

NOTES FOR A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN FOOTBALL FAN GROUPS FROM BRAZIL (TORCIDAS ORGANIZADAS) AND ARGENTINA (HINCHADAS)

APONTAMENTOS PARA UM ESTUDO COMPARATIVO ENTRE TORCIDAS
ORGANIZADAS E HINCHADAS

APUNTES PARA UN ESTUDIO COMPARATIVO ENTRE TORCIDAS
ORGANIZADAS E HINCHADAS

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Keywords

Football.
Sociology.
Recreational
activities.

Abstract: The present study is an initial approach to a comparative study between football fan groups from Brazil (*torcidas organizadas*) and Argentina (*hinchadas*). The article presents a thick description of similarities and differences, in synchronic and diachronic terms, between both groups of football fans. It focuses on each group's emergence, organizational status, logics of belonging, and their most significant practices and representations. Finally, it illustrates the contributions of this study to build a public sociology of regional sport.

Palavras-chave

Futebol.
Sociologia.
Atividades de lazer.

Resumo: No presente estudo se propõe uma primeira aproximação comparativa entre torcidas organizadas e *hinchadas*. O texto apresenta uma descrição densa que aponta semelhanças e diferenças, em termos sincrônicos e diacrônicos, entre ambos grupos de espectadores de futebol. Se focalizará os contextos de surgimento, os enquadramentos organizacionais, as lógicas de pertencimento e as práticas e representações mais significativas de cada um dos objetos empíricos analisados. Finalmente explicitaremos alguns aportes para a construção de uma sociologia pública do esporte regional.

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Resumen: En el presente estudio se propone una primera aproximación comparativa entre *torcidas organizadas* e *hinchadas*. El texto presenta una descripción densa que señala similitudes y diferencias, en términos sincrónicos y diacrónicos, entre ambos colectivos de espectadores futbolísticos. Se focalizará en los contextos de surgimiento, los encuadramientos organizacionales, las lógicas de pertenencia y las prácticas y representaciones más significativas de cada uno de los objetos empíricos analizados. Finalmente, explicitaremos algunos aportes para la construcción de una sociología pública del deporte regional.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Latin America seems to have two backbones: a geographical one known as “the Andes” and another one related to sport: football. Having become one of the most massive rituals of our contemporary societies, football is a special metaphor and a metonymy to implement our social sciences. After pioneers Eduardo Archetti (1985) and Roberto Da Matta (1979), we know that it is not about doing “[...] sociology of football, but about turning football into sociology”. Among the multiplicity of facets of the “football field”, a topic seems to be recurrent in recent years, mainly in mass media: violence carried out by two types of organized football fans: Argentinean *hinchadas* and Brazilian *torcidas organizadas*. However, we believe that the visibility of the phenomenon has not been translated into relevant explanations.

Therefore, this article represents an initial approach to the comparative study between the Argentinean *hinchada* of Córdoba’s Club Atlético Belgrano, self-styled “*Os Piratas*”, and São Paulo FC’s *torcida organizada* from Brazil, who call themselves “*Dragões da Real*”.¹ The work will seek to present a “thick description” (Geertz, 1990) aimed at finding continuities and differences, both diachronic and synchronic, between the internal universes of those two types of groups of fans whose common reference is football, but that are defined from disparate local processes.

In the first part of the text, we will only contextualize and briefly clarify what we mean by *hinchada* and *torcida organizada* in order to set our objects of study. The second section will diachronically reconstruct the origins of *hinchadas* and *torcidas organizadas* in general and of our empirical referents in particular. The third section carries out a comparative thick description of the internal logics shaping the groups in question. Finally, we present some concluding remarks on the relevance, challenges and limitations of this sort of work.

