

NÚMERO PUBLICACIÓN 278

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Football Experiences to Combat Social Exclusion and a World Cup: what kind of social capital beyond the tournament?

Importante

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AGOSTO 2013



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Acknowledgements

Especial acknowledgements for Dr. José Ramón Gil for his comments. The author is also grateful to Dr. David Arellano, Dr. Guillermo Cejudo, Laura Sagert and Manuela Londoño. Gilles Johannet, Patrick Mignon, Benoît Danneau and Christophe Aubin from Paris 2011 Homeless World Cup Local Organizing Committee, Marie-Laure Houari, Patrick Gasser, Christophe Jaccoud and Michaël Attali for their support. To Adam, Lavina, Mariella, Sergio and Trevor for their participation in the conference held at CIDE in October 2012.

Abstract

Mexico City hosted a World Cup for homeless players during the second week of October 2012. It was the tenth edition of this social and sporting event, which originated in Graz, Austria, in 2003. This document reviews the forms of social capital created but also compromised when football is used as a social tool. In this vein, it is worth considering the nature of the social work carried out by the NGOs that accompany these football players before and after the world tournament. The local football soccer experiences and the participation in this World Cup constitute a set of considerations which can be analyzed as social policies, where various meanings, perceptions, impacts but also challenges, limits and contradictions are combined within these programs.

Key words

Football - homeless - social capital - tensions - accompaniment- social policies

Resumen

La ciudad de México albergó un torneo de fútbol para personas sin techo durante la segunda semana de octubre 2012; la décima edición de este acontecimiento socio-deportivo surgido en la ciudad de Graz, Austria, en 2003. Cabe preguntarse qué tipo de trabajo social es llevado a cabo por las asociaciones que acompañan a estos jugadores sin hogar más allá de este mundial. Este documento tiene la intención de revisar las formas de capital social creadas y también comprometidas cuando el fútbol se usa como herramienta social. En este sentido, diversos esfuerzos, desafíos, límites y paradojas se combinan para las ONGs a cargo de estos proyectos. Las experiencias locales de fútbol y la participación en este mundial pueden conformar una base de consideraciones desde el análisis de políticas sociales.

Palabras claves

Fútbol - personas sin techo - capital social - tensiones - acompañamiento- política social

Introduction

The Homeless World Cup has been held annually since 2003. The initial idea of this event has been to challenge homelessness through football soccer by proposing new tools and images of hope. This event has gained in popularity over time and it is argued that through this participation *homeless-persons* have the opportunity to benefit from positive experiences since they meet new people, form friendships, find meaning in this activity, establish new goals for their lives and create new personal narratives, or self-conceptions. The establishment of these new ties can be regarded as social capital building for these players.

While the use of this type of football programs for the homeless and the individual's participation in this international sporting event may well contribute to building social capital, different situations and circumstances such as player selection processes, tensions during the tournament and disappointments after it may in fact erode any social capital acquired. In other words, despite the positive effects that football may create when used as social tool, traumatic experiences related to this participation in this World Cup may also have a negative impact.

The purpose of this article is to describe some of these effects and present the importance of taking possible negative impacts into account, especially when running and evaluating such programs. The distortions identified during the field work on which this article is based include: heterogeneous profiles of players, highlighting ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic differences; the process of selecting players to participate in the World Cup, the uneven level of the tournament for certain delegations, in which many games are marked by resounding defeats; conflicts within groups, unmet expectations for both players and coaches, lack of social accompaniment after the event, and uncertainty about obtaining the necessary funding to continue with programs. This qualitative description seeks to contribute to the social policies debates related to using football soccer practice and the Homeless World Cup as an instrument for social change.

In fact, this tournament has grown over the years, moving annually to different cities all over the world. Mexico City held the World Cup for the homeless in October 2012, while Paris hosted it near the Eiffel Tower in August 2011. It is scheduled to be held in Poznan, Poland in 2013; in Santiago, Chile in 2014; and in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 2015. In addition, several countries are currently seeking to host this event in the future.

However, each cup may be marked by different approaches. A major difference between the event held in Paris in 2011 and Mexico City in 2012, for example, was that while the French edition was organized by local Non-

Government Organizations (NGOs) working with the homeless and included an international symposium prepared by the Local Organizing Committee; the Mexican version was run by a corporate foundation, with no interest in symposiums. Priorities in the Mexico City version were quite different: assuring a huge event, with a main venue for over 5,000 people, media coverage and stands for promoting corporate images.

In Mexico, it was only possible to continue with the discussion of the social impacts related to taking part in this international event because a round table, independent yet parallel to the tournament, was held at the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE), part of the Mexican network of specialized public centers of research and higher education, where various effects, constraints and challenges were debated.

Characteristics of the Homeless World Cup

This World Cup was created by two street paper editors: one from *The Big Issue* in Scotland, Mel Young and the other from *Megaphone* in Austria, Harald Schmidt. The first cup took place in the city of Graz, Austria, in 2003. This inaugural event involved eighteen teams, all associated with the International Network of Street Papers (INSP), a network comprising street papers sold by the homeless in various countries.

This tournament has used a new format for indoor football soccer, played by four players against four, enabling teams to make permanent changes during the games since each delegation is allowed to present eight footballers. Matches comprise two half-times of seven minutes, in which one player must always remain in the rival half of the field, creating situations where three players are in attack positions against two defending players, helping their goalkeeper. This type of football is played in a walled-in enclosure, a feature that enhances the intensity of the games.

During the first cup in 2003, football fields were the same ground of city square, surrounded by walls and bleachers for spectators. The following cups introduced synthetic grass for fields as new teams began joining the tournament. More nations, representing the homeless in their countries, joined at each cup, such Argentina in 2004 and Mexico and Chile in 2006. Subsequently, other NGOs in addition to those associated with INSP have become local partners of this World Cup, introducing other categories and profiles of participants: teenagers and young adults recovering from drugs and alcohol, people living in urban shelters in cities such as Vancouver, Washington DC or Dublin, slum inhabitants in Nairobi, São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Bombay and political refugees. Since 2008, vulnerable women have played in the Women Homeless World Cup. As a result of the tournament's growth, Paris 2011 received 53 countries, with 70 teams: 48 male and 12 female.

This event has also attracted international and local sponsors. The European Union of Football Associations has supported the movement since the first cups, together with an international brand of sports apparel. After Graz 2003, subsequent editions were held in Goteborg, Sweden, in 2004; Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2005; Cape Town, South Africa, in 2006; Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2007; Melbourne, Australia, in 2008; Milan, Italy, in 2009; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2010; Paris in 2011 and Mexico City in 2012. Each event has been organized by a Local Organization Committee together with the technical staff of the Edinburgh-based headquarters (Segura 2012). The tournament usually takes place over a period of seven days.

According to both co-funders¹, the initial purpose of this international meeting was to challenge the charitable sector by using a new instrument to work with the homeless, by creating international solidarity, proposing tools through football participation and innovating to tackle and conceive of homelessness differently.

