It is hereby declared that, for the preparation of this thesis, digital language-support tools—specifically Google Translate and Grammarly—were used exclusively for translation and grammatical/stylistic revision of limited portions of the text. Any output produced by these tools was carefully reviewed, corrected, and reworked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the content. The structure of the thesis, the argumentation, the selection and interpretation of sources, as well as all scientific and methodological content, are entirely original and attributable to the author.

Summary

CHAPTER 1: From Local Identity to Global Industry: Understanding Modern Professional Football

1.1 Context and relevance

Football starts as many sports do as a socio-cultural phenomenon that ties people and communities together under a shared identity. It has undergone a massive change in the last twenty years. Already during the 20th century, the idea of sports, including football, becoming increasingly a full-fledged profession, started to become popular (Corci & Ammirante, 1999, p. 499). By the end of the 20th century, factors including sponsorship agreements, broadcast contracts, and private club ownership had drastically changed the way football was played and managed. Nowadays football has become a global phenomenon that completely goes beyond “national, social and cultural boundaries” (Bergh & Ohlander, 2020, p. 359). As the 21st century has progressed, the game has encountered an increasing number of new difficulties, especially related to globalization and ongoing discussions over football governance, which has rendered the management of football club quite complex feat (Burton and Chadwick, 2019).

As previously mentioned, football, like many other sports, started out as a deeply localized cultural institution, tightly linked to cities, neighborhoods, and specific social groups. As Shobe (2008) highlighted, football historically functioned as “a potent medium for collective identification with a place" allowing people to see themselves through their local club and stadium (p. 331). A particularly symbolic role was played by stadiums: they were physical locations where people reproduced shared memories, values and urban belonging. Residents used their club as a “text” to connect personal

experiences with the collective identity of their city or neighborhood (Hague & Mercer, 1998, as cited in Shobe, 2008, p. 331).

The intrinsic relationship between football clubs and local identity is rooted in Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" meaning "a group of people who self-identify as a common people, even though most members of the group will never meet (Anderson,

1991 as cited in Shobe, 2008, p. 330). In the world of football, this means when people gather at the stadium, chant the same songs or watch their team represent "their" place, the imagined community appears "more real" through the repetition of collective performance and shared rituals. In this way, football teams have historically represented certain socioeconomic classes, local traditions, and urban cultures, creating a strong link between sports and territorial identity.

The football club FC Barcelona acts as an effective example of this phenomenon. As Shobe (2008) details, the club since the early 1990s became inseparable from Catalan political and cultural identity. Already in 1910, the crest was redesigned to include the Catalan flag, which symbolized a significant shift, signaling the club's growing role in expressing Catalan nationalism. (p. 335). During both dictatorships in Spain, first under Primo de Rivera and subsequently under Francisco Franco, Camp Nou, the FC Barcelona Stadium, was one of the few places where Catalans were able to use their own language, symbols and songs without being persecuted. "At a Barca match, people could shout in Catalan and sing traditional songs when they could do it nowhere else" converting the

stadium into a venue for resistance and cultural survival (Rexach, 1984, as cited in Shobe, 2008, p. 338).

These historical examples show how football clubs in the past served not just as sports entities, but also as symbols of local identity, social affiliation, and political expression. Long before football became a worldwide industry, clubs like FC Barcelona, Athletic Club Bilbao, Celtic Glasgow, and Raith Rovers embraced their towns' cultures, class identities, and territorial narratives (Shobe, 2008).

However, in the last twenty years football has become a global phenomenon less tied to one specific location. This has been mainly allowed by two key factors: the increased international circulation of players as well as the technological innovation that has helped reshape the football industry as a whole.

The global movement of players is a phenomenon that has some historical roots. Football related migration has existed since the early 20th century, additionally it saw a substantial

increase with the creation of major international competitions like the first World Cup in 1930. The event expanded “the international market for football talent” and prompted the movement of football players across continents, which was often driven by economic push factors at home and the financial opportunities abroad (Taylor, 2006, p.8). Early movements of players from South America to Europe demonstrate how mobility in football far predates modern globalization and was impacted by both economic incentives and as well as historical-cultural linkages. An example of this were Argentinian and Brazilian players of Italian origin moving to Serie A in the early 1920s and 1930s (Taylor, 2006, p. 17).

However, the movement of players remained quite limited until the mid-1990s when a split happened with the Bosman ruling in 1995. Before 1995 international mobility within European football was significantly limited and heavily regulated. The Bosman ruling, which happened on December 15, 1995, represents a watershed moment for the international circulation of football. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling changed two fundamental aspects, firstly “it eliminated transfer fees for players out of contract with their teams who wished to change club within and between European Union countries” and secondly “it made quotas on the number of foreigners playing for a club illegal” (Binder, 2011, p. 1). This ruling decreased the amount of control that clubs had on football players' careers as well as considerably lessening the tight constraint of cross-border movement.

Overall, the flow of players, coaches, know-how, capital, and data represents a worldwide system based on historical migratory circuits, socio-cultural interdependence, and technological transformation. The increased internationalization of football labor is both a direct result of current globalization as well because of those long-standing transnational links that despite all continue to influence how modern teams recruit, organize and compete in a globalized business.

The emergence in recent years of digital technologies has acted as an amplifier of this process, not only by aiding in the evolution of football from a local reality to a global phenomenon, but also by reshaping the organizational structure of professional football clubs, particularly in relation to the identification, evaluation, and management of human capital at the international level. While early technological innovations primarily affected the way football was consumed—through television broadcasting and, later, online

streaming platforms—the most significant impact has progressively concerned internal managerial processes, especially those related to talent acquisition and development (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023).

One of the most evident transformations has occurred in the field of scouting. Traditionally based on localized observation and informal professional networks, scouting activities are now increasingly supported by digital platforms, large-scale performance databases, and algorithmic evaluation tools (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023). These systems allow clubs to compare players operating in heterogeneous competitive environments through standardized indicators, such as physical performance metrics, tactical behaviour, and injury history (Vilela et al., 2018, as cited in Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023). As a result, organizations are able to reduce information asymmetries when recruiting internationally and to evaluate a far broader pool of potential candidates than would be possible through physical observation alone.

From a global staffing perspective, this shift has important implications. Digital infrastructures enable clubs to construct more systematic and centralized recruitment strategies, transforming talent identification into a continuous, transnational process rather than a series of isolated decisions (Brady, Bolchover, & Sturgess, 2008). In this sense, technology does not merely support sporting performance, but becomes a strategic resource that structures how organizations access, filter, and allocate human capital across borders, similarly to what occurs in multinational corporations.

Moreover, the diffusion of analytical tools has contributed to the partial standardization of evaluation criteria across leagues and countries. By translating performance into quantifiable indicators, clubs can compare players from different cultural, tactical, and institutional contexts using shared benchmarks, reinforcing the integration of international football labor markets (Gilmore, 2009). This process strengthens the transformation of players and technical staff into globally mobile professional assets whose value is assessed according to organizational rather than purely local criteria.

Digitalization has also influenced the management and development of personnel once recruited. Technologies such as GPS tracking systems, wearable sensors, and performance monitoring software allow clubs to collect continuous data on training load, physical condition, and recovery patterns, supporting more individualized training programs and reducing the risk of long-term performance deterioration (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023). In an industry characterized by short competitive cycles and high investment in human resources, these tools contribute to protecting and enhancing the long-term value of talent (Gilmore, 2009).

Overall, digital technologies have reinforced the strategic dimension of staffing in professional football. By enabling clubs to search for talent globally, evaluate it systematically, and manage it more efficiently over time, technological infrastructures have become embedded in the organizational logic of modern football. Staffing decisions are therefore increasingly shaped by data-based rationality and long-term planning, bringing football organizations closer to the operational models traditionally associated with multinational enterprises (Brady et al., 2008).

All these factors have led talent and staffing to be an increasingly strategic asset in modern professional football. It is now not only key to on-field performance but also to the long-term business sustainability of clubs. The global level that football has reached in the last few years has led to heightened competitiveness and rapid environmental change in the football industry. This has meant that clubs need to maximize the value that comes from their human resources, specifically because the particularly as the knowledge, skills, and abilities of players and staff are rare, costly to develop, and difficult for rivals to imitate (Gilmore, 2009, p. 478- 468).

This is quite consistent with the rationale of global staffing: in a market where clubs source people abroad and compete across borders, human capital becomes a critical differentiation.

Furthermore, as Gilmore (2009) highlights sustained competitive advantage is created not only by acquiring talent but from building a unique “social architecture” composed of coaches, performance analysts, sports scientists, and other support staff whose tacit knowledge and collaborative routines cannot easily be replicated by competitors (p. 575).

This insight explains why worldwide football staffing plans are increasingly focused on building integrated, high-performing ecosystems rather than merely recruiting individual players. As a result, knowing how clubs manage, develop, and strategically deploy personnel within global staffing frameworks is critical for predicting long-term success in the modern football industry.

In this increasingly globalized and technologically interconnected football landscape, as previously said, effective global staffing has become a core strategic function for

professional clubs. As Brady (2008) highlights, contemporary football is defined by the rising intertwining of commercialization and globalization in which clubs function as international entertainment enterprises rather than merely local athletic entities (p. 60- 62)

A comparison can be drawn between multinational corporations and football clubs, since similarly to multinational corporations that rely on international talent flows to ensure competitiveness across all global markets, football clubs depend on their capacity to attract, integrate and keep high-quality players, coaches, and technical staff from diverse contexts. The companies that are able to successfully staff and manage their talent are not surprisingly “the ones doing well in the market” since “if good employees believe that they are working for the best, they will stay put”, this idea holds nowadays true for football clubs (Brady, 2008, p. 57).

However, football's labor market differs significantly from traditional industries. It is structured by unique constraints such as transfer systems, training compensation rules, and international mobility restrictions, as well as strong external pressures created by media conglomerates, global fan markets, and cross-border competitions.

Brady (2008) points out how rising athlete mobility and the now global level of competitions have led to the development of patterns that go beyond the borders of nation-states, redesigning recruiting strategies and forcing clubs to look for talent at the global level in order to gain a competitive advantage (p. 58-59). Players have evolved into global commodities and brand assets, valued for reasons other than on-field performance, such as marketing power, transnational fan appeal, and media prominence. This proves once again the strategic importance of global staffing is. The presence of

global tournaments like the UEFA Champions League further increases these pressures, because competing well at the European level necessitates creating squads capable of confronting varied tactical cultures and elite global opponents (Brady, 2008). In this larger global football economy, transfer spending, media income, and global fan participation all intensify the request for cross-border talent acquisition and management (Brady, 2008).

In this complex and instable market, football clubs require HRM competences similar to multinational firms. However, the risks in football are much more palpable: performance cycles are short, media scrutiny is ever-present, and the quality of talent can quickly decline. In this context, global staffing does not function only as an operational tool but becomes a part of the strategy to success and long-term stability for the club.

1.2 Problem statement

Despite the above-mentioned similarities between MCNs and football clubs and the increasing need for HRM capabilities to be developed within the context of football clubs. There is a clear gap in the literature when it comes to applying global staffing theory to professional football, even though it could provide essential insights on how football clubs can achieve success in such an instable market. The main reason why there is such a gap lies in the fragmented nature of literature on the topic. Literatures on sports sociology, labor economics, and HRM theory are rarely integrated.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

However, to successfully conceptualize the topic and gain efficient insights, there needs to be a proper synthesis of all three. The aim of this thesis is to develop an

interdisciplinary conceptualization of the topic by applying global staffing theory, which is usually used in the context of MCNs, to football clubs instead.

The objective of this thesis therefore is to firstly, describe the relevant global staffing and global talent management frameworks, adapt them to the context of the modern football industry and finally illustrate different strategic interpretations through club examples.

The scope of this thesis requires literature-based research, using the following sources to piece together a more cohesive picture. This research will use as main sources academic

papers from HRM, global talent management and sport management theories, subsequently it will be aided by industry reports developed by FIFA, UEFA etc., and finally, some parts will be based on the information relayed by official club documents.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The following thesis will be developed in four chapters; the first chapter provides an overview of the recent changes and factors that led to the evolution of football from a local sport to a global phenomenon, to explain the motivation behind applying global staffing theories can be insightful. The second chapter will provide a thorough outline of global staffing theories, starting from their foundations to their current characteristics. The third chapter will explain how those theories can be applied to football, and it will do so by also providing concrete examples of what is currently present in the football world. The fourth and final chapter sums up the insights developed by this thesis, present its conclusions, and provides suggestions for future literature.

CHAPTER 2 Global Staffing in International HRM: Concepts, choices and the Talent Lens

Building on chapter 1's discussion of professional football as a globalised, technology-enabled and highly mobile industry, this chapter introduces the International Human Resource Management (IHRM) concepts needed to analyse cross-border staffing decisions with clarity and consistency. It outlines the core global staffing frameworks, their main strategic purposes, and their evolution towards a talent-management perspective, but it does so by emphasising that these elements form a connected analytical system rather than isolated topics. In other words, staffing is treated as a strategic choice architecture: it shapes who is placed in pivotal roles, how authority and knowledge move across units, and how organisational integration is maintained when operations span multiple institutional contexts. This matters because, in sectors characterised by high mobility and strong performance pressures, staffing decisions influence not only immediate outcomes but also longer-term capability development and governance. The chapter therefore develops a conceptual lens that can be applied systematically to professional football in Chapter 3, allowing staffing patterns to be interpreted as structured responses to coordination needs, learning objectives, and constraints rather than as idiosyncratic hiring events. In practical terms, IHRM provides the vocabulary to describe how organisations decide whether international roles should be filled through mobility, local hiring, or broader global search, and how those choices interact with control, learning, and legitimacy. The chapter also clarifies what counts as a 'pivotal' role from a talent perspective and why some positions deserve disproportionate

attention because they shape performance and coordination across units. Importantly, the aim is not to claim that corporate models fit football perfectly, but to build a disciplined set of constructs so that the later comparison across clubs can be explicit, traceable, and internally consistent. Methodologically, the chapter works like a bridge: it turns the descriptive context of Chapter 1 into variables that can be observed and compared. Each section therefore introduces a concept and immediately specifies what evidence would indicate that concept in practice (for example, who is moved, into which roles, and for what stated purpose). This makes the later analysis more transparent and reduces the risk of treating high-profile hires as inherently strategic without showing the underlying logic. This scaffolding is essential for disciplined comparison.

2.1 International Human Resource Management and the place of global staffing

International Human Resource Management (IHRM) concerns the management of people in organisations whose operations extend beyond a single national context and therefore must function across borders in a sustained way. Cross-border activity exposes organisations to multiple institutional and regulatory environments, different labour markets, and heterogeneous cultural expectations about employment relationships, authority, and performance. Because these differences affect how work is organised and how people interpret roles, IHRM extends domestic HRM by requiring systems that manage international mobility, cross-unit coordination, and alignment across geographically dispersed units. This extension is not simply additive: practices that work within one national setting may produce unintended effects when applied across borders, and the organisation must design HR mechanisms that remain coherent while allowing for contextual variation. In this sense, IHRM deals with the problem of achieving

organisational integration without assuming uniformity in rules, norms, or labour-market conditions (Dowling et al., 2023). Operating across borders typically means that a single organisation must comply with several legal regimes, work with different norms about contracts and authority, and coordinate people who interpret performance, loyalty, and leadership through different cultural frames. These differences increase uncertainty and can produce misalignment even when the formal structure is clear, because informal expectations about 'how work gets done' vary by context. IHRM therefore asks not only which HR practices exist, but how they travel, how they are adapted, and how the organisation prevents fragmentation when units face different incentives and stakeholder pressures. Another recurring issue is consistency: headquarters may want uniform HR rules, while local units need discretion to comply with local law and attract talent. IHRM focuses on how to design that balance, for example through global principles combined with locally adapted practices, and through governance mechanisms that coordinate exceptions rather than letting them accumulate informally.

