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# **The influence of stadium renovations on the ambiance perceived by soccer audiences: the case of the Maracanã stadium in Rio de Janeiro.**

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Carrying a triple economic, social, and political dimension, the ambiance of a football stadium is an essential intangible asset as a cultural heritage. It is a subject of conflicts of use between organizations in the sports entertainment sector and organized supporters. This article aims to analyse the impact of the renovations carried out in Maracanã Stadium, which took place from 1999 to 2014, on the ambiance experienced by cariocas clubs' publics. An ethno-topographic study was conducted to design a mnemonic archive of Maracanã. This study involves participant observation of 15 matches and 26 individual active non-directive interviews with spectators. Through an exploration of their memories, this research reveals five categories of metaphors that hold significance in describing the ambiances experienced and perceived by the public both before and after the renovations. These renovations, conducted without public consultation, and in some instances, against public opinion, not only alter the ambiance of the stadium but are universally experienced as an urban trauma, compromising the re-appropriation of this public space by its users.

Keywords: Ambiance ; Football ; Memory ; Maracanã Stadium ; Publics ; Re-appropriation ; Renovation ; Rio de Janeiro.

Porteuse d'une triple dimension économique, sociale et politique l'ambiance d'un stade football est un actif immatériel essentiel autant qu'un patrimoine culturel. C'est un objet de conflits d'usages entre organisations du secteur du spectacle sportif et supporters organisés. Cet article vise à analyser l'impact des rénovations du stade Maracanã, opérées de 1999 à 2014, sur son ambiance perçue par les publics de clubs cariocas. Une étude ethno-topographique a permis de constituer une archive mnémonique du Maracanã. Celle-ci a pu être élaborée par l'observation participante de 15 matchs et la réalisation de 26 entretiens individuels non-directifs auprès de spectateurs. Ce recours à leur mémoire révèle cinq catégories de métaphores significatives des ambiances vécues et perçues par les publics avant et après les rénovations. Ces dernières, conçues sans les publics, voire contre certains d'entre eux, transforment l'ambiance du stade et sont

unanimement vécues comme un trauma urbain compromettant la réappropriation de cet espace public par ses usagers.

Mots-clés : Ambiance ; Football ; Mémoire ; Stade Maracanã ; Publics ; Réappropriation ; Rénovation ; Rio de Janeiro.

The ambiance in a soccer stadium is the result of the passions expressed by soccer partisans (Bromberger, 1995) in the public space (Lévy, 2003). It depends on how the match unfolds, and on the physical (Melnick, 1993) and sensory (Giulianotti, 2004) configurations that the stadium's key stakeholders (operator, resident club, invested spectators, etc.) create to foster emotional attachment to the stadium (Gaffney & Bale, 2004). As a vector of emotions (anxiety, excitement, etc.), the stadium's ambiance plays a triple role: economic (e.g., making the stadium profitable), social (e.g., creating a collective identity) and political (e.g., asserting a territorial hold) (Roux, 2014). It is therefore an essential intangible asset as well as a cultural heritage. Its nature and control give rise to user conflicts between stakeholders of the sports entertainment sector (from clubs to FIFA) and those in the world of organized supporters (Chaboche, 2022). Predicting, projecting, and managing the ambiance therefore mobilizes those actors. Yet this sensory dimension of the maximization of sports stadiums' value remains little studied (e.g. Bale, 2001 ; Lee *et al.*, 2012 ; Roux, 2014 ; Balji & Chakraborti, 2015 ; Wilhelm, 2020 ; Steadman *et al.*, 2021).

Our article aims to help fill this gap by examining the typical case (Yin, 2014) of the Maracanã stadium in Rio de Janeiro, for its political centrality in Brazil and its mythical status in world soccer (Gaffney, 2008). Based on an analysis of the meanings that the supporters of its resident clubs associate with the stadium, Flamengo and Fluminense, we seek to understand how and to what extent the Maracanã's renovations, which began in 1999, have influenced its ambiance. Given that the soccer stadium is an important part of popular culture (Tuailon-Demésy *et al.*, 2023) in Brazil, have the Maracanã's contemporary architectural, material, and commercial transformations altered its ambiance? Have the emotional bonds that audiences have forged with the Maracanã through their experiences (Tuan, 1975) in the stadium been broken, changed, or reinforced with these transformations? How does the public's memory contribute to the symbolic reconstruction of this venue? In short, does Roux'

description - i.e., "a technical improvement [of large stadiums] and of their uses for the consumer, but a deterioration of the sensory quality for the spectator" (2014, p. 61) - apply in the renovated Maracanã, and in what respect(s)? These issues and questions call for an ethno-topographical study (Duarte *et al.*, 2007) to assess the effects of this renovation on soccer games as rituals (Bromberger, 1995), and in particular on the stadium's ambiance as perceived by the public.

The current trend of stadium refurbishments is the subject of debate in Brazil and elsewhere. Under the guise of seeking to improve cleanliness and safety, they lead to a Disneylandization of the game (Hourcade, 2016) and the gentrification of stadiums (Rannou, 2017). This tends to lessen the ambiance in stadiums, which are among the last places for individual and collective extroversion in public space. Thus, there is social and scientific significance in looking at the determinants of a soccer game's ambiance and of the perceived ambiance variations by different audiences following the renovation of an emblematic sports venue such as the Maracanã stadium. To this end, we first present the conceptual framework of the study as well as the case studied. This is followed by a presentation of the methodological design for this qualitative research and an analysis of the results obtained. We close our article with a discussion followed by concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

### **Conceptual framework: ambiance and memory in a renovated stadium**

As part of the social sciences of sport, this work draws on concepts and methods from architecture, urban planning, ethnology, and environmental psychology. In this context, the concept of ambiance, and that of memory, will be examined from the angle of soccer stadium renovations.

### *Ambiance, between materiality and sensitivity*

The word *ambiance* derives from the Latin verb *ambire*, meaning 'to go around' (Thibaud, 2016). Everything that makes up a given environment is surrounded by this "moral and material *ambiance*" (Augoyard, 2004, p. 18) referred to as *ambiance*. According to Augoyard (2010), the terms *atmosphere* and *ambiance* are synonymous, but the former refers only to emotion and feeling, whereas the latter, which is richer in meaning, refers to a combination of physical, spatial-temporal, emotional and psychosociological elements. In fact, the term *ambiance* is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is a "sign of youth, vibrancy, or modernity ("there's a lively *ambiance* here!")"; on the other, it refers to "a sense of a unifying and singular temporal thickness" (Amphoux, 2003, p. 60). Amphoux (2003, p. 60) notes that "in the first case, [*ambiance*] consists of a dressing-up of reality (...), illusory since it wears the mask of representation: façade effects, architectural decorativism or urban scenography", while in the second case, it "is perceived, on the contrary, as reality laid bare (...): effects of authenticity, architectural essence and urban place spirit".

*Ambiance* combines light, sound, materials, scale, presence, and volume, and thus, it "eludes a formal definition" (Chadoin, 2010, p. 153). It depends as much on the subjectivity and immediacy of experience as on physical elements set within a long time period. It therefore influences behavior and the living environment. Thus, "architectural and urban *ambiance* results from a situation of sensitive interaction (sensory and signifying) between material reality (...) and its social, technical and/or aesthetic representation" (Amphoux, 2003, p. 60). *Ambiance* can only be felt through bodily immersion in material and sensitive space (Thibaud, 2004); it is changing (Roux, 2014) and affects the individual unknowingly, through slow, lasting impregnation (Thibaud, 2016). Steadman *et al.* (2021) synthesize a large bibliography and note that *ambiance* arises from the effects of emotions and sensations that circulate between bodies in a given place.

In the case of a soccer stadium, ambiance stems from the internal logic of this contact sport, which consists in investing the opponent's zone in order to score goals and win the game. The ambiance is composed and recomposed according to the physical components in the staging of the match (bleachers, fences, etc.) and the presence of supporters, acting in the show through their expressed support, and even more so of fans who actively support their team and create their own spectacle, rather than being mere spectators attending a sporting event (Roux et Tixier, 2010). According to Roux (2014, p. 60), the perception of an ambiance “implies a synesthetic (through each of the sensory modalities) as well as cenesthetic (general impression) sensory relationship to the world, [as it] does not refer to a particular spatial or temporal scale [and] studying it requires (...) a multidisciplinary approach”.

