From Hooligan Groups to Agents of Social Change: Re-Signification of Football Supporter Culture in Colombia

Marcela Patricia Estrada Arango[1], Omar Alejandro Afanador Ortiz[2], Omar Hernán Nova Jaimes[3], César Augusto Mateus Medina[4]

[1] Universidad de Investigación y Desarrollo, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5763-4256
[2] Universidad de Investigación y Desarrollo, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5533-8530
[3] Universidad de Investigación y Desarrollo, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4480-6247
[4] Universidad de Investigación y Desarrollo, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Abstract
In Colombia, football supporter groups have transitioned from collectives associated with violence to agents of social transformation through the implementation of "barrismo social" as an innovative public policy in Latin America. This qualitative study, based on documentary analysis of regulations, institutional reports, and media records of supporter group leaders (2012-2024), characterizes the identity re-signification processes that enabled this change. Four key dynamics are identified in this process: adoption of community practices for social fabric reconstruction, articulation with governmental entities and civil organizations, strengthening of supporter group identity through collaborative networks, and transformation of media narratives. The findings show that "barrismo social" channels football passion toward collective actions with positive impact, establishing itself as a replicable model of social intervention and coexistence in urban contexts affected by violence, not only in Colombia but throughout Latin America.
Keywords
social supporter movement, collective identity, community intervention, sports public policies, social transformation, social cohesion.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Colombia has undergone a significant transformation in the phenomenon of soccer bars, driven by the emergence of social barrismo as an innovative public policy in 2012. Traditionally associated with violence and vandalism inside and outside stadiums, these groups have redefined their role by actively engaging in community initiatives and the promotion of civic values, using soccer passion as a platform for building the social fabric and defending collective causes (Londoño and Pinilla 2009). Recognizing and analyzing the dynamics that have allowed this transition is essential to understand the potential of barras as new agents of social change in countries such as Colombia. Various recent studies underline that social barrismo constitutes a process of identity resignification and collective resistance (Salazar 2019; Camayo and Restrepo 2023; Castillo 2019; Aparicio-Castillo 2013), where young people find spaces of belonging, agency, and community care, especially in contexts of social exclusion and marginalization. Faced with this situation, the Colombian Ministry of Equality and Equity highlights that the barras, traditionally stigmatized and criminalized, have managed to transform their practices towards solidarity and community building, developing collective projects that respond to structural inequalities and promote improvements in the living conditions of their members and

territories (Ministry of Equality and Equity 2024). This change has been possible due to the internal organization capacity of the barras and their appropriation of practices of care and social resistance, which allows them to emerge as social and political actors with an impact on coexistence and urban peace (Salazar 2019).

However, this process faces important challenges related to the legitimization and institutional and social recognition of these groups (Barrera 2019; Casa y Macías 2022; Silvera 2013). Although the barrista experiences have generated positive impacts in the reduction of violence and the promotion of human rights, the national and institutional narrative still reproduces historical stigmatizations, making it difficult to consolidate social barrismo as a legitimate and sustainable movement (Universidad Nacional de Colombia 2024 and Alcaldía de Cartagena 2024). The persistence of these negative narratives in the media and in public opinion limits the access of barras to opportunities and resources, and restricts their potential as agents of change in the construction of a more participatory and peaceful society (Ramírez and Herrera 2021; Institute of Social Communication 2022; Media and Society Observatory 2022; Antonio Restrepo Barco Foundation 2023)

In this context and despite these limitations, Barrista leaders have emerged as protagonists of processes of reconciliation and social cohesion, especially in urban environments affected by decades of armed conflict. Recent research documents how these leaders have articulated collective actions aimed at community well-being, promoting training, entrepreneurship, violence prevention, and human rights promotion projects in alliance with public and private entities and civil organizations (Morales and Vásquez 2022; Ombudsman's Office 2022; Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation 2022). Social barrismo, understood as public policy and social movement, has allowed the soccer clubs to channel their organizational capacity and their influence on youth towards the construction of peace, coexistence and active citizenship, evidencing their potential to have a positive impact on the transformation of social imaginaries and the reduction of urban violence (Sánchez 2015; Presidency of the Republic of Colombia 2025, Mayor's Office of Cali 2022 and Institute of Studies for Development and Peace 2023)

Football, collective identity and stigmatisation

Football occupies a central place in the social and cultural life of Latin American countries, including Colombia, functioning as a privileged space for socialization and identity expression, especially among urban youth. Soccer fans, in this framework, play an ambivalent role: they promote solidarity and a sense of belonging, but they have also been the object of media stigmatization and public policies aimed mainly at the repression of violence (Corporación Convivencia 2022; Universidad de la Salle 2023; Fundación Corona 2022). Various Latin American studies warn that, although these collectives can be spaces of youth cohesion and agency, they also face criminalization processes that make it difficult for them to be recognized as legitimate actors of social transformation (Castillo 2019; Camayo and Restrepo 2023).

Existing academic research on this topic has tended to reproduce a partial view focused on the conflictive episodes between soccer fans (Torres & Jiménez, 2020; Pérez 2022; Vargas 2023) relegating the organizational capacity and transformative potential of these organized groups to the background.   Despite this, the pioneering contributions of Londoño and Pinilla 2009 and Salazar 2019 have been fundamental in overcoming this reductionist view, by documenting experiences in which bars resignify rituals and symbols to influence the public sphere as citizen movements and consolidate frameworks for dialogue with the State and civil society.

This study is based on a critical and multidimensional approach that articulates two central concepts, that of identity resignification and that of social barrismo. In this regard, Snow

and Benford (1988) defined resignification as a process by which a collective transforms the meaning and function of its cultural and social practices to adapt to new social and political demands, going from being perceived as violent actors to agents committed to coexistence and community development. For its part, Decree 1007 of 2012 states that social barrismo refers to those actions aimed at redimensioning the practices of soccer bars, enhancing their positive aspects through training processes and dialogue of knowledge, and legitimizing their intervention in social and community spaces.

