

Assistance Along a Football Player's Career Trajectory

The Role of Intermediaries in the Facilitation of African Football Migrants Towards European Leagues

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Master Thesis Human Geography

Globalisation, Migration and Development

Management Faculty

Radboud University Nijmegen

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Acknowledgements

I never looked at my own journey as being a migratory one, even though over the years I have studied and lived in three different countries, all of which have afforded me unique opportunities and perspectives on the world. However, over the course of this year, my courses and professors showed me how looking at a particular situation with a new perspective can sometimes lead to seeing something in an entirely different manner. By looking at my own trajectory and experiences, I have learned a great deal more about myself and those I have encountered over the course of my life, appreciating the motivations and desires that guide people to make certain life choices – especially when it comes to migration.

I was fortunate to delve deeper into the world of international football a sport I have actively played since I was a child. Although, originating from Canada, I did grow up referring to it as soccer. Being able to research European football and its linkages to migration has been an eye-opening experience. Not only have I been able to learn more about the sport and the ins and outs of its most competitive leagues in Europe, but I have been fortunate to meet several fascinating individuals. I am grateful to all those I interviewed, especially for the time they provided me throughout my research. In addition to leading me to tremendously interesting information, they also allowed me to understand some of the more personal aspects of their own lives. I would like to especially thank David, a Dutch intermediary central to this thesis. He took a great deal of time out of his own busy schedule to connect me with others and to help me begin to understand how I might be able to shape my thesis under this topic.

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List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
FA	Football Association, England
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA TMS	FIFA Transfer Matching System
KNVB	Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond
NASL	North American Soccer League
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

Executive summary

A recent focus of migration industry literature has been to take a closer look at its complexities and the blurring between its legal/formal and illegal/informal processes and systems. Furthermore, by looking at the applicability of the migration industry onto other sectors, we can add to current literature. This thesis seeks to utilize migration industry theory, specifically focusing on brokers, and look at its applicability on international football. With the internationalization of sports there has been an increase in the importation of foreign talent, especially by leagues that could financially afford to do so and offer lucrative contracts to the top talent. When it came to international football, many European leagues began to import foreign talent, particularly from its former colonies. Due to the frequency of importing foreign talent, many professional football players are migrants themselves, leaving ample opportunities to assess international football from a migration perspective. While previous work has addressed some of these similarities, there has not been a review of the applicability of the migration industry, specifically using brokerage literature to understand the parallels between it and international football. This thesis seeks to bridge this gap and provide some understanding as to how migration brokers exist and operate within this industry.

Chapter 1, the introduction, outlines the main research question, *who are the facilitators within international football, and how does their role influence the movement of footballers and the opportunities presented to them?* With the main research question, as well as subsequent sub-questions, an explanation of the research relevance and research process are provided. This thesis primarily focuses on the role of intermediaries within international football as they assist football players in pursuing their career goals. With a specific focus on the role and challenges that intermediaries may encounter when working with football players originating from Africa. This focus was chosen due to the strong ties between European leagues and African ones, as well as the significant number of African players playing within European leagues, whether professional or amateur. By beginning with a focus on intermediaries' roles and then complementing it with the narratives of some African football players who have successfully penetrated the European football market, an understanding of how these two groups of individuals simultaneously operate at the same time, while often not in a unison manner.

The conceptual chapter begins by setting the stage to understand the various borders and dynamics within international football. By taking Wallerstein's (1974; 1980; 1984) world system's theory and using it to explain the center-periphery dynamic occurring within international football. The center, being European leagues, is surrounded by its semi-peripheral regions, South America and Africa, and finally, the peripheral region being the rest. This dynamic created an environment in which football players focus on obtaining a contract within the center region, due to both the financial benefits and prestige that comes with playing in that region. The focus towards the center region by footballers, often requires some to overcome several borders, whether perceived or physical, when it comes to their career

trajectory and opportunities. Often, attaining these opportunities requires assistance, similarly to the trajectory of many migrants. This assistance comes in the form of facilitators and brokers, who in international football are typically intermediaries. Reviewing migration industry literature, focusing on brokers, and drawing parallels between it and international football permit us to gain insight into their similarities. Furthermore, by exploring relevant concepts such as trust, mobility, and navigation, we can see how both international migration and international football are guided by similar notions.

Chapter 3, *A Macro Perspective on Football Intermediaries*, reviews FIFA's role as international governing body and the regulations pertinent to football intermediaries. By reviewing the implementation of these regulations by national associations, we gain a brief understanding of the system under which intermediaries operate and whose rules they must abide throughout their practice.

The following chapter, *A Micro Perspective on Football Intermediaries*, takes a closer look at the role of football intermediaries, by focusing on two different individuals – David and Emmanuelle. One is a registered intermediary in the Netherlands, while the other also operates in the Netherlands, but in a more unofficial intermediary-like capacity. This chapter draws the conceptual linkages between a football intermediary's role and that of the relevant literature.

Finally, Chapter 5, *Navigation Towards Football's Center*, looks at how football players, specifically ones originating from peripheral football region Africa, navigated their way towards their football contracts. Some utilized intermediaries during their own trajectory, while others were successful on their own. However, they all raised the importance of networks and trust, which reflect themes within the conceptual chapter.

The Conclusion provides a review of the interconnectivities between the literature and the empirical data discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for future research, as well as a discussion surrounding relevant policy implications. I also reflect on the research experience, including data gathering, to discuss the areas in which this subject could be further investigated.

1 Introduction

Professional sports have the potential to lead to fame and fortune for the most talented athletes, especially those who are able to access opportunities in the top leagues of their sport. Often, due to the internationalization of many professional sports, this requires athletes to travel away from their homes, whether for better training opportunities or due to a contract transfer. To support this, most professional sport leagues and their members have developed sophisticated networks to both identify talented athletes, as well as facilitate their migration. Independent facilitators and brokers also exist in the broader migration industry, where they assist aspiring migrants in their own journeys, whether it is to flee persecution or pursue economic prosperity. While these kinds of migration industry brokers and football intermediaries exist in different industries, their roles overlap quite a bit, and this thesis seeks to delve into these two topics to explore their similarities. This thesis, at large, seeks to answer the following question: *who are the facilitators within international football, and how does their role influence the movement of footballers and the opportunities presented to them?* By focusing empirically on football brokers through a migratory lens, I will seek to shed light on how intermediaries in international football can have an impact in the field of migration and mobility, particularly due to the high degree of mobility experienced by most professional football players.

In the same way that migration industry brokers operate under both legal and illegal contexts, which can lead to them aiding but also exploiting migrants, football intermediaries also have the potential to do the same. Therefore, by looking at the context in which international football developed and the high financial stakes that can lead to the completion of transactions and decisions that are not always in the best interest of the players, we will get a better sense of how intermediaries and football players navigate their environment throughout their own career path.

1.1 Research Relevance

1.1.1 Societal Relevance

*"Increasingly larger transactions **are often not done in a clean, open manner** and raise a lot of questions about potential misuse of funds. We have to tackle this issue; **the curtains must be open**. I want objective calculations and payments that all go through a central clearing house, where both the **intermediaries' commissions, transfer fees and training compensations are handled**." – Gianni Infantino, President of FIFA (Thomas, 2018)*

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has come under scrutiny for its choices and actions, since its inception in 1904, but has seen an increase in criticism in the past decade, primarily due to a variety of scandals such as match fixing, and bribery of top organizational members (De Marco, 2017; Kelly & Harris, 2010). However, as of late, an increasing amount of pressure has been placed on increasing transparency throughout the organisation, specifically surrounding the movements of funds, whether it be between leagues,

clubs, or intermediaries¹. The urgency to create systematic changes was sparked due to the increasing number of unrecorded financial sums associated with the transfers and signings of footballers, as well as the involvement of numerous unlicensed agents (FIFA, 2015a; De Marco, 2017). Recent changes to FIFA intermediary regulations have resulted in the creation of more transparency from both national and international football bodies, in the hopes that these will result in improvements to the current system. The influential role intermediaries hold, within the world of international football, permits them to wield their power and influence, in ways that do not always result in the best outcome for all parties involved in the transactions. The current system is one that parallels research and theory on the migration industry, and at large mobility studies. The role of these intermediaries is similar to that of migration industry brokers and facilitators. Similarly, to migration brokers, football intermediaries control a relatively substantial amount of access points to lucrative football contracts, which are often sought out by prospective footballers seeking to migrate to regions offering better opportunities.

This thesis will empirically examine football intermediaries through a migration industry lens that will allow us to use current research on brokers to demonstrate the parallels between these industries. This will be done by unpacking the similarities between international football and international migration, specifically by looking at the resemblances between their center and periphery dynamics, with certain regions being more attractive over others; the development and growth of international football as an industry over time, as well as the facilitators involved in the transfer or relocation of players to various European teams. Once these similarities are identified, further discussion surrounding the migration industry and international football will be completed to identify some of the complexities associated with the role of football intermediaries, especially when it comes to the ethical and societal dilemmas attached to relocating talented young football players. This thesis will take a secondary look at the relocation and transfer of African football players to both amateur and professional European Leagues, especially cases that involve the use of intermediaries. By understanding how international football was established and how its development is a result of much larger discussions, especially ones related to colonialism and borders, we will be able to see how international football is reflective and relevant of various migration research, primarily ones surrounding the migration industry and mobility.

1.1.2 Scientific Relevance

Research has attempted to identify the various kinds of individuals participating in international mobility, especially in the realm of international sports (Borges et al, 2015; Kelly, 2008; others). Borges et al. (2015), highlight “an increasing number of sports migrants in the world which include athletes, referees, managers and coaching staff” (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Maguire & Falcous, 2011 in Borges et al., 2015, p. 588). The internationalisation of multiple

¹ An intermediary, as defined by FIFA is “a natural or legal person who, for a fee or free of charge, represents players and/or clubs in negotiations with a view to concluding an employment contract or represents clubs in negotiations with a view to concluding a transfer agreement” (FIFA, 2014a).

positions and roles within sports permits individuals new opportunities to engage and work within regions they may not have previously been able to. To further work completed on this topic, this thesis will seek to focus empirically on a variety of football intermediaries functioning similarly to migration brokers, including, but not limited to, agents, and club staff. This will be done in an attempt to understand their roles under a migration industry context, to discuss how they are involved in the mobility of football players. Their roles are extremely relevant because of their facilitatory role assisting footballers seeking out better opportunities or contracts, as well as importing talented players for their own teams. As many athletes attempt to find new challenges or opportunities for themselves, whether it be for financial gain or a better environment, footballers are often looking forward towards their next step. Ultimately, these next steps are facilitated by individuals, such as football intermediaries, who are positioned in a way to help these players.

This thesis focuses empirically on football brokers under a migration industry context, thereby, seeking to shed light on brokerage in international football, as it can have an impact within the field of migration and mobility, particularly due to the high degrees of mobility experiences by most professional football players. There has been a lot of discussion surrounding the ethics attached to attracting skilled individuals to certain regions in migration studies, more specifically talented athletes to further developed regions than their point of origin (Andreff, 2010; Schokkaert, 2016; Magee & Sugden, 2002). In addition, a number of researchers have focused on the dreams and aspirations of migrants guiding their migratory journeys (Esson, 2015a; 2015b; Poli, 2010). Furthermore, within migration industry literature, the forms of brokers and facilitators is explored to explain the role they play in assisting or hindering the movements of migrants from point of origin to destination (Alpes, 2013; Alpes, 2017; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013; Kley, 2017; Schapendonk, 2018; Spaan & Hillmann, 2013).

This thesis seeks to address these debates, while primarily focusing on the intersection of brokerage theory and its effect on an individual's mobility potential, specifically under the notion of the migration industry and the parallels seen between it and international football. Furthermore, by unpacking our current understanding of these debates, we will be able to understand their relation to one another under the premise of international football. To do so, we will primarily focus on the roles and forms of intermediaries (brokers) found within this environment, and then utilize the experiences of African football players in their pursuit of opportunities in Europe to highlight the relationship between facilitation and mobility.

Looking at the facilitation within the international football system will allow us to further unpack the politics of mobility often present in international professional sports. As Cresswell (2010) discussed in *Towards a Politics of Mobility*, the trajectory for one traveller moving from A to B might contain "completely different practices of mobility and sets of represented meanings associated with them" (p. 22). While some experience the movement from A to B in a privileged setting, involving 'plush velvet seats', others can have an entirely different

experience (Cresswell, 2010, p. 22). This significant discrepancy between the movement of some versus the movement of others is seen every day within migration and reflects the desirability of certain migrants over others. It is often assumed that when it comes to sport migrants, the migrant's desirability is extremely high, leading to the assumption that their migratory process may be one completed with ease. *Muscle drain*, the notion of removing the most talented athletes from a lesser developed region to a developed one, increasing the number of talented athletes in the importing region, occurs within a variety of global sports, but when taking a closer look at football, as Andreff (2010) outlines in his paper, it is seen frequently through a variety of international transfers and signings in football, especially from a south to north direction. Since 1995, the international mobility of players has grown drastically, reinforcing the phenomenon of muscle drain and placing certain countries at a disadvantage when it comes to developing their own football facilities and abilities (Andreff, 2010). However, when it comes to the politics of mobility, the desirability and trend to import foreign talent has continued at a steady increase and eased the process for foreign players to obtain work visas for countries with established sport migration systems, such as England, where they have a specific point-based system for incoming foreign football players (Mills & Reeve, 2016).

Looking at the experiences of the African footballers interviewed for this thesis, especially focusing on their pursuit of opportunities within European leagues, will provide us with some insight into the politics of mobility, especially looking at the potential for different kinds of exploitation, before, during, and after the migratory trajectory of these football players. Understanding the vulnerabilities within this system will permit us to better understand the role facilitators can play, as well as how African footballers navigate this complex environment. By highlighting specific experiences from those interviewed during the research phase of this thesis, we will be able to highlight how they attempted to navigate the complexity of international football and pursue opportunities in Europe. Furthermore, the insight provided by intermediaries will assist our understanding of some of the obstacles foreign players may face throughout their career path and how intermediaries can either assist or hinder their mobility.

Previous research completed by academics, such as James Esson (2015a), provide us with an understanding as to the significant motivators for youth to risk their safety, and potential exploitation, in the pursuit of a successful football career. The success of others seen by aspiring youth leads them to maintain faith that their own dreams may be realized if they remain committed to the path on which they find themselves. However, these youth find themselves in the middle of a complex environment that is always changing, which often leaves these vulnerable youth to seek assistance from others. This thesis will further explore this environment, by looking at the role of the facilitators who help these football migrants, as well as the international institution in which they find themselves and the regulations that manage and monitor their own actions.

Beginning by looking at the historical context that resulted in the institutionalization and international management of football today, an understanding of the hierarchy and borders

within this system will be developed. This will ultimately lead to an explanation of the more desirable football regions in the world, and why individuals are so committed to obtain a position within them. Furthermore, an analysis of the broad range of facilitators who operate within international football will provide us the ability to see how they utilize their own power and influence to obtain success, while also assisting and hindering the access of certain individuals to the desirable football regions. Once an understanding of these important pieces is achieved, further analysis will be made as to how these migrants are able to begin to tackle this complex environment, which at times is its own playing field, always changing and adapting to the day's needs and filled with layers of complex power relations that one must navigate. Ultimately, leading to further understanding of the trajectories taken by young footballers, as well as the way in which they navigate their surrounding environment throughout this journey.

All of these topics will ultimately permit us an opportunity to review the current system and existing structures aimed at monitoring and enforcing regulations, which ultimately could allow for the identification of areas in need of additional policies or changing to existing ones in order to make improvements.

1.1.3 Research Aim and Research Questions

The research aim of this thesis, at large, is to answer the following question: *who are the facilitators within international football, and how does their role influence the movement of footballers and the opportunities presented to them?* By breaking down this question into four sections, each focusing on one aspect needed to understand the overall process, we will shed further light onto international football migration and the actors who both hinder and enable the movement of certain players over others.

Firstly, the world of international football will be discussed in **1) Unpacking International Football**. Within this section, the conceptual framework for the thesis will be completed. It will focus on the historical contexts that resulted in today's international football regions, specifically relating to Wallerstein's *world systems theory*. In addition, it will focus on the development of borders, both within and surrounding international football, as well as an analysis of the actors involved in its environment and their relevance to current migration industry theory. Furthermore, by utilizing the migration industry lens, we will be able to unpack the role of migration brokers and how they are relevant to international football, especially when it comes to facilitating the movement and career prospects for football players. These interconnected themes will be further analyzed by looking at the impact post-colonialism has upon their development in international football.

This following two sections will address the variety of intermediaries found within international football, and the environment in which they operate. Due to the complexity of this environment, it will be divided into two sections, one focusing on the macro level and the other on the micro. The first part, **2) A Macro Perspective on Football Intermediaries**, will look at the international environment and the institutions involved in the management and monitoring of intermediaries. By unpacking the various actors (whether it be organizations or

individuals) operating simultaneously in identifying and transferring football's top players, we will look at the different layers that seem to work together and against one another. The second part, **3) A Micro Perspective on Football Intermediaries**, will take a closer look at the day to day practices of football's most prominent intermediaries – football agents. The power held by intermediaries today is unparalleled when compared to others within international football due to the array of roles they can take, whether it be representing football players, discovering new talent, or assisting football clubs. Therefore, by unpacking their day to day on a micro level, we can see how they operate within the macro level system, and the limitations imposed on these micro actions.

Once an understanding of the system has been developed, the final section, **4) Navigation into Football's Center**, will seek to address how players, primarily those from the peripheral football region Africa, move towards football's center region – European leagues. Through the application of Vigh's notion of social navigation, we will see how individuals are left to navigate international football's continuously changing environment (2009b).

Within these three sections, a number of additional questions will be evaluated. Such as,

1) Unpacking International Football, Conceptual Development

- How is international football set up and governed?
- Do borders exist between the different regions, leagues, and players? If so, how are they reinforced and what kind of role do they play in bordering players, and others?

2) A Macro Perspective on Football Intermediaries

- Who governs football intermediaries?
- Who are these intermediaries within international football, and what is their role?

3) A Micro Perspective on Football Intermediaries

- What kinds of practices do their roles encompass?
- How are an intermediary's network and trust central to their success?

4) Navigation into Football's Center

- How do footballers navigate the complex international football environment?
- How do the intermediaries hinder or enable their movement?

1.2 Methodology

This thesis utilized a mixed design, drawing heavily from both a review of documents, as well as a number of qualitative interviews. By focusing on three primary areas – relevant football institutions/organizations, intermediaries, and football players, I was able to pull together the relevant data in order to highlight how these areas relate to one another. By blending the document review with qualitative research, I could gain a deeper understanding of how certain regulations are interpreted or applied to various situations, primarily by intermediaries. As my thesis primarily focuses on the role and governance of football intermediaries, understanding how they themselves apply the regulations under which they operate is pivotal to this thesis.

Within qualitative research, there are a variety of methods through which researchers can gather and analyze their data. For my thesis, I primarily utilized interviews and a form of the snowball approach as the means to gather my information, regarding data collection for both facilitators and football players. This approach allowed me to use some current contacts and connect with individuals who fell under the purview of my research. In addition to focusing on footballers' experiences, my research incorporated the practices and views of the facilitators involved within the migration trajectories of footballers, primarily by looking at their role as one that can both hinder or aid the movements of football migrants within their own restrictive and hierarchical environment.

1.2.1 Document Review

I completed a great deal of research focusing on the organizations and institutions relevant to international football. This ranges from the overarching international football organization, FIFA, to national associations and local football clubs. By gaining an understanding of their roles and how they operate, I could further explore their interpretation and implementation by the actual actors completing intermediary work. Primary sources were utilized and were complimented by secondary resources from a variety of outlets, such as businesses, academics, and specialists in the field.

1.2.2 Multi-perspective Research Design

A multi-perspective research design “aims at understanding a given phenomenon and the intertwining agency of a variety of actors” (Achermann, 2009, p. 53). My thesis focuses on two primary groups of individuals: 1) football intermediaries, and 2) African footballers, and the complex environment in which they both exist. By looking at the variety of actors involved in this process, I was able to gather a variety of opinions and understand the complexity of the system. With both parties having a degree of dependence on one another, I was presented with a multidimensional picture of the system in which they both operate, leading to a deeper understanding of the field in which football migrants need to navigate to complete their trajectory.

1.2.3 Participant Overview

Throughout my research phase, I connected with a variety of individuals, based in Europe as well as Canada. One of my respondents, David, I met with on numerous occasions and was key to understanding intermediaries based in the Netherlands, and Europe at large. Furthermore, he managed to connect me with a number of locally based African football players and another intermediary-like individual to complement the information he provided me. I must note, that my research, due to it being a mixed research design, did limit the number of informants I interviewed, in part due to the amount of additional information I reviewed. In total, I connected with about 10 individuals throughout my qualitative data collection. These individuals ranged from experts in international sports, to football intermediaries and club staff, to football players. All of these different perspectives and opinions have come together within this thesis to highlight the range of differences that can

exist within one environment. By utilizing different individuals with different backgrounds, I believe I have been able to gather a fuller picture than one that would only focus on individuals from one specific area in football, or similar backgrounds. However, the research for this thesis has shown me that there are still several different perspectives and opinions to be found within this environment. One in particular, David, an intermediary from the Netherlands, is central to this thesis' chapters related to intermediaries. I believe that by meeting with this Dutch football intermediary on numerous occasions, I gained a deeper understanding about the specifics of his role and experiences, as well as that of others within the football industry in which he interacts with. His insights were invaluable to my thesis. The information focusing on African footballers and their own experiences was derived from the others I interviewed. These individuals originated from at least three different African countries and had varying experiences, through both football and as individuals, that I think create a multidimensional perspective of how African footballers navigate international football.

1.2.4 Snowball Approach

As discussed above, by using an adapted snowball approach, I connected with a handful of respondents to complete my research, and in turn, these respondents were able to continue to connect me with additional ones. Similar to a rolling snowball, "this is a technique for finding research subjects where one subject gives the researcher the name of another, who in turn provides the name of a third and so on" (Vogt, 2005, p. 300 in Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424). While my respondent pool is relatively small, leaving it to not entirely fall under the snowball sampling method, the general definition of this method is relevant. By demonstrating my sincerity and being open regarding the purpose and focus of my research, I was able to gain trust by individuals in 'gatekeeper' positions who had a better opportunity to connect me with relevant respondents. Dahinden & Efionayi-Mäder (2009) discuss their use of gatekeepers as their snowballing approach was failing. They specify that, "ideally these gatekeepers are persons with a high credibility, because their recommendation of the research must be credible in order to convince potential interview partners to participate" (Dahinden & Efionayi-Mäder, 2009, p. 104).

Due to the relatively 'closed' nature of the world of football, as Kelly & Harris (2010) explained, seeking out potential contacts and research respondents in football is extremely challenging due to the closed nature of this world. Their success was largely due to "the fact that the first author was a professional football player in England and Ireland for the last ten years and was not seen by interviewees as an 'outsider'" (Kelly & Harris, 2010, p. 490). I believe that my initial connection with David, a football intermediary, who was able to connect me with a handful of football players as well as another intermediary-like individual for my research.