2 ON ENDURANCE AND BUREAUCRACIES

Neither Argentina’s “*hinchadas*” nor Brazil’s *torcidas organizadas* represent the only forms of organizing a club’s fans. According to Toledo (1996), Brazilian football includes two different forms of fan organization: *torcidas uniformizadas* (*uniformed fan groups*) and *torcidas organizadas* (*organized fan groups*). However, such distinction deserves a closer look: São Paulo FC’s *Torcida Uniformizada* (TUSP), created in 1940, and Flamengo’s *Charanga Rubro-Negra*, created in 1942 are mentioned in several academic studies about *torcidas organizadas* as the first collective organizations aimed at rooting for a football team. These groups had their specific clothing (their team’s jersey, which used to be rare at the time), they used musical instruments and they had leaders who usually had some link with the club (TOLEDO, 1996, 2002; PIMENTA, 1997; SANTOS, 2004; MURAD, 2007; HOLANDA, 2009; CANALE, 2012; PALHARES *et al.*, 2012).

Despite being considered the first fan organizations aimed at rooting for a football team, *TUSP* and *Charanga* cannot be seen as *torcidas organizadas* or *torcidas uniformizadas*. Their direct link to their clubs, the presence of “symbol-fans”, their identification only with the club

¹ The choice of these empirical referents has two main reasons: 1) both cases are focuses of our respective graduate studies; 2) due to their sizes, internal logics and contexts, with their similarities and differences, the two cases seem to lend themselves to relevant comparative analyses. Note that in both cases fieldwork consisted of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with a long and systematic stay in the field, focusing on the practices and representations of members of the *hinchada* and *torcida organizada*.

and their rejection of violence distinguish the first fan organizations from today's movements. In general, we can say that a distinction between *organized* and *uniformized groups* should consider the organization of the group in question. In this regard, studies by Holanda (2009) and Canale (2012) may help in the differentiation, which is not only based on terms or words; it is also conceptual and theoretical. We will see that each concept refers to a specific type of organization. As the two authors point out, in the 1940s there were already groups called "*torcidas organizadas*",² but they could not be considered as such because of their organization, structure and practices.

Based on this, it can be said that *torcidas uniformizadas* are groups of people who meet to root for their teams, wearing the same attire, but they do not constitute an institution. *Torcidas organizadas*, in turn, are legally recognized institutions (legally considered as recreational organizations, or *gremios recreativos*). In summary, the main difference between *torcidas organizadas* and *uniformizadas* would be the former's bureaucratic-legal status as institutions recognized by law.

Torcidas organizadas' more global but not absolute organizational structure lies in their choice of formulas to appoint "board members". However, note that each group can decide the forms of its own internal organization. It can be said that *torcidas organizadas* have their own bureaucratic organization (TOLEDO, 1996; PIMENTA, 1997).

As for Argentina, it is also crucial to distinguish between two types of organized fan groups strongly identified with their clubs: militant fans and *hinchadas* or *barras*³ (ALABARCÉS, 2004). The former usually organize in their clubs' institutional spaces such as members' sub-committee or local offices. The latter have an informal but clearly vertical and hierarchical organizational structure from the institutional point of view.

Both groups identify with the local notion of *aguante* (endurance). While the former focus on rooting and unconditional fidelity to their teams, for the latter, endurance is associated with a moral universe where physical violence is appreciated. In sum, both groups of fans are well organized, but "militants" do so within a formal institutional framework while "*hinchadas*" do it informally.

3 CONTEXT OF EMERGENCE: DIACHRONIC COMPARISON

The *torcidas organizadas* movement began in the late 1960s and early 70s. As we said above, there is no consensus about the first one to emerge in Brazil. Some academic studies (TOLEDO, 1996; PIMENTA, 1997) point to "Gaviões da Fiel" and "*Torcida Jovem do Santos Futebol Clube*" as the first *torcidas organizadas*, since they were founded in July and September 1969, respectively. However, other empirical and academic data would dispute the assertion made by Toledo (1996) and Pimenta (1997), since *Torcida Jovem do Flamengo* claims to have been founded in 1967 after a division in *Charanga Rubro-Negra*, when some members ques-