Recent IHRM research also reflects a broad shift in what counts as “international work”. Rather than focusing only on traditional expatriation, the field increasingly examines diversified global work arrangements (short-term moves, frequent travel, project-based mobility, and virtual cross-border collaboration) and the institutional processes through which MNCs attempt to standardise HR practices while remaining locally legitimate. Bibliographic reviews show a steady expansion of IHRM themes over the past decades, with mobility, global integration–local adaptation, and talent-related questions remaining central, but increasingly connected to digitalisation and new organisational forms (Fan et al., 2021). At the same time, research on MNCs highlights that HR policies do not simply

“diffuse” from headquarters: they are negotiated and contested within and across strategic action fields, making governance and legitimacy inseparable from staffing and HR design (Edwards et al., 2022).

Within IHRM, global staffing is central because staffing choices shape how organisations deploy and develop human capital internationally and how they construct the human infrastructure needed for integration. Staffing determines who holds authority in key positions, who is entrusted with representing headquarters priorities, and who is positioned to broker relationships between units. For this reason, staffing becomes strategic when it affects governance (who represents headquarters and how control is exercised), learning (how routines and knowledge travel), and capability development (how leaders accumulate international experience and networks), rather than simply filling vacancies. Put differently, global staffing decisions can either reinforce fragmentation-by leaving units isolated and locally optimised-or strengthen integration-by placing people who can coordinate, translate, and transfer practices across boundaries. The strategic character of staffing therefore lies in its organisational consequences: it shapes how the firm manages interdependence and how it builds leadership capacity over time (Dowling et al., 2023). Staffing decisions also determine where boundary-spanning capacity sits in the organisation: individuals placed in key posts often act as translators between headquarters and local units, interpreting goals, aligning priorities, and resolving conflicts that formal rules cannot anticipate. This is especially relevant when knowledge is distributed and time pressure is high, because coordination depends on trust, credibility, and speed of communication as much as on formal reporting lines. For these reasons, global staffing should be analysed as a design lever that shapes the firm's

internal social network, not only as a headcount allocation exercise. Even when organisations speak the language of 'best talent', staffing still implies choices about power: who is authorised to decide, who has access to strategic information, and who can escalate issues across borders. Therefore, analysing staffing patterns also reveals which actors are considered part of the organisation's core and which are treated as peripheral, a distinction that matters for both integration and knowledge sharing.

Global staffing also sits at the intersection of key IHRM decision areas, which is why it should be analysed as part of an internally consistent HR system. It connects to compensation because international mobility often requires packages that address relocation, cost-of-living differences, and perceived fairness among mobile and non-mobile employees, and because reward design influences willingness to accept assignments. It connects to performance management because evaluation under cross-cultural and role-ambiguity conditions involves multiple stakeholders, unclear benchmarks, and possible conflicts between local and corporate priorities. It also connects to development and succession planning because international experience is frequently treated as an accelerator for leadership readiness and as a signal of high potential. For these reasons, staffing should be treated as a coherent set of choices embedded in broader HR and strategy systems: selection, preparation, rewards, and post-assignment career paths must fit together if mobility is to generate the intended organisational benefits (Dowling et al., 2023). Seen as a system, these links imply that 'good staffing' cannot be evaluated in isolation from the HR infrastructure that supports it. For example, without credible performance signals and agreed evaluation criteria,

internationally mobile staff may optimise for the wrong audience (local versus corporate) or experience role conflict that reduces effectiveness. Similarly, if repatriation and progression are unclear, mobility may create attrition risk precisely among the people in whom the organisation has invested most. Treating staffing as an interconnected decision area therefore helps explain why the same staffing choice can succeed in one organisation and fail in another. For instance, mobility pay often requires decisions about equalisation, allowances, and currency risk, while also managing perceptions of inequity among locally hired colleagues. Performance management can be complicated by multiple bosses and by differing expectations about feedback and evaluation. These are not administrative details: they condition whether international staffing produces commitment and learning or instead produces conflict and turnover.

While the thesis is interdisciplinary in scope, this chapter focuses specifically on the HRM/IHRM theoretical backbone to ensure that later chapters rely on explicit constructs rather than implicit assumptions. The aim is to define the main analytical categories: staffing orientations, employee categories, mobility forms, purposes of transfers, and the talent-management lens, and to clarify how they connect. This theoretical focus is also a methodological choice: it allows the subsequent application to professional football to be structured and comparable, rather than purely descriptive. The integration with football-specific institutional and labour-market dynamics is therefore developed in Chapter 3, where these concepts are translated into the sector's distinctive regulatory and market setting. Concretely, this chapter specifies the main categories and relationships that will later be used as coding dimensions: the staffing logic an organisation adopts, the type of people it moves, the form and duration of mobility, the purpose the move is meant to

serve, and the expected longer-term talent return. By making these dimensions explicit early, the thesis avoids 'conceptual drift' in the application chapter, where examples could otherwise remain illustrative but not comparable. This theoretical clarification also helps keep the scope disciplined: the focus remains on staffing and mobility as strategic levers, while other IHRM topics are considered only insofar as they enable or constrain staffing outcomes.

2.2 Global staffing: meaning, goals, and core decision architecture

In international settings, global staffing refers to the decisions and processes through which organisations identify key roles, source candidates from different national pools, and deploy them across borders while maintaining effectiveness and integration. It is an architecture because it is not limited to selection: it includes how assignments are designed (for example, objectives, scope, authority, and duration), how individuals are prepared (screening, training, support), how they are rewarded (mobility packages and incentives), and how international experience is reintegrated into career paths through repatriation and progression. Describing staffing as an “architecture” highlights that choices at one stage influence outcomes at others: weak preparation can undermine performance; misaligned rewards can distort motivation; and poor reintegration can destroy long-term returns by producing turnover or wasting accumulated experience. Therefore, global staffing is best seen as a system that links immediate deployment decisions to longer-term capability building and organisational integration (Dowling et al., 2023). This architecture perspective also implies that global staffing starts upstream, with role design and the identification of which positions are strategically critical in an international system. Organisations rarely need global mobility everywhere; they need it

where interdependence is high, where control and learning matter most, or where scarce expertise must be deployed quickly. A useful implication is that global staffing should be assessed in terms of alignment: do assignment objectives, authority, support mechanisms, and planned next roles fit together so that both the immediate job and the longer-term organisational return are achieved? Because assignments have both task and learning dimensions, organisations should specify success indicators at the outset, such as implementation milestones, relationship-building goals, or knowledge-transfer outputs. Without explicit criteria, it becomes difficult to evaluate whether the assignment created integration or merely filled a gap temporarily. This is particularly relevant in environments where rapid results are expected and patience for long-horizon returns is limited.

The goals of global staffing can be grouped into recurring organisational purposes. First, it can strengthen coordination and alignment, especially when dispersed units must implement corporate priorities consistently and when interdependence requires predictable cross-unit collaboration. Second, it can support capability building by exposing individuals to different markets and operating conditions, thereby expanding managerial repertoires and developing people who can operate across contexts. Third, it can facilitate knowledge transfer, particularly the movement of tacit knowledge that is difficult to codify and more likely to travel through relationships and networks than through documents alone. These goals are conceptually distinct but often overlap in practice: a single assignment may simultaneously support control, learning, and development. This is why staffing decisions should be evaluated not only on short-term task completion, but also on whether they strengthen the organisation’s ability to

coordinate and adapt over time (Dowling et al., 2023). A further, often implicit goal is legitimacy management: staffing choices communicate whose knowledge is valued and who is trusted to lead, which can influence acceptance by local employees, partners, and regulators. Staffing also shapes organisational identity across borders because leaders embody norms and define what is 'standard' versus 'local'. When viewed this way, the goals of staffing extend beyond filling positions to shaping the balance between standardisation and adaptation, and between short-term execution and long-term learning. Coordination goals can also be functional: staffing may be used to align finance, operations, and analytics across borders, ensuring that different units interpret targets and constraints in compatible ways. In practice, the same staffing move can carry several goals, but unclear prioritisation can create confusion for the assignee and for local stakeholders. Explicitly stating the primary goal therefore becomes part of effective assignment design. It also supports consistency in decision-making across units.

These goals imply trade-offs. Staffing solutions that maximise headquarters influence may increase standardisation and reduce uncertainty about corporate control, but they may also create legitimacy problems or reduce local responsiveness, especially if host stakeholders perceive leadership as externally imposed. Conversely, highly localised solutions may increase contextual fit and acceptance while weakening integration, making it harder to diffuse routines and sustain a shared organisational identity across units. Moreover, international mobility is costly and its returns are often indirect or realised over longer time horizons, which makes cost-benefit considerations unavoidable and sometimes politically contested inside organisations. The practical implication is that global staffing cannot be optimised on a single dimension: it requires prioritising among

competing objectives and designing HR support mechanisms that reduce the downsides of the chosen approach (Dowling et al., 2023). These tensions often lead to hybrid solutions rather than pure orientations: organisations may staff some roles with headquarters-linked personnel while building strong local pipelines for other roles. Trade-offs also appear over time, because the 'right' balance can change as international units mature, as trust develops, or as the organisation shifts from market entry to optimisation. Finally, the ability to measure outcomes is uneven: control benefits may be visible quickly, while learning and leadership development benefits are delayed and harder to attribute, which can bias decisions toward short-term logic unless evaluation criteria are defined in advance. Another trade-off involves speed versus depth: rapid deployments can solve immediate problems but may not allow enough time for deep adjustment and relationship-building. When roles are time-critical, organisations may rely on short rotations, but then must compensate with stronger handover processes and institutional memory to avoid repeated reinvention.

2.3 Staffing orientations: ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, and regiocentric logics

A widely used lens to interpret international staffing strategies is the notion of staffing orientations: broad managerial logics that shape where organisations source key personnel and how they balance headquarters influence with local autonomy. Orientations are useful because they do not merely describe a staffing outcome; they capture an underlying mindset about which labour pools are considered legitimate, how control should be exercised, and what the organisation prioritises in international operations. The classic articulation distinguishes ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric

orientations, proposed as alternative mindsets through which multinational corporations may structure international operations and management approaches. By identifying these logics, the framework helps explain why similar organisations may adopt different staffing patterns even when facing comparable international challenges (Perlmutter, 1969). Orientations are especially helpful in research because they allow observed staffing moves to be interpreted as part of a coherent strategic posture, rather than as isolated events. They also highlight that staffing is not only a labour-market choice but a governance choice: it indicates where the organisation locates decision authority and how it manages dependence between units. In later application, the same logic can be used to interpret whether a club or organisation behaves more like a 'home-centric' system, a locally embedded system, or a system that treats talent as globally substitutable. Using orientations as a lens also supports comparison across cases because it offers a stable typology. Instead of cataloguing individual hires, the analysis can ask whether decisions systematically privilege home-grown leadership, local embeddedness, or global mobility, and whether that pattern is consistent across functions and over time.

In an ethnocentric orientation, organisations tend to staff key roles-particularly in foreign units-with parent-country nationals, primarily to reinforce control, ensure alignment with headquarters practices, and transmit corporate routines. This approach effectively treats headquarters as the main source of managerial templates and assumes that deploying PCNs reduces uncertainty about implementation. In a polycentric orientation, organisations emphasise host-country nationals in leadership and key operational roles to improve legitimacy and responsiveness in the local environment; here the organisation accepts greater differentiation across units in exchange for contextual fit. A geocentric

orientation frames staffing as a global selection problem and aims to deploy the best available talent regardless of nationality, to support integration and learning across units; it implies that the relevant talent pool is worldwide and that nationality should not be the primary constraint. In analytical terms, these orientations represent different ways of trading off control, legitimacy, and learning in the international firm (Perlmutter, 1969). Importantly, these orientations are ideal types: real organisations often mix them by function and hierarchy level. For instance, a firm may be ethnocentric for finance and compliance to preserve control, but polycentric for customer-facing roles to strengthen local legitimacy. Geocentric approaches also require sophisticated processes to evaluate and compare candidates across contexts, which raises issues of fairness, standardised criteria, and bias. Making these implementation demands explicit helps avoid treating orientations as slogans and instead treats them as operational commitments with resource implications. Orientation choices also influence how careers are structured: ethnocentric systems tend to reward headquarters-based trajectories, while geocentric systems require global career paths and broader succession planning. In practice, this affects retention, because employees evaluate whether mobility opportunities and leadership roles are realistically accessible to them. Thus, orientations have behavioural consequences that extend beyond immediate staffing outcomes. In summary, the orientation chosen sets the default assumptions about where competence resides and how quickly it can be transferred, which is why it conditions both selection systems and the speed at which units can be aligned.

Many later treatments explicitly include regiocentric staffing to capture strategies where talent sourcing and mobility flows are organised primarily within regional clusters rather than across the entire global system. The intuition is that regions may share institutional similarities, cultural proximity, and integrated labour markets that make mobility more feasible, cheaper, and more acceptable than truly global moves. Regiocentric logics can also reflect the organisation's structure, for example when regional headquarters coordinate multiple countries and become the primary arena in which careers and transfers are managed. This extension is commonly associated with the broader EPRG framing and has been linked to work on multinational evolution and managerial orientations (Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979). Regiocentric strategies can also be a response to regulatory and competitive realities, such as regional competition formats, shared qualification systems, or regionally integrated labour markets. They may reduce cultural distance and relocation friction while still supporting cross-unit learning, because movement within a region can be frequent and less disruptive. At the same time, regiocentric systems can create their own boundaries, potentially limiting truly global talent flows and producing regional silos if coordination across regions is weak. Region-based staffing can also simplify standardisation because neighbouring countries may share reporting traditions or professional qualifications, making transfers smoother. However, it can entrench regional power centres and create uneven access to global roles if the organisation relies too heavily on regional pathways. This is why regiocentric patterns should be interpreted as both a coordination solution and a potential source of new internal boundaries.

The value of these orientations is that they connect staffing choices to governance priorities and make trade-offs visible. Ethnocentric approaches can strengthen integration via control and simplify coordination by placing trusted representatives of headquarters in key posts, but they risk local resistance, reduced legitimacy, and weaker host-country leadership development. Polycentric approaches can strengthen local fit and acceptance and may improve stakeholder relationships, but they complicate cross-unit coordination and may hinder routine transfer if units become too differentiated. Geocentric approaches support learning and global integration by mobilising talent across borders and encouraging network building, but they increase organisational complexity and resource requirements because global selection, mobility management, and career systems become more demanding. Seen this way, orientations are not “best practices” but coherent strategic logics with predictable strengths and weaknesses (Perlmutter, 1969; Dowling et al., 2023). Another advantage is diagnostic: by mapping strengths and weaknesses to each orientation, the framework helps explain predictable failure modes. For example, ethnocentric patterns may trigger local resentment and reduce retention, while strongly polycentric patterns may make global coordination dependent on formal reporting and thereby slower and less resilient under stress. In practice, organisations often evolve along these logics as they internationalise, so analysing the orientation also supports a temporal interpretation: staffing patterns can reflect not only current strategy but also stage of international development and past path dependence. Finally, the orientation framework makes the normative question explicit: a staffing strategy is 'good' only relative to the organisation's priorities and constraints. By articulating those priorities, the framework helps justify why certain tensions are accepted (for example, higher costs for

greater integration) and why others are avoided (for example, legitimacy risk in highly sensitive markets).

