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Professional footballers, a mobility of choice?

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Media coverage of the World Cup in Brazil has raised the issue of player mobility and transfers between different clubs around the globe. But do players' extremely mobile lives also involve extreme constraints?

The author

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Transcription translated into English

With their highly mobile lives, professional footballers help to glamorise certain hypermobile and seemingly hyperflexible ways of life – at least in the eyes of the general public. They are mobile from club to club, their contracts change every two or three years, and the loan system can lead to them changing club for a few months during the course of a season. Such **mobility** is both highly valued and a conscious choice when a player's career is on the rise – but much less so when that career is coming to an end. For if their value on the transfer market declines due to either injury or age, they sometimes have to move to less attractive towns and cities, or to other countries or even other continents.

Today, the glamour and the media profile attached to the highly mobile lives of footballers are very much in the spotlight as they leave for the World Cup in Brazil. Paradoxically, though, this hypermobility is also accompanied by a kind of 'house arrest' that restricts players' movements to the journey from a hotel to a football stadium. They are obliged to travel by a secure coach and to train in sports complexes that are closed to the public

travel by a secure coach and to train in sports complexes that are closed to the public. Such an example shows that the flexibility in the way of life chosen by a professional footballer is more a matter for the clubs than for the players.

Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

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Keywords : [High Mobility](#), [Immobility](#), [Lifestyles](#), [Collective representations](#)



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Vincent Kaufmann

Social Scientist

Vincent Kaufmann, a Swiss sociologist, is one of the pioneers of mobility and inventor of the concept of motility. He is director of LaSUR at the EPFL, General Secretary of CEAT and professor of sociology and mobility analyses.

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