2 Some *torcidas* from Rio de Janeiro serve as an example: "*Torcida organizada do Fluminense*" (1939), "*Torcida organizada do Vasco*" (1944), "*Torcida organizada do Bangu*" (1952), and "*Torcida organizada do Botafogo*" (1957). While their names include the word "organized", considering their structures, organizations and practices they could not be seen as *torcidas organizadas* (HOLANDA, 2009). These previously mentioned groups were more similar to what we now know as *torcidas uniformizadas*. Likewise, there are now groups called "uniformized" but which are constituted as *torcidas organizadas*, such as the *Torcida Uniformizada do Palmeiras (TUP)*. Therefore, the group's organization determines how it should be called.

3 "*Hinchadas*" and "*barras*" are the local categories with which the very members of these organizations identify. Here we will use these notions instead of the media-created and stigmatizing "*barra bravas*".

tioned both its management (friendly relations among members of government and police) and its leader⁴ (HOLANDA, 2009). In the field of academic studies, in turn, Canale (2012) suggests that *Torcida Jovem da Ponte Preta* appeared in March 1969.⁵

Despite the debate about the very first *torcida organizada*, what is clear is that those organizations emerged in the context of Brazil's military dictatorship.⁶ At that time, a large part of civil society had little political participation in traditional structures while there was increasing involvement and interest in sports.

An example of such increase in participation was the emergence of *torcida organizada Gaviões da Fiel* as a form of protest against the club's president and his political management. Corinthians's fans wanted more political participation in the club and wanted to make it more democratic. Besides, the team was not having good results in sports, which increased the pressure on its leaders (TOLEDO, 1996; HOLANDA, 2009).

The reason for the appearance of *torcidas organizadas* in Brazil was fans' interest in participating more actively in the decisions of their clubs in a period when traditional participation channels were closed (PIMENTA, 1997). The foundation of "*Grêmio Recreativo Torcida Organizada Dragões da Real*" took place in this context and under a similar trend. This is one of São Paulo Futebol Clube's *torcidas organizadas* and it calls itself "*Dragões da Real*" (The Dragons of the Real). It was the result of the merger of other smaller *torcidas* in 1979-1984.

Dragões da Real was the name by which São Paulo's *torcida organizada* called itself after the merger of two *torcidas organizadas*: "*Dragões do Mais Querido*" and "*Real Força Inflamante Tricolor*". The choice of the word "*Dragões*" was due to the mystical nature of the dragon and the high number of members with Eastern background. Besides, the Dragons, according to its members, are closely related with Eastern culture. The name "*Real*", in turn, was kept from *torcida organizada "Real Força Inflamante Tricolor"*.

Meanwhile, the "*hinchadas*" sprouted in Argentina between the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s (ROMERO, 1986). Although there are still few studies on the subject, some evidence suggests that the birth of "*barras*" responds to two structural conditions of the historical period mentioned above: 1) a prevailing political culture dominated by authoritarianism in Argentina, as well as organized and institutionalized violence, collective action, prohibition and illegality, mainly due to the closure of institutional-legal democratic ways for vast segments of civil society (CAVAROZZI, 2006) and 2) progressive increase in political violence. On the other hand, in the specific field of football, successful "modernization" of sports caused increasing commodification (ROMERO, 1986). As circulation of resources increase, the dispute for them also intensified.

The *barra* of Córdoba's Club Atlético Belgrano emerges in this context in 1968 and they call themselves the *Pirates*. There are several conflicting versions about that nickname, but one element appears in almost all of them: the "pirate" character would be derived from a practice widespread among members, which consisted of looting and stealing, especially when the "*barra*" goes to different stadiums to follow their team.

4 This questioning led many members of Charanga to leave and culminated in the creation of the *Torcidas Jovens* movement, mainly during the 70s. The movement triggered the inclusion of small fan groups in emerging *Torcida Jovens*.