This perception also calls for an activation of the senses, promoting a kinesthetic state (Sherrington, 1956) whereby an individual is intensely connected to what he or she is feeling. Wilhelm (2020) believes that the bodily sensations experienced by spectators depend on the unfolding of the match and on their perception of the stadium's dimensions. According to him, these bodily sensations are related to spatiality: impressions of compression and expansion of the body in the act of cheering; awareness of one's position in the stadium; influence of the immediate surroundings; cognitive distinctions between here/there and inside/outside.

Uhrich and Koenigstorger's theoretical model (2009) for analyzing stadium ambiance highlights the role of emotions triggered by different stimuli (sound, light, etc.). Its application, through interviews with sports stadium operators and spectators, shows that the stadium's physical and social environment influences ambiance (Uhrich et Benkenstein, 2010). Balaji and Chakraborti (2015) measure ambiance using a scale comprising fourteen items grouped into four dimensions: physical layout, aesthetics of facilities, entertainment experience, social interaction. From another angle, Da Silva *et al'* (2021) systematic literature review shows that a stadium's ambiance is a determining factor in the decision to buy a ticket.

The presence of active, ambiance-producing club supporters strongly enhances viewers' emotions (Herold, Boronczyk et Breuer, 2021).

The stadium forms a sensory landscape (Lee *et al.*, 2012) punctuated by micro-ambiances generated by groups who "share and/or experience the same event, the same activity in a given space, the sensory characteristics of which orient social practices" (Lira, 2015, p. 64). These micro-ambiances vary according to sensory elements (chants; shouts when a foul is committed, or a goal is scored; entry or exit of a player; etc.) and the dynamics of the stadium's occupation by its different groups of spectators. They mark the presence, identity and deep attachment to the group and club of supporters (Edensor, 2015) who are at one with their peers in the materiality of the venue. Cheering, chanting, booing, and silence feed these micro-ambiances which each individual memorizes according to his or her own psycho-affective characteristics.

### ***The stadium, a place of memories for its visitors***

According to Bergson (1999, p. 266), the primary function of memory is "to evoke all those past perceptions which are analogous to the present perception, to recall to us what has preceded and followed them, and so to suggest to us that decision which is the most useful ". Memory is thus a history forged (Jodelet, 2002) in a dialectical relationship between past, present, and future. It is used to make contact with memories, traditions, and customs. It is strictly linked to the culture and identity of peoples, societies, groups, or individuals. Living and current, evolving and changing, memory is also vulnerable and erasable (Jodelet, 2002). For it to endure, a memorization effort is required.

According to Ricoeur (2000), memorization is a constant and complex process of meaning production that involves remembering and forgetting, and in which fantasy and pleasure can play a part. This process is essential to the construction of meaning and the attribution of value to a place based on the discourses it gives rise to. Thus, the stadium



appears as "a semiotic body" (Semprini, 1992, p. 25). It fosters social relations that reinforce its appropriation and significance as a territory (Mascarenhas, 2005). Memories associated with a stadium are born of the emotions felt when attending a game and the experience of collectively cheering on one's team, by immersing oneself in the ambiance in a demonstrative and sonorous manner.

In his work on the aural experience of festive ambiances, Romieu (2009) shows that festivities leave memory traces. Using a Freudian approach, he shows that these traces are accumulations of hidden or renewed memories. When summoned, these memories are reformulated and take on new meanings. Freud (1921) likened the psychic apparatus to a "writing machine" (Nioche, 2012, p. 124) that captures, organizes, and offers the components of a repository, a support for individual perceptual, behavioral, cognitive, and affective experiences. Like writing, memory is a process of creation and reproduction. Like a palimpsest - "a work whose present state may suggest and reveal traces of earlier versions" (CNRTL) - memory can be activated to restore meaning to what one considers damaged.

Thus, to reclaim the Maracanã and reterritorialize themselves in it following its refurbishment - which was experienced as a rupture - active club supporters have taken pains to recreate the ambiance they like to remember so as to feel good in the stadium (Tuan, 1975). In Brazil, a plethora of literary, musical, and poetic works celebrate the ambiance of games played in the Maracanã stadium, ambiance inscribed in collective memory and popular culture. For Nora (1984), places of memory exist in most cultures to ward off the risks of oblivion or trivialization.

Yet urban intervention, i.e., the reconstruction of a city upon the existing city, tends to negate pre-existing social and community networks (Montaner et Muxi, 2011), which tends to explain why new or renovated stadiums are said to be "in quest of urbanity" (Loubière, 2014). This obliteration of the history of groups and their cultures causes urban traumas (Duarte,

Uglione et Vilaça, 2012). In psychoanalysis, traumas are the psychic effects of a breakdown in meaning-making processes that can lead to traumatic disaffiliation.

Feelings of belonging and not belonging result from a search for the meaning of existence, always starting from a loss (Heidegger, 1967). A sense of not-belonging is felt "in places that can be reached but which, in fact, do not constitute a home" (Vaz, 2015, p. 284). Steadman *et al* (2021) thus show that a stadium relocation is traumatic because it breaks the intergenerational traditions that contribute to the ambiance. This is also true of a renovated stadium, in which severe struggles for the control of the ambiance rage (Chaboche, 2022). It then takes time for the public to accept the changes, to feel good again in the stadium, and, in turn, to assimilate it to a "symbolic home" (Charleston, 2009, p. 145).

All in all, the elements of this conceptual framework make it possible to propose a model for analyzing the production and perception of ambiance by the audiences of renovated stadiums, which we apply to the case of the Maracanã.

### **Case study presentation**

Known as the world temple of soccer (Gaffney, 2008), the Maracanã stadium has recently undergone a series of renovations. The rationale behind these renovations needs to be examined from the angle of the transformation of its audiences and ambiance.

#### ***Rationale behind the Maracanã refurbishment and its effects***

The Maracanã stadium was built for the 1950 World Cup and was meant to be the world's largest soccer stadium (estimated capacity 155,000) and to help establish Brazil as a modern country (Gaffney, 2008 ; Helal *et al*, 2018). It was designed to be the Stadium for the masses - *estádio das massas* in Portuguese - by the populist regime in power at the time. The expression *estádio das massas*, widely used in popular parlance, has always characterized its

ambiance. It was coined by a radio journalist. After the latter's death in 1965, the stadium was renamed after him (Estádio Mário Filho), and the name still appears on its façade. The common term "Maracanã" is a nickname.

For 50 years, the stadium was structured around three main areas (fig. 2): the upper ring (concrete bleachers); the middle ring (seats and boxes); and the lower ring, known as the *Geral* (standing areas surrounding the pitch, allowing fans to circulate freely and form a compact mass just above the pit).



Figure 2. The original Maracanã. Source : Arquivo Nacional, 1950-1959 (Public domain).

As soon as it opened, the stadium experienced intense territorialization, between political domination and symbolic appropriation (Lefebvre, 2006), on the part of fans of the clubs it was home to: Flamengo, Fluminense, Vasco de Gama, Botafogo. From the 1980s onwards, some fan groups used violence whose intensity, frequency and media coverage led to some of their members being banned from the stadium (Buarque de Hollanda, 2016). As in the case of England, stadiums have been renovated at the request of sporting bodies (Brazilian

Football Federation; clubs) to improve safety and maximize revenue from the provision of sporting events. It was then proposed that the Maracanã be classified as a historic monument, for its architectural quality, of course, but above all to counter its gentrification, i.e., the gradual replacement of less affluent audiences with more affluent ones (Rannou, 1997 ; Giulianotti, 2002). In light of the 1990s attempts to privatize it and the steady rise in ticket prices, the aim was to preserve its popular essence. However, this project to have the stadium listed as a historic monument jeopardized the profitability of the venue, which was deteriorating due to a lack of maintenance: in 1992, 3 spectators died and 97 were injured when a fence gave way under the pressure of a crowd of fans.

