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The relevance of media in football coaching: the case of José Mourinho's leadership approach

Fernando Ilharco*

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Cultura, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, Portugal

This article examines the leadership approach of the football coach José Mourinho, particularly of the relevance of the media for his top performance at Porto (2002–2004), Chelsea (2004–2007), Inter Milan (2008–2010) and Real Madrid (2010–2013). The perspective from which we analyse the work of Mourinho in that period, and his presence in the media, is based on what science calls the paradigm of complexity. This is a relational perspective which, in this case, means not only focusing upon the actions ‘central’ to the activity in question – the technique, tactics, physical preparation and so on – but, with particular relevance, detail and in an integrated fashion, also focusing on the media and the cultural context in which the activity takes place. Key to the transformational work of José Mourinho is his presence in the media, the managing of fame, the challenges and ambitions of the players, the fans and the general public. At stake is a personification of a global system of significance.

Attention is the scarcest resource of the twenty-first century hyper-mediatized societies. We live *in* media,¹ in a society characterized by the abundance of information, created, manipulated, distributed and consumed by us humans.² A dark cloud approaching or a clap of thunder are information, but not the kind of information that surrounds us today. In more developed contemporary societies we are immersed in cultural information. The real, as Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) stated, is now a desert – we live in a media and cultural space, where the images and the narrative of the Internet, television, the cinema and mobile phones are more real than the non-mediatized physical reality by which we are always surrounded.³ Every moment thousands of visual, audible and tactile stimulants compete for our attention. In this context capturing someone's attention is a key strategy for success. Herbert Simon (1916–2001), winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics, highlighted the issue:

what information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it.⁴

Nowadays, top football managers are global celebrities and focal points of attention, and their role is highly prized in media, commercial and political terms.⁵ An important aspect to the success of coach José Mourinho, in arguably the world's most

*Email: ilharco@ucp.pt

popular sport, is the attention and fame he commands in a hyper-mediatized context, together with his careful management of this within an overall holistic approach.⁶

José Mourinho started his career as head coach of professional European football in 2000 at Benfica, in Lisbon. In 2001, he coached União de Leiria for a few months and early 2002 he went to Porto, in the North of Portugal. There he started a successful and sometimes polemic career. He led the football team for two or three years at each one of the clubs he worked with. At Porto he won the Portuguese championships of 2002–2003 and 2003–2004, the Portuguese Cup 2002–2003, the Supercup Cândido de Oliveira in 2003, the UEFA Cup in 2002–2003, the UEFA Champions League 2003–2004 and the UEFA Super Cup 2002–2003. While coaching Chelsea from 2004 to 2007, he won twice the Premier League, the FA Cup 2006–2007, the Football League Cup in 2004–2005 and 2006–2007 and the FA Community Shield 2005–2006. In Inter Milan he won the Serie A twice, in 2008–2009 and 2009–2010, the Coppa Italia, 2009–2010, the Supercoppa of Italy 2008, and he led the team to winning the UEFA Champions League of 2009–2010. At Real Madrid he won the Copa del Rey in 2010–2011, La Liga in 2011–2012 and the Supercopa of Spain in 2012.

In the summer of 2013, José Mourinho left Real Madrid and went for Chelsea, again. Yet this time his leadership at Chelsea would be of another kind. Mourinho aimed at staying at Chelsea longer than the usual two or three years. He planned to work for 10 or more years of sustainable success. ‘It’s up to me to show I deserve to be here for a long time’, said Mourinho, at the press conference of 10 June 2013. His plan was to build a dynasty for the long-term, as it was referred to in the press.⁷ His challenge was not anymore a transformational one, of two to three years of individual intense work, high motivation, team stimulation and relationship development, well along the lines of a transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio 2006). His goal, that time, was to stay longer at Chelsea. His leadership style changed to accommodate this new challenge. Mourinho claimed in earlier 2014, eight months on at Chelsea, that his management style was always going to change when he settled down at a club; and, he insisted, it was the case:

I don’t know if my reputation is unfair or not. (...) One thing is to lead a team where I want to try to get the best results immediately. For a couple of years your leadership can be much more confrontational. It’s a completely different way to do it. It’s one thing to have a relationship with my players that I know are going to be my players for a couple of years. Another thing is to educate players with a relationship and with an empathy that I’m sure is going to be for five, six, seven, eight years. Completely different.⁸

But it did not go well and he left Chelsea early in the 2015–2016 season. Yet, that was a different challenge, which we do not analyse here. This article analyses Mourinho’s leadership from 2002 at Porto to 2013 at Real Madrid.

Looking at the media performance of Mourinho, this paper is part of a growing line of research into the media, society and sports issues. The relationship between media and sport has become of particular interest to media scholars over the last decade. Sports and the mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship.⁹ ‘Sport and the media have become associated to such an extent that it is often difficult to discuss sport in modern society without acknowledging its relationship with the media’.¹⁰ Nowadays, a European national football clash, such as Real Madrid – Barcelona, is watched live by several hundred million viewers all over the world.

Mourinho is a holistic football coach, one that considers the media highly important on a day-to-day basis.¹¹ His way of working fits well in a trend, running for some decades, of growing visibility of football managers:

The relationship between managers and the media has been part of a wider historical process that has seen the visibility of managers increase [...], reflecting not only developments within the media, but also those in the football industry. In the light of changes in the nature of competition and commercialization, the media's relationship with football has grown closer. (...) [I]t is hard to disentangle the manager's role as a media figure from his actual impact on the team's performance. The media wants managers who make [...] news.¹²

More than simply performing a job or exercising a profession, Mourinho constantly articulates a symbolic and emotional narrative, in his words, gestures and attitudes which are reflected in the media, involving each of the players in a motivational experience. A media global adventure presents itself to the players and Mourinho, challenging them in a way aimed to promote effectiveness.