5 According to Canale (2012) there are two factors that may explain the constant reference to Gaviões da Fiel as the first *torcida organizada*. The first reason is that *Torcida Jovem da Ponte Preta* is organized similarly to *torcidas uniformizadas* in the state of São Paulo (such as the previously mentioned TUSP). Therefore, it can be said that the *Torcida Jovem da Ponte* was founded as a *torcida uniformizada*. The second reason is the history and representation of Gaviões da Fiel. Judging by its manifesto, impact and visibility, it is likely to have eclipsed the previous emergence of *Torcida Jovem da Ponte Preta*.

6 Brazil's dictatorship lasted from 1964 to 1985.

The *Pirates* also claim to be “Córdoba’s first *barra*” because of their early birth in comparison to other groups in the city. In its beginning, they appear linked to Peronist and unionized labor movement, with strong membership in the Alberdi neighborhood where the current stadium of club Belgrano is located.

As a first historical comparison, we might think about the following hypothesis: *torcidas organizadas* and *hinchadas* in general as well as *Dragões da Real* and *Los Piratas* in particular were born under a repressive and exclusive macro-political context. These emerging organizations were escape spaces for “doing politics” and gathering against the closure of traditional political-institutional channels. It is no coincidence that the favorable scenario for that was football, since that sport represents a structural, daily, massive, popular, public sphere in both countries, and has high capacity to produce and reproduce identity and cultural processes.

Moreover, such features allow us to hypothesize that football displayed significant barriers against control, censorship and repression by the countries’ respective dictatorial apparatuses, which does not mean that the regimes did not pervade and reconfigure the football field. Rather, they probably found more resistance and challenges there than in other societal domains.

4 STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION AND INTERNAL LOGICS: SYNCHRONOUS COMPARISON

Overall, Pimenta (1997) argues that most *torcidas organizadas*⁷ adopted institutionalized channels as their form of internal organization, and thus became bureaucratic organizations. On the one hand, this implies rules and hierarchies; on the other hand, it implies a series of functions, responsibilities and roles. This type of bureaucratic organization creates the figure of a *torcida organizada* member.

The initial procedure to become a member of *Dragões da Real* is to fill out a registration form with personal details and to pay a fee (30 *reais* for men and 15 *reais* for women). Approximately 20 days later, the person will receive a membership card and will be formally considered a *torcedor organizado* or “organized fan”. After being registered with *Dragões da Real*, members still need to register at São Paulo’s state Football Federation (FPF)⁸ in order to enter the stadium wearing the attire of an organized fan group.

There is no explicit restriction on participation in *Dragões da Real*. Men, women and anyone over 18 can be members, even in caravans that travel to root for the team. Only minors (under 18) need a formal authorization from their parents to receive a membership card. Although they are still few, there are female members in the *Dragões*, and they can even run for positions on the board, although there is no woman on the board nowadays.

According to Toledo (1996) the organization of a *torcida organizada* varies mainly according to: number of members, property and ideology. Note that political issues can change that organization, since the struggle for power can result in clearly opposed groups.

7 Even though most *torcidas organizadas* have this very bureaucratic organization, there are now groups that oppose that name and organizational model. Examples are popular groups in Rio de Janeiro, identified by Teixeira (2013) as well as in southern Brazil, in cities such as Porto Alegre and Criciúma. Those popular movements even resemble Argentina’s *hinchadas* in some aspects such as their visual-aesthetic appearance.

8 Names of all organized fans registered at the FPF can be requested by government authorities and police when there are episodes of violence. Therefore, organized fans must present their registration cards to the FPF when they enter the stadium.

Dragões da Real has had 16,000 members since it was founded in 1984. The number of members corresponds to its historical records. That means that since 1984, 16,000 people joined *Dragões*, which does not mean that they have that number of active members nowadays – they are currently about 200 people. These are the fans effectively involved in the group’s daily life (going to the stadium, attending its headquarters, helping with preparations and general organization). When it is time to go to stadiums, that number can fluctuate if the team plays at home or away. About 200 people take part in the former group and 50 in the latter.