In 2000, the Maracanã was listed by the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN in Brazil) as a heritage site, in recognition of its architectural quality and the cultural and ethnographic value of its appropriation and occupation by its audiences: the originality of how they cheer and encourage their teams; innovative collective practices on the part of the *torcidas* - groups which were imitated in Europe from the 1970s onwards with the emergence of ultras - the specificity of the *Geral* (Girão, 2012). The stadium's layout is not set in stone. If IPHAN authorizes and supervises the work, it is possible to improve comfort and safety.

The initial refurbishment of the Maracanã took place in 1999 for the 2000 FIFA Club World Cup and followed this principle. The *Geral* remained, while the number of seats increased: green (behind the goals and without backrests to allow the ultras to move with ease), white (central stands) and yellow (side stands). The number of blue seats in the middle ring has been increased to accommodate a public willing to pay more for access. New boxes were also built in the central stands.



Figure 3. Maracanã before its refurbishment in 1999. Source: Rodrigo Soldon (licence creative commons, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Rio was awarded the right to host the 2007 Pan-American Games, which led to further renovations. Parts of the restructuring were well received by the public (Ferreira, 2017): lowering of the pitch surface; expansion of parking areas, cloakrooms, and toilets; and so on. On the other hand, the addition of 28,000 seats to develop the blue sector (fig. 4), at the detriment of the *Geral zone* and covered seats, angered those who used to occupy these areas. The *Geraldinos*, as they are called, saw themselves as creators of ambiance. Positioned very close to the coach's bench, some even thought they could influence his choices (Asberg et Martins, 2015). These renovations reduced the freedom of movement - seen as cultural heritage - in this highly original section of the stadium. For reasons of comfort and safety, the capacity has been reduced (national competitions: 100,000 seats; international matches: 80,000), mainly due to the elimination of the standing area. But, without the *Geral*, the intensity of the ambiance has been reduced, due a loss of freedom of movement and price increases aimed at attracting less fervent middle-class audiences: the maximum ticket price

represented 3.3% of the minimum wage in 2000, but jumped to 14.5% in 2008, after the renovations (Paula, 2023). Journalist L. Castro explains:

There were 30,000 standing places at [1 to 2 euros] depending on [the] match. The price was considered fair because the view wasn't very good and there was no comfort. But there was no violence, even though opposing fans were side by side (Asberg et Martins, 2015).



Figure 4. The Maracanã refurbished for the 2007 Pan American Games. Source : R. Silveira Camargo (public domain).

The controversial hosting of the 2014 World Cup accentuated the gentrification of the Maracanã (Castro, 2016). Now equipped with a museum, the stadium is one of Rio's most visited tourist sites, especially during matches. However, in the absence of any additional revenue other than from rare concerts, it is used solely for soccer, at a high operating cost of around 5.2 million euros in 2023 (Zarko, 2023). That is why the municipality, which manages the facility, has launched a competition for ideas to reconfigure it. In addition to a complete overhaul of the interior, the projects proposed the demolition of public facilities (a gymnasium, an athletics stadium, and an aquatic park) - that were not part of the FIFA 2011 specifications (Castro 2016), to give way to the construction of a parking lot and a shopping center in the listed Maracanã polygonal stadium. Faced with protests, the State of Rio abandoned its plans to demolish the athletics stadium and aquatic park in late 2009, but in

early 2012 launched a call for Expression of Interest. On this occasion, the Rio Popular Committee<sup>1</sup> led a campaign, supported by public figures, with demonstrations around and then inside the stadium, calling for the preservation of popular classes' access to the Maracanã. It also published a manifesto listing its criticisms (e.g., tactics to discourage fans from behaving in an unpolished manner) (Campanha O Maraca é Nosso!, 2012).

Nevertheless, management of the stadium was entrusted to the Maracanã S.A. consortium formed by Odebrecht (former Brazilian leader in construction and public works, renamed Novonor), IMX (former sports events agency) and AEG (world leader in the operation of entertainment infrastructures) for a period of 35 years. But the restructuring of the stadium was so extensive that it significantly affected its essence. Contrary to the principle of physical preservation of historical and cultural heritage sites, the interior of the Maracanã and its emblematic roof were demolished. Only the façade remains. The stadium's surface area has doubled, but its capacity has dropped to 79,000 seats. Reconstruction of the stands has improved visibility and comfort in the 110 boxes. Four giant screens and new sound and lighting systems have been installed. Escalators and elevators lead to air-conditioned lounges, and `socializing areas for the more affluent visitors. 360 screens broadcast the matches in the 60 bars situated close to the boxes. 3% of the seats - the most profitable - are so-called VIP seats (with personalized services, drinks, etc.), which is four times less than the average number of VIP seats in French stadiums renovated for the 2016 UEFA European Football Championship (Chaboche, 2019).

### ***Hyper-sectorization of a heritage-listed sports site***

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<sup>1</sup> Created in 2010, the Rio Popular Committee (CPR) includes social organizations, popular movements, trade unions, organizations for the defence of rights and control of the public budget, and universities. It is fighting all forms of inequality and the mass eviction of residents to host the 2014 Football World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. Regarding the controversial Maracanã renovations, the CPR denounces human rights violations in Rio de Janeiro and encourages the population to participate in urban governance.

The recommendations of the Taylor Report submitted to the British Parliament following the Hillsborough tragedy (97 dead, 766 injured) in 1989 had a considerable impact on the Maracanã. Now hyper-sectorized, it is organized into 114 zones within four separate sectors (fig. 5). This restructuring has eliminated the right to walk around the ring where the old stands used to be. However, the consortium has maintained the stadium's division during derbies between the two resident clubs only: the southern sector is reserved for Fluminense fans, the northern for Flamengo fans, and the eastern and western sectors mix spectators during derbies. The South and North sectors feature toilets and bars, which are cleaned during the match, while the other two are more sophisticated (escalators, elevators, meeting rooms, high-end restaurants).

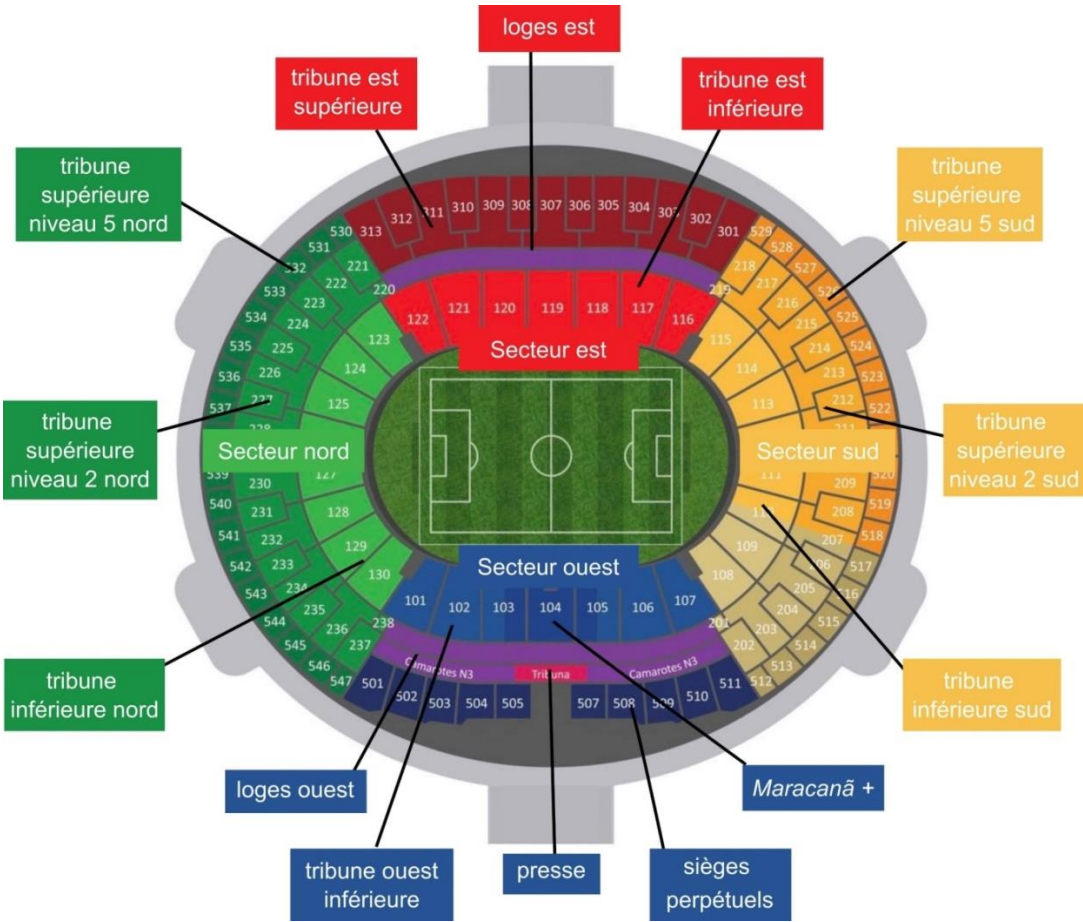


Figure 5. Sectors's names of the actual Maracanã. Source : auteurs.



