

Volume 40
issue 2 / 2021

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 40 (2)
may/2021-aug/2021

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

The snake charmer: Tite and transformation of the function of the football coach under the neoliberal rationality

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TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Mostaro, Filipe. De Marchi, Leonardo (2021). The Snake charmer: Tite and the transformation of the function of the football coach under the neoliberal rationality. *Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication*, v. 40, n. 2.

Submitted on: 05/31/2021 / Accepted on: 07/28/2021

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v40i2.50264>

Abstract

In order to contribute to the discussions on the colonization of sports by what can be called the spirit of neoliberal capitalism, this article analyzes the profile of Tite published by the business magazine *Você S.A.* as the paradigm of a new generation of football coaches that resemble that of the business manager. Therefore, it was chosen to carry out an analysis of the professional. The reason for choosing this article is that it summarizes in a paradigmatic way the various discourses on the managerial profile of Tite, establishing a direct relationship between the management of sport and the vision of rational management of life according to the neoliberal values.

Keywords

Neoliberalism; New techniques of management; Football; Football coach; Tite (Ade-
nor Leonardo Bachi).

Introduction

On November 22, 2016, during an interview to television show broadcasted by the sports-specialized television channel ESPN, *Bola da Vez*, the former Uruguayan football player and currently an executive officer (in the jargon of the Brazilian football metier, a *director*), Diego Lugano, qualified the football coach Adenor Leonardo Bachi (Caxias do Sul, May 25, 1961), as known as Tite as a *snake charmer*. Commenting on this exotic metaphor, Lugano suggested that somehow the coach is so gently treated by the sports press that it seems those persons that enchants a beast, in other words, the sports press systematically avoid to publish harsh criticism against Tite, acting in a rather different way with other coaches. According to Lugano, this treatment results in a positive atmosphere, creating ideal conditions to reach good results. The statement is highly interesting not so much for its unusual metaphor as for holding a new conception of control inside the football metier. His main compliment to a football coach does not refer to his qualities as a strategist, but rather to his ability to manage an enterprise: Tite is a good public relations professional, which ensures an environment conducive to the best performance of the teams he commands. In precise terms, taken from the lexicon of management literature, Lugano praised Tite's ability to be a good *manager*.

The profession of coach in team sports (basketball, baseball, football, among others) was one that undergo the most radical transformation in recent years inasmuch as this function was identified with that of the business manager (Carter, 2006). If the coach used to be considered a more technical task (derived from the military environment, it was the sports mimesis of the commander who strategizes and coordinates troops during a field battle), from the 1970s onwards, the sports economy became financialized (Santos, 2020) and the function of coach began to be compared with that of the professional who manages the assets of a private company, in that case, the football club (Mostaro, 2019). Increasingly, his attributions became not only to prepare the players for the matches, but also to increase the player's valuation in order to be negotiated in the football market with other clubs, to deal with the press as if he was a public relations professional, to administrate as scientifically as possible victories and adverse situations (draws and defeats) aiming at to maximize the value of the company's brand (club), among other tasks that are less consistent with the modern sports ethics than with the so-called new theory of administration, which was one of the touchstones of neoliberalism as a form of rationality, that is, as the governmentality of the contemporary world¹ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2009; Chamayou, 2020; Dardot and Laval, 2016).

Modern sports emerged at the end of the 19th century, forged in the ethos of industrial capitalism (Pröni, 2000; Guilianotti, 2010; Melo et al., 2013), as a means to impose an inner-worldly asceticism onto workers' body and soul (Elias, 1992). However, what happens nowadays can be most adequately defined by what Neil Postman (1994) calls *Technopoly*: a technocracy that aims to exclude alternative ways of life in order to impose neoliberalism in its psychological, technological and sociological dimensions as the only model to be adopted. Under this new conception of control, a football team must be conceived as a

¹ The use of the term *neoliberalism* is shrouded in controversy. For contemporary liberal economists (who are in line with the economic theories of the Chicago School, the Austrian School, or even the German-based ordoliberalism), the use of the label is not adequate as these thinkers see themselves as mere continuators of the classical liberal thought as expressed in Adam Smith or John Locke, especially in what concerns the unconditional defense of the principle of free market and private property. Nevertheless, there is a voluminous, and still growing, critical literature that has consistently underlined breaking points (whether theoretical, ideological, or political) between classical liberal authors and those of the 20th century, what justifies the use of the neologism *neoliberalism*. It is argued that neoliberalism is not only an economic theory, but a political rationality that is based on a new conception of subjectivity, the idea that every individual is a set of assets (or that every person holds a human capital, as defined Gary Becker, 1964) that must be managed according to economic laws, transforming every individual into an *entrepreneur of the self* (*l'entrepreneur de soi*), in the words of Michel Foucault (2008). It is in this critical sense that the term is used in the article.