2.4 Employee categories and forms of international mobility

A second building block of global staffing is the categorisation of employees according to nationality in relation to the assignment location. A standard IHRM distinction is among parent-country nationals (PCNs), host-country nationals (HCNs), and third-country nationals (TCNs). These categories matter because they are associated with different coordination roles, cost structures, legitimacy implications, and career dynamics, and because they often carry implicit assumptions about whose knowledge and authority are prioritised. Using this categorisation helps clarify the logic behind staffing mixes: the issue is not only who is employed, but what organisational function their nationality-status is expected to serve in terms of control, embeddedness, or bridging across contexts (Dowling et al., 2023). In analytical terms, these categories matter because nationality-status can proxy for different resource bundles: language competence, institutional knowledge, network embeddedness, and credibility with specific stakeholders. They also influence the psychological contract: expectations about career progression, rewards, and organisational support can differ across categories, and perceived inequity can undermine integration. Using the PCN/HCN/TCN classification therefore supports a more precise discussion of why a given staffing mix was chosen and what coordination problem it is meant to solve. The categories also have practical implications for HR process design, such as how contracts are structured, which benefits apply, and how performance information flows back to decision-makers. Where categories are mixed within the same unit, the organisation may need deliberate practices

to prevent subgrouping and to encourage collaboration, because perceived status differences can undermine integration.

PCNs are often used to strengthen headquarters control and support the diffusion of corporate practices, particularly when standardisation and alignment are prioritised. HCNs can enhance local embeddedness and contextual competence because they understand local institutions, labour-market norms, and stakeholder expectations, and they may increase perceived legitimacy inside and outside the organisation. TCNs can be useful when they combine relevant expertise with potentially lower political or cultural friction than PCNs, and they can function as “boundary” talent who bridge different contexts. The chosen mix also affects other HR practices, including compensation and performance management, because pay structures, incentives, and evaluation criteria may need to accommodate contextual variation and role ambiguity, and because different categories may face different fairness perceptions and career expectations (Dowling et al., 2023). Because the categories carry different cost and risk profiles, staffing mixes also express the organisation's risk appetite. PCNs may be more predictable carriers of corporate routines but can be expensive and may face adjustment issues; HCNs can stabilise operations and relationships but may have weaker access to headquarters networks; TCNs can combine expertise with bridging capacity but may face legal complexity and ambiguous organisational belonging. These dynamics reinforce the earlier point that staffing is systemic: the selected mix must be supported by consistent pay, evaluation, and career rules to avoid creating parallel classes of employees. Career outcomes differ as well: PCNs may be evaluated as future corporate leaders, HCNs may be evaluated as local capability builders, and TCNs may face ambiguity about which

system they belong to. These differences can affect commitment and willingness to share knowledge. Therefore, the staffing mix should be examined together with career pathways and with signals about whose advancement is valued.

Mobility is not limited to the traditional long-term expatriate model. Organisations increasingly rely on short-term assignments, commuting arrangements, rotational programs, and project-based international work to balance coordination needs with cost, speed, and employee constraints. These alternatives can reduce relocation disruption and costs while still enabling knowledge transfer and relationship-building, especially when objectives are specific and time-bounded. They also offer flexibility when long-term expatriation is difficult due to family constraints or legal barriers. However, these forms typically change what mobility can accomplish: short-term or commuting arrangements may deliver targeted expertise and rapid coordination, but they may be less effective for deep socialisation or broad leadership development. For this reason, the mobility form selected should fit the intended purpose of the staffing decision (Dowling et al., 2023). Digital collaboration tools and remote working arrangements have further expanded the menu of mobility options, allowing some coordination and expertise transfer to occur without physical relocation. However, virtual interaction typically transmits codified knowledge more easily than tacit routines, and it may not build the same trust and informal networks that physical co-presence can create. This implies that mobility choices should be framed as a portfolio decision: organisations combine face-to-face moves and virtual coordination depending on whether the objective is rapid problem solving, deep socialisation, or leadership development. These options are especially attractive when the organisation needs rapid input from specialists or when relocation is

politically or personally difficult. Yet they can increase coordination load if frequent travel or parallel time zones create fatigue and reduce availability. Consequently, mobility form is part of risk management as well as part of capability building.

A useful way to frame this expansion is to treat mobility as only one subset of "global work". Lazarova, Caligiuri and Collings argue that international HRM increasingly needs to account for a rapidly changing world of work in which cross-border coordination can be achieved through multiple configurations of where work is performed, who participates, and how collaboration is organised—from dispersed teams and digitally mediated collaboration to short-cycle and portfolio careers across organisations. This perspective matters for global staffing because it shifts the analytical question from "which expatriate model is used" to "which combination of global work arrangements best fits the intended coordination, learning, and control purpose". In other words, firms assemble portfolios of global work to balance speed, cost, knowledge transfer, and legitimacy in ways that would not be captured by a narrow expatriate/non-expatriate distinction (Lazarova et al., 2023).

2.5 Why organisations transfer people: coordination, control, development, and knowledge

A foundational explanation of why multinational corporations transfer managers is provided by Edström and Galbraith (1977), who conceptualise international transfers as

an organisational mechanism for coordination and control rather than merely a solution to staffing shortages. Their framework treats transfers as a design choice that helps the multinational function as an integrated system when formal structures alone are insufficient to coordinate complex interdependence. In this view, transfers serve multiple functions simultaneously: filling positions when specialised competencies are needed, developing managers by exposing them to different environments and responsibilities, and strengthening integration across dispersed units through socialisation and network creation. The key implication is that transfers should be evaluated as strategic investments in organisational capability, not simply as tactical responses to vacancy (Edström & Galbraith, 1977). Edström and Galbraith's view is influential because it reframes mobility as an organisational design mechanism that complements structure: when formal controls are insufficient, people flows can create the social glue needed for coordination. It also implies that transfers can be planned proactively, not only reactively. If the organisation anticipates future integration or learning needs, it can design assignments that deliberately create cross-unit networks and shared interpretive frames, thereby reducing the need for heavy formal control later on. The framework also helps separate 'movement as substitution' from 'movement as investment'. If the transfer is purely to fill a gap, the organisation may prioritise speed and technical fit; if it is developmental, it must prioritise stretch, reflection, and planned next roles. This distinction becomes useful later when interpreting whether a staffing decision in football is meant to stabilise short-term performance or to build a longer-term leadership pipeline.

Transfers contribute to coordination by creating shared understandings and informal communication channels that complement formal structures. Managers who have worked across units can translate expectations, anticipate misunderstandings, and facilitate collaboration by relying on personal relationships rather than only on formal reporting. Transfers can reinforce control not only through monitoring but also through cultural alignment, as assignees carry corporate routines and expectations and embody "how things are done" in the organisation. At the same time, transfers act as developmental investments: by dealing with unfamiliar institutional settings and complex stakeholder demands, managers broaden competence and build judgement that may be valuable in later roles. In this way, transfers create both immediate organisational benefits and longer-term leadership capability (Edström & Galbraith, 1977). These benefits depend on credibility: assignees must be perceived as legitimate by both headquarters and host units, otherwise they can become sources of friction rather than coordination. Transfers also shape organisational memory because mobile individuals accumulate context-specific knowledge about multiple units, which can later support better decision-making and crisis response. To preserve this value, organisations need mechanisms that capture and reuse the learning created through mobility, rather than allowing it to remain purely personal and disappear if the individual exits. Reintegration matters here: if the organisation does not place returnees in roles where their cross-unit knowledge is used, the integrative value of transfers dissipates. Effective systems therefore link mobility to subsequent appointments, mentoring roles, or knowledge-sharing routines that institutionalise what was learned.

This view aligns with IHRM accounts that staffing is intertwined with learning and governance. International staffing flows can shape how knowledge is created and diffused, particularly where knowledge is tacit, context-bound, and relational, so that it is difficult to codify and transmit through manuals or formal training alone. People moves can therefore function as knowledge-transfer mechanisms by carrying routines, interpretation frames, and network ties across units. Consequently, staffing decisions are not only about who goes where, but also about which organisational problems are solved through mobility rather than through structure alone-for instance, whether integration is pursued through centralised control, through socialisation, or through cross-unit learning. The analysis of transfers thus becomes an analysis of organisational design choices implemented through people (Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Dowling et al., 2023). From a knowledge perspective, mobility is particularly relevant where learning depends on observation, practice, and participation in local routines. People carry not only 'what to do' but also 'how to interpret situations', including norms about acceptable risk, quality standards, and negotiation styles. This is why transfers can function as an integration mechanism even when formal policies exist: they align meanings and expectations. Consequently, analysing staffing flows also means analysing how organisations build communities of practice across borders and how they balance codified standards with locally learned adaptations. This also suggests that the effectiveness of staffing flows depends on absorptive capacity: host units must be able and willing to receive and integrate transferred routines. When local units lack resources or perceive imported practices as illegitimate, knowledge transfer can fail regardless of assignee quality.

Therefore, staffing analysis should consider both the sender and receiver conditions, not only the mover.

2.6 From staffing to Global Talent Management: the strategic talent perspective

Over time, international staffing debates have increasingly intersected with Global Talent Management, reflecting a shift from mobility as primarily a coordination tool to talent as a strategic resource that organisations must consciously build and deploy. This shift emphasises that staffing choices are not only about filling roles abroad, but also about ensuring that the organisation has a pipeline of people capable of performing in positions that matter most for competitive advantage. A central contribution is Collings and Mellahi's (2009) formulation of strategic talent management, which emphasises identifying pivotal positions-roles that disproportionately influence competitive advantage-and building a talent pool capable of filling them. In this perspective, international staffing is one mechanism through which organisations develop and allocate talent for these pivotal roles (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This shift is partly driven by increased competition for scarce, high-impact skills and by the recognition that not all roles contribute equally to performance. As a result, global staffing is increasingly connected to questions such as: Which positions are truly pivotal for value creation? Which competencies are difficult to buy on the market and therefore must be developed internally? And how should mobility opportunities be allocated to maximise long-term organisational resilience rather than only short-term deployment efficiency? The talent turn also makes workforce segmentation more explicit: organisations increasingly differentiate between roles that are pivotal and roles that are necessary but less

strategically decisive. Staffing systems then allocate attention and resources accordingly, which can improve efficiency but also raises ethical and motivational issues if segmentation is poorly communicated.

Recent work on Global Talent Management (GTM) further strengthens this shift by arguing that "global talent" cannot be treated as a generic pool: it must be defined relative to strategic roles, changing organisational realities, and the mechanisms through which firms identify, develop, and deploy talent across borders. Caligiuri and colleagues emphasise that contemporary GTM is shaped by increased volatility, digital interdependence, and changing patterns of mobility, which require organisations to redesign how they source and integrate talent and how they build capability at scale. In practical terms, this supports an analytical focus on (i) pivotal positions, (ii) talent pipelines and socialisation routines, and (iii) decision systems that protect methodological continuity even when operating across multiple countries (Caligiuri et al., 2024).

This perspective changes how global staffing is interpreted. International assignments can be designed as part of a system for leadership development, succession planning, and capability formation, rather than as ad hoc responses to vacancy or short-term coordination problems. When mobility is embedded in a talent system, assignments are selected because they generate specific developmental experiences and build competences needed for future pivotal positions. Mobility becomes one instrument within a portfolio of talent practices aimed at staffing pivotal roles consistently across geographies and over time, alongside selection, training, career planning, and performance management. The implication is that staffing decisions should be evaluated not only by immediate performance but also by whether they contribute to building a

sustainable internal talent supply for strategically critical roles (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Under a talent-management approach, assignment design becomes more granular: organisations specify which experiences (for example, leading in ambiguity, managing multiple stakeholders, or transferring routines) an individual should acquire. This can lead to differentiated mobility, where high-potential individuals receive broader and more challenging cross-border roles, while other moves are narrowly targeted to deliver expertise. The approach also raises governance questions about transparency and fairness, because selective investment in a 'talent pool' can generate perceptions of exclusion unless criteria and pathways are communicated clearly. In turn, this requires stronger data and governance around talent decisions: organisations need reliable information to identify potential, monitor development, and decide when someone is ready for a pivotal role. This can increase bureaucratic load, but without such infrastructure geocentric or talent-based staffing becomes aspirational rather than real.

The strategic talent lens also clarifies why organisations may accept the high costs and risks of mobility: expected returns may be realised through improved performance in pivotal roles, stronger internal networks, and enhanced organisational resilience via deeper succession pipelines. In other words, the value of mobility may be reflected in organisational robustness and leadership depth rather than in short-term cost savings. International experiences can also create individuals with broader organisational knowledge and cross-unit bridging ties that support coordination and learning. Thus, the staffing-talent link has direct implications for how organisations allocate resources and structure careers internationally, because it frames mobility as an investment in strategic

capability rather than as an administrative necessity. It also implies that decisions about who is moved should be tied to an explicit view of pivotal roles and future talent needs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Dowling et al., 2023). At the same time, the talent lens highlights a key vulnerability: if repatriation is poorly managed or if post-assignment roles do not use the new skills, individuals may disengage or exit, turning mobility into a net loss. Therefore, the value logic of international staffing depends on retention and on the ability to redeploy learning into future pivotal positions. Seen this way, mobility investments need to be evaluated with a longer horizon, including pipeline depth, succession readiness, and the organisation's capacity to operate under volatility. An additional implication is that external hiring and internal development become complementary: even in a talent system, organisations may 'buy' talent for urgent needs while 'building' it for sustainability. Global staffing choices then reflect how the organisation combines these levers under uncertainty and competitive pressure. In analytical terms, the key outputs to look for are retention after mobility, promotion into pivotal roles, and evidence that cross-border experience is actually used in subsequent appointments.

2.7 Risks, trade-offs, and constraints of global staffing

Despite its strategic potential, global staffing involves significant risks, trade-offs, and constraints. A first issue is cost: relocation packages, allowances, administrative complexity, and opportunity costs make international assignments expensive, particularly when assignments fail to deliver expected outcomes. Costs are not only financial; they also include managerial time, coordination burdens, and possible productivity losses

during transition and adjustment. Because returns are often realised indirectly and over longer time horizons, organisations face uncertainty in assessing whether the investment is justified, which can lead to underinvestment in support or overly short-term evaluations. As a result, cost considerations influence not only whether mobility occurs, but also which forms of mobility are preferred and how assignments are structured (Dowling et al., 2023). Cost pressures can lead organisations to substitute long-term assignments with shorter and more flexible forms of mobility, but this may reduce developmental depth and weaken integration benefits. Moreover, the accounting visibility of costs can exceed the visibility of benefits, which are often dispersed and realised later, making mobility vulnerable during budget cycles. Effective staffing strategy therefore requires an explicit theory of value: what benefits are expected, when, and through which mechanisms, so that support systems are not cut in ways that undermine outcomes. Furthermore, some costs are indirect, such as disruption to teams, time spent onboarding, and the loss of local continuity when key people rotate out too often. These indirect costs can be especially salient in high-performance contexts, which reinforces the need to match mobility frequency and duration to the actual coordination and learning objectives.

Beyond cost and adjustment risks, recent IHRM work underlines that global staffing is exposed to institutional contestation and to shifting expectations about what constitutes "responsible" employment and governance. This is relevant when organisations operate under intense public scrutiny, because staffing and HR choices can become part of broader legitimacy debates. The strategic action fields perspective suggests that MNCs' attempts to impose global HR norms are mediated by external actors and by internal coalitions; as a result, standardisation efforts may generate conflict and require deliberate

negotiation and signalling rather than relying on formal authority alone (Edwards et al., 2022).

Second, international assignments are vulnerable to performance and adjustment challenges. Cross-cultural differences, family considerations, role ambiguity, and insufficient organisational support can undermine effectiveness even when assignees have strong technical skills. These risks can manifest in reduced performance, conflict with local stakeholders, or premature return, and they can also affect organisational outcomes through disruption and the potential loss of human capital if assignees leave after demanding assignments. The organisation therefore must treat adjustment as a strategic risk factor rather than a personal issue, and it must design selection, preparation, and support mechanisms that reduce the probability of failure. Without such support, the expected benefits of coordination, learning, and development may not materialise (Dowling et al., 2023). Selection criteria therefore need to include not only technical competence but also adaptability, interpersonal skills, and motivation to work across cultures and institutions. Support mechanisms can include realistic previews, cross-cultural preparation, family assistance, mentoring, and clear role definition to reduce ambiguity. Because the social costs of failure can be high, organisations that treat adjustment as an organisational responsibility - rather than an individual problem - are more likely to realise the intended coordination and learning returns. Support also needs to extend to the host unit: line managers and teams may require guidance on how to integrate the assignee, how to allocate authority, and how to resolve conflicts between local and corporate priorities. Without host support, even well-prepared assignees can

struggle, because misaligned expectations are a relational problem rather than a purely individual one.

Third, staffing choices produce governance and legitimacy trade-offs. Extensive reliance on PCNs may strengthen control and simplify implementation of headquarters priorities, but it can weaken local legitimacy and impede local leadership development, especially if local actors perceive limited trust or limited career prospects. Strongly polycentric approaches can improve embeddedness and acceptance, but they can complicate global integration and routine transfer if units become too differentiated and coordination relies heavily on formal mechanisms. These tensions are particularly visible when staffing orientations are used as an interpretive frame, because orientations express the underlying balance between control, autonomy, and learning. In practice, the challenge is to design staffing patterns that preserve legitimacy while maintaining sufficient integration to achieve organisational objectives (Perlmutter, 1969; Dowling et al., 2023). Legitimacy also operates internally: local employees may perceive limited career prospects if leadership is systematically imported, while mobile staff may be perceived as temporary outsiders and struggle to build trust. These perceptions affect collaboration, knowledge sharing, and retention, which means that legitimacy is not a 'soft' issue but a performance-relevant variable. Accordingly, effective staffing strategies often combine mobility with deliberate local development, signalling investment in host-unit capabilities while still maintaining integration where it is strategically necessary. These tensions can be mitigated through mixed teams, co-leadership arrangements, and explicit development commitments for local staff. Such mechanisms allow organisations to maintain integration while signalling respect for local competence. Therefore, legitimacy

considerations should be treated as design inputs when choosing between staffing options, not as after-the-fact communication problems.

Finally, staffing decisions operate under institutional constraints such as immigration regimes, labour law differences, and local employment norms. These factors limit feasible staffing mixes and mobility forms by shaping who can be hired, how quickly, and under what contractual conditions, and they can introduce compliance burdens and delays that reduce organisational flexibility. Institutional differences also influence what kinds of reward packages are possible, what performance-management systems are legitimate, and how employment relationships are governed. For this reason, organisations must align staffing strategy with context and design HR support systems that mitigate risk and increase the probability that assignments deliver their intended functions. In short, the effectiveness of global staffing depends not only on the staffing logic but also on the institutional feasibility and organisational support surrounding it (Dowling et al., 2023). In addition, compliance constraints - taxation, social security coordination, licensing rules, and data-protection requirements - can affect the design of contracts and the speed of deployment. Constraints also interact with organisational reputation: mishandling immigration or employment rules can create public and regulatory backlash that affects legitimacy. For this reason, the practical feasibility of staffing strategies depends on both external institutional conditions and internal HR/legal capabilities that can manage complexity without slowing down strategic responsiveness. In contexts with strict regulation, organisations may also rely more on local hiring and on alternative coordination mechanisms, such as standardised processes, auditing, or short-

term expert visits. This reinforces the earlier point that staffing logic is partly constrained by feasibility and that effective strategy often involves combining mobility with non-mobility coordination tools. This can make timing and sequencing of moves a strategic variable.

2.8 A practical framework to be applied to professional football

The conceptual foundation developed in this chapter can be summarised in an integrated framework that will guide the application in Chapter 3. The purpose of this framework is to connect the major building blocks introduced above into a coherent chain of reasoning that can be used to interpret staffing patterns as strategic responses rather than as isolated choices. It combines (i) the underlying staffing logic (orientations), (ii) the concrete staffing instruments and mobility forms, (iii) the organisational purposes that mobility is intended to serve, (iv) the talent-management perspective on pivotal roles and pipelines, and (v) the constraints and trade-offs that shape feasibility and outcomes. In this way, the framework functions as a structured lens that links observed staffing decisions to their strategic rationale and to the conditions under which they are more or less likely to be effective. It also provides a template for analysis: for any observed staffing choice, the framework suggests asking what logic it reflects, what mechanism implements it, what purpose it serves, what talent return is expected, and what constraints shape it. By structuring the analysis in this way, the application can move beyond narrative description toward explanation, without requiring a one-to-one equivalence between multinational corporations and sport organisations. The framework is therefore intentionally modular: it can be applied at different levels (club, department, role type) while preserving the same reasoning chain. In Chapter 3, this structure will allow the analysis to make claims like: 'this club's staffing pattern is predominantly geocentric in

technical roles but polycentric in governance roles', and then to discuss why that configuration is plausible given constraints. Without such a framework, the analysis would risk becoming a collection of interesting cases without a consistent explanatory backbone.

First, staffing decisions can be interpreted through staffing orientations (ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, regiocentric), which express how organisations balance control and autonomy and how they define the relevant talent pool (Perlmutter, 1969; Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979). In the framework, orientations work as a starting point because they indicate what the organisation is trying to accomplish through staffing: tighter control and standardisation, stronger local legitimacy, broader global learning, or regional coordination. Orientations also clarify what kinds of staffing moves are seen as normal or legitimate and what kinds of careers and mobility patterns are likely to be supported. As a result, they provide a way to interpret staffing outcomes as expressions of governance priorities rather than as purely technical HR decisions. Operationally, this means that when examining a case, the analysis should look for signals of the underlying logic: who is trusted with leadership, which labour markets are treated as primary, and how much autonomy is granted to local units. It also encourages attention to path dependence, because an organisation's history and identity can make certain staffing choices more acceptable than others. Finally, orientations can be treated as hypotheses about outcomes: for example, whether a given logic is likely to prioritise control over learning, or to trade integration for local legitimacy. This is also where comparative logic enters: different organisations can be compared on how strongly they commit to one logic versus another, and on whether their practices are internally consistent with that logic. Inconsistency - for

example, claiming a geocentric approach but using locally idiosyncratic evaluation criteria - can itself be an important empirical finding.

Second, orientations are implemented through instruments and mobility forms, including the composition of PCN/HCN/TCN groups and the selection of assignment types (long-term expatriation and alternatives) (Dowling et al., 2023). This element highlights that orientations are not just labels: they become real through concrete choices about who is moved, into which roles, for how long, with what authority, and with what support and rewards. The PCN/HCN/TCN mix affects legitimacy, control, and continuity, while the assignment type affects cost, speed, and the depth of socialisation and learning. Therefore, instruments and mobility forms translate strategic intent into operational reality and materially shape the likely outcomes of the staffing approach. In empirical application, this prompts attention to the decision rules used in recruitment and assignment: are candidates evaluated with a shared global rubric, or with locally specific criteria? The answer affects comparability and perceived fairness. Instruments also include the support package around the move - relocation, onboarding, language support, and career planning - which can determine whether the mobility form actually delivers the intended coordination or knowledge-transfer function. Because instruments translate intent into practice, the analysis should also look for 'friction points' where implementation fails, such as short assignment durations that prevent relationship-building or incentive schemes that reward individual performance at the expense of knowledge sharing. Identifying such mismatches helps explain why similar staffing logics can produce different outcomes.

Third, staffing and mobility serve strategic purposes such as coordination/control, development, and knowledge transfer-functions highlighted in the classic account of manager transfers as organisational design mechanisms (Edström & Galbraith, 1977). Including these purposes in the framework forces the analysis to specify what organisational problem a staffing choice is intended to solve: for example, whether the aim is to ensure consistent implementation, to build leadership capabilities, to transfer tacit routines, or to create cross-unit networks that support collaboration. Because one assignment may serve multiple purposes, the framework encourages attention to prioritisation and to potential tensions between goals. In other words, the "why" of mobility is necessary to evaluate whether the "how" of staffing is appropriate. This element is crucial because it prevents a common analytical shortcut: assuming that the presence of mobility automatically implies learning or control. Instead, the purpose must be inferred and, where possible, evidenced by how the role is defined, how success is measured, and how the individual is positioned in the organisational network. Where purposes conflict - for example, rapid control versus developmental exploration - the framework encourages identifying which objective is prioritised and what trade-offs are accepted. This is particularly relevant in football-like contexts where results pressure can push decisions toward short-term fixes. Clarifying purpose helps separate reactive hiring from deliberate staffing architecture, and it offers a basis to evaluate whether the organisation is building capabilities or only buying temporary performance.

Fourth, the framework incorporates a talent lens: organisations identify pivotal positions and develop talent pools capable of filling them, treating staffing as part of a long-term system of strategic talent management (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This element shifts

the focus from single staffing events to the sustainability of staffing over time: which roles are pivotal, how readiness is developed, and how mobility experiences contribute to pipeline depth and succession planning. It also clarifies why organisations might allocate scarce mobility opportunities selectively, targeting them toward roles or individuals with the highest expected strategic returns. In this way, the talent lens complements the staffing-orientation logic by making explicit how staffing links to long-term capability formation and competitive advantage. Applied carefully, this lens also clarifies why organisations may restrict mobility to a small subset of people and roles: not all experiences contribute equally to future pivotal positions. It also implies that staffing outcomes should be judged over time, through pipeline indicators such as readiness, succession coverage, and the distribution of international experience across the leadership cohort. Thus, the talent lens turns the chapter's concepts into a set of observable questions about who gets international exposure, why, and with what career consequences. It also encourages attention to how organisations define 'potential' and 'pivotal': whether pivotal roles are defined narrowly (for example, only top leadership) or more broadly (for example, analytics and recruitment roles that shape the pipeline). This definitional choice can materially change staffing priorities and investment patterns.

Finally, the framework is bounded by constraints and trade-offs-cost, performance risk, legitimacy dynamics, and institutional limitations-that shape the effectiveness of staffing strategies and require alignment between intended purposes and HR support systems (Dowling et al., 2023; Perlmutter, 1969). This element emphasises that staffing strategies are not evaluated in a vacuum: the same staffing logic may produce different outcomes

depending on context, support mechanisms, and feasibility constraints. Trade-offs highlight that gains in one dimension (for example, control) can generate losses in another (for example, legitimacy or development), and constraints highlight that some staffing solutions may be impractical due to law, regulation, or labour-market realities. Therefore, the framework treats effective staffing as an alignment problem between goals, instruments, and context. In application, these constraints serve as boundary conditions: they explain why an organisation may adopt a theoretically attractive staffing logic but implement it only partially, or substitute it with alternative mechanisms. They also remind that support systems are part of the strategy: when costs are high and risks are salient, the organisation's willingness to invest in preparation, wellbeing, and reintegration becomes a differentiator. Therefore, evaluating staffing effectiveness requires considering both the chosen logic and the organisational capacity to execute it under real-world constraints. Finally, trade-offs are political as well as technical: different stakeholders may prefer different staffing outcomes, and decisions may reflect internal bargaining. Recognising this does not weaken the analysis; it strengthens it by explaining why staffing architectures can be stable even when not obviously optimal on purely economic grounds.

Chapter 3 will use this framework to interpret staffing choices in professional football under conditions of high mobility, strong regulation, and intense performance pressure. The purpose is not to impose a corporate template mechanically, but to use IHRM constructs to organise evidence and identify patterns in cross-border staffing. In this chapter, the IHRM conceptual backbone has been developed to analyse international staffing decisions in a structured and comparable way, treating staffing as a strategic

choice architecture rather than as a sequence of isolated hires. Specifically, the discussion has clarified staffing orientations as underlying governance logics (ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, regiocentric), employee categories and mobility forms as implementation instruments (PCN/HCN/TCN mixes and a spectrum of assignment types), and the core organisational purposes that international transfers can serve (coordination/control, development, and knowledge transfer), while also incorporating a strategic talent-management perspective centred on pivotal positions and talent pools (Perlmutter, 1969; Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979; Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Dowling et al., 2023). Taken together, these elements specify what to observe when studying international staffing-namely the staffing logic, the mechanisms through which mobility is organised, the functions mobility is expected to perform, and the constraints and trade-offs that condition outcomes. Chapter 3 therefore moves from this theoretical foundation to the sectoral application, using the framework developed here to structure the analysis without extending the conceptual scope established in Chapter 2. To do this, the chapter's concepts will be translated into football-relevant role categories and mobility patterns, such as the international recruitment of players, coaches, technical directors, performance analysts, and medical or sports-science staff. The analysis will consider not only headline transfers, but also the less visible staffing of backroom and governance roles that affect capability building and coordination across the club's network. Where possible, the discussion will distinguish short-term performance-driven moves from longer-term pipeline strategies (for example, academy development and succession planning) and will relate them back to the orientation and talent lenses. By keeping the conceptual scope stable, Chapter 3 can compare cases on the

same dimensions and show how different staffing architectures respond to similar pressures in the contemporary football environment. Practically, the application will treat clubs as organisations operating in multiple labour markets with distinctive constraints (transfer systems, registration rules, and league regulations) that shape feasible staffing options. It will also consider how technological scouting and data analytics influence the 'geography' of talent pools, potentially shifting clubs toward more geocentric or regiocentric logics in recruitment. This will allow the chapter to discuss not only who is hired, but how clubs structure recruitment, development, and coordination as an integrated staffing system. The chapter will therefore treat staffing evidence as patterned choices over time, linking individual moves back to an underlying architecture rather than treating them as one-off stories.

Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework, Analytical Model, and Peer-Reviewed Illustrations

This chapter continues the argument developed in Chapters 1 and 2 by consolidating the thesis' conceptual building blocks into a single analytical model applicable to professional football clubs operating across borders. Its function is integrative rather than narrative: it defines the constructs that the thesis will use, specifies the mechanisms expected to connect them, and translates broad ideas about globalisation, identity, and international human-resource architecture into dimensions that can be operationalised with observable indicators. In line with the thesis logic, the chapter does not rely on single-club storytelling as evidence; instead, it uses peer-reviewed studies as "evidence-informed illustrations" to demonstrate how scholars have already observed the relevant mechanisms in concrete contexts (Anderson, 1991; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Brewster et al., 2011; Dowling et al., 2023).

Positioning the chapter as a bridge matters for internal coherence. Chapters 1 and 2 establish that professional football clubs are hybrid organisations: they are simultaneously cultural institutions rooted in place and identity, and economic organisations exposed to global markets, mediated consumption, and cross-border labour. The model developed here therefore treats "internationalisation" as an organisational design challenge rather than as a purely commercial initiative. The core claim is that cross-border activity becomes strategically sustainable only when governance orientation and staffing architecture are aligned with (i) the club's identity work and legitimacy

constraints and (ii) the ecosystem dependencies that shape value creation and value capture (Croci & Ammirante, 1999; Gilmore, 2009; Burton & Chadwick, 2019).

The chapter proceeds in three moves. First, it clarifies the environmental conditions of transnational football and the implications of ecosystem dependency and time (Section 3.1). Second, it formalises identity and legitimacy as boundary conditions that shape what organisational choices are feasible and how they are interpreted (Section 3.2). Third, it translates these premises into a structured model centred on governance orientation, staffing and talent architecture, and asset/value logic (Sections 3.3–3.7). The final section provides peer-reviewed illustrations mapped explicitly to the model, followed by a synthesis that closes the conceptual arc and sets out how the model can guide empirical operationalisation and thesis conclusions (Sections 3.8–3.10).

3.1 Professional football as a transnational ecosystem

A central premise of the thesis is that contemporary professional football operates as a transnational ecosystem rather than a collection of insulated national industries. Clubs are embedded in overlapping networks of leagues and governing bodies, broadcast and platform intermediaries, sponsors, agents, academies, training providers, and global fan communities. These actors shape both incentives and constraints: they influence what counts as success, which resources are accessible, and how club actions are publicly framed. In such environments, competitive advantage becomes increasingly relational because clubs rarely control the full chain through which value is created and captured. Even core resources—talent, attention, and legitimacy—are co-produced through relationships and external interpretations rather than being fully owned (Croci & Ammirante, 1999; Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023).

Relational ecosystems have a specific organisational implication: internationalisation often occurs through mediated channels. A club may expand global reach via distribution agreements, platform visibility, global sponsors, or touring partnerships without building commensurate internal capacity to coordinate those interfaces. This creates a gap between outward international presence and inward organisational capability. The gap is analytically important because it explains why some clubs appear global in market terms while remaining domestically organised in governance and staffing. The thesis model therefore treats ecosystem coordination as a primary organisational problem: it asks which roles are responsible for monitoring external dependencies, how information flows from external networks into internal decision-making, and how trade-offs are resolved when sporting and commercial priorities conflict (Dowling et al., 2023).

In football, these trade-offs are rarely abstract. Consider recruitment: commercial incentives may favour highly visible signings that strengthen global brand recognition, while sporting incentives may favour system fit, cohesion, and risk management. Similar conflicts arise around coaching philosophy, youth development versus short-term performance, and the allocation of resources to elite squads versus infrastructure. When clubs operate across borders, the number of stakeholders able to influence such choices expands, and the cost of misalignment rises. A club that lacks an explicit governance mechanism for resolving trade-offs often defaults to ad hoc decisions, which can produce strategic inconsistency and reputational volatility over time (Gilmore, 2009).

Globalisation also increases the strategic relevance of time. Football decisions unfold on multiple clocks: immediate match outcomes, seasonal objectives, multi-year squad construction, and longer-term identity narratives. These clocks are not naturally

synchronised. A staffing architecture optimised for short cycles (rapid hiring, quick dismissals, constant role redefinition) can undermine learning and long-term asset building because knowledge leaves faster than it accumulates. Conversely, an architecture optimised for long cycles may become politically fragile when results deteriorate and stakeholder pressure intensifies. The analytical model therefore treats temporal alignment as a mechanism linking staffing stability, knowledge transfer, and asset maximisation (Gilmore, 2009).

Digital media and platformisation add another time-related dynamic: they compress reaction windows. Reputation shocks travel faster, and clubs must respond under conditions of information asymmetry and high emotional intensity. This affects organisational design because it increases the value of routines that stabilise meaning—crisis communication protocols, internal alignment between technical and commercial units, and clear accountability for stakeholder engagement. In short, the environment rewards clubs that can translate external signals into coherent internal action without losing strategic direction. This is a core reason why the model emphasises governance and staffing architecture, rather than treating internationalisation as a marketing extension (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023).

Finally, cross-border labour mobility expands opportunity sets while amplifying uncertainty and the cost of decision errors. Greater player mobility and global recruitment increase the size of the market, but they also increase heterogeneity in adaptation requirements, legal and regulatory exposure, and coordination complexity. If decision quality declines, the financial consequences can be severe because contracts are large, sunk costs are high, and reversals are expensive. Hence, globalisation in football cannot

be reduced to a single metric such as foreign-player share or international revenues; it reorganises competition, labour markets, and legitimacy in ways that affect how clubs create and defend advantage (Taylor, 2006).

3.2 Identity and legitimacy as boundary conditions

In football, identity is not an optional symbolic layer; it is a boundary condition that shapes organisational feasibility. Clubs are interpreted as carriers of place-based meaning, historical narratives, and community representation. Supporters and wider audiences often treat the club's identity as something that must be respected even when the club pursues global growth. This has a direct organisational implication: choices that might be rational from an efficiency standpoint can be resisted if they violate perceived authenticity. A model that ignores identity therefore risks mis-specifying the constraints within which clubs operate (Anderson, 1991; Shobe, 2008).

Treating identity as a boundary condition also implies that "fit" cannot be reduced to cultural similarity. Fit is often constructed publicly and retrospectively: stakeholders make sense of appointments and strategies by narrating why a person or decision embodies, stretches, or violates club values. Legitimacy management is therefore not only about selecting candidates who appear acceptable at the time of appointment. It is also about building organisational routines that stabilise meaning over time—through consistent communication, symbolic practices, and visible alignment between what the club says and what it does. When clubs expand across borders, they face global scrutiny

and multiple interpretive arenas; stabilising meaning becomes an organisational capability rather than a rhetorical exercise (Anderson, 1991; Burton & Chadwick, 2019).

Analytically, the model distinguishes between identity content and identity process. Identity content refers to the narratives and symbols a club claims—its stated traditions, "DNA", and representations of place. Identity process refers to the organisational capability to reproduce, adapt, and defend those narratives under pressure. The distinction matters because clubs can maintain stable identity content at the level of slogans while failing to maintain identity process at the level of organisational behaviour. For example, repeated decisions that conflict with stated values can erode legitimacy even if branding remains consistent. Separating content from process enables later analysis to observe not only what clubs claim, but how they manage the tensions created by internationalisation (Shobe, 2008).

Legitimacy in global football is multi-audience rather than unitary. Local supporters often value continuity and representation; global followers may value star power and spectacle; sponsors may value brand safety and reach; governing bodies value compliance and integrity. These audiences can react differently to the same decision. This makes the organisational challenge more complex than a simple "stakeholder management" checklist: the club must manage trade-offs between audiences without losing coherence. The model therefore treats legitimacy management as intertwined with governance orientation and staffing architecture, because those organisational choices determine who interprets external demands, who speaks for the club, and how conflicts are resolved (Burton & Chadwick, 2019).

A further implication is that staffing decisions in visible roles become symbolic signals. Appointments of head coaches, technical directors, and high-profile players can reinforce or destabilise perceptions of authenticity. When audiences interpret such decisions as a break from identity narratives, the club may face legitimacy backlash that affects commercial partnerships, matchday atmosphere, and internal cohesion. Conversely, when decisions are framed as consistent with identity narratives, they can legitimise strategic shifts and protect the club during performance downturns. In this sense, identity is simultaneously a productive resource and a constraint, and the organisational problem becomes one of design under constraint rather than simple resource acquisition (Anderson, 1991; Shobe, 2008).

3.3 Internationalisation choices and governance orientation

Chapters 1–2 argue that internationalisation becomes organisationally consequential when it changes how decisions are made, coordinated, and justified. A classic lens for translating globalisation into managerial choices is Perlmutter's EPRG typology—ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric, geocentric—because it captures how organisations distribute authority and how they conceptualise foreign operations. Ethnocentric orientations treat the home organisation as reference and govern foreign activity as extension. Polycentric orientations grant autonomy and emphasise adaptation. Regiocentric orientations coordinate within regions. Geocentric orientations pursue integrated systems in which talent and practices are evaluated globally and coordination aims at system-wide optimisation (Perlmutter, 1969; Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979).

In football, governance orientation is best observed through decision rights and coordination routines rather than through organisational charts alone. Clubs differ in who

decides, who proposes, who approves, and who can veto high-leverage choices. High-leverage decisions include: head-coach selection and dismissal criteria; recruitment shortlists and final signing authority; academy promotion thresholds; performance methodology and medical risk tolerances; and strategic investments in facilities, analytics, and scouting infrastructure. A club can be commercially international while remaining organisationally ethnocentric if pivotal sporting decisions remain centralised in home-base networks and informal power structures. Conversely, a club can adopt geocentric routines—global scouting integration, standardised performance systems, multi-site knowledge transfer—without necessarily being the most international in revenue terms. The model therefore separates "international exposure" from "international organisational design" (Dowling et al., 2023).

This distinction matters because governance orientation shapes consistency. Ethnocentric governance can provide clarity and speed but may under-use local knowledge and create legitimacy problems when local contexts differ. Polycentric governance can foster adaptation and local legitimacy but may fragment practices and reduce learning across units. Geocentric governance can increase system learning and standardisation but requires heavier coordination and can be vulnerable to political conflict if accountability is unclear. The thesis model treats governance orientation as a core lever because it influences how information is aggregated, how accountability is assigned, and how the club resolves conflicts between sporting and commercial aims under global scrutiny (Brewster et al., 2011; Dowling et al., 2023).

Edström and Galbraith's work on managerial transfers provides a complementary mechanism-based view of governance. They emphasise that transfers coordinate and

control by moving people who carry tacit knowledge, shared norms, and organisational routines. In multinational firms, this helps align dispersed operations when formal control is limited. In football, analogous transfers include not only executives but technical directors, recruitment leaders, academy heads, performance-science leaders, and other pivotal roles. Mobility in these roles can serve as a governance tool: it can spread "club methodology", align evaluation criteria, and reduce fragmentation. However, excessive mobility can also destabilise learning if it becomes reactive turnover rather than deliberate transfer. The model therefore treats transfers and role mobility as observable expressions of governance orientation and integration strategy (Edström & Galbraith, 1977).

To maintain coherence with the identity argument, governance orientation is also a legitimacy choice. Centralising decisions may protect identity narratives by ensuring that "club DNA" is guarded by insiders, but it may be viewed as detached from local supporters if the club expands into new communities. Decentralising decisions may increase local legitimacy but create accusations of abandoning tradition if local adaptations are perceived as diluting identity. Geocentric integration may enable global coherence but risk being seen as corporate standardisation. Therefore, the model expects that effective governance is not merely efficient; it is narratively defensible across audiences. This is why identity management and governance orientation are treated as interdependent rather than as separate chapters (Anderson, 1991).

3.4 Staffing architecture in transnational football

International HRM frameworks in Chapter 2 highlighted that staffing is not simply a support function; it is an architecture that shapes organisational capability. In football,

staffing architecture extends beyond players to include coaches, analysts, recruitment and scouting teams, medical and performance staff, academy leadership, communications, and commercial roles. Internationalisation typically increases specialisation and interdependence: more specialised roles are needed, and the quality of coordination among them becomes more consequential. A club that expands cross-border without adjusting staffing architecture often experiences coordination losses—misaligned recruitment, inconsistent development pathways, and conflicting performance philosophies (Brewster et al., 2011; Dowling et al., 2023).

The classic staffing categories of PCN, HCN, and TCN remain analytically useful when adapted for football organisations. PCN logic appears when senior decision roles are filled primarily from home-base networks and when organisational identity is treated as requiring domestic socialisation. HCN logic appears when local embeddedness and supporter legitimacy are prioritised, particularly in roles that require cultural reading of stakeholders. TCN logic appears when competence is sourced globally and the organisation seeks a "best-talent" principle that is not tied to home or host country. These logics coexist in many clubs and can be configured differently across organisational layers. The model uses them to interpret staffing patterns as signals of governance orientation and identity strategy (Dowling et al., 2023).

A key staffing challenge in football is the coupling between sporting and commercial domains. Sporting staff influence on-field performance, which affects brand value and revenue; commercial staff influence partnerships and reach, which can feed back into sporting investment capacity. Internationalisation increases the number of roles that sit at the interface: global partnership managers, international academy coordinators, regional

scouting leads, and brand/community engagement roles. The organisational question becomes whether these interface roles are empowered, how they report, and whether they have mechanisms to reconcile conflicts. A club can add interface roles without solving accountability; in that case, roles become symbolic rather than functional and do not reduce coordination loss. This is a direct operationalisation of the "ecosystem interface problem" described in Section 3.1 (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023).

From a mechanism perspective, the model assumes that staffing architecture influences outcomes primarily through decision quality under uncertainty. Internationalisation increases uncertainty because information is noisier, contexts vary, and evaluation horizons differ. Decision quality improves when clubs develop routines for information integration (structured scouting reports, analytics, medical data), formal decision forums, and stable accountability for outcomes. Decision quality deteriorates when clubs exhibit reactive staffing, shifting mandates, and unstable evaluation criteria. These patterns are observable and can be used later to assess whether internationalisation has been accompanied by organisational redesign or merely by outward expansion (Brewster et al., 2011).

Temporal alignment is again central. Staffing stability in pivotal roles can enable learning and cumulative improvement in recruitment and development. Yet, football's performance volatility creates incentives for frequent turnover. The model does not assume that stability is always superior; rather, it posits that clubs require explicit governance routines that define which roles should be stable (because they protect methodology and long-term assets) and which roles can be more flexible (because they respond to short-term needs). Without such differentiation, clubs oscillate between

strategic directions and lose the ability to build and protect assets such as academies, scouting networks, and internal performance systems (Gilmore, 2009).

3.5 Strategic talent management and pivotal positions

Strategic talent management frameworks provide a language for distinguishing between roles that are merely necessary and roles that are pivotal to sustained competitive advantage. Collings and Mellahi emphasise that pivotal positions are those that have a disproportionate impact on strategic outcomes and that require deliberate pipelines and differentiated investment. Applying this to football suggests moving beyond the idea that "players are the talent" to treat the organisation as a system of pivotal decision roles: recruitment leadership, sporting director/technical director, head coach, academy director, and performance-science leadership are roles that shape the long-term trajectory of the club. Internationalisation increases the importance of these roles because it increases complexity and uncertainty; the cost of poor decisions rises, and recovery becomes slower and more expensive (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Brady, Bolchover, and Sturgess' argument about the "football model" for the talent economy reinforces the organisational point: talent alone is not sufficient; the organisation must manage talent through systems that align incentives, roles, and evaluation. In football, this includes how clubs identify talent, integrate talent into coherent playing models, and manage the trade-off between short-term performance and long-term asset development. The model therefore treats talent systems as mechanisms that connect governance orientation to outcomes. For example, a geocentric governance orientation is expected to require a more formalised talent system with standardised

evaluation criteria and cross-unit knowledge transfer routines. A polycentric orientation may rely more heavily on local talent identification and adaptation, which can be effective if accountability is clear and learning mechanisms exist (Brady et al., 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

The model also distinguishes between "talent acquisition" and "talent architecture". Talent acquisition refers to sourcing players and staff; talent architecture refers to how the organisation designs pathways, roles, and decision processes that make talent productive. A club can acquire star players without a coherent talent architecture; in such cases, performance may be volatile, and the club may struggle to convert talent into durable advantage. Conversely, clubs can build competitive advantage through coherent architecture—academy pathways, recruitment methodology, and performance systems—even if spending is constrained. This distinction supports the thesis' claim that the organisational problem is one of design under constraint rather than simply of resource acquisition (Gilmore, 2009).