Furthermore, Kelly (2008) conducted research on the role of football managers in Britain and Ireland and identified similar challenges he faced when beginning his research. He explained that "gaining access to professional football players and managers normally presents major difficulties for researchers, for professional football is notoriously closed social world"

(Kelly, 2008, p. 401). However, since Kelly's (2008) paper, a number of other works have been completed on football, including both the role of managers and clubs, as well as concerns over corruption, and the exploitation of youth and foreign football players (Schokkaert, 2016; Kelly & Harris, 2010; Andreff, 2010; Lembo, 2011; Esson, 2015a; 2015b; Poli, 2010a; 2010b). These papers have identified a variety of concerns, practices and opportunities to implement change, which have begun to ease access to a once very closed off world.

Researcher such as, Dahinden & Efonayi-Mäder (2009), used the gate-keeper approach during their research with cabaret dancers by seeking out individuals at the center of these networks, which could "bridge different sub clusters of the group. [However], a difficulty of working with gatekeepers concerns the limitations of their contacts" (p. 104). For my thesis, one of my respondents, David, a Dutch football intermediary, was a form of gatekeeper into the world of football, as he was able to further connect me with African footballers who were both close friends and acquaintances that he knew from the field. This was extremely useful in advancing my research data. The trustworthy relationships I have been able to build with certain individuals, allowed them to feel comfortable connecting me with others they felt would be useful to my understanding of my research topic. By being respected as a trustworthy researcher, the referrals I obtained and the involvement from the gatekeeper, created more trust with other respondents and a willingness to participate in my research.

While these were concerns for my research, I believe that I was able to gather research data from both intermediaries and African footballers from a variety of backgrounds. The two intermediary-like individuals I interviewed come from different backgrounds, one being Croatian and the other from Africa, as well as the football players ranging from being active players to retired ones from different countries of origin.

1.2.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Due to my research being more substantive with the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative data collection, I primarily used semi-structured interviews as the means to gather qualitative data. As the areas within my research that fall under qualitative data focused on the motivations, experiences, and choices made by footballers within the football world, I sought to understand how they attain access to football's center region through various facilitators. This kind of information and understanding was only truly attainable through the sharing of narratives, stories, and experiences. Furthermore, this approach allowed me to gain insight into these individuals' subjective and unique experiences (Kelly, 2008). In addition, understanding how football intermediaries operate within this environment was possible due to both research conducted interacting with intermediaries to gain their thoughts and opinions on their role, as well as through the review of commentaries and information accessible through various platforms, such as online resources.

Through semi-structured interviews, I utilized open ended questions which allowed me the possibility to "captur[e] a large variety of migration trajectories and [the] flexibly add further questions during the interview" (Dahinden & Efonayi-Mäder, 2009, p. 100). I chose to

use semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions primarily due to the fact that it allows for a flexibility within the interview, as well as more “spontaneous and in-depth responses” (Baumbusch, 2010, p. 255; Ryan et al., 2009). This flexibility resulted in a variety of instances where my informants were led to recount stories that resulted in shifts in my research that I believe allowed it to become more insightful than initially imagined. In addition, as each footballer’s trajectory can be different, it is beneficial to have the liberty to develop new questions as you speak to them based on what you are discussing. Interviews also allowed me to take on the more laborious role of documenting the responses and information gathered, as opposed to requiring the respondent to document their own story. I found this aspect to be especially entertaining for those I was interviewing as they were often impressed with how quickly I wrote down the stories and information they were recounting. In addition, having the opportunity to ask some “sum up questions” and “sum up responses” as discussed by Dahinden & Efonayi-Mäder (2009), allowed for later quantification, an opportunity to seek further clarity, or detect any possible misunderstandings (p. 101). As interviews were primarily completed in English, with a few in French, I did not have the challenge of translating both questions and answers, or to find a translator. This decreased the potential for incorrect translations, as well as the possibility for cultural or linguistic misunderstandings, which some researchers have encountered (Dahinden & Efonayi-Mäder, 2009; Bilger & Liempt, 2009). However, due to some linguistic differences, it was important to identify less technical terminology to use when it came time to explain my own research and thesis objectives. I needed to find synonyms and ways to explain technical terms - such as thesis, facilitator, and trajectory.

1.2.6 Selection, Sampling and Participation

With my research focusing on two primary groups of individuals – intermediaries and African footballers, I needed to have a few approaches when it came to finding respondents to participate in my research. Participation was also voluntary, and I made it known to respondents that they could choose to not respond to questions if they felt uncomfortable doing so.

Football Facilitators

My goal was to be able to connect with a variety of facilitators involved in the football migration process. In addition, by reviewing previously completed research and documentation regarding the various forms of football facilitators, I was able to gather a rather insightful understanding of their roles within international football. In addition, reviewing migration policies and restrictions from both countries, as well as player and intermediary regulations from FIFA, and other related governing bodies, I will be able to better understand the system through which intermediaries work, as well as how it is navigated by footballers.

I found Achermann’s (2009), explanation and use of mixed methods research particularly insightful as to how it allowed for a combination of both quantitative data and qualitative data when it came to foreigners in Swiss prisons. This method is utilized within this

thesis to demonstrate the regulations and how they are placed into practice by those within the system. Achermann goes on to explain that, generally speaking, mixed methods research is “an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)” (Achermann, 2009, p. 113). By using a similar approach, I was able to gather the opinions and practices from various facilitators and compare them to more quantitative information regarding the systems in which they work. Ultimately, this research approach “aims at making visible, transparent and understandable the complex, manifold and sometimes contradictory process of social life” (Achermann, 2009, p. 53). Understanding the complexity of the international football system, will only increase our understanding of current work on specifically the migration industry and its impact on associated national, regional, and global policies.

African Footballers

While the Veni research project is largely focusing on West African migrants, in an attempt to break the negative rhetoric and dialogue associated with migrants from this region (Schapendonk, 2014), I chose to expand my research outside of these parameters. My goal was to connect with African footballers from a variety of origins, however, due to my reliance on voluntary participation as well as using the snowball approach to connect with footballers, this did pose a few challenges and unfortunately my reach was not as far as I had initially hoped. The purpose of connecting with African footballers was to better understand how they navigate a complex system that is both guided and controlled by a variety of facilitators, while focusing on the center-periphery divide in international football.

2 Conceptual Framework

While football may be extremely accessible to fans across the world, whether it be through various streaming platforms or the extensive list of international competitions, the opposite is the case for most hopeful foreign players trying to access the international football market. In addition, many football players are continuously seeking better opportunities on other teams, whether it be for monetary gain or a chance to win some of the most coveted international competitions, they are most often focused on seeking something better. Borders have emerged within and around the world of international football, making it especially challenging for foreign players seeking lucrative contracts within top European leagues. Due to the internationalization of football, players not only have to cross many national borders, but also a variety of other borders that have emerged and are a result of the expansion of international modern-day football. Whether it be due to strict contract regulations, immigration policies, or gatekeepers policing the entry of top players into highly coveted European leagues, borders are highly present, both hindering and assisting the mobility of African footballers towards Europe. However, this is not the case for the most skilled and talented football players, who are often granted an ease of passage and who avoid the challenges faces by many others.

Often, once players manage to bypass these borders, they are faced with a variety of new challenges, such as securing a professional contract. Many either seek out the assistance of intermediaries or are pursued by intermediaries hoping to represent them on their journey towards a successful football career. These intermediaries, also commonly known as sports agents, are knowledgeable and have a certain dominance when it comes to their relevance and influence within their environment of expertise. These football intermediaries, who offer a variety of brokering services, are extremely reflective of the different forms of brokers found within the migration industry, where brokerage is conceptually grounded. Therefore, by delving into theory on the migration industry and the explanations of brokers and brokerage services, we will see the parallels drawn between these two environments – international football and the migration industry. Through an understanding of the actions of football intermediaries, we will see how their role is one that is highly relevant to migration industry studies, and migration as a whole, due to the amount of mobility caused in both importing and exporting skilled players to the top leagues from countries around the world.

This thesis seeks to draw together relevant theories, primarily on brokerage, the migration industry, and mobility, to demonstrate the actors involved in both enabling and hindering the movement and access of players to the top football leagues. As many athletes are migrants themselves, seeking better prospects abroad or pursuing lucrative opportunities presented to them, they often require the services of individuals able to assist them on their career path. Typically, these individuals come in the form of brokers or facilitators who are knowledgeable about the environment in which this athlete operates. Therefore, by taking a deeper look at the relationship between these brokers and the environment in which they operate, we can relate different migration industry concepts and apply them to this thesis' subject matter – international football.

2.1 European Football and the Rest

The bordering found within international football can be traced back through the historical expansion of the sport, particularly due to the actions taken in modern day football's evolution. In addition to the internationalization of football, colonialism has had profound effects worldwide, whether it be in various sectors, businesses, or national development. Not only was football spread globally due to various international competitions, but today's football rules and regulations all originate from European founded FIFA – the 'United Nations of football' (FIFA, n.d.b). Founding members included "France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain (represented by Madrid FC), Sweden and Switzerland...[with] the German Football Federation [cabling] its intention to join on the same day" (FIFA, n.d.a). While Great Britain may not have been a founding member, they have been dubbed the creators of modern day football and were the first country to professionalize the sport as well as create their own national regulatory body - the *Football Association* (FA) - to manage English clubs (FIFA, n.d.a). The majority of these founding European countries have lengthy colonial ties and histories affecting populations and regions around the world, making it evident how they have had an impact on the spread of modern day football around the world. With the spread of international football, the *Laws of the Game* governing the sport have been set and maintained by FIFA. Originally written in 1886, they have been redrawn in 1937 and 1938, with an additional revision completed in 1997 (FIFA, n.d.a). As all 208 football league members around the world are required to follow FIFA directory when it comes to rules and regulations, this top-down regulatory system ensures that all leagues abide by European standardization of the sport. With the historical evolution of the sport being centralized in Europe, it is no surprise that with the additional years for development over the past century that European leagues have seen the most success and growth when compared to others around the world. This process is also very reflective of colonialization and the mentality held by colonizing countries who believed that they could bring "modernization" and "development" to regions desperately in need of this (Said, 1978). While most sports are governed by one overarching body, the centralization of it in Europe does seemingly stem from colonial legacies and their desire to be involved in the development of rules and regulations. Furthermore, by bringing football to other regions, they were able to import talent from colonies and guide the development of players to match their ideas about the correct regulations and processes for this to occur.

In addition to FIFA being the international governing body for football, there are regional bodies, functioning similarly to provincial governments, who manage the various teams under their purview within their region. For example, the *Union of European Football Associations* (UEFA) governs the 55 national football associations across Europe, as well as Turkey, Russia, and Israel (UEFA, 2017a). In addition, they also organize some of the most popular and lucrative international tournaments for clubs within the region. Each year, the top teams compete in the Champions League or the Europa League. The tournament prize money, while only awarded to this tournament's participants, is only a small portion of the overall wealth accumulated within international football, one of the many reasons European leagues are so attractive to players pursuing a professional career. During the 2017/18 season, the total estimated gross commercial revenue will be approximately €2.35 billion, with the winners "expected to receive €15.5 million and the runners-up €11 million" (UEFA, 2017b).

2.1.1 Center-Periphery Dynamic

Ultimately, the localization of success and growth in Europe resulted in a kind of centralization of international football, leading to the creation of a kind of border, or 'center and periphery' divide between Europe and the rest of the world (Taylor, 2007, p. 9). Taylor (2007) reflects on the dynamic being loosely comparable to Wallerstein's world system's theory, where Europe's football leagues are at the core, the semi-periphery spreads outwards encompassing South and Central American leagues, and finally, the periphery includes Africa, Asia, Oceania and North America. The core, with its top competitive leagues and lucrative financial benefits controls the system and attract players from the peripheral regions, similarly to migration theories which highlight the movement of migrants from peripheral regions to the core, as they seek betterment of their current situation (Wallerstein, 1974; 1980; 1984; Castles et al., 2014). There has been an increase in players from Africa moving into the center region, as well as a number of European leagues branching outwards towards African countries to develop football programs and build football academies throughout the continent, ultimately resulting in Africa penetrating into the semi-peripheral region, and increasing its position from the periphery as specified in Taylor's (2007) original proposition (Cockburn, 2015; transfermarkt, n.d.a; n.d.b; n.d.c). This continual and steady expansion of European clubs towards Africa, whether it be through youth training academies or the exportation of European coaches to African clubs due to both proximity as well as a tradition of importing "cheap African talent", has resulted in the development of strong relationships between the core and new semi-peripheral region (Cockburn, 2015).

However, the peripheral-core migration explanation is limiting if trying to explain all football migration under one umbrella explanation – a process that has been a challenge for many migration theorists and researchers over the decades when it comes to migration studies, due to the complexity of the migration. One of the critiques of Wallerstein's center-periphery concept is that it focuses strongly on political-economic rationale, which does not fully explain the current situation seen within international football (Taylor, 2007). While the center-periphery may have developed due to political-economic conditions, such as Europeans being the sport's inventor, or the increases in financial success, today's football remains within a center-periphery divide due to the perceived or imagined borders surrounding the various top leagues. Footballers and their associated fans have come to know the different leagues within a form of hierarchy, with the English Premier League holding the top position, and from there other European leagues are seen as lower tiered in quality but still remaining within the center region. Moving outwards to the various other national leagues found within the semi-periphery and peripheral regions found within South America, Africa and further outwards North America and Asia. While the development of this regionalized understanding of the top regions of football exists due to a variety of influencing factors, such as perceived borders and talent centralization, it is only reinforced due to the resource allocation, high financial distribution, and competition dominance within the top leagues as opposed to those found further from the center (Europe).

2.1.2 Perceived Borders

The field of migration is complex, requiring approaches and reasonings to be combined in order to attempt to understand the root causes of migration and mobility across borders. Playing in the European football leagues come with a sense of achievement for those within them. People around the world, primarily youth, grow up watching football and seeing their heroes on tv playing for the biggest teams in the world – European ones – ultimately developing aspirations to be “just like them” when they grow up. Football fans place their teams and favourite players on a pedestal, creating a kind of threshold, or border, across which the best teams and their own football dreams lie. Most footballers are aware that the likelihood of them attaining a top European league contract are minute, but this does not stop youth players from holding these dreams and working hard to realize them. Migration scholars have commented on the imaginative practices utilized by migrants in preparation for their own migration. Koikkalainen & Kyle (2016) believe that *cognitive migration* is key in understanding migration, explaining that it is the process of a migrant “visualizing themselves in a future time and place prior to making the actual move” where the migrant is actively engaged in negotiating their own future (p. 760). Additionally, van der Velde and van Naerssen (2010) discuss the use of three-fold process in which migrants need to complete in order to actualize their migration – the threshold approach. They emphasize the necessity for migrants to cross a mental threshold, similar to the one football migrants build and work on actualizing in their progression towards a professional football career (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2010). These mental borders are important for footballers, as a large part of their success hinges on their mental ability to persevere through challenging times. This is seen when looking at the number of rules and regulations placed upon the entrance of foreign players into European leagues, when compared with the relatively minimal regulations imposed on European players (Cockburn, 2015). FIFA has implemented regulations preventing the international transfer of players under the age of 18, ensuring that non-European players are only able to integrate within the European leagues at either a prohibitive cost or a great challenge (FIFA, n.d.d, p. 17). Players under the age of 18 are able to be signed as long as they are either European or the minor footballer’s parents have happened to move to this country for reasons not linked to football (FIFA, n.d.d, p. 17). Increasing concerns over the English football leagues being ‘owned by foreigners’ has prompted action by England’s *Football Association* (FA) to ensure that there are more playing opportunities for home grown footballers, who move at an ease from academies to the higher levels (Couse, 2015).

The core-periphery dynamic has remained due to these mental perceptions towards the *top* of football and its associated leagues and players. While Europe as a whole may be within football’s core, within this region, as previously mentioned, the English Premier League is considered to house the ‘cream of the crop’, with the best and most talented players in the world found there. This ultimately results in it being *the* desired destination for footballers around the world. These imagined borders only increase the complexity of the trajectory for a prospective footballer to seek out and obtain a professional contract. Due to both the stigmatization of the various European leagues, and their associated successes, as well as due to the stigmatizations associated with migrants themselves, obtaining success within this industry requires passage through multiple borders and hurdles. However, many would argue that these challenges ultimately make obtaining success worthwhile.

2.2 International Football and Migration Brokerage

As an intermediary's role is one that requires him/her to mediate and execute football related negotiations between different parties, a migration broker typically "mediates between a migrant and an employer" (Phuong & Venkatesh, 2016, p. 94). Faist (2014) explains that "brokerage as a point of departure helps us to account for the selection of migrants and their mobility, the adaptation of migrants, and the forging and maintaining of cross-border ties" (p. 39 – 40). This is evident when applied to brokerage in international football due to the identification and selection of the best foreign athletes to be afforded contracts in the most desirable regions. The mobility of certain players over others also affords them the opportunity to maintain contacts with their point of origin, allowing them to potentially become brokers of their own in the future or assist others in joining them abroad.

A body of work on migration brokerage suggests moving away from distinctions such as illegal/legal and a focus on separating smuggling and trafficking, especially due to the variety of services and roles taken on by migration brokers and facilitators that fall outside of these dynamics (Alpes, 2013; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Spaan & Hillmann, 2013). An openness to understanding the various positions held by individuals who operate within a facilitation position for migrants provides us the opportunity to continue to grow our understanding, and in turn further understand those assisting individuals along their migration journey. By focusing on international football, the pursuance of contracts abroad, and the desirability of players from certain peripheral regions, we will be able to add to current research on migration brokers and the migration industry within which these individuals operate.

Spaan and Hillmann (2013) developed a figure (see Figure 1) to demonstrate the array of linkages and actors within the migration industry. They go on to detail that, "rather than being confined to job brokers and people smugglers, [they] conceptualize MI (migration industry) in a broader fashion, in that it involves all kinds of formal and informal/illegal actors and institutions, functioning as facilitators, regulators and controllers of migration" (Spaan & Hillmann, 2013, p. 69). Their conceptualization of the migration industry parallels the complexity with that of international football, especially when one looks at the number of actors functioning in both formal and informal roles to assist footballers in attaining different opportunities. Similarly, to football, migration industry actors can be "institutionalized or incidental, regulated and unregulated" (Spaan & Hillmann, 2013, p. 69). Within international football, national football organizations monitor the leagues in their country of purview and FIFA, the international football body, in turn monitors and regulates the national bodies. Under

the formal linkages within the migration industry we find the legal/formal activities and services.

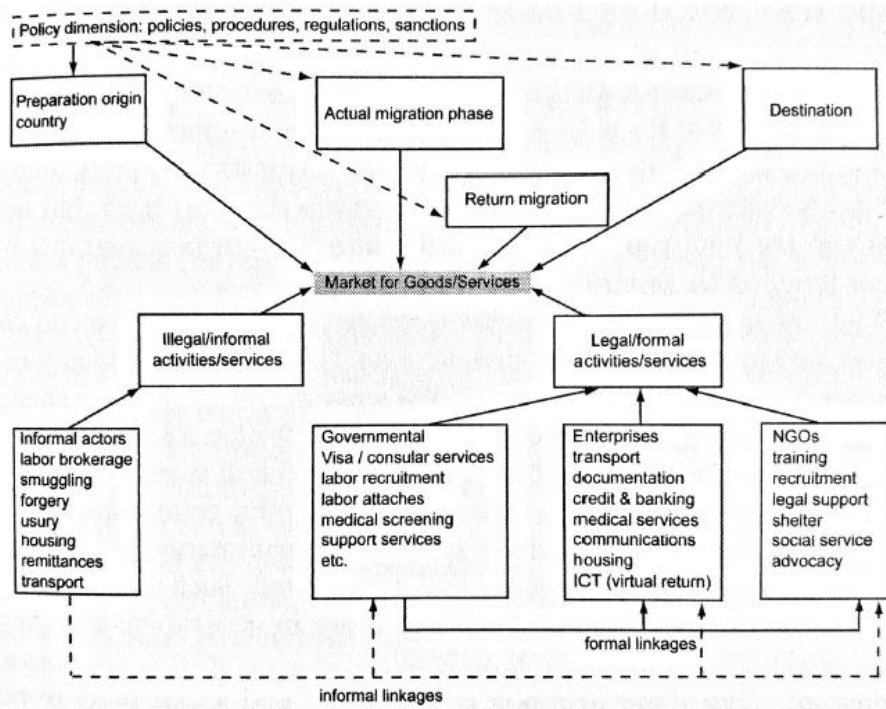


Figure 1 - Migration trajectories and actors of the migration industry (Spaan & Hillmann, 2013, p. 69)

For international football, here one would find the international, national, and municipal football leagues, as well as club staff offering an array of services such as training (team development), recruitment (scouts, agents, coaches, etc), and legal support (club staff and legal departments). Furthermore, areas such as transport, documentation, credit & banking, housing, would all exist as sub-tasks of the incoming football club for a newly contracted football player, as they would assist with the associated required processes to have the player join their team. They may even place the player in temporary housing with a team mate until something suitable is found. Services and industries such as government, visa/consular services, medical screenings and so on, would also exist due to the channels some incoming football players may be subjected to as a result of the location of the team or country in which they are going to. For example, an African player would most likely be subjected to a more rigorous immigration processes than a European player being signed to another European team. If we look at the illegal/informal services section, we find the existence of some of the darker areas of international football, specifically exploitative ploys by fake football agents, who target vulnerable populations in Africa through false offers and money scams (Essen, 2015a, 2015b; de Hoog; 2016; Madsen & Johansson, 2009). We also find a number of African players who have completed their migratory trajectory as a result of these ploys and remain in Europe hoping to obtain a legitimate offer or contract (de Hoog, 2016). Furthermore, we also find cases where

individuals have been caught or suspected of falsifying documents to their career opportunities, such as Congolese footballer Chancel Mbemba Mangulu, who was the focus of a FIFA investigation as he had 4 different birthdays listed in different documents (Sinnot, 2013). Documents with Congolese clubs stated he was born in 1988, while his Belgian club's records listed 1994 as his birth year, and finally Mbembe himself claims he was born in 1990 (Sinnot, 2013). Between these two areas, legal and illegal, we find a variety of individuals creating informal linkages, or hoping to assist victims of these exploitative ploys, such as friends, intermediaries, or organizations such as Foot Solidaire, who have fought to protect or assist these individuals in whichever way they can. As Spaan and Hillmann (2013) believe, these networks "straddle various borders, social categories, economic sectors and jurisdictions. These agents and actors do not operate in isolation and in parallel economic fields but are engaged on different levels of cooperation and conflict" (p. 70). As we will see in the following chapters of this thesis, there are often practices that may not be seen as completely legitimate by some bodies but are seen as acceptable by others. Spaan and Hillmann (2013) elaborate on this under the notion of the migration industry, however, it is also applicable within international football. "Depending on the specific vantage point taken, certain activities can be considered illegal (e.g. by the state), but legal/acceptable by other actors, e.g. by migrants...Because they refer to overlapping realities, this challenges existing analytical categorizations" (p. 70). They further their argument to suggest that, "we go beyond a narrower focus on individual migration experiences by emphasizing the interactions between social and institutional structure, the policy environment, taking into account the multiple perspectives of various MI actors on their roles, conflicts and (trans)actions within the migration trajectory, analogous to 'global commodity chains'" (Spaan & Hillmann, 2013, p. 70). As Spaan & Hillmann (2013) request this broader look at the migration industry, this thesis is also expanding its view to look into the parallels and comparisons between it and international football. If we begin to look at the global reach of football as well as the actors and organizations who work within this industry, we will begin to see how their roles are ones that do affect migration and compare to migration industry research.