body of highly specialized professionals, scientifically chosen for each role on the field (striker, goalkeeper, defender and so on) in order to have the best performance, and the ultimate goal is to add value to the brand of the club and its sponsors (Adidas, Nike, Puma, among others) in the various competitions the team participates (Smit, 2007).² As a result, the coach becomes responsible to reach results as planned, which demands the ability to control player's psychology (Mostaro, 2019). The managerial role that the football coach assumes in the current capitalist context demands to control over the creative and playful character of the game in favor of the acceleration of victories and the consequent accumulation of capital. In order to do so, the available technological tools must be applied to foresee the unpredictability of the game, to rationalize it, to direct it in favor of a certain materiality, sociability and subjectivity, embedded in the neoliberal capitalist model.

In Brazil, the transformation of the role of the football coach has been intensely advocated by the sports press,³ which is one of the main vectors for the diffusion of neoliberal values in the local society. In fact, journalists and commentators were among the first to ask for the so-called *professionalization* of football management, and the coach was pointed as the sensitive point to begin with the execution of the neoliberal agenda in the football *métier*. According to the press, the traditional coach profile, which derives from the military chief or the captain of industry who imposes a discipline on players (considered lazy workers), still predominates among club managers and owners. This model is described as antiquated, though, outdated compared with what is practiced in Europe, as it is associated with the figure of the father, who raises his children alternating disciplinary rigor with paternal tenderness. It is no accident that certain victorious teams in Brazilian football are known under the nickname of *family* of a certain coach – being the most notable case that of the *Scolari family*, referring to coach Luís Felipe Scolari in his victorious passage through the Brazilian national team during the FIFA's World Cup in 2002 (Gastaldo, 2003). However, so the narrative goes, this form of management leaves aside the new training techniques that make modern football teams more competitive. The demand for high performance in the different competitions the clubs compete in would require a rational planning, the adoption of business techniques to organize professional clubs. In order to change this outmoded culture of football clubs' management, the arrival of some Schumpeterian entrepreneur is often urged. Much of the celebration by the sports press of Tite's profile can be explained according to this reasoning. Since his breakthrough on the national football scene, Tite has been described as a practitioner of both the contemporary football methodologies (developed in Europe) and enterprise management (developed in the United States). His most successful teams are described less as a sort of *Tite family* than the result of scientific method of training applied. By assuming the Brazilian national team, Tite went beyond the limits of the sports press and became a model of the new managerial mentality also to the press in general.

In order to contribute to discussions on the colonization of sports by the neoliberal governmentality (Dardot and Laval, 2016; Foucault, 2008), this article analyzes the professional profile of Tite published by the business magazine *Você S.A.* (Tozzi, 2017). The article chosen summarizes in a paradigmatic way the discourses on the managerial profile of Tite, naturalizing the connection between the management of businesses, sports and everyday life under neoliberal values (Ehrenberg, 2010; Han, 2018). The article is divided into two parts. Firstly, we address the effects of neoliberal values of business management on sports, notably football, indicating how the colonization of the game has its main dissemination agent on

² The sponsorship of major sporting goods companies in athletes and football clubs resulted in an increasing demand for physical preparation. The physical dimension gained so much prominence that the figure of the physical trainer became a key function inside the club's coaching staff. Insofar as the body of the player becomes a technology that must be prepared to reach the highest performance as possible every time, technical products such as balls, football shoes and uniforms are presented as determining factors to enhance results. The intense use of advertising in the media associates such goods with competitiveness, making those items objects of desire for the daily life (Smit, 2007).

³ On the role of the sports press in the creation of football representations in Brazil, see Helal, Lovisollo and Soares (2001, 2011), Helal and Cabo (2014), Brinati (2016) and Mostaro (2017).

the coach, inasmuch as this figure is described as a model of rational leadership (and not charismatic) to be adopted. Secondly, we discuss how the image of Tite has been constructed in accordance with this narrative, having the publication of his profile in *Você S.A.* as the basis for analysis.