This analytical framework integrates perspectives from the sociology of social movements, emphasizing the importance of collective action repertoires, resource mobilization, and the transformation of interpretive frameworks (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Snow and Benford 1988), since this combination makes it possible to address both the internal dimensions (identity, symbolic, and organizational) and the external dimensions (relationship with the State, civil society, and the media) that facilitate or limit the consolidation of social barrismo as a model of community intervention.

Relevance and objectives of the research

The relevance of this work is expressed on three different levels, the first of which is an original contribution to the knowledge of youth social movements, by making visible the transformative capacity of historically stigmatized groups such as the barristas, questioning dominant narratives and providing a more nuanced understanding of urban youth agency. On a second level, the implications for the design of public policies, offers empirical evidence for the formulation of sports and community policies aimed at coexistence and inclusion, overcoming merely repressive approaches (Salazar 2019). Finally, it proposes a conceptual and methodological framework adaptable to other regional and global contexts where there are similar phenomena of stigmatization and the need for integration of soccer fans.

Based on the above, this research is aimed at answering: how are the processes of identity resignification configured in Colombian soccer bars that transition from conventional barrismo to social barrismo and what are the internal and external factors that facilitate or limit this transformation? To answer these questions, the objectives are established as the characterization of the identity and organizational dynamics that sustain the transition from conventional barrismo to social barrismo; the analysis of the role of public sports and coexistence policies in this process, and, finally, the evaluation of the sociocultural implications of the consolidation of social barrismo as a model of community intervention.

From the "barras bravas" to the "social barrismo": an integrative conceptual framework

The concept of the "barra brava", adapted from English hooliganism, was consolidated in Latin America as an expression of ritualized and territorialized violence (Moreira 2019; Garriga 2020). During the last decades, the episodes of violence associated with soccer fans transcended the sphere of the stadiums, unfolding in urban public spaces and generating a climate of alarm and social condemnation in various Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Mexico and, especially, Colombia. This phenomenon has contributed to the consolidation of stereotyped and prejudiced views in broad sectors of regional public opinion, reinforcing the perception of fans as disruptive and dangerous actors for citizen coexistence (Alabarces and Garriga 202; Cabrera 2022). Various studies indicate that the persistence of confrontations and the lack of effective channels for conflict mediation have deepened the gap between the barras and society, exacerbating opposition and distancing between both social groups (Villanueva and Gómez 2018; Ocampo 2007)

This violence, understood as a constituent part of the Barrista identity in its initial stages, was manifested through physical and symbolic aggressions that functioned as mechanisms of recognition and group belonging. These practices, far from being limited to the sports environment, generated an environment of anxiety and fear in society, fueling processes of stigmatization and exclusion of young people linked to these groups (Minigualdad y Equidad 2024). It should be noted that this precariousness and the sense of uncertainty experienced by impoverished and racialized youth, who find in the bars a space of belonging and identity, are not an exclusive particularity of Colombia, but reflect structural dynamics present throughout Latin America (Minigualdad y Equidad 2024; Aparicio-Castillo 2013)

In Colombia, pioneering groups such as Los Comandos Azules (Club Deportivo Los Millonarios), La Guardia Albirroja Sur (Deportivo Santa Fe), Los del Sur (Atlético Nacional) and Barón Rojo (América de Cali), structured the first forms of hierarchical organization and repertoires of action that, in many cases, involved confrontations and the use of force. passivity or punitive response on the part of the State (Quintero and Villamarín 2019; Méndez 2023). The Southern Albirroja Guard of the Santa Fe Sports Club, in particular, is recognized as one of the first to initiate this type of dynamic in the country (Sánchez 2015). However, from 2012, with the enactment of Decree 1007, there was a turning point that guided the conscious resignification of symbols and rituals towards practices of coexistence, peace and community development (González and Ruíz 2020; Institute of Public Policy 2021; Fundación Progresar 2021). As a result, in the last decade, new practices of coexistence, social inclusion, and citizen recognition have emerged, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the processes that facilitate or limit the transition from conventional to social barrismo (Republic of Colombia, Ministry of the Interior 2012, 5). This transition implied a conscious reconfiguration of symbols and rituals towards practices of coexistence, peace, and community development, as evidenced by studies on the subject (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris 2023; Center for Community Development Studies 2023)

Identity resignification and the theory of social identity
Identity resignification implies that a collective redefines the meaning, symbols, and practices that characterize it, adapting to new social and political contexts. This process is central to the transformation of traditionally stigmatized groups, such as the soccer fans, who manage to reconstruct their identity and project themselves as agents of social change. According to the theory of social identity, developed by Henri Tajfel, belonging to a group constitutes an essential component of individual self-concept (Tajfel 1981). People gain self-esteem and a sense of belonging from their affiliation to social groups, and this collective identity can motivate collective action, especially when the group's valuation is threatened or can be reinforced (Villanueva & Gómez 2018; Ocampo 2007)

Tajfel (1981) also argues that individuals categorize people into groups (*ingroups* and *outgroups),* identifying with those they perceive as their own. This identification fosters internal cohesion and can prompt collective actions aimed at improving the image and status of the group. When members perceive that their group is subject to stigmatization or discrimination, they tend to mobilize to resignify their identity and achieve recognition and legitimacy in the public space. In the case of social barrismo, this theoretical framework allows us to understand how barristas reconstruct their collective identity, going from being seen as agents of conflict to social actors committed to coexistence and community development. Likewise, this theory explains that the transformation of the group's self-image and symbolic resignification are fundamental processes for marginalized groups to become active subjects of social change (Fundación Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto 2002). Thus, the resignification of identity not only strengthens group self-esteem, but also

legitimizes the presence and action of these groups in the public sphere, generating new forms of recognition and citizen participation (Snow and Benford 1988).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design
This study adopts a qualitative approach, privileging documentary analysis as a central procedure to characterize the processes of identity resignification in Colombian soccer barras that transition from conventional barrismo to social barrismo. The qualitative approach is ideal for addressing complex social phenomena, allowing shared meanings to be described and processes of change to be reconstructed from the perspective of the actors involved. In this way, a deep understanding of the practices, discourses, and regulations that make up social barrismo in Colombia is facilitated (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista 2010; González 2006).

