FUTEBOL feminino. Torneio complementar", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, May 25, 1984, p. 4.

Futebol Clube (Oporto), *Clube de Futebol União de Coimbra*, *Grupo Sportivo de Carcavelos* (Lisbon), and *União de Coima*, for Setúbal.²³ The successes of *União de Coima* targeted the promotion of the personal leisure of the young practitioners themselves, and the experiences extracted from the tournaments held in various areas of Portugal shaped sociabilities and internal objectives in the club. Moreover, it would not be by chance that the *União de Coima* also imitated the structure of the Oporto challenge of 1984 some months later, when it organized the "Christmas Tournament" in the same molds, with invitations to three other clubs of Lisbon area.²⁴

This consolidation of the associative framework of *União de Coima* influenced other entities to manifest themselves in encouraging women's football. Perhaps by mimicry, a Barreiro club known as *Luso Futebol Clube* advanced also with its "Festival", organizing a small team of young women from downtown who would play against *União de Coima* in a tournament played in the pavilion of the host entity in August 1985. In practice, it was the team from the center against the team from the outskirts, ending in 1 to 9 in favor of the Coima women. The success of the organizational model of *União de Coima* arose interest, and some metamorphoses were observed in the neighboring municipalities. In Monte da Caparica, a small locality in Greater Lisbon 20 kilometers away, *Terras da Costa* club adopted the same model as well organized its own women's eleven-a-side football challenge, inviting entities from outside the municipality, mainly the "*Os Cariocas*" group from Barreiro, which won the honorable cup of the sports discipline on the field, with no cards received.²⁵ Or *Seixal Futebol Clube*, promoter of the

²³ "FUTEBOL feminino", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Nov. 30, 1984, p. 3.

²⁴ They managed to bring together *Alapraia* (São João do Estoril), *Sociedade Desportiva Banheirense "O Real"*, and *Amora Futebol Clube* with surprising results of 10 to 0 against the team from Baixa da Banheira, reaching the final against *Alapraia*, which they won by 2 to 1 ("FUTEBOL feminino. Torneio de Natal", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Dec. 28, 1984, p. 4).

²⁵ "FESTIVAL de encerramento para entrega dos prémios", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Aug. 02, 1985, p. 3; "FUTEBOL feminino", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Aug. 23, 1985, p. 4; "FUTEBOL feminino. 3º Torneio", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Aug. 30, 1985, p. 3.

1986 Summer Tournament, in which the Barreiro team of *Clube Dramático Instrução e Recreio 31 Janeiro "Os Celtas"* participated, placing third in a total of six competing teams.²⁶

These episodes provide enough space for a qualitative analysis of the associative management of female leisure. Even more so when it was exercised mainly from football and allowed some young women to aspire to a better quality of life, with trips to other parts of Portugal or even overseas (Figure 2). In the Coina case, one may observe this phenomenon during the 1985/1986 season, precisely when *União de Coina* became district champion and at least two outside players joined the team (Lina, from *União Banheirense*, and Adelaide, from *União de Coimbra*).²⁷ The organization of the National Cup in 1986 by the Portuguese Football Federation—in everything similar to the Brazilian *Cup*—also ended up being one of the greatest splendors. The Coina team played the tournament with the leading opponents from the capital, mainly the *Académico de Alvalade*. And even with an unfavorable outcome, the young women themselves had access to a privileged form of leisure that expanded beyond borders that same year. In July, *União de Coina* also participated in the 11th International Women's Football Tournament in the French city of Royan against teams such as *Association Sportive Côte de Beauté Royan*, *Fußball-Club Köln* (Germany), and *Stilon Gorzów Wielkopolski* (Poland), on which the Coina women emerged victorious in all matches.²⁸ The successful participation in Royan served as a motivating element for new interested women to enroll

²⁶ "FUTEBOL feminino. Torneio de Verão", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Sep. 12, 1986, p. 3; "FUTEBOL feminino. União de Coina venceu o torneio", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Oct. 17, 1986, p. 2.