In this spirit, when Paris was chosen to host the event, the Local Organization Committee decided to reserve space and time during the tournament to discuss programs associated with this international cup and social policies in various countries designed to fight homelessness. Parallel to the Homeless World Cup held in August 2011, eight local projects that participated in this first symposium were presented: the Argentinean experience of homeless persons, both men and women, from townships in Buenos Aires' urban zone (Rotman: 2012); the association of football teams comprising homeless players with professional clubs as their sponsors in Belgium (Ballegeer: 2012); the functioning of a players' committee in Paris (Kouaku: 2011); the combination of football and the participation in a marathon among homeless Greeks together with immigrants in Athens (Alefantis: 2012); the incorporation of HIV carriers within the local project in Indonesia (Otto: 2012); the organization of tournaments in Nairobi's slums (Ahmed: 2012); the combination of homeless and corporate teams in Spain (Servian: 2012) and the experience of women living in refugee camps in Uganda (Achen and Angwech: 2012). While some cases were introduced by their managers, others were presented by former homeless, individuals who were actively taking part in these projects.

As an extension of this discussion, a group of experts debated social policies. These included the federal policy in the United States to end homelessness, Housing First (Roman: 2012); the problems associated with definitions and support for the homeless in France (Damon: 2012); an innovative experience in Madrid, coping with the economic crisis through farms (Cabrera: 2012); the mechanisms of social exclusion, informal labor markets and unemployment risks in Japan (Malinas: 2012); sport as a

¹ The two co-funders of this World Cup were interviewed on different occasions.

contributor to peace in African contexts (Opiyo: 2012); the movement of recyclable material gatherers as a way of leaving the streets in the city of São Paulo, Brazil (Costa Viera: 2012); the creation of accompaniment units for the homeless in Finland (Kaakinen: 2012) and the scope of football as a new social instrument for excluded people (Mignon: 2012). Public policies in France were confronted in the last session by the national secretary of housing and the representative of the city of Paris; where different perspectives and opposing political parties were represented. In addition to national dimensions, European criteria were part of the final debate of the symposium².

Nevertheless, each cup may differ from the previous one in many aspects as mentioned earlier. Mexico City 2012 was an event that focused excessively on the football tournament, rather than on the discussion of homelessness, which was, paradoxically, the initial objective of this event: using football as a means to discuss and combat homelessness. Mexico created a distinctive atmosphere at the venue; covering virtually the entire city square, the *Zocalo*, where commentators with microphones harangued the crowd (between three and four thousand people according to the day and game) to support Mexican teams (in both the male and female competitions). This atmosphere created, however, a psychological barrier between Mexico and the rest of the delegations³. Mexico won the female tournament and lost the male final against Chile, a situation that was celebrated by the vast majority of the international community.

Despite specific situations in Mexico City, and any degree of distortions during previous cups, the opinions expressed by the organizers of the tournament to the media, reports and speeches have always outlined the positive impact created by this event. Statistics, available on Homeless World Cup's website reflect extremely positive perceptions and opinions of players consulted six months after the tournaments. Yet, very little independent research on the sociological impact of this sporting and social event has been undertaken. The scant academic research includes one reference to social capital building in Australia's homeless teams (Sherry 2010), reports from volunteers' perceptions (O'May 2009; 2010; 2011) plus the analysis of the first Welsh delegation (Magee 2011; 2013) and the French experiences between 2007 and 2011 (Segura, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a). Let's review some literature regarding social capital and sport, football in particular, to discuss later the features of this World Cup for homeless-persons.

² Freek Spinnewijn, head of the European of National Organizations Working with Homeless (*Fédération Européenne des Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri*) participated in this debate.

³ A situation questioned by various delegations, who even complained to the personnel of the World Cup headquarters. A similar situation occurred in Edinburgh 2005, when certain resistance was shown towards the English teams, but according to witnesses, the commentators asked the crowd to support England, stressing that the event was not a sporting but rather a social tournament.

Social Capital and Football as a Theoretical Framework

According to Coleman (1988), the widening of reciprocity from social relationships can yield benefits for marginalized groups. For Putnam (1993), social networks can be positive when members obtain rewards that are beneficial to themselves and society, but they can also be negative when members belong to a group that creates negative societal impacts, such as crime, corrupt behavior, extortions or drug abuse.

The basic idea of social capital is that communities are formed through trust and shared values (Putnam: 1993, 2000). Consequently, when speaking about marginalized groups, access to sports activities is often related to informal practices and occupying abandoned fields. Therefore, access to sport is also a matter of social development; Hylton and Totten (2008) address the need to consider the reduction of the inherent inequalities in mainstream sport provision. Authors such as Blomfield (2003), Green (2006), Guilianotti (2007) and Gasparini & Marchiset (2008) have identified the increasing promotion of sports, especially collective practices, as means of social inclusion, which shape a growing number of public policies and social programs, including peace promotion in post-war contexts (Rookward & Palmer: 2011).

It is natural, then, that the notion of social capital, generated by this “sporting spirit” emerges as an issue for policy makers, NGO actors and social researchers engaged in the study of the impact of sport. Therefore, exploring, discovering and understanding the nature of these dimensions of social capital pose a new challenge for social research.

Assuming that social programs using sports can indeed create a positive social impact, Mignon distinguishes between bonding and bridging capital (2012: 130). Bonding social capital develops naturally within a group, reinforcing ties among members, but creating barriers to outsiders. Bridging social capital refers to open interactions that spread from one group to another. These two aspects need to be distinguished in order to understand the nature and forms of social capital building within social sports programs. Green (2008) considers, for example, that sport may enhance personal change while aggregated personal changes can lead to a broader societal impact. For Green, however, “It is not sport *per se* that is responsible for particular outcomes; it is the ways that sport is implemented” (2008: 131 cited in Sherry 2010: 7).

Social research conducted in six municipalities in France between 1995 and 1997 (Charrier 1997), has provided qualitative findings in response to various objectives when using sport as a social tool for disadvantaged urban populations, such as creating sports-related jobs for unemployed youth through training; public support for football clubs that cater to vulnerable teenagers; diversifying accompaniment instruments related to sport such as

summer and winter activities, and enhancing bridges between sport activities and communitarian actions in damaged neighborhoods. According to Charrier (1997: 10), a common feature of these public policies in France has been the remobilization of bodies and spirits of participants. But, as Charrier points out, although these activities may well produce immediate impacts, they may not last over the years when public support is withdrawn (p.12).

Critical research should also explore unexpected, unwanted effects, and take these elements into account for social programs using sport promotion (Gulianotti: 2007). According to Fodimbi (2002), the concept of football as an instrument of social integration is based the idea that this activity increases respect for others. As rules are incorporated, respect for oneself, respect for the authorities (referees and coaches); team work; moral values and discipline are instilled.

Nonetheless, Fodimbi points out that there is no irrefutable evidence showing that behavior valued in football necessarily becomes a model for behavior in everyday life for vulnerable groups (2002: 135). Chobeaux (1999) argues that the techniques and methodologies used to work with sports to foster social integration must be debated. Chobeaux stresses the importance of determining how and to what extent educational learning is introduced, who the coaches and assistants are and what their background is. This author also signals the need to analyze the nature and forms of social evaluation applied and the way social indicators of inclusion are designed, since sport and football in particular, tend to reject « less competitive players ». This may exclude persons and groups already subject to social exclusion (Gasparini and Vieilles-Marchiset 2008).