Furthermore, if we look at football intermediaries as a form of gate keepers circling access to the different leagues and teams, it parallels our understanding that migration brokers assist entry of migrants towards their destinations. Spaan and Hillmann (2013) explain that, "the intermediaries who facilitate the process of migration are located in and between the licit and illicit, thereby negotiating the modus of visa, travel and employment arrangements" (p. 81). Football intermediaries occupy these same specific tasks, sorting out contract negotiations, including employment arrangements, assisting in the submission and processing of visas as well as travel, ultimately leaving them to be a parallel to migration intermediaries. As a football gatekeeper provides access and services to both players and clubs, brokers also provide services to ease a migrant's transit. The following section will further explore the gate keeper role held by intermediaries over football's regions, by taking a particular interest in the movement of players from the peripheral regions to the center.

In addition, the illegal/legal differentiation implies a sense of “under-cover, shadowy and invisible nature of the market of migration brokerage”, which is often not the case (Alpes, 2013). This is relevant when looking at football intermediaries and their own practices. While there are pushes for transparency and combatting corruption in football, especially for punitive action to be taken from the top-down, as De Marco (2017) explains, corruption in football is prolific and does not always include criminal activity. Ultimately,

“it might not even create civil liability (but it usually, and increasingly will), it may involve a dishonest breach of the regulators rules in order to obtain some advantage (which can often be referred to as simple “cheating” and might be lawful conduct at civil law) or, as a result for example of de-regulation, may not even breach the relevant regulations” (De Marco, 2017).

These practices, the ones that are ultimately not completely illegal fall under what I have termed the *grey areas*. The *grey areas* that appear in the world of international football, especially in relation to intermediary practices will be further explored in Chapter 4, where we will look at how certain regulations are being bypassed due to loopholes identified by intermediaries. While their actions may not be in direct contradiction to the rules, they put into question certain existing ethical lines. During their research into the trafficking of young football players, a topic they stumbled into, journalists Madsen & Johansson (2009) uncovered that,

“licensed [football] agents in many cases used local, unlicensed agents to do their ground work. Big clubs [have] smaller farmer clubs where they could put minor players on hold, waiting for them to get legal. And big clubs dealt with unlicensed agents, all though it was a breach of FIFA-regulations. If the player on offer was promising enough, the rules and regulation didn't seem to matter very much”.

These practices, while mostly illegal, do occur and until as of late had not been under the same kind of international scrutiny as they are today. As Spaan and Hillmann’s (2013) conceptualization of the migration industry demonstrated, its application to the football industry is very applicable, especially when one looks at the research uncovered by Madsen and Johansson (2009). Their networking and outsourcing of processes or work to others, often in informal or illegal positions only reinforces the parallels between these two environments.

2.2.1 Gate Keepers to the Center

While a typical fan of football, who may not be entirely aware of the technicalities of the system or how it unfolds on a day to day basis, might believe that coaches and club owners collaborative develop their own team, this is not an entirely accurate depiction. The world of international football is extremely complex, with multiple layers of people, companies, and institutions involved in the identification, signing, and furthermore development of future professional footballers. These individuals, often only concerned with their own success or profit, create an array of borders within which they operate and ultimately hold the power to make certain decisions. As we further unpack this area, looking at intermediaries and the decisions they make and roles they play within international football, we will see the borders within which they operate. This industry has a multitude of individuals providing goods and

services, as well as many monitoring the flows of these individuals. Migration industry literature will be relevant when showcasing the parallels between those controlling and assisting the flows of migrants with intermediaries in football once again controlling the flows of their own players, who are often migrants themselves.

Football's intermediaries range from agents, to independent scouts and club scouts, agents, coaches, lawyers, businesses, friends and family members. Similarly, to the migration industry, brokers can take on a variety of roles and represent an array of individuals, paralleling what is seen within international football. Not only do brokers play active roles within the migration industry, but football intermediaries also play critical roles when it comes to identifying and signing talented footballers, particularly because many players are in fact migrants themselves. Furthermore, by adding to the identification of migration industry actors, we can gain more of an understanding of the additional sectors in which the migration industry touches.

Migration industry entrepreneurs also include money lenders, recruiters, transportation providers and travel agents, legitimate and false paper pushers, smugglers, contractors, formal and informal remittance and courier service owners, lawyers and notaries offering legal and paralegal counseling, and promoters of immigrant destinations" (Hernández-León, 2013, p. 155 in Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 6). The range of individuals involved within the international football realm is so extreme and it creates endless possibilities when it comes to how those involved operate. If we look at football intermediaries as a migration industry actor, we can gain insight as to how international football is reflective of certain migration industry practices, ultimately providing us with a greater awareness as to how these industries operate and if there are policies that may be needed to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups.

Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen (2013) believe that early conceptual development surrounding the migration industry primarily focused its "analysis to the informal and/or illicit activities", which they saw as limiting, as by their definition migration industry actors operate within both the illegal and legal channels. Football intermediaries are also reflective of this understanding, as there are those who operate within more legitimate streams, as well as those who can operate outside of international regulations. In their book, *The Migration Industry and the Commercialization of International Migration*, Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen (2013), outline what they believe to be 5 types of partly overlapping actors within the migration industry:

"1) larger and often transnational companies; 2) various agencies and companies facilitating access to legal migration, at times even to undocumented forms of migration; 3) smaller enterprises, typically set up by migrants themselves who manage to commercialize their transnational knowledge and networks by providing services to prospective migrants; 4) the clandestine actors, composed of more developed human smuggling networks,

transnational criminal organizations, trafficking rings; and 5) NGOs, humanitarian organizations and migrant associations involved in migration”.

While football agents do not easily fall under any of these categories as is, there are aspects of their roles that are reflected within these five outlined categories. For example, FIFA and its national associations operate internationally, providing employment to individuals internationally, reflective of the actors in group one, those who “wield significant financial and political interests in the countries where they operate” (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 9). While Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen (2013) discuss the larger transnational companies in relation to migration management services, in regard to international football, they have a great deal more responsibilities under their purview. In addition, football agents function similarly to the agencies and companies facilitating access to legal migration, outlined in type two. These agencies, “often offer a package deal to set up everything, including translation, start-up loans, job contracts, housing, legal paper work and transportation” (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 9). Football intermediaries for the most part sort out the technicalities for their players, whether it be through contract negotiations, seeking out new opportunities, or assisting them in personal matters, they truly have a multidimensional job.

Football intermediaries, in their variety of forms, do police the entrance and success of players. Coaches, scouts, and managers identify talent and reaffirm the abilities of players, ultimately making decisions about that players future success. If one of these intermediaries state that this player is talented and offers them a position within their club or on their top teams, then that individual has passed through one of the borders. Once they have crossed this border, there are other borders through which they must pass, whether it be officially obtaining and signing a contract, obtaining a work visa, integrating within their new environment, or gaining playing minutes. The borders or thresholds facing footballers exist in the same manner that they may for a migrant, however different the actual border may be.

Football intermediaries, as a result of their complex role and ability to develop extensive networks within the industry, are in key positions which permit them the ability to police and monitor the entrance of individuals (potential footballers) into the center of international football. As previously discussed, individuals who hold similar positions within the migration industry are referred to as facilitators or brokers – those who assist migrants in their trajectory and are also extremely knowledgeable about the field in which they operate, as well as being aware of how best to take advantage of the environment in which they are located – often to seek success or monetary profit (Alpes, 2017; Faist, 2014; Kley, 2017; Schapendonk, 2018). When it comes to international football, these experts, primarily football intermediaries, are the most knowledgeable when it comes to being cognizant of how the field works, which teams are in need of what kind of players, how to assess players’ strengths and abilities, and how to use their own skills in order to execute contract negotiations and deals.

In addition to utilizing their own contacts to advance opportunities, brokers and facilitators also have the potential to shape the movement and trajectory of migrants, especially if they advertise certain destinations or careers over others. As Cranston (2016) showed us in her paper, based on the destination services provided by organizations or facilitators, a migrant can be prepared as to what to expect when they complete their migratory journey as well as what they will encounter in their destination. Destinations services prepare the migrant for their upcoming move, including what to expect and how to negotiate interactions within their destination society (Cranston, 2016). Intercultural training is seen as a way to give migrants the required knowledge to understand other cultures and as Cranston (2016) discusses, this can be done through role-playing as a way to practice interactions the migrant may have. This further prepares them to be a successful expatriate and avoid offending others in their new environment (p. 664-665). Similarly, to the themes discussed in Cranston's (2016) paper, aspiring football players are often prepared for their move to training facilities or clubs by certain individuals (destination service personnel) who educate them on what to expect because of their move. Cranston (2016) argues that, "we can see how the GMI [Global Mobility Industry] directs the migrant to experience encounter in particular ways, through producing knowledge of 'expatriate' habits" (p. 657). This can be done through different manners, whether it be a result of the destination service personnel having previous experience and specified knowledge on the region, or that the destination service has pre-established relationships with a certain region which lead it to prioritize certain regions over others. This is relevant for international football, especially when we acknowledge the importance of relationships and trust between football personnel/intermediaries and players. Often prioritizing certain relationships or areas is done due to previously established knowledge on the area, leaving the individual to advertise or suggest the area they may be familiar. This can lead football players to have a limited scope of opportunities or be prepared for one region over the other, especially if they rely on another individual to establish and prepare those opportunities for them. Therefore, football players are prepared and educated on what to expect in a certain region or league because of the experience and knowledge held by those carrying out their destination services. The development of these expectancies on the part of the migrant further instills this notion that there is a difference or border between them and their destination. The football intermediaries, similarly to migration brokers, stand between these two areas, reinforcing their role as the one who can help the migrant or football player overcome this border.

2.2.2 Trusting Relationships

One extremely relevant and influential topic within migration and migration industry research is that of trust. This thesis is an intersection of a few areas in which trust is relevant and especially important, for example between intermediaries and players; intermediaries and club staff; between different staff within a club, as well as between aspiring professional players relying and those to assist them in reaching their dreams. This thesis highlights a few instances in which trust has been central or identified as being important throughout the

relations and experiences of individuals, which has been echoed in previous research on associated topics, such as football and migration (Kelly, 2008; Kelly & Harris, 2010; Esson, 2015a).

Trust and distrust exist between many actors within international football, and as Kelly & Harris (2010) explained in their paper, *Managers, directors and trust in professional football*, a great deal of issues arise between club staff on a reoccurring basis. While this paper takes a deeper look into relationships between football team managers and the owners and directors, they do identify that trust is important between players and physiotherapists as well as between managers and the backroom staff they appoint (Kelly & Harris, 2010, p. 491). Kelly & Harris (2010) discuss the 'bases of trust' which "influence individuals' expectations about others' trustworthiness and their willingness to engage in trusting behaviour when interacting with them" (p. 491). They highlight that "in trying to understand why trust remains such an elusive and ephemeral resource within many organizations, researchers have focused attention on identifying psychological and social processes that impede the development of trust" (Kelly & Harris, 2010, p. 491). Rotter (1971) discussed the existence and development of interpersonal trust explaining that, it is defined as,

"an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal, or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on. If such expectancies are generalized and constitute a relatively stable personality characteristic, they should be readily amenable to investigation...This definition clearly departs significantly from other uses of the concept of basic trust which is used in a more general way, often synonymous with the healthy personality or belief in the goodness of others" (p. 444).

Migrants often rely on others when it comes to completing their migratory journey, due to the various obstacles and challenges they may face. This is also the case for aspiring football players who are seeking out professional opportunities. Often, to obtain a contract, they need to be identified and liked by coaches or managers, or have an intermediary seeking potential opportunities for them. These relationships and reliance on others, often constitute a certain level of trust that these people will be able to assist them and have the football players' best interests at heart. Therefore, the environment in which all these individuals find themselves often has a certain level of trust that exists, but as Rotter (1971) explains, "the more complex the society, the greater the dependence on others. If trust weakens, the social order collapses" (p. 443). Ultimately, if trust begins to collapse or fade within international football, then weaknesses will appear, and exploitative situations could begin to appear.

Alpes (2013) identified the need to "study migration brokerage in relation to people's perspectives in places of departure. This perspective will also include some more structural constraints and vulnerabilities beyond the direct (financial or physical) relationship to a broker" (p. 5). Individuals utilizing brokers need to hold a certain level of trust that the individual they are hiring will follow through on their promises and actually assist the individual in their

trajectory. Alpes (2013) noticed that “although failure is common, migration brokers continue to attract new clients who entrust them with large sums of money. While often accused of being criminal businessmen, the migration brokers with whom [she] worked in the field were greatly admired” (p. 4). Therefore, she noted that migrants do not develop trust and place credibility in brokers under the typical lenses, such as legal/illegal nature of work, but through alternative basis that are grounded upon the “historical, political and legal context in which aspiring migrants try to emigrate” (Alpes, 2013, p. 5). In the context of international football, players from the peripheral regions need to rely on brokers to assist them in attaining professional contracts in the center. The reliance on brokers as well as the desire to instill trust in brokers coming from football’s center region is showcased in James Esson’s (2015a) paper, *You have to try your luck: male Ghanaian youth and the uncertainty of football migration*, as he recounts the experiences and desires of Ghanaian youth to seek football contracts abroad, primarily in Europe, and the variety of exploitative situations many players and families have found themselves in. In one scenario, an under-17 team “was led to believe that a talent scout working for FC Juventus (Serie A in Italy) had come to watch them play, and for a fee could arrange trials for players” (Esson, 2015a, p. 1386). Their coach was skeptical and confirmed with FC Juventus that this ‘talent scout’ did in fact not work for them, and even with his suspicions, many of the players’ families placed pressure on their children to just pay the talent scout whatever sum of money was necessary to secure a trial abroad (Esson, 2015a, p. 1386-1387). In this scenario, even though one would assume that trusting an outsider so easily is unlikely, these families and players did due to their belief that this kind of opportunity was potentially worth the risk if it was untrue.

This thesis shows us the importance of trust between both intermediaries and players when it comes to football migration and contract negotiations. Professional players utilize intermediaries to further their success and to finalize contract negotiations, whereas aspiring football players need to interact with intermediaries to seek out contractual opportunities. Both of these relationships require certain levels of trust, especially when it comes to crossing borders during the journey from the periphery to the center.

2.3 Mobility and Access for Certain Players Over Others

This section will primarily explore the intersection of mobility studies with the existing borders in football aimed at players, especially when it comes to social borders they may encounter amongst clubs, teammates, and fans.

A trend has existed since colonial times, where larger and more prosperous European colonizers have benefitted from African talent (Darby et al., 2007). The presence that countries such as France, Belgium, Portugal, and England had within many African countries resulted in the flow of many African players to football leagues within these European countries. In Darby et al. (2007), the authors explain that a body of work exists arguing that “the recruitment of African playing talent by European football clubs can be interpreted as a form of neocolonial exploitation”, which they go on to explain “involves the sourcing, refinement, and export of raw

materials, in this case African football talent, for consumption and wealth generation in the European *core* and that this process results in the impoverishment of the African *periphery*” (p. 143 – 144). Due to these kinds of histories being engrained within the practices of certain countries (colonizers) to others (colonized), it is no surprise that football clubs seek out players in countries in which they have a relationship, ultimately easing the identification, exportation, and further obtaining of a visa, a simpler process. These practices largely exist due to colonial legacies, only increasing the influence colonialism continues to have around the world.

Over roughly the past half century, there has been a steady increase in the number of foreign football players entering the European leagues. A considerable number of them, as explained previously in the thesis, stem from South and Central America as well as Africa. Taylor (2007) expands on the reasoning for this, especially in the early days of international football – “from as early as the 1930s, French professional clubs mined their colonies for football talent. Players from the North African territories of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia were initially the most common” (p. 10). In addition, other countries, such as Portugal and Belgium, also sought out talent in their own colonies, though not to the extent that France did. Meanwhile, football great, England, has gone through various moments of both tightening and loosening restrictions on foreign players in their leagues (Taylor, 2007, p. 12).

With agents targeting certain populations over others due to an ease in transfer processes, it creates an uneven playing field between footballers trying to enter the top leagues. Reflective of the politics of mobility, which ultimately exclude certain migrants over others due to more favourable attributes. Cresswell (2010) elaborates on the politics of mobility through an illustrative description, “while some experience the movement from A to B in a privileged setting, involving ‘plush velvet seats’”, others must “travel close to death on a wooden plank precariously balanced on the same carriage’s axels” (p. 22). Agents and other intermediaries seek out footballers who will ultimately provide the most profitable outcomes, as any business would. Therefore, those that provide a high outcome at a relatively low cost to labour are seen extremely favorably in the eyes of any business. The complexity of migration policies has opened the doors for intermediaries to fill the gaps within the system and ease the migration process for footballers and clubs.

Questioning the allowance of access of certain footballers to the top leagues echoes debates seen in migration studies – should migrants be permitted access to flourishing economic centers, or to what extent are countries responsible for those fleeing persecution or danger in their own countries (The Economist, 2015; Castles & al., 2014). When it comes to football migration, restricting access to the top leagues only creates multiple disadvantages – for football in peripheral regions, for clubs in the top leagues, and for individual players’ own development. Therefore, if we are to have international football, then it truly does need to be open and accessible to all. However, we have seen that this is not always the case.

Not only are agents or intermediaries responsible for allowing outside influences to sometimes sway the manner in which they seek out new talent, but football fans, and players

themselves have also had an impact on bordering within football. Issues of racial violence or segregation have been seen in various professional football leagues. Kick It Out, a football organization established in 1993 to counter racism and discrimination in football, continues to play a significant role in today's game (Kick It Out, 2017, p. 2). The 2016/2017 yearly report identifies a rise in discrimination within professional football from the previous season, with specifically 48% of reports related to racial discrimination, 21% to Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic discrimination, and 17% of discrimination being faith related (Kick It Out, 2017, p. 7). The notion of the 'other' in social sciences has increasingly been seen in various research due to its ongoing relevance within today's society, and this is no different when it comes to professional football clubs. Many players have been the victims of racism and isolation upon joining a team, especially if they are of foreign origin. The process of seeing individuals or countries as an 'other' stems from the historical practice of colonialization, as expanded upon in Edward Said's work on the subject. He shows how the information regarding conquered colonies by the colonizers upon their return altered the perception of these places. Edward Said (1978) explained in the opening of his text, *Orientalism*, the

“Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral of European material civilization and culture” (p. 9-10).

Throughout the rest of *Orientalism* (Said, 1978), he discusses the various discourses that have been developed to entrench Western society with the significant differences between these regions of the world, leading to justification for colonialism and 'modernization' processes within the Orient. This 'modernization' process has been implemented across various regions and systems, including in international football where the central institutions were typically European and sought to spread the 'correct western' football practices and beliefs to other regions. Furthermore, this systematic process ultimately instills the dynamic that one group is incapable of developing their own correct systems and the other is. The dichotomy of the 'other' is still very prevalent today around the world, as well as in professional football, whether it be associated with a player's race, religion, football skill development, or the associated football quality in their country of origin. This divide only continues to allow European football to extend its reach to other regions and implement development processes in regions where they believe it is needed, and furthermore, export top players to bring them into their own leagues to utilize their skills.

2.4 Navigating the Ever-Changing Environment

As we discuss the various borders that emerge throughout international football, as well as the constantly changing environment in which the various organizations, actors, and players find themselves, we begin to see the formation of a complex web take place. This complexity

leaves individuals, primarily football players, to figure out which path to take on their own. It is up to them to distinguish between those that will help them, those that will exploit them, those that will prevent them from reaching their dreams, and the list goes on. All of these individuals come together in one environment, often only seeking to benefit themselves and better their own situation. Ultimately, leaving players from the peripheral football regions to sift through this environment hoping that they connect with one individual who will assist them, and hopefully not exploit them, as they pursue a professional football contract.

Henrik Vigh (2009b) in his paper, *Motion squared – A second look at the concept of social navigation*, discusses “how people act in difficult or uncertain circumstances and in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions” (p. 419). Previous work completed in West Africa and Bissau, as well as research with migrants from these regions in Lisbon and Portugal, left him seeking to clarify the concept of social navigation and how people act within their own social worlds (Vigh, 2009b, p. 419). In this paper he seeks to define the concept, as previous work citing the term has not clearly defined it but has used it as a frame of reference. Vigh’s (2009b) research led him to conclude that, what his informants were encountering were “the push and pull of social forces – not as static constraints or positions of power in a social field but as social effects that engage social beings and bodies within the social environment in question” (p. 423). Similarly, to football migrants from the peripheral regions moving towards the center, they encounter a variety of social forces and beings imposing constraints on them. Whether it be the restrictions on non-European football players seeking contracts or being limited in youth training opportunities, the discrimination they encounter, or intermediaries choosing who or how an individual enters the center, the range of social forces is vast. However, footballers from the periphery, especially African ones, are aware of the necessity to continue to adapt and “dubria” (swaying movement of the upper body or continuing to move in a social setting) to survive (Vigh, 2009b, p. 423).

Social navigation includes “both the assessment of the dangers and possibilities of one’s present position as well as the process of plotting and attempting to actualize routes into an uncertain and changeable future” (Vigh, 2009b, p. 425). While previous research and theory have looked at changes experienced by migrants within a static moment, social navigation bears in mind the ongoing continuous changes experienced by individuals. In addition, Vigh (2009b) acknowledges our tendency to look at social formation and change in a diachronic perspective, and states that “we often forget...to take the movement of the social environment into consideration” (p. 426). While it is evident to see social navigation play out within turbulent or political circumstances, Vigh (2009b) makes sure to clarify that “we all navigate, but the intensity and visibility of our navigational efforts depend on the speed and/or opacity of social change and our ability to control oncoming movement” (p. 430). Therefore, it is easy to understand the relevance of social navigation in the trajectory of peripheral football players. There are various stages they need to pass to hopefully obtain one of the coveted professional football contracts. By taking the stories and experiences gathered during the research phase of

this thesis, an understanding will be provided which will demonstrate how peripheral African players navigate the complexities of international football.