Scope and period of study
The collection of documentary data was limited to the Colombian context, covering the period between 2012 and 2024. This period begins with the enactment of Decree 1007 of 2012 – which establishes the statute of social barrismo – and includes the most recent initiatives of barrista groups in cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Manizales.   The selection of these four localities responds to rigorous methodological criteria that guarantee geographical representativeness, diversity of experiences and the availability of empirical evidence on processes of social barrismo in Colombia.   These four Colombian municipalities had an early implementation of Decree 1007 of 2012, through which social barrismo was promoted.   The capital of Colombia, Bogotá was one of the first cities to implement consultation tables and local bar councils, especially in towns such as Chapinero, as well as Medellín, a city that developed the "Cultura Fútbol" program as a model of municipal intervention with sustained financing and clear goals. For its part, the city of Cali implemented methodologies of "dialogue of knowledge" and articulation with religious and civil organizations, with emphasis on the recovery of public spaces. (Archdiocese of Cali). Finally, the city of Manizales, a town that has the experience cataloged as emblematic of "Fans for Manizales", academically documented as a paradigmatic case of barrista transformation that became a replicable model of transition from violent practices to citizen construction and political participation initiatives in the country (Vélez and Cardona 2020; Center for Regional Coffee Studies (2021).

In addition, these cities have the largest academic and documentary production on social barrismo in Colombia, including previous studies by researchers such as Londoño and Pinilla (2009) on Manizales, Salazar (2019) on Bogotá, and various institutional reports on Medellín and Cali. Likewise, the availability of primary sources (decrees, reports, barrista communiqués) is significantly greater in these cities, in addition to the presence of barrista organizations with greater trajectory and public visibility. Additionally, the selection of these localities allows the identification of patterns, convergences and particularities that can be transferred to other urban contexts, not only Colombian but also Latin American, complying with the transferability criterion of qualitative research. This selection allows us to build a comprehensive panorama that encompasses different urban scales, intervention models and sociocultural contexts, strengthening the external validity and generalizability of the study's findings.

Population and sample (documentary corpus)
The documentary corpus was made up of various primary and secondary sources, among them the following stand out:
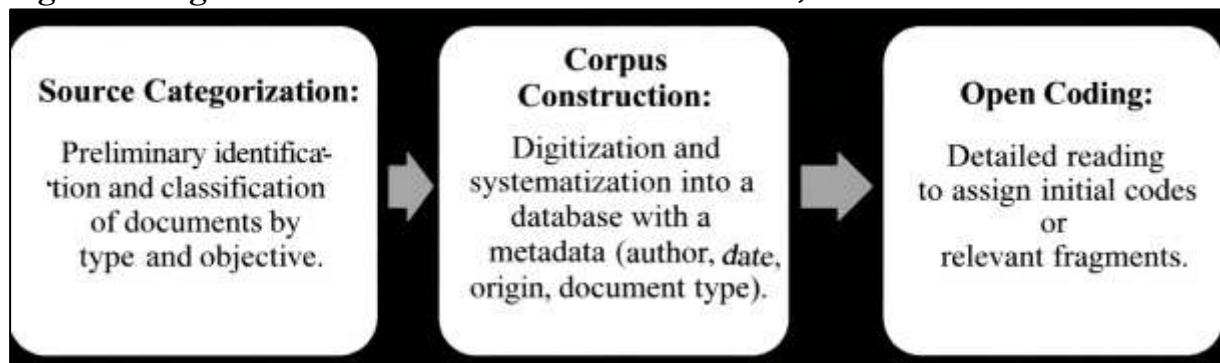
- Regulatory documents: Decree 1007 of 2012, Ten-Year Plan for Coexistence in Football 2014–2024, Law 1270 of 2012.
- Institutional and academic reports: Studies by the Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto Foundation, publications by government agencies and public and private universities.
- Materials produced by barrista groups: Official communiqués, coexistence manuals, reports of socially oriented projects, photographic records of their activities.
- Media coverage: National and regional press articles on initiatives and transformations of social barriismo.

Rigorous inclusion criteria were applied, prioritizing thematic relevance (neighborhood resignification), geographical representativeness and temporal updating. On the other hand, documents without clear authorship or with an exclusively sporting focus were excluded.

Data collection techniques and instruments
The documentary analysis was developed following the stages proposed by Cellard 2008; Gil 1999:

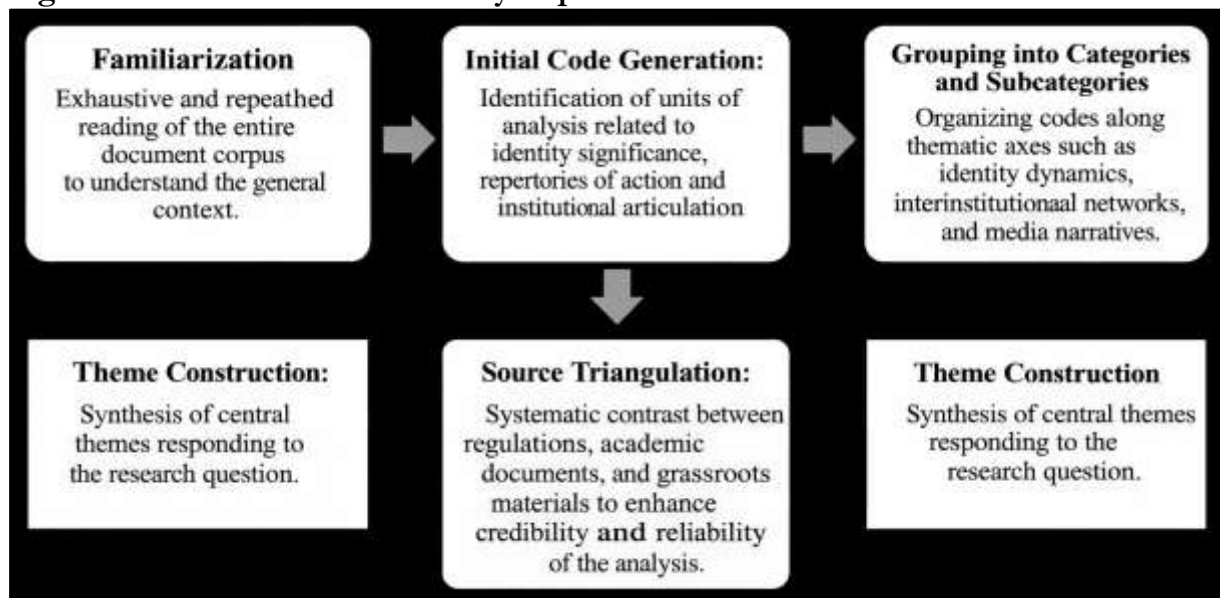**Figure 1. Stages of information collection Cellard 2008; Gil 1999**