Other sociologists in France have proposed indicators to record social integration through levels of participation (Duret & Augustini 1993) related to time-management, places where sports are played and social relationships formed through sport. Duret and Augustini use social accompaniment and the goals set as the starting point (1993: 4-5). Initial steps are characterized by the stabilization of habits, routines and detoxification. Further objectives may include containment strategies since relapses frequently occur. Societal integration is progressively achieved through different levels as participants gain self-confidence and tools that allow them to advance towards social and economic autonomy (1993: 126-127).

Nevertheless, on the basis of a case study in the Netherlands, Spaaij (2009) raises the question of whether the intervention of sport-based programs fails to break the system of social inequalities reproduction (cited in Magee & Jeanes 2013: 4).

When considering the case of this Homeless World Cup, Magee and Jeanes (2013) outline the need to understand homelessness in its diversity and heterogeneity. These authors see homelessness “as a continuum that views a homeless person as holding a multitude of often shifting positions from

completely roofless and living on the streets, to living in shelters and support accommodation or (even) temporarily accommodated by family and friends” (2013: 5) as Levinson (2004) or Meert (et al: 2004) have noted.

Understanding homelessness therefore involves a challenge when studying or even organizing this World Cup. Following Magee and Jeanes, this tournament: “needs to be analyzed more extensively to determine whether it can address aspects of social exclusion (2013: 5) and, if so, how this is achieved (Coalter: 2007 in op.cit).

Sherry’s study of (2010) of Australian teams preparing and taking part in this tournament between 2006 and 2008 adopted a social capital approach in which football, as a collective activity: “involves similar levels of participation from other individuals and which has stated aims and outcomes that leads to the accrual of social capital for the participants” (p.9). For Sherry, the social capital formed through this participation involved friendship, team spirit, and collective support.

But as Magee (2011, 2013) notes, the tournament itself may create paradoxical situations due to the highly competitive physical activities insofar as the environment can become overwhelming and too pressurized for less competitive players (Magee & Jeanes 2013: 11). Magee (2011) holds that widening sporting access to the Welsh team accompanied in 2003 was intrinsically beneficial to those in the squad, especially during preparation for the event, but stressful during the tournament (Magee & Jeanes: 2013). From the first World Cup in Graz in 2003, Magee identified the gap between coaches who focused on inclusive participation and enjoyment, and those whose fundamental concern was to win the tournament. Therefore, Magee has warned about the risks of social exclusion due to highly competitive trends (2011: 170). This same trend was directly observed by the author of this manuscript in Melbourne 2008, Milan 2009, Rio de Janeiro 2010 (Segura Trejo 2011) and Paris 2011 (Segura Trejo 2013b) as well as in Mexico City 2012. As a result, the gulf between elite and non-elite teams (Magee: 2011) has increased annually.

Although my research confirms various positive impacts on footballers followed throughout four years in France (Segura Trejo 2008; 2009; 2011, 2012 and 2013a), it also warns of the need for post-accompaniment (after the event) in order to prevent, or at least contain depression and relapses. As a matter of fact, contrary to the statistics provided by the organizers of the World Cup on its website, which only refer to successful perceptions, unexpected effects often occur, before, during and after the tournament. As Magee (2011, 2013) points out, tensions between social accompaniment and sport performances may affect the spirit of the tournament for certain delegations. As personally observed in the different cups, this situation may also occur in competitive teams which fail to achieve the sporting objective

established in advance, when high competitive standards overshadow social objectives.

In this respect, Mexico 2012 served as an example for continuing with previous ethnographic observations and academic discussion in order to explore general and particular issues not only as regards social capital building, but also as regards its erosion, due to distortions that can generate negative effects.

Research and Methodology

The discussion of social capital proposed here is based on ethnographic observations between 2007 and 2012 for a doctoral dissertation based on an in-depth case study of football used as a social tool for supporting vulnerable groups. This research began with the French Local Championship against Social Exclusion (Segura 2008, 2009) organized around Paris with social teams belonging to NGOs working with the homeless throughout the year. Two teams were personally followed, one linked to *Secours Catholique*, composed of players living in shelters, others recovering from alcohol and drugs and still others waiting to obtain political asylum in France. The other team, from the *Centre d'Accueil et de Soins Hospitaliers* (CASH), from the city of Nanterre, comprised asylum seekers and political refugees.

The first team used to meet and train on Saturday mornings and the second every Tuesday evening. Matches between eleven-a-side teams in this championship (or ten or nine depending on the occasion) were expected at least once a month. This championship was the place where players were chosen to represent France in the Homeless World Cup between 2005 and 2010. Since 2010, other NGOs in various parts of the country have been invited to participate in national tournaments for the international cup.

Participant observation became the main research tool throughout the research. Thus, frequent interaction produced mutual trust created by months of visiting the field (Whyte 1943/1993). As happened to Wacquant (2000) when describing his ethnographic experience in boxing rooms in Chicago, involvement with these groups in France, those participating in the local championship and those from three delegations travelling to Melbourne 2008, Milan 2009 and Rio de Janeiro 2010, forged strong ties with certain members over time.

Training and playing local matches with these two specific teams allowed this researcher to achieve a rapport with the players. This, together with ethnographic observation, provided first-hand information for research purposes (Emerson 1981). Visiting some of these players at their shelters during the week made it possible to understand their situations as Anderson (1924/1998) did with the hobos in Chicago. As Becker (1958) notes in relation to participant observation, the observer gathers information by taking part in

the everyday life of the group he studies. Becker explains that the researcher observes the different situations faced by the people frequented during research and observes how the latter behave. The researcher then discusses his interpretation of the observed events with some of them (1985: 2). Another indicator of qualitative research relies on the capacity to act as an integrated and natural member of the group studied (Douglas 1976, cited in Emerson 1981: 65).

In this case, after two or three months of frequenting the football fields, chatting to coaches and volunteers, and listening to players' conversations, open and semi-structured interviews were carried in different stages with members of these two teams. The interviews were designed to determine the impact of this sporting activity. This stage permitted, progressively, the reconstruction of players' social carriers (Becker 1963), and their appreciation of their lives before and after having joined the football teams. After reading the first interviews, the data were verified with coaches and volunteers in order to confirm facts or understand the reasons behind invalid information.

Intense participation with the local association, the organizers of the local championship and teams representing France in the Homeless World Cup, allowed this researcher to listen and express his views on the functioning of the project. Involvement for a period of several months elicited an invitation from the association to travel, as a staff member to three consecutive World Cups: Melbourne 2008, Milan 2009 and Río 2010 (Segura 2011, 2013a). These opportunities made it possible to follow the preparatory process for each cup, the tournaments and the return to France. Interviews with 24 players (8 from each process) were subsequently conducted. Ten players who participated in different cups were personally accompanied: three from previous editions (of players always present at local championship), three from Melbourne 2008, two from Milan 2009 and two from Rio 2010.