Finally, strategic talent management is linked to legitimacy. Pivotal positions are often visible to stakeholders: head coaches and sporting directors are interpreted as symbols of direction. Clubs must therefore manage both the technical competence and the narrative legitimacy of pivotal appointments. The model expects that clubs with stronger identity process can make larger strategic shifts with less legitimacy damage, because they can narratively justify decisions and maintain consistency in how choices are explained. Clubs with weaker identity process are expected to experience repeated legitimacy crises when strategic shifts are interpreted as opportunistic or incoherent (Anderson, 1991; Burton & Chadwick, 2019).

3.6 The analytical model: constructs, dimensions, and expected relationships

The chapter proposes an analytical model organised around four interdependent dimensions:

(1) identity and legitimacy management;

(2) internationalisation strategy and governance orientation;

(3) staffing and talent architecture;

(4) asset maximisation and value capture.

Identity and legitimacy management concerns how clubs sustain authenticity narratives and manage stakeholder expectations under global scrutiny. Governance orientation concerns how authority, decision rights, and coordination routines are distributed across borders. Staffing and talent architecture concerns how clubs design roles, pipelines, and mobility patterns to protect decision quality in pivotal positions. Asset maximisation and value capture concerns how clubs convert sporting and symbolic assets into durable economic value while protecting those assets from erosion (Gilmore, 2009).

The model is mechanism-based. Rather than assuming that internationalisation automatically improves performance through market expansion, it proposes that outcomes depend on how clubs handle coordination complexity and legitimacy exposure. Internationalisation intensity increases both coordination demands and legitimacy risk because more actors influence decisions and more audiences interpret them. Governance orientation and staffing architecture are treated as levers that mitigate these pressures. Identity process is treated as a conditioning factor: it influences how organisational choices are interpreted and whether the club can sustain legitimacy when strategic trade-offs are visible. Asset maximisation is treated as an outcome domain that depends

on sustained decision quality and temporal alignment (Gilmore, 2009; Dowling et al., 2023).

To make the model research-ready, the chapter articulates relationships that can be expressed as testable expectations. First, higher internationalisation intensity should increase the payoff of integrated governance routines because coordination losses rise non-linearly with complexity. Second, governance–staffing coherence should predict decision consistency: clubs whose decision rights and staffing architecture align with their internationalisation strategy are expected to show more stable recruitment methodology and performance systems. Third, identity process should moderate legitimacy volatility: clubs with stronger identity process are expected to sustain stakeholder support during strategic changes, while clubs with weaker identity process are expected to experience recurrent legitimacy shocks. Fourth, asset maximisation is expected to be sustainable when staffing stability in pivotal roles enables learning and when governance routines protect long-term assets from being sacrificed to short-term performance pressure (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Gilmore, 2009).

The model's advantage is that it provides a coherent map for interpreting seemingly disparate phenomena in football: global fan engagement, ownership controversies, transfer strategies, academy investment, managerial turnover, and brand narratives. Rather than treating these as separate topics, the model treats them as coupled outcomes of organisational choices under global ecosystem constraints. This enables the thesis to move beyond descriptive accounts of global football and toward an explanation of why clubs differ in their ability to internationalise while maintaining performance and legitimacy (Croci & Ammirante, 1999; Taylor, 2006).

3.7 Operationalisation: translating constructs into observable indicators

Operationalisation is treated here as a correspondence problem: theoretical constructs must map onto observable evidence without losing meaning. The model does not require that every construct be measured with a single indicator; instead, it proposes indicator families that triangulate the construct. The aim is disciplined inference: to make later analysis explicit about what counts as evidence for a dimension and what would count as evidence of misalignment. This section outlines operational indicators for each dimension and clarifies how they can be used consistently across clubs and contexts (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

3.7.1 Identity and legitimacy management

Identity content can be operationalised through official narratives and symbolic commitments: mission statements, historical claims, slogans, and formal representations of club values. However, identity process requires behavioural evidence. Indicators include:

consistency between public claims and strategic actions over time; governance routines for supporter engagement and dispute resolution;

crisis response patterns (speed, transparency, alignment between technical and commercial messaging);

stability of symbolic practices (e.g., decisions about heritage markers, community programmes, and representation).

Importantly, these indicators must be read in relation to context: what counts as "authentic" varies, but the presence of routines that stabilise meaning is a generalisable organisational capability (Anderson, 1991; Shobe, 2008).

3.7.2 Governance orientation and internationalisation strategy

Governance orientation can be operationalised by tracing decision rights and coordination routines for high-leverage decisions. Observable indicators include: (i) who has final authority on head-coach selection and dismissal; (ii) whether recruitment decisions follow documented processes or depend on individual discretion; (iii) the structure of decision forums (committees, veto rights, reporting lines); (iv) the degree of standardisation in performance methodology across units (e.g., academy, senior team, satellite clubs); and (v) the presence of integration roles tasked with coordinating cross-border activity. Strategy–governance misalignment can be identified when a club claims a global strategy but maintains domestic, informal governance that cannot cope with cross-border complexity (Perlmutter, 1969; Heenan & Perlmutter, 1979).

3.7.3 Staffing and talent architecture

Staffing architecture can be operationalised through role design, stability, and mobility patterns. Indicators include: (i) identification of pivotal positions and whether they are supported by pipelines; (ii) tenure and turnover rates in key technical roles; (iii) the presence of specialised functions (analytics, performance science leadership, recruitment operations); (iv) the configuration of PCN/HCN/TCN logics in senior roles; and (v) deliberate transfer patterns that function as knowledge transfer rather than reactive replacement. The model predicts that high internationalisation intensity raises the value of structured talent architecture because decision errors become more costly and coordination demands rise (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Dowling et al., 2023).

3.7.4 Asset maximisation and value capture

Asset maximisation is operationalised as the club's capacity to build and protect assets with long gestation cycles: academies, scouting networks, training facilities,

medical/performance systems, and durable brand meaning. Indicators include: (i) investment continuity in infrastructure; (ii) the stability of development pathways from academy to first team; (iii) evidence of learning accumulation in recruitment and development (e.g., reduced volatility in squad construction strategy); and (iv) mechanisms that protect long-term assets during short-term performance downturns. Value capture can be examined through the conversion of sporting and symbolic assets into revenue streams and resilience—yet the model treats value capture as dependent on organisational design rather than as an independent driver (Gilmore, 2009; Brady et al., 2008).

Operationalisation also requires defining what would count as "design under constraint" in a practical sense. For example, repeated strategic resets, frequent turnover in pivotal roles, and contradictory recruitment philosophies are evidence that the organisation lacks stabilising routines and is being pushed by short-term pressures. Conversely, a club that maintains stable methodology while adapting tactics and personnel indicates the presence of learning routines and coherent governance. The empirical value of the model is to provide a consistent logic for interpreting such patterns rather than treating each change as an isolated event (Gilmore, 2009).

3.8 Peer-reviewed evidence-informed illustrations aligned to the model

The illustrations below are not presented as exhaustive case studies. They are peer-reviewed, theory-relevant examples that show how researchers have observed the model's mechanisms in contemporary football contexts. Each illustration follows the same logic: construct focus, study approach (as reported), and the implication for the

thesis model. This design prevents anecdotal drift while meeting the need for concrete examples grounded in credible evidence.

3.8.1 Multi-club internationalisation and governance: City Football Group (CFG)

Construct focus: governance orientation, transnational coordination, and asset/value capture in a network structure. Richardson analyses the internationalisation of City Football Group as a multi-club ownership configuration, examining how the group expands across countries and how this expansion is coordinated. The study is particularly relevant because it frames internationalisation as an organisational strategy enacted through governance mechanisms rather than as a simple accumulation of commercial partnerships. It also highlights that multi-club structures raise governance questions about integrity, competitive balance, and the distribution of benefits across the network (Richardson, 2024).

Implication for the analytical model: multi-club structures intensify interface problems and make staffing architecture a governance tool. Coordination across clubs requires roles and routines that standardise certain practices (e.g., recruitment methodology, performance development principles) while allowing adaptation to local contexts. From the model's perspective, CFG illustrates why "geocentric" coordination is difficult but potentially valuable: it can create learning benefits and talent pathways, yet it also increases legitimacy exposure because stakeholders may perceive network strategies as corporate or as distorting competition. The model therefore expects that sustainability depends on explicit decision rights, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and a defensible identity narrative that explains the network's purpose (Richardson, 2024).

3.8.2 Transfer characteristics within multi-club ownership networks

Construct focus: staffing architecture, talent flow, and control/coordination mechanisms. Quansah and Breuer provide a critical analysis of player transfers within MCO networks, focusing on the characteristics and patterns of transfers. The study treats transfers as organisational outputs shaped by governance and incentives rather than as purely market-driven events. This is valuable for the thesis because it offers an empirically grounded route to operationalisation: transfer flows can be analysed as observable evidence of integration, hierarchy, and value extraction within a network (Quansah & Breuer, 2025).

Implication for the analytical model: when a club is embedded in an ownership network, recruitment and transfer decisions become dual-purpose. They serve sporting aims (strengthening squads) and governance aims (allocating assets, managing pathways, and sometimes capturing value). The model therefore interprets transfer patterns as an indicator family for both staffing architecture and asset maximisation/value capture. Crucially, the model also predicts legitimacy sensitivity: if stakeholders interpret transfers as exploitation of affiliated clubs or as undermining competitive integrity, the identity/legitimacy dimension becomes binding. In that sense, Quansah and Breuer's analysis supports the claim that governance, staffing, and legitimacy are analytically inseparable in multi-club contexts (Quansah & Breuer, 2025).

3.8.3 Identity, ownership, and multi-audience legitimacy: Qatar and Paris Saint-Germain

Construct focus: identity content versus identity process under global scrutiny. Griffin examines how Qatar Sports Investments' ownership of Paris Saint-Germain has shaped the club's identity and the broader meanings attached to it. The study is valuable because

it shows identity not as a stable essence but as a contested interpretive arena. Ownership becomes part of the club's symbolic representation, influencing how audiences interpret commercial strategies, sporting ambition, and political meaning. The analysis thereby provides a peer-reviewed basis for the thesis' multi-audience legitimacy argument (Griffin, 2024).

Implication for the analytical model: identity process conditions the effectiveness of internationalisation. In the model's terms, PSG illustrates that identity content (branding) can be strong while identity process (the capacity to stabilise meaning) is under continuous pressure because audiences interpret ownership, spending, and strategy through competing moral and political frames. This strengthens the rationale for treating legitimacy management as an organisational capability rather than as a communications activity. It also reinforces the link between visible staffing/strategy choices and legitimacy: appointments, signings, and strategic partnerships can be interpreted as signals about what the club "is" and "stands for," shaping how expansion is received by different audiences (Griffin, 2024).

3.8.4 Legitimating contested ownership: Manchester City fan discourse and sportswashing

Construct focus: legitimacy mechanisms and stakeholder interpretation. Kearns analyses discourse in a Manchester City online fan forum to examine how supporters legitimate contested ownership and accusations of sportswashing. The study addresses a key gap in the sportswashing literature by focusing on longer-term, investment-based strategies rather than one-off event hosting. It shows that legitimacy is negotiated through narrative strategies, boundary-drawing, and the delegitimation of critics, rather than being simply a function of performance results or legal compliance (Kearns, 2024).

Implication for the analytical model: legitimacy is produced and contested within supporter communities, and clubs face interpretive politics as a routine condition of globalisation. For the model, the case supports the identity-process construct: clubs need routines that connect organisational decisions to stakeholder sense-making, particularly when internationalisation increases visibility and reputational risk. It also suggests that governance and staffing choices can indirectly affect legitimacy by shaping the club's strategic narrative and by influencing the perceived integrity of decision processes. The model therefore expects that clubs operating under heightened scrutiny benefit from coherent internal alignment between technical decisions and external communication, because misalignment creates narrative openings for legitimacy crises (Kearns, 2024).

3.8.5 Place-based identity as constraint and resource: FC Barcelona

Construct focus: place, identity, and legitimacy as a constraint on organisational design. Shobe analyses the historical relationship between FC Barcelona and Catalan identity, demonstrating how football clubs can operate as carriers of national or regional narratives. The study is valuable because it clarifies why identity in football is not an add-on: it is embedded in place and politics and is therefore resistant to purely commercial reframing. For the thesis model, Barcelona provides a peer-reviewed anchor for treating identity as both symbolic capital and constraint (Shobe, 2008).

Implication for the analytical model: clubs with strong place-based identity face a narrower range of narratively defensible organisational choices when internationalising. Standardisation and corporate expansion can be interpreted as dilution. The model therefore predicts that such clubs require stronger identity process routines—governance structures for stakeholder engagement, consistent symbolic practices, and careful

management of visible appointments—if they are to expand globally without eroding legitimacy. Barcelona also illustrates the model's temporal argument: identity narratives are long-cycle assets that require maintenance; short-cycle decisions can create long-cycle legitimacy costs (Shobe, 2008).

3.8.6 Brand internationalisation strategies: comparative insights from European clubs

Construct focus: strategic pathways to international presence and their organisational requirements. Richelieu develops a conceptual model of sports team brand internationalisation and illustrates it through European football cases including FC Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain, and Olympique de Marseille. The value for the present thesis lies in the connection between strategic positioning and the process through which clubs cultivate international brand meaning. Rather than treating internationalisation as uniform, the model proposes different strategies through which clubs become global brands, implying different organisational priorities and constraints (Richelieu, 2008).

Implication for the analytical model: internationalisation pathways impose different requirements on governance coherence and identity management. A strategy centred on brand reputation and tradition must protect authenticity, while a strategy centred on challenger positioning may rely more heavily on distinctive narratives and targeted market penetration. These differences map onto the thesis model's dimensions: governance orientation shapes the capacity to coordinate cross-border brand actions; staffing architecture shapes the capability to deliver consistent sporting and commercial outputs; identity process shapes legitimacy under scrutiny. Richelieu's comparative approach therefore supports the thesis claim that organisational design choices mediate

the outcomes of globalisation rather than being secondary to market exposure (Richelieu, 2008).

3.9 Integrating the model with the thesis: coherence checks and analytical payoffs

The framework developed here provides coherence checks that can be applied when analysing any club's internationalisation claims. If a club claims a global strategy, the model asks whether governance and staffing architecture reflect a compatible orientation, rather than assuming that globalisation is primarily a commercial phenomenon. If a club expands internationally while maintaining domestic, informal decision rights in pivotal sporting roles, the model predicts coordination loss and strategic inconsistency. If a club pursues expansion without routines that stabilise identity narratives, the model predicts legitimacy volatility under scrutiny. These are not moral claims; they are mechanism-based expectations about how organisational design interacts with ecosystem complexity (Dowling et al., 2023).