Source Categorization:
Preliminary identification and classification of documents by type and objective.

Corpus Construction:
Digitization and systematization into a database with a metadata (author, *date*, origin, document type).

Open Coding:
Detailed reading to assign initial codes or relevant fragments.

Prepared by the author.

Once the documentary analysis was developed, the process of analysis of the collected data was carried out.

Data analysis procedure
For this procedure, an inductive thematic analysis was adopted, developed in five phases that are described below:

Figure 2. Inductive thematic analysis phases

Familiarization
Exhaustive and repeathed reading of the entire document corpus to understand the general context.

Initial Code Generation:
Identification of units of analysis related to identity significance, repertories of action and institutional articulation

Grouping into Categories and Subcategories
Organizing codes along thematic axes such as identity dynamics, interinstitutionaal networks, and media narratives.

Theme Construction:
Synthesis of central themes responding to the research question.

Source Triangulation:
Systematic contrast between regulations, academic documents, and grassroots materials to enhance credibility **and** reliability of the analysis.

Theme Construction
Synthesis of central themes responding to the research question.

Prepared by the author.

To ensure internal validity and reliability, the following strategies were applied:
- Documentary triangulation: Contrast of information between different types of sources to avoid bias.
- Evidence chain log: Organized archive of versions, field notes, and coding maps.
- Inter-research review: Discussion and adjustment of codes and categories with a second expert reader to ensure analytical coherence.
- Qualitative quality criteria: Principles of credibility, transferability, dependency and confirmability were met, following recognized standards in qualitative research.

This study presents inherent limitations to qualitative design and documentary analysis, such as the dependence on secondary sources, due to the fact that the research is based on existing documents, which limits access to first-hand information and may reflect editorial or institutional biases. Likewise, the representativeness of the corpus, since, although rigorous criteria were applied, the documentary selection may not cover the totality of Barrista experiences in Colombia, especially in less visible or informal contexts. However, these limitations are compensated for by a rigorous triangulation of documents from different perspectives – normative, academic, media and barrista – which allows for the construction of a comprehensive and multifaceted panorama of the phenomenon. This approach strengthens credibility and analytical depth by contrasting information and avoiding one-sided biases. In addition, the documentary approach is especially relevant for the study of public policies and institutional processes that shape the phenomenon. The dynamic nature of social barrismo implies that some recent developments may not be fully reflected in the corpus; However, the study lays a solid foundation for future research incorporating ethnographic or participatory methods, thus contributing to the progressive construction of knowledge in this emerging area.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The results of this research show how Colombian soccer fans have undergone a significant transformation from being groups stigmatized by violence to becoming social actors committed to peacebuilding and social cohesion. This study identified several emblematic projects developed by soccer clubs of Colombian professional clubs since 2012 (See Table 1), grouped into four main categories:

a. Identity dynamics: resignification of symbols and rituals

This resignification is the central process in the transformation of Colombian soccer bars towards social barrismo, which implies a profound reinterpretation of the traditional identity elements of barrismo, providing them with new meanings and functions oriented towards inclusion, coexistence and community commitment. As is the case of the flags and colors used by the barristas, which previously symbolized rivalry and exclusive belonging, to turn them into emblems of peace, solidarity and positive barrista pride. This is the case of the "Murga del Indigente" (Rexixtenxia Norte, DIM), which uses music and visual symbols as tools for social integration and expression of values of respect and coexistence.

Image 1. The Murga of the Indigent: Music for Peace and Coexistence in Medellín


Photographs taken from the Barra's Facebook page

On the other hand, the chants that used to incite confrontation have been transformed into messages of reconciliation, inclusion, and peaceful resistance (Martínez and Ospina 202; Institute of Musical Studies 2022). In community activities, solidarity days or reconciliation events organized by these groups, the songs become vehicles to educate and sensitize both the barristas and society about the importance of coexistence and mutual respect, by mobilizing their members around positive values and shared social objectives (Rodríguez 202; Popular Education Center 2022).

As for graffiti and murals in public spaces that in the past could contain messages of threat or mark territory in some urban areas of these cities, they are now used to beautify urban spaces with artistic expressions that seek to convey messages of inclusion, memory and bar pride, since they celebrate the history of the bars, their leaders and their collective achievements in favor of the community (López and Castañeda 2021; Institute of Visual Arts 2022; Memory and Territory Foundation 2023).