The current internal organization of *Dragões da Real* can be schematically divided into four groups that are hierarchically structured in terms of power, but more democratically in terms of rights. The pyramid is the most relevant model to explain the asymmetries within the group, since few members in positions of leadership, power and decision-making coexist with many members in subordinate positions that do not take part in decisions.

Note that in relation to rights (mainly voting rights), *Dragões* is a democratic organization, since all those who have been members for over a year and pay their monthly fees can vote in board elections. The possibility that most members choose board members does not exist in many other *torcidas organizadas*, mainly in larger ones, because board members fear that new people might come to power and make many changes to the group (TOLEDO 1996; PIMENTA 1997).

The top *Dragões* group is composed of members of the current board, which includes up to seven people. The group is elected mainly at two different times. The first step is the election for President and Vice President by members, which takes place every four years. After the president and vice-president are elected, they start calling people they trust to serve in the board. Positions within a *torcida* are created after consensus between the president and the vice-president. This can lead to an extensive range of roles and responsibilities within the group.

The board is *Dragões’s* hard core, since it includes people who centralize power and decision-making. This group is in charge of general management and represents some sort of leadership. It organizes caravans, elects board members,⁹ represents the group before State officials, establishes and maintains relationships with other *torcidas organizadas*, holds tickets given by the club¹⁰ for matches, and organizes local offices. The board has power and defines the directions taken by the group, i. e., they are directly responsible for its general situation and actions.

The second group is the *Permanent Council*. A standing group without many changes over the years (it changes much less than the board, for instance), consisting of ten people, all men aged 28-40 with a long history or a high “concept” among the group. These members assist the current board because of their reputation and respect based on their long experience within the group. They include former presidents, vice-presidents, council members and former board members. Each participant of the Council chooses his own substitute.

The Council can help in cases of complaints, protests and disapproval towards the current board, always tending towards a “neutral” stance and thinking about “what is best” for the *torcida*. This group holds important symbolic power due to recognition and respect enjoyed by

⁹ Persons in charge of basic functions in the organization of the *torcida*, for example, taking care of musical instruments, commanding chants, opening and closing headquarters, accounting and organization of parties.

¹⁰ Note that due to many cases of violence perpetrated by *torcida organizadas*, several Brazilian clubs (e. g. Cruzeiro and São Paulo) have stopped giving free tickets to organized fans.

its members, but has no mechanism for effective action to decide on the direction taken by the *torcida*. Therefore, decisions are always up to the board.

The third group is composed of the most senior members of the *torcida* and those who attend matches and headquarters more often. It includes many members in charge of tasks and functions within the *torcida*, such as those forming the *bateria* (set of musical instruments), *puxadores* (chanting leaders) and those in charge of *bandeirões* (big flags), *faixas* (banners) and *bandeiras* (flags). This third group has about 100 members.

Finally, the fourth group includes remaining members of the *torcida organizada*, usually those who sporadically or very rarely attend *Dragons'* everyday activities. Consequently, these members have little recognition within the organization, are not usually identified as peers or may be simply unknown to members, but they still have their membership cards and enjoy the same rights as all others. Many members of this group could be called *povão*¹¹ by organized fans in the three groups mentioned above.¹²

Like most Argentinean *hinchadas*, the *Pirates* are a heterogeneous and complex organization. Their internal logic and makeup has been changing in diachronic terms, since it has historically included different leaders or “referents” as well as several factions. Internal divisions have shaped a complex organization mediated by difference and inequality that permanently oscillate between consensus and conflict – duality that often leads to violent confrontations.