They Wear Black Tie⁴: the football coach from the captain of industry to the neoliberal manager

The mobilization of football as a cornerstone in the symbolic dimension of modern national States has bestowed that game with a strategic cultural importance, which is systematically used to produce credible images and narratives about the social order. In particular, team sports represented an ethical model used to discipline the body of the masses (Elias, 1992). In this sense, the coach was responsible to apply to the players (that were workers usually) an inner-worldly asceticism that would produce in their body and mind a disposition to work. Associated with capital practices, the role of the coach was then in line with that of the captain of industry who would personally command a factory, aware that: "all the artifices used by the industrialist to streamline the production of goods could also be used to streamline the production of goals" (Davies , 1992, p. 301).

Analyzing the trajectory of the football coach's attributions, Mostaro (2019) demonstrates that the military model of discipline was adopted in the early 20th century and remained paradigmatic until the 1970s. Military commanders developed a know-how in controlling a large group of men which was transferred to the sport field. As a result, the management by fear and respect to hierarchy became institutionalized in the football *métier*. Another important move was the adoption of the metaphor of the family. By equating the football club to a family, the coaches (in general, older men) had assumed the role of father who should be respected by the younger ones. The association with the figure of an idealized father, that of the patriarchal bourgeois family, was not incidentally: the goal was to enroll respect to a certain social hierarchy on the players' morale.

With the advent of neoliberalism, from the 1970s onwards, there is a shift in the social function of sport, from a primarily moral dimension to a utilitarian one. As the economy of sports became more financialized (Proni, 2000), the role of the coach gradually abandons the moralistic association with the *pater familias* to adopt the image of the modern manager of private companies. As the football club becomes organized in accordance with the model of an enterprise, it becomes mandatory for the coach to know how to act upon not the players' morale, but psychology in order to achieve as much productivity as possible, here understood as the average between the accumulation of points (victories) and the reduction missing points (draws, defeats) (Mostaro , 2019). Thereinafter, the objective is to impose another set of values to the players: no longer the respect to the family, but the search for profits, an ideology that advocates the ideal of competition as the organizing principle of the social order.

To understand the shift that occurs in sports management theory, it is necessary to take into account that neoliberalism does not refer only to a form of economic theory, in this case, the ideas advocate by authors from the Austrian School of economics, the Chicago School or even the German ordoliberals. It can be better defined as a political rationality, that is, "neoliberalism can be defined as the set of discourses, practices and devices that determine a new way of governing men according to the universal principle of competition" (Dardot and Laval , 2016, p. 17). It is a new form of governmentality, a set of procedures that aim to manage the actions of political subjects through a new form of subjectivity (Foucault , 2008). In other words, neoliberalism is a form of government based on the constitution of a new subjectivity Michel Foucault (2008) labeled the entrepreneur of self (*l'entrepreneur de soi*).

⁴ Translator's note: Reference to the title of a theater play (1958) and, later, a full-length film (1981) written by the Italian-Brazilian actor, screen player and political activist Gianfrancesco Guarnieri (Milan, 1934 – Sao Paulo, 2006), *They Don't Wear Black Tie*.

Based on a careful reading of the neoliberal literature, both Michel Foucault (2008) and Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2016) consistently stressed out that the entrepreneur of the self is not equivalent to the *homo oeconomicus* of classical liberal theory. To the neoliberal theory, the *homo oeconomicus* was nothing more than an ideal type, with no concrete existence, inasmuch as he would have access to all the information produced in the market and enough time to process it. As a result, he could choose the best choices among all the options at disposal and, thus, maximize his profits. The problem with this reasoning is that such perfect market conditions do not actually exist. The neoliberal economic agent is, on the contrary, a concrete person, or a *homo agens* (Dardot and Laval, 2016), bestowed with practical reason and bounded rationality, who cannot access all market information and who is in continuous competition with others entrepreneurs (therefore, having no time to think about all the choices to make). Therefore, he cannot be sure which is the best investment at disposal. Even so, he must make choices taking the inherent risks or, in a word, he must pursue profit opportunities assuming the risk of failure. Far from a minor theoretical disagreement, the figure of *homo agens* implies a psychologization of the economic process: conceiving himself as a company, the entrepreneur of the self must assume a correct attitude or, precisely, to be *proactive* (as it systematically appears in the correspondent literature) and take risks in order to make profits. In this understanding, the success or failure of an enterprise (its performance) depends not on structural factors of the economy, but fundamentally on the motivation and attitudes of the entrepreneur of the self. It is no coincidence that the so-called self-help literature has become a fundamental reading for the education of the management class today. In a world conceived as a fierce competition between different sorts of enterprises, from the entrepreneur of the self to the multinational corporation, it is mandatory to seek within oneself the strength *to win* (a verb borrowed not incidentally from the sports lexicon).

It is in this context that sports assume a new meaning in neoliberal capitalism. As Dardot and Laval note:

The new subject is the man of competition and performance. The self-entrepreneur is a being made to 'succeed', to 'win'. Much more so than the idealized figures of heads of enterprises, competitive sport is the great social theatre that displays the modern gods, demi-gods and heroes. While the cult of sport dates from the early twentieth century, and proved perfectly compatible with fascism and Soviet communism, as well as Fordism, it experienced a major turning-point when it permeated the most diverse practices from within, not only by lending them a vocabulary, but, more decisively, through a logic of performance that transforms its subjective meaning. (Dardot and Laval, 2016, p. 353)

As Alain Ehrenberg (2010, p. 10) argues, "the practice of sports and the language of sport have penetrated to such an extent in every pore of our society that it is a ubiquitous principle of action". To what Dardot and Laval (2016, p. 354) add: "more so, perhaps, than economic discourse on competitiveness, this model [the sports discourse] has made it possible to naturalize the duty of performance, which has diffused to the masses a normativity centered on generalized competition."

In this context, the figure of the coach needs to undergo a profound transformation. From that father figure who sought to implement the inner-worldly asceticism of work, the one who preconized a care of the body against what was considered a form of expenditure in popular culture (drinking, popular festivities, sexual practices without reproductive purposes, among other non-rationalized forms of *modus vivendi* practiced by the working class), the coach of the neoliberal era acts more like a psychologist who requests to produce "ever more" and enjoy "ever more", intensifying the performance of each individual in all spheres of life. It is no accident that the professional dedicated to transforming the individual's "mindset" has been labeled "coach", as he or she always prompts entrepreneurs to produce ever more, to undertake without fear of failure (which is understood as a positive situation inasmuch as it serves as an experience for future investments). Coaching came out of the sporting environment to be incorporated

not only into companies, but also into the private life of individuals, functioning as the disseminator of a technocratic vision that spreads the ethics of competition and performance in the daily life. In this perspective, business affairs and personal life shall not have borders. The narratives in the sports press that celebrates individuality and the capacity to “overcome the difficulties in life” have become common sense, axioms used as guides to individuals left in a world dominated by the neoliberal rules of competition. To win becomes the only horizon in the game of life, regardless of social conditions, scenarios and personal contexts. That is the reason the coach is necessary for career planning, or for achieving success in love, in finances or any sphere of human activity where the imaginary of performance can be imposed.

Neil Postman (1994) argues that this set of activities that establish management and efficiency as the highest social values indicates the transition from what he calls *Technocracy* to *Technopoly*. The author defines the Technopoly as a social, cultural and psychological process that seeks authorization, satisfaction and orders deriving from technology. According to Postman (ibidem, p. 79): “Those who feel most comfortable in Technopoly are those who are convinced that technical progress is humanity’s supreme achievement and the instrument by which our most profound dilemmas may be solved.” In this perspective, technocracy has not completely destroyed the traditions of the social and symbolic worlds. The Technocracy may have subordinated them and even humiliated them; it did not make them totally ineffective as these traditions could still produce social bonds that constituted society itself.

To make clear the difference between the concepts: Technocracy did not aim at a reductionism, by which human life is subsumed to machinery and technique. Technopoly does have this intention though. Technopoly means the submission of all forms of cultural life to the sovereignty of technology. Technopoly is totalitarian technocracy in the sense that social institutions are reduced. In the Technopoly regime, the tension inherent in technocratic societies disappears, dissipating other social forms that cohabited the social imaginary, and placing the technocratic imaginary as the only possible, correct guide to daily life. In the Technopoly regime, the complexity inherent in the playful dimensions of life is disdained. Everything hinges on the technopolistic vision, absolutely disembedded, as Postman (1994) argues, of a moral foundation. As Muniz Sodré (2016) highlights, the strictly technical dimension of life (materialized by Technopoly) prevents human empathy.

In the football environment, even more than the club’s owner or the board of directors, it is the coach who performs the administrative functions of modern clubs. He is the one who deals with the players, the press, the fans, ultimately symbolizing the club within and without the pitch, which transforms him into the gear that makes the entire productive chain of football moves. As a result, the responsibility to plan and conduct the club lies on the shoulder of the coach. Hence, he (in the vast majority of the cases, it is a male figure with scarce participation of women) assumes several roles at the same time, from choosing the players who will make up the team’s squad (which implies a decision-making capacity at some level over the club’s budget) to the treatment with the press. In order to do so, it is mandatory to adopt the latest business management technics. In fact, he takes on so many responsibilities that he must have assistants who can perform his technical functions during the team’s training.⁵ Handling an entire technical apparatus allows him to plan as accurately as possible the club’s performance over time. Such activities bring him closer to a CEO than an expert in game strategies. It is not for narcissism that the coach wears formal attire on the edge of the pitch (often due to contractual imposition): he is the ultimate image of football as a business. They hence wear black tie.

When the game becomes equivalent to the corporate competition for profit (when a title promises to bring more investment from sponsors, a league table placement allows a club to access an international competition that pays higher prizes), the moral status of meaning of victory and defeat is displaced in

⁵ This unusual situation has become a common practice in the daily lives of clubs. The role of training the players is often delegated to the coach’s assistants, while the coach himself takes care of managerial aspects of the team.

favor of a purely economic logic. They become factors that only determine the company's position in the market (that is, league table), thus the increase or decrease in the value of the club's assets. Victories are understood as the direct result of well-executed business planning. They add value to the club's brand. Defeats are understood as the result of a failure in planning and management. They reduce the company's added value. The result is that the dismissal and admission of coaches are determined by a financial logic of valuation: the key point is whether the coach is able to meet the goals established in the contract, bringing more investments to the company.

According to this ideological and institutional context, the dynamic of matches must also be submitted to technical control. The coach must motivate his squad to win ever more. In order to do so, he must mobilize the available technology to reduce the randomness inherent in any competition. Equipped with the latest technology at disposal (from sensors to map the players' heart activity and heat maps to drones), the coach forecasts all the probabilities in a match, helping each player to make decisions, leading the team to victory. In a highly competitive market, where everyone is *a priori* equally prepared to compete, it is necessary to look for something else to improve performance. Thus, the coach shall turn to the psychological side of the players as it may help them to control of their emotions and influence their behavior. Influencing the decision-making capacity and the awareness of the athletes is the ultimate goal. In other words, the coach shall use psychological techniques to control the randomness of the game.

Tite, the ideal manager: the profile of Tite in Você S.A.

On June 14, 2016, Adenor Leonardo Bachi, known as Tite, was invited by the Confederação Brasileira de Futebol (acronym in Portuguese, CBF), organization responsible for the Brazilian Football national team, to assume the post of coach. At that moment, there was some tension among the CBF board of directors, for the national team was performing badly during the qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup, which would be held in Russia. That alone would justify harsh criticism from a demanding specialized press. But there was another factor of concern: the national team needed to regain prestige after suffering a humiliating defeat in the previous tournament to the German national team, when Brazil lost the semifinals for the unusual score of seven-to-one (the match was so traumatic that it became popularly known as *the game of seven to one*) (Brinati, 2016). At last, but not least, the strained relations between the sports press and the then coach of the national team, the former athlete Carlos Caetano Bledorn Verri (professional nickname, Dunga), whose introverted and often rancid personality created friction with journalists (Mostaro, 2017), increased the intensity of criticism on the performance of the *amarelinha* (the metaphor used in reference to the predominantly yellow color of the T-shirt).