The Northern and Southern sectors, situated behind the goals, are the most popular because of their lower prices and warm ambiance. In these sectors occupied by ultras, chanting, singing, daring choreography, giant mosaics made up of sheets of colored paper placed on the seats, percussion, smoke, even prohibited visual displays (e.g., fireworks and other pyrotechnics) and sound (e.g., smoke bombs) are the order of the day. These sectors attract teenagers and young adults, to whom the most seasoned fans pass on the ultra-subculture, in a "game [that] is played with space, since the objective is to ensure the visibility of spatial actions on supporters' territories, i.e., in one's territory's defense or by encroaching on that of the 'enemies'" (Rannou, 2017, p. 102).

Less electric, the Western and Eastern sectors reveal a recent diversification of spectators (women, elderly people, celebrities, etc.). Security guards maintain a new order, which more or less consists in keeping people seated. These sectors mark a shift "into the age of the post-modern stadium', that of control and consumption [where] crowds are segregated, deprived of all social value, and individuals atomized, reduced to the status of customers" (Roux, 2014, p. 61). The western sector is less busy, with changing audiences except for the holders of perpetual seats passed on from generation to generation. This sector features boxes for occasional guests from the business world, as well as the Maracanã + section. The Maracanã + section is usually priced between the very high box rates and the lower-level side seats in this western sector. Admission is free for the disabled. Prices rise for major matches and the Maracanã + zone sometimes becomes the second most expensive sub-sector of the stadium after the boxes. The Eastern sector attracts more visitors than the Western sector, especially actor-spectators - who are particularly keen on attending major soccer games - one of the four categories - along with the classic spectator, the artist-supporter, and the actor-fan - in Ferreira's taxonomy (2017 of spectators' strategies to adapt to the renovated Maracanã).

The hyper-sectorization of the Maracanã aims to transform it into a *Tradium* (Bale, 2001, a contraction of *Trade* and *stadium*. Gaffney (2008) refers to this as the Carioca version of the post-modern, secure, comfortable, aesthetic, commercial, multifunctional and customer-experience centered stadium (Paramio *et al.*, 2008) promoted by FIFA. This consumerist model promotes hyper-commoditized entertainment for the middle classes (Giulianotti, 2002) and a high degree of price variability in line with the principles of yield management. Designed above all for the affluent metropolises of Europe and North America, this model has failed to work in other parts of the world. Filmmaker Walter Salles, winner of the 1998 Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival and an avowed Botafogo supporter<sup>2</sup>, believes that:

the World Cup [2014] (...) brings [this] FIFA model that has nothing to do with the history of our stadiums [and] creates a standardization of stadiums that no longer reflects local cultures. Gone is the project to incorporate the working classes into soccer (...) The immediate consequence is empty, overpriced, privatized stadiums (Fièrè, 2014, p. 92-94).

However, no long series of data on match attendance exists. When interviewed by the authors for this study, a group of researchers from the soccer website *ludopedio.org.br* estimated that attendance at the Maracanã would remain fairly high. The drop in capacity, offset by an increase in the offer of customer-experience centered services, has led to price rises to attract more affluent visitors, families, or spectators who have previously been excluded from soccer games because of the sometimes violent atmosphere in the stadium (women, sexual minorities, etc.), at the detriment of working-class categories. It is therefore appropriate to compare the moods as they were perceived before the Maracanã's series of renovations with those experienced since its reopening in 2013.

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<sup>2</sup> Director, screenwriter, and producer born in Rio de Janeiro. As a child, he attended the Maracanã to support Botafogo, the resident club until 2007.

## **Methodological approach: building a mnemonic archive on the Maracanã**

The methodological design aims to find out how the Maracanã's refurbishment has influenced the production of its ambiance and its perception by spectators. To this end, we rely on their recollections through interviews, as well as on post-renovation field observations, accompanied by photographic snapshots. The aim is to understand the spectators' representations of the stadium, so as to identify any changes in their perceptions of its sensory quality.

The first author of this article conducted an ethno-topographical survey. This method aims to analyze the "configuration of the attributes of a space, in order to identify types of identity meanings and collective urban images, as well as to understand the materialization of cultures, subjectivities and life projects" (Duarte *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). Ethno-topography focuses on spatial properties to understand the dynamics of a socio-cultural group in a place, using visual media to interpret the collected material. The survey was conducted in the form of participant observation. Indeed, according to Becker (1997), participatory and active observation is essential in ethnography, as it enables the researcher to examine his or her object of research by becoming aware of people's experiences.

From October to November 2016 and from August to November 2017, the author attended fifteen matches (five Flamengo, ten Fluminense). To familiarize herself with the social dynamics of the venue, she blended in with the fans to the point of being enlisted by a group of ultras to, for a short time, serve as flag-bearer! During each game she attended, she recorded her observations and feelings in a field notebook following "a logic of pre-analytical narrative (...) through spontaneous and reconstructed notes" (Kadri : 2023, p. 4). Aiming to collect narratives relating to possible changes in the ambiance at the renovated Maracanã stadium, she conducted 26 active non-directive interviews by means of an introductory question ("Are you a regular at the Maracanã or is this your first time?") and a central

question ("What do you think of its latest renovations?"). The first author transcribed the answers to create a unique text in the form of a mnemonic archive. The material was interpreted using her field notes, set against the theoretical framework, between ambiance and memory in the renovated stadium.

To clarify and complement these notes, which were recorded with "an emotive purpose, of a sensory nature, in situations of immersion ‘watered’ by her own subjectivity and affect” (Kadri, 2023, p. 4), the author conducted interviews in each sector of the stadium (West: two interviews; East: five; South: ten; North: nine), without concern for gender or age. All that mattered was the availability and apparent state of the interviewee; For her own safety, she selected individuals that were neither obviously drunk nor excessively euphoric. The average profile of respondents was a 44-year-old man who had been going to the stadium for 29 years, since the age of 15 (Table 1).

<b>Personne interrogée (par ordre d’entretien)</b>	<b>Âge</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Fréquentation du Maracanã (en années)</b>
F.C.	54	Masculin (M)	~ 35
A.M.	52	M	~ 35
C.A.C.	49	M	~ 30
A.O.	42	M	34
W.J.	33	M	17
P.H.	36	M	18
L.H.	29	M	Deuxième match
L.A.	49	Féminin (F)	42
R.L.	53	M	~ 45
R.F.L.	53	M	~ 45
G.A.	69	M	~ 50
A.R.	56	F	~ 20
P.P.	32	M	20

V.F.	36	M	~ 15
W.N.	18	M	Premier match
E.R.	60	M	~ 35
M.A.	56	M	38
R.S.	28	M	18
R.F.	25	M	9
R.D	32	M	~ 20
C.A.	54	M	~ 45
B.M.	58	F	50
P.M.	24	M	17
M.C.	60	M	~ 50
L.S	20	F	8
O.C	64	M	60

Tableau 1. Personnes interrogées au Maracanã. Source : enquête de l'autrice.

Each verbatim was entered in a table of narratives inspired by the "Mnemonic Archive of Place" tool (Uglione, 2008). Used to construct collective histories with a purpose of comprehension and interpretation, this tool postulates that each place is invented, fabricated by the significant and legitimate force of the subjectivity of testimonies. Their transcription serves to identify the metaphors describing this place, to reveal the memory of past ambiances and compare them with those of the present. The aim is to assess the complexity of the values and meanings attributed to a place (Uglione, 2008).

