

Meanings of democracy for the subjects of Corinthians's Democracy¹

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Abstract: This research is focused on Corinthians's Democracy – a movement of a group of football players and officials of Sport Club Corinthians from 1981 to 1985 by. The purpose of this article is to examine the meanings ascribed to democracy by players, coaches and officials who were the subjects of that movement. Using literature review on democracy, two semi-structured interviews, and historical research in newspapers, we found statements provided by those subjects on how they understood democracy within Corinthians' movement. As a result, we found that responses varied both in terms of how they advocate decision-making procedures and in the content of achievements, as well as some contradictory points. Thus, no unequivocal meaning can be found for democracy in Corinthians's Democracy.

Keywords: Corinthians's Democracy. Sociology of sports. Football. Democracy.

¹Research sponsored by CAPES.

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1 INTRODUCTION²

This article is part of a larger study on so-called Corinthians's Democracy.³ Our goal is to explore the different meanings of the term "democracy" for the subjects of Corinthians's movement. The movement covers the two terms of President Waldemar Pires ahead of Corinthians, from March 1981 to March 1985. In that period, less authoritarian forms of management were established for the club and the team, allowing players' participation in decision-making processes. Moreover, Corinthians's Democracy can be considered a time for greater political awareness in football because players also participated in the campaign for direct national elections in Brazil.⁴ The late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by the rise of labor and social movements in Brazil. According to Sader (2002, p. 30), the period represented the creation of a "collective behavior to challenge the prevailing social order" with the emergence of new political parties and new social movements with distinct identities and discursive matrices. In that scenario, recognition of football players as citizens and their emergence as political subjects became possible.

In that context, Corinthians's Democracy raised theoretical and practical questions about its democratic meaning. As indicated by academic literature on that historical context, Brazil's democratic reopening was seen in distinct ways by several political actors – including those who saw democracy as an opening of the military regime – the military themselves – and those opposing

²The procedures employed in this research are in accordance with the guiding ethical principles provided for in Resolutions 196/96 and 251/97 of the National Health Council.

³The expression "Corinthians's Democracy" (*Democracia Corinthiana*) was not a collective creation of Corinthians' football players. Journalist Juca Kfourí, in a discussion about the future of the club, uttered it as if there were democracy in Corinthians. After that, Washington Olivetto, then the club's adman, began to use it to identify the moment the team was undergoing and created the "Corinthians's Democracy" brand, which became the name of its institutional newspaper, was written on T-shirts, and designated tickets for re-election of subsequent boards.

⁴The so-called "*Diretas já*" campaign demanded resumption of direct elections for President. It gained momentum after a bill with that aim was presented in Congress – known as Dante de Oliveira – in order to re-establish direct elections and end the indirect electoral college (BERTONCELO, 2007).

the regime – uniting the regime’s “internal” opposition to more radical opposition (which joined at the political demonstrations of the campaign for “Direct elections now!”).⁵ Within that context, Corinthians’s Democracy also contained different views on democracy.

Therefore, we will try to understand the views of democracy that circulated in Corinthians’s movement. That will allow us to answer two questions: i) Which were the meanings understood and intended for and with the movement?; ii) Does the plurality of forms of participation forged by the movement allow us to distinguish Corinthians’s Democracy as a participatory and democratic movement?

Addressing these issues means thinking of a way to link sports and politics in a particular situation of Brazilian football: Corinthians’s Democracy. In that juncture, the meanings of participation that were promoted, especially for football players, created a historical window for the constitution of those athletes as subjects no longer deprived of their right to power. We thus contribute to research on the sports field, focusing on the perspective of power relations within that field.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAY

We conducted our research by contextualizing the object in order to draw the nexuses between the historical and sociological perspectives. Here, we will work on the speeches and understandings of Corinthians’s Democracy not as an isolated fact, but as a product and the subject of a historical time.

In addition to literature review, we conducted semi-structured interviews with two subjects of that period – the club’s president

⁵Our main reference for understanding the plurality and complexity of political meanings of the 1980s were Florestan Fernandes’s studies (FERNANDES, 1980, 1982, 1986). Other references also indicated plurality of meanings for participation (Bertoncello, 2007); emerging social movements (Paoli, 1995); discourse and action matrices (Sader, 2002).

Waldemar Pires and football player Wladimir.⁶ Another source of statements on Corinthians's Democracy was the research in sports supplements of major newspapers in São Paulo (*O Estado de São Paulo* and *Folha de São Paulo*), from March 1981 to March 1985. We also reviewed *Placar* sports magazine during that period, since it used to have high interest in the movement, expressed in several editorials. Those materials were chosen because they were the main references in the sports press and the main newspapers in the state of São Paulo, and because they contemplate distinct views supporting and opposing Corinthians's movement. After setting aside all the news about Corinthians, we selected those containing accounts and testimonies from players, coaches and club officials expressing how those subjects understood democracy in Corinthians's experience. After that stage, we categorized their responses in order to elucidate the most recurrent meanings about the concept of Corinthians's Democracy.

For this analysis, we relied on remarks made by historian Jacques Le Goff (2003). According to the author, "considering that every document is true and false at the same time, the point is to understand production conditions and to show to what extent the document is an instrument of power" (LE GOFF, 2003 p. 525). Therefore, the choice of sports publications in our research played the role of ordering recurring ideas and conflicting opinions on the subject. The categorization of meanings attributed to democracy in Black-and-White⁷ movement was carried out as the research literature suggested to distinguish them. Next, we divided the article into five topics: the first one covers conceptual definitions of democracy in academic literature; the second and third topics present two broad views in which different meanings of democracy defined by Corinthians's subjects fit, either as institutional procedures or as

⁶Semi-structured interviews were conducted with open-ended questions such as: "How would you define Corinthians's Democracy?"; "What were the movement's accomplishments?"; and "Which rights did Corinthians Democracy achieve?". The interviews were conducