SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE ACTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF LOVE.FUTBOL, ITS APPROACH AND ITS COMMUNITY INTEGRATION PROCESSES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Emilio Andrés Martínez[*]
María de Ibarrola Nicolin[**]

ABSTRACT: Sport for Development emerged at the dawn of the 21st century as a fundamental tool for generating social cohesion. International organizations, scholar researchers and other public actors have taken initiatives to coordinate efforts in harmonizing guidelines around the advantages offered by non-competitive sport. At the other end of the spectrum, NGOs work closely with vulnerable populations, using sport as a transformative means to promote inclusion, public health, and a culture of peace. The NGO love.fútbol is presented as a case study with a community-driven methodology for the transformation of their public sports spaces, articulating the use of local knowledge and training so that the community manages the sustainability of its sports space. Its analysis is presented as an example of the work of NGOs in the social movement of Sport for Development.

Keywords: *Sport for development, community, sustainability, knowledge, public Spaces.*

RESUMEN:
El Deporte para el Desarrollo surge en los albores del siglo XXI como herramienta fundamental para generar cohesión social. Organismos internacionales, investigadores académicos y otros actores públicos han tomado iniciativas para coordinar esfuerzos en la armonización de directrices en torno a las ventajas que el deporte no competitivo otorga. En el otro extremo, las ONG[1] trabajan con cercanía a la población vulnerable utilizando al deporte como medio transformador para impulso de la inclusión, salud pública y cultura de paz. La ONG love.fútbol se presenta como estudio de caso con metodología centrada en las comunidades en el cambio de sus espacios públicos deportivos, articulando el uso de saberes locales y la capacitación para que la comunidad gestione la sostenibilidad de su espacio deportivo. Su análisis se presenta como un ejemplo del trabajo de las ONG en la corriente social del Deporte para el Desarrollo.

> Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that Little else does... Sport can create hope, where once there was only dispair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination. (Nelson Mandela, 25 May 2000 at the inaugural Laureus World Sports Awards in Monaco)

A) INTRODUCTION

Among the diverse and profound problems arising from inequality are the barriers and exclusion regarding access to games and sports, which are fundamental rights of citizenship (Venegas, 2019; Coldeportes, 2018). The distribution of resources and budgets for public spaces dedicated to sports practice and investments in sports programs is influenced by socioeconomic policy designs, whether they stem from neoliberal or populist governments. These policies often prioritize the privileged socioeconomic strata, creating a trend that moves from the center to the social periphery, consequently excluding disadvantaged populations from their right to public health and community coexistence.

Public policies generate various externalities that result in the exclusion from access to sports and a healthy lifestyle. For instance, sedentary practices combined with poor eating habits contribute to obesity –particularly concerning

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[1] Throughout the work, the reference of NGOs will be used, which refers to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), as this type of philanthropic organizations are recognized in Mexico and for the purposes of support and development of vulnerable communities.

childhood obesity in Mexico– which can lead to hypertension and diabetes. Besides the sports and the corporal fitness are socially and economically-related to identities, class and cultural capital (Branz and Levoratti, 2017). Another risk in undeserved communities reflects that the lack of safe play areas and limited opportunities for social interaction can push children and adolescents to seek belonging in criminal groups or resort to substance abuse as a means of fulfilling their need for acceptance."

In this context of SDP as a deliberate social space to inspire change and foster development, "Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) has been widely understood as the intentional use of sport and play to achieve non-sporting goals and outcomes" (Graeff, Šafaříková and Sambili-Gicheha, 2024, p. 1), some civil organizations, both in Mexico and globally, focus promoting healthy lifestyles through sports, physical activity, and play as formative practices for children, youth, and adults. "They use sport not in a competitive perspective but in a way that is conducive to the development of the participants, be it on a psychological and/or social level in particular" (Gadais, Ambrosini and Rioux, 2021, p. 2). Consequently, SDP emerges as a significant focus within the ecosystem of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), serving as a means to promote positive outcomes that impact people's lives through sports.

This ecosystem adheres to various perspectives, actor profiles, and interests that shape the SDP sphere. NGOs can serve as valuable assets when different stakeholders –including scholars, businesses, the public sector, and communities– collaborate to enhance the foundation of their programs and projects. NGO's or practitioners (Gadais, Ambrosini and Rioux, 2021) contribute through their methods, abilities and knowledge of communities to configurate the practices to empowering communities to create improved processes and outcomes while moving beyond dichotomies such as North-South or Theory versus Practice (Décarpentrie et al., 2024; Soares and Safarikova, 2024).

It is important to highlight the significant role of "the Community" in this work. The community's identity understands that collective identity characteristics are formed and organized around shared interests, values, local knowledge, and symbols that are dynamic and not necessarily rooted in a particular geographic location. The methodology of NGO's[2] creates

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[2] NGOs implement programs and projects aimed at addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, utilizing systematic methodologies characterized by a deep understanding of the specific issues at hand. This comprehensive knowledge enhances their ability to adapt and stimulates community acceptance of their role as agents of change. While each NGO may present unique narratives reflecting diverse origins, the underlying heuristic framework supports the development of their methodologies, intervention processes, and management strategies. These frameworks are

opportunities for bringing people together, training them, and encouraging to use local knowledge around common goals.