The model also clarifies why "success" in global football should be treated as multidimensional. Sporting performance, financial resilience, and legitimacy are coupled but not identical. Clubs can achieve short-term sporting success while accumulating legitimacy risk; they can build commercial reach while undermining sporting methodology; they can maintain identity while limiting commercial expansion. By separating dimensions and specifying mechanisms, the model allows the thesis to explain divergent trajectories rather than merely describing them. It provides an analytical vocabulary for identifying what a club is optimising and what it is sacrificing, intentionally or unintentionally, when it internationalises (Gilmore, 2009).

Another payoff is the ability to link micro-organisational choices to macro outcomes. Managerial turnover, recruitment process changes, and shifts in academy strategy often look like isolated events; the model interprets them as signals of governance orientation and temporal alignment. Likewise, controversies about ownership and sportswashing are often treated as external political topics; the model integrates them as legitimacy dynamics that condition organisational feasibility and strategy. In this way, the chapter completes the theoretical arc begun in Chapters 1–2 and provides a platform for coherent synthesis in the remainder of the thesis (Anderson, 1991; Kearns, 2024; Griffin, 2024).

3.10 Limitations of the framework and directions for disciplined application

The framework is intentionally synthetic, and this creates limitations that must be acknowledged to maintain academic discipline. First, the model is not designed to predict match-level outcomes; it is designed to explain organisational trajectories under global ecosystem constraints. Second, constructs such as identity process and legitimacy are inherently interpretive and cannot be reduced to single quantitative measures without loss. The model therefore encourages triangulation: combining narrative evidence (communications, stakeholder responses) with organisational indicators (turnover, decision routines, investment continuity). Third, the framework does not assume a single "best" governance orientation. Ethnocentric, polycentric, and geocentric configurations can all be viable depending on identity constraints, resources, and strategic aims; the model's contribution is to specify the trade-offs and coherence requirements (Perlmutter, 1969).

Applied carefully, the framework supports disciplined empirical work and transparent argumentation. It encourages the thesis to avoid two common errors: (i) treating

globalisation as a descriptive label rather than an organisational challenge, and (ii) treating clubs as brands without analysing the organisational systems that produce and sustain the brand. By centring governance orientation and staffing architecture, the framework makes the organisational mechanisms explicit. By treating identity and legitimacy as boundary conditions, it avoids a purely economic account that cannot explain stakeholder conflict and reputational volatility. By including peer-reviewed illustrations, it grounds the framework in the existing scholarly record and reduces reliance on journalistic narratives (Richelieu, 2008; Richardson, 2024).

The chapter therefore closes the conceptual stage of the thesis. It provides definitions, mechanisms, and operational indicators that can be used consistently in later analysis and in the final synthesis. In that sense, it acts as the hinge between the literature-building work of Chapters 1–2 and the thesis' concluding argument about what organisational designs enable clubs to internationalise while sustaining performance, legitimacy, and asset development over time (Gilmore, 2009; Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

3.11 Additional mechanisms: platformisation, regulation, and organisational slack

Platformisation has reshaped how value is distributed in football ecosystems. Streaming platforms, social media, and algorithmic discovery affect which clubs gain global visibility and how fans engage. This creates a dependence on intermediaries whose incentives may not align with clubs' long-term identity and sporting priorities. From an organisational perspective, platform dependence increases the value of boundary-spanning roles and routines: clubs must translate platform metrics into strategic decisions without allowing short-term engagement signals to crowd out long-cycle asset development. The model therefore treats platformisation as a contextual amplifier of the

legitimacy and time mechanisms described earlier: it raises the speed of interpretation and the cost of delayed response while simultaneously increasing the temptation to optimise for short-term attention (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2023).

Regulation and governance by leagues and governing bodies also function as boundary conditions. Clubs are constrained by rules on transfers, financial sustainability, ownership compatibility, and competition integrity. These constraints interact with internationalisation in two ways. First, they shape feasible governance architectures: multi-club ownership structures, for example, raise integrity concerns that trigger regulatory scrutiny and require internal compliance routines. Second, they influence stakeholder legitimacy: even when rules are formally met, perceptions of "fairness" may be contested. The model therefore treats compliance routines and integrity signalling as part of governance orientation, particularly for clubs whose strategy depends on cross-club coordination or state-linked ownership structures (Richardson, 2024; Quansah & Breuer, 2025).

A further organisational mechanism is slack and resilience. Clubs operating in volatile environments may require organisational slack—financial buffers, stable processes, and spare capacity—to absorb shocks without constant strategic reversal. Slack is not inefficiency in this framing; it can be a design choice that protects long-term projects such as academy development, methodological learning in recruitment, and cultural integration routines. Because football organisations face noisy performance signals, the presence or absence of slack can influence whether governance is able to hold to longer horizons. The model thus treats slack as a moderator: under low slack, short-term pressures dominate; under higher slack, clubs may sustain coherent strategies even

through adverse runs, enabling asset maximisation and identity process continuity (Gilmore, 2009).

3.12 Extended operational guide: how the model can be applied consistently

To apply the model consistently, the thesis can use a stepwise analytical logic. Step 1 is to define internationalisation intensity in a way that matches the thesis' conceptual framing. Instead of using one metric, the analysis can triangulate intensity through evidence of cross-border activity in sporting operations (e.g., scouting networks, academies, recruitment footprints), commercial operations (global partnerships, platform distribution, touring), and organisational structure (presence of international offices or networked ownership arrangements). Step 2 is to classify governance orientation by tracing decision rights in pivotal areas and by identifying the routines through which coordination is attempted. Step 3 is to map staffing and talent architecture by identifying pivotal positions, stability patterns, and knowledge-transfer mechanisms. Step 4 is to evaluate identity and legitimacy management through the content–process distinction and multi-audience interpretation. Step 5 is to integrate these findings to assess alignment or misalignment and to infer implications for asset maximisation and value capture.

A key discipline in this approach is to treat claims and practices separately. Clubs often articulate a global strategy in communications; the model requires checking whether organisational arrangements support the claim. For instance, a club may emphasise a data-driven recruitment philosophy, yet rely on ad hoc decision-making concentrated in a single individual. A club may frame itself as youth-development oriented, yet frequently block academy pathways by short-term signings. A club may claim local authenticity, yet repeatedly adopt decisions that supporters interpret as purely commercial. The model's

value is that it provides a vocabulary for identifying these inconsistencies without moralising: it treats them as design problems with consequences for performance and legitimacy.

Operationally, the model also encourages temporal structuring. Evidence should be interpreted relative to the clock it belongs to: match outcomes are a fast clock; managerial tenures often sit on an intermediate clock; squad construction and academy development operate on longer clocks; identity narratives operate on the longest clock. If analysis mixes clocks without distinction, it risks attributing causality incorrectly (e.g., attributing a short-term success to a long-term structural change that has not yet matured). By organising evidence by clock, the thesis can improve causal plausibility and reduce the temptation to over-interpret episodic events as strategic transformations.

3.13 Additional peer-reviewed illustrations: country branding and fan perception

3.13.1 Qatar's football strategy as country branding and its organisational implications

(Ginesta,2014) analyses football as part of Qatar's country branding strategy, highlighting how investment in football functions as soft power and place branding. While the article is not a club-level organisational study, it is relevant to the thesis model because it clarifies why ownership and sponsorship can become inseparable from identity narratives. When a club becomes a vehicle for nation branding, legitimacy dynamics intensify: stakeholders interpret decisions through geopolitical frames, and organisational actions are evaluated not only in sporting terms but also in moral and political terms. For the model, this strengthens the decision to treat legitimacy as multi-audience and to incorporate integrity signalling and stakeholder interpretation into the governance dimension.

3.13.2 Fan perceptions and legitimacy in the PSG context

(Cho,2020) examines fan perceptions in relation to PSG ownership and the broader political environment in which the club operates. The study underscores that legitimacy is not a simple function of organisational compliance or sporting success; it is mediated by how fans interpret the club's relationship to states, governing bodies, and media systems. This aligns with the model's identity-process mechanism: clubs require routines that manage meaning and that address tension between competing expectations. For the thesis, such work provides a basis for later operationalisation of legitimacy management through evidence of supporter discourse, perceptions, and organisational responses, rather than relying solely on financial or sporting indicators.

3.14 Model propositions: making the framework testable without oversimplifying

Turning a conceptual framework into a usable analytical tool requires explicit expectations that guide empirical interpretation. The goal is not to force the thesis into a strict hypothesis-testing design, but to make causal reasoning transparent: if the thesis claims that governance orientation or talent architecture matters, it should be clear what patterns would be consistent with that claim and what patterns would challenge it. The propositions below are written as research-ready statements. They can be used later as a checklist for interpreting evidence in a disciplined way (Perlmutter, 1969; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Dowling et al., 2023).

Proposition 1: coordination payoff. As internationalisation intensity rises, the marginal value of integrated governance routines rises, because coordination losses increase non-linearly with ecosystem complexity. Empirically, this implies that clubs with broader cross-border activity should display more formalised decision rights, clearer mandates for pivotal roles, and more structured information integration in recruitment and

performance. Where such routines are absent, the model expects higher volatility in strategic direction and greater sensitivity to short-term shocks.

Proposition 2: governance–strategy coherence. Clubs that articulate a global strategy but retain domestic, informal decision rights in pivotal sporting positions are expected to experience governance–strategy mismatch. Observable signs include repeated changes in recruitment philosophy, oscillation between short-term star acquisitions and long-term development rhetoric, and recurrent conflict between technical and commercial leadership. In contrast, clubs that align decision rights with their internationalisation strategy should show more stable routines and clearer accountability.

Proposition 3:identity moderation. Identity process moderates the effectiveness of internationalisation. Clubs with stronger identity process (the capability to reproduce and defend narratives through routines) should be able to expand internationally with lower legitimacy volatility because they can narratively justify change and maintain visible alignment between claims and actions. Clubs with weak identity process may experience legitimacy crises when expansion decisions are interpreted as inconsistent with the club's stated identity (Anderson, 1991; Shobe, 2008; Burton & Chadwick, 2019).

Proposition 4: multi-audience trade-offs. The greater the divergence between key audiences (e.g., local supporters and global followers), the more the club requires explicit governance routines for trade-off resolution. Empirically, this should appear as defined roles for stakeholder engagement, structured supporter communication channels, and internal coordination between communications and sporting leadership. Without such routines, the model expects reactive communications and inconsistent positioning across audiences.

Proposition 5: pivotal role protection. Clubs that identify pivotal positions and protect them with stable mandates and appropriate evaluation horizons are expected to show higher decision consistency in recruitment and development. This does not mean that pivotal roles never change; it means that changes are justified as methodological adjustments rather than abrupt reversals. Observable indicators include continuity in playing model, stability in recruitment criteria, and sustained investment in scouting and development systems (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Brady et al., 2008).

Proposition 6: learning accumulation. Staffing stability in roles responsible for methodology (e.g., recruitment operations, performance science leadership) enables learning accumulation and reduces reliance on repeated strategic resets. Empirically, this may appear as gradual refinement of recruitment patterns, increased integration between academy and first team, and reduced volatility in squad construction. Conversely, frequent turnover in methodological roles is expected to increase dependence on opportunistic signings and short-cycle changes.

Proposition 7: asset–legitimacy coupling. Asset maximisation is sustainable only when value capture does not erode identity assets. Because identity is part of the club's value proposition, strategies that increase revenue while damaging perceived authenticity may produce short-term gains but long-term fragility. Observable signs of erosion include persistent supporter conflicts about commercialisation, weakened community attachment, and reputational shocks that reduce sponsor willingness to associate. Conversely, clubs that protect identity while investing in long-gestation assets are expected to display greater resilience (Gilmore, 2009).

Proposition 8: ecosystem dependence. The more a club's internationalisation depends on external intermediaries (platforms, sponsors, agents), the greater the need for boundary-spanning roles and compliance routines that translate external dependencies into internal decision processes. Without such roles, clubs risk being steered by external incentives, producing misalignment between sporting priorities, commercial pressures, and legitimacy management.

3.15 Governance and managerial implications for thesis closure

Because the present chapter is intended to close the thesis logic, it should also inform how the concluding argument is constructed. The model encourages a conclusion that is not a simple recap of literature but a synthesis organised around the four dimensions. A disciplined closing chapter can therefore: (i) restate how internationalisation in football creates coupled demands on governance, staffing, identity, and assets; (ii) summarise what the peer-reviewed illustrations suggest about these mechanisms; (iii) discuss boundary conditions and limitations (interpretive nature of legitimacy, regulatory context, performance volatility); and (iv) propose future research directions that follow directly from the model's propositions.

Chapters 1 and 2 develop two complementary strands that must be held together for the thesis to remain coherent. Chapter 1 frames professional football as a globalising field in which clubs pursue international reach while remaining anchored in place, history, and identity. Chapter 2 frames international human-resource management as a set of organisational choices through which multinational organisations coordinate across borders and sustain performance. The present chapter's model connects these strands by placing governance orientation and staffing architecture at the centre of the analysis, and

by treating identity and legitimacy as boundary conditions that shape what designs are feasible and how they are interpreted.

First, the model translates the globalising field logic from Chapter 1 into an organisational problem statement: clubs are not merely exposed to larger markets; they are exposed to a greater number of dependencies and interpretive arenas. This is why internationalisation is treated as an ecosystem and interface challenge. Second, the model translates the IHRM logic from Chapter 2 into football-relevant levers: governance orientation (how authority and coordination are distributed), staffing and talent architecture (how pivotal roles and pipelines are designed), and transfer/mobility mechanisms (how knowledge and control move through people).

Seen in this way, the model offers an explicit answer to a recurring risk in the literature: separating "business of football" analyses from "cultural institution" analyses. The thesis proposes that these are not separable domains at the organisational level because decisions that appear purely economic (platform distribution, global partnerships, global recruitment) routinely trigger cultural interpretation and legitimacy response. Likewise, decisions that appear purely cultural (symbolic practices, "DNA" claims, identity narratives) influence commercial attractiveness and the willingness of partners and audiences to engage. The framework is designed to keep these couplings visible and analytically tractable.

3.16 Governance and managerial implications and chapter contribution

Building on the aims and arguments developed in Chapters 1 and 2, the model can be translated into a set of governance and managerial implications that guide the final synthesis, without presuming a formal research design.

First, the framework clarifies how internationalisation should be interpreted in organisational terms: beyond descriptive indicators such as revenue composition or player nationality, the relevant question is how cross-border activity reshapes decision rights, coordination demands, and exposure to external dependencies.

Second, it highlights governance as a design problem: clubs are more likely to sustain cross-border operations when they institutionalise coordination routines and accountabilities that protect sporting methodology from ad-hoc reversals and short-term turbulence, while still enabling local adaptation where it is strategically required.

Third, it specifies staffing and talent architecture as an integration mechanism: sustained internationalisation depends on how pivotal roles are defined, staffed, socialised, and evaluated so that mobility and turnover do not erode learning, decision quality, and continuity.

Fourth, it treats identity and legitimacy as operational constraints: as ownership, sponsorship, and platform visibility intensify interpretive pressure, clubs require routines that stabilise meaning across multiple audiences and that make trade-offs between sporting and commercial priorities governable rather than reactive.

The contribution of this chapter is therefore twofold. Substantively, it argues that the central organisational challenge of global football is design under constraint: clubs must expand and coordinate without eroding identity assets and without allowing ecosystem pressures to overwhelm decision quality. Methodologically, it provides a structured way to interpret evidence and reduce reliance on anecdotal claims. By specifying dimensions, mechanisms, and indicator families, the chapter equips the thesis to make claims that are

falsifiable in principle: it becomes possible to identify what kinds of evidence would support or contradict an interpretation of a club's internationalisation as coherent, partially aligned, or misaligned.