The mnemonic archive was constructed using the following phasing:

- Choice of study location;
- First contact, in the stadium, with each target person to present to him/her the context and objectives of the research, with a view to conducting a recorded interview

(Authorization n°56289015.3.0000.5257 to conduct this battery of surveys granted by the Ethics and Research Committee of the University Hospital of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). The first author ended each interview when she reached the saturation point;

- Transcription of the stories into a single corpus, in the form of significant sentence extracts grouped together in a single text;
- Identification of key words or expressions and of their recurrence in each text segment. Metaphor categories (e.g., "Battlefield"; "Colossus"; etc.) are then highlighted in font size 14, using a specific color for each category (e.g., red for the "Colossus" metaphor). Metaphorical extracts, which fall into one or other of the identified metaphor categories without necessarily containing the metaphoric term itself, complete the story table in font size 12 and, for the "Colossus" metaphor, in red once again. The rest of the text is made invisible by using a white font. This is a process of corpus reduction by means of thematic analysis, which "consists in systematically locating, grouping and (...) discursively examining the themes addressed in a corpus" (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2012, p. 231), with a view to proposing categories of metaphors;
- Analysis of the meanings that emerged from these categories, using elements of the conceptual framework and the first author's field notebook.

The oral corpus represents 157 minutes of recording (minimum, maximum and average interview durations (in minutes): 1; 20; 6), which might seem a short time. But the *in situ* nature of the interviews - with people "conducting themselves in an 'endogenous' manner, i.e. not shaped by the survey design" (Dodier & Baszanger, 1997, p. 39) - made it possible to very quickly obtain answers that were often dense and rich in meaning, in a particular context: that of recent renovations, perhaps stirring up memories of magnified ambiances. The fact that they were conducted *in vivo*, before the match or at half-time, does not seem to have

influenced their duration. In any case, the aim was not to collect life stories – which requires being present with each respondent for a relatively long time - but rather to conduct first-hand interviews (Bongrand & Laborier, 2005) to grasp his/her practices and representations. The aim was to get each person, for a short time, to reflect on his/her participation in a sporting event. These discourses were transcribed using the ATLAS TI text analysis software to identify the metaphors used, connect them together in the interweaving of individual narratives and build a mnemonic archive.

### Results: Metaphor categories echo audiences’ narratives

Structured into five categories of metaphors that signify the Maracanã – *Battlefield* (Campo de batalha), *Magical place* (Lugar mágico), *Colossus* (Colosso), *Theater of dreams and emotions* (Teatro de sonhos e emoções) and *snobby* (Engomadinho) - the mnemonic archive translated into English by the first author reveals the perceptions of pre- and post-renovation ambiences on the part of the stadium’s attendees (fig. 6).

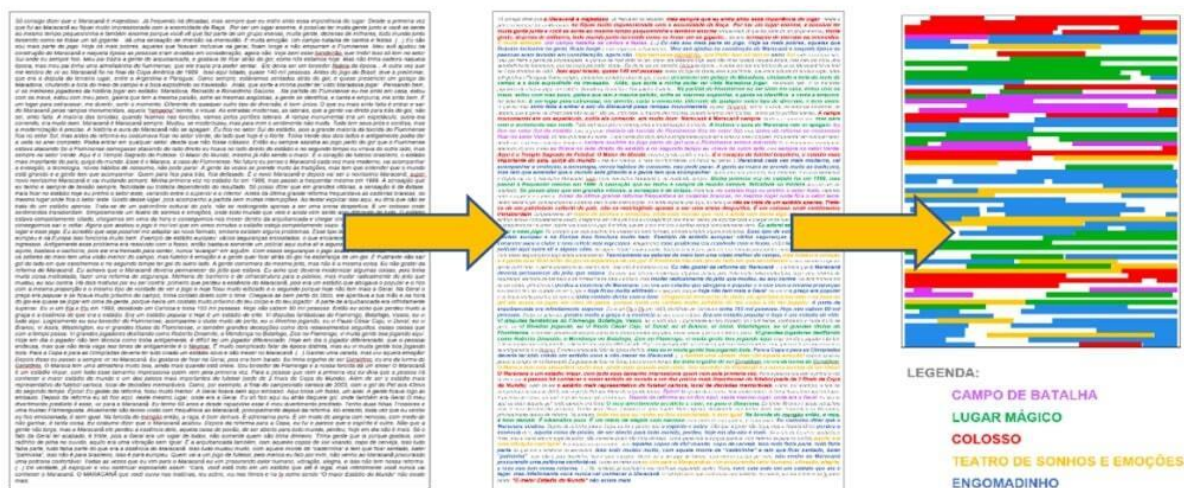


Figure 6: Production diagram of the Maracanã mnemonic archive. 1st image - Extract from the table of stories: interviews transcribed one by one to create a unique text; 2nd image - categorization by color of the identified metaphors; 3rd image - visual diagram (without text) to measure the intensity of each category of metaphors. Source: author, 2018.

From this archive are extracted verbatim comments of:

- classic spectators, concentrated in the East and West sectors, and who only manifest themselves in moments of euphoria or discontent (Ferreira, 2017);
- satellite artist-supporters, positioned alongside organized groups without joining them (Ferreira, 2017);
- collectivized artist-supporters, concentrated in the North and South sectors and members of organized groups (Ferreira, 2017).

This plurality of profiles makes it possible to identify the perceptions of the Maracanã audiences, whether spectators, supporters, or fans (Roux & Tixier, 2010).

### ***A Battlefield***

This metaphor is drawn from excerpts of statements by fans who regard the soccer match as a "battle". According to R.S., a satellite artist-supporter (28 years old; first visit to the stadium at the age of 10): "The Maracanã is a battlefield, with songs and parties". Words such as dispute, attack, adversary, enemy, war, territory used by the interviewees brought out the metaphor of the battlefield. For example, W. J., a collectivized artist-supporter (first visit to the stadium at age 16), states:

I stay in the southern sector of the stadium, because the vast majority of Fluminense fans stay here, but before the refurbishment, I used to stay in the green sector, on the side that is now the northern [sector]. There was green on both sides, and, in those days, you could move all around the ring. You could get into any sector, as long as it wasn't a *classico* [derby]. So, I always watched the game from behind the goal area of Fluminense's opposite team. If Fluminense started attacking on the right, I'd stay on the right side of the stadium and in the second half I'd turn the other way, but always in the Greens' sector.

This Battlefield symbolism equates the stadium with a disputed territory. This dispute becomes much clearer when the analysis focuses on micro-ambiances. Micro-ambiances are circumscribed within trenches of sorts, which represent a struggle to defend and promote a



territory. Those who hold them, the ultras, produce the most powerful and hard-hitting micro-ambiances. Assigned by the operating consortium to the upper central parts of the North and South sectors, far from the pitch, these groups have spontaneously extended their territories to the lateral parts and lower levels of these sectors, creating a clear distinction from the rest of the stadium with their chants, flags, and symbols worthy of those of an occupying army.

Another micro-ambiance is created by the *post-geraldinos*, one of the five sub-categories of artist-supporters in Ferreira's taxonomy (2017). Nostalgic of the *Geral* era, when people could roam at will near the pitch, they make their presence felt by leaning towards the pitch - an impressive sight when large numbers of fans do so - to cheer their team or berate its opponents(fig. 7).



Figure 7. *Pós-geraldinos* standing near the ground. Source : Ferreira, 2017.

A.R., satellite artist-support (first visit to the stadium at age 35), declares:

I loved being in the *Geral*. I also liked being in the stands, in the middle of Raça [a group of Flamengo supporters]. Now, without the *Geral*, I sit in the middle of the Raça crowd, in the northern sector. I have sometimes sat in fixed seats, but I hated it. I like crowds, I

like confrontational situations. In the old Maracanã, I sat [for a match] in one of the perpetual seats, but none of that appealed to me; what I like is the crowd.