Image 2. Graffiti Barra Barón Rojo Sur – Bogotá
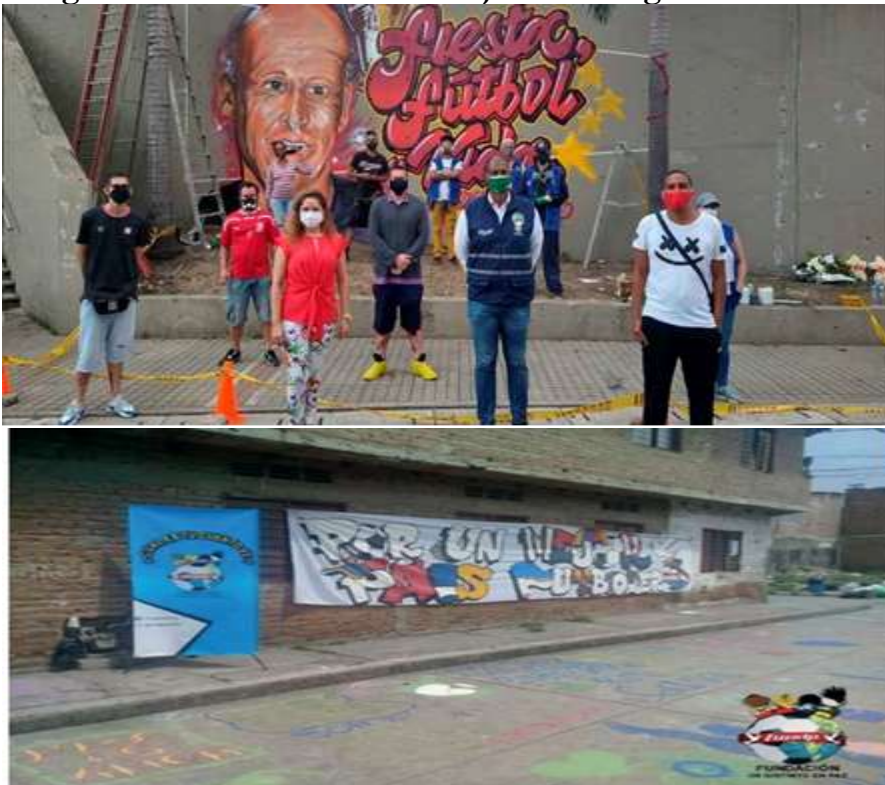
Taken from Social Networks Fundación Un Distrito en Paz – Cali- Colombia

- **New rituals of coexistence:**

Barrista rituals such as receptions, caravans and celebrations, are resignified to emphasize community building and the promotion of nonviolence. These events become spaces for meeting, training in civic values and intergenerational dialogue. In addition, this symbolic resignification also implies openness to internal diversity, promoting the inclusion of women, young people from different backgrounds and people of different orientations, thus enriching practices and the sense of belonging.

In short, the resignification of symbols and rituals in Colombian social barrismo is a dynamic process that transforms the collective self-image, legitimizes the public presence of the barras and consolidates their role as social actors committed to coexistence, peace and community development.

b. Community Action Directories:

The soccer clubs mobilize their structure and networks to implement social projects such as Cultura Fútbol in Medellín (training and mobilization for peace), Navidad Verdolaga in Medellín (workshops and support for vulnerable children) and Verdiblanco Community Kitchens in Cali (food for vulnerable populations). In these community service practices, solidarity actions are incorporated as part of collective rituals, including aid brigades, donation campaigns, cleaning days and educational activities, which reinforce the Barrista identity as an agent of social transformation.

Image 3. Christmas Verdolaga – Atlético Nacional Community Activity

Source: Social Networks Barra Los del Sur – Atlético Nacional

Image 4. Culture Football: a project of social transformation

Source: Social Networks Atlético Nacional and Deportivo Independiente Medellín. https://acortar.link/8y9ZvZ.

Image 5. Community Dining Room Barra Popular Frente Radical Verdiblanco

Source: Social Networks Instagram Frenteradicaloficial@

c. **Media narratives:**

Media narratives about barrista collectives in Colombia and Latin America have undergone a significant transformation over the past two decades, moving from a predominantly criminalizing approach to more nuanced coverage that recognizes the transformative potential of these groups. Traditionally, the mass media reproduced interpretative frameworks that systematically associated soccer fans with violence, vandalism, and the alteration of public order, contributing to the construction of stigmatizing social imaginaries that limited their recognition as legitimate social actors. This media coverage, characterized by the oversize of conflictive episodes and the invisibilization of constructive initiatives, functioned as a mechanism of symbolic exclusion that restricted the access of the barras to opportunities for citizen participation, financing, and strategic alliances. However, the implementation of public policies such as Decree 1007 of 2012 in Colombia, together with the communication management developed by the barras themselves through social networks and alternative media, has generated a gradual change in the dominant narrative frameworks. Currently, there is a coexistence of narratives that reflect the complexity of the barrista phenomenon and the dispute over social common sense. On the one hand, media discourses persist that reproduce stereotypes and punitive approaches, especially in the coverage of sporting events and episodes of urban violence. On the other hand, an alternative narrative has emerged that makes social barrier initiatives visible, highlighting community projects, reconciliation processes and youth leadership in the construction of territorial peace. This narrative transformation has been driven by several factors: the professionalization of the communication strategies of the barras, which have developed their own content to dispute hegemonic representations; the emergence of journalism specialized in youth and urban culture issues; and the influence of civil and academic organizations that have documented and made visible the successful experiences of neighborhood transformation. Alternative media, digital platforms, and community communication spaces have played a crucial role in the construction of these new narratives, allowing the voices of the barristas themselves to be heard and recognized as producers of knowledge and agents of social change.

The impact of this narrative transformation transcends the media sphere and translates into concrete changes in social perception, public policies and opportunities for institutional articulation for the Barrista collectives. The positive coverage of initiatives such as "Fans for Manizales", the community kitchens in Cali, or the training programs in Medellín, has contributed to modifying social imaginaries and generating more favorable conditions for the recognition of the barras as actors of local development. However, this transformation is uneven and presents permanent tensions: while some media and contexts have moved towards more comprehensive narratives, others maintain reductionist approaches that limit the transformative potential of these groups. The persistence of these negative narratives continues to generate barriers to access to resources, participation in political decision-making spaces, and the consolidation of strategic alliances, evidencing that the dispute over media representations continues to be a fundamental field of tension for the legitimization of social barrismo as a model of community intervention in Colombia and Latin America.