This paper is divided into three sections and a conclusion. First, we introduce the theoretical perspective that shapes our analysis. Then we analyse Mourinho's media performance, from Porto in 2002 up to Real Madrid in 2013, as a central aspect of his professional activity. Finally, before the concluding remarks, we show how Mourinho uses the concept of history, the making of history live on the media, as a narrative that leads him and his team.

The perspective that makes a difference

Contemporary professional football essentially is not physical or technical, nor is it tactical – it is an intense media activity, which is emotional, global, and total. It is the 'global love-match between football and television'.¹³ It is a global human activity, both engaging and intensely emotional and mental – 'like man, football is a whole', says Mourinho.¹⁴ At the height of competition, it is the media context and the story being told that can make a difference. The objectives of the season are central to an affectionate and emotional experience, covering all aspects of the players' lives, of the group as a living being and as an actor making history daily, in training sessions and games, during coach journeys and group meals and at press conferences and media interviews.

This perspective is useful to understanding José Mourinho's performance. This is a relational perspective which does not focus directly on the actions 'central' to the activity – the technique, tactics, physical preparation and so on – but which rather, with particular relevance and detail, focuses on the media-cultural context in which that activity takes place. From this perspective, it is central to the work of José Mourinho, the world of entertainment, the managing of fame, the challenges and ambitions of the players and the actions of the fans and the general public. 'Today a football coach who only understands football is a bad coach',¹⁵ Mourinho repeats. Football is about the relationships on which it is based: the relationship with the public, the structure of the club, the fans, the opposition, the media, the business world, the city and so on.¹⁶ It is a global spectacle, an emotional catharsis and a competition of intelligence, motivation, effort and ambition. The team lives for the kind of spirit that creates an adventure of conquest, based on an injection of motivation which feeds, both psychologically and physically, on dedication, effort and a rhythm of wins which is part of a global show.

An appropriate perspective to understand the work and the media historical narrative of Mourinho, we submit in this article, is based on what science calls the paradigm of complexity.¹⁷ This model of thinking and understanding reality is somewhat different from the traditional Cartesian paradigm – René Descartes (1596–1650) –, in which much of scientific research, and, therefore, much technical and professional activity is centred. This traditional, reductionist paradigm, suggests that thinking is the foundation of existence. This led to the separation of mind and body, to the dualist models of science and life in society – mental vs. physical, object vs. subject, thinking vs. acting, group vs. leader, manager vs. worker, representation vs. reality and so on. The separation between mind and body, division and hierarchies, are such paradigmatic notions that they dominate traditional scientific and philosophical thinking. This model reduces the study of the phenomenon in question – a professional, an organization, a team – to its constituent parts, assuming that from a detailed understanding of the parts, and their subsequent joining, one understands the whole, the entire phenomenon. The assumption is the more we know about each element, the more we know about the entity as a whole.¹⁸ Thus, a professional would be the sum of his or her technical and management skills; a football player would be the combination of several aspects, including physical, psychological, technical, disciplinary and tactical aspects. From this understanding one sees the world as a machine. From the perspective of complexity, that is no longer so.

The epistemological perspective we use in this article, while not completely breaking away with the old ways, requires a new openness in describing and analysing the many relationships among entities. The complexity perspective assumes that the world is not a determinist machine that current Cartesian models presuppose. It is a way of thinking that involves an approach that does not occur from the outside in, but always within the phenomenon studied. Each element is only distinguished insofar as it is an element of the whole, never leaving it or being isolated and only serving to show why it is an integral part. It is a logic in which understanding the parts also means understanding the whole, because the part is always something within the whole. In turn, understanding the whole entails by its very nature understanding the parts as well, because if we switch off one element of the whole to which it belongs, we decontextualize not only the part but the whole itself. The intrinsic logic of the whole – of a person, of a group, of an organization – is relational, interactive and interdependent. Complex thought challenges us to see both the wood-and-the-trees.¹⁹

Rich in notions coming from diverse areas of science, this wholistic perspective emphasizes the relational aspects and the emergent patterns of events. The key notions that we use in this paper are the ideas of contextualization (everything is what it is within a specific context); the primacy of situation (the capacity to adapt is decisive); the person, the group, the organization, as a whole; the emergence (the appearance in a collective, a group or an organization, of characteristics that do not pertain to the parts that make it up); the notion of far-from-equilibrium (living systems organize themselves, survive and prosper far from conditions of equilibrium); the ‘butterfly effect’ of chaos theory, which establishes that a small alteration in the initial characteristics of a given situation may generate through positive feedback a large alteration as the situation evolves; the neighbourhood interaction (the influence exerted by the elements of a system on their immediate neighbours, rather than the influence or determination of top-down ‘instructions’); and the teleonomy (the purpose and direction that exists in living systems).²⁰

According to the wholistic perspective we follow, what is most important is not the entities themselves – whether they be things or people – but the relationships. Clearly, every player has his own skills and capabilities. However, they are not to be considered in their absolute state, but rather in the way they fit in to, and serve, the whole. As opposed to the mechanistic Newtonian theory, from a complexity perspective the leadership should focus on the relationships among the team's elements, not on the elements themselves.

The history of science teaches us that every time a paradigm changes the world changes with it. What the football game was, understood according to its physical, technical, tactical, psychological and disciplinary aspects, has changed in the last decades. José Mourinho considers his work, his team, each individual player, the training and the game, the media, the effort and the show in a global context. He does not single out an issue or divide a phenomenon into several aspects. When dealing with professional players, he does not separate the physical from the mental, the emotional from the rational, or the technical from the tactical. He is interested in the whole person, globally, and, likewise, with the games he takes into account the media and the cultural contexts that precede, surround, and succeed them.