> [...] thus, we propose a foundational definition of community as a relationship that unfolds within a distinct social space, separate from ordinary time and the routines of daily life. In this space, the interactions among individuals are founded on a commitment to common interests and mutually beneficial reciprocity. (Osorio, 2023)

Among the objectives of this document is to highlight the crucial role of sport as a human activity that inherently fosters social exchange and promotes a culture of peace. Additionally, it aims to underscore the importance of NGOs as organizers of SDP programs that are closely aligned with the population's needs. This is further illustrated through a case study of the organization love.fútbol (LF), which employs an intervention methodology that transforms the physical context of community sports spaces (CSS). LF enhances the physical environment while promoting the sustainability of sports activities and improving facility conditions in underserved communities. Additionally, it provides training services focused on Sport for Development (SDP).

> [...] As sport has evolved into an industry, it has diminished the inherent joy found in playing merely for the sake of the game...The experience of the game has transformed into a spectacle, featuring a small number of active participants and a vast audience of spectators. Football, once a game to be played, has become one of the most lucrative businesses worldwide, structured not to facilitate play but to hinder it. (Eduardo Galeano, 2015, p. 2)

B) SPORT AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Modernist societies positioned sports as one of the expressions to showcase the archetype of a highly competitive human being and, in turn, to shape within them the symbols of increasingly developed societies. "Additionally, the United Nations (UN) included it in the reconstruction process in Europe after the Second World War and, as we will describe later, it played a role during the Cold War" (Svoboda and Safarikova, 2021, p. 483).

These showcases established a commercial and political connection with sports through significant sporting events. On one hand, they promoted mass

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derived from practical learning experiences, peer model replication, and attentiveness to the needs of the communities.

participation and individual involvement, inviting viewers to experience the excitement vicariously from the comfort of their homes. On the other hand, they led to the commercial management of sporting myths, utilizing symbols such as team colors, logos, and idols. These elements of identity –incorporating aspects like city pride, stadium loyalty, and even mascots– successfully created a sense of collective belonging. (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004) However, this commercialization carries the risk of inciting intense passions among fans, occasionally leading to behavior that may overflow into uncontrollable fervor[3].

> […] there are many variables that influence whether a sport-based initiative may lead to positive outcomes, there is also the real danger that such initiatives may cause harm or damage. Negative outcomes of sport, especially when it takes place in a hypercompetitive manner, include aggresion, violence and cheating... (Yamada and Sanders, 2022, p. 45)

Despite recognizing sport as a central element in the development of individuals and communities, especially in the context of citizenship, there remains a collective perception rooted in decades of viewing sport primarily as a spectacle. This perspective often leads to the understanding of sport as merely an extracurricular activity, a hobby, or even a luxury. As noted by Añorve (2021), "Sport has had difficulty being considered a legitimate and important object of study, as it has often been seen as a trivial activity, an unproductive endeavor, or a waste of time".

Fortunately, the commercialization and negative externalities often associated with sport do not define its essence, nor do they overshadow its numerous positive attributes. Its practice requires only a shift in mindset; sport exists in the spirit of communities and individuals. This is why it is often referred to as a "game" –it acts as a bridge between the knowledge and skills developed through intuition or instruction, connecting adults and children alike. Engaging in sport can be as simple as making the decision to move beyond a sedentary lifestyle.

> Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals

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[3] We call these football communities 'self-invented virtual diasporas' as they are forged from the global dispersal of club-focused images and products, and from the voluntaristic identification of individuals with club-related symbols and practices (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004, p. 551).

and communities as well as health, education and social inclusion objectives. (UN, 2016, p. 10)

In the early decades of the 21st century, there has been an intensified effort to align conventions related to SDP as a formative tool. This movement has been promoted by international organizations, and some governments, along with a growing inclusion of academic studies and the dissemination of knowledge surrounding sport (Añorve, 2021; Svoboda and Safarikova, 2021).

The perspective of SDP as a catalyst for change is evident within the institutional framework that regards it as a critical element of global, regional, or national public policies. As Yamada and Sanders (2022, p. 44) state, "A policy does not guarantee anything, but policies help guide action and provide a foundation for change".

> […] foster a global partnership for development. This is an essential step to achieve the objectives of the United Nations, and it can only be achieved if civil society, governments and international agencies are fully committed. (UN, 2003, p. 4)

In this integration, the significance of multi-actor collaboration is paramount. The interventions of NGOs in community SDP programs serve, as well as the structure of institutionalization of sport for development (Svoboda and Safarikova, 2021; Gadais et al., 2021; Decarpentrie et al., 2021), as the executing agencies within this ecosystem, working towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[4] (UNDP, 2023; UN 2024). Due to their close ties with communities, NGOs leverage sport as a tool to stengthen a culture of peace and tolerance. Their initiatives also aim to create more inclusive cities and actively promote social action lines addressing climate change. "...Through community, faith and teamwork, and by implementing relevant local solutions, sport has a unique potential to inspire positive change towards a more sustainable future for people and the planet" (Common Goal and Football For the Future, 2024, p. 4).

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[4] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are interconnected; they acknowledge that progress in one area can influence outcomes in others, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to social, economic, and environmental sustainability (UNDP, 2023).

Governments, NGOs[5], and other stakeholders in the social sports sector are increasingly initiating collective activities that recognize sport as a human right (Venegas, 2019). In this context, NGOs engaged in the sports sector have redefined local physical activities to make them accessible to all groups and individuals, aiming to enhance the benefits derived from participation. "SDP is increasingly pursued by NGOs in partnership with government departments of education and health" (Kidd, 2008, p. 373). Additionally, some NGOs advocate for transforming public contexts, improving both sports infrastructure and community participation frameworks. This approach requires positioning sport as a socially constructive activity (Coldeportes, 2018, p. 7).