The context gave the sports press a perfect alibi to demand Tite as the new coach of the Brazilian national team. More than other professionals available at that moment, Tite was systematically presented as the antithesis of the outdated style of Dunga. After all, Tite presented a profile that is highly praised among contemporary football board of directors and commentators. After ending his short career as a football player, at the age of 28, Adenor received a Physical Education degree from the Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas (Sao Paulo, Brazil). In the early 1990s, he assumed the post of coach in small town football clubs in the countryside of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where he was born. In the year 2000, he managed to win the State Championship⁶ with one of these teams, the Sociedade Esportiva e Recreativa Caxias do Sul, as known as Caxias, in a dispute against the prestigious Grêmio Porto-Alegrense Foot-Ball Club. This feat created the opportunity to assume Grêmio as the coach, in the following season, allowing

⁶ Translator's note: Brazil is a federation divided into 26 states, and the federal district of Brasilia. Due to the large number of football clubs in each state, besides the national league (Brasileirão) and the national cup (Copa do Brasil), at the beginning of each football season, there are competitions among clubs of the same state only, what is known as State Championships.

Tite to win important titles and to achieve national recognition. Always presenting an image of a modern football manager, and not that of a *boleiro* (according to the sports milieu slang, it refers to the player who becomes coach but maintains a professional posture similar to that of active players), Tite would work in many clubs around the country and even abroad (Middle East), becoming an exponent of a new generation of coaches, described by the press as more scientific and professional. After some failures (notably at Clube Atlético Mineiro, when the team was relegated to Serie B, in 2005), his career gained a new impetus during his moment at the Sport Club Corinthians Paulista from 2010 to 2015. On that occasion, Tite led the team to major victories, including the World Champion title of the FIFA Club World Championship, against the Chelsea Football Club (England), in 2012. Ever since, Tite has become the snake charmer, that is, an unanimity among the Brazilian sports press, which describes him as the remedy against the traditionalist approach, the only profile able to rescue the positive image of the Brazilian national team in the international scene after the seven-to-one tragedy.

Despite the touch of irony contained in Lugano's metaphor, it is undeniable that Tite has an unusually positive presence in the press, and not only in the sports press. Among the narratives that exalt his figure, a considerable amount of them praises more than his qualities as a coach of football clubs. Since the very beginning of his career, Tite adopted for himself the model of the European manager, not only wearing suit and classic shoes on the edge of the pitch, but also defending a scientific approach to the game, that is, the use of new technologies for training, a psychological approach to deal with the players, and the participation of the coach in the club's decision-taking – an attitude manifestly different of the practical know-how so exalted by traditional coaches.⁷ His remarkable feats commanding Corinthians consecrated the image of a modern football manager, which also caught the attention of the economic press. Tite is often portrayed as a successful businessman, a model to be followed by the business community.

Among the articles on Tite's entrepreneurial character, one is paradigmatic: Tite's profile published by the magazine *Você S.A.* (Editora Abril), in 2017, a portrait of him as an ideal manager. We chose to analyze this article, written by journalist Elisa Tozzi (2017), for a number of reasons. First of all, the nature of the magazine. Created in 1998 by Editora Abril, it is a monthly periodic dedicated to cover the financial market and to encourage entrepreneurship. It is a magazine that disseminates, in journalistic style, the values of the so-called revolution in management theory, which gave a narrative to neoliberal reason, as several authors have analyzed (Boltanski and Chiappelo, 2009; Chamayou, 2020; Dardot and Laval, 2016; Foucault, 2008). Such adherence to neoliberal values is remarkable in the very title of the magazine: *Você S.A.*⁸ An expression that summarizes with incredible precision the touchstone of neoliberal reason: every individual is an entrepreneur of the self (Foucault, 2008).

Under the heading “These are Tite coach's secrets to successful leadership”, the article describes the Brazilian national team's coach as a leader whose qualities can inspire entrepreneurs. As Elisa Tozzi (2017, para 8, emphasis added) describes, “with a well-defined leadership style, investing in his intellectual preparation and implementing his own management philosophy, *Tite has a lot to teach about personnel management — within and without the pitch*”.

⁷ Tite was not the first football coach to incorporate the image of the manager in Brazil. Such *persona* gained prominence first with the coach Wanderley Luxemburgo who, back in the 1990s, adopted an entrepreneurial attitude, achieving enormous success in the clubs where he worked – a trajectory that led him to manage the world-famous Spanish club Real Madrid and the Brazilian national team as well. Tite followed the path opened up by Luxemburgo, perfecting this trend among football coaches. It is also worth remembering that a coach from another sport, volleyball, Bernardo Rocha de Rezende (professional nickname Bernardinho), is the professional who most identifies himself with the neoliberal manager model, being a notorious investor in the financial market.