In the summer of 2004, when he began working as manager of Chelsea, Mourinho wrote a letter to each of his players, outlining the goals for the coming season. In the middle of the letter he wrote: 'From now on, every exercise, every match, every minute of your social life has to be focused on being a champion'.²¹ But, what does the social life of a footballer and his media exposure have to do with playing good football? The attitude is key. It is a stance to be maintained at all times, in matches and in training, on the pitch and in media interviews, twitter messages and Facebook pages. A coherent, pragmatic and emotional narrative, projected onto fame and the media, and developed out of a winning dream, is the bond that unites everything, the match and the image of the match, the professional and the personal, the results and fame. This global approach is Mourinho's method for dealing with the complexity of everyday life in his profession. For José Mourinho, top level sport is not a physical activity; it is a human, global activity.²² The contrasting reductionist/Cartesian/Tayloristic approach would understand, and thus working with, a football player in analytical terms, that is, separating physical, psychological, technical, tactical, disciplinary dimensions and so forth. Traditionally, each one of these aspects would be worked out in isolation, split from the other dimensions. Based on the homogeneity of the emotional-rational human, in line with the research of the neurologist António Damásio,²³ among others, Mourinho leads his team through a narrative of emotions, pressure, ambition and satisfaction, where victories are the emotional 'reward' that provides balance to the professional player's whole.

Media is the professional context

In his daily life, in his acts and words, during training and at matches, in the changing rooms and at media interviews and press conferences, Mourinho embodies a global meaning system, which impacts the team and the individual, the personal and the professional, the psychological and the physical, the tactical and technical, us and the opponents, the stadium, the fans and many hundreds of millions of media followers – instantly creating a reality. This is a total experience, well aligned with Mourinho's wholistic approach. It is a world that constantly surrounds the players and the fans. It is a reality made of the Internet and TV images and videos,

a constant flux of media stories and news. Mourinho's role is what it is within a hyper-reality, on the screens of the world,²⁴ challenging and shattering the mediocrity that any routine, even the most opulent and seductive one, always tends to create. It is a holistic and all encompassing approach, ever present in the flow of communication coming from television, social media, newspapers, radio stations and thousands of related social events.

The personality that José Mourinho projects to the media – arrogant and tough, with a fighting spirit – does not reflect the way he is on a daily basis within his professional and personal circles.²⁵ What we see is the behaviour of a professional, who is using a communicational strategy that is appropriate for the global show of contemporary football, with precise objectives: to positively influence his team and negatively influence the opposing teams. The arrogance is part of a strategy of persuasion, of shaping reality and ensuring belief in victory as an enabling context for the emergence of victory itself. Being different today is what draws attention, and that includes communicating quickly and more effectively. When everything is tense, suspended in the surprise that is happening, for Mourinho, it is time to act, argue, protest and demand. When everything explodes, and screaming and protests fill the air, when all seems lost, then it is time to be quiet, calm, straightforward, and direct.

For Mourinho, talking to TV stations and media from all over the world is part of the match, part of the whole 'When I go to a press conference before a match, in my mind the match has already started. When I go to a press conference after the match, the next match has begun'.²⁶ 'That's where I send the message I want to get across to my players, opponents, and fans'.²⁷ But, in fact, the match starts well before the press conferences; the surrounding environment that enhances the behaviour that Mourinho intends of his players is constantly developed, shaped and created by his own actions. 'I have clearly felt throughout my career', says Mourinho,

that I have changed behaviours with what I say. Obviously I do not mean everyone, and it does not always happen, but it does happen often, and, therefore, I think it is a method to be exploited and that is what I have done.²⁸

A small initial change can generate a powerful change later on, the so-called 'butterfly effect'. This notion explains much of Mourinho's communication strategy in the pre- and post-match press conferences.

Almost every conversation that Mourinho has is part of his job and the ultimate goal of each of these communications is not communicating as such, but to increase the chances of victory for his team. At a press conference he is not talking to the people who are in the room, but to others that are not there – his players, [the players of the opposing teams], other coaches, [the football federations], and so on.²⁹

In February 2005, in Barcelona, when Mourinho was leading Chelsea, on the eve of a clash with the Catalans in the Champions League, he projected all his confidence in the press conference, trying to send the message that he knew Barcelona well, that it held no secrets for him, and that his players could count on that. The journalists asked Mourinho which players he would be bringing onto the pitch. The answer was a surprising one. After naming his own team, Mourinho told the journalists: 'If you want I can also tell you the alignment of the Barcelona team'.³⁰ Leaving no time for journalists to digest this surprise, he listed the team that Frank Rijkaard, the Barcelona coach, would put up to play Chelsea the following day. The next day, when the players entered the pitch, they saw that Mourinho's predictions had been

correct, which provided an additional boost to their confidence, just seconds before the start of a clash of giants, which would end in a draw.

The mind games that Mourinho plays in the media have specific objectives. Firstly, Mourinho intends to increase the confidence of his players without risking too much, so as not to be detrimental to the performance of his team; he also wants his players to have no doubts about his control of the situation, so as to keep them focused on the match. But Mourinho also has the opponents in mind. His statements are intended to make the rivals feel over-confident, confused, or disoriented. In other cases, Mourinho is only seeking to generate controversy in order to unite his group further and to maximize their concentration on the goal of winning. Mourinho tries to shape the motivational and psychological conditions of the match in order to increase the likelihood that this will result in a favourable outcome for his team. By encouraging, challenging, or confusing them, Mourinho wants his team to feel 'unbalanced' and under sufficient stress so that only victory is able to redraw that balance; far-from-equilibrium, as the theory suggests, might be interesting conditions for a team to prosper and win.³¹

José Mourinho's high-profile, charismatic and controversial stance, which attracts the attention of the media, is an important part of a comprehensive strategy aimed at saving his players from the attentions of the media, potentially breaking their concentration, as well as disrupting the opposing teams. A specific example of this occurred in his first year as coach of Real Madrid, just days before the classic Barcelona–Madrid match. An incident in a Champions League match involving the Madrid team filled television screens and newspaper front pages. During the Champions League group stage Real Madrid played Ajax of Holland in their penultimate game. Real Madrid was winning, which meant the team would automatically go through to the knockout phase which followed. Then, two of Real Madrid's players, Sergio Ramos and Xabi Alonso, forced second yellow cards and were sent off. Madrid ended the match with nine players, but still won the game, which had long been decided. This strategy was aimed at cleaning the sheet in terms of punishment for cards. With a second yellow card, the players would be banned from playing in the next match in the group stage of the Champions League and, thus, would have a clean sheet for the playoffs that would follow. Although this is a somewhat questionable tactic in ethical terms, it has been used by many football coaches. It takes advantage of UEFA rules and seeks to have the best team available for the crucial phase. There was, however, something unique about this particular case, which would be sensible to say that any other dedicated football coach would not easily consider.