> Initiatives aimed at development and peace often blend traditional formats with educational tools and social objectives that extend beyond mere sports achievements. In fact, some programs may prove challenging to implement in other contexts, highlighting that sport serves primarily as a starting point for these broader objectives. (Córdova, Segura and Islas, 2021, p. 94).

This approach stimulates interest in promoting a culture of sports among citizens, facilitated by organizations that harness this tool to promote social cohesion.[6] Conversely, collective action arises from communities, expressed through NGOs. Together, they form an organizational ecosystem that creates opportunities for inspiring human development.

> British clubs began implementing occupational schemes for youth in the 1990s, utilizing football sessions and recreational activities for seniors, and more recently creating mixed spaces for girls and boys. Sheffield United embraced this trend in the early 2000s. In 2008, the club established a dedicated foundation aimed at raising funds and broadening its offerings, leading to the creation of the Sheffield United Community Foundation. (Segura, 2021, p. 9).

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[5] The SDP projects organised by these NGOs may be based on local participants' needs or, especially when there are other actors involved helping with financing, promotion or coordination, may follow the motives and interests of the involved stakeholders (Svoboda and Safarikova, 2021, p. 487).

[6] Various organizations focused on football for development (as well as other sports) contribute significantly to this ecosystem, showcasing important progress and diverse methodological approaches. Notable examples include love.fútbol, Futbol Más, Proyecto Cantera, Get on the Bus, Sports Creative, Scholas, Más Sueños, Coaches Across Continents, Futbol con Corazón, Tiempo de Juego, Colombianitos, Pazear, Gol de Letra, Starte, JUF, Girls United, She Wins, the Jugamos Juntas initiative, Street Soccer, Vibra León, Ratas Voladoras, Utopia, Natlik, and some many more which operate not only in Mexico but in various countries around the world.

Evidently, efforts ranging from citizen demonstrations, such as initiatives by neighborhood groups, to more structured programs led by NGOs are strengthened by this intentional approach of collaboration with institutional proposals from international agencies. This includes professional sports clubs that are aware of the SDP ecosystem, as well as private companies and foundations connected to NGO networks.

C) THE SYSTEMIC ROUTE

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a framework for guiding public initiatives and coordinating efforts related to these essential social policies (Soares E. and Safarikova S., 2024). Governments and international agencies actively promote these goals to foster a more equitable world. Within the framework of Sports for Development, the SDGs are leveraged as a robust foundation for designing public policy strategies that are both inclusive and consistent, fostering community development. "The first systematized actions in this domain emerged from the university agenda where they responded to the United Nations announcement in 2003 to declare 2005 as the year of Sports" (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004; Kidd, 2008; Córdova, Segura and Islas 2021).

For now, the system is seen in two senses: on the one hand, the achievements and scope regarding policies related to the SDP contemplate a design from international organizations and the important role of scholars whose initiatives pass through some government agendas to be installed in public policy frameworks. While, on the other hand, the focus of NGOs is on the field of everyday actions, with the intrinsic challenges of the implementation of each program and its problematic contexts.

The case developed below is that of love.fútbol (LF), an NGO that constantly and proactively promotes the execution of its projects and programs for local development using sport as the central tool of change. LF has been chosen as the organization for this study due to three important characteristics:

1. Its NGO profile in the SDP segment,
2. The study is conducted in Mexico and extends to Brazil, even though LF is a global NGO with processes that are organic and adaptable to local contexts, and
3. It is an organization that emphasizes the role of the community at the center of its intervention processes and methodologies.

The study was carried out based on semi-structured interviews directed at: Global Operational Director (the COO), one of its Regional Managers and one of its Project Manager. On the other hand, the basis of the study of Community Networks (CN) was carried out with field observation and questionnaires applied to 51 volunteer members of these groups, five CN with 32 interviews in the Mexico City outskirts and four CN with 19 interviews in the metropolitan area of the city of Recife in Pernambuco, Brazil.

These communities attended by LF are underserved and typically face issues such as violence, drug-related problems, and inadequate distribution of public services. Although they have specific challenges within their context, a common trait is the lack of a safe place to play.

D) love.fútbol AS THE CASE STUDY

Love.fútbol (LF) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to establishing safe environments for play and sports in underserved communities, particularly for girls, boys, and young people. This initiative is supported mostly by sponsorships from global or national brands, usually private companies, that are committed to corporate social responsibility efforts aimed at aiding the growth of marginalized communities.[7]

Driven by the goal of transforming community sports spaces and ensuring their sustainability, LF implements projects across various vulnerable communities worldwide. A public space can be rehabilitated when there is a recognized need for an inclusive and safe place for play. This might involve revitalizing pre-existing but poorly maintained infrastructure or build a new one from scratch.

Although the construction process itself may present numerous challenges, LF's primary challenges often lie in building the capacity of community members. LF relies on active community participation to bring these projects to life. After a new sports space is inaugurated, these members must be empowered to manage the facility, ensure its safety, and use it as a foundation for long-term community development.

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[7] Although less frequent, LF also manages resources, support, and financing from foundations and governing bodies. Additionally, this includes the backing of allies and stakeholders such as legal services, financial advisors, architecs, marketing teams, or pro-bono public relations agencies.

D.1) love.fútbol: Its Mission and Beginnings

Sport –like other forms of art, such as music or dance– is a communal experience. In its universality, it fosters connections among people; in its simplicity, it becomes a powerful tool for social change. The spaces where we play connect us with our peers and, in some way, with the broader world.