²⁷ Only five teams played the 1985 /1986 Setúbal district championship: *Banda Democrática 2 de Janeiro* (Montijo), *União de Coina* (Barreiro), *Amora Futebol Clube* (Seixal), *Clube Desportivo "Os Pelezinhos"* (Setúbal).

²⁸ "UNIÃO de Coina convidado a participar no torneio internacional em França", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jul. 04, 1986, p. 4.

in the community association.²⁹ A few months after the return of the team, *União de Coína* would present a roster of 19 players, four of whom were outside reinforcements (Elsa, a former player of *Odivelas*; Célia and Suzana, both former *Amora* players; and Orlanda, ex-*Casa Pia* club).

These descriptions contrast (and a lot much) with the sociopolitical reality that a country like Portugal was undergoing in the 1980s. It would be enough to pose a simple question: if everything was going so well, what was the reason for women's sport to end in *União de Coína*? If there was enough stability at the organizational level, the same cannot be appointed to the social level. Indeed, the historical weight of four decades of dictatorship still weighed, and the management of female bodies through football—and in an extra-state way, with young women opting for playing outside their localities of origin—was a recent and little-consensual topic (BRASÃO, 2004, p. 387; DOMINGOS, 2010, p. 31). In any case, and according to the most conservative mentalities of that time, the practice of this sports discipline in Coína challenged the very "historical nature" of genders, precisely when men should be strong and women docile. And this will also respond to the reason for the nonexistence of any alternation in the sports landscape in the locality. To this date, *União de Coína* has no football field.

Figure 2: Poster of the first International Tournament (*União de Coína* archive).

²⁹ The *União de Coína* delegation in Royan consisted of José Inácio (director), José António (sports manager), Cristina Fernandes and António Rianço (massage therapists), and Nuno Fachada (physician). In parallel with the eleven-a-side tournament, an indoor football tournament was also organized ("FUTEBOL feminino", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Aug. 01, 1986, p. 3; "FUTEBOL feminino. União de Coína", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Dec. 26, 1986, p. 4).

FUTEBOL FEMININO
1.º TORNEIO INTERNACIONAL
do União R. C. D. Coina / Rajal
Com o apoio da D. G. D. - SETUBAL
CAMPO DO TORRALTA EM TROIA
COM AS EQUIPAS DO
União R. C. D. Coina / Rajal
G. D. Os Pelézinhos - Setúbal
S. D. 2 Janeiro - Montijo
At. Villaverde - Madrid
DIA 7 - 9 - 85
às 16,30 h. - At. Villaverde - S. D. 2 Janeiro - Montijo
» 18,00 h. - União R.C.D. Coina/Rajal - G. D. Os Pelézinhos
DIA 8 - 9 - 85
às 16,30 h. - Disputa do 3.º e 4.º
» 18,00 h. - FINAL
EM DISPUTA AS VALIOSAS TAÇAS
Auto Barreiro — S. D. U. B. Clube Convívio - Barreiro — Família
Fernandes — Hannover R. F. A. — Decorações Sistalum, Lda.
Restaurante Internacional - Coina — Transporte Ideal/NOBAC

DECORAÇÕES SISTALUM, LDA.
DE - M. ROMÃO
Av. Fuz. Navais, 95-R/c. - Q. LOMBA - Tel. 2045794 - 2830 BARREIRO

Tip. Comercial - Barreiro — 500 ex. em 29-8-85

Source: The authors

Obstacles to the Deconstruction of a Dominant Nature

A look at the adoption of women's football by *União de Coina* also reveals that the practice of this sports discipline was regularly viewed as a social rupture in gender roles or even an obstacle to the deconstruction of a dominant status quo. Although some sporadic articles appeared in the local press portraying expressions of interest in playing

for the club, the reality was quite disparate.³⁰ The scarcity of exploratory studies on the relationship between women's football and leisure in democratic Portugal forces one, at least for now, to observe the discredit in this sports discipline from a necessarily reducing prism. Since fiduciary support was lacking, everything was lacking. The April 1986 draw showed the resistance of economically weaker clubs in the face of transportation challenges. The community associations from Greater Lisbon— such as *Banda Democrática* (Montijo) and *Amora* and *Pelezinhos* (both from Setúbal)—did not register, claiming financial difficulties, with the calendar thus being limited to five rounds, ending on May 11 of that same year.³¹ However, it was not just a financial issue. Not entirely.