⁸ Translator's note: The title of the magazine is explicitly inspired by the neoliberal ideology of the *entrepreneur of self*, as Michel Foucault (2008) defined. The meaning of the expression *Você* (You, in Portuguese) *Sociedade Anônima* (acronym S.A., meaning joint-stock company) is that every individual is a joint-stock company. Therefore, the title should be understood literally: *You Joint-Stock Company*.

The article is organized into eight topics, which represent what the journalist understands to be Tite's best qualities as a football manager. The division calls attention insofar as it mirrors some values that the business literature advocates. For the purposes of the analysis, we grouped the eight themes into three axes: (1) Psychological motivation, (2) Leadership, (3) Technical improvement.

The first axis includes two topics: (1) Intrinsic motivation and (8) Dealing well with pressure. In both sections, the journalist highlights Tite's ability to deal with emotional intelligence or, in other terms, the coach's ability to motivate players (extremely successful professionals) to create a commitment to the national team's objectives. After all,

when representing the Brazilian national team, those athletes have a specific challenge: delivering good results for an institution that is not their employer. They are playing not for the salary [personal interest], but for something else. Therein lies the challenge for the coach, to identify what is this "something else". But Tite knows how to do it (TOZZI, 2017, para 9).

The first sentence deserves careful observation. It replicates the dilemma in contemporary business literature, which is to make workers have the best professional performance possible even if they are not formally employees of a company, that is, without labor rights (this is the dilemma, for example, of the digital platforms of the so-called sharing economy, such as Uber or Airbnb). When it happens, it is imperative to appeal not to self-interest (working more would be equivalent to earning more money, in a cause-and-effect relation) but to psychology: performance at work shall respond to a moral commitment to an ideal of life, which is the ultimate goal. It should also be noted that the Brazilian national team is compared to a private company (both are "institutions"), putting Tite in an equivalent position of a CEO.

Following, the focus turns to the handling of psychology techniques in order to reach that "something else" necessary to improve performance, using whether motivational lectures or individual talks with the players. These techniques create strong emotional bonds between the players and the coach. Tite is portrayed as a bold professional, whose profile blends emotional intelligence, rationality and a taste for adrenaline, which allows him to withstand the strong pressures inherent in the office of manager. Once again, the sports environment is equated with the business one: "as happens in companies, there is a strong demand for good results" (Tozzi, 2017, para 41). The best solution is thus to align the duties of profession with the pleasures of private life: "For [Tite], the secret to be successful but balancing work and personal life is, theoretically, very simple: do what you love do to" (Tozzi, 2017, para 44.). It is curious to notice that the article does not even mention the financial side involved in the office of coach; it highlights only the moral commitment to work, which blurs the boundaries between work and personal life.

The second axis encompasses the coach's control over the group of athletes through the creation of a competitive environment. The topics are: (2) Bonds of trust, (3) Total transparency and (4) Loyalty and meritocracy. In all these sections, the journalist stresses the business management techniques applied by Tite in order to create an ambient of competition among players. To do so, Tite (a) speaks in terms the players acknowledge, which (b) creates a sense of confidence as the technical decisions are explained as straightforward as possible and (c) he makes clear that the participation in the national team depends entirely on individual effort of each. "On Tite's teams", ponders the journalist, "no player is simply more important than any other as to take one's place [without technical justification] — and it doesn't matter what name is stamped on the shirt. For the coach, what counts is who is better at that very moment" (Tozzi, 2017, para 27). Under these conditions, players tend to be more engaged in training and matches, resulting in better performance. As the journalist says, "it's the good old meritocracy, but with a dose of loyalty" (ibidem).

Finally, the third axis of analysis is dedicated to Tite's impetus to continually improve his technical knowledge: (4) Reading the environment, (6) Personal and team improvement, and (7) Learning from frustrations. As Dardot and Laval (2016) remind us, the neoliberal subject does not have access to all the

information and, therefore, must make choices that contain risks. The neoliberal economic agent “[...] is not a passive maximizer, but a constructor of profitable situations that he discovers through his alertness and which he can exploit.” (ibidem, p. 146). Furthermore, in an economy based on continual innovation and creative destruction of practical knowledge, it becomes impossible not to fail. Two consequences of these neoliberal axioms are worth mentioning. On the one hand, failure is not only an inherent part of entrepreneurial action, but also a positive factor as long as it serves as a learning experience for future situations. As Dardot and Laval (ibidem, p. 147) note, “the important thing about this process is the reduction of ignorance it makes possible, the learning by discovery [...]”. On the other, the continuous technological innovation requires a systematic investment in the training of professionals: hence the positive evaluation among the business community over the periodic qualification of white-collar professionals. After all, “The market is a process of continuous learning and constant adaptation” (ibidem, p. 147).