Since 2010-2011, Belgrano's *hinchada* has entered a period of internal strife leading to monopolistic dominance by one faction. The segment self-styled “*Los Piratas Celestes of Alberdi*” (Alberdi's Sky Blue Pirates) and led by an old member known as “*Loco Beto*”¹³ violently expelled the other two factions identified as “*March 19*” and “*the gang of Jetón Marcos*” from the stands. Since then, the “*Alberdi Sky Blue Pirates*” faction has handled the *Pirates* by itself (CABRERA, 2013a).

However, Club Atlético Belgrano's *hinchada* is not a uniform and monolithic organization since it is still divided into small groups from different neighborhoods in Córdoba, and each of those small groups has one or more leaders who are connected in some way with the top leader.

This shows that the group's organization is strictly vertical and hierarchical in terms of both interactions between different subgroups and roles, functions and benefits that correspond to each member within the *barra*. However, a crucial fact in their internal structure is the sole authority of “*Loco Beto*” – whose domination and legitimacy are almost complete. All logistic, aesthetic, political and economic decisions depend on him.

The group's vertical internal organization is also seen in a clear division of labor. Roles and referents are assigned to the several activities: transporting “*drums*”, “*flags*” and “*curtains*” (huge flags), locations in the stands, organizing travel, resale of carnets,¹⁴ writing chants, attire

11 The word *povão* (general people) is used by organized fans to describe people who have no connection with any *torcida organizada* but sympathize with those groups. *Povão* is an alterity for organized fans as well as common fans – those without any links with *torcidas organizadas*.

12 Note also the formation of small groups that call themselves “*bondes*” (trams). These groups are spontaneously generated, with strong local or neighborhood identification (“*Bonde da leste*”, “*Bonde da norte*”, “*Bonde do centro*”, “*Bonde do ABC*”) which sometimes results in physical and symbolic disputes with *bondes* rooting for other teams over the control of a certain area or neighborhood. The number and makeup of *bondes* is not constant because their creation is autonomous. They are fluctuating subgroups that are self-created, self-governed and are independent from headquarters. In the *Dragons*, they are located within the third group (older and more frequent members).

13 The real names and nicknames of our informants have been changed to keep them anonymous.

14 Belgrano's managers give “*The Pirates*” a significant amount of free carnets to enter the stadium, whose surplus is sold to “*common fans*” who do not have tickets.

provision, negotiations with others actors involved in football (players, managers, police, etc.) among others.

Belgrano's *hinchada* is currently undergoing a process of growth. Despite its highly fluctuating number of members, we can say that they are about 200-300, although there is a hard and fixed core of no more than 80 people. All of them are men, and women are banned, although some of them were allowed to attend spaces of the *hinchada* in very few occasions (pre-match meetings, center of the popular stand, trips to play in different cities, etc.). In addition to women, children are also strongly segregated. While many young children who are relatives of members are seen within the *hinchada* during matches, at meetings or chanting in the popular stand, they are explicitly excluded from many activities such as trips, some meetings where alcohol and drugs are consumed, and violent clashes.

Another element of alterity that is systematically built into the *hinchada* is represented by the local notion of “*puto*”¹⁵ as opposed to “macho”. The identity dichotomy between “machos” and “putos” is fundamentally about one’s willingness for violent body clashes. “Machos” have “balls” because they “can stand it”, which would be expressed in their bravery, courage, physical strength and propensity for violence. “Putos”, in turn, are not “real men” since their “lack of balls” is mainly expressed in their refusal of violent clashes, they “run away” everywhere, and they do not “use their hands” (CABRERA, 2013b). The above exposes the indissoluble bond existing in the moral universe of the *hinchada* between violence and masculinity (GARRIGA ZUCAL, 2005).