### *A Magical Place*

For many of those interviewed, the Maracanã is a place of transcendence and, through its ambiance, has the power to enchant fans. In this respect, it appears as a magical place, which "produces extraordinary, unusual effects [and] which seem to have no rational explanation" (CNRTL, s.d., s.p.). Some of the respondents' narratives describe it as endowed with magic, with an aura and a soul; this is reflected, for example, in the following comment made by A. R., an artist-supporter already quoted above:

For someone who comes here for the first time, I talk of it first as a historic tourist spot, but above all as a magical place, because so much has happened here. Everyone sings, everyone shouts, everyone swears, it's a magical place. The Maracanã is a magical place. I think everyone should know that.

The Maracanã is home to happy memories of victories, to ghosts of bitter defeats and immeasurable pain following fatal accidents. It is said to have long helped mitigate perceptions of socio-economic and racial inequality (Canal parabólico, 2014). This mystique, fed by fragments of memory, allows fans to resituate themselves within the renovated Maracanã stadium. R. F., a classic spectator, explains:

I was born in 1964, I'm 52. My father brought me here in 1969 (...) I remember that from 1973 (...) I saw some fantastic Flamengo, Botafogo and Vasco matches. I've seen it all here. I'm a Fluminense fan, I follow the club very closely. I've seen Rivelino, Paulo César Caju, Duval, Branco, Assis, Washington... I've seen Fluminense win great titles. I've also seen great disappointments, like when it was relegated twice in two years... things that pass with time. I've seen great players come and go, like Roberto Dinamite, Mendonça at Botafogo, Zico at Flamengo, I've seen a lot of good people play here. Nowadays, players don't have the technique they used to have, and it's hard to find a player with a distinctive style. Today, Neymar is the distinguished player that people deify, but he would have no place in the teams of the past.

The ambiance of the Magical place reveals identities linked to moments and situations that make it more emblematic in the context of each person's life, with memories serving as the backdrop to this construction. One's relationship with the stadium and the way in which it enables the creation of an identity linked to significant moments is reflected in the account of G. A., a classic spectator whose first match as a supporter in his late teens promoted his emancipation by broadening his use of urban space:

One day, I told the lady for whom my mother did the laundry that I'd never been to the Maracanã. She asked me: "So why aren't you going today?" I replied that I had to take some clothes home and that I didn't have much money. She said, "I'll give you the money, but it's free today, so you use it for a snack". I said my mother wouldn't like it, but she said she'd talk to her later. That was over 40 years ago (...). When I got home, (...) I saw a piece of wood, because my mother liked to hit me with it. I said: "You're going to beat me up even if I tell you the truth, aren't you? But I'm going to be beaten with satisfaction. Think about it, I'm already a young man, I already have a girlfriend, I need to learn things. I only go into town to pick up clothes for my mother and on Sundays I go to the movies with my girlfriend (...), the rest is just work, work and work. I took advantage of the fact that I could go to the Maracanã for free. (...). And I wanted to see Pelé.' And my mother replied: "But you know you mustn't do anything without asking us first? And I said: "I know, I made a mistake, but you want to beat me up, so beat me up". I took a beating, but I experienced that emotion. After that, I kept going to the Maracanã, because it enchanted me. I loved being at the stadium, and I loved the *Geral*, because it was very cheap. I was proud to be a *Geraldino*.

### ***A Colossus***

For many, the Maracanã remains the world's largest stadium, an icon for its monumentality (Heral *et al.*, 2018) and its representativeness for soccer and global sports architecture. This is how the *Colossus* metaphor permeates narratives. P. H., a classic spectator (first visit to the stadium at age 18), explains:

I'd say it's not just a stadium. It's part of the country's cultural heritage, and not just a sporting arena. It's a colossus where emotions flow.

Memory participates in the perception of the Colossus. When the Maracanã had a larger capacity, it was not only the setting for iconic matches, but also the stadium for large crowds. O. C., a classic spectator (first visit to the stadium at the age of 4), says:

I can only say that the Maracanã is majestic. I've been coming here for decades, but every time I come, I feel the grandeur of the place.

The Maracanã not only used to welcome more spectators, but also took on its full dimension during emblematic matches, as satellite artist-supporter A.O. declares:

I remember coming here to the Maracanã. It was for the 1989 Copa America finale. It was packed... nearly 140,000 people (...) Come to think of it, I've seen the best players in history play in the biggest stadium in the world: Maradona, Reinaldo and Ronaldinho Gaucho...

This perception of the Maracanã's stature is probably due to its very wide terraces, which can accentuate the impression of monumentality. This perception is also guided by the symbolic field, by the imprints left over time, as W. J., a collectivized artist-spectator puts it:

This is the Sacred Temple of Football. The biggest in the world, even if it's no longer the biggest. This is the heart of Brazilian soccer, the most important stadium in the country, perhaps in the world. This is Maraca, the home of Fluminense.

Through this appropriation of the stadium in the name of a supporters' club and the perceived power of its monumental nature, this Colossus is characterized by its dialectic relationship to the local and the global.

### ***A Theatre of Dreams and Emotions***

The *Theatre of Dreams and Emotions* metaphor sums up the staged dimension of a 90-minute match, in which the audience is both spectator and participant. This metaphor differs from that of the Magical Place in that it relates more to the expression of symbols, rites, and rituals. The oral corpus reveals a whole series of representations of the match in which the ambiance

of the Maracanã is likened to a collective artistic performance. P. H., a classic spectator - already quoted above - declares:

The Maracanã is simply a theater of dreams and emotions, where all those who have come and continue to come feel something different from anything they have felt.

Pre-match preparations are meticulous, especially for the *tifo*, the set of vocal, visual, and choreographed animations that Ultras plan and carry out to liven up and decorate the stadium in a sort of competition between groups. On the outskirts of the stadium, fans are dressed in their club colors, they drink, eat, talk, and sing in bars and public spaces. Although a battle is brewing, these preparations - half pre-match routing (Edensor et Millington, 2010), half ritual - remain festive. The ambiance becomes tense when the opposing supporters arrive on site.

Various other rituals occur during matches, as B.M, a satellite artist-supporter explains:

The Young Flu [one of Fluminense's ultras] always arrive after the start of the match, 5 minutes late. They throw the rice powder and pass by with their big flags.

In light of this anti-racist ritual, which predates the opening of the new Maracanã stadium<sup>3</sup>, Fluminense has become aware of the importance of creating its own ambiance. The photo below is evocative (fig. 8). In this picture of the stadium lit up in the club's colors, the spectators in the foreground are waving balloons, also in the club's colors, distributed at the entrance. In this way, they contribute to the liveliness and vibrance *in situ* and to the televised spectacle since that of the ultras is usually only filmed in wide shots. In the background, in the upper section of the terrace one can make out the rice powder thrown by the ultras in a gesture

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<sup>3</sup> Carlos Alberto's departure from América-RJ to play for Fluminense angered fans. On May 13, 1914, the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil and the player's first match for Fluminense - the only black player on the team - América-RJ fans hurled rice powder, used as a pale white foundation, at him in insult. Since then, the rice powder has become a symbol of Fluminense and its anti-racist struggle.

recognized by IPHAN (in its listing of the Maracanã stadium) as being of high cultural, heritage and political value. These different ambiances testify to a new partitioning of the Maracanã stadium' space. The North and South sectors are occupied by active and politicized club fans who are critical of the club's marketing strategies. The East and West sectors, on the other hand, are mostly occupied by new, younger, more feminine, and perhaps more docile fans, the behavior of whom the operators seek to shape to their advantage.



Figure 8. One stadium, two atmospheres. Source : author, 2017

Other rituals sweep the micro-ambiances in this Theatre: shouting at key moments in the game (fouls; start, restart and end of match; etc.); more active fan participation in the second half; booing at opponents; tension at penalty kicks. Only this ritualization of critical moments, at times of totally collective emotions, can punctuate these micro-ambiances. The frequent interventions of the new official announcer, hired after the renovations, also disrupt, perhaps deliberately, these micro-ambiances born of effusive moments of sociability.