Moreover, six interviews with staff members of France's delegations complement the information and understanding of specific situations. During the three cups mentioned, in addition to Paris 2011 and Mexico 2012, 20 interviews were conducted with coaches and players from other teams (Segura 2011, 2012, 2013a).

In regard to Paris 2011, this researcher took part in the organization of the international symposium parallel to the tournament. The Mexico City 2012 Cup was also observed *in situ*. In addition, an independent conference was organized by this author at CIDE, where five local programs focusing on social dimensions participated in an open debate on impact, achievements, constraints and challenges. These programs were The Street Soccer League from the city of Vancouver; *Hecho Club Social* from Buenos Aires; the *Oasis* project from South Africa; *Surprise Strassensport* from Basel, in Switzerland, and *Ganándole el partido a la vida* from Lima, in Peru, making it possible to identify general and particular features. Nigeria and India, also invited to the

meeting, were unable to travel to Mexico at the last minute due to financial constraints, a situation that affects several delegations every year.

This document incorporates comments during the symposium of Paris 2011 and the round table at CIDE that support and complement this author's own findings. These testimonials constitute second-hand information (Emerson 1981) for this research, insofar as the researcher was not personally able to observe these local programs or compare discourse with behavior *in situ*. This article also assumes that more research is required in order to understand and analyze social capital building, considering both the positive and negative effects created by football for the homeless, an instrument amplified by participation in this international cup.

CONFERENCE HELD AT CIDE: FIVE FOOTBALL EXPERIENCES TO COMBAT SOCIAL EXCLUSION



Picture from CIDE, October 10, 2012

Analysis and Discussion of Field Work

An Argentinian player interviewed during the event in Mexico City in 2012 explained his situation in regard to social influences: “I used to have problems with drugs. I don't want to take drugs any more. But my roommates from the shelter always pressure me to take drugs with them”. This is how this player refers to the negative social capital influencing his life, but he regards his football peers as positive ties, “Most of us have had problems with drugs, but

as we train, we care about our health. We calm our anxiety and we feel clean”.

In regard to the programs participating in the Homeless World Cup, Mignon states that football constitutes a factor that attracts disadvantaged people within these circuits, since it elicits strong universal interest among youth (2012: p.6). In every country and sometimes every city, these programs develop their own ways of recruiting players, but football constitutes their common instrument. It was observed in France that players living in shelters were invited to join teams for the local championship by others who were already training. How they feel during their first experiences determines whether players decide to engage on a regular basis (Segura 2011).

At the conference held at CIDE, the Peruvian representative posed the question of new links for players in this project:

“Some of the boys on the team have belonged to hooligan groups (barras bravas in Latin America). They used to be respected and feared because of that. When we brought them to this program, we needed to work on their self-esteem. We formed a team from different neighborhoods, so they could meet new persons in similar situations and form new links, but at the same time, break their ties with gangs”.

Creating positive social capital for former homeless individuals implies breaking negative ties. Indeed, this process involves forming new relationships and new social circles. According to the Oasis speaker from South Africa, participants in the program, in Western Cape Town, manage to change social circuits as they distance themselves from old habits and create new images of themselves. As the Oasis representative explains, “Football brings motivation and a reason for engagement for South African players trying to find a place”. As noted during the CIDE conference by all the speakers, football allows players to release their emotions as well as providing them with informal (and formal) networks.

In this same vein, it was also noted in France during the participant observation that football is weekly activity providing a degree of personal stability for individuals in unstable circumstances, as well as a network of friends and acquaintances (Segura 2011). Participants in these local projects often lack family support and social recognition. They therefore find meaning and affection as they become regular participants in these circuits. Collective sports serve as spaces for socialization, since sports groups function as an extension of family ties (Baillet 2002: 135).

Consequently, spaces created by this use of football constitute recreational moments for players. As the Vancouver representative notes, “A boy who has been training with us for a year told us his name was Peter. We recently learnt that this is not his real name”. Since players do not have to undergo formal interviews or bureaucratic procedures to join these teams

and training sessions, they regard them as places where they feel free to turn up.

The representative of *Hecho Club Social* in Argentina stresses that players who bring acquaintances and friends to the program convince them that training is beneficial for them. For Switzerland's representative, teenagers and depressed adults experiencing difficult circumstances reduce their social isolation by meeting at football sessions.

As football becomes a stable activity, it creates an impact on self-perceptions. The representative from Belgium explained during the Paris 2011 symposium that, "Working with football allows a new image of players to be projected, a positive image for themselves and positive images towards society" (Ballegeer 2012: 15). This aspect means that players can introduce themselves into society as footballers, even if they are playing in amateur teams. After having joined teams and as they train on a regular basis, many of these players form new narratives of their experience (Magee & Jeanes 2013), which incorporate the past but also include hope in the present and immediate future (Segura 2013a). When introducing themselves to an audience (Goffman 1959) they make an effort to project the transformations of themselves with the new meanings they have acquired, wishes and goals. One of the players interviewed in France, a participant in the local championship explained:

"Football gives you the possibility to meet people. I was living in a shelter six months ago. I met one of the guys from this team there and he convinced me to join in. I realized here that I was not the only one with problems. I was able to share my concerns with the rest of the players and I even found solutions to certain personal situations. I have now new motivations. The social assistant is helping me find a job. This football team has given me energy and friends. When you experience homelessness, the worst thing you can feel is that you are alone and no one cares about you".

The social ties formed by members of these teams involve bonding social capital (Mignon 2012) and relationships between members of these circles, where solidarity and fraternity can emerge. However, bridging social capital (Mignon, *op. cit*) constitutes a more complex challenge. In other words, building social ties with other circles requires additional efforts and progress. This can be a fragile process, depending not only on the will of football players, but also on circumstances and sustained social accompaniment, as noted later on this article.

Maintaining social capital is therefore not an easy task for associations working with vulnerable people. Tensions between players or between players and coaches are common in every project, especially when the environment is characterized by heterogeneity in participants' profiles.

Diversity in Participants' Profiles

Homeless players participating in local projects related to this international cup include street paper vendors in many countries, asylum seekers, immigrants living in difficult conditions and political refugees. By way of an example, the Greek project has created ties between local people and immigrants trying to become integrated into the country, mainly refugees from Afghanistan and from Nigeria (Alefantis: 2012). But the language barrier hampers integration. Even though some coaches speak English, not every local member does. Communication among players passes during several months through gestures and football understanding.

Other categories involve teenagers and young adults undergoing detoxification from drugs and alcohol, urban shelter residents and slum inhabitants in various countries.

The project in France, based on the Local Championships against Social Exclusion in the Paris urban zone, has attracted asylum seekers and homeless living in shelters and volunteers (Segura 2009). This championship has subsequently invited other NGOs working in other parts of the country to participate in national tournaments before the final selection for the World Cup. Participants in each of these projects are characterized by their cultural diversity. Mixing with team members of other nationalities provides diversity, creating solidarity and friendship, key elements in building social capital.