2.5 Conclusion

As this chapter shows, international football provides us with an environment in which we can find the intersection of debates from the migration industry, brokers, mobility studies, and migration. As migration scholars continue to demonstrate, it is a complex field in which many areas of study overlap with one another, and this is evident when one looks at international football's existence and the actors that operate within this environment. Brokers or intermediaries are especially important, as we will see in the following chapters when it comes to their role as well as how they manage the borders around football. They are the bridges between different leagues and opportunities for both clubs and players. Furthermore, their choices and network can guide the opportunities afforded to different players. In turn, most football players can obtain better or more opportunities if they utilize brokers, increasing the likelihood of their own mobility. However, this requires a certain level of trust, especially when it comes to deciding who is deserving of trust or who is most likely to provide the best opportunities. The following chapters in this thesis will seek to provide empirical evidence to further these arguments and demonstrate their existence within international football, and migration industry studies.

3 A Macro Perspective on Football Intermediaries

To obtain a sense of the complexity of the environment in which football intermediaries exist and operate, one must discuss the various relevant aspects and organizations that both manage and monitor intermediaries, as well as the tools that are utilized by intermediaries. This includes, as a starting point, both the international body (FIFA) and the national football associations that play key roles in the institutional management of intermediaries. As well as organizations and businesses, such as law firms, businesses, and football schools, who all play a variety of roles geared towards assisting intermediaries in their tasks. Finally, in order for intermediaries to execute their role, there are a variety of relevant tools that one needs in order to both improve their chances to seek out new clients and opportunities for their current players, as well as tools that are utilized as a means by which to track the actions of intermediaries.

To begin, in part one, a discussion surrounding the most recent and substantial changes to intermediary regulations will be given. Here, an explanation of the relationship between FIFA and its associations will be provided, as well as an overview of FIFA's 2015 regulatory and institutional changes. This will demonstrate the complexity of the institutional management of intermediaries and be a starting point from which the discussion of different kinds of intermediaries will commence. In this section, part two, we will further delve into identifying the different kinds of intermediaries that find themselves operating within international football. The term intermediary is used as a 'catch all term' to reference all actors operating within an intermediary-like role, whether aimed at concluding a transfer agreement between different parties or assisting others within this process. This can include those who operate within an official capacity, as well as those who play a lesser official role, both for a fee or free of charge, as defined by FIFA (FIFA, 2014, p. 4). While not all intermediaries operate under FIFA's institutional management, they do still exist and can have significant impact and influence within the field.

3.1 Part One: Institutional Management of Intermediaries

FIFA – International Authority

FIFA, the international organisation responsible for the management of football on a global level, has 211 national organisations that fall under its purview, through both financial and logistical support (FIFA, n.d.b). In return, these associations have to uphold obligations due to their role as FIFA representatives in their own countries, such as “respect[ing] the statues, aims and ideals of football’s governing body and promot[ing] and manag[ing] [the] sport accordingly” (FIFA, n.d.b). Furthermore, the associations make up various Confederations, which offer support to FIFA during the organisation of tournaments.

FIFA					
AFC Asia	CAF Africa	CONCACAF North & Central America and the Caribbean	CONMEBOL South America	UEFA Europe	OFC Oceania

The regulation of football intermediaries is completed on a national basis, with international regulations being developed by FIFA, and expected to be upheld by all associations. These associations, while they develop their own regulations and policies, are done so based on what is outlined by FIFA. It is possible to have varying practices between associations, due to the independence they hold in developing and implementing their own practices. For example, England’s national football association, The *Football Association* (FA) has a more developed and robust system, than the Netherland’s KNVB, when it comes to publicizing the names of football intermediaries who have had their licenses suspended or revoked due to disciplinary action (FIFA, 2018). These variations are minute when comparing the overall system but do make a difference when addressing how advanced some associations are over others. Bearing in mind that both of these associations are ones found within extremely developed countries, who both place a significant importance on the development and sustainability of football within their country.

Within this chapter, the recent changes and regulatory developments made by FIFA will be analyzed to see whether it has resulted in a more transparent environment for all those involved. In addition, taking a closer look at how these changes have been implemented on a national level by the associations will be addressed. Primarily through an analysis of the KNVB’s (Netherland) system, as well as a look at England’s FA. Once a review of these systems, and how the regulations aim to manage intermediaries is completed, we will look at the additional actors who play key roles in the success of both intermediaries, players, football clubs, and regulatory associations within international football. These actors primarily referring to certain systems and companies that intermediaries can utilize as a tool for them to more successfully carry out their job. In addition, to these systems are ones, such as FIFA Transfer Matching System, that are used by clubs to record transfers and contracts, as an additional way to implement various checks and balances into the current system, in the hopes that eventually it will create additional transparency.

3.1.1 FIFA’s Regulation of Intermediaries

In 2015, significant changes were made to *FIFA’s Players’ Agents Regulations*, replacing it with the new *Regulations on Working with Intermediaries*, which was developed as a means to address several shortfalls that had been identified over the years. FIFA concluded that at most, about 30% of international transfers were being completed by unlicensed agents, resulting in individuals playing key roles without having obtained any formal licensing (Sinnott,

2010). FIFA was essentially managing the “Wild West”, as described by Football consultant Tor-Karlsen, and their policing of everyone involved was becoming very time consuming and challenging (Sinnott, 2010). In addition, the difficulties and inefficiencies encountered with the licensing system, such as the finalization of many international transfers without the use of properly licensed agents, as well as a lack of transparency within the system, and confusion over “the differences between club representatives and players’ agents and their respective financial obligations”, it was decided a change to a more transparent and tightly controlled and supervised system was required (FIFA, 2015a, p. 1). This new system focuses on key aspects, such as transparency, proper payment of intermediary fees, addressment of conflicts of interest, as well as the protection of minors (FIFA, 2015a, p. 2). The dissolution of their licensing exam meant that anyone can register with the national football association for the country in which they will work, ultimately becoming a legitimate agent and able to represent clients without any form of actual training or education. This new freedom to register as an intermediary does come at a cost, as it can be extremely challenging, especially due to the lack of a network these agents may have, their unfamiliarity with the legal and contractual aspects regarding transfers and signing processes, as well as experience regarding how to successfully negotiate a contractual agreement with a club (Kearney, 2018a; 2018b).

Specifically, the new system has certain expected requirements for the various associations to uphold, as outlined in FIFA’s chart below (FIFA, 2015b). More relevant regulation changes have been highlighted and will be referred to throughout the thesis.

General principles & responsibilities	Players and clubs are entitled to engage the services of intermediaries when concluding an employment contract and/or a transfer agreement
	Players and clubs shall be diligent when selecting an intermediary. Once selected, players and clubs shall ensure the intermediary signs the relevant Intermediary Declaration and representation contract concluded between the parties
New registration system allowing for increased tracking/traceability of intermediary activities	<p>Each member association is required to implement a registration system for intermediaries; intermediaries must be registered in this system for each transaction they are involved in; all intermediaries must complete a mandatory Intermediary Declaration and submit this to the member association concerned. This declaration represents the intermediary’s adherence to the statutes and regulations of FIFA and its member confederations and associations when carrying out his activities.</p> <p>Representation contracts concluded between intermediaries and players or clubs must also be deposited with the association when the intermediary is being registered. This also applies to the renegotiation of an employment contract.</p>

<p>Increased information relating to scope of intermediary services</p>	<p>Clubs and players will now be obliged to include information in representation contracts about their chosen intermediary, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● scope of intermediary services ● legal nature of their relationship with intermediary ● details on contract duration, remuneration as well as necessary signatures, among others
<p>Disclosure and publication of registered intermediaries and their remuneration</p>	<p><i>Players and clubs will be required to disclose full details of remunerations paid to intermediaries.</i></p> <p><i>Member associations will be required to annually publish:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● names of all intermediaries they have registered ● single transactions intermediaries were involved in ● total remunerations made to intermediaries by registered players and affiliated clubs
<p>Regulation of intermediary fees</p>	<p><i>The regulations recommend fees paid to intermediaries to be limited to 3% of the player’s basic gross income or of the transfer compensation.</i></p> <p>Any payments made to intermediaries acting on behalf of minor players are strictly prohibited.</p>
<p>Disclosure of any conflicts of interest</p>	<p>Players and clubs must ensure that no conflicts of interest exist when engaging an intermediary.</p> <p>If the intermediary discloses in writing any conflict of interest and obtains the written consent of all parties involved before negotiations start, no conflict of interest will be deemed to exist.</p>
<p>Imposition and publication of sanctions on intermediaries</p>	<p>Member associations are responsible for imposing sanctions on any party under their jurisdiction. <i>They are obliged to publish all sanctions taken against intermediaries and must inform FIFA so that the FIFA Disciplinary Committee can decide on whether the sanction should have worldwide effect in line with the FIFA Disciplinary Code.</i></p>
<p>Enforcement of the member associations’ obligations</p>	<p>The <i>proper implementation of the minimum standards and requirements at association level will be closely monitored by FIFA.</i> It is important to note that the new on Regulations on Working with Intermediaries set out minimum standards and requirements which member associations may introduce as they deem necessary for allowing physical and legal persons to conduct players’ transfers and related transactions. Certain other activities performed by agents, such as the negotiation of</p>

	the exploitation of players' image rights, are not affected by the new Regulations on Working with Intermediaries.
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Table 1 - FIFA's Working with intermediaries – reform of FIFA's players' agent's system – What the new regulations on working with intermediaries will mean for players and clubs, 2015

As this chart shows, the expectations for both associations and clubs in relation to intermediary services are quite clear. There is a new-found importance placed upon transparency and open reporting of funds and fees associated with the various transfers and contracts being completed throughout FIFA leagues. Furthermore, by implementing specific requirements and outlining the monitoring capacities that will be carried out by FIFA, the associations were required to develop their own systems that abide by these expectations. The concern over undocumented funds associated with previous transactions are also now being countered by the requirement to properly document and “disclose full details of remunerations paid to intermediaries” (FIFA, 2015b, p. 2). While there are numerous regulatory changes that have a positive impact on the system, there are still opportunities through which, at both an international and national level, improvements to the system can be made.

One major change that was implemented at the same time as the above regulations, was the dissolution of FIFA's licensing exam (FIFA, 2015a). This exam was a mandatory component of the previous licensing process, where prospective football agents were required to complete a rather intensive and demanding exam to obtain a license to practice as a registered football agent (Lowen, 2015). However, as previously mentioned, the system in which these registered agents were working was filled with unlicensed agents completing similar roles and profiting off the transfers and signings in which they were participating (FIFA, 2015a; De Marco, 2017). This prompted FIFA to implement the current system, which required agents to register yearly with the national association in whose country they will be working. This registration includes signing a declaration form stating that they will abide by association regulations when it comes to their intermediary work, a police background check, as well as a yearly registration fee (The FA, n.d.a; KNVB, n.d.). In addition, new FIFA regulations require their associations to publish the names of all registered agents on their respective websites, making it publicly accessible. The transactions in which football intermediaries participate are also all publicly accessible (The FA, n.d.a; KNVB, n.d.). This level of transparency ensures that all parties involved can access and view the details from these transactions, which permits FIFA a sense of comfort that there are not thousands of unreported transactions taking place without their knowledge and proper documentation.

3.2 Implementation by the Associations

As FIFA developed and implemented a list of required regulations for associations to implement, there has been some liberty provided as to how the associations develop the infrastructure and system for their own intermediary processes. Within this section, an overview as to how the KNVB and the FA have implemented the FIFA regulations will be discussed. By specifically looking at the KNVB and its intermediary practices, relevant information will be covered which will assist in our understanding for the following chapter, in

which the day to day practices and role of a Dutch football agent will be addressed. These two associations, both have very developed and internationally respected football institutions, are good examples of how the FIFA regulations have been interpreted and implemented into practice.

Both associations have sections on their websites devoted to intermediary regulations and practices. As any intermediary who practices within an association's territory is required to register with that association, it would be expected that the information be provided in multiple languages for accessibility. However, this is not the case on both associations' website, as the documents and information are in the national language for their respective country. While the KNVB does have an English website, when you access it, you are unable to view the section on intermediaries. There is no explanation as to why there are challenges when it comes to accessing information, one could interpret that this may be a way to limit access for those outside of nationals. All registration documents and regulatory explanations on the KNVB's website are in Dutch, which did make it challenging to interpret. However, as per FIFA requirements, they do post the names of registered agents, yearly transactions, the amount spent by football clubs on agent fees, examples of the various contracts, yearly registration fees, and a few other additional files (KNVB, n.d.). While the FA's website is more accessible due to everything being in English, they also have additional sections that the KNVB does not. One relevant section to note is one containing the names of football intermediaries who are currently suspended, as well as the details of their suspension. Both this section and the one listing all currently registered agents, can prove to be extremely helpful, especially when it comes to verifying registration of agents, something which should be utilized by footballers and their families when approached by intermediaries.

3.3 Part Two: Intermediaries

As FIFA's revised system, *Regulations on Working with Intermediaries*, suggests, it is a more encompassing system that covers, the actions of an individual "who, for a fee or free of charge, represents players and/or clubs in negotiations with a view to concluding an employment contract or represents clubs in negotiations with a view to concluding a transfer agreement" (FIFA, 2014a, p. 4). While the previous system was geared more towards the licensing of specific players' agents, this one now requires all individuals, no matter their title or specific employment, to register if they are to be involved in any football negotiations. This means that individuals, such as agents, lawyers, or businessmen all fall under this purview. These various intermediaries, whose roles may differ from that of strictly players' agents, are able to utilize their own specialization in their field, to negotiate a desirable offer for all parties involved.

In addition, while intermediaries are required to register with the national association in which region they operate, this is not always the case. There are some individuals who perform intermediary functions, such as mediating an introduction between players and different clubs, but do not register via the traditional routes. While it is unclear whether or not this is

permitted, they can perform impactful roles within international football. These individuals will be further explored in the next chapter.

3.3.1 Players' Agents

These are the primary forms of intermediaries within international football. They are responsible for representing both players, and sometimes clubs, within contract negotiations. Within football agents, we find what some call “super agents”, meaning they are the “biggest power-wielders around...representatives behind some of sport’s most significant – and expensive – deals, particularly those who boast an extensive portfolio of clients” (Quarrell, 2016). These super agents are in unique positions, because often they are the ones who have the ears of the biggest clubs and individuals involved in international football (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg). They can push deals through, and in some scenarios, it is impossible for a deal to be finalized without them, increasing their influence and power (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg). There are a minimal number of super agents in international football, leaving it to be a coveted position for other agents to achieve.

With the dissolution of the agent licensing exam, as previously discussed, a number of individuals have become licensed intermediaries representing footballers. While some may have some formal training or experience, whether it be due to them being retired players or having sought out programs geared towards educating new football agents, there are a large variety of individuals. Companies such as Sports Management Worldwide (n.d.), The Football Education Center (2017), and the Professional Football Scouts Association (n.d.), all offer courses aimed at intermediaries improving their knowledge and abilities to be successful within the field.

It is also important to note that agents/intermediaries can either work independently or under a company providing intermediary services. When it comes to annual registration, the intermediaries need to be registered, along with the company for which they work.

3.3.2 Club Personnel

Individuals who already work for clubs, whether they be professional or amateur, do play intermediary roles within international football. People in roles such as scouts, trainers, coaches, managers or legal counsel, all have the potential to play intermediary roles between players, clubs, or other intermediaries. Thus, requiring them to be added to the list of various intermediaries found within international football. David (2018), a Dutch football agent, has a friend who works for a professional Dutch club, who has gained permission to operate within a more intermediary role from that of his current role as solely a scout within his club. They have granted him permission to go into joint ventures with David as long as he does not hinder the success of the club for which he works (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg).

A peer described the role of a family friend who works for a Dutch football club as being one that required her to obtain the correct documents and visas for new club players (conversation with Victoria, 2018, Nijmegen). As her friend recounted to her, she works under a

more legal focused role, where she is required to obtain and assist in the transfer of new footballers, both from Europe and further into peripheral regions. While this individual's role is one that ends after the completion of this task, leaving them to be comparable to border security or immigration officers. These roles require someone to take at face value the paperwork and individual and process their application to permit them to cross a border.

While many of these individuals operate for the benefit of their own organisation, there is the potential for them to connect with others outside of their workplace. In addition, staff who work at the satellite training facilities connect with partner clubs or individuals to inform them of talent within their facilities or the region in which they operate.

3.3.3 Law Firms and Businesses

Organisations, such as law firms, businesses, marketing agencies, and so on, can also play a role in contract negotiations. Whether it be for their expertise, or their own investment in a player, they can be used to advance and assist in perfecting the finalization of a contract. However, it is important to note that, along with the many other changes implemented in 2015, third party ownership of players was also banned, removing the ability for businesses to be entitled to participate or be compensated in the future transfer of players, something they had previously been afforded (FIFA, 2014b).

If we take a closer look at the role law firms play in contract negotiations, we can use the firm Mills & Reeve as an example, who offer an extensive list of services, covering a variety of sectors, such as corporate, finance, health and care, litigation and arbitration, real estate, technology – in addition to sports related matters (Mills & Reeve, n.d.). With lawyers specializing in legal sports issues, it allows them the opportunity to be engaged in contract negotiations, providing advisement to both clubs and other intermediaries as questions or complex contracts arise.

On their website, Mills & Reeve (2016), provide an example of the complexity of a player's international journey from his home country of Brazil to England. The example highlights their involvement in this fictional, but realistic depiction of the obstacles along a young player's career path, from being identified and furthermore signed by a major professional European football club. In this case, the footballer, Reevaldo, was represented by his football agent, and in turn, the English team interested in him also contracted his football agent to represent them as well. This is permitted as long as the correct paperwork is completed and there is full disclosure. In addition, there was some complexity surrounding Reevaldo gaining a work permit, due to his young age and lack of international matches, which are typically required to gain approval of the United Kingdom's point-based permit system (Mills & Reeve, 2016). In these instances, having legal counsel can assist in easing the process as they are well versed in the legal nature of migration permits and the necessary requirements through which to gain one.

Wyscout is an independent business/organization that provides services to actors involved in international football – whether it be coaching staff, intermediaries, football players, or the media, their range of goods and services is reflected through the different ‘packages’ one can purchase for videos, data, statistics, and tools. One can “analyze teams, matches and players; discover new talents; promote your players’ learn by the best. Everywhere, from your desktop, tablet or mobile” (Wyscout, n.d.a). Claiming to be the “most used technology in the world for scouting, match and performance analysis”, it is no surprise the value that this system brings to football actors and the completion of their own job (Wyscout, n.d.a). The system is available for use on a variety of monthly subscription packages that include a variation of access to items such as an extensive archive of videos, coverage of hundreds of international matches and competitions, player profiles, and networking opportunities (Wyscout, n.d.). In addition to them providing access to a variety of tools and services, they also organize the Wyscout Forum. An event dedicated to international football and the transfer market, as well as it being an opportunity for Player Agencies and Clubs to network before each transfer market window (Wyscout, n.d.). This event is commonly referred to as the “speed dating of football” due to its tendency to connect such a large variety of individuals and clubs to one another (Zanardi, 2017). Wyscout’s event’s page, for their upcoming Forum in November 2018, already states that they have more than 150 participating clubs, highlighting teams like Juventus, Arsenal, and Roma, who are all found within football’s center region (Wyscout, 2018). There do not seem to be many other companies or systems that match this one’s extensiveness and versatility, giving it dominance throughout international football. While it may not be the optimal choice for every individual, it certainly allows users to expand their own reach and watch games or review player profiles for individuals they may have not encountered had it not been for this software.

3.3.4 Independent Individuals

There are also individuals who pay intermediary-like roles within international football but are not necessarily abiding by the traditional or regulatory channels when completing their actions. One of the primary groups of individuals I’ve heard referenced playing intermediary-like roles and connecting young footballers with either clubs, trainers, or agents, has been friends and family members. A few of those I interviewed discussed the fact that sometimes these individuals will receive a cut or payment for connecting a player with someone and often these are undocumented (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg; Interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Julian, May 2018, Tilburg). Friends and family can be successful in this role dependent on the network they hold. If they are familiar with football club staff, then inviting them to their child or friend’s own football game could lead to a potential trial invitation which could in turn become a contract offer. It is also not uncommon for family members to become licensed football agents and only have under their care their son or daughter. This can be seen with players such as Lionel Messi, Arjen Robben, Juan Mata and Neymar, who all have family members representing them (Quarrell, 2016).

There are also individuals, such as Emmanuelle, who I encountered during my research. He has positioned himself within an international football network, largely based between Europe and Africa, assisting players either finding a football club or helping them adjust to their new environment. He is not a registered intermediary but does hold a similar role as he is often helping players find opportunities within European leagues.

Finally, there are also individuals who make certain services available to ease the process related to obtaining contracts for players. At an annual networking event hosted by Wyscout, David, a registered Dutch football intermediary I interviewed, encountered an individual who was offering naturalization through Malta for players who did not have an EU passport (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg). This offer, while it might seem unusual, is similar to the variety of offerings available to migrants by brokers and facilitators throughout their migration trajectory (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013). These kinds of opportunities increase the probability of certain players obtaining contracts in Europe, especially because having EU citizenship enables professional clubs to offer players from the peripheral regions contracts with significant ease. While I am not able to confirm if this individual is a registered intermediary, their offering is one that aligns with relevant intermediary actions, as well as impacts the entrance and accessibility of football's center from those within the periphery, ultimately showcasing the extensiveness of different forms of intermediaries.

This is not a complete list of the different forms of intermediaries acting within international football, but the various forms I encountered throughout my research. I do believe that similarly to research on the migration industry, the different kinds of actors found within international football is extensive and depending on the various needs that arise, whether it be due to new legislation or regulations, new actors will arise offering tools and services that can be utilized as a means to either bypass their restrictions or easily navigate their implementation.

3.5 Conclusion

The macro environment in which intermediaries operate is extremely complex, from the extensive variety of intermediaries, to the institutional systems in which they operate, there are so many combinations that can occur. Both clubs and players are not required to utilize an intermediary to complete their own transactions, but most often do, as the expertise intermediaries have is often invaluable. With the relatively recent changes to the FIFA intermediary system, their role and activities are becoming more transparent, which is a positive to international football. While some intermediaries can still operate in rather unformal roles or undocumented ones, it is important to continue to advance the policies and regulations within this field to ensure overall transparency and legitimacy. However, this will be a challenge, especially when it comes to associations whose football institutions are less advanced than those of the Netherlands and England. This is even more of a concern when we look at the democratic culture in countries around the world, and the number of them that are

in fact football associations under FIFA. The Economist, in its yearly Democracy Index, attempts to place a numerical value on the overall strength of the democratic culture in countries. While it is “an imperfect and debatable list, which ranks 167 countries (FIFA has 211 members). Nevertheless, it’s striking to note that only 19 rank as full democracies, while more than half are classified as either “Hybrid Regimes” or “Authoritarian,” with more than a quarter falling into the latter category” (Marcotti, 2018). While there should be a separation between international sports and politics, their relationship is often one that coincides. Ultimately, if there is to be transparency and accountability within FIFA and international football, many of these national associations, as Marcotti highlights (2018), will be required to “operate to a far higher standard of integrity, democratic principle and disinterested independence than the countries (and cultures) to which they belong is utopian”. This will be one of the greatest challenges for FIFA as it continues to develop towards its goal of being more accountable and transparent while simultaneously expanding its global reach. In addition, the increasing involvement from businesses and various organizations, who do not operate to any form of political standard, will continue to hold a great influence over FIFA’s evolution. With companies such as Wyscout offering beneficial goods and services, as well as networking opportunities, to football clubs, coaching staff, intermediaries, and others, their use is one that is invaluable to the success of these actors.