However, in this Theater, many perform alone, without being dissociated from the collective match script. For example, transistor radios are still widely used by individual spectators to keep track of other games. They have not been supplanted by smartphones and their many uses (selfies, etc.). These self-presentation practices, which can be seen as either old-fashioned or very contemporary, blend together and feed the ambiance of the Maracanã without negating the objective of integration, that is to say, that of uniting the fans in their encouragement to their team, since the stadium brings together individuals sensitive to the same symbols. C.A.C., a satellite artist-supporter (first visit to the stadium at the age of 19), enthuses:

Look at that [club] flag, it's so beautiful! When they raised it, even I stood under the flag. It's only here, in the South sector, where I always stay.

Ordinary people dress up, paint their faces, and give their all to cheer their team in this outdoor environment, or simply mingle with the groups. R.S., a - satellite artist-supporter, already mentioned above, explains:

I'm not officially part of a supporters' group, but I know many members of these groups and I've been to the matches with them several times and I've watched the games alongside them in the stadium. I'm friends with members of Young Flu, Força Flu, Bravo 52 and Sobranada [Fluminense supporters]. I usually watch the games from where the drums of Bravo 52 are because it's always more festive and lively there.

The strength of this collective identity, the shared feeling of belonging to a group, is one of the key factors, forged by memory, in the general ambiance of the Maracanã. Nevertheless, it would seem that societal changes and the strategies of the stadium's operators are undermining the foundations of this collective identity and are thus changing the ambiance within this Theater of Dreams and Emotions.

### *A stadium turned snobby.*

Finally, some responses contain metaphors that express anguish, sadness, and anger with regards to the renovated stadium. The phrase "it's not the same Maracanã anymore" was constantly repeated.

First of all, the reduction of the stadium's capacity has irritated many. For some, the Maracanã remains a giant. For others, this gigantism was once associated with a more welcoming and popular aura, and a less snobby atmosphere. R. F., a classic spectator already quoted above, claims that:

I didn't like the renovation of the Maracanã. I thought it should stay as it was. I think some things had to be modernized, because there were a lot of things that were poorly maintained, and the whole security and safety system needed renovating ... Improving the toilets and the infrastructure for the public ... but to radically change how it was, I'm against for two reasons: firstly, because it has lost its essence, because it was a stadium that welcomed the popular (classes) and the rich with the same desire to watch the match; whereas today it has become very elitist; and secondly because we no longer have the Geral. The price there was accessible to popular audiences, and you were very close to the pitch; you were in contact with the team. You could get very close to your idol, he'd shake your hand and when there was a goal, he'd almost throw himself on top of you, because there was such close contact between your body and that of the player.

Fans are still committed to the Maracanã, but its refurbishment has left them traumatized. W. J., a collectivized artist-spectator already mentioned above, expresses this ambivalence:

I can only partly identify with this renovated space. The infrastructure - good toilets, bars, kiosks, more user-friendly services - is perhaps better than in the old Maracanã. But I think it's become a bit too comfortable for people, and that bothers me a little. I used to like it when everyone had to stand, you had to stand and as you were standing, you sang, you jumped, you encouraged the team. Nowadays, everyone wants to (...) pull their seats down, sit and watch as if on a sofa. There's a song our fans sing that says: "These are the stands, not a sofa". If I'm here, it's to cheer and sing along throughout the match.



The perceived excessive surveillance by security guards and cameras is causing anxiety in this Maracanã that has turned snobby. Fans say they are held back by the omnipresence of security measures and equipment, which compromises the ambiance. Fighting for the right to cheer on their team as they please, they gradually start ignoring seat assignments, use empty spaces as improvised bleachers (staircases, places with broken seats, sector partitions, ramps), stand up, jump, shout and break all rules aimed at controlling their behavior. R. S., a satellite artist-supporter- already quoted above, explains:

I no longer feel the energy and emotion I had in the stadium before the refurbishment, except in very specific moments. I think this is due to a number of reasons, not only to the architectural issue itself, but also to the elitization of the sport, with the application of ever-higher ticket prices, which excludes the popular social classes from the stadium and brings in their place people with greater financial capacity, but who don't share the passion in the same way. Because of the Pay-Per-View system, people who used to come to the games regularly can't come anymore, which also leads to emptying stadiums in the long term; the growth of social networks and the culture of recording everything at all times, in which enjoying soccer is less important than going to a game to post it and make fun of it on Facebook and Instagram, and in which it is more important to take selfies and record videos than to sing and watch the match. These factors, along with the snobby vibe in the new Maracanã, are killing the culture and idiosyncrasies that existed in the old stadium.

### ***Discussion***

While observing sport shows attended predominantly by men, the first author experienced some harassment when she was in the North and South sectors, where the atmosphere was the most unrestrained. During high-stake matches, she found it difficult to conduct interviews due to the high levels of stress, euphoria and anger. Lastly, it was difficult to translate into notes the plethora of emotions that could be observed at the same time. All of this complicated and limited her work. Nevertheless, the conceptual and methodological framework of this unique case study can be replicated in other settings, with a view to identifying a general model for the changes in soccer games' ambiance, in renovated stadiums.

A soccer stadium has "the power to stir hearts and minds, to evoke and anchor strong visual and social memories" (Wood et Gabie, 2011, p. 1199). It is a place of learning, self-building and transmission, the foundation for a continuity of uses and practices from one generation of fans to the other, beyond the age-related differences in perceptions of one's first emotions experienced at the stadium. Among the people surveyed, a third made their first visit to the stadium between the ages of 7 and 10 ("the age of reason"), and another third between the ages of 16 and 20 (late adolescence). (...) [Now] learning how to behave in a stadium at the age of 7 and with one's father is not the same as learning with friends during adolescence" (Roux, 2018, s.p). It is in this context that the results obtained from a mnemonic archive organized into five metaphors should be discussed.

The first metaphorical category, that of the *Battlefield*, expresses the struggle for victory. As the most serious trifle in the world (Bromberger, 1998), soccer offers, for the duration of a match as well as on and around the pitch, a metaphoric representation of social life, between structure and anomie. Durkheim (1981) notes that anomie reinforces a society's sense of belonging and self-esteem. On this *battlefield*, like soldiers, groups of fans defend their territory, or even conquer that of their opponents (Rannou, 2017). In the case of the renovated Maracanã, this metaphor also reflects the struggle of fans, as well as the regrets of ordinary spectators, regarding the effects of hyper-sectorization: drastic reduction in the freedom of movement around the stadium and in kinesthetic sensations; etc. Their aim is to gain a kind of extraterritoriality in this archetypal controlled and monitored stadium (Paramio *et al.*, 2008 ; Gaffney, 2008): reclaiming of the lower South and North stands by the ultras, parked higher up by the consortium; standing; leaning on the dividing fences; etc. Testifying to a vivid memory of past ambiances, this push towards the reoccupation of lost space is linked to a strong emotional attachment (Gaffney et Bale, 2004) and regenerates the territoriality of groups and individuals, i.e., "a feeling of belonging to a piece of land and a mode of behavior within this entity" (Le Berre, 1992, p. 627). Deterritorialized, these groups

and individuals tend to reinvent an ambiance suited to this new *Battlefield*. Disruptions, such as the series of renovations that the Maracanã has undergone, remind them of the remarkable ambiance they used to be immersed in, "a moment (...) torn from ordinary life, involving a rupture of values and rehabilitating the body and the collective" (Torgue, 2004, p. 11).

This is why this temple of soccer (Gaffney, 2008) is perceived as a *Magical Place*. Organized collective encouragement was invented here. In crowd psychology, inclusion in a group that shares a common goal forges a collective soul. This collectivization is a powerful factor in the production of myths. According to Tuan (1975), myths do not refer to the past, but to shared knowledge within a society.

Experiencing the remarkable ambiance of the *Magical Place* (Torgue, 2004) is an essential part of the fan's life. His/her immersion - "the act by which a body is immersed in an environment" (Bernard et Andrieu, 2015, p. 77) - in the Maracanã is part of its identity. But in this new, hyper-sectorized stadium, restrictions on permitted uses compromise the supporter's immersivity, i.e., "the ability of a body/subject to immerse itself in a space created by its own movement" (Bernard et Andrieu, 2015, p. 77). The interviews indicate that the stadium has undergone so many changes that it has become standardized. They also point out that the power of its mystique and the rituals it generates perpetuate the spirit of the site. This *genius loci* refers both to the distinctive ambiance of a place in popular culture (Tuailon-Demésy *et al.*, 2023) and to a phenomenological approach to the relationship between individuals and their environment in architectural theory (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), particularly through the representations they make of the stadium's dimensions (Wilhelm, 2020).