4. Inter-institutional coordination:

Inter-institutional articulation is one of the fundamental pillars of social barrismo in Colombia, representing a paradigmatic change in the relations between the barrista collectives, the State and civil society. This articulation has materialized through the formalization of strategic alliances that transcend the sports field to insert themselves in processes of territorial planning, community development and peacebuilding. The regulatory framework established by Decree 1007 of 2012 and the Ten-Year Plan for

Coexistence in Football (2014-2024) has provided the legal and operational bases for the barras to establish collaboration protocols with municipal mayors, government secretariats, educational entities such as SENA, religious organizations such as the Archdiocese of Cali, and private foundations. alliances that have allowed the barrista collectives to access the technical, financial and logistical resources necessary for the implementation of projects with a social impact, overcoming the historical limitations derived from stigmatization and institutional exclusion.

The diversity of actors involved in this articulation shows the complexity and richness of the inter-institutional fabric built around social barriers. On the one hand, public entities have recognized the organizational potential of the barras for the implementation of youth, coexistence and local development policies, establishing negotiation tables, local bar councils and citizen participation mechanisms that legitimize their presence in political decision-making spaces. On the other hand, the private sector and civil organizations have identified strategic allies in the bars for the development of social responsibility, technical training and youth entrepreneurship programs. Emblematic examples such as the coordination between Rexixtenxia Norte (Deportivo Independiente Medellín) and SENA for technical training, the alliance of the Un Distrito en Paz Foundation with the Cali Government Secretariat, or the agreements between bars and universities for participatory research processes, demonstrate the capacity of these groups to establish cooperative relationships that enhance their territorial impact and strengthen their social legitimacy. However, this inter-institutional articulation faces significant challenges related to sustainability, political continuity and overcoming institutional prejudices. The dependence on local political wills and the lack of stable budgets for the development of social barrier programs generate vulnerabilities that can affect the continuity of initiatives. In addition, there is still resistance in some institutional sectors that maintain stigmatizing views of the barras, limiting the possibilities of articulation and restricting access to resources and opportunities. However, the successful experiences documented in cities such as Medellín, Bogotá, Cali and Manizales show that when there is political will, budget allocation and recognition of the autonomy of the barrista, inter-institutional articulation can generate significant impacts on coexistence, community development and the construction of citizenship. This articulation represents, ultimately, an innovative model of participatory governance that recognizes organized youth as legitimate political subjects and key actors in urban social transformation.

4. DISCUSSION

The process of transition from conventional to social barrismo in Colombia constitutes a paradigmatic phenomenon of identity resignification and collective transformation that serves as an example to be replicated in other contexts. Beyond the mere description of practices, the findings of this study allowed us to interpret how soccer fans have reconfigured their sense of belonging, their repertoires of action and their place in the public sphere, in the light of the proposed theoretical frameworks.

Identity resignification and collective self-image

From the perspective of social identity theory (Tajfel 1981), the resignification of symbols, chants, and rituals not only strengthens the group self-esteem of the soccer fans, but also acts as a mechanism of resistance against historical stigmatization. The data show that the transformation of the "Murga del Indigente" of the Barra Rexixtenxia or the reinterpretation of chants in Hinchas por Manizales, are not simple superficial changes, but active strategies to redefine the "we barrista" as a legitimate and purposeful subject in the public space. This identity reconstruction challenges the hegemonic discourses that

associate the barras with violence and allows the barristas to recognize themselves and be recognized as agents of social change, which coincides with the postulates of Snow and Benford (1988) on symbolic resignification in social movements.

Resource mobilization and repertoir transformation

The mobilization of organizational and symbolic resources, interpreted from the theory of McCarthy and Zald (1973), shows that soccer fans have not only adapted their practices to new political opportunities, but have also developed capacities to manage complex social projects. The organization of community fairs, soup kitchens, and leadership workshops reveals the capacity of the bars to articulate internal resources (leadership, networks, logistics) and external resources (institutional alliances, financing), overcoming the traditional model of reactive or confrontational action. This transformation of repertoires, in terms of Tilly (1978), implies an expansion of the forms of collective action available, now oriented towards the construction of social capital and the generation of public goods.

Political opportunities and institutionalization

The institutionalization of social barrismo through Decree 1007 of 2012 and the Ten-Year Plan for Coexistence in Football (2014–2024) can be interpreted, following Tarrow 1998, as the opening of a structure of political opportunities that has allowed the barras to insert themselves into community planning and management processes. However, the interpretation of the data suggests that this openness is partial and uneven: while in cities such as Medellín, Bogotá, Cali and Manizales, significant progress has been observed in inter-institutional coordination and the allocation of resources, in other contexts administrative and budgetary barriers persist that limit the sustainability of the Barrista initiatives. This reveals the importance of local agency and political will in the consolidation of social barrismo as a legitimate actor.

Transformation of interpretative frameworks and public legitimacy

The change in media narratives and the management of communication by the barras themselves, interpreted from the perspective of *frame alignment* theory (Snow and Benford 1988), has been key to disputing the dominant common sense and generating new forms of social recognition. The dissemination of success stories, the visibility of solidarity activities and the production of their own content have allowed the barras to dispute symbolic hegemony and build a collective image based on dignity, resilience and community contribution. This process of transformation of interpretative frameworks not only modifies public perception, but also affects the ability of the barras to attract support and alliance and thus expand their political incidence.

Tensions, limits and challenges

Interpreting the findings also reveals unresolved tensions and challenges. The persistence of stigmatization, organizational fragmentation and the lack of stable resources show that the resignification of identity and the institutionalization of social barriers are unfinished processes and subject to permanent disputes. In addition, the appropriation of public policy by the barras is not without contradictions: some leaders perceive institutional diagnoses as redundant or not very valuable, which can weaken the appropriation and sustainability of initiatives. These tensions invite us to rethink intervention models, privileging participatory and dialogic approaches that recognize the diversity and autonomy of the barrista collectives.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical interpretation of the results demonstrates the relevance of a multicausal approach that articulates social identity theory (Tajfel 1981), resource mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1973), political opportunities (Tarrow 1998), and the transformation

of interpretive frameworks (Snow and Benford, 1988). This conceptual integration allows us to understand how the barras have managed to strengthen their collective self-esteem, develop social management capacities, take advantage of institutional openings and dispute symbolic hegemonies to consolidate themselves as recognized political subjects. The Colombian case provides empirical evidence on the capacity of traditionally marginalized youth groups to influence processes of building citizenship and social cohesion, challenging reductionist approaches that associate them exclusively with violence.