4 A Micro Perspective on Football Intermediaries

The experiences of a football intermediary are typically unique, especially due to the nature of their role being one that allows them to represent both clubs and players, as well as working with different leagues, whether professional or amateur. This section of the thesis will take a closer look at the experiences of two intermediaries, one registered and one more unconventional intermediary, who both play a presence in the lives of international football players, as well as within the center-periphery region. Both intermediaries are primarily located in the Netherlands, but they have managed to expand their reach due to the network they have developed, including previous work in Belgium, Germany, Croatia, and Israel. Their experiences, while unique, are reflective of overall practices of other intermediaries, and provide us with an understanding of the practices and tools utilized by them in their roles. Furthermore, they were both able to recount experiences of their peers, sometimes leading to further unique accounts of the role intermediaries can play.

This chapter will seek to draw parallels between football intermediaries and theory surrounding migration brokers within the migration industry. Moreover, it seeks to bring together aspects of the conceptual framework in a manner that demonstrates the relevant similarities between the migration and football environments.

4.1 Intermediaries

4.1.1 David, Licensed Intermediary in the Netherlands

The first intermediary we will discuss is David, a registered agent with the KNVB, who is a retired professional football player. Having transitioned into intermediary work after the dissolution of the licensing exam, he worked for an intermediary company and then opened his own company and works independently. For David, part of the appeal to get into intermediary work when he did, was due to not having to write and subsequently pass FIFA's previous intermediary licensing exam as there was a significant cost associated with it and the passing rate was quite low. However, once it was removed, it was easier for him to get into the industry and utilize the network he had from his professional football days. He currently has about twenty players that he works with, on both professional and amateur teams. Most of his players are within the Netherlands, but he has a few other players in associations in both Croatia and Israel.

The players he represents range from past teammates to individuals he has met through friends, as well as a few he has connected with through chance opportunities. One of his players, the one playing in Israel, he was connected with through an individual he met while on holiday in Thailand. The player in Israel wants to move to Europe, so mandated David to seek contract opportunities for him within the region. As David explained, it takes both hard work and luck, such as his haphazard encounter with the player's friend in Thailand, to continue to expand your network and seek out new opportunities, both for yourself as well as your players. Trying to be in the right place at the right time increases David's chances of identifying talent or connecting with players in different regions. As Esson (2015a) reiterates the message of the

African footballers whom he interviewed, “you have to try your luck” (p. 1389), he explains that “these expressions are used by young people in their respective countries to describe the ability to improvise using accessible resources, and amend strategies and plans according to opportunities and constraints” (p. 1389). Similarly, to these footballers, David and other intermediaries need to navigate their own environment with what is at their disposal. This navigation, as Vigh (2009b) elaborated, reflects “Bourdieu’s perspective [that] people may move and act vertically in the social topography of a field, competing for position and capital, and this act strategically in relation to each other as competitors, but they generally do so without having to worry about the movements of the field” (p.427). However, as Vigh (2009b) goes on to argue, this is quite a static description because often people are also caught in an uncertain and always changing field, leaving them to also have “to interact with each other and the [playing] field” in which they find themselves (p. 247). Therefore, for David, not only does he need to deal with his own players’ needs, or the needs of the clubs themselves, but he is also at the mercy of the national and international football bureaucracies under which he operates, as well as the influence of team results and football fan pressures onto their own clubs. Ultimately, leaving him in an ever-changing environment and one where he needs to deal and interact with the opportunities he finds in front of him.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Kelly & Harris (2010) focused on the ‘bases of trust’ in their paper, *Managers, directors and trust in professional football*, an “individuals’ expectations about others’ trustworthiness and their willingness to engage in trusting behaviour when interacting with them” (p. 491) can often be a result of the interactions had with that individual or recounts of previous encounters by others in relation to that person. Furthermore, Kelly & Harris (2010) state that the “expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal, or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on...should be readily amenable to investigation” (p. 444). In David’s case, this individual offering up his friend seeking a move from Israel to Europe would have developed a sense of trust or expectation that his word or intermediary approach could be relied on and would result in potential positive outcomes for his friend. Often these kinds of expectations towards an individual are “generalized and constitute a relatively stable personality characteristic” (Kelly & Harris, 2010, p. 444). David’s ability to showcase his own trustworthiness and reliability serves him well when it comes to meeting potential new clients and pursuing new connections with different clubs and football staff.

David continues to focus on expanding his own network, which is already quite well developed from his professional days. Many of the players he formerly played with are now in coaching positions or technical directors with clubs, expanding his network to a variety of other European countries and clubs outside the Netherlands where he has made his home. These contacts assist him in seeking out both new players and positions for his existing players on their teams. As different leagues may require more technically skilled players as opposed to ones with better fitness, having a range of teams with a variety of needs assists him in placing the players he works with. Due to his network, he has begun to travel to Belgium more

frequently and is hoping to further expand into this region, both seeking players to work with as well as identifying opportunities for his own players in this region. Due to the proximity of Belgium to the Netherlands and previously playing in Belgian leagues, it is an easy market to begin to tap into.

Working for himself and continuing to expand his business leaves David to be his own entrepreneur, and by expanding his network and increasing his own social capital, he can develop more opportunities for himself and his business. “Sociologists have stressed the importance of social capital as a determinant of entrepreneurship: entrepreneurs rely on their contacts for information and services” (Wahba & Zenou, 2011, p. 891). This is seen in David’s business as well as within migration industry literature, where similarly migration industry entrepreneurs can “include money lenders, recruiters, transportation providers and travel agents, legitimate and false paper pushers, smugglers, contractors, formal and informal remittance and courier service owners, lawyers and notaries offering legal and paralegal counselling, and promoters of immigrant destinations” (Hernández-León, p. 155 in Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p.6). A typical day for David involves him often connecting with his players and checking in on them. He highlights the importance of knowing his players and gauging their needs. As he says, some can need more guidance or support than others, which can take up significant amounts of time. It is especially important to ensure his players understand the process and the potential challenges that they may encounter. David believes that finding the best fit for his players, both in relation to team and environment, is important, and therefore he spends a lot of time seeking out the best opportunities for his players. In addition, he often checks in with his contacts and discusses the current state of affairs for their teams or their players, providing him with opportunities to gather information he may not have previously had.

‘Knowledge based trust’ is another form of trust relationship which Kelly & Harris (2010) discuss as being one that develops over time between parties. This is prevalent especially for relationships formed by David between himself and football clubs, other intermediaries, or leagues. “If trust is evident it provides the basis for a relationship and it may be deepened to provide the basis for further extending the relationship” (Kelly & Harris, 2010, p. 495). David discussed his focus on developing and sustaining relationships between himself and clubs as he continues to grow his own company, especially as the relationships often result in opportunities for his own players as well as future players. Similarly, to other agents, David spends a lot of time watching football matches. He primarily watches games in the Netherlands, whether it be teams his own players are on or other teams to identify opportunities for his players to fill. Most professional teams host social networking events after the games, open to the families of their players as well as intermediaries and club staff. These events provide intermediaries the opportunity to speak to players or staff and continue to expand their own network, as well as obtain more information as to the needs of the club. The clubs are happy to host these events because not only does it allow them to meet different agents, but it also permits them an

opportunity to find out what other kinds of players are being representing, leads which may be useful for them as they continue to grow their own team.

During the off-season, when all competitions have come to an end, clubs often take this time to regroup and assess what the needs of their team are. In light of this, they often organize a variety of training sessions and games for players they are interested in. David has secured a variety of spots at these training sessions for his own players, both for clubs that are interested in them, but as well for some clubs who he believes could benefit from his players. He also attends a variety of these sessions to further educate himself about the needs of the teams and to identify the variety of players seeking different opportunities. Once again, these sessions draw in a multitude of individuals, allowing for further networking opportunities. David's job is one that relies heavily on obtaining and holding information, especially when it comes to other people and facilities relevant to his environment, which is similar to migration brokers needing to be aware of the relevant information for their own industry.

As David primarily works based off relationships within his network, he has the potential, as Cranston (2016) argued to shape the destination of migrants. Because he may inadvertently be advertising a certain set of countries due to his connection with them, he could be limiting their opportunities in a sense. While Cranston (2016) discusses that “the expatriate is taught what they ‘need’ to do in [an] encounter through the treatment of culture shock” (p. 657), David, and other intermediaries, set the expectations for a player as to what to expect in the league and country in which their contract is being negotiated. Football players, their own form of expatriate, typically need to integrate to some degree in their new environment, as will be expanded upon by Emmanuelle in the following section. Therefore, the experience and knowledge held by intermediaries allows them to speak to this process and what to expect upon reaching their point of destination.

4.1.2 Emmanuelle, Intermediary-like Actor in the Netherlands

During the research phase, I also encountered an individual, named Emmanuelle, whose involvement in international football was rather interesting. While he is not a registered intermediary, he does partake in intermediary-like actions, such as connecting players with clubs or agents, both within the Netherlands and in other European countries. He understands the FIFA system, as well as the requirements to register as an intermediary to execute official intermediary options, but he finds the system too restrictive. Due to his network expanding through multiple European countries (Netherlands, Belgium, Germany) and including a number of African players located in these countries, he would be stuck paying thousands of euros to register within each country as an intermediary. Therefore, he opts to continue to help players and agents in more of an informal role until he can find a more international option. Specifically, one that allows him to operate in multiple countries and avoid having to register with each national association separately (Interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg). It is relevant to note, that I have not found any information for a more international intermediary

opportunity, however, this may be an idea for the system as it continues to develop over the years.

His involvement in football intermediary work is not his full-time job, and often he is not paid for his assistance, so does it mostly during his free time or when he encounters someone he could assist. For Emmanuelle, he is currently playing a bit more of the long game in identifying and developing the network needed to pursue this full-time like David. Furthermore, Emmanuelle sees his work not as one that will create tremendous profit, but as being a necessity to assist African players primarily during the transitory phase into European football leagues.

One of the most important aspects of his work is assisting primarily African players, though is open to helping others, to settle into their new environments. As an African migrant himself, he knows the challenges that they face transitioning and becoming accustomed to their new environment. He “is not focused on money but humanity”, he believes that helping people through this often-challenging process is important (Interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg). Furthermore, his position as a fellow migrant, allows him to share a form of trust, as outlined by Kelly & Harris (2010), as “thick interpersonal trust [...] embedded in strong emotional relationships and is generally restricted to people from similar backgrounds” (p. 492). He is primarily located in the Netherlands, specifically in Tilburg, where there are a number of Africans, both footballers and not, in professional and amateur teams. He believes that there are two main challenges for African players once they arrive in Europe, one being that they are strong ‘street’ football players, but not accustomed to the European style of play and more so how to play within a team setting. In Africa, players are used to playing pick-up style soccer, mostly in the street, which makes it a challenge for them to easily transition onto European teams. Emmanuelle also explains that assisting players in getting to know their new environment is important. He highlights that most players need help setting up a phone, finding businesses where they can get food or goods they are used to, finding a good barber, and so on. He says that clubs and agents do not often help foreign players with these smaller details, which is why he has found this niche and continues to help as many players as he can.

Within his role of assisting players in integrating or becoming more comfortable with their new team, he focuses on trying to advise fellow African players about the challenges that do arise coming from the peripheral region into football’s center. Within the context of Chapter 2 and the development of the center-periphery divide in international football, the Netherlands would fall into the center region, especially when considering how advanced Dutch football leagues are and the monetary figures associated with the different teams, especially for those playing in the tier one professional league. Furthermore, the close relationship between the professional and amateur teams, especially as transitory opportunities for players to showcase their abilities in the amateur teams and move to the professional ones is quite strong.

In addition to becoming accustomed to the new environment they are in, he also focuses on trying to explain the social dynamics of European teams. He explains that many

Africans do not like to open up and discuss their lives as many have come through tremendously difficult situations in order to be where they are today. This unfortunately leads to many African players having a hard time making friends or connections with their team mates. Because of this, he advises them to try to connect with others, especially when it comes to activities outside of football. For example, when players go out to celebrate the end of the season or a holiday, many will often drink as it's more common within European culture. While a number of African players he has spoken to do not drink, he tells them to find an alternative, whether it be a soda or juice, having something in your hand will make you seem involved even if you are not drinking. As opposed to many who choose to refuse any drink and stand awkwardly without anything. Emmanuelle's explanation reflected some of the discussion surrounding the notion of borders between individuals, especially those stemming from different backgrounds. The cultural distinctions and variances are very present within teams due to how much time players spend together, and for Emmanuelle, identifying these differences and finding opportunities to create a new practice go hand in hand, for him, in integrating and becoming a member of your new team and environment. He believes that if players began to pick up these kinds of practices, then their likeability would increase and lead to more inclusion by team mates and club staff. This kind of information is invaluable to African players but is typically not provided to them by clubs or their agents, as they may be unfamiliar with the needs of players from outside of Europe, not experiencing the same kind of barriers a peripheral player would. This has been discussed in work related to the *Orient* by Edward Said (1978), where colonial legacies have led to distinctions between cultures and furthermore, challenges in integration between peripheral groups into center regions. Football sees this in scenarios where foreign players come to play in European leagues and both fans and staff critique how their leagues are overrun by foreigners (Couse, 2015). In addition, players receive it in the discrimination they face by fellow teammates and fans, which *Kick it Out* (2017) discussed in their *Annual Report* focusing on racism, violence, and discrimination in football.

Emmanuelle sees the challenges faced by African footballers as something that could be resolved, to a certain degree, with additional support or education before players leave their homes. He knows that there is a draw to come to Europe, where many perceive a multitude of opportunities awaiting them. However, he does not wholeheartedly agree with this, especially with the many challenges that face footballers once they arrive. If they cannot integrate and grow accustomed to the practices of European teams, then they risk being dropped. Both David and Emmanuelle highlighted the challenges facing African players, as well as others from outside the center (Europe) when it comes to signing contracts and seeking opportunities. There are regulations in place requiring non-EU citizen players to be paid higher sums of money than European ones, leaving it to be a significant burden on clubs to sign players. Therefore, many are left having to wait until they are older to have the opportunity to sign these kinds of contracts, primarily because the minimum amounts can be extremely high. For example, the KNVB required non-EEA players to be provided with minimum salary requirements when being offered a contract by a professional club. David (2018) and Emmanuelle (interview, May 2018,

Tilburg) spoke about minimum salary requirements for foreign players when I spoke to them, citing figures in the hundreds of thousands of euros per year for non-EU players obtaining Dutch professional contracts. This system often creates challenges for younger non-European players to come directly into Dutch leagues, specifically due to the required minimum salary requirements (interview with David, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Julian, May 2018, Tilburg). Sometimes this results in teams having to wait until players are older or seek out alternate player options that do not come with the associated high minimum salary requirements.

Another challenge that Emmanuelle feels hinders the development of African players is that many well-known retired African players or European clubs develop programs and assist African clubs, but only for the short term. He does not believe that they are there long enough to create any form of long term change or impact which could be more successful to the development of both the region as well as the players. Therefore, Emmanuelle finds that his role focusing on assisting players once they arrive here is invaluable to their development as well as success to have people who are willing to assist them through a challenging transition.

4.2 An Intermediary's Network

As highlighted throughout the above sections, one of the most important aspects for an intermediary is their network. Typically, their networks take years to develop, sometimes as a result of working within football for years or being a retired player transitioning into intermediary work. Whatever the path, developing this network is fundamental to achieving success in the field. This is a similar fact to migration brokers who rely on their own connections and networks to further facilitate the movement of migrants (Alpes, 2013). With the 2015 dissolution of the licensing exam, many individuals thought it would be an easy way to make extra money by registering as an agent, and likely many of them struggled, especially since they had little experience or network through which to work. David explained a variety of the individuals with which he works and communicates with on a frequent basis. The following list details a few of them, as well as an explanation of their role and relationship:

1. **Club Staff:** David is friends with an individual who is a trainer for one of the professional clubs. They used to play together and have maintained contact on both a professional and personal level. In the past they have shared information with one another on new players or the club's needs. However, as of late, his friend has been seeking to continue to develop the work they complete together and identify new football talent. Therefore, he approached his club and asked about completing this kind of work on the side in partnership with David. They approved, as long as it did not disadvantage their own club's success.
2. **Other agents abroad:** David is also friends with a number of agents abroad, who both assist him with work within their own country, but also seek out opportunities for their own players within the Netherlands. This kind of two-way communication and assistance helps both intermediaries expand their reach and grow their network. David

has been involved in intermediary transactions where his own players have been signed in the association of another agent, utilizing their name on the official documents as opposed to his own, allowing him to not have to register with that national association.

3. **Local Coaches:** David also maintains contact with a variety of local coaches, especially ones who work with various local clubs or amateur teams. These individuals can often connect him with players who are playing on their own teams and reaching the age to seek out contracts or new opportunities. One example in particular I found most interesting was a local club coach located in Tilburg. This coach, a former player himself, works with local players, many more challenging or troubled youth, to try and provide them with opportunities to focus their energy into football. Tilburg is a very multicultural neighbourhood, with a mix of low and high-income neighbourhoods. This team is located within one of the lower income neighbourhoods. In the few years since he began coaching this team, he has brought it to the top of the league and won the league multiple times. His goal was to showcase the challenges he faced himself on the path to success, which allowed the players to identify with him and in turn use their own challenges as motivation to achieve success.
4. **Players:** David stays in contact with a variety of players, from all over the world, who in turn, due to their friendship and experiences, feel comfortable connecting him with their friends or fellow players in need of an intermediary. These relationships are invaluable to David as they allow him to showcase his own experience and trustworthiness, ultimately creating opportunities for him to be referred to other players.

European clubs have also developed their own partnership training facilities abroad, many of them being in a variety of African countries, to ensure that their development throughout their youth aligns with the style of play of that club. This ultimately results in players that can easily transition into their professional teams (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg; Darby et al., 2007) and the creation of a pool of potential players available to be signed to various teams in the future. This long-term development is preferable for many clubs due to the relationships it can create with different populations, as well as the creation of bilateral immigration policies with specific countries (Lembo, 2011, p. 562). By creating almost an extension to their European based club, they are directly expanding their network internationally, which assists them in identifying and securing talented players for their teams.

There are endless possibilities and combinations for both an intermediary to find new talent, or a footballer to find a contract. Due to this, there are always new opportunities being discovered or offered, and a variety of actors and contacts only assists in seeking these out. Therefore, intermediaries always need to continue to expand and grow their own network.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Spaan and Hillmann (2013) developed a figure (Figure 1) to demonstrate the interconnectivity and complexity of the migration industry. Below is a figure I adapted from theirs to demonstrate the parallels between both industries. Due to many professional athletes being migrants themselves, they often go through the same governmental

processes and systems that other migrants do. While we have seen that in some cases athletes have their own separate approval process or have an ease in mobility due to their status as a professional athlete and associated desirability, the approval processes do still exist. Furthermore, while migrants typically have access to a variety of tools and services, such as housing assistance, NGO support, or legal support, footballers have a similar set up. Most clubs

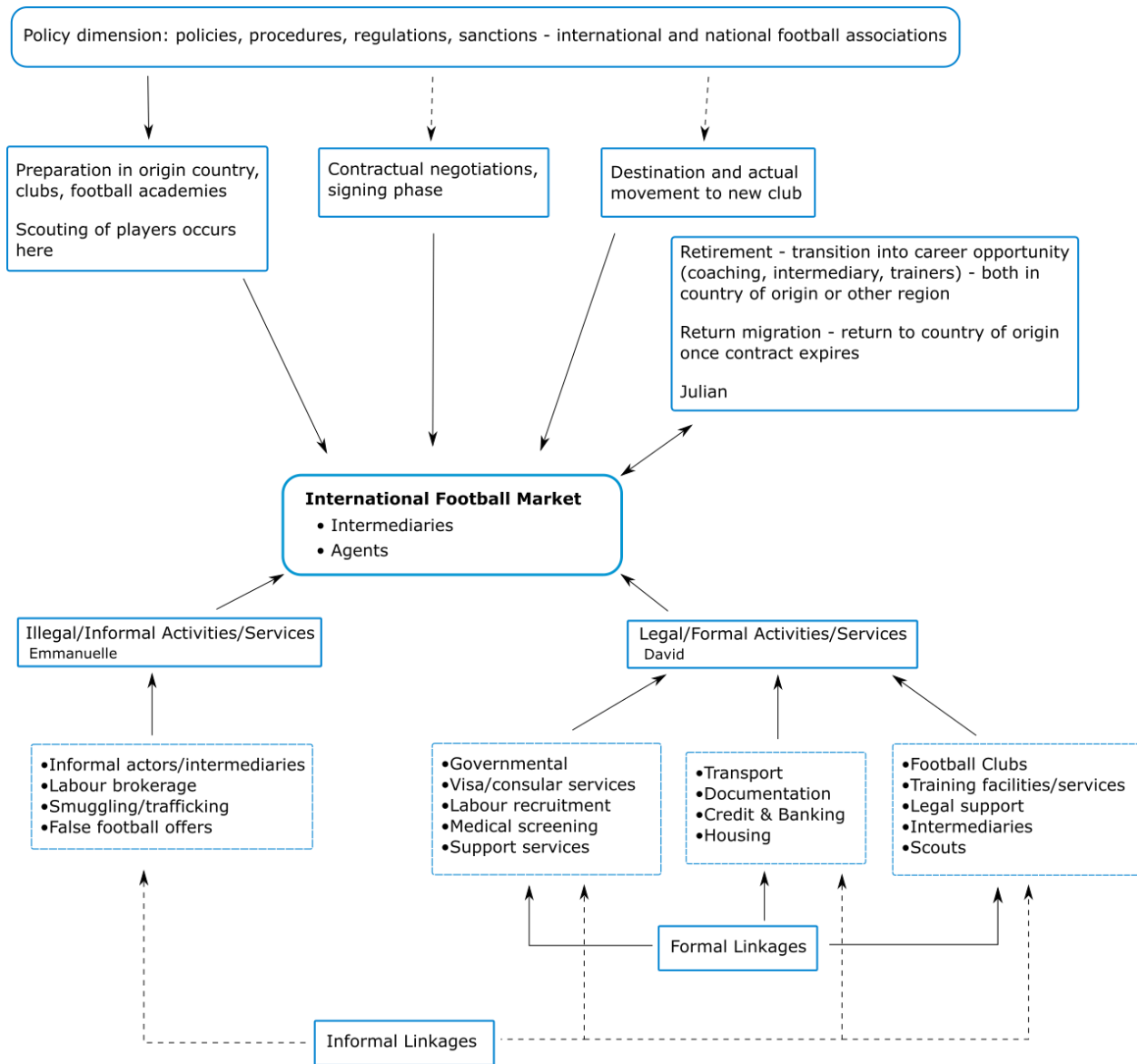


Figure 2 - International Football Market, based on Spaan & Hillmann's (2013) Migration Industry figure

have their own in-house legal council, training facilities, and assistance when it comes to housing. Under the relevant sections I have also added the names of the individuals I interviewed, where I believe that their role is most relevant. The interconnectivity between legal/formal and illegal/informal are particularly relevant within international football,

especially when reviewing the importance of relationships, with both individuals in and outside of football, who connect players and clubs.