The vast majority of *hinchada*’s active members are young and adult men in the 15-40 age group, approximately. A smaller group ranges from 40 to 60 years of age. We can schematically say that there are three different age groups, which also involve clearly distinct roles and hierarchies: the youngest (15-25) who usually make up the “music of the *barra*” (playing “drums” or “winds”) or carry hand flags. They occupy the lowest level in the pyramid structure. A second group of adults (25-40) represent the largest population and combine a wider range of logistic roles such as distribution of flags in the stands, carrying the *barra*’s symbolic goods (drums, flags, “curtains”, etc), the chanting from the lower stands; they may have some surplus carnets to distribute to peers or to sell. Finally, a smaller but important group includes older members about 40 to 60 years old. This last group is Loco Beto’s most trusted circle and the *barra*’s core decisions depend on them (distribution of resources, investments, political ties, friendships-feuds with other *hinchadas*, etc.)

As can be seen in the description above, internal organization is very similar for the *Pirates* and the *Dragons*. They are both highly organized groups with well defined vertical structures and hierarchies. We also found frequent internal disputes and other conflicts that result in fluctuating organizational systems, in content rather than form. The structure is maintained while names change. Both organizations have power asymmetries that are expressed in distinct logics when it comes to making decisions or guiding the group.

There are also symbolic universes of prestige, recognition and respect among members that mark not only hierarchies but also identity limits that are expressed in symbolic and material boundaries defining those who are part of the organization and those who are not. Besides,

¹⁵ The notion of “*puto*” (faggot) within the *hinchada* is linked to sexual practices, but it is not limited to that. “*Puto*” refers not only to a sexual role or orientation, but also to a reticent, evasive and pacifist predisposition in face of violent clashes. So, equating “*puto*” with homosexual is correct but reductionistic. Under the category of “*puto*”, not only homosexuals are established as an alterity, but also violent practices – *aguante*, or endurance – are confirmed as power and domination relations.

there are common instances operating as aggregating spheres for members of both groups: the club as an institution, the stadium as their territory, the very meetings as interaction scenarios in pre-established spaces, and match days as social rituals. Finally, the number of active members in both cases seems to be both fluctuating and coincident in quantitative terms.

However, differences between the two cases are as visible as complex. The main difference seems to be the *Dragons'* legal bureaucratic regime compared with the *Pirates'* informality and illegality. This difference results not only in distinct organizational structures but also in synchronic and diachronic operational logics and practices and in representations that seem to have little in common. The first thing to note is the foundation of the organization's highest authority.

Following Max Weber, we can say that legitimacy sustaining the top of each pyramid is different in each of the empirical cases analyzed. In the case of the *Dragons*, the board's legitimate domination seems to rest primarily¹⁶ on rational-legal criteria since their power, that is, "the probability of imposing one's will within a social relationship" (WEBER, 1994, p. 43), "rests on the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue command" (WEBER, 1994, p. 172). The presence of statutes, subjection to law, formally regulated functions and roles, bureaucracies and periodic and "washed" economic contributions are all elements that lead us to think in domination that is primarily legal and rational. We are also facing a collective authority (board) whose decisions are binding, which can be helped by another group of the same nature (Permanent Council).

Meanwhile, the *Pirates* are structured on a one-person authority (Loco Beto) who bases his power on a hybrid of "traditional domination" and "charismatic domination" (WEBER, 1994, p. 172). "Beto" is over 60 years old and has led the *barra* for over 30 years. He has been a member of the *hinchada* since its beginning and permanently uses oral narratives to refer to the mythical origins of the group as a source of legitimation. He historicizes a tradition through symbolic symbiosis between personal experience and the vagaries of the *Pirates*.¹⁷ His "experience" in the world of *hinchadas* stems from his survival as the highest authority since "ancient times" (WEBER, 1994, p. 180) in an environment that is represented by the "Pirates" themselves as hostile and violent.

But besides tradition, charismatic domination is built in the *Pirates*. Beto is an object of prestige, recognition and respect because features of "heroism or exemplary character" (WEBER, 1994, p. 173) are placed on him. The fact that he "is an old reference" is not enough; along that history, he must have demonstrated high possession and accumulation of the most appreciated capital among the *Pirates*: *aguante*, or endurance. Beto has been in all violent clashes experienced by the *hinchada* in the last decades, and he came out victorious in several of them – as reconstructed by the collective memory of the *hinchada*. His body literally resisted more than seven firearm shots. In the moral universe of the *Pirates*, that is irrefutable evidence of his enduring corporeality.