The perception of this *Colossus* varies according to the ambiance at each match, which results, not only from the physical size but also from the magnitude of sensory elements (sounds, human warmth, cheering movements, emotions...). Thus, the ambiance at a grand final game seems to increase the size of the stadium. Although its immensity is now all relative, since many stadiums around the world have a capacity equal to or greater than the

Maracanã stadium, the special place it holds in memories still gives it the physical and symbolic power of the *Colossus*, a mythical statue of extraordinary dimensions.

In this *Theater of dreams and emotions*, the ambiance implies a transformation of relationships involving the sharing of desires, thoughts, affects and actions. The pre-match, match and post-match rituals performed by the fans contribute to the ambiance of the show. This *theater offers a break from everyday life*. Attending a match is a celebration, an extraordinary event the arrangement of which reveals the ties that societies forge with their territory (Di Méo, 2001). This intense relationship with the ambiance of the theatrical Maracanã is part of a territoriality that promotes the deep attachment of fans to specific areas of the stadium (Charleston, 2009), in which they have experienced and memorized emotions (Giulianotti, 2004).

However, the fans have not yet accepted the renovated stadium as their own. The individuals interviewed in this new *snobby* Maracanã regret the time when ticket prices were lower and stigmatize the austere control of bodies. The public having not been consulted regarding the renovations, the fans (particularly those in the North and South sectors) resist them all the more that they feel dispossessed and marginalized, which reinforces their impression that the venue is shrinking. The transformation of the stadium is supposed to have been conducted in response to the necessity to modernize the venue but is received with the general feeling that "it was better before". This observation corroborates S. Freud's analysis that "the group is entirely conservative and has a deep aversion to all innovation and advances, and an unbounded respect for tradition" (Freud, 1921, p. 120). This is evidenced by the fans' resistance to the renovations, which they feel promote a degree of snobbery in coming to the stadium on the part of new, less regular, and less fervent audiences. The elimination of standing areas has marked a paradigm shift in stadium design towards a "Holy Trinity of amenities: refreshment stands, toilets, shopping" (Roux, 2014, p. 62). Yet, in the United States in particular, their reintroduction has helped to recreate an ambiance that benefits the commercialization of matches but is controlled enough to preserve the image of

the broadcaster and sponsors. In a stadium in which the ambiance has been altered by a partly pervasive connectivity (Raspaud, 2016), appealing to the memory of supporters, "who continue to do the job" (Raspaud, 2016, p. 955), equates to revealing a process of traumatic disaffiliation. There is nothing to suggest that this trauma can be fully healed unless the audience is radically changed. Many clubs have already tried to do this but have had to back down in the face of a drastic loss of ambiance, which has devalued the sporting spectacle.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this article has been to understand how and to what extent the Maracanã's renovations have affected its ambiance. The ethno-topographical survey reveals the trauma experienced by the regulars, nostalgic of past and now idealized ambiances. In French, nostalgia is associated with psychopathological disorders or, at the very least, with a state of lack, regret, or sadness about what will no longer be. In Portuguese, nostalgia expresses these states, but also a positive emotion, called *saudosismo*, which spurs individuals to action when they recall ambiances they wish to relive. Thus, many people are trying to recreate a fantasized Maracanã, a dream territory rooted in a collective imagination, to counter the effects of behavioral normativity and architectural standardization associated with contemporary sporting events.

Indeed, the architectural, material, and commercial transformations of the Maracanã have altered the essence of its ambiances. The original configuration of this stadium for the masses offered fans the incomparable sensation of being in direct contact with the players. This seminal element determined the specificities of the Maracanã's ambiance. Hyper-sectorization has partly deprived the fans of their control over the ambiance, for the benefit of the stadium operators and their commercial interests. According to the survey, the general ambiance that prevailed before the series of renovations has been supplanted by a mosaic of micro-ambiances that compete with, rather than complement, one another. Past ambiances

persist in the North and South sectors. The East and West sectors are now home to spectators who used to be a minority of the audience (families, women, the elderly, children, LGBTQIA+), whose behavior is well controlled by the operators and is supposedly conducive to a so-called quality TV show, but which invisibilizes the cultural, popular, and political gestures of the active club supporters. This new show superimposes the noise made by the ultras, mixed into a discreet, pleasant background sound similar to background music, and images of more disciplined audiences to market a product that attracts investors (broadcasters, sponsors, etc.).

As a result, the range of emotions felt towards the venue has widened; they can arise from the ephemeral relationship of the occasional business visitor to the venue, just as they can result from the existential bond between regular fans and their stadium. The Maracanã's renovations have imposed a new order marked by the commodification of a sporting show to which the poorest sections of the population have limited access, and which is characterized by a control of the spectators' behavior. The fans fight against this control, and seek to preserve the lively, popular ambiance recognized by IPHAN. Establishing memorial links between the past and the present, with the maintenance of the ultras' rituals and the emergence of *post-geraldinos*, is in fact proving to be necessary for the spectators to reclaim ownership of this renovated site. Traumatic relationships are thus partly compensated by traces of the past, which mediate the creation of new emotional and affective ties with the Maracanã. This need for ties is reflected in some narratives, which can be interpreted as unconscious strategies for renewing the meanings of the renovated site.

For some, the Maracanã's significance has disappeared with the series of renovations it has undergone. For others, it's an ever-evolving stadium that can be "resemantized" (Peixoto, 1996, p. 160) through the construction of a new narrative. Indeed, as Bergson points out, the ambiance of the place shapes memory and vice versa. In any case, the renovated Maracanã is an archetype of the large contemporary stadium, a fashionable urban model whose target

audience includes families and business professionals rather than popular and active club supporters (Chaboche, 2019). As is the case elsewhere, the technical sophistication and consumerist logic of its renovations alter the authenticity and sensory quality of its ambiance (Roux, 2014). This is why a large proportion of the public encourages autonomous, self-managed uses and practices that promote an ambiance that conforms to the representations they have of it: exuberant and collective. Thus, creating ambiance is a political act that contributes to the life of the city.

The Maracanã's ambiance has been corrupted by the physical transformation of the stadium, the exclusion of the most popular audiences and the alteration of the modes of encouragement. As a result of difficulties in making the stadium profitable and of the Odebrecht corruption scandal, the Maracanã S.A. consortium was dissolved in 2019. Since then, Flamengo and Fluminense have signed a temporary agreement to operate the stadium. Determining whether they wish to preserve the fan-based subculture in order to reinforce the stadium's status as a hyper-place, i.e., "an intense space (...) where creativity and the desire for social engagement are expressed" (Lussault, 2017, s.p.), is a first avenue for extending this research.

Ten years after its reopening in 2013, fans are only slowly and partially reclaiming the Maracanã, which was renovated without them, or even against them (*Geraldinos*, the most virulent ultras), with no regard for the original ambiance. The operating clubs would gain nothing by betting on a gradual oblivion, which "refers [in reality] to supporters' memory and fidelity to the past" (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 536. On the contrary, it would be in their interest to encourage processes of co-construction of the ambiance, even if this does not correspond in all respects to their marketing vision of an optimal customer experience. The hypothesis of shared governance of the Maracanã's ambiance between its owner (the municipality of Rio de Janeiro), its operators (the clubs) and its users open up a second avenue for further research.

Ultimately, this article is of course addressed to the community of researchers interested in the ambiance of professional sports stadiums, to the designers of major sports arenas (programmers, architects), urban objects with very high socio-political stakes, as well as to those who operate them and consider ambiance as a resource. This work also aims to enlighten the choices of public decision-makers, who very often own these infrastructures and manage them as profit centers. Finally, it aims to be useful to users, especially those who produce the ambiance, by providing them with new keys to understanding their presence in the stadium, a place of socialization and expression of collective life, and to act politically on the city.

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