In the center region you find the international football market, where all the teams, leagues, intermediaries, players, and so on, operate and reap the financial benefits. Under the legal/formal services you find the processes and institutions related to scouting, training, contractual negotiations, national migration policies and procedures, and individuals who operate under the formal environment. Beside that, you will find the informal/illegal services, where both well-intentioned and bad-intentioned individuals operate. While exploitative schemes fall under this area, so do individuals like Emmanuelle, who provide informal services which do lead to situational betterment for many football players. Similarly, to the migration industry, within international football you can find both positive and negative informal services. However, due to the negative impact associated with most informal/illegal services in migration, there is often a negative perception around all services found here.

In the upper half of the international football figure you find the preparatory region for a footballer's entrance to the international market, specifically when it comes to their training, identification and contractual finalization. In addition, where Spaan and Hillmann (2013) refer to return migration, we find the return of footballers to their home country (return migration) or the transition into another sector within a new region. Above these regions you find the policies, procedures and regulations that all affect the outcome and potential for footballers. Finally, the dotted lines refer to linkages that do not always occur or are potential links between different areas. Just as footballer players can seek out contracts within European leagues independently, they may also utilize contacts in both formal and informal positions, but this is not required. There may also be policies and regulations which apply to them based on their country of origin or point of destination, while others may not face the same kinds of bureaucratic challenges.

4.3 Who uses Intermediaries?

It may also be important to discuss who uses intermediaries. They are primarily utilized by players but can also be hired by engaging and releasing clubs during contract negotiations. Intermediaries are versatile, which allows them to be extremely useful to an array of individuals due to their own expertise and negotiating. Their understanding of the needs of different clubs allows them to gauge how much a club may be willing to give to secure the new player. Similarly,

“migration industry actors and services play an active role at every step of migration and are present in different types of migratory movements. The migration industry, so to speak, ‘greases the engines of international migration’ by providing and articulating the expertise and infrastructural resources needed to cross-border movements” (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 6).

Without the expertise held by the individuals in these industries, neither would be able to successfully move the ‘goods and services’ they provide their clientele. Intermediaries make the most profit from transfer fees due to the way contracts are developed, so having knowledgeable individuals involved in these negotiations can ensure that the best outcome is had for involved parties, especially with the significant amounts of money being moved around. In April 2018 alone, USD 6.3 million was spent on transfer fees (FIFA TMS, 2018, p. 1). FIFA TMS created the diagram below to showcase the utilization of intermediaries in specifically international transfers.

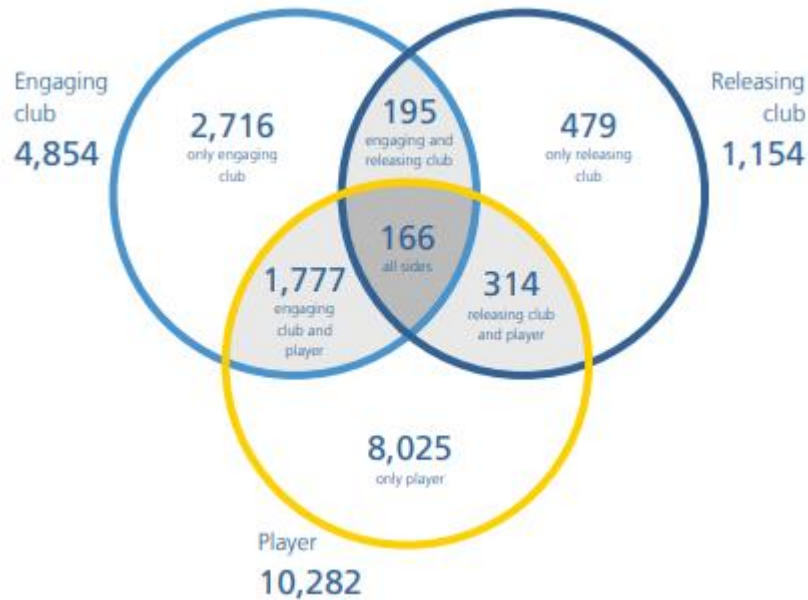


Figure 3 - Number of international transfers with intermediaries since 1 Jan 2013

As this chart demonstrates, in the 4 years they focused on, the number of international transfers is extremely high, and, in many cases, there is a utilization of intermediaries by one involved party. FIFA TMS’ data also shows that in 2013 there was the use of an intermediary 726 times by an engaging club, whereas in 2017 to date, there had been an increase to 1,190 (FIFA TMS, 2017, p. 3). This increase is likely due to the increase in overall international transfers, which has been a trend across the world in football (FIFA TMS, 2017, p. 3). FIFA TMS is in a fortunate position to provide us with accessible data on intermediaries and their use since all transfers and contracts are input into their system for verification. Therefore, they can pull direct data to compile into accessible information for reference and use. They have also indicated that English clubs are involved with the most transfers where engaging clubs utilize intermediaries and when transfers involve fees (FIFA TMS, 2017, p. 3). Some of the most drastic figures come from FIFA TMS’ information on the financial aspects of international transfers and intermediaries. “Since 2013, the total spending on intermediary commissions is USD 1.59 billion. Of this amount, 97.2% was paid by clubs affiliated to member associations of UEFA:

European clubs spent USD 1.54 billion on intermediaries when engaging or releasing players. The rest of the world combined spent USD 45 million” (TMS, 2017, p. 5). These amounts are very telling and enforce where international football is focused – within Europe and UEFA. For associations in UEFA to be responsible for 97.2% of the total funds associated with intermediary commissions, shows us where most football activity is centered and why both players and intermediaries focus on opportunities within this region. Furthermore, this focus creates a sort of tunnel vision for both intermediaries and prospective players as they focus heavily on the region where the most money is to be found and profits are likely to be high.

While accessing exact monetary figures on the migration industry is challenging, due to a percentage of the activities taking place within the illegal realm, some figures have been estimated. Human smuggling, “allegedly among the fastest growing forms of international organized crime, with estimated annual profits garnered from smuggling to the EU running at €4 billion and from smuggling across the Mexican-US border, at \$5 billion” (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 2). The installation of a high-tech surveillance system at the US-Mexican border ran a total estimated \$2 billion-dollar cost and involved roughly 100 subcontractors, while contracts with private companies in the US to run immigration detention centers total \$5.1 billion, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was awarded \$265 million in 2010 to help governments carry out voluntary immigration return programs (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013, p. 2-3). The extremely high monetary totals found within both international football and the migration industry showcase their relevance and attraction to many individuals, ultimately leading to the conclusion that no matter the regulations that arise individuals will find ways to either adapt or circumvent new policies.

4.4 Choosing their Clients

When speaking to both David and Emmanuelle, we discussed how they choose their clients (Interviews, May 2018, Tilburg). For David, it depended on what aspect of his job he was working on. If he was seeking an opportunity for one of his players, then he would evaluate the player’s strengths, weaknesses, and what they needed in their current position. This could range from needing an opportunity to further develop, a challenge, or a more short-term opportunity. For example, one of his players was playing for a team that has been relegated and was going through financial challenges. David needed to find his player an opportunity on another team higher in the previous league to continue to develop this player and provide them with opportunities so that their presence did not disappear from the professional leagues. David was reaching out to clubs and was trying to work on a variety of options for him, as their primary goal was to get him back to the professional leagues as quickly as possible. Due to David often becoming more personally invested in his players, he often feels just as disappointed as his players do when they face challenges. In this case he was hopeful to find them an opportunity, even if that meant going outside the Netherlands. This situation, with the team that was relegated, also provided David with another opportunity. Due to the team being relegated and moving to the amateur league, many of the players on the team chose to leave

(David estimates it was roughly 80% of the players). Many of the players were able to leave due to contract stipulations related to relegation. However, these gaps provided other players with opportunities to sign to a team, such as two of David's players. These kinds of opportunities are often haphazard and require David to act quickly to capitalize on these moments for his players.

David also spends a significant amount of time fielding calls with his players and checking in on them to see how they are doing. Having been a former professional footballer, he is aware of the struggles they face and truly only wants his players to succeed. The difficult aspect of his job is to break the bad news, as he knows how upsetting it can be to players. He also makes an extra effort to prepare his players for the realities of professional football and set their expectations so that they do not get ahead of themselves and their potential opportunities. Therefore, to ensure his players have the most opportunities possible, David seeks to develop positive relationships with all the teams in the leagues, which could lead to opportunities for him and his players. He attempts to reach out to new teams he has not worked with before, and ones where he does not have relationships with club staff. However, because he is self-employed, he does need to prioritize his work to a certain degree. Therefore, he tends to focus on the strong relationships he has, such as his friend who is a trainer for one of the professional Dutch clubs who is also pursuing intermediary work with David. Between the two of them, they can analyze the needs of the teams in the professional league and reach out to players they think would benefit these teams. David would like to expand his company, especially if he can bring in people he trusts and who know the system. Ultimately though, David does not hesitate to work with whoever he believes would lead to beneficial opportunities for either him or his players, though it is often easier to work with those with whom he has a previous relationship. Emmanuelle is also open to working with whomever he deems in need of assistance. He told me that often he hears of players having recently moved to the Netherlands from a mutual friend and will reach out.

Most of the work completed by both David and Emmanuelle does not result in immediate monetary results. As David receives his money from contract signings and transfers and Emmanuelle is still working on his intermediary business, their networking and assisting others is done solely on the idea that it could pay off in the future. They also both reiterated that money was not what pushed them but rather helping others, and that they would rather work on a smaller scale and develop relationships with players and clubs than simply focus on the business matters and making money, which can result in not having a personal investment in their players. This mentality is different than most migration brokerage literature, as it often paints brokers as being more temporary figures in a migrant's trajectory, organizing their transport or documents and not developing any form of long term relationship with them (Alpes, 2013; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen, 2013; Cranston, 2016; Cranston et al., 2018).

An intermediary typically receives payment when a contract is finalized or a transfer of one of their players occurs. As David explained, the transfers are where the money lies. When a

club and a player sign a contract, in it you will find outlined the technicalities for a future transfer within their 5-year contract period. “If a player transfers before their contract expires, the new club pays compensation to the old one” (Quick, 2017). For example, Neymar had a 222m-euro buyout in his contract and that sum was paid out to his former club, of which 38m euros was split between his father (his own intermediary) and others who took part in facilitating his move (Quick, 2017). In David’s current situation, he is unlikely to be involved in transfers involving similar sums of money, as the intermediaries involved in these kinds of top-player transfers are super-agents. However, for David, having any of his players transfer would result in a larger payout than contract renewals where he typically gets paid about 5% of signing fees. For him, being able to sign a player and have higher stipulated transfer fee would be a very successful outcome for him. This also means that his work is not over, even regarding his players who have current contracts, as he needs to work to make them seem appealing and entice teams to pursue a transfer, which can result in a financial payout for him as well as the player.

4.5 The Grey Areas

One common theme that arose during a some of the interviews, as well as research related to this thesis, was the fact that within international football there exists a rather complex ‘grey area’. Different conversations highlighted several instances in which intermediaries, clubs, or leagues can operate within a grey area where no specific regulations or monitoring exist to enforce rules. In addition, previous work done by academics, investigative reporters, and others, has highlighted the often questionable and illegal practices that have penetrated international football over the years. While FIFA and national associations have attempted to curb these practices with policies and regulations, they do still occur.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are individuals offering naturalization processes for football players as a manner through which to ease their signing into certain leagues. While there are no laws preventing this, these kinds of practices do assist in circumventing various regulations and laws in place guiding access for certain players to different football regions. Naturalization is especially impactful for players coming from peripheral regions to the center, as often their status or citizenship is one that would cause additional challenges to gain a work permit. David (2018) was approached by an individual offering these kinds of services through Malta, as their naturalization/citizenship process seems to be a relatively easy one. On the Government of Malta’s website (2016) they indicate that,

“if you are a foreigner or stateless person and you have resided in Malta throughout the twelve months immediately preceding the date of application; and you have resided in Malta for periods amounting in the aggregate to a minimum of four years, during the six years preceding the above period of twelve months; and you are of good character; and you have an adequate knowledge of the Maltese or the English language; and you would be a suitable citizen of Malta you are eligible to apply for Maltese citizenship”.

Once Maltese citizenship is obtained, it makes the process for seeking out European football contracts simpler, as Malta is one of the EU member countries and this provides citizens the opportunity to move freely and work within the Schengen border (Schengen Visa Info, 2017). In addition, in 2017, Malta decided that it would launch a public consultation aimed at granting citizenship to “foreign nationals who have given an ‘exceptional’ service to the country”, which includes individuals in the five following sectors, “science, research, sport, art and culture” (Times of Malta, 2017). These kinds of initiatives showcase the openness Malta has to granting citizenship and facilitating naturalization, which makes it a location in which intermediaries are prone to develop their services in line with the needs of both the industry and opportunities to profit.

Paul (2018), a football coach who has previously worked with teams in the Premier League, including Everton FC, spoke to me about his experience and industry knowledge when it came to certain countries being known as almost “stepping stone” environments for foreign players. He explained that,

“some clubs formed alliances with clubs in certain countries where their legislation is a bit more lax in an effort to be able to get players without access to paper work official. Belgium is a country that was quite renowned in Europe as been a country to bring African players to house them for a couple of year to try and get access to European passport” (Paul, 2018).

This kind of industry knowledge is extremely beneficial to both intermediaries and players, as it can prove to be a useful route for them to focus on trying to utilize. However, this information might not be readily available to players from the peripheral region, making it key information for intermediaries to possess and use as a way to make themselves more appealing to prospective players as well as clubs who may use an intermediary to assist in the naturalization or visa process for a peripheral player.

The migration industry contains similar practices, in the age of technology communication between migrants, as well as brokers, has never been easier. As Sánchez-Querubin & Rogers (2018) describe, “migrants have ‘access to recommended routes by fellow migrants, safety advice and GPS coordinates for family and friends, and smuggler boats’ (Frouws et al., 2016, p. 4). Facebook groups help circumvent securitized EU routing when people on the road warn those following behind” (p. 1-2). Real time information and updates are published and accessible for everyone, whether it is in relation to recently closed borders, asylum procedures, additional border checks, or where to find resources such as water, all this information is readily and easily accessible (Sánchez-Querubin & Rogers, 2018, p. 1-2). This kind of environment leaves brokers and migrants able to adapt their plan or alter their course while on a specific path. This is the same reality for football intermediaries. Whether it be through real time tweets, or insiders releasing key information to them, they can access information about clubs and what they may be looking for as it is occurring. Both industries rely on information knowledge and dissemination.

Intermediaries, especially due to the requirement to register with each association in which they complete contractual negotiations, often have unofficial partners or contacts in these countries who will be involved in these negotiations on their behalf. For example, if an intermediary in the Netherlands has a player who is to be signed to a Belgian team, then they may reach out to a Belgian intermediary to complete the necessary paperwork for the contract, providing their name to the deal with the club, but sharing the profit between the two intermediaries. While I was unable to identify any regulations deeming these practices as illegal, they do raise certain questions surrounding the conventionality and ethicalness of these practices, especially when there are regulatory systems in place to monitor the actions and completion of registered intermediaries. However, agreements, such as this one, allow intermediaries to continue to expand the opportunities for their own players, as well as permit them to avoid having to pay association registration fees in countries where they may only complete one or two contractual negotiations a year. Due to the potential to have very limited contract work within a country, it is often not worthwhile for an intermediary to register within multiple associations, especially if the registration fee is not outweighed by the number of contract negotiations they may be involved in for that year.

Another piece of information that was brought to light during the interviews was the fact that even though amateur football players are not supposed to be paid, there were various instances raised by those I interviewed, where they were aware of players receiving some form of monetary payment for playing. Whether it was somewhere to live or financial assistance, certain amateurs do receive payment, which is not necessarily expected as these leagues are typically unpaid. However, due to the thin distinctions between the leagues at some points, especially when teams get relegated to lower leagues, sometimes players do obtain payment for their services. This may not be entirely relevant in relation to intermediaries, however, they can profit off the signing of a player to an amateur team. While none of the intermediaries I spoke to stated that they benefitted from these kinds of opportunities, they were aware of others who had. Some intermediaries may also choose to invest a great deal into a player if they truly believe in them and their potential, which may lead them to make certain deals with their players that they receive repayment for their investment once signed. There are no specific regulations in place guiding these kinds of practices, leaving them within this grey area. In addition, intermediaries also need to be creative when it comes to showcasing their players or finding them playing opportunities until a contract is signed. While this is a rare occurrence, this could include approaching clubs to inquire about their players joining the team to receive some playing time, in return an intermediary could offer to cover their own player's costs, as opposed to the club. Once again, David explained that he had heard of these kinds of instances but had not directly encountered them. While it is unclear if this is due to it being a discrete exchange between club staff and the intermediary, or if David did not encounter it due to his lack of involvement in a similar scenario, he did express that he has heard conversation surrounding these kinds of occurrences.

Past research has also highlighted a variety of instances when football actors, whether club staff or other, have taken matters into their own hands when it comes to resolving obstacles a desired player is facing. Whether it was through the falsification of documents or skirting FIFA regulations (Madsen & Johansson, 2009; Borden, 2015; FIFA, n.d.d.). For example, one common rule clubs attempt to skirt are those focusing on the protection of minors, which can limit the early access to players, especially those outside of Europe, to clubs until they turn 18 years old. Regulation 19, implemented in 2001, requires, a “player’s parents [to] move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons **not** linked to football” (FIFA, n.d.e). While one would believe this rule to be straight forward, there have been a number of incidents where clubs have attempted to bypass this rule in order to secure the youth footballer for their club, leaving us to infer that the potential benefits outweigh the risks (Madsen & Johansson, 2009; Borden, 2015). Throughout their research, Madsen & Johansson (2009) found “clubs and agents who admitted to us that they did offer parents work to get the players while they still were minors, to bypass the regulations, all in the fight to get the biggest talent - first and cheapest”. These kinds of practices are evidently illegal but are completed by individuals for whom the potential profit outweighs the risk.

While these are a few limited examples of some practices that occur within the grey areas of international football, they are by no means all of them. David acknowledged that while these ‘grey area’ practices do occur, there is no real way to monitor them. Often these systems rely on people to come forward with information and report these instances, but this does not happen, most probably due to the financial benefits those involved are obtaining. Nick De Marco (2017), a sports lawyer, commented on the realities of corruption in football stating that previously “allegations of corruption in football focussed on “old school” English football managers receiving cash payments for signing players from particular agents” and while corruption may still occur today, it is to a lesser degree, especially since football clubs have come to better understand their position as a professional business, more so than they did in the past, and have implemented some forms of checks and balances, similarly to FIFA’s regulation updates. However, De Marco (2017) does reiterate that football today is far from being “clean” and that as “greater amounts of money pour into football the competition between the top clubs for the best players increases”. These payments, while they may be seen as unorthodox in most other businesses, and are often in breach of FA Rules, are still common as “there is a widespread perception that sometimes the only way to secure the signing of a player is to engage in the same type of conduct that everybody else seems to be engaged in, otherwise the club or agent will miss out on a player to their competitors” (De Marco, 2017). This kind of perception, similarly to the one that places the European leagues as the top in the world, may take a long time to break or change, leaving organizations to continue to work on implementing regulations and policies to hold these individuals to higher standards. However, we know that in football the primary goal is to import the best talent to the top teams, causing teams and individuals to continue to develop ways to circumvent policies and rules to create profit.

4.6 Conclusion

The experiences from both intermediaries encountered during the research phase have provided us with an interesting lens into international football. While they are both primarily based within the Netherlands, they provide us with an interesting perspective into the ongoings and experiences faced by peripheral players seeking opportunities in the center. Both of these intermediaries are foreigners within the Netherlands, allowing them to undergo their own experience when it comes to understanding the Dutch system and share their experiences with incoming and outgoing footballers to Dutch teams. Both individuals have worked very hard to expand their own network, allowing them to experience an international perspective when it comes to intermediary work and international football. This transnational role they have created for themselves permits them the opportunity to seek out a version of the role that works best for them and those they work with. By creating bilateral relations with individuals in other countries, David has been able to increase the opportunities for his players in other EU countries, outside of the Netherlands, at low cost to himself and them. In addition, Emmanuelle has been able to help players adapt to their new environment, something he feels is typically unimportant to many intermediaries. At the core of both of their roles is an importance and respect placed on the players they work with. They reiterated throughout the interviews that it was not all about the money, but helping players achieve success. Their experiences showcase the spaces in which FIFA and its associations can improve the current regulations and system. By potentially offering an international intermediary opportunity, individuals like Emmanuelle could assist more players in more official manners when it comes to negotiating and seeking football opportunities. David could also more easily approach clubs and avoid having to find representatives in that country to complete contract negotiations. While improvements to FIFA's intermediary system in 2015 have been successful and have seen positive changes come to light, there are other areas in which further improvements could be made.

5 Navigating Towards Football's Center

With the complexity of the regulatory system and variety of intermediaries positioned within international football, it is no wonder that seeking out a professional contract is often filled with lots of obstacles. It is not required for players to seek out the assistance of an intermediary, however many do choose to do so, as it alleviates some of the pressure completing all of the work themselves. Having an intermediary working for you also permits you the opportunity to spend all your time focusing on honing your skills and improving your football abilities. For many, finding a professional football opportunity is the most important thing. Many spend years practicing and imagining the success they can achieve through football and how they intend to obtain this. However, the path upon which footballers obtain these successes is highly influenced based on their own situation as an individual. As we have seen in previous chapters of this thesis, football's center region contains the most coveted positions, resulting in players already located within the center as well as those in the periphery, looking to move towards and within this region.