In terms of public policy, the findings suggest that the institutionalization of social barrismo has been key to legitimizing the participation of the barras in community planning and management processes, although challenges related to budget sustainability, organizational fragmentation, and the need for more participatory and dialogic approaches persist. Successful experiences in cities such as Medellín, Bogotá and Cali show that the articulation between local political will, resource allocation and recognition of the autonomy of the Barrista can generate significant impacts on coexistence and community development. However, the inequality in implementation between territories shows the importance of strengthening institutional frameworks that guarantee the continuity and scalability of the Barrista initiatives.

This study also reveals tensions and limitations that invite us to rethink the models of intervention with organized youth. The persistence of stigmatizations, the perception of some leaders about the redundancy of institutional diagnoses and the need to diversify sources of financing, suggest that the consolidation of social barrismo requires more flexible, contextualized approaches that respect the internal diversity of the barrista collectives. These tensions do not invalidate the achievements made, but rather point to the complexity of the processes of social transformation and the need for institutional accompaniment that recognizes the agency and autonomy of the actors involved.

Finally, this work contributes to the academic and political debate on youth movements, citizenship and social transformation in Latin America, offering a replicable analytical model to study similar phenomena in other regional contexts. The resignification of soccer barrismo in Colombia shows the potential of organized youth to build alternatives of inclusion and coexistence from below, contributing to the understanding of democratization and peacebuilding processes in post-conflict societies. The findings invite us to deepen research on the conditions that facilitate or limit the emergence of transformative social movements, as well as to design public policies that recognize and enhance the capacity for agency of groups traditionally excluded from public debate.

References

1. Alabarces, Pablo, and José Garriga. 2021. "Violent territorialities: football as a space of urban dispute in Latin America." Latin American Journal of Urban Studies 28(3): 45-67.
2. Cali Mayor's Office. 2022. "Social Barrism, a strategy to build peace and citizen culture in Cali". https://www.cali.gov.co/pazycultura/publicaciones/169313/barrismo-social-una-estrategia-para-construir-paz-y-cultura-ciudadana-en-cali/
3. Mayor's Office of Cartagena. 2024. "Barristas Challenge Social Stigma: Historic Table for the 2024-2027 Development Plan." https://www.cartagena.gov.co/noticias/barristas-desafian-el-estigma-social-mesa-historica-para-el-plan-desarrollo-2024-2027
4. Aparicio-Castillo, Mariana. 2013. "Youth, Violence and Soccer in Latin America: Perspectives from the Margins." Journal of Social Studies 47: 88–102.
5. Arroyo, Luis. 2014. "Transformations of Barrismo in Colombia: From Conflict to Coexistence." Revista Colombiana de Sociología 37(1): 45–62.
6. Barrera, Víctor. 2019. "Transformation of social conflicts. Participatory diagnosis." Alliance for Peace, Bogotá.

7. Cabrera, Néstor. 2022. "Rituals of violence in Colombian football: anthropological analysis of barrismo." Colombian Journal of Anthropology 58(1): 123-145.

8. Camayo Bados, M. A., and D. Restrepo Alfonso. 2023. "Social Barrism and female participation: a vision of the women of the Frente Radical Verdiblanco bar." Challenges 45: 121–135.

9. Casa, Daniel Alejandro, and Diego Macías. 2022. "Social Barrism - A Case Study in Los del Sur Popayán, 2002-2014." University of Cauca.

10. Castillo, J. Sebastián. 2019. "The influence of social barrismo processes on the transformation of barras bravas: The case of Barón Rojo Sur and the Foundation a District for Peace." Austral Journal of Social Sciences 16: 73–88.

11. Cellard, André. 2008. "Documentary Analysis." In Qualitative Research: Epistemological and Methodological Approaches, edited by Ruth Mercado, 295–316. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

12. opular Education Center, Minuto de Dios University. 2022. "Transformative Songs: Social Education from Barrismo." Revista de Educación Popular 28(3): 89-112.

13. Center for Studies for Community Development, Universidad Pontificia Javeriana. 2023. "Barrismo and local development: transformations post-Decree 1007." Revista Javeriana de Desarrollo Social 28(2): 89-112.

14. Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation. 2022. "Memory and Youth Resistance: Experiences of Barrista Leadership in Bogotá." Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá.

15. Clavijo, Janneth. 2004. "Football, Violence and Identity in Colombia." Universitas Humanística 58: 103–120.

16. Coexistence Corporation. 2022. "Stigmatization and Peacebuilding: Narratives on Organized Youth." Bogotá: Corporación Convivencia.

17. Ombudsman's Office. 2023. "Youth and Human Rights in Urban Contexts: Barrista Leadership as an Agent of Transformation." Special report. Bogotá: Ombudsman's Office.

18. Londoño, Ángela M., and Víctor E. Pinilla. 2009. "The Social Barrismo of Fans for Manizales: A Political and Citizen Practice." Austral Journal of Social Sciences (16): 73–88. DOI: 10.4206/

19. Antonio Restrepo Barco Foundation. 2023. "Barriers to Youth Inclusion: Impact of Stigmatization on Access to Opportunities." Bogotá: Antonio Restrepo Barco Foundation.

20. Corona Foundation. 2022. "Social Narratives and Youth Development: The Impact of Stigmatization on the Opportunities of Soccer Bars." Bogotá: Fundación Corona.

21. Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto Foundation. 2002. "Identity Resignification and Collective Action in Contexts of Exclusion." Research report. Bogotá: Fundación Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto.

22. Memory and Territory Foundation. 2023. "Memory Murals: Barrismo as a Builder of Historical Narratives." Journal of Collective Memory 18(1): 45-68.

23. Fundación Progresar. 2021. "Coexistence and Barrismo: The Transformative Impact of the Regulatory Framework." Estudios de Convivencia 12(1): 45-68.