Another important difference lies in the mechanisms and resources from which the membership of each group is built. In the *Dragons*, the first barrier is provided by bureaucratic processes (registration forms, membership cards and registration at FPF) and there seems to

¹⁶ As is also apparent from Weberian theory, in neither case legitimate domination rests solely on that mentioned above, since these ideal types are never expressed in "pure" form in reality.

¹⁷ The symbolic and historical identification between "The Pirates" and "Loco Beto" is exemplified in the complete name of Belgrano's *hinchada* when seen in flags, graffiti, shirts, chants, etc. Its full name appears as "Alberdi's Sky Blue Pirates. The historic *barra* of Loco Beto".

be no very clear restriction on membership; men and women, adults, youth and even children can have it. Again, first-level identity limits (those who belong to it and those who do not) follow a legal bureaucratic logic.

Quite differently, the logics behind entrance in the *Pirates* are not bureaucratically materialized but respond to ordinary and extraordinary experiences: the former include daily rituals typical of *hinchada* such as attending meetings, taking part in the division of labor, going to the stadium and sharing relaxation scenarios outside the football world with other members; the latter type of experiences include mainly violent clashes. Showing “endurance” in any of these cases can often be synonymous with identity recognition within the group. Besides, Belgrano’s *hinchada* excludes women and children from many of the *barra*’s rituals.

5 FINAL THOUGHTS

We would like to conclude with some comments based on the above and which we consider vital to build a public sociology of sport in the region. First, it seems crucial to highlight the relevance of approaching sport from a sociological standpoint, since it remains a privileged field for understanding aspects, components, paradoxes and contradictions of a society, especially considering the specifics of football in Argentinean and Brazilian societies.

Secondly, we emphasize the need to encourage co-productions and academic dialogues between researchers in different contexts. Scientifically exhibiting continuities and differences between football fans at local (*hinchada* and *hinchas militantes*, *torcida organizada* and *torcida organizada uniformizada*), regional (*hinchada* and *torcida organizada*) and global (incorporating *ultras* and *hooligans*, for example) levels is essential to build comprehensive, interdisciplinary and critical academic works.

Thirdly, there is the essential task of thinking public policies for security in football fields. The starting point should be a general picture of the situation in which the specificities of each local and regional context are detailed. Simply confirming and simplifying the logic of *hinchadas* and *torcidas organizadas* leads to misdiagnoses, which result in the inefficient public policies prevailing in the region. Another vital dimension to create preventive policies should be the empowerment and participation of *hinchas* in their design, planning and execution. The *hinchas* are part of mobilized and organized civil society, and channeling those qualities to build comprehensive sports safety can be an innovative and fruitful strategy.

Finally, we want this work to encourage new horizons of analysis, which is why we expect challenges related to our subject that could not be dealt with here. On the origins of that phenomenon, it is essential to advance in accumulating, systematizing and analyzing in order to respond: Why were “football” in general and fans’ organizations in particular instrumental as “escape spaces” for gathering and collective action in contexts of restricted liberties? We must also look further into the organizational continuities and discontinuities of each case, seeking to respond to the following: What are the reasons for the bureaucratic-institutional path adopted by *torcidas organizadas*? Why is institutionalization not considered by actors in Argentinean *hinchadas*? And how do the specifics of each case relate to their notorious links with the world of violence and lawlessness? Another question that emerges after the last World Cup in Brazil in 2014 is related to the visible links between *hinchadas* and *torcidas organizadas*. What kind of reciprocity or exchanges results from these international encounters and ties? Can we think

of a transnational or regional culture of organized football fans? In sum, questions abound and it could not be different for a topic that worries, reveals, impassions and keeps its intense effect unchanged.

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