Furthermore, due to the evolution of FIFA and international migration regulations, today, more than ever, new policies, regulations, laws, and obstacles are facing individuals and making it more challenging for someone to seek out opportunities themselves. As David (2018) explained, when he was playing he was able to negotiate and sign his own contracts directly with clubs, but today it is a different environment. With countries also trying to update or strengthen their own migration policies, often athletes can get stuck requiring complex requirements to gain a work permit. For example, as Mills & Reeve (2016) explained in their Reevaldo example, players hoping to obtain a UK work permit often needed an international playing presence, which can be a challenge for younger footballers. Therefore, there is an Exception Panel that deals with more complex cases, but the purpose of the process geared towards talented football players is to "show that you are bringing an extraordinary talent to that country" (Paul, 2018). Furthermore, with countries such as the UK having recently chosen to leave the European Union and the Schengen region, new challenges are arising for players currently playing within the FA. Therefore, by involving an intermediary, it provides both the player and club with an opportunity to seek specialization in the contracts and migration policies that will be touched upon.

Moreover, while FIFA has begun to refer to football agents as intermediaries, a term more encompassing of the various roles they hold and perform. As my thesis has demonstrated, intermediaries can work within a variety of roles, for instance, being employed by football clubs and players, to working with club staff and other football agents. The same can be said about brokers and facilitators within the migration industry who assist migrants and hopeful migrants throughout their journeys. Often without this assistance from different individuals, who either specialize in an industry or wield control over a certain area, many would face even steeper challenges completing their trajectory independently. Therefore, this chapter will review some of the experiences of African football players throughout their

international career as well as some current footballers in their pursuit of their professional football aspirations. By utilizing Vigh's notion of social navigation (2009b), we will explore how the decisions and experiences of the African football players is reflective of this conceptualization, especially when it comes to requiring individuals to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves.

This chapter encompasses the experiences of a handful of African players in their pursuance of professional opportunities in European leagues. Some of the players have attained their aspirations and others are in the process of fully realizing them. Wherever they are within their career path, their stories detail the challenges and pressures they experience within a continuously changing environment that is not often placing their interests first. The different individuals whose stories we will discuss are as follows:

- Julian: a Guinean former professional player who is now in the process of completing his coaching license in the Netherlands. During his playing years, he met his wife and has since started a family, making the Netherlands his permanent home.
- Isaiah: a 21 year old Ghanaian currently playing for one of the Dutch tier 1 professional teams. He is in his first few years of playing in Europe and has had a great deal of support from the club he currently plays for. Both in terms of development and support, especially after undergoing an injury and subsequent surgery in the first year of his contract.
- Eli: a Ugandan player in Canada currently playing for one of the professional teams in the North American Soccer League (NASL), but with the aspiration to move onward to Europe.
- Sebastian: an African footballer who has been playing in Greece for the past few years.

All these individuals were also able to share stories and experiences related to friends, family, and fellow players they have encountered over the years, especially in relation to football. These stories will assist in complementing their own journeys in international football and certain experiences that they have been able to avoid due to others having unfortunately undergone them instead.

Furthermore, additional information from our two intermediaries will permit us to further explore some of the more specificities that impact a player throughout their own career paths as well as specific challenges facing Africans as they transition into a new environment in Europe.

5.1 Navigation

Henrik Vigh (2009b) broke down the conceptual use of social navigation, stating that, it is typically "used when referring to how people act in difficult or uncertain circumstances and in describing how they disentangle themselves from confining structures, plot their escape and move towards better positions" (p. 419). While he explains that the concept is widely applied, it is often in an unspecified or misused manner, leading him to seek to further explain its use in

his paper, *Motion Squared: A second look at the concept of social navigation*. In the context of this paper and international football, players often visualize their expectations and the teams on which they would like to play, in the hopes that this vision will assist them in developing the path on which they need to travel to achieve this. This is the case for the African footballers interviewed for this thesis. Many of them have an end target in mind, which is ultimately to make it to the top leagues and reap the associated benefits. Furthermore, they seek to change their current situation while simultaneously dealing with the changes that arise. In Isaiah's case, as you will see in this chapter, he is confronted with an unexpected injury causing him to have to change his plan of increasing his playing statistics to one of healing and recovering. Eli was hoping to go from playing in Qatar with the Aspire Academy to a European league but has since ended up in Canada playing with a professional team there, while he continues to hope for an opportunity in Europe. All these players have to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves, especially when it comes to Vigh's (2009b) belief that "we organize ourselves and act in relation to the interplay of the social forces and pressures that surround us, and that social navigation designated the practice of moving within a moving environment" (p. 425). These players know that there are different possibilities and paths in their future and making decisions that will benefit them and move them closer to their end goal.

5.2 A Focus Towards the Center

European leagues are a draw for all players, but especially so for African footballers. Due to the proximity of the leagues to their home continent, as well as previously successful African footballers, many young players make Europe their target destination. This was no different for those interviewed throughout the research phase, who aspired to find a European league in which to play. Even the Ugandan player in Canada was hopeful that in the next few years, as he continues to develop, he would be fortunate enough to have a European team take interest in him.

Those I interviewed highlighted an array of reasons they had for focusing on Europe (interview with David, 2018, Tilburg; Interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Eli, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Isaiah, May 2018, Tilburg; interview with Julian, May 2018, Tilburg). At the top of their list was the fact that European leagues were far more developed and offered the opportunity to higher financial benefit. In addition, the superiority and feeling of success one would feel once they had attained playing on a top European team was discussed. For them, and similarly for other African migrants, Europe is seen as an environment filled with better and more opportunities (Esson, 2015a; Esson, 2015b; Poli, 2010). They do not see their own local clubs or leagues as being on the same level as those within Europe, which is understandable, especially due to the segmented international football regions and with the center having as many benefits as it does when it comes to facilities and quality. Furthermore, Ungruhe & Esson (2017) note that young men and boys in Ghana view their ability to become football players as a way through which they can utilize their own bodily capital to attain spatial mobility, leaving them to create their own source of earning in a region

where there are substantial profits to be made (p. 34). They view Europe's football opportunities as a way that they can improve their own social status back home, ultimately reinforcing the desire to move towards football's center. While footballers have been able to make significant amounts of money in football leagues in countries like Bangladesh, where some players are making \$2000 a month, the status and success they view as possible in Europe does not compare (Ethirajan, 2013).

As Taylor (2007) reasoned, there are three sets of determinants that can be used to explain football migration – economic, cultural, and institutional/structural (p. 8). Furthermore, the “movement of footballers has been affected by economic and political processes and by the restrictions of states and governments, as well as the regulations of national and international football federations” (Taylor, 2007, p. 6). The movement and increased freedom for footballers to move between different leagues was sparked by the Bosman Ruling in 1995 which has been deemed responsible for internationalizing European leagues and creating an environment in which players can move with an increased ease and afforded players with “the same freedom enjoyed by other European Union workers to move” (Taylor, 2007, p. 12). The Schengen Agreement, which resulted in the “abolition of internal border controls, [creating uniform] procedures [surrounding] issuing a [...] visa, operation of a single database for all members known as SIS – Schengen Information System as well as the establishment of a cooperating structure between internal and immigration officers” (Schengen Visa Info, 2017b). All these instances colliding around the same time created a perfect environment in which players developed an increased sense of desire and acknowledgement for the various benefits that would arise could they achieve a football opportunity within Europe. Furthermore, countries with ongoing colonial ties and easier immigration policy processes, became seen as almost a transitory country that footballers could use to gain entry into Schengen and then turn their current visas into ones that would allow them to work further into the center's football region. “After 1945, national immigration policies continued to be important in determining where migrants actually went” (Taylor, 2007, p. 11). Italy opened its doors to foreigners, in limited numbers, and introduced legislation called *oriundi* which opened migration to those who could have their original citizenship reinstated due to them being of Italian or Spanish descent (Taylor, 2007, p. 11). While the economic argument for the center-periphery divide is limiting when discussing the center-periphery dynamic within international football, it is relevant due to the attraction it has towards footballers seeking financial benefits. While the conceptual framework discusses the set up of football's center and periphery, leaving the economic relations between countries as the main explanation is limiting because other core economic regions, such as North America, are found within football's peripheral region (Taylor, 2007, p. 9).

In addition to the players benefitting from moving to the center region, intermediaries are also able to benefit, especially when it comes to transfer costs, which is where they are set to make the most profit. “Professional players sign contracts with clubs for a fixed term of up to five years. If a player transfers before their contract expires, the new club pays compensation to

the old one. This is known as a transfer fee” (Quick, 2017). Furthermore, FIFA, in their revising of intermediary regulations in 2015, recommended limiting an intermediaries’ fees to 3%, however, often it is higher between 5-10% (FIFA, 2015b; interview with David, 2018, Tilburg). Therefore, the closer to the center and the top leagues both footballers and their intermediaries are, the more likely they are to benefit financially. Knowing this, it is no surprise that intermediaries are also seeking to assist their players to reach these regions.

Those I interviewed spoke about their desires to seek success and financial reward through a sport they all loved. Having seen other successful Africans now playing in the top European leagues, they know that their own dreams are possible. Julian and Emmanuelle spoke in detail about the fact that many of their friends feel pressure from family, friends, and their communities back home to reach these dreams. Especially when those back home have given up money or assistance to them to reach Europe. “You need to be a man to go home, you cannot be a boy” was the phrase used by Julian to explain the situation in which you need to reach to return home. He explained that you must have money to show for your migratory efforts and give back to those who have helped you. You cannot go home if you are only half way to the goal you set out to attain. Isaiah also explained that his mother stayed back in Ghana when him and his father moved to Portugal. She has not been able to come to Europe yet and he felt that he needed to be more successful than he was at that time for her to come visit. He was currently living with another young teammate but explained that within the contract his intermediary was working on, he needed him to have the club agree to a higher salary or housing for him to be living on his own. This would, in his mind, have him finally be in a position where he could fly his mother over and show her his success.

The number of foreign players moving to European leagues has continued to increase since roughly the mid 1990’s and has only continued to increase, leading to the belief that this trend is likely to continue, especially if players from the peripheral regions remain both highly skilled and drawn to joining European leagues (Andreff, 2010). A review of TransferMarkt’s league shows us that currently there are a total of 93 players from the semi-periphery region (South America = 45; Africa = 48) playing in the Premier League, more than double the number of foreign players from these regions during the 2000/01 season (TransferMarkt, n.d.c). The only concern for foreign players drawn towards playing in the center region is the concern some of these leagues have over the development of their own players for international tournaments, as often many of the top teams have numerous foreign players on them and this limits the opportunities for prospective national team players to continue to gain experience in the top leagues. For example, England has gone through various phases of restricting foreign players’ access and permitting it, with current discussion ongoing surrounding once again implementing restrictions (Couse & Gunawardena, 2015). This thin line between being supportive and allowing access to the top leagues for foreign players, while still wanting to provide your own athletes with opportunities to compete, is quite complex. If the Premier League has too many foreign players being provided playing minutes, then the English players

may have to seek out other opportunities in leagues outside of England to gain playing time, which in turn limits the level of competition in English leagues.

Other countries such as Qatar, where Eli attended Aspire Academy, a multi-sport development facility focusing on developing the best national athletes, have used naturalization to increase the talent pool within their country (Aspire, 2018a; Blatter, 2015, p. 23). In 2015, Qatar competed in the Men's Handball World Championship with a "team compris[ed of] an overwhelming majority of recently naturalised players. The practice did not contravene International Handball Federation regulations, but it did contradict the spirit of a national team" as pointed out by former FIFA President Sepp Blatter (2015, p. 23). When this was written, Qatar had already been given the 2022 FIFA World Cup, causing further concern that they may repeat these actions in preparation for this tournament. However, as Blatter (2015) went on to clarify, there are stricter regulations in place governing the "acquisition of a new nationality" and "Change of association" for FIFA bodies, where there were none within the International Handball Federation (IHF). Naturalization, as mentioned in Chapter 4, are accessible opportunities for both players national clubs, as a way through which they can access and include talented players onto their various teams. A football coach I interviewed, with playing and coaching experience in England, discussed the fact that the academy moved a number of African players to their facilities after a screening event as a way to build up the level of Qatari players and also give those African players a chance to obtain citizenship by the time the World Cup took place (Paul, 2018). Even though the Aspire Academy website claims that "no players have been naturalized/represented Qatar as this is not the aim of the project" (Aspire, 2018b), their previous actions cause doubt that this may occur. Being knowledgeable of these kinds of practices can assist both players and intermediaries seeking football opportunities. An intermediary may propose a player to a club or academy under the context that this player's situation may be one that would allow for naturalization to take place, benefitting all parties involved. In Eli's case, he was told that he would not be able to stay on with the academy after turning 18. Furthermore, he did not believe there were many promising opportunities in Qatar to play on one of the professional teams due to his lack of citizenship. When the Canadian football team offered him a spot on their youth team until he turned 18 and could sign a professional contract, he followed that opportunity hoping it would lead to further growth and future signings on other professional teams. However, he knew that attending the Aspire Academy would provide him with essential opportunities to grow and access to some of the best coaches and trainers. For Eli, he is content and accepts the need to take some detours and a longer route towards his desired final region – Europe. As Esson (2015a) explains, "in some cases, would-be football migrants became strategic about their choice of playing position...due to the perception that foreign scouts are actively seeking these types of players" (p. 1392). In Eli's case, he has been strategic and decided that playing in different leagues and being exposed to different players only increases the likelihood of making a transfer to a European based team.

With teams seeking the best players from around the world, often players are removed from their home countries to train in better facilities abroad. As the examples in this chapter highlight, this is often the case and has clubs seeking younger players to assist them throughout their development, in the hopes that they become what the club envisioned their potential to be. However, this system can be detrimental to countries of origin, especially if they continue to remove the best players. As Andreff (2005) articulated in his work on *muscle drain*, “rather weak sport performances and lower comparative wages provide a negative incentive to the most talented players, and trigger their move away from their home developing countries” (p. 1). This process deemed “muscle drain”, leaves the country of origin suffering as its talented athletes are taken to the top clubs and regions, and in turn the country is unable to improve its current infrastructure and leaves its players to be exported abroad. Emmanuelle and Julian discussed their experience concerning the lack of infrastructure and properly structured environments in Africa, hindering their players ability to develop the same skills and game knowledge as those training in European facilities. This ultimately makes it a challenge for Africans to integrate and grow accustomed to European football systems. Furthermore, Emmanuelle spoke about the fact that, from his experience, football development related money going into specific programs or countries may not have the desired effect, whether it comes from international organizations or former players hoping to “give back” to their home town or country. However, in his eyes, what they are attempting to give in terms of programs or development only ends up being temporary and no actual changes are realized by the end of it (Interview with Emmanuelle, May 2018, Tilburg). He also highlighted the fact that certain African countries, such as Nigeria, who have typically received assistance over the decades through these kinds of programs have had the ability to develop their infrastructure. Furthermore, funding and commercial opportunities continue to be given to them, but other smaller and less developed African countries are often overlooked for these programs, which ends up creating a large discrepancy between levels of competitiveness. In his work on Ghanaian football players, Esson (2015a) referenced some of the challenges raised by Emmanuelle and Julian, especially the ones that had to do with there being little infrastructure or accessible opportunities to learn about the European style of play in Africa. In this paper, Esson (2015a) says,

“owners, coaches, and players at all three clubs stressed how vital it was that they learnt and applied training methods used by European clubs to complement the player’s natural sporting ability. The strategies used to gain this information ranged from watching training videos online to establishing relationships with organizations in the sport-for-development industry that could provide coaches from Europe and North America” (p. 1392).

The homework and extra effort African players need to put into their own development to come close to the abilities and experience European footballers get is quite drastic.

Emmanuelle and Julian discussed the strong desire for many Africans to come to Europe for these benefits when I spoke to them, with Julian explaining that this was a reason for him coming to Europe and attempting to seek out football opportunities. They explained that there are not as many opportunities in Africa for them to have the same success, so Africans hope that with some luck, they can attain success in Europe. But often, because of the lack of understanding had by aspiring Africans, they arrive here unprepared for the challenges they are going to face. For Emmanuelle, this lines up with his intermediary-like role and the information he hopes to share with African players. The culture is different and the challenges that they will have integrating with the team are significant. They both reiterated how Africans typically have undergone significant challenges by the time they get to Europe and that they do not really want to discuss them, especially when most of their teammates will have never had to experience anything similar. However, even though most Africans expect to undergo significant challenges in their own migratory journey, they do so feeling as though it is worth it if they reach Europe.

5.3 Navigating their Route

One of the biggest challenges for these players was establishing and obtaining different the different steps necessary for them to move forward with their football career. They needed to place a significant amount of trust in others to assist them on this journey, as well place a certain faith within themselves to be able to follow through on their own dreams. The stories of their trajectory towards Europe contain a variety of complexities that I will expand on within this section to show the variables they could encounter.

5.3.1 Getting There

To get to the center, the first things players need are a contract and the proper documentation, whether it be to visas or work permits. For many prospective youth footballers, they are willing to run great risks to obtain opportunities in Europe. As James Esson (2015a; 2015b) demonstrated, a number of young boys and their families fall victim every year to football schemes promising tryouts or success with professional European teams. These cases often have individuals posing as agents or scouts approaching players at their training facilities or tournaments and waving around papers or offers trying to prove their legitimacy (Esson, 2015a; 2015b). As Emmanuelle and Julian explained, they had encountered people who explained similar occurrences, individuals would approach a young player or their family waving papers at them, with no way of knowing if they were real or not. Therefore, there is a need to rely on those deemed trustworthy to help figure out if they are offering real opportunities. When Julian arrived in Europe, he came with the New Guinea under-16 youth team for an international tournament in France on a Schengen visa. He decided to attempt to pursue an opportunity in France on a professional team but was unsuccessful. A friend who was in the Netherlands contacted him and suggested that he make his way there because there were more opportunities and the likelihood of him finding a team and obtaining the correct documents were more likely. Fortunately, he found a position on Willem II, in Tilburg. The club

put him in touch with an intermediary who assisted him in obtaining the correct paperwork because he unfortunately did not still have a valid Schengen visa when he arrived in the Netherlands. They were able to resolve that issue and once he obtained the papers he was able to sign a contract. Furthermore, because of his age, being about 24 or 25, Willem II was able to avoid the higher fees associated with signing a younger player. Julian's older age made him an attractive prospect for the club, due to his skill and because he was able to be signed for a lower fee than most youth African players. Similarly, to Kley's (2017) belief that "facilitators at the destination, like having relatives and friends there or already having a job...primarily trigger deciding in favour of migration" (p. 47), Julian was moved to travel to the Netherlands due to the suggestion and experience of his friend already being there and having knowledge about this environment and likelihood for success. As Kley (2017) argues, these "findings suggest[.] that we should widen our understanding of facilitators and constraints by understanding migration decision making as a process which perceived behaviour control is increased gradually until the decision in favour of migration is made" (p. 47).

Some African players, like Isaiah and Sebastian, have been fortunate throughout their career path towards a position on a European football club. For Isaiah, his father was offered employment in Portugal and he went with him, resulting in him eventually gaining a Portuguese passport, which made his signing with the Dutch tier one team quite seamless. It was suggested to him to use this passport, as opposed to his native Ghanaian one, due to the ease of using a European one as opposed to one from a country outside the EU. Holding a Portuguese passport also allowed him to represent Portugal in the under-19 European Championship in 2016, providing him with more exposure to prospective clubs and intermediaries. Sebastian was also sought out by a Greek team, who arranged for all the required visa paperwork to be completed and approved before he was to make his move. In addition, he also met a German woman who he has since married and has children with, which made subsequent work permits and visa submissions a much easier process.

With the many variables found between different countries' migration policies and processes, it is no surprise that there can be an array of different scenarios for players pursuing football opportunities abroad. Within this thesis, those I interviewed have been fortunate in their experiences and have been able to seek assistance from knowledgeable individuals whom they trust.

5.3.2 Trust

Having a network around you with people you can trust to help you throughout the challenges you may face is extremely important. As mentioned previously, Emmanuelle and Julian spoke about people approaching Africans with papers trying to showcase their legitimacy or potential offers they may have for them. They explained that you need to be able to find people who know the system and can help you figure out fact from fiction. They find that too often Africans are being misled and it is because of the level of vulnerability and their overwhelming desire to get to Europe where they believe the best opportunities exist. Almost

all the individuals I spoke to throughout my research, players and intermediaries alike, echoed a desire to give back to others, given the fact that they had all received support and assistance throughout their own trajectories and felt that they needed to do the same for others. This was heavily discussed by Emmanuelle, who has specifically helped Isaiah since he arrived in the Netherlands. He wanted to be able to help him navigate his new environment, even though he had already been living in Portugal and has been able to grow accustomed to the environment over the past 6 years. However, he is in a new country and community which he may not be familiar with. Emmanuelle assisted Isaiah in finding the local shops and businesses where he could find specific products from back home and connected him with friends in his own network who had experience playing football professionally in Europe. This included Julian, who as previously mentioned played professionally for the same club in the past and has his own set of unique experiences and knowledge which can be beneficial if shared with others.

Alpes (2013) studied the reasons for migrants trusting brokers in her paper, *Law and the credibility of migration brokers*, in the hopes of being able to understand what is creating such faith and reliance on individuals often accused of being criminals or scamming vulnerable migrants. "Migrants do not evaluate the 'powers' of migration brokers in terms of the supposed 'legal' or 'illegal' nature of their work" (Alpes, 2013, p. 4). Moreover, aspiring migrants trust brokers due to the historical, political and legal context in which they find themselves, especially since often their situation is one where "it has become increasingly difficult for many aspiring migrants to obtain visas at consulate offices" (Alpes, 2013, p. 5). Therefore, migrants are drawn towards brokers who have shown success in facilitating the migration of previous migrants. Alpes (2013) goes on to explain that brokers seen to have extensive networks, especially international ones, were seen as "big men" who were the most likely to successfully help aspiring migrants. Furthermore, the expertise and capital they showcased reinforced these beliefs and in turn created a sense of trustworthiness that they could deliver on the services they were offering (p. 7). "Aspiring migrants see migration brokers as enabling people...Family members abroad are also crucial facilitators of emigration, but often cannot bring over aspiring migrants without the help of migration brokers either" (Alpes, 2013, p. 8). This perception, similarly to the view of football intermediaries, positions them as a friend or helper to the migrant. In the case of football, without the assistance of an intermediary, an aspiring football player is unlikely to obtain a contract or a position on a team. In the context of Alpes' paper (2013), those she interacted with utilized different names for the various brokers, demonstrating the different levels of perception aspiring migrants have towards brokers and the information attached to each broker due to previous experience.

Isaiah spoke highly of his agent, who his father put him in touch with when he developed an interest in seeking professional football opportunities. The agent, who is a family friend, has been working with Isaiah since he was a youth player. Isaiah has received offers and propositions from other agents but has never acted on them, because of the trust and sense of obligation due to the success his agent has already brought him. He describes his agent as being "like a brother" who has managed to find him a great team in the Netherlands for which to

play. The agent believes in Isaiah and has told him many times that “Isaiah is going to make him proud”, leaving Isaiah to completely trust the individual and accept him as family. Similarly, to what Alpes (2013) spoke of, certain brokers within the community of the aspiring migrant are often seen as holding a certain status and capable of certain tasks. In this scenario, Isaiah’s father knew this intermediary and deemed him capable of assisting his son. Furthermore, the intermediary had positioned himself as a close friend to the family over the years and partook in supporting Isaiah throughout his football development by attending matches and tournaments.