The actions that unfolded were followed live on television, and were performed taking advantage of the hyper-mediatized context. Conversations were shown between Mourinho and Casillas, and then between him and Sergio Ramos and Xabi Alonso. They were covering their mouths covering mouths with their hands so that the television cameras would not be able to see the exact words exchanged. Yet, they moved along the pitch to talk to each other, acting as if they were telling a secret, thus intentionally calling television attention. Then, both players were sent off, one after the other. Xabi Alonso took such a long time taking a free kick that he was sent off; the same thing happened to Sergio Ramos with a goal kick. One wonders why those actions were so blatant. Coaches who use this tactic do not make it so clear. So, how can we explain Mourinho's behaviour in the case described above?

Following the expulsions of the Real Madrid players in the match with Ajax, the UEFA disciplinary committee would meet in the following week, as usual, in order to decide on the punishments. In theory, each player would be suspended for one match, meaning they would not play in the coming Champions League match, the last in the group stage, which would only be a formality for Real Madrid anyway, since the team had already passed to the next stage, the knockout phase. The case, however, would be more controversial than usual, given the whole sideshow surrounding the events. Mourinho was aware of the controversy, of course. He knew it would grab the public's attention, and take up important television time and space on the front pages of the newspapers. Like many leaders who know that the future is not written but is influenced and shaped by our daily actions, Mourinho was a few days ahead of events and in a wholistic way was trying to minimize the impact of future situations which might be less positive for his team. Real Madrid was going through an important period at the time, and Mourinho was shaping the context of the coming weeks. In the Spanish league, Real Madrid was 1 point behind the leaders, Barcelona, and within days they would be visiting Catalonia, where they would play at Nou Camp against the Pep Guardiola's team. It was always going to be a very difficult match.

It was always possible for Real Madrid to win. Yet things being as they were, Mourinho knew that, on a normal day, it would be very difficult to win at Nou Camp. If Real Madrid lost, the distance between the clubs would increase to 4 points, and although this would not be impossible to recover, it would undoubtedly be more difficult. A loss was always to be avoided, since it would leave psychological and emotional scars, and dampen ambitions. The more you talk about defeat, the more time it takes mentally, and in the media, to overcome the situation.

The UEFA meeting concerning the events of the match of the Champions League took place just a few days after the match at Nou Camp, as expected. The case was all over the media, the scale of the controversy was increasing and UEFA was forced to set an example with its decision. A few days later it came down heavily on the players involved and also launched an investigation into José Mourinho, which, after several months, led to the Portuguese coach being punished with a four-match ban. Real Madrid, as we know, lost against Barcelona in a match in which the Catalan side clearly proved to be superior. The final score in the clash was 5–0. Barcelona played better and also had luck on their side. Mourinho did not explore this aspect. Clearly taking responsibility for his team's defeat, he did not talk about the details that could have changed the fortunes of the match. It was likely that Real Madrid would lose the match in Catalonia, ending an uninterrupted series of wins. It would be hard for the *merengues*, but the forced red cards episode would take the spotlight to another place, which was Mourinho's intention since the beginning of this episode. The UEFA meeting would help to deflect attention from the defeat and, thus, minimize its impact on the players – contextualization is key. Moreover, a good controversy always helps to unite a group. This was particularly pertinent because Mourinho was in the first few months of his first year at Real Madrid. In part, we believe, the action analysed here achieved its objectives. Of course, this action, which in its anticipatory and contextual contours is rather original, would have been more effective if Real Madrid had draw or lost 1–0 or 2–1.

Mourinho's three-day stubble, loosened tie, and Armani overcoat are particulars rather than details. An evolutionary approach to group dynamics³², one can immediately notice the meanings of assurance and aggressiveness behind these behaviours,

which aim at preserving group identity and strength. The players and their opponents, as well as the media and the public in general, can easily capture, even if subconsciously, the idea of a man in action, with a fighting spirit, who is rude, ruthlessly committed to winning, well protected and prepared for anything. The first sportsmen were hunters and soldiers. Indeed, there are theories of sports being symbolic hunts, either for other humans or for animals.³³ A good war hallows every cause, as Nietzsche stated.³⁴

The strange attractor of making history

The underlying perspective we are using to analyse the work of José Mourinho is a holistic understanding of reality, which has seen developments in various fields of science from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Chaos theory,³⁵ one of these developments, proposes, among various notions, the concept of the strange attractor: a complex set towards which a variable, moving according to a dynamical system, evolves over time³⁶; we have adapted this notion in order to analyse Mourinho's media performance.

The challenge for the professional players in José Mourinho's teams is to make history.³⁷ Making history is what a group expects the most from a leader.³⁸ Making history is nowadays a media event. In the language of Dayan and Katz,³⁹ live broadcasting of history as it happens is one of the most emblematic media contents of our era. Mourinho says, 'When we are at this level it is a matter of pride; it is a matter of personal pride. I want to make history (...) Within fifty years I will still be in the history of Porto, Chelsea, Inter'.⁴⁰ Making history is the narrative that makes sense in the ongoing global media stream that Mourinho leads.

From the point of view of complexity, we can say that the meaning that comes from the future – winning the national Football League or the Champions League, or asserting oneself as a top professional – acts as a strange attractor, a concentration of meaning and of patterns of behaviour and attention, that have a daily impact on the unfolding of reality, making history.