> love.fútbol exists as an effort to ensure a place for all girls and boys to execute their passion for the game in a safe environment. Its mission is to maximize the potential of each community's sports and play spaces to serve as an inclusive and sustainable catalyst for social impact. (love. futbol, 2023)

D.2) Its Achievements and Impact

LF's accomplishments encompass multiple dimensions, including organizational development, methodological enhancement, project expansion, and initiatives aimed at ensuring the organization's sustainability. With its three offices in the United States, Brazil, and Mexico. Here's a chart summarizing the key data points about LF's projects and impact:

TABLE 1. LF METRICS (JUNE 2024)

Metric	Value
Number of projects completed	More than 90
Number of continents involved	5
Number of countries involved	19
Number of languages engaged	Over 40
Total volunteer hours	More than 100,000 hours
Young people impacted annually	Over 70,000

It is important to highlight a couple of noteworthy examples of these evolving processes within communities:

In Olinda, Brazil, a Community Sport Space (CSS) called Rio Doce, constructed by LF (joint with its local partner Pazear), in a neighborhood plagued by violence where police and local authorities were noticeably absent. This project not only created a safe space for play but also established a new ZIP code for the community. Today, even taxis frequent the area, and the energy of the children has flourished there.

Additionally, improvements from LF projects have utilized high-quality recycled plastic materials and included features for capturing and storing rainwater. Meanwhile other initiatives also aim to reduce the carbon footprint by opting for alternative sands and materials instead of concrete in the base of artificial grass.[8]

D.3) *Three Central Objectives in LF's Mission*

Inclusive Access to the Game LF aims to transform the physical state of public spaces using quality materials and, when possible, adopting practices and constructive elements that reduce the carbon footprint.

Community Participation Central to LF's methodology, community participation ensures that local volunteers are trained in project sustainability processes. This focus places the community at the heart of every phase of the project.

Courts as Platforms for Local Change LF views the courts as transformative spaces that spark broader social change. Once a Community Sports Space (CSS) is delivered, these communities are equipped to host programs, build alliances, and drive diverse improvement processes.

FIGURE 1.

THREE CORE OBJECTIVES

Access to Play — Community Ownership — Platform for Development

Source: Taken from the love.fútbol methodology, consulted in 2023.

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[8] The effective practices and significant outcomes from love.fútbol can be detailed further in another article focused on those aspects.

D.4) Phases of a LF Intervention Process

An ideal LF project spans between 6 to 8 months in duration. Projects are funded through the investment commitment of a corporate entity, foundation, or multinational organization. Once there is a financing and community of focus agreement, LF begins with the six-phase implementation of its methodology to achieve the previously indicated objectives.

FIGURE 2.
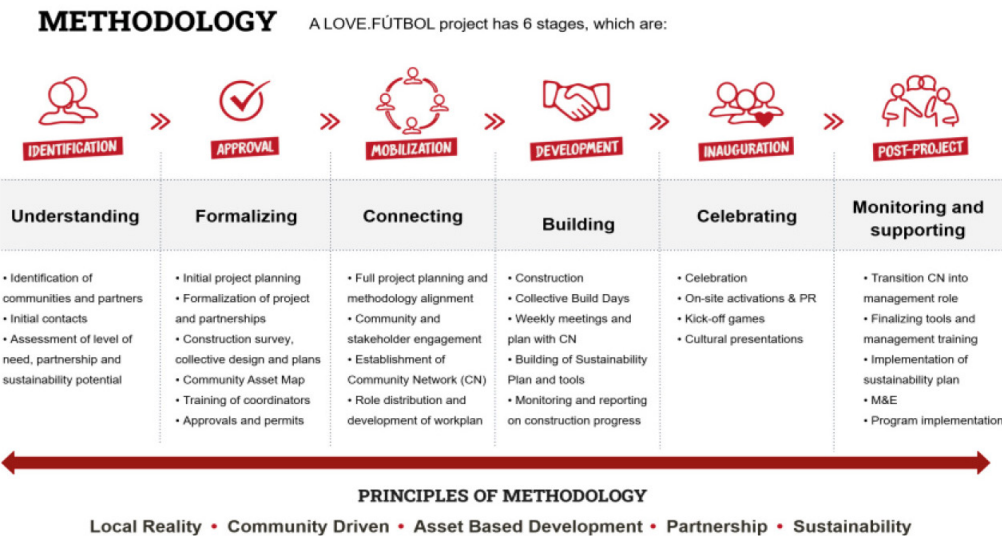
Source: Taken from the love.fútbol 2023 methodology.

D.5) Objectives and Outcomes of Intervention

From a perspective grounded in the systematized theory of change, as an important theory to mapping "the central processes or drivers by which change comes about for individuals, groups, or communities…" (Gadais, Ambrosini and Rioux, 2021, p. 3); LF activates intentional training sessions for individuals and voluntary community groups. This trained cohort forms a collective and informal body known as the Community Network (CN). The CN oversees the sustainability of the Community Sports Spaces (CSS). Starting from the inauguration of the field, the CN's responsibilities include coordinating its use and fostering greater interaction with groups inside or beyond the CSS through links and activations related to the SDP.