Furthermore, Isaiah, due to the acceptance and support he has received from the trainer and scouting director at his club, feels as though he has found a team on which he would like to stay. This trust and once again sense of obligation to stay and provide success on the football pitch, was further instilled after he suffered an injury during his 2017-2018 season. He has received tremendous support from the coaching staff and trainers throughout his recovery and claims to be at about 95% fitness throughout this recovery. Not only did he suffer a few breaks in his ankle, but his surgery was further complicated when he developed an infection post-operation. A doctor with the club has been assisting him throughout the rehabilitation process and with further support from the team staff, he hopes to be back on the field next season (2018-2019) at full strength. This support has only further instilled in Isaiah the trust and a desire to give back to the team, which has led Isaiah’s agent to pursue a contract renewal for his upcoming season. Isaiah’s intermediary is working with the club to finalize this contract, all while trying to ensure that important aspects, such as guaranteed playing time, are included in the new contract. He clocked about 464 minutes with his team over the past two years in 16 appearances. Isaiah explained that he trusts his intermediary to speak on his behalf and relay the final contract options to him once he has discussed this with the club. Ultimately, as Isaiah noted, he is getting older and needs to secure playing time to increase his prospects with other clubs and higher leagues in the future. Isaiah was hopeful to stay with Willem II, but since our interview, I discovered that he did not agree to the proposed contract his intermediary and club finalized. Ultimately, Willem II would not agree to cover Isaiah’s apartment costs and were requiring him to pay for it out of his own salary, which he was not willing to do. However, his intermediary had managed to get the club to agree to the other stipulations such as playing time and increased salary.

Unfortunately, even if you trust someone, there is the potential that their advice or assistance could result in a negative result. This was the case for a friend of Eli’s who was connected with an intermediary through a mutual friend. Even though the friend vouched for the intermediary, the player was unfortunately robbed of hundreds of dollars because of false promises. The intermediary said he would need \$1000 Canadian dollars to complete the work associated with finding different opportunities. The player could only put together \$500 and the intermediary accepted this, stating he could repay him after he found him a contract. However, after this exchange, the intermediary disappeared, taking the player’s money and cutting contact with him as well as the mutual contact who introduced them. This is an

extremely unfortunate scenario, but it is one that does occur in international football, as young inexperienced footballers are often taken advantage of (interview with Eli, May 2018, Tilburg; Madsen & Johansson, 2009). This intermediary had developed credibility with the friend, leading him to believe he could successfully obtain an opportunity for this young footballer. His actions led him to now be known as a deceiver, which as discussed in Alpes' (2013) work, can be detrimental to this broker's future work, especially if he continues to work within this community.

In addition, as Alpes (2013) argues, family members and friends can function as brokers assisting hopeful migrants in their prospective migratory desires (p.8). In football's case, often family members and friends function as intermediaries, creating or seeking opportunities for hopeful footballers. Julian and Emmanuelle recounted the story of their friend who was being pursued by a Dutch team. He knew how much the club wanted him and due to this, he decided that he would attempt to create a successful opportunity for not only himself, but also two fellow African players. He told the club that he would sign with them if they signed his two friends as well. The club agreed, and all three players were given contracts. While these scenarios are extremely rare, they do demonstrate the potential for players to exert their own form of power throughout their career path towards football's center. It also demonstrates how not all players seek out assistance from intermediaries and attempt to complete their own contractual obligations.

5.2.3 New Challenges, Uncertainty and Creativity at Play

The interconnectivity of international football, as well as its increase in both foreign players joining different leagues, is creating both unique opportunities for players in addition to challenges for others. As we have been discussing the experiences of the various African players to attain position within European clubs, many of them face a variety of challenges and had to rely upon themselves and those willing to assist them in achieving their goals. The manner in which international football has been developed, especially with the multitude of borders and challenges that exist throughout the globe, makes it difficult for footballers to pursue and achieve their professional aspirations. However, for the few that do succeed, such as those interviewed, they were fortunate to encounter a variety of helpful individual, as well as capitalize on opportunities that were presented to them. As international football continues to change, as well as the world surrounding it, we are seeing a number of things occurring that could have different levels of impact upon access for players and the continuity of foreign players in the different leagues.

One major looming concern for players is the effect that Brexit may have on their current visas and work permits for the UK, and this applied to players originating both within and outside football's center region (Mills & Reeve, 2016). As there is no longer a freedom of movement to the UK and an ease in employment for European players, many will now need to apply for work permits to be able to gain a football contract within the Premier League. This is also a concern for peripheral players, especially African players, as previously there was a belief

that certain countries may be easier to transit through into the UK. This was likely due to the fact that the UK has more strict migration policies, but due to its inclusion in the EU, holding a Schengen visa made it easier to gain access to the UK. Previous understandings related to certain countries being more relaxed when it comes to immigration policies are starting to change, and with the UK choosing to leave the EU, traditional migratory or transfer routes are now disappearing for players trying to move from the peripheral to center region. Transit routes into the English leagues through countries such as Belgium are now disappearing, leaving more challenges for these hopeful football players to cross. However, the use of intermediaries or facilitators, such as those focused on naturalization, or even countries who are now more open to naturalization, may become more appealing to aspiring footballers.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3, businesses are developing online platforms that are easing intermediary and club access to players and game data. While this is primarily assisting clubs and intermediaries, technology is creating opportunities for players seeking to showcase themselves. David explained that he, as well as other colleagues he's spoken to, have been receiving an increase in messages across social media platforms from players sending them videos or resumes of themselves in the hopes that they will assist them in obtaining a contract. This extremely innovative approach, David feels, is changing the current processes. Now players can more easily connect with those they would like, whether it be a club or intermediary. Club staff can easily now watch clips or highlights of these players online, something that was not possible in the past. These advances provide footballers with more agency in an environment in which they are often one of the lesser powerful individuals. This is important, especially for aspiring players who may have once believed that they were unable to achieve their dreams due to a system that was heavily stacked against them.

5.4 Conclusion

As this chapter has shown us, the number of variables or obstacles faced by player, as well as intermediaries assisting them, is quite large. Players need to identify who they can trust and how they can rely on people to assist them in obtaining opportunities or moving to a region where opportunities are more likely. Furthermore, they must identify the opportunities that provide the best chance for success and act on them, even if it does take them on an unlikely detour.

If we look at Isaiah's experience, specifically him losing out on a contract extension, he sees it as just a part of football. He is disappointed he will not be staying on with a team he likes, staff he trusts, and a community which he feels a part of and, to a certain degree, at home with. He knows that decisions take place and teams change their minds as to what is important or what they are willing to give up in return for a player. In his case, Willem II is not the team that can provide him with what he wants, therefore looking elsewhere does not concern him as he believes he will find something. Eli likes playing in Canada for his team but has asked his agent to keep his ears open and approach other teams to see if there are any opportunities for him out there, hopefully in Europe. The African players I spoke to know that they need to adapt

and change courses if what they are faced with is not what they were expecting. However, their motivations in regard to a better life for them and to give back to those back home who have helped them in their trajectory, pushes them to achieve some semblance of their aspirations. In Julian's case, he achieved success and since retiring has grown a family and has a phone store in his community. He is also pursuing a coaching license to continue to be involved and give back for the help he received.

Vigh's (2009b) understanding of social navigation helps us to understand that often decisions are not made in an isolated environment. Often there are different variables at play guiding how an individual makes these decisions, whether it be which football team may provide them with the best chance at a future transfer, or which country to target as a potential transitory country to the top football leagues, there are so many different scenarios a footballer can be confronted with. Those interviewed for this thesis provide us with a small glimpse at their lives and the challenges and obstacles facing players coming from the peripheral regions to the center and often they are only able to surpass these obstacles with the support or assistance from others.

6 Conclusion

This thesis sought to expand the applicability of current migration industry theory focusing on the role and function of brokers to a new industry, international football. By demonstrating the parallels between migration industry literature and the actualities of the football industry, especially the role of intermediaries, we can continue to challenge and build on our current understanding to further existing knowledge and literature. Over the past century, as we saw countries, resources, organizations, and so on, become internationalized, we saw an increase in interconnectivities between industries, including sports. Football, one of the world's largest and most international sports, touches every corner of the world, and is continuously seeing the transfer of players to top leagues, reinforcing the competitive nature between teams for who can afford to spend the most to attract the top players.

Throughout this thesis, I sought to show the intersection between international football and the migration industry, especially the parallels that exist when it comes to the practices of both industries. Both environments typically have a center region, where people are drawn towards the success and financial opportunities of the region. For international migration, these regions are typically developed or northern hemisphere countries, where economic prosperity flourishes and migrants seeking opportunities to better their lives aspire to reach. International football's center, as outlined in this thesis, exists in Europe, where the world's top leagues are located. Furthermore, the institutions that exist in both govern the entrance of individuals requiring them to obtain necessary documents, whether it be visas, contracts, or employment opportunities. In addition, the individuals who operate within these environments hold similar roles, whether it be migration brokers aiding prospective migrants or football intermediaries seeking and obtaining contracts for aspiring athletes. Both environments hold their own unique aspects, but ultimately, migration industry literature, while not normally applied to international football, is applicable.

The main research question - *who are the facilitators within international football, and how does their role influence the movement of footballers and the opportunities presented to them?* – hoped to guide this thesis' research to attempt to identify some of the key individuals at play and hopefully draw parallels between these two environments. Within the previous chapters, I have shown how the development of international football's center and periphery dynamic has guided it to reinforce borders within its environment. Ultimately, these borders have created new challenges for aspiring and talented footballers seeking opportunities within its center. Therefore, many need to utilize assistance from facilitators, typically in the form of football intermediaries, who know the field and can put their own specialized knowledge and experience to work seeking opportunities for these players.

Chapter 3 attempted to paint a brief overview of the different institutions involved in the governance and regulation of international football. The goal of this chapter was to demonstrate the complexity of the environment and the number of institutions at play at one time. Furthermore, it sought to highlight the evolution of the role of intermediaries in the past

few years, drawing attention to the different kinds of intermediaries that exist and how their roles may vary, all while operating towards the same objective. By developing a brief macro perspective of international football, one is able to get a glimpse into the different kinds of actors and hopefully develop some context as to how they interact and utilize the different systems at their disposal before taking a closer look at intermediaries in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 took a micro perspective look at the day to day of two football intermediaries, attempting to demonstrate their role and involvement in the facilitation of football players' career paths towards the center region. Both David and Emmanuelle spend significant time reinforcing their priorities as intermediaries as being one that focuses on the player first as opposed to the financial payoffs. However, as they discussed and as seen in previous research by academics, investigative journalists, and football institutions, intermediaries and other individuals operating in football do often partake in illegal or 'shady' backroom deals (de Marco, 2017; FIFA, 2015a; Madsen & Johansson, 2009). Whether it be backroom payments for certain players to managers or intermediaries, or the falsification of documents, questionable business exchanges do take place and the governing bodies are trying to take action to counter them. One, for example, being the implementation of national licensing requirements for intermediaries, as opposed to the previous licensing exam which was not curbing the number of unlicensed individuals taking part in contractual negotiations and reaping significant financial benefits. However, in the case of the two intermediaries spoken to in Chapter 4, even with only one being registered, they both spoke about their involvement as being facilitators or mediators connecting individuals (football players) with opportunities, often requiring some form of migration due to the needs of different clubs abroad and the origin of the footballers involved.

Chapter 5 hoped to further develop the reader's understanding of the intermediary's macro and micro environment and look at how footballers exist within this, by using Vigh's (2009b) notion of social navigation, where an individual exists and makes decisions based on the ever-changing environment in which they are found. From the time a footballer either chooses to pursue a professional contract, or has one thrust upon themselves, they exist within a very complex environment. Football clubs are always pursuing their own goals, deciding what kind of players they want or what style of play suits their team, creating their own list of priorities to pursue. In addition, leagues relegate their lowest teams providing opportunities to other teams being promoted, creating new opportunities for players to obtain career prospects in a professional league. In addition, intermediaries and club staff have their own priorities when it comes to choosing what type of player they want to represent or know is needed by a certain club. These realities and needs all exist at the same time, operating simultaneously and often not coordinating with one another. Therefore, individual football players need to be aware of this and make their own decisions when it comes to how they move forward within this environment. At times, what is occurring around them can both hinder and enable opportunities related to their football career trajectory. This thesis attempted to paint a picture of these environments and how at times the one thing that players, and intermediaries, rely on

is chance and luck. Often, they have no control over their environment and must rely on others to assist them or create their own opportunities. In addition, one important aspect that was highlighted was the necessity for trust between individuals. Whether this was between intermediary and footballers, or between intermediaries and football clubs, trust was central to many of these relationships.

Previous research on migration, brokerage, and football, by individuals such as James Esson (2015a; 2015b), Alpes (2013), Faist (2014), Kelly & Harris (2010), and Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sorensen (2013), all highlight the necessity for trust between individuals, especially when it came to advancing migratory opportunities or relationship building between parties. This thesis' respondents gave a glimpse into the necessity for trust to exist, as did the aforementioned research, but more could be studied in this regard to showcase the relevance of trust in international football, especially when it comes to its relationship with the migratory industry and the relationship between intermediaries and their clients.

6. 1 Policy Implications

Many countries have their own specific migration policies when it comes to the acceptance of professional athletes into their country. For example, as previously mentioned in the thesis, the UK has their own set of regulations and processes in place for professional footballers seeking opportunities within their country. These migration policies, while complex, clearly define the process and requirements that hopeful football players must meet to secure proper documentation. For example, the club applying for the permit must demonstrate that the foreign player is "internationally established at the highest level, and will make a significant contribution to the development of football at the highest level" (Mills & Reeve, 2016). Foreign players can automatically qualify for this permit if they meet specific requirements, such as playing in a minimum number of international matches in the past two-years, however, for younger players, especially ones who do not meet these minimum requirements, or who have not had the opportunity to play many international matches, this can often be difficult to achieve. This scenario led to the development of an exceptions panel which tries to evaluate a player based off slightly different criteria, such as the transfer fee being paid for this player's transfer, the wages included in the contract, and other competitions in which the player has played (Mills & Reeve, 2016). This system, while very specific to the UK, has worked for them in the past, but has only been applied to non-EU citizens due to the UK's involvement in the European Union and Schengen Agreement. But with their referendum in 2016 to leave the EU, these policies will need to change to reflect their new relationship with other European countries. This could lead to significant additional challenges for EU players pursuing opportunities in FA leagues, and furthermore, it will require European players currently playing in the UK to seek out the proper visa documentation to retain their contracts.

Once this separation comes to complete fruition, it will be interesting to assess the impact this has had on the importation of foreign players into FA leagues, especially when it comes to the impact on EU players who have previously benefited from an ease in movement

between Schengen countries. The impacts of the 2016 referendum will be felt through several sectors, and we will only be able to understand the extent of these impacts as time goes on.

In addition, governing body, FIFA, and its associations, should consider further review and revising when it comes to their policies and regulations regarding both intermediaries and the processes associated with the transfer and signing of footballers. Their review and changes in 2015 have brought some positive changes to the system, however, as briefly identified in Chapter 4, grey areas still exist within the current system and individuals are always identifying new loopholes to exploit, such as those offering naturalization. As the regulation of intermediaries is now done from a national position, the registration system has the potential to be limiting, especially as it requires intermediaries to pay the high registration fees for each national association they operate under. For intermediaries, such as David and Emmanuelle, these high fees can be too high, especially if they have players registered in three different associations. Emmanuelle is currently unregistered due to this process and is hopeful that eventually a more international opportunity will arise, so that he can take advantage of his previously established contacts and not be limited to only working in one country.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

While this thesis was able to identify connections between migration industry brokerage and international football, there are still further areas that could be looked at. Especially taking a deeper look at the role of intermediaries operating at different levels, comparing those who work within smaller regions against those operating for large businesses. In addition, super agents and their actions within international football are worth focusing on, as they are often on a level far superior to their counterparts. Focusing in on additional club staff, such as the role and actions of club managers, scouts, legal teams, and so on, could also highlight some interesting parallels between international football and the migration industry. This thesis only touched the surface of the different areas that could be further explored to expand the application of concepts and theories surrounding the migration industry and brokerage.

Furthermore, while attempts were made to utilize the information gathered from football respondents to understand their navigation within the complex football environment, there is still a lot of information that could be gathered to demonstrate how they go about their own navigation. Especially if one were to look at how they navigate and choose who assists them in their football trajectory. In addition, information surrounding the role of individuals like scouts and coaches when it comes to identification of talent in peripheral football regions, and furthermore, how they bring aspiring football players to the clubs located in the center region would be quite interesting.

Another interesting area that was discussed during the research phase was the fact that aspiring footballers are trying to take the development of opportunities for themselves into their own hands by reaching out directly to those that can assist them. This proactivity is made easier due to the interconnectivity of people caused by technology, leaving footballers to be

able to seek out intermediaries on social media platforms and websites. These footballers can upload content showcasing their talent and potential so that it can be seen directly by clubs, coaches, and intermediaries, but also can try and find their own representation in the pursuance of contractual opportunities. While the increased usage of technology, especially regarding migration has been previously looked at (Sánchez-Querubin & Rogers, 2018), studying its usage within international football as a tool for both football players and in turn, intermediaries, could lead to some interesting conclusions.

6.3 Final Thoughts

Finally, this thesis was able to draw some interesting parallels between the migration industry and international football, ones that I was not initially expecting at the beginning of this research phase. Having not previously written a thesis, the entire process was a learning experience, which I believe I was successfully able to complete. However, I do see room for further research on this subject, especially if a larger study was able to be completed on intermediaries, from different backgrounds, countries, registered and non-registered, as well as on football players. I believe a unique review could be done on those still in their country of origin in addition to those who have begun pursuing a football career through alternative routes, such as migrating irregularly or for a different purpose than football, and furthermore, how these footballers interact with intermediaries or facilitators to pursue career opportunities. These different perspectives may lead to interesting conclusions that would further our understanding of the migration industry's reach into different industries and sectors than we currently are aware of. Moreover, looking at the parallels between the migration industry and other sports, such as baseball in the United States, could lead to additional discoveries that have not been reviewed.

While I believe my research was able to uncover a number of interesting conclusions, I do acknowledge that my research sample was limited. However, the respondents I was fortunate to connect with had ample and interesting information to share. Having not previously have written a thesis during my undergraduate degree, the process of becoming a researcher myself was very new. I found it interesting learning how to approach and bridge different conversations with individuals, especially when at times there may have been language barriers present. I know that there is a great deal more I can learn, especially when it comes to question formation and gathering more details on specific topics, which became apparent to me when reviewing my notes and feeling as though I had more questions at that moment but was unable to gather the information from the respondent as they were no longer around. Many of my interactions with African football players were only for a short period of time and often sporadic, which made it challenging to prepare for. Furthermore, some concepts discussed in my thesis became relevant after my conversations with the players and not having the most direct or clear communication options with them to follow up on our conversations made it challenging to gain additional information. While the research and data collection presented me with a number of unforeseen challenges, I thoroughly enjoyed this experience

and found it to be extremely educational, allowing me to grow as a researcher as well as an individual.

7 Bibliography

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8 Appendices

8.1 Respondent Overview

1. Chris, Football Fan

Location: Canada, Origin: England

Provided insight into the set up of international football, including tournament and basic league information. Has a few friends from childhood playing professional leagues in England (the FA).

2. Dale, Director working on International Sports Program Implementation and Regulation

Location: Canada, Origin: Canada

As an expert in the field of international sports and security we were able to discuss some current issues found in international sports, including doping, match fixing, and exploitation. He provided background information and insight into the field associated with my thesis as well as some areas to further explore.

3. David, Football Intermediary in the Netherlands

Location: Netherlands, Origin: Croatia

David is a former professional football player who has previously played in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Croatia. He represented himself when he played because when he was playing the contract processes were simpler than they are now. However, his previous experience has benefitted him in his transition into being an intermediary. He began his work as an intermediary with a company and after a few years opened his own company and now works for himself representing about 20 players, playing in both professional and amateur leagues in the Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia, and Israel.

4. Eli, Professional Footballer

Location: Canada, Origin: Uganda

Eli is a young professional football player in Canada playing for one of the NASL teams. He was scouted in Uganda and was offered a position within the Aspire Academy in Qatar. From there he was offered an opportunity with the NASL team and has been playing with them for 2 seasons. Ultimately, he aspired to obtain a professional opportunity on a European league, where he considers the best teams to be located.

5. Emmanuelle, Intermediary-like individual

Location: Netherlands, Origin: Unknown, Africa

Being a migrant himself and having lots of friends in both the football world, he has found a niche in which is hopes to insert himself. He is hoping to share his experience as

a migrant and help recently migrated individuals integrate within their new environment. While he is hoping to eventually become a licensed intermediary, he finds the currently national registration system one that would limit the contacts he has throughout Europe in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and so on. Until then, he will continue to work in his current field, cinematography, and help both players and migrants he encounters.

6. Isaiah, Professional footballer in the Netherlands

Location: Netherlands, Origin: Ghana

Isaiah is a young footballer in the Netherlands. He had previously migrated to Portugal with his father and subsequently gained Portuguese citizenship in his teens. He was connected with a family friend who was an intermediary and this friend found him an opportunity on a Dutch Tier 1 team. He played one season with them and both sides were hopeful for a contract extension, but unfortunately Isaiah's requests could not be matched by the club.

7. Julian, Former professional football player, now coach

Location: Netherlands, Origin: Guinea

Coming to France with the under-16 national Guinean football team, he then decided to remain in Europe and found an opportunity in the Netherlands on a Tier 1 team. After a lengthy career in the Netherlands, he retired and settled down in Tilburg eventually getting married and starting a family. He has continued to remain within the world of international football pursuing coaching opportunities. He is currently in the process of obtaining his KNVB coaching licenses.

8. Paul, Football Coach

Location: Canada, Origin: England

Having played professionally in England, Paul upon retirement pursued a career in coaching and player development. He accepted an opportunity to be the club coach and technical director at a soccer club in Canada and has been working there for a number of years. He was able to speak about his knowledge and experience from his time working in a few clubs in England, especially when it came to the working knowledge within the field and especially in England.

9. Sebastian, Professional Footballer

Location: Greece, Origin: unknown, Africa

I was only able to briefly speak to Sebastian, a football player in Greece who has been playing there for a handful of years. He was fortunate to receive an offer from a club

who subsequently arranged all the contract and paperwork associated with his migration and visa requirements. In his case, he obtained a contract and the facilitation of his transition quite easily.

10. Victoria, Masters Student

Location: Netherlands, Origin: Netherlands

Victoria has a family friend who works for a Dutch League 1 football club and was able to speak minimally to her role. Unfortunately, I was unable to connect with her family friend, but the little that Victoria was able to explain about her friend's role did assist in my thesis.