More than the will to win, in a Nietzschean perspective, or the will to obtain pleasure, in a Freudian view, the strange attractor of the future, with its challenge that draws *me* and directs *my* efforts, is the embodiment of a desire for meaning, an essential impetus to fill life with the sense of something that gives it a direction, a reason, a will to meaning, as Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) noted.⁴¹ The future is the challenge,⁴² meaning is its content. Every day, via the demands he places on his work, his attention to detail, his thorough preparation, the challenges he accepts publicly and the total motivation he seeks to provide for his players, José Mourinho embodies a full and attracting challenge. 'My motivation is what motivates best my players',⁴³ says Mourinho. By what he says and does, a leader is a magnet, a joining force and a presence that directs the flow of events, the players' attention, the spotlight of television and the heat and the emotions of the players' efforts on the pitch and their pursuit of the extraordinary. Within this context, the leader is the strange attractor of chaos theory.

In his words and actions Mourinho projects the future of his team. Let's go back to January 2003, when he began his career as head coach at Porto in the North of Portugal. Accustomed, since the 1980s, to being national champions, Porto was then sitting in sixth position in the national championship. For more than three years the team had not won the national competition. Their coach had been fired. The club

was in crisis. Mourinho, who did not yet have an important track record as a head coach, entered an environment that was ready to explode. In the middle of this intense crisis, expectations regarding the press conference to present the new coach were high. And what did Mourinho say? ‘I am sure that next year we will be national champions’.⁴⁴ Simple, direct, confident and motivating, Mourinho was the spark that ignited the fire in the midst of a crisis that functioned as oxygen. But where did the strength of what he said come from? From the expectation, both challenging and motivating, that was publicly assumed and launched at that precise moment: in just a year we will be champions. Promising victory, Mourinho took a risk that only self-confident leaders can. His position was clear and unequivocal – ‘I’m sure’. Publicly demonstrating belief in a goal is one more step towards achieving that goal. And if there is one thing that a group always appreciates, it is their leader’s ability to reduce their uncertainty. Also particularly important, of course, was the use of the word ‘we’ – ‘we’ll be champions’, rather than ‘I’m going to be this or that ...’ Obviously, this episode did not determine that Mourinho would become a champion. However, Mourinho’s attitude, in publicly taking a risk, exposing himself and motivating his players, triggered additional efforts and dedication in him to achieve this intended goal. Moreover, when the players heard the statement they saw themselves as champions.⁴⁵ Hearing Mourinho saying what he said publicly made them eyewitnesses to the fact that their new coach believed they could be champions. The ‘looking glass self’⁴⁶ that players are for each other, reflects each one as a champion. Thus, through neighbourhood interaction, a winning influence is launched.

When he came to London, in June 2004, to begin duties as head coach of Chelsea, Mourinho used a variation of the same strategy. When questioned about his ability to lead a team in the Premier League, Mourinho immediately stated that he was not a nobody, but rather a European champion – ‘I am a special one’,⁴⁷ echoing biblical times. With his subtle approach, Mourinho tied himself to the greatest story of all time, and what was also present here was the challenge of the future and what he, the new leader, would promise to make happen. The work of Mourinho’s teams is assessed according to specific objectives which take the challenge and the success story further. By projecting his team into the media and into the future, challenging both them and himself, and thereby seeking to increase the strength of their faith, Mourinho is the star in a global, hyper-professional and emotionally cathartic media narrative, which positions the players in an extraordinary media adventure, a hyper-reality that is what is most real for them.

Veni, Vidi, Vici

The narrative that viewers see in Mourinho’s media performance is a text which has often been built on a symbolic context which he has set in motion much earlier. This was what happened, for example, when Mourinho, then coach of Inter Milan, began his leadership of Real Madrid on television and on the Internet all across the world. On early May 2010, Mourinho had celebrated the elimination of Barcelona at Nou Camp, in a match that would go down in history with regard to tactics, motivation and entertainment. Fifteen days later, 45 years after their previous victory, Inter Milan once again became the European champion. The day before, taking advantage of the situation, Mourinho had asked for the support of Real Madrid’s fans for Inter to beat Bayern Munich in the stadium of Real Madrid, where the final of the

Champions League would be played. Symbolically, it can be said that in the final of the Champions League in May 2010, leading Inter Milan, Mourinho won his first title with Real Madrid in their stadium and with the support of Madrid's public.

Let us zoom into the moment. Inter Milan has just won, everyone is vibrating with the victory and celebrating, the medals are being handed out and history is being made. Mourinho approaches the sideline and with his hands firmly on his hips and puffing out his chest, he observes the crowd in the stadium around him. Dozens of photographers and reporters record the moment for posterity. What is being seen at the moment? The flash of a 10-year career with 17 national and international titles, an unbeaten run of more than 120 home game in national championships, and the new season of the Spanish league just starting. At that moment, according to our reading, posing in their stadium, *veni, vidi, vici*, letting emerge⁴⁸ a new reality in La Liga, Mourinho was sending out two clear messages. One was for the Real Madrid dressing rooms: with this victory in the Champions League a new story has begun. The other message was for Real Madrid's opponents in the Spanish league: the psychological, media mind games have begun. A few days later Mourinho would put into words what everyone was feeling as he stood there squarely on the pitch, looking around him: 'fear is what I want in the changing rooms of our opponents'.⁴⁹

Shortly afterwards, having circled the stadium waving the Portuguese flag as a last gesture in an evening's work in which the details had not been left to chance, Mourinho went on his way. In that final tour of the Santiago Bernabéu stadium, José Mourinho's leadership of the Portuguese national team was begun, de facto. The involvement of a whole nation began, of millions of Portuguese people all over the world, who could now see new hope for the future beginning to grow. The stage was set, the expectation and the pressure of the challenge that will lead Portugal to be World Champions in 10 or 15 years' time. Echoing meanings that date back to biblical times and to the Portuguese myth of the retuning in a foggy morning of the long disappeared king Sebastião, the 'special one' will indeed return one day – a promise was made, one that motivates and builds the future. From the perspective of complexity, the elements of a phenomenon are what they are as a systemic whole; they are never to be disconnected or decontextualised. The surrounding media spectacle and emotional environment are central to the work of José Mourinho. Another example of this kind of work can be found in late 2010, while he was coaching Real Madrid. Mourinho was surprisingly involved in events related to the Portuguese national team. A few months after Portugal's poor performance in the South Africa World Cup, energies were running high, eventually leading to the sacking of Carlos Queiroz, the Portuguese coach. There would soon be a period where clubs would stop playing for 10 days, in order to allow the national teams to compete in the qualifying matches for the finals of the European Championship 2012. Portugal needed to win its two remaining matches, one at home, against Denmark, and the other away, against Iceland.