And that is how Tite is described. By the end of the contract with Corinthians, in 2013, after a highly successful period, Tite took the unusual decision not to renew it (even though he could get a much higher salary than he was receiving at that moment) in order to take a sabbatical in Europe, where he intended to update himself with the latest football strategies. Rather than being considered an unreasonable attitude, the decision is celebrated in the article as a demonstration of a high skilled professional who wants to keep up with the latest professional theory and practices, in order to adapt to a context of continuous transformation and fierce competition.

Under the heading *Learning from frustrations*, we read how Tite assessed the greatest failure in his career, the relegation of the Clube Atlético Mineiro in the year 2005. As described in the article:

Failing to deliver the results expected, Tite resigned in August; the team was relegated in December. “Even now it still hurts me deep. But I learned then I was no hero, I didn't have super powers. In such a competitive championship [as it is the Serie A], I would need time to do a work from the beginning to the end of a cycle”, he concluded. This event still serves as a lesson that casts lights on Tite’s career decisions up to the present (Tozzi , 2017, para 34).

The passage is paradigmatic of how failure is assessed under the neoliberal governmentality. It also indicates the reason Tite was kept as manager of the Brazilian national team for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, even after the defeat and elimination in the 2018 competition - a situation that had never happened with any professional before. Introduction

Final remarks

The eight topics highlighted by the magazine are dedicated to giving a materiality to an ideal profile. Like any individual, Tite has numerous other qualities that have not been enumerated – and those same qualities could be assigned to other person. The goal is simply to present the most important coach of the most popular sport in the country as an ideal businessman. This is a powerful strategy to naturalize to an audience lay in business administration the values of competition, meritocracy, and entrepreneurship. For Tite, in turn, the article strengthens his image as vanguard among local football professionals, ensuring his position in the market. As Tite demonstrates he is capable of using neoliberal management techniques to interfere in football, he enchants the beasts of economic journalism as well.

The colonization of the game by neoliberal reason is a two-way road. On the one hand, sport modalities are progressively administrated as business. On the other, sporting symbols used as business management tools (Ehrenberg, 2010), what is known as the gamification of life (Han, 2018). Expressions such as *to wear the shirt* (of a club) or to develop a *team spirit* are axioms frequently mentioned in business lectures. Insofar as business ideology is presented as a method of management that should be applied to the private life, assuming the function of an ethics, the sports symbology gives a language and a narrative

to a cult of performance that invites each individual to be an entrepreneur of the self. As Ehrenberg (2010, p. 13) declares: “The entrepreneur was constructed as a model of a heroic life because he synthesizes a lifestyle that praises risk-taking as a virtue in a society that aims at making inter-individual competition a synonym of fair competition”. If the archetype of the hero was historically construed as the individual who would take risks to save humanity/society (Campbell, 2007), now it is associated to the entrepreneur who takes risks in the neoliberal game to save himself. Overcoming difficulties, probation, competition and success are presented to the ordinary people as values that define a successful entrepreneur, equating this figure to the heroes and stars that dominate the sports imaginary.⁹

There seems to be a strong bond between neoliberalism and Technopoly: both loosens social bonds and traditions to favor the ideal of efficiency. In the football world, Technopoly and neoliberalism are represented by the neoliberal coach, who aims to reduce the risk of financial operations in sport, trying to eliminate the randomness of the game, colonizing it.

More than a narrative about Tite, the article published by Você SA functions as the flute of the snake charmer we mentioned at the beginning of the article. A strategy to legitimize the neoliberal rules to all players, to keep them fascinated and engaged in the game. More dangerous than the snake, the neoliberal flute creates an order, playing its rules at one constant volume, at one constant pitch, at one constant rhythm, silencing the noises the essence of game can make.

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⁹ About the social construction of sports heroes, see Helal (1999).

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