LOCAL CHAMPIONSHIP IN PARIS (BOIS DE VINCENNES)



Picture taken by the author of this article, May 24, 2009

In Basel in Switzerland, Surprise Strassensport organizes a sixteen-team league bringing together an average of one hundred and fifty players including vendors of Surprise Strassenmagazine, asylum seekers and people either living on the street or in social institutions.

SWITZERLAND'S TOURNAMENT IN 2012 (STRASSESPORTS)



Picture shown at the round table at CIDE, October 10, 2012

Oasis, in South Africa, works with at-risk adults, teenagers and children in Western Cape Town, offering a football league and tournaments throughout the year.

The *Gánandole el partido a la vida* project, created in 2011, hosts adolescents and young adults from the most disadvantaged parts of the city of Lima, and those recovering from addictions, including some former *barras bravas* (a Latin American version of hooligans).

SOUTH AFRICAN TEAM FOR MEXICO 2012, FROM THE OASIS PROJECT



Picture shown at the round table at CIDE, October 10, 2012

PLAYERS FROM GANÁNDOLE EL PARTIDO A LA VIDA, PERU



Picture shown at the round table at CIDE, October 10, 2012

The Vancouver Street Soccer League receives both female and male teenagers, recovering from drugs and or from broken families, immigrants and aborigines from the north of the country.

VANCOUVER STREET SOCCER LEAGUE



Picture shown at the round table at CIDE, October 10, 2012

Young women from disadvantaged urban and rural zones also participate in local circuits. *Hecho Club Social* comprises political asylum seekers (South Americans and Africans), homeless young adults recovering from alcohol and drug problems and young women from townships around Buenos Aires City (Rotman 2012).

National representations can adopt various forms in these programs as asylums seekers and political refugees prepare to represent their host country in international tournaments. Argentina, for instance, has brought African players to the World Cup, together with Peruvian, Paraguayan and Bolivian immigrants in vulnerable situations. France has incorporated Romanians, Georgians and Africans from different countries, all living in shelters and members of social teams.

ARGENTINEAN PLAYER FROM LIBERIA IN MILAN 2009 (HECHO CLUB SOCIAL)



Picture shown at the round table at CIDE, October 10, 2012

Nevertheless, as associations incorporate different profiles, many of them unknown to each other, this mixture can also produce tensions within delegations when the international tournament approaches. Transformations of identities and narratives do not occur in a linear fashion. Hesitations, setbacks and frustrations are part of this experience (Segura Trejo 2011) and some of these frustrations emerge when the World Cup becomes unbearable for players.

Tensions Before and During the Cup

From a sociological point of view, tensions are normal in these football programs as they often take place, regardless of specific contexts. Throughout the year, several tensions appear as the international tournament looms. While some problems emerge during selection processes and preparation for the international cup, others are exacerbated during the tournament. Moreover, various disappointments erode social capital after the World Cup.

When analyzing programs related to this World Cup, it is essential to distinguish competitive delegations from socially-oriented programs. Competitive delegations tend to reject players who do not play well enough

to join a team hoping to win the tournament. Their argument, heard by this researcher in various interviews with certain Latin American program managers, is that they need to win the tournament, or at least finish among the top positions in order to attract sponsors and media attention. It would seem, by listening to them, that failing to finish among the top positions would prevent them from reaching sponsors and media. This same claim has been made by certain Eastern European delegations. In these programs, team profiles vary slightly from those of socially-oriented delegations. Competitive delegations tend to bring players who are recovering addicts but have a strong background in football, some of whom have participated in semi-professional leagues. One Latin American player consulted in Paris 2011 admitted to this researcher that he used to play in the second and third professional divisions of his country.

Socially-oriented delegations work with different criteria. They chose players who are usually accompanied throughout the year, including many of them for several seasons. These players are rewarded for their presence in the programs despite the fact that their football level will not ensure their team's top positions in the world cup. France belongs to this category of delegations (Segura 2009, 2011). Yet, even if the main focus is not on winning the tournament, some players can feel a heavy burden in regard to sporting expectations. Negative views of self-identity may even emerge during the selection process for the international tournament. As one player in France who trained and eventually left the group in the run-up to Milan 2009 remarked:

“Whenever I make a mistake on the field I feel inundated with criticism. We are not preparing for the (FIFA) World Cup here, I have not come here to be evaluated. If I can't have some fun, I don't need this in my life. I have had enough failures and disappointments to add one more to my life” (in Segura 2013a).

Some players experience difficulties in adapting to the discipline and authority of regular activities. As Canada's representatives explains, “There is an enormous distrust of authority among new players”. He attributes this to the, “Discomfort at being in a new situation in which there are new rules to follow”. After many years of social instability, some players are not used to receiving instructions from coaches, volunteer and other football partners (Segura 2011). As a result, delegations may experience strong tensions due to internal disagreements.

Moreover, some of these tensions may be exacerbated when delegations bring both female and male teams to the World Cup. Mixed delegations represent new, more complex forms of social capital within these circuits since different social policy goals are set by NGOs working with vulnerable women.

Whereas some countries focus on male teams, others try to form mixed delegations, while a group of nations concentrate exclusively on female teams. Melbourne 2008, the first cup directly observed, saw young women and teenagers from rural and urban contexts taking part in the first Women's World Cup. Profiles participating in this Women's Cup reflect different features of social integration and social capital. Colombia, Paraguay and Uganda (Achen and Angwech 2012) are among these exclusive female projects, fostering gender participation in isolated (urban or rural) areas and using football to enhance girls' self-esteem. A propos of this, as Colombia's project manager explained during one interview:

“Our girls have suffered violence from their parents, their couples or their neighbors. We try to help them rebuild their self-esteem. As they meet other girls, they feel they are not alone”.

Other Latin-American delegations have combined female and male teams. After six tournaments with male teams within the World Cup from 2004 to 2009, Argentina's *Hecho Club Social* took female teams to Rio 2010, Paris 2011 and Mexico 2012, not without experiencing tensions before, during and after the tournament. Small subgroups, rejecting the cohesion of delegations, posed several problems in regard to harmonious interaction, especially during the cups. Thus, gender inclusion demands well-prepared female staff members capable of handling conflict among troubled and vulnerable teenagers and young women, who sometimes have sentimental ties to members of the same delegation, or become temporarily involved with other members of participating nations during the tournament.

As a result of the World Cup selection process, many players are rejected before the confirmation of annual delegations. While some remain in the programs, perhaps in anticipation of opportunities to travel in the future; others decide to drop out of the teams. Some players are even asked by their associations to leave or to keep their distance for a while as their presence may be problematic for the rest of the group. If a player is expelled from a program, he or she may suffer social isolation again, driving him back (or her) to previous negative ties (Segura 2013a).

Nonetheless, once the delegation has been confirmed and travels to the cup, various situations affect the players' spirit. During the five observed World Cups; three as a member of the French staff, one as a volunteer for LOC Paris 2011 and another as an independent observer in Mexico 2012, several breakdowns within the delegations were noticed in various delegations. Some were temporary, due to the circumstances of the games that were overcome after calm was restored; whereas other cases severely compromised the stability of the group and the programs' social goals.