24. Garriga Zucal, José. 2020. "Ritualized Violence in Argentine Soccer: Genealogy of the Barra Brava Concept." Revista Argentina de Sociología 17(29): 89-112.

25. Gil, Antonio Carlos. 1999. Methods and techniques of social research. 5th ed. São Paulo: Atlas.

26. González, Jorge. 2006. Methodology of qualitative research. 2nd ed. Málaga: Aljibe.

27. González, María Elena, and Carlos Ruiz. 2020. "Transformative Public Policies: The Impact of Decree 1007 on Colombian Barrismo." Journal of Public Policy 34(2): 123-145.

28. Hernández, Roberto, Carlos Fernández, and Pilar Baptista. 2010. Research methodology. 5th ed. Mexico: McGraw-Hill.

29. Institute of Visual Arts, Jorge Tadeo Lozano University. 2022. "Social muralism and barrismo: transformation of urban public space." Revista Tadeo de Artes 25(2): 123-145

30. Institute of Social Communication, Sergio Arboleda University. 2022. "Media, youth and social exclusion: analysis of media representations of soccer bars." Communication and Society 29(3): 145-167.

31. Institute for Development and Peace Studies (INDEPAZ). 2023. "Peacebuilding Youth: The Role of Barrista Leaders in the Prevention of Violence." Bogotá: INDEPAZ.

32. Institute of Musical Studies, EAFIT University. 2022. "Sonorities of Peace: Barrista Chants as Vehicles for Social Transformation." Revista Musical EAFIT 12(1): 78-96.

33. Institute of Public Policy, Externado University. 2021. "Decree 1007: catalyst for the transformation of barrista." Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia.

34. López, Andrea, and Miguel Castañeda. 2021. "Urban Art and Territorial Resignification: The Transformation of Barrista Graffiti." Revista Universidad Nacional 42(1): 78-96.

35. Martínez, Sandra, and Diego Ospina. 2021. "Music and Reconciliation: The Transformation of Barrista Chants in Colombia." Revista Universidad de Medellín 33(2): 134-156.

36. McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, y Mayer N. Zald. 1996. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

37. Méndez, Laura. 2023. "Barrista Violence and Security Policies in Colombia." Journal of Colombian Studies 15(1): 233–250.

38. Ministry of Equality and Equity. 2024. "Social Barrismo Program 'Popular Endurance for Life'". Technical Document for the Formulation of Strategic Programs, Office of Knowledge and Strategic Knowledge.

39. Morales, Andrés, and Luisa Vásquez. 2022. "Community Mediation and Neighborhood Leadership: Strategies for Peaceful Conflict Resolution." Colombian Journal of Social Work 34(1): 89-107.

40. Moreira, Verónica. 2019. "From Hooliganism to Barrismo: Conceptual Transformations in Latin American Soccer." Revista de Estudios Sociales 67: 34-52.

41. Observatory of Media and Society, Javeriana University. 2022. "Media discourses and social exclusion: the case of the soccer bars in Colombia." Sign and Thought 41(80): 78-95.

42. Ocampo, Andrés. 2007. "Youth, Violence and Football: Barrismo in Colombia." Youth Notebooks 5(1): 23–41.

43. Pérez, Carolina. 2022. "Research Methodologies and Social Representation of Barrismo: Critical Analysis of Academic Approaches." Revista Universidad de Antioquia 35(4): 167-189.

44. Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. 2025. "Social Barrismo gains strength, Government launches program to promote coexistence".

45. Quintero, Oscar, and María Villamarín. 2019. "History of Barrismo in Colombia: From Violence to Social Transformation." Journal of Social Sciences 25(3): 112–128.

46. Ramírez, Jorge, and Claudia Herrera. 2021. "Media representations of barrismo: between stigma and transformation." Journal of Social Communication 35(2): 123-145.

47. Republic of Colombia. 2012. Law 1270 of 2012. "By which the National Commission for Safety, Comfort and Coexistence in Football is created."

48. Republic of Colombia, Ministry of the Interior. 2012. "Ten-Year Plan for Coexistence in Football 2014-2024." Public Policy Document.

49. Rodríguez, Carmen. 2023. "Popular pedagogy and barrista chants: education for coexistence." Revista Pedagógica Nacional 45(1): 23-45.

50. Salazar, Diana Paola. 2019. "Social Barrism and Public Policy for Coexistence in Football: Transformative Experiences in the Cities of Bogotá and San Juan de Pasto." • Trans-crossing Frontiers 13 (2019): 161-178.

51. Sánchez, Leidy Viviana. 2015. "Social Barrism: An Alternative for Change". Degree project, Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios.

52. Silvera Sarmiento, A. 2013. "Citizen Coexistence and Security: Social Barrism as a Scenario for the Resignification of the Youth Reality of the District of Barranquilla." Journal of Social Sciences 19(32): 49-68.

53. Snow, David A., y Robert D. Benford. 1988. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." International Social Movement Research 1: 197–217.

54. Tajfel, Henri. 1981. Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

55. Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

56. Tilly, Charles. 1978. From Mobilization to Revolutio. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

57. Torres, Miguel, and Sandra Jiménez. 2020. "Epistemologies of Conflict: Academic Biases in the Study of Barrismo." Revista Universidad del Valle 33(1): 123-145.

58. La Salle University. 2023. "Youth participation and structural barriers: analysis of the access of soccer fans to peacebuilding spaces." Bogota:

59. National University of Colombia. 2024. "Less violence and more football culture, the challenge of public policy." Medellín.

60. Vargas, Andrés. 2023. "Invisible Youth Leadership: The Case of Soccer Bars in Academic Research." Revista Pedagógica Nacional 40(2): 78-96.

61. Villanueva, Pablo, and Juan Gómez. 2018. "Conflict and Mediation in Latin American Soccer: Comparative Perspectives." Latin American Journal of Social Studies of Sport 10(2): 45–67.

62. Villanueva, Roberto, and Carlos Gómez. 2018b. "Youth and urban violence in Latin American football." Sociological Studies 36(2): 289–315.