FIGURE 3. THEORY OF CHANGE SCHEME (MAYNE,2015) TO REPRESENT THE LF INTERVENTION

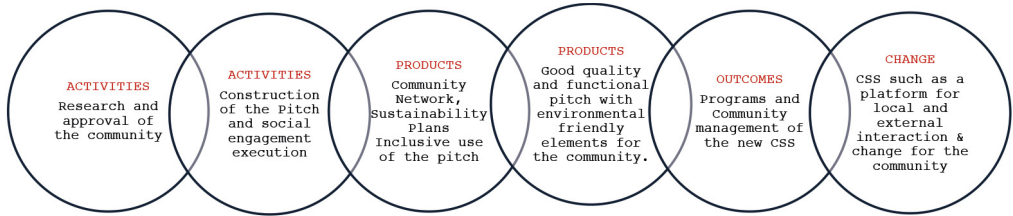| ACTIVITIES Research and approval of the community | ACTIVITIES Construction of the Pitch and social engagement execution | PRODUCTS Community Network, Sustainability Plans Inclusive use of the pitch | PRODUCTS Good quality and functional pitch with environmental friendly elements for the community. | OUTCOMES Programs and Community management of the new CSS | CHANGE CSS such as a platform for local and external interaction & change for the community |

Figure 3 presents an intervention series and corresponding products or outcomes. In each case, various assumptions are foreseen, representing challenges to be overcome first by LF and later by the CN[9] from the inauguration of the field[10] onward.

The first objective of LF, ensuring access to the game, is achieved by executing actions spanning phases one to five of LF methodology, producing two key outcomes as detailed in Figure 3. The LF's objective of placing the community at the center is interwoven throughout the project, with its intentional formation primarily occurring during phases three through five. The third objective, encouraging improvements and changes within the community, is focused on the long term and represented in phase six (Figure, 2). For this reason, the post-project phase begins shortly before the inauguration and extends over time, relying on the community and CNs for sustained impact.

E) COMMUNITY NETWORKS: THEIR ROLE AND CONCEPTUAL SPECIFICITIES IN A LOCAL PITCH

From LF's perspective, with its focus on Sport for Development (SDP), a local pitch's empowerment through participation holds greater significance than merely providing access to the game. The term Communitarian Sport Space (CSS)[11] signifies more than a place to play; it integrates diverse sports, cultural, and social activities. It also includes various user groups and engages

[9] Among the various risks the following are noteworthy: reluctance from authorities to grant construction permits, claims to the space from community leaders or groups asserting ownership, criminal organizations misusing the space, challenges associated with conditions of land reconstruction, ongoing theft of tools and materials, climate-related issues, rising costs of materials during the process, and unrealistic expectations from sponsors.

[10] The post-project phase –phase six of the LF process– represents a significant methodological challenge in LF's commitment to promoting the long-term sustainability of the field. The promise of change appears somewhat blurry unlike previous phases that involved clearly defined activities and deliverables, future changes will largely be shaped by the community itself.

[11] In this work, terms such as "court", "CSS", "pitch", field, site and "space" may be used interchangeably.

stakeholders to sustain these activities and maintain the CSS's physical condition.

Recognizing that the CSS promotes sports and healthy practices, it could became an ideal platform for collective and social activities that cultivate community values such as inclusion, tolerance, public health, and a culture of peace. To achieve this, LF emphasizes two critical aspects following the renovation or construction of a pitch:

- The first one is identified with Socio-Sports Training Programs: These programs target children and young people aged 6 to 18, emphasizing sports practices with a *curriculum* designed to build technical skills while prioritizing values of citizenship over competition. LF secures sponsorships to implement these programs, carried out by specialist partners or LF's expert team.
- The second aspect poses the greatest challenge, as it relies on community volunteers to form the group known as the Community Network. Originally conceived as an informal body, this group will take charge of managing the CSS to ensure the effective use and preservation of the court.

In this context, it is essential to set objectives, plans, and implement communication strategies that nurture structured participation to attain sustainability. This initiative is groundbreaking as it consists of community volunteers, grounded in the LF methodology, and seeks to enhance the sustainability of the CSS. The CN will develop its own organization (activity system) through actions involving various community members and groups, a sort of division of labor among those groups, and networks beyond its initial scope, strengthening their knowledge to effectively fulfill management roles (Engestrom, 2001)

F) LOCAL KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO COMMUNITY NETWORKS (CN)

In terms of love.fútbol local knowledge plays a pivotal role. LF offers various training sessions throughout its processes to equip and strengthen CN, enabling them to define deliberation mechanisms and operational rules. This empowerment allows the networks to manage and strategize around the CSS effectively.

In the initial stages of a renovated field's usage, it accommodates sports, cultural, and artistic practices, categorized as technical knowledge (TK)

–more related to the first objective of love.fútbol in Figure 1. Moreover, CN actions are structured with coordination of the system, recognized as management knowledge (MK)– related in some way with the second objective of love.fútbol-These two knowledge categories, TK and MK, help initiate processes and intentional goals focused on ensuring the space's long-term sustainability. Consequently, planned interactions with diverse and external groups should be included, aiming for longer-term engagements to form sustainability knowledge (SK) –nurturing the third objective of love.fútbol–. (Cole, 1990 and 1999; Tarja, 2006).

For example, the installation of lighting on one CSS in a "dormitory out-skirts" does more than just provide illumination; it creates a secure environment and encourages community relationship-building. This setup allows returning local workers to use the space at night, encouraging the formation of night sports tournaments. Although it may seem straightforward, achieving this requires consensus among nearby neighbors, users, local authorities, and, if possible, potential sponsors. This consensus-building is essential for developing a resilient and sustainable community space.

The analysis of the field study, combined with the surveys and interviews carried out, resulted in a proposal designed to enhance knowledge of CN. The proposal employs conceptual categories associated with 'practical learning' that are closely connected to the use of CSS, the knowledge gained, and the extent to which both physical and cultural artifacts are engaged.

Wartofsky, as referenced by Cole (1999), provides a framework for understanding how artifacts are used as representations of knowledge. His analysis characterizes these levels of artifact use in terms of their practical and collective interactions, ranging from everyday, technical, and systematic uses to more ideal applications (Tarja, 2006). By utilizing this framework, the proposal seeks to leverage these varying levels of interaction to strengthen the collective knowledge base and operational strategies of CN.