As mentioned earlier, the World Cup has always been characterized by competitive nations on the one hand, and socially-oriented delegations on the

other. This division creates significant differences in the field. Magee and Jeanes observed from Welsh delegation participating in 2003, noting that: “Heavy defeats to more accomplished teams significantly dented confidence and created negative feelings of self-worth” (2013: 12), a situation that is inevitably faced by socially-oriented delegations year after year.

Strong teams in this cup such as Brazil, Mexico, Scotland, Russia and Portugal tend to beat weak teams by over 20 goals at the beginning of the tournament. This situation can increase feelings of failure and upset many players. It can also give rise to complaints from players from the same delegation. One Argentinean player, consulted after a heavy defeat in Paris 2011, defined the situation as follows,

“I try to give it my all on the field but some of my teammates don’t care about it. They don’t mind whether we lose a match or we win, they only want to have fun. I’m not like that; I want to win when I play football. I don’t know why they come here. We trained every week for several months. I thought we were stronger, but we are so weak on the field. We won’t even qualify for the next round and we’ll end up in the group of teams just competing for the fair-play trophy”.

This testimonial shows that expectations about winning the tournament, or at least reaching the top positions may create enormous disappointments when the imagined goals are not achieved. Thus, when the internal atmosphere of the group turns negative, latent conflicts developed before the World Cup may be exacerbated during the event. Anxiety increases with morning-to-evening coexistence (Magee & Jeanes 2013: 13-14) for a fortnight (including travel time).

Troubled personalities may also emerge during the trip. During the first directly observed World Cup in Melbourne 2008, a schizophrenic personality in the French delegation exploded during the week. His behavior upset the spirit of the whole group. Another example of this type of situations was observed at the Paris 2011 World Cup, where two members of the Spanish delegation were on the verge of resorting to physical violence when they were stopped by volunteers.

The experience of the World Cup can turn into a nightmare for some players for different reasons, some related to troubled personalities, others due to unexpected circumstances or disappointments during the moment. When the experience of being in this tournament affects them negatively, bad feelings can spread to part of the team, or even to the whole delegation. For these reasons, some players wish to return to their country during the cup and not to see the rest of the delegation ever again.

Consequently, while many players are better off after the experience of the World Cup, since they have new friends (new social capital) and some seem to have partly recovered from past breakdowns and negative habits;

others are in a worse situation than before if there is no plan for their containment after the tournament. Interruptions in the interaction (Goffman 1967) during the cup demand post-accompaniment for players, as long as associations are capable of assuming disappointments and failures in regard to their own expectations (Segura 2011, 2013a). An important question for associations is therefore whether to continue with social accompaniment when tensions involving a player pose a threat to the stability of the program. How to do this, to what extent and what limits should be established are thorny issues that must be answered by associations.

Social Accompaniment after the Event

Players need time to process and understand everything they have gone through after the intense experience of the World Cup. Social capital acquired before the cup tends to become fragmented as the delegation comes to a natural end.

According to the interviews carried, players who have participated in the cup usually make one or two true friends from this experience (Segura 2013a). They also gain several contacts, including players, coaches, volunteers and journalists who have followed their delegation. Some of the players who have enjoyed the cultural experience of the international cup remain in contact with players from different countries through the Internet. One player from France visited the Belgian players he had met in Rio 2010 three months after the World Cup.

Some remain in the programs after the trip while others return to their provinces in the country. In this case, some of these footballers send news or act as local contacts for future meetings, while others lose touch with the association with which they traveled to the tournament.

In fact, some players feel they have been abandoned by the association in charge of national representatives during the Homeless World Cup. One player in the French delegation of 2010 reflected on his experience a year later:

“While we were preparing for the World Cup, they used to call us every week. We had meetings for training, for speeches, to talk to journalists and for other reasons. After the tournament we only had one meeting all together. I feel we are no longer useful”.

Unmet expectations among certain players, who were hoping to secure a job after the tournament through the intervention of the association or to receive more attention, may be a source of great disappointment. Some of them may also feel outraged. One player from a Latin American country who played in the cup in Cape Town, in 2006, established contact with the author of this

article by e-mail in 2008. He described his disappointment⁴ in the following terms:

“We were told that we were participating to represent the homeless in our country. We belonged to a shelter in the capital, but the following year (2008) a marketing company came and took control of the project. They used and exploited our pictures and images without our authorization. They started recruiting players who were not homeless in order to improve the level, but they keep using our profiles to attract media attention”.

Associations face many problems in regard to the accompaniment of delegations after the World Cup. As the testimonials of the coaches interviewed suggest, many associations participating in the international tournament move quickly onto training the following delegation. Efforts focus on forming a new team because the cup takes place annually. However, some delegations such as Spain and Belgium prefer to participate every two years in order to avoid this tendency. In France, where intense efforts have been made to continue with accompaniment after the World Cup and review situations periodically (Segura 2011), social relapses have always occurred among certain players. Some of them lose their jobs after a few months, returning to their old habits of alcohol consumption (Segura 2013a). It is important to recall that some NGOs do not always have the required capacity to conduct social accompaniment as they would wish. One of the social workers in the project in France was quite clear about this aspect:

“We try to follow up on our players after the World Cup, but apart from the fact that we don’t always have the necessary time, I wonder whether the same social worker should follow up on the player after this experience. I really think that other social workers should take over, because a new period starts after this trip. The problem is that our associations don’t have the means to provide more social assistance. So, the same person needs to be taken care of. I think it would be much more beneficial for both parties to be supported by a third person at this stage”.

In the case of female teams, certain aspects of social accompaniment also compromise the continuity of the programs. Homelessness clearly affects vulnerable men more than women (Brousse et al 2008), but more and more troubled girls are joining football programs every year. Nevertheless, NGOs must often struggle to obtain recognition for this activity. Continuity of female programs poses another challenge for certain delegations. The

⁴ Not only did he authorize this researcher to mention his disappointment but he insisted that this be done. He even asked to have his name, surname and country mentioned. This was not done because the objective of this article is to describe general situations rather than personal cases, persons, programs or countries in relation to this World Cup.

manager of the first female team in France, especially prepared for Paris 2011, observed the following six months after the event:

“We had a great deal of support from the Local Organizing Committee to create this female team to represent France. But now that the LOC has been dissolved after the event, we are struggling to continue the girls’ project. They (the girls) are demanding attention and activities, since they want to continue training and have the opportunity to travel. These girls participated in the World Cup here in Paris. It was great for them but they want to travel to represent the country. Unfortunately, as far as I see for the near future, it will be very difficult to travel. We are unable to ensure continuity for the moment”.

After the initial participation of a female team in this World Cup, France only travelled with a male team to the following editions in Mexico City 2012 and Poznan 2013 due to difficulties in ensuring financial support for both teams. Each project requires sufficient funds and proper infrastructure to assure ongoing activities before implementing plans to expand. This aspect is encountered by the majority of these delegations, who experience a yearly to meet financial needs.

Funds and Infrastructure for Continuity

Not every delegation participating in the World Cup benefits from a single, strong sponsorship to cover operating costs throughout the year and the trip to the international tournament. Nigeria and India, among other delegations, were unable to travel to Mexico City due to difficulties in securing funding. Other delegations, such as Uganda, have always relied from the outset on the support provided by the World Cup Foundation to run their projects. Uganda was unable to travel to Mexico City for reasons unknown to this researcher⁵. Thus various delegations experience enormous difficulties not only in attending the World Cup, but simply in surviving as associations.

Although private and public partners are involved with delegations travelling to the World Cup, partnerships may change or discontinue their support for several reasons, compromising the continuity of the programs. In fact, only a few delegations are self-sustainable. *Hecho Club Social* has enjoyed a stable partnership with national sport authorities in Argentina since 2004, but it relies on this support to travel to the World Cup every year.

Surprise Strassensport *in* Switzerland is an interesting case in this respect. In addition to the street paper mechanism, whereby half the profits are given to homeless vendors and half to the paper, Strassensport has also encouraged

⁵ Information was requested from the headquarters but various changes within the headquarters’ structure made it impossible to obtain information on Uganda and its absence in Mexico 2012.

the concept of inviting partners to support football tournaments by buying part of the grass fields. As Lauzanas and Loraind explain, NGOs working with sports must innovate in various aspects in order to survive (2007: 199-238). NGOs need to set provocative goals and use innovative methodologies when working with collective sports for vulnerable groups. Moreover, they are asked to provide proof of positive impacts in order to continue receiving subsidies. They therefore need to attract professional expertise and advisors. A great deal of managerial innovation is required of these NGOs.

Creativity in regard to fund raising and increased participation is illustrated by the Greek project involving this World Cup; where not every member of the local program benefits from the possibility of the World Cup, as happens in most countries in these circuits. Instead, the idea of engaging participants in a marathon in Athens has opened up new paths of inclusion as another physical practice is encouraged. In addition to this new space, participating in the marathon raises funds for the association (Alefantis 2012), which has not only made it possible to finance trips to the World Cup, but has also helped provide funding for the World Cup Foundation in 2011⁶.

The fact that a delegation is unable to travel to the World Cup every year is not the greatest problem beyond the fact that players can be disappointed as they have to wait for the following year(s). The worst situation is when financial support for running local activities is not even ensured. Infrastructure constitutes a key variable for holding activities. During an interview in Mexico 2012 the manager of Argentina acknowledged:

“We only have a fixed space under the highway that connects Buenos Aires to the airport. We meet twice a week and train there. We don’t benefit from synthetic grass for training, which would be a luxury for us. We are trying to convince a professional football club to lend us a playing field from time to time, but for the moment, we have to put up with these conditions”.

This situation varies from delegation to delegation. In Paris, regular training sessions for the local championship are held outside the city, in the Bois de Vincennes Park, where grass fields are provided by the local sport authorities (Segura 2008). Consequently, French teams play football soccer with the traditional eleven-a-side format. Once a delegation has been formed for the World Cup, this team can train in rented synthetic grass fields similar to those of the international tournament.

While delegations that enjoy sufficient funding are able to train on synthetic grass, most organize training sessions on grass or precarious cement fields. Moreover, in the vast majority of countries, although not all of them, managers and coaches run the programs on a voluntary basis. Most of them do

⁶ These funds helped support the attendance of other countries at Paris 2011.

not receive formal wages or salaries for their efforts, and are simply paid compensation to cover costs. Nevertheless, they benefit from symbolic recognition from family, colleagues and participants as well as media attention. Some managers become famous in their neighborhoods since they appear on the news.

But, as has been noted in France, associations struggle to attract media attention; and when the media try to find out the kind of work that is performed when using football to combat homelessness, not all of their reports benefit their cause. This topic was debated at the conference held at CIDE during Mexico 2012.

Ambiguities regarding Media Attention

One might think that access to the media would always be beneficial for these associations, as indeed it often is. Media attention provides symbolic retribution since success stories and efforts are valued. Nonetheless, ambiguities and disappointments after interacting with the media are also common in these circuits.

As the representative from Argentina explained during the conference at CIDE:

“Some media come looking for sport results. We tell them that we have to measure results after several months, such as whether a player has gone back to school or quit drugs. These kinds of results take time to be estimated”.

Some journalists follow local projects for some time. They are therefore familiar with the nature of the programs and their goals. Others, on the other hand, come looking for miraculous stories or sensationalist information, such as drug abuse and criminal records. As the representative from Peru said in Mexico:

“During our last training session in Lima, some journalists came to interview our players. Some of them only wanted to talk about violent past records. One of the players refused to answer, despite the pressure he was subjected to by a journalist. Players have the right to refuse this kind of portrayal”.

Before Paris 2011, several journalist raised the question of the point of organizing a World Cup for homeless persons if they continue being homeless. Some local associations working with the homeless even refused to join the initiative in France, since they were not convinced that football was a useful tool for dealing with homelessness. Associations may face this type of questions, for which they need to provide convincing arguments and data to

prove that football is making a difference and creating positive social capital. Intense debates were held within the Local Organization Committee of Paris 2011 to explain the benefits of the program and the significance of organizing the World Cup.

Anyone living on or facing the streets experiences sociological stigma, as is the case in France as a result of the use of SDF (Sans domicile fixe, (no fixed abode)) designation by administrative services (Brousse et al 2008), media and ordinary comments, reducing human nature in difficult circumstances to a single term. This is why some delegations participating in this World Cup pay particular attention when dealing with media and presenting the players' profiles. Switzerland's project has appointed a person to work year round on sensitizing the media to diversity, the impact of football and challenges. The representative from Belgium at the Paris symposium stressed the importance of projecting images of the will, motivation and forces required to change situations, while explaining to the media that changes are not guaranteed through football alone (Ballegeer 2012).

As projects expand, media attention increases and more activities are incorporated. However, new challenges arise for the horizon of associations working with football as a tool for supporting homeless persons, by providing spaces and conditions for participants' social capital, while using their survival skills.

Perspectives for Social Policies and Social Research

All these different features emerging from ethnographic observations, interviews and independent forums constitute aspects of the efforts made by NGOs to build social capital for participants through football activities. Social capital can be fostered by these NGOs or built by the football players themselves within these circuits. Social capital may be strengthened over or eroded by a variety of circumstances. Football serves as a magnet for young people among vulnerable groups, especially for those who find pleasure and meaning in playing and training.

The number of programs related to this international tournament and their local activities has grown in recent years. Many delegations with years of experience in this World Cup have even begun to promote tournaments with neighboring countries. The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Austria have organized regional events with various countries. In early 2012, Argentina organized the first ever *Copa America* in the district of *Quilmes*, near the city of Buenos Aires, which included one team from Costa Rica, several from Argentina and one from Peru, with Russia as a special guest.

In addition to regional tournaments, other activities are also being introduced by delegations. Argentina has proposed karate to complement football. As mentioned earlier, Greece has organized marathons. Switzerland

offers cultural activities, such as choral groups, joined by players and people who experience social isolation but do not necessarily participate in football activities. South Africa has created a regional alliance with Namibia, planning activities in both countries. Brazil's delegation managers, the organizers of the World Cup in Rio de Janeiro 2010, have planned a series of international tournaments profiting from football attention as FIFA 2014 approaches and are confident they can benefit from public subsidies.

All these activities can contribute to the growth of social capital for participants as they meet new people, form new ties and receive useful information. However, social capital building does not constitute a linear process. Networks, connections and ties can be harmed by a range of problems. NGOs working with vulnerable people within the same physical space deal with different, heterogeneous profiles. Consequently, tensions tend to surface during regular activities throughout the year. Some players are committed to the programs, whereas others leave temporarily or permanently because of breakdowns in social interaction.

Focusing too much on aspects of football, such as increasing competitiveness in teams as a means of winning the World Cup may exclude less skilled football players producing exclusion of players with low football standards. The selection process retains a few players and rejects varying numbers of participants depending on the nature of each program. Although programs reach more teams and players when national tournaments are being organized, social accompaniment is not always guaranteed when the number of players increases.

Likewise, once a delegation is formed and the World Cup approaches, nervousness and anxiety may combine with excitement and happiness for the players who are selected. In fact, the World Cup is an intense experience for every single participant. However, disappointments and relapses may dampen certain players' spirits and the atmosphere of the entire group during the tournament; adding unexpected challenges to continuing the social work.

However, accompaniment after the event remains a highly sensitive issue for programs and NGOs participating in this World Cup. While some of them provide intense accompaniment, others focus on the next football teams for the following cup. This stage of social accompaniment requires further research, while more attention needs to be paid to the whole community taking part in these international circuits, especially when delegations are responding to sponsors' interests.

Even for the lucky delegations that benefit from powerful, generous sponsors, obtaining funds and renewing them always poses a challenge in which delegations rely on the will of sponsor(s). This researcher considers that the spirit of this cause should not be lost because of sponsorship interests, media coverage and competitive goals. The initial aim of this movement was to tackle homelessness rather than to raise the technical aspects of the event

to spectacular standards or to select the best players to win the cup. Many delegations are aware of this while others have made competition and sport achievements their priorities. As this latter trend gains ground, social associations may be absorbed or replaced by marketing firms or corporate foundations with greater access to funds, connections and resources, which are interested in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the image and allure of football. In the worst case scenario, if a social association is completely replaced by a stronger firm, it can find other networks that use sports for social work.

In this vein, ties to street papers are still crucial for some delegations, not only for their present functioning but also for their future. It is important to remember that the origins of this World Cup for the homeless were street paper networks. Moreover, street papers have not only supported these football tournaments but have also provided opportunities and containment for football players, which were (or became) newspaper and magazine vendors. Deep ties and partnerships with street papers can still open up various opportunities as some vendors may become reporters and journalists when given professional and practical training.

Other options can also become available for former homeless individuals devoted to football. As has been the case in France (Segura Trejo 2011, 2012) through social accompaniment after the World Cup, some players have been able to access to different trades, such as plumbing or electricity, and a few have also begun to engage in cultural activities such as amateur theater. Moreover, some of these players try to support other participants.

On the basis of these aspects, it is now important to propose certain social policy and research considerations. Following the trend of local programs and the increasing number of countries participating in this international cup, gender inclusion and its management are part of the present and future agenda. Gender inclusion poses a qualitative challenge for associations that have been working with men for years. Consequently, social research on gender inclusion in these programs would be extremely useful for explaining impacts and challenges.

As Magee & Jeanes (2013) point out, more empirical research is required to appreciate the different impacts created by this use of football and the scope of this World Cup. Although various positive effects have emerged (some of which have yet to be explored), others, which contradict social goals, should also be explored. Even though NGOs must prove positive impacts in order to receive subsidies, the study of negative effects and the erosion of social capital due to disappointments, relapses and social breakdowns should also be included in this research agenda.

Competitive delegations and their sponsors concentrate on their teams' potential to win, creating speeches about victory and success through the use of the football, especially when they seek to attract media attention.

Independent research, especially academic research, is required to discuss social capital, not only in regard to its positive impact. Analyses must be conducted of the situations and effects regarding players who are rejected due to their failure to meet competitive standards.

Further debate on the level of the tournament would also be extremely beneficial for the spirit of the cup and the community participating in it. NGOs would benefit greatly from constructive public debate on unexpected consequences and negative impacts, which would include different points of view. Symposiums and forums can therefore play a significant role in sharing problems, receiving advice, arriving at joint solutions and creating networks among NGOs. Paris 2011 proved that symposiums are useful for delegations participating in this World Cup. Organizing symposiums prior to the World Cup or post-event encounters can encourage the sharing of experiences. Mexico 2012 lacked this kind of debate directly associated with the event, where policy makers, journalists, students and academics can meet and share opinions with actors from NGOs from all over the world. The conference organized at CIDE was a totally independent effort, which deepened the debate on certain issues but only provided access for five experiences among the nearly fifty countries that participated in the cup.

Public support can be crucial not only to providing funding but also to contributing to evaluation and adjusting the criteria for national delegations and their management. In this same vein, training volunteers to deal with difficult circumstances can prevent players (or volunteers) from dropping out of the scheme. Ensuring the continuation of delegation managers, although difficult to achieve in most cases, makes a qualitative contribution to programs' institutionalization and development. Programs that are able to survive the potential departure of their managers have already overcome a significant challenge.

In order to survive, programs not only need funding to be continuously renewed but also the capacity to renew their structure without being absorbed by marketing firms or corporate foundations. Otherwise, some delegations may run the risk of disappearing. Expansion must first be fostered by the ability to survive (Kats & Kahn 1966) guaranteed by managers but also by program participants, consulted and fully taken into account. Sustainability poses a significant challenge for these kinds of projects. This is why independent research and evaluations of social impacts, but also of internal functioning, can provide a challenging but extremely constructive role for social capital building and social policies created by these networks. This paper seeks to contribute to this debate.

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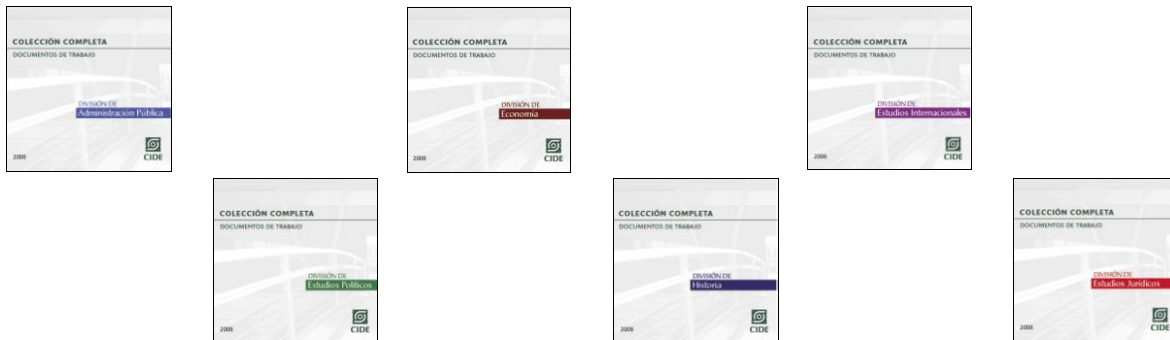
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