3.17 Construct glossary and operational definitions for consistent usage

Internationalisation intensity refers to the degree to which a club's sporting, commercial, and organisational activities depend on cross-border markets and networks, not simply the presence of foreign players or fans. Governance orientation refers to the distribution of decision rights and the routines through which cross-border coordination is achieved, interpreted through EPRG as an organising lens. Staffing and talent architecture refers to how the club designs pivotal roles, pipelines, and information integration routines that protect decision quality under uncertainty. Identity content refers to the narratives and symbols that a club claims; identity process refers to the organisational capability to reproduce, adapt, and defend those narratives under scrutiny. Asset maximisation and value capture refer to how the club builds and protects long-gestation assets (methodology, academies, infrastructure, brand meaning) and converts them into sustainable value without eroding the symbolic base that underpins legitimacy.

These definitions do not eliminate ambiguity; football organisations are complex, and available evidence is uneven. However, they enable the thesis to use the same vocabulary consistently when interpreting peer-reviewed work and when constructing the final synthesis. In practice, this means that when the thesis describes a club as "geocentric", it should point to evidence of integrated decision rights and standardised routines; when it describes identity management, it should distinguish between content claims and process

capabilities; and when it discusses asset maximisation, it should focus on continuity and protection of long-term assets rather than on short-term spending levels alone.

3.18 Extended discussion: multi-club ownership as an organisational form

Multi-club ownership (MCO) networks provide a particularly clear illustration of why the thesis treats internationalisation as organisational design rather than as market expansion. An MCO is not only a portfolio of clubs; it is a governance system that must coordinate competing priorities: competitive performance at each node, the creation of development pathways, the allocation of transfer value, and compliance with integrity norms. In a network form, coordination costs and legitimacy exposure rise together. The organisational question is therefore whether the network creates learning and pathway advantages that outweigh the frictions and risks it introduces. Richardson's analysis of City Football Group and Quansah and Breuer's analysis of transfer characteristics both point to MCOs as structures in which talent flows can serve multiple functions: development, optimisation of playing time, value protection, and strategic positioning across leagues. For the thesis model, this confirms that staffing architecture can be a governance mechanism, and that transfer patterns are an observable output of that mechanism (Richardson, 2024; Quansah & Breuer, 2025).

MCOs also highlight a tension between integration and differentiation. Too much integration can raise integrity concerns and reduce local legitimacy, because stakeholders may perceive the local club as a subsidiary whose priorities are subordinated to the network. Too little integration, however, can eliminate the potential benefits of a network form, turning the group into a loose holding company with limited learning effects. In terms of the EPRG typology, MCOs make the limits of simple labels visible: a network

can be geocentric in recruitment methodology while remaining polycentric in supporter engagement and local identity work. The model therefore encourages the thesis to avoid treating orientation categories as static labels and instead to analyse orientation across domains (sporting operations, commercial operations, identity routines).

For clubs within an MCO, identity management becomes more demanding. Local audiences may accept international investment when it is framed as strengthening competitive prospects without erasing local meaning, but they may resist if they interpret the club as being used instrumentally. This is consistent with the identity-process logic: legitimacy is stabilised by routines that make the club's actions intelligible and defensible over time. Even in non-MCO contexts, the MCO discussion matters because it foregrounds the same organisational issue at a more visible scale: cross-border expansion increases dependencies, and the organisation must decide how to govern those dependencies without losing legitimacy and without eroding long-term assets.

3.19 HR mechanisms that operationalise the model in football organisations

The model's staffing and talent dimension can be made more concrete by linking it to specific HR mechanisms commonly discussed in international HRM. Selection and staffing decisions in cross-border contexts typically involve trade-offs between technical competence, institutional knowledge, and legitimacy. In football, these trade-offs are intensified because roles are highly visible and outcomes are publicly evaluated. For pivotal roles, the model implies that selection criteria should be explicit about both competence and narrative fit: what skills are required to implement a playing model, how decision rights are structured, and how the role is expected to interact with supporters and

external stakeholders. Treating fit as a public and retrospective construction reinforces the need for onboarding and communication routines, not only selection screens.

Development and knowledge transfer are equally central. International HRM research highlights that capabilities travel through people and routines, not only through formal policies. In football, this implies that clubs seeking global coordination must invest in development systems that encode methodology: shared performance frameworks, common recruitment evaluation templates, and structured learning processes that survive turnover. Transfers of key staff across units can function as socialisation and coordination mechanisms, but they need clear mandates to avoid simply exporting home practices that do not fit local contexts. The model therefore expects the highest payoff when mobility is used deliberately to diffuse core methodology while leaving room for local adaptation in identity work and stakeholder engagement (Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Brewster et al., 2011).

Finally, the model suggests that performance management in football should be interpreted as an organisational design problem. If evaluation horizons are too short for strategic roles, clubs will overreact to noise and undermine learning. If evaluation horizons are too long without accountability, clubs may tolerate persistent misalignment. The model therefore supports an argument for differentiated horizons: fast feedback for match preparation and tactical execution; medium horizons for squad construction and performance methodology; longer horizons for identity routines and asset development. This differentiated-horizon idea is consistent with the thesis' emphasis on time as a strategic dimension and helps explain why some clubs oscillate between resets while others accumulate advantage through incremental refinement (Gilmore, 2009).

Conclusions

This thesis addressed a question that is easy to state yet difficult to manage in practice: why do some clubs succeed in sustaining internationalisation—understood as expansion across markets, audiences, and global networks—while others, despite pursuing similar ambitions, experience instability, loss of coherence, and intermittent outcomes. The core argument developed across the thesis is that the difference depends neither merely on the intensity with which a club "goes global" nor on isolated tactical decisions. Rather, it depends on the organisational design that makes internationalisation viable over time. In this view, global growth becomes sustainable only when governance, the architecture of staffing and talent management, and the constraints of identity and legitimacy are aligned and mutually reinforcing.

In this sense, the global staffing lens—originally developed to interpret multinational enterprises—was not used as an end in itself, but as an analytical tool to make contemporary professional football intelligible as a transnational organisational form. Clubs face trade-offs typical of global firms, yet amplified by the specificity of the sporting product: outcome uncertainty, rapid decision cycles, and continuous reputational pressure. Applying that literature to football therefore served a clear purpose: to organise the main mechanisms through which internationalisation produces either resilience or instability, and to show how "going global" becomes a function of organisational choices rather than a generic consequence of market opportunities.

A first mechanism concerns identity and legitimacy. In football, legitimacy is not a "soft" dimension separable from performance; it operates as a practical constraint that

conditions strategic freedom and organisational stability. Clubs that withstand global transformation tend to preserve coherence between what they claim to be and what they do, especially when they must speak simultaneously to multiple audiences (local supporters, international publics, sponsors, investors, and institutions). Crucially, the thesis distinguishes between identity content and identity process: beyond symbolic narratives, sustainable internationalisation requires routines and practices that stabilise meaning over time. Where this stabilisation is missing, global exposure tends to amplify volatility, trigger reputational crises, and undermine the internal consistency needed to execute strategy.

A second mechanism is the alignment between strategy and governance. When a club pursues global objectives while retaining decision structures and coordination logics typical of a domestic, reactive, or highly personalised organisation, the result is misalignment—and misalignment tends to generate resets: abrupt shifts in direction, rapid turnover in pivotal roles, and loss of methodological continuity. In this thesis, governance is not reduced to ownership arrangements; it concerns how decision rights are distributed, how priorities are translated into routines, and how coherence is maintained across technical, sporting, and commercial domains. Clubs that sustain internationalisation tend to institutionalise criteria, coordination mechanisms, and accountabilities that reduce ad-hoc decision making and protect long-term choices from short-term turbulence.

A third mechanism concerns the quality of the staffing and talent architecture. Acquiring international talent is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. What differentiates more resilient clubs is the presence of an organisational architecture that makes talent

productive and integrable. This includes protecting and staffing pivotal positions, clarifying roles and interfaces across scouting, analytics, performance, and coaching, managing turnover, and establishing socialisation mechanisms through which newcomers can internalise the club's methods and expectations. In this perspective, global staffing is not simply about where individuals come from, but about how mobility, selection, and development are governed so that human capital supports continuity rather than disrupting it.

A fourth mechanism is the management of organisational time. Football operates with multiple clocks: match results follow a fast clock, whereas the development of assets such as academies, infrastructure, technical methodology, and reputational capital requires a long clock. Clubs that fail often confuse these temporalities, misattribute causality, and respond to short-term signals with changes that destroy learning and accumulation. By contrast, sustainability requires a deliberate capacity to protect long-term trajectories while remaining adaptive at the margins. This does not imply rigidity; it implies an organisational discipline that distinguishes between what can be adjusted quickly and what must remain stable to generate compounding returns.

A fifth mechanism concerns the construction and protection of long-gestation assets and the capacity to capture value without eroding legitimacy. In global football, economic benefits do not derive solely from commercial expansion, but from the ability to turn intangible assets into durable rents: brand meaning, relational networks, talent pipelines, and the perceived quality of the sporting experience. Yet these assets are fragile if detached from identity coherence and governance discipline. The thesis therefore emphasises a coupling between asset maximisation and legitimacy management: value

capture remains sustainable when it is consistent with the club's identity processes and when governance prevents short-term extraction from undermining long-term accumulation.

Overall, the thesis argues that clubs that manage to sustain internationalisation are those that build a stable alignment between (i) governance capable of translating strategy into routines and criteria, (ii) a staffing and talent architecture that governs the complexity of global human capital, and (iii) a conscious management of legitimacy and identity treated as operational constraints. The framework developed in the study was instrumental precisely to avoid a reductionist reading of the phenomenon (as a purely commercial or purely sporting issue) and to highlight the organisational mechanisms through which global ambitions become either a source of resilience or a driver of instability.

The limitations of the work stem primarily from its conceptual nature and from the heterogeneity of club-specific contexts. The absence of a systematic empirical test—for instance through a structured comparison of cases, governance indicators, and measures of organisational continuity—limits the possibility of making strong causal claims in a strict sense. Moreover, differences in regulatory and competitive environments across leagues may operate as confounding conditions. These limitations also point directly to future research directions: the framework could be operationalised into observable indicators and applied to a comparative set of clubs, allowing for stronger inference on how governance, staffing architecture, and legitimacy interact under different institutional environments.

In conclusion, internationalisation in professional football is not a linear race toward "more global". It is a selective process that rewards organisational coherence. Clubs gain

or lose sustainability not so much because of the magnitude of expansion, but because of their capacity to design and maintain a decision system and a human-capital architecture that remain compatible with identity constraints and with the complexity of the global ecosystem.

References

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Balzano, M., & Bortoluzzi, G. (2023). The digital transformation of soccer clubs and their business models. *Impresa Progetto – Electronic Journal of Management*, (1). https://doi.org/10.15167/1824-3576/IPEJM2023.1.1527

Bergh, G., & Ohlander, S. (2020). From national to global obsession: Football and football English in the superdiverse 21st century. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 19(S5). https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.627

Binder, J. J., & Findlay, M. (2011, January). *The effects of the Bosman ruling on national and club teams in Europe* (Fourth draft) [Manuscript]. University of Illinois Chicago.

Brady, C., Bolchover, D., & Sturgess, B. (2008). Managing in the talent economy: The football model for business. *California Management Review*, 50(4), 54–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/41166456

Brewster, C., Sparrow, P., Vernon, G., & Houldsworth, E. (2011*). International Human Resource Management* (3rd ed.). Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

Burton, N., & Chadwick, S. (2019). European football supporter attitudes toward ambush marketing. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 20(1), 143–162. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-10-2017-0107

Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A., & Zimmermann, A. (2024). Global talent management: A critical review and research agenda for the new organizational reality. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11, 145–169. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032123-130235

Cho, C. H., Janin, F., Cooper, C., & Rogerson, M. (2020). Neoliberal control devices and social discrimination: The case of Paris Saint-Germain football club fans. *Journal of Accounting and Management Information Systems, 19*(3), 409–443. https://doi.org/10.24818/jamis.2020.03001

Collings, D. G., & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, 19(4), 304-313. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2009.04.001

Collings, D. G., Scullion, H., & Dowling, P. J. (2009). Global staffing: A review and thematic research agenda. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20(6), 1253-1272 https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190902909806

Croci, O., & Ammirante, J. (1999). Soccer in the age of globalization. *Peace Review,* 11(4), 499–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659908426298

Dowling, P. J., Festing, M., & Engle, A. D. (2023). *International Human Resource Management* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Edström, A., & Galbraith, J. R. (1977). Transfer of managers as a coordination and control strategy in multinational organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22(2), 248-263 https://doi.org/10.2307/2391959

Edwards, T., Almond, P., Murray, G., & Tregaskis, O. (2022). International human resource management in multinational companies: Global norm making within strategic action fields. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 32(3), 683–697. https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12422

Fan, D., Zhu, C. J., Huang, X., & Kumar, V. (2021). Mapping the terrain of international human resource management research over the past fifty years: A bibliographic analysis. *Journal of World Business*, 56(2), 101185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2020.101185

Gilmore, S. (2009). The importance of asset maximisation in football: Towards the long-term gestation and maintenance of sustained high performance. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching,* 4(4), 465–488. https://doi.org/10.1260/174795409790291394

Ginesta, X. (2014). The use of football as a country branding strategy: Case of Qatar and FC Barcelona. *International Journal of Sport Communication.* https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513486886

Griffin, T. R. (2024). Identity Matters: Qatar and Paris Saint-Germain. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 13(1), 73–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/21534764.2024.2356290

Hague, E., & Mercer, J. (1998). Geographical memory: The collective memory of place. In B. Graham & P. Howard (Eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (pp. 47–60). Ashgate.

Heenan, D. A., & Perlmutter, H. V. (1979). *Multinational Organization Development: A Social Architecture Perspective.* Addison-Wesley.

Kearns, C. (2024). 'Best run club in the world': Manchester City fans and the legitimation of sportswashing*? International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902231210784

Lazarova, M., Caligiuri, P., & Collings, D. G. (2023). Global work in a rapidly changing world: Implications for international human resource management. *Journal of World Business*, 58(1), 101365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2022.101365

Perlmutter, H. V. (1969). The tortuous evolution of the multinational corporation. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 4(1), 9-18.

Quansah, T. K., & Breuer, C. (2025). Multi-club ownerships (MCOs): A critical analysis of transfer characteristics within football ownership networks. *Soccer & Society.* https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2025.2474581

Richardson, C. (2024). Taking on the world: The internationalisation of City Football Group. *Review of International Business and Strategy*, 34(2), 198–221.

Richelieu, A. (2008). The internationalisation of a sports team brand: The case of European soccer teams. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 10(1), 23–38. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-10-01-2008-B006

Shobe, H. (2008). Place, identity and football: Catalonia, Catalanisme and Football Club Barcelona, 1899–1975. *National Identities*, 10(3), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608940802249965

Taylor, M. (2006). Global players? Football, migration and globalization, c. 1930–2000. *Historical Social Research*, 31(1), 7–30.

Vilela, T., Portela, F., & Santos, M. F. (2018). Towards a pervasive intelligent system on football scouting: A data mining study case. In A. Rocha, H. Adeli, L. P. Reis, & S. Costanzo (Eds.), *Trends and Advances in Information Systems and Technologies* (Vol. 3, pp. 341–351). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77700-9_34