- *Productive Use of Artifacts - First Level TK:* This level emphasizes the practical application of artifacts, encompassing sports and cultural activities carried out in the field. For example, a CSS equipped with a high-quality playing surface can fulfill various functions. The flexible uses of this space and its limitations are shaped by a common understanding and shared knowledge among the participating groups, facilitating diverse and creative engagement with the new context.
- *Understanding Intangible Knowledge - Second Level MK:* This level focuses on acknowledging the intangible elements inherent in physical artifacts. By introducing socio-sports training programs a broader range

of groups can be involved. These programs enrich management and organization –division of labor–, improving productive interactions among users on the court. Through these initiatives, the CN learns to appreciate and leverage the less visible knowledge.

- *Configuration and Community Development - Third Level SK:* At this stage, the emphasis is on creativity and design, imagining scenarios for long-term community enhancement and transformation. Grounded in innovative ideas and developmental goals, these configurations strive for the collective benefit of the diverse user groups. This level emphasizes strategic foresight and planning to ensure sustainable growth within the community in the CSS.

> Wartofzky calls these imagined worlds tertiary artifacts. He remarks that such –possible worlds– provides candidates for conceivable change in existing practices. Such imaginative artifacts, he suggests, can come to color the way we see the actual world, acting as tools for changing current praxis. (Cole, 1999, p. 91)

These levels of knowledge work together to create a complete strategy for using and understanding artifacts in a CSS. This holistic approach enriches our collective knowledge, helping us to achieve community objectives efficiently.

G) FIELDWORK RESULTS: WEIGHTED[12] RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES

A significant achievement of the LF methodology is the establishment of CNs as crucial advocates for sustainability. This approach encompasses training designed for CN members to provide them with essential skills and knowledge. However, the investigation uncovered some weaknesses within the structure of these networks, specifically highlighting challenges encountered in the formation and functioning of CNs.

Below are some inferences related to the results of the fieldwork. The linear weighting presentes three categories of knowledge: Solid Knowledge (SK), Medium Knowledge (MK), Fragile Knowledge (FK) and Dispersion (D). These have been weighted and are presented in the next tables, three in Table 2 and two in Table 3.

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[12] "Linear weighting" refers to a method of assigning weights to items or responses in a straightforward, proportional manner. In this approach, each item is given a weight based on its importance or relevance, and these weights are typically applied linearly across a range.

G.1) Structure of the RC

This body named the Community Network gains relevance as an organ that proves to be an innovation for the communities. This represents an opportunity area for the methodology and training processes of LF, since knowledge of its structure and of the CN itself is fundamentally important for organizing the activities of the CSS.

Responses about the CNs' structure show wide dispersion, indicating fragile foundations in the profile and identity of CN members within communities. This hinders organization due to a lack of self-recognition of their roles.

Although CNs serve as community leadership in the new CSS, LFs communication to network members has been not intentionally directed. It is advisable to design and implement a training strategy, including symbolic incentives, to better support and recognize these volunteer members to improve the MK of this group.

G.2) About your CN

Unlike previous questions, this kit focuses on everyday actions within the Community Sport Space (CSS). Responses show some clustering, reflecting a relatively consistent understanding among CNs. The most tangible knowledge relates to first-level knowledge TK (Cole, 1999; Tarja, 2006), tied to familiar artifacts and daily life, which supports easier communication.

Even lower-rated aspects, like relationships or CN functions, show agreement. Overall, CN knowledge is strong in executing sports-related activities using familiar tools or TK but becomes less visible when involving other actors and the scope of management goes beyond the CSS.

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF QUESTIONAIRES ABOUT STRUCTURE, KNOWLEDGE OF MY CN AND THE COMMUNITY FIELD

		SK	MK	FK	D
	Total weighting: RC structure	1	1	1	6
1	Functions in the CN	0	0	0	1
2	If the regulations are known by you	0	0	0	1
3	Do you think there are clear rules for the members	0	0	0	1
4	Inclusive process of forming rules	0	0	0	1
5	Whether cooperation is promoted through the regulations	0	0	0	1
6	Size of the community network (CN), profiles, and groups	0	0	1	0
7	Age of the CN	1	0	0	0
8	Frequency and mode of meetings	0	1	0	0
9	Spirit of cooperation in the CN	0	0	0	1
	Total weighting: Information about your CN	3	3	1	0
1	Are you a member of the community network (CN)	1	0	0	0
2	How many members integrate your CN	1	0	0	0
3	Which are the most important functions of the CN	0	0	1	0
4	Approximate number of organizations nearby the CSS	1	0	0	0
5	How many organizations are connected with the CN	0	1	0	0
6	Members' capacity for association with other organizations	0	1	0	0
7	Highlight the capacities of the CN members	0	1	0	0
	Total weighting: About your field	4	1	0	0
1	What was happening in that space before the renovation	1	0	0	0
2	What are the opportunities brought by the renovated field	1	0	0	0
3	What community opportunities it generates	1	0	0	0
4	Is there a clear plan for the development of the field	0	1	0	0
5	Trust and atmosphere among the CN members	1	0	0	0

G.3) The Court

The court, transformed by LF into a safe CSS, offers new opportunities for children and the wider community to play. Group responses consistently highlight the contrast between past uses and current potential.

Table 2 shows the highest ratings, emphasizing everyday knowledge and collective aspirations for the space. This shared vision forms the basis for LF to foster collective knowledge and coordinated action within the community. Collective vision involves the SK in some way and goes through the TK either going from the everyday behavior toward what is achievable as a group

–collective action (Habermas, 2021)– triggering knowledge that can be grouped, communicated, and generate more consistent actions within an activity system in the context of a CSS.