Participation in the club's activities required the traditional roles of the young Portuguese women to change due to the personal management of leisure, and not all companies were interested in promoting an activity considered almost "unnatural." A 1989 interview with Joaquina Ruivo (team manager of the club) showed well how the combination of being a woman, teacher, and an association leader broke with the stereotypes commonly destined for the "masculine nature." (NOVAIS *et al.*, 2021, p. 8) Add to that the fact that this athlete resided in the center of Barreiro (eight kilometers away) and that she would have to resort to public transportation, which amounted to only one bus every hour. Beyond a busy schedule, the article from *Jornal do Barreiro* also revealed other details that were no less secondary. In fact, the questions of journalist Abílio Ferreira were very pertinent and showed some resistance existing at the time: the possible closure of the *União de Coima* headquarters with the sudden dismissal of the

³⁰ Such as player Isabel Portugal, a resident on the Benfica parish (Lisbon), who purposefully traveled in 1984 to the outskirts of Barreiro solely to integrate *União de Coima* ("FUTEBOL feminino. Torneio de Natal", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Dec. 28, 1984, p. 4).

³¹ Participating teams from the South Zone in 1986: *Académico de Alvalade* (Lisbon), *União de Coima* (as representative for Setúbal); *Odivelas*; *Alcobaca*; and *Carcavelos* ("FUTEBOL feminino. Campeonato Nacional", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Apr. 11, 1986, p. 4).

leadership justified with the departure of some players due to discredit in the institution. It was evident that the absence of stable sponsorship weighed on the logistics of the minimum requirements for traveling throughout the country and made the situation economically unfeasible for most players.³² But this does not explain everything, and only the following question remains: whether the end of women's football at *União de Coima* turned out to be an imposition of the social market.

Conclusion

As mentioned throughout the text, the observation of the adoption of women's football at *União Recreativa de Cultura e Desporto de Coima* from 1981 to 1990 shows how a hypothetical triangulation between leisure, landscape, and nature may and should always be carried out with some meticulousness. Above all, it is always necessary to assume the peculiar characteristics of the analyzed institution as primordial and (plausibly) not always comparable to the rest of the country. Despite the resistance, the adoption of football in Coima ended up shaping the entire regional territory and placed a small peripheral toponym of Greater Lisbon on the mental map of the Portuguese followers of this sport. Just see how a small team almost forgotten was at the genesis of the current Women's Football League in Portugal. This analysis also showed how football entered the implementation strategies of women's right to leisure in Portugal, and there were different forms and variables in time and space, starting with a small youth framework experience with indoor football, aspiring to be something bigger, with journeys to several European countries. In light of the time, these trips aroused conversations, rumors, and whispers, some quite unpleasant for the young women who viewed football as an escape to a better professional career and only desired an increase

³² BREVE entrevista com Joaquina Ruivo", *Jornal do Barreiro*, Barreiro, Jun. 09, 1989, p. 3.

in quality of life (DONOSO PÉREZ; REINA GIMÉNEZ; ÁLVAREZ-SOTOMAYOR, 2023, p. 560).

The meager existence of primary sources, in parallel with the scarcity of exploratory studies for the post-1974 period, when Portugal entered the democratic regime, prevents us from dwelling better on this relationship between women's football, leisure, and landscape if we understand the latter concept as an information space of public experiences (BESSE, 2006). Even more so in peripheral territories such as Coima, within a peripheral municipality of Great Lisbon, and in countries like Portugal, in the far west of Europe. Interestingly, when *União de Coima* decided to end women's football in 1990, other neighboring clubs adopted it, accepting the transfer of some players and opening a new cycle in the territory. The *Grupo Desportivo Estrelas Areenses* was one of them, but the conjuncture was already another (PEREIRA, 2007, p. 31). It is precisely on this triangular framework of the management of leisure, landscape, and nature that we opted to reflect. In addition, we hope that this article has contributed to the purpose.

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