Then the Portuguese Football Federation announced its intention to hire José Mourinho as national coach for those two matches. After a mediocre qualifying campaign, the Portuguese team now had two final matches ahead of it, two crucial ones. These were two matches that Portugal should theoretically win, but not long before they had drawn at home against Cyprus. Then, when everybody was naturally expecting Mourinho to reject the possibility of coaching Portugal for two matches, Gilberto Madaíl, the President of the Portuguese Football Federation flew to Madrid to meet him.

Intense controversy and expectation filled the days that followed. The headline in the Portuguese sports daily, *Record*, read ‘Mourinho is the solution to save us from not qualifying’ and ‘Madaíl [President of the Portuguese Federation of Football] believes that only Mourinho’s competence and capability of mobilization can reverse the negative cycle’.⁵⁰ The website of *MaisFutebol* carried the following headline in the early afternoon of 16 September: ‘National Team: Gilberto Madaíl in Madrid’. Real Madrid, meanwhile, guaranteed that so far they had no information concerning the Portuguese Football Federation and José Mourinho. ‘I just spoke to the management board and they do not have any information on the issue. It is something new and unprecedented’, said Emilio Butragueño, director of institutional relations of Real Madrid.⁵¹ The meeting between Mourinho and Madaíl took place the next day and the issue dominated the Spanish sports newspapers. ‘Mourinho is not for rent’ was the message all over the media. The front page of the sports newspaper *Marca* read: ‘Mou no se alquila: El Madrid contrario a la cession’. Another article read: ‘Mourinho is the impossible dream of Portugal’. Real Madrid considered it unreasonable to loan their coach to train the national team for two games. José Mourinho, despite wanting to help the Portuguese national team, would abide by the decision of his club. Yet, Mourinho never closed the door, always leaving open the possibility that, if all those involved could come to an understanding, he would lead the team of Portugal in those two matches.

However, within days the operation proved impossible. There was no progress on either side and the Portuguese Football Federation invited Paulo Bento, former coach of Sporting Clube de Portugal, to be the national coach. The matches drew near, and in yet another surprising development Mourinho sent a letter of support to the Portuguese national team and the new coach, asking for union, dedication, and extolling patriotism; a letter widely publicized by the media and published on the website of the National Association of Football Coaches.⁵²

The national teams are not space for personal statements; it is a statement of a nation, and therefore should be a collective space of deep emotion, empathy, unity. The squad is there because they play better than the Portuguese bank employees, taxi drivers, politicians, teachers, fishermen, or farmers; they were chosen to fight for Portugal. (...) the Portuguese who will play for Portugal – I repeat, I do not like to call them players – have to know where they are going, what they are going to, why they are going, and what is expected of them ... when the Portuguese Football Federation contacted me to be the national coach, what I felt was pride in my home (...) for Portugal, I will go! So those who go, go to give, we must go heart and soul, then, not as individuals or for individualism; then, there are Portuguese that will win or lose, but standing tall; then there is only room to feel proud and to have a positive attitude.⁵³

Portugal won both matches, with the same score: 3–1. The country was back on the path towards the European Cup of 2012. The Spanish sports newspaper *Marca* headlined: ‘CR7 [Cristiano Ronaldo] scores again in Portugal 3–1 Denmark’, ‘Iceland 1, Portugal 3: Cristiano scores and Portugal is alive’. ‘That is the way to go!’ read the first page of *Record*, a leading Portuguese sports newspaper, adding: ‘Ronaldo scores in two games as much as in two years with Queiroz [the former Portuguese coach]’. The team took a deep breath, the players returned to their clubs and the mission was accomplished. Did José Mourinho’s letter help? Carlos Martins, who played both games, confirmed: ‘Of course the José Mourinho’s letter helped’. The Mourinho national coach episode, the sense of urgency created and the

expectations generated all changed the environment. With those two victories, the situation of the Portuguese national team and the players had changed.

Both the Spanish and the Portuguese media highlighted the good start that Paulo Bento made in leading the Portuguese national team, and the performance and goals of Ronaldo, which put an end to the bad path he had gone through during the South Africa World Cup. Cristiano Ronaldo's first season in Madrid – 2009/2010 – had fallen short of expectations as well. Ronaldo did not score as many goals as expected, nor did he play the kind of football he was so well-known for. Ronaldo knew this.

The 2010–2011 Spanish *La Liga* began in late August, and in September, at Real Madrid under the leadership of Mourinho, Ronaldo still did not score. The sports media spoke of Ronaldo's goal crisis. There was talk of a crisis of confidence. Journalists brought the issue up with Mourinho and he defended Ronaldo, identifying him as an example of a perfect professional: 'Cristiano Ronaldo is untouchable. He works like crazy',⁵⁴ said Mourinho. When Portugal was eliminated from the World Cup in South Africa, losing 1–0 to Spain, and the team's coach and Portuguese commentators were looking for scapegoats, Mourinho, who was on vacation at the time, came forward to defend Ronaldo in the media.

At the first press conference after the Portugal matches, Mourinho welcomed the fact that the Real Madrid players were happy with their participation. Regarding Cristiano Ronaldo, he once again expressed his confidence in him and praised him. But this time Mourinho went further:

Cristiano's astrological chart has changed. Cristiano returned happy after the Portuguese matches, scoring in decisive moments and winning. In those games he scored goals with his head and with his right and left feet. We have to let him be now. Now he is happy and that makes everything easier.⁵⁵

The Real Madrid matches took place and everything was fine and easier for Ronaldo. The team beat Malaga 4–1, away from home, with two goals from Ronaldo. The Champions League brought them another victory: this time 2–0 against AC Milan, with Ronaldo scoring again. 'Ronaldo tipped the balance in a clash of titans. CR7 came and scored', the Portuguese newspaper *A Bola* read. Another match in the Spanish League followed and Real won again in a 6–1 victory against Racing Santander, with Ronaldo scoring four of the goals. The headline in *Marca* read 'Real Madrid of CR7 is a hurricane',⁵⁶ and Ronaldo was quoted as saying 'I had never scored four goals in a match'. He was on his way to his best season ever. Ronaldo's will to win and hunger for goals had never been greater. He finished the season winning the Golden Boot, a trophy awarded to the best scorer of the national championships in Europe.

Adapting to the emerging situation,⁵⁷ Mourinho took advantage of an extraordinary set of circumstances in an unusual way. Football coaches often complain about the matches their players have to play for their national teams. Other coaches accept the rules of the game, and when players leave for the national team they do not think about it. But all of our lives are a continuum, and are not composed of unconnected, independent sequences. Intervening via the media in the course of events, Mourinho did this in a way which was motivating for the Portuguese players, for the national team's new coach, and for Portuguese people in general. Moreover, he helped to create a stimulating environment that would help Ronaldo to get back to

scoring goals. The challenge was to make the most of two important matches that Ronaldo was about to play.

Mourinho did his job globally, for the short term and for the future, taking advantage of the circumstances, and benefitting both the performance of his own team, Real Madrid, and that of the Portuguese national team. Mourinho motivated the players and the Portuguese people as a nation – which is key to the performance of a national team –, as well as encouraging the Portugal's coach, Paulo Bento, who, when confronted by journalists about being a second choice, replied: 'Being second to the best in the world is very motivating!' And, once again, Mourinho worked the story of one day being the coach of the Portuguese team and developing an environment of achievement, delivery and making things happen which long seemed to have been written.

Concluding remarks

Mourinho changed the football world by bringing performance in the media to the centre of competitive effectiveness. Attention and fame in the context of a hyper-mediatized society and careful management of these are key to Mourinho's outstanding performance in the period analysed in this article.

The theoretical perspective we use to understand the work and the historical hyper-mediatized narrative in which Mourinho acts is based on what science calls the paradigm of complexity. Mourinho's work, in his transformational years of leadership, from 2002 up to 2013, stands for a relational perspective that does not directly focus upon the actions 'central' to the specificity of the activity but rather, with particular relevance and detail, focuses on the media-cultural context in which that activity takes place. José Mourinho considers his work, his team, each individual player, the training and the game, the media, the effort and the show in a global context. Being a champion is an attitude, assumed at all times, during matches and in training sessions, on the pitch and in television interviews, as well as in the sports media, social media, and so on.

The epistemological standpoint of our analysis uses the media as the enabling context within which a focused on the whole approach of Mourinho is developed. This perspective, we claim, describes in useful ways the work of Mourinho in the period in analysis, and enables as well highlighting aspects and patterns of action that would not be possible under a reductionist epistemology.

This complexity perspective we use emphasizes the relational aspects and the emergent patterns of events within a mediatized context. The 'butterfly effect' of chaos theory, which establishes that a small alteration in the initial characteristics of a given situation may generate through positive feedback a large alteration as the situation evolves, is a notion that helps to explain many Mourinho comments at the press conferences. While at a press conference before a match, for Mourinho 'the match has already started (...),⁵⁸ that's where I send the message I want to get across to my players, opponents, and fans'.⁵⁹ The press conference is not a media event on its own. What is said is part of a leadership performance that aims to enhance the chances of Mourinho's team winning the match.

Quite the same wholistic logic, using the media as the enabling context, can be applied to the episode of the ostensive forced yellow cards. For Mourinho, it would be the media coverage of the official punishment by UEFA of his behaviour and of the Real Madrid players involved that would take away the public attention of a

possible not so good match against Barcelona. This would soften the frustration, the emotional shake up, and the concerns of his team over that match and his chances of being Spanish Champion. This kind of approach, trying to shape an informational, emotional, and motivational context through the media is as well visible in the episodes of the victory of Inter Milan of the Champions League, when the winning celebrations were concluding, Mourinho approached the sideline with his hands firmly on his hips and puffing out his chest, he observes the crowd in the stadium around him; and in late in 2010, within the context of the Portuguese national team, on the acting of Mourinho to recover Ronaldo's confidence and high performance.

The key notions of the complexity paradigm of contextualization, the primacy of the situation and adaptation, and the emergence in a collective of characteristics that do not pertain to the single parts that make it up, worked on within an enabling media context, are useful to describe the episodes above of the ostensive forced yellow cards, and of the recovering of Ronaldo.

Focusing on the whole, within a mediatised context, our analysis used as well the complexity notion of far-from-equilibrium, which claims that living systems organize themselves, survive and prosper far from conditions of equilibrium, to explore the competitive relevance of the many polemics in which Mourinho gets involved. His intent is one of unbalancing himself and his team. The objective is challenging himself and the players in a way that only victory would establish a balance.

A coherent, pragmatic and emotional narrative, projected onto fame and the media, and developed out of an extraordinary dream, is the bond that unites everything, the match and the image of the match, the professional and the personal, the results and fame. Each player, each member of the club where Mourinho works, each fan of the football team is expected to influence his peers. Neighbourhood interaction, the influence exerted by the elements of a system on their immediate neighbours, rather than the influence or determination of top-down instructions, is a notion useful in our analysis to describe an approach focused on the context, on creating a narrative that engulfs the team as a collective and each one of the players, members of the club, fans as individuals.

This global approach is Mourinho's method for dealing with the complexity of everyday life in his profession. In the course of daily life, Mourinho embodies a system of meaning that touches the energy and dreams of hundreds of millions of people. It is a holistic and all encompassing transformational approach, which is ever present in the flow of communication of global society.

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Notes

1. For example, Deuze, *Media Life*; Baudrillard, *Simulacra*; McLuhan, *Understanding Media*.
2. Davenport and Beck, *Attention Economy*; Franck, 'Economy of Attention'; Goldhaber, 'Attention Economy and the Net'; Lanham, *Economics of Attention*.
3. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*.
4. Simon, 'Designing Organizations', 40–1.
5. Wagg, 'Angels of Us All?'
6. The references to statements of José Mourinho are based on three texts published in Portuguese, the mother tongue of Mourinho: (i) Lourenço, *José Mourinho... a biography of Mourinho*, published in 2004, with the collaboration of Mourinho himself; (ii) Ilharco and Lourenço, *Liderança: as Lições de Mourinho...* published in 2007, a work that presents material of an exclusive interview with Mourinho, who wrote the Preface of the book, and of another interview with Rui Faria, Mourinho's number one assistant in his coaching team; and (iii) Ilharco, *Mourinho...* published in 2012, which expands the covering of Mourinho's coaching onto Inter Milan and Real Madrid. The translation to English of the passages referred to is of ours.
7. For example, as soon as December 2013, in ESPN network, <http://www.espnfc.com/chelsea/story/1,660,158/mourinho-out-to-build-chelsea-dynasty> (accessed 23 March 2016) or CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/12/23/sport/football/mourinho-wants-chelsea-dynasty/> (accessed 23 March 2016).
8. For example, *Daily Mail*, January 18, 2014 'Chelsea boss Mourinho claims he is a changed man in changing role', <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2541925/Chelsea-boss-Mourinho-claims-changed-man-changing-role.html> (accessed 23 March 2016).
9. E.g. McChesney, *Media Made Sport*; Beck and Bosshart, 'Sports and Media'; Wenner, 'Sport, Communication'; Brown and O'Rourke, *Case Studies in Sport Communication*; Miller et al., *Globalization and Sport*; Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play*; Wenner, *Media, Sports, and Society*; Wenner, *MediaSport*; Blain and Berstein, *Sport, Media, Society*.
10. Bernstein and Blain, 'Sport and the Media', 3.
11. Horkey, *Sportwissenschaft*.
12. Carter, 'Managing the Media'.
13. Rowe, 'The Global Love-Match'.
14. Ilharco and Lourenço, *Liderança: as Lições*.
15. Mourinho in a interview to *Seleções of Reader's Digest* in 2003; accessed in October 2015, 2nd, <http://anabelamotaribeiro.pt/jose-mourinho-2003-14,445> [translation of ours].
16. Gomez et al., *Value Creation*.
17. For example, Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Morin, *Introdução ao Pensamento Complexo*; Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Sciences*; Johnson, *Emergence*.
18. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Sciences*.
19. Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Morin, *Introdução ao Pensamento Complexo*; Byrne, *Complexity Theory*; Erdi, *Complexity Expanded*.
20. Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Morin, *Introdução ao Pensamento Complexo*; Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Sciences*; Johnson, *Emergence*; Byrne, *Complexity Theory*; Erdi, *Complexity Expanded*.
21. Ilharco and Lourenço, *Liderança: as Lições*, 66.
22. *Ibid.*, 47–9.
23. Damásio, *Descartes' Error*; Damásio, *The Feeling of What Happens*.
24. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*.
25. Lourenço, *Mourinho*; Ilharco and Lourenço, *Liderança: as Lições*.
26. Barclay, *Mourinho – Anatomia de Um Vencedor*, 163.
27. Ilharco, *Mourinho*, 25.
28. Lourenço, *Mourinho*, 139.
29. Barclay, *Mourinho – Anatomia de Um Vencedor*, 162.
30. Ilharco, *Mourinho*, 146.
31. Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Johnson, *Emergence*; Byrne, *Complexity Theory*; Erdi, *Complexity Expanded*.

32. For example, Vugt and Ahuja, *Selected*.
33. Beck and Bosshart, 'Sports and Media'; Carroll, *An interdisciplinary Study of Sport*.
34. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
35. Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos*.
36. Ruelle and Takens, 'On the Nature of Turbulence'.
37. Ilharco, *Mourinho*.
38. Freud, 'Group Psychology'; Le Bon, *The Crowd*.
39. Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*.
40. *El País*, 'Arranca la Liga: José Mourinho – En el fútbol lo arriesgo todo. En lo personal, riesgo cero, August 24, 2010.
41. Frankl, *Man Search for Meaning*.
42. Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
43. Lourenço, *Mourinho*, 128.
44. Ilharco and Mourinho, *Liderança: as Lições*, 83.
45. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*.
46. Ibid.
47. Ilharco and Lourenço, *Liderança: as Lições*, 33.
48. Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Johnson, *Emergence*; Byrne, *Complexity Theory*.
49. Ilharco, *Mourinho*, 38.
50. The quotes that follow, from Portuguese and Spanish newspapers, are translations of ours of the originals.
51. *Marca*, 'Mou no se alquila', September 17, 2010.
52. ANTFP, www.antfp.pt.
53. *A Bola*, 'Leia a mensagem complete de José Mourinho'; translation of ours from the Portuguese, <http://www.abola.pt/nnh/ver.aspx?id=224850> (accessed October 2, 2015).
54. *Marca*, 'CR7 es intocable, trabaja como nadie', September 3, 2010.
55. *Marca*, 'La carta astral de CR7 há cambiado', October 10, 2010.
56. *Marca*, 'El Madrid de CR7 es un ciclón', October 23, 2010.
57. Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*; Johnson, *Emergence*; Erdi, *Complexity Expanded*.
58. Barclay, *Mourinho – Anatomia de Um Vencedor*, 163.
59. Ilharco, *Mourinho*, 25.

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