G.4) Expertise

Included in the Table 3 shows no clear trends in CN responses, though some initial similarities appear in response dispersion. When asked about key leadership within CNs, answers are widely varied, indicating leadership exists but is not highly valued or seen as essential for CN development.

There is low awareness of these leaders' contributions to community well-being, despite possible other interests. However, medium to strong recognition exists for emerging new leadership, which is more positively valued.

This presents an opportunity for LF to promote knowledge-building initiatives that complement local leadership, supporting training and monitoring within the RCs.

G.5) Local Knowledge

Table 3 includes initial responses about individual CN members' knowledge and contributions. While contributions vary, combining their knowledge can strengthen local changes through the CSS, supported by trust and closeness.

However, achievements, training, and connections with other groups receive low ratings. Members recognize their context and proximity but have made little effort to improve training or strengthen relationships inside their CN, a trend consistent across all CNs that were chosen for answering the questionnaires.

TABLE 3. GROUPED WEIGHTING OF RESULTS FROM TWO QUESTIONNAIRES ABOUT EXPIRIENCE AND LOCAL KNOWEDGE AND TRAINING

		SK	MK	FK	D
	Total weighting: Expertise of RC members	3	0	1	4
1	Leadership works toward the group's focus	0	0	0	1
2	Leadership possesses qualities and knowledge that guide others	0	0	0	1
3	Leadership has a good understanding of the RC's structure and organization	0	0	0	1
4	These leaders have good knowledge of the community and of sports, cultural, and social groups	0	0	0	1
5	Our leading member has political interest but primarily works for the community	0	0	1	0
6	How many RC members would you consider experts with community knowledge who can guide efforts to strengthen the network?	1	0	0	0

TABLE 3. CONTINUATION

		SK	MK	FK	D
7	How many do you consider have good ties and contacts at an intermediate level?	1	0	0	0
8	How many members do you consider well-intentioned but still learning?	1	0	0	0
	Total weighting: Knowledge and training for the RC	2	1	2	1
1	What types of knowledge do you think predominate among the RC you belong to?	1	0	0	0
2	Of all the RC members, what percentage do you think are the least participative?	0	1	0	0
3	Do you believe friendship and trust ties will allow the RC to endure for how long?	1	0	0	0
4	Since the Community Network (RC) was formed, we have had concrete achievements	0	0	0	1
5	Types of training based on the formation of the RC	0	0	1	0
6	Achievements and links with other organizations	0	0	1	0

H) ANALYSIS OF CN: STRENGTHENING AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF A CSS

The review of the CN arising from a love.fútbol project focuses on their group profile as a voluntary and community body that oversees sports and social activities in the new pitch. Additionally, it considers their role as potential advocates for the sustainability of the CSS, aimed at creating more opportunities for change and fostering community development.

The exploration of the conditions, means, and structures involved in forming CN reveals several challenges encountered by LF in its projects[13]. These challenges are often rooted in the varied realities faced during the implementation of each initiative.

> Pedro Leal, a Regional Manager at LF, highlights that "the diverse profiles of community members and the conditions under which training occurs are not always ideal. The use of virtual media, for example, can be ineffective, particularly for community members lacking the necessary technological skills. (Pedro Leal, interview, March 2024).

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[13] Fifty-one people from the CNs answered the five sets of questionnaires. Members came from 5 CNs in Mexico and 4 in Brazil. The analysis method was based on linear weighting, assigning different values to the responses focused on the knowledge that members have regarding their own pitch, the structure of their own community network, the expertise of their members, the basic information of their community network, and the knowledge created within their own CN.

The training moments are not explicitly defined within the implementation process; rather, the training takes place during the execution of other milestones, such as the activities of field construction or social mobilization of the project.

> "It is a concept that appears beautiful in theory; however, its practical implementation is far more intricate. Recognizing that each community has its unique characteristics and that local realities demand tailored solutions has always resonated with me. Local-reality local-solutions, I have always liked that. This means that regardless of the techniques you have, independent of the planning guide, it means that you have to vary a lot and adapt to the community that you have and that will have an impact on the results that you are looking for. (Fabiola García, LF Project Manager, interview in March 2024).

The analysis of the formation of CNs reveals several factors that contribute to weak structuring, affecting their effectiveness and sustainability:

- Unclear timelines for establishing the structure of the CN during the project.
- Insufficient training conditions, making it challenging to concentrate on the content.
- Lack of materials tailored to the language types, conducive environments, and flexible schedules needed for a diverse community, and member profiles.
- The objectives and personal interests of CN members regarding the new space do not fully align during the training process.
  - The importance of the CN as the core body of the post-project is not determined and clarified, even from the LF methodology regarding:
  - o The complexity of this group in their creation and their practices as CN.
  - o The appropriate environment for the development and integration of local knowledge.
  - o The need to equip the CN with an organizational profile and establish its activity limits, scope, and systemic interaction with the outside.

These shortcomings are not deliberate on the part of LF; they stem from a lack of resources, time constraints, and the inherent inertia of projects that prioritize the physical transformation of spaces and community mobilization.

There is a limited margin of time and resources available for aligning, training, planning, and reflecting on the CN. The complexity of the CN as an entity, along with the significance of its role in the sustainability of the CSS, underscores the necessity for more flexible processes in its formation and integration. The outcome of the research materializes in a training proposal based on a series of courses and more visual tutorials that can be distributed through social media.[14]

Among the components analyzed, the good news is that there is indeed knowledge circulating and being put into practice within the CNs. Although the structured Mangament Knowledge (MK) of a CN could be recognized as precarious, the trust and potential participation, as well as the knowledge that members have about their immediate environment more identified as Technical Knowledge, can represent an opportunity for them and their performance in the sustainability process of the CSS.

Establishing the foundations of the organic identity of a CN seems to be an important measure given the low weightings in these areas, to understand the enrichment that can occur from solid knowledge related to these aspects, as well as the best ways to trigger the circulation and strengthening of ties of trust and cooperation among the members.

I) FINDINGS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

Interviews with LF project managers and an analysis of questionnaires from CN members reveal that the current relationship with CN formation lacks intentional training programs regarding their roles and missions. While these volunteer groups within CN gain a general understanding of their functions –such as maintenance, fundraising, scheduling, and communication– they often lack self-awareness of their own capabilities and do not have clearly defined scopes and boundaries for their organization. This knowledge is essential for effectively connecting Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) activities with systemic community collaboration.

It has been mentioned so far that the CN involves the natural complexities of their own model as a Complex Associative System (CAS)[15] developed in a

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[14] The explanation of these training instruments exceeds the scope of this document; therefore, a more in-depth explanation is expected to be provided in another article focused on training and strengthening knowledge through intentional training and practical learning.

[15] Here are some key characteristics that define them as CAS: A) CN operate without a central authority, enabling diverse input and collaborative decision-making processes. B) This mentioned autonomy provides a flexible adaptability, these networks can evolve to meet changing needs and circumstances. C) Inside this informal organ the interdependence of the Members rely on one another for resources, information, and support, forming a web of relationships that enhances collective problem-solving. D)Interactions within the network can lead to the emergence of new patterns and innovative solutions for community issues. E) They are deeply influenced by the local culture and environment, which

community sports space. It is understood, then, that before the transformation of a site, individuals and sports groups in that territorial space orbit in a disarticulated manner, or at least not fully aligned with the SDP perspective. Therefore, the change of the CSS inherently triggers the gathering of groups, meaning it begins to generate the integration of the community among them.

The application of knowledge and artifacts at the level of Technical Knowledge (TK) becomes clear when a field is adopted for regular sports activities, which are enhanced through ongoing practices. The TK encompasses knowledge that is developed and cultivated within local contexts, while also incorporating influences from other groups and regions. This is evident in the diverse sports disciplines that blend new artifacts and spatial boundaries.

Meanwhile, the MK promote coexistence among the disciplines, shaping an organized system for greater inclusion and tolerance. The potential of the CNs becomes evident as they begin to coordinate diverse groups and implement more intentional programs focused on SDP. This microenvironment introduces another layer of complexity, requiring interactions with external organizations, allowing the activity system of their CSS to coexist with other systems, installing activities that promote the inclusion and sustainability of the CSS.

The third level of knowledge and artifact utilization (Wartofzky, 1979 in Cole, 1999) appears to be only vaguely defined, manifested in the disparate good intentions of the CN members. Occasionally, they achieve significant accomplishments that surpass the context of the CSS. However, in general, there is little connection between the practical task of the TK, the execution of management activities by the MK, and even less so during the planning and implementation of activities aimed at interacting with other groups to foster a wider perspective on sustainability concerning SK.

In accordance with LF's methodology, which concretely triggers the interactions of CNs with stakeholders, other agents and external communities with a focus on building more equitable societies. The proposal for intentional training in Sustainability Knowledge, recommended by this research, transcends because it is integrated into the vision of continuity and development of the CSS and community ties.

This research led to a training program, including courses and tutorials, designed to strengthen the LF methodology. By practically integrating the local knowledge of Community Network members, this program enhances coordinated training throughout the LF project, promoting long-term sus-

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shapes their structure and operational dynamics. F) Elastic Membership: The network exhibits flexibility in terms of membership, making it easy for individuals to join or leave, accommodating changing needs and contexts (Luna and Velasco, 2009).

tainability and embedding Sport For Development and Peace as a core element of community change.

H.1) Final Thoughts

Sport for Development (SDP) as a tool has immense potential to drive positive change in Community Sports Spaces (CSS). In the work of the NGO love. fútbol, its methodology centers on creating safe play spaces for the undeserved communities, particularly benefiting youngpeople.

LF articulates its processes by involving community members from the initial phases and throught of projects. The axis of the CSS's sustainability hinges on the harness of local knowledge and the training and formation of a group of volunteers organized within an CN. This sustainability, in turn, provides the opportunity to use the pitch as a platform for developing groups that enhance community connections through activities related to SDP social sphere.

A substantial contribution have been made to connect the structuring activities (Giddens, 1987) of community and civil society organizations to the intitutional (for instance sports for diplomacy) and corporative or government initiatives to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Specifically Goal 10, "Reduced Inequalities," and Goal 11, "Sustainable Cities and Communities" for this case. Additionally, an examination of the various specifics of LF projects reveals a consistent alignment with other Millennium Development Goals, including Goal 3, "Good Health and Well-being," Goal 5, "Gender Equality," and "Climate Action".

Finally, this proposal to strengthen the CNs focuses on love.fútbol's perspective of sport as a tool for transformation with a community approach. LF emphasizes the implementation of actions for integrating change in safer physical contexts for everyone and redefines collective activities in their sports and community training practices. Therefore, the CSS becomes an attractive factor for the potential changes in the current coexistence system, leading to improvements and benefits in the areas of inclusion, tolerance, and a culture of peace for the communities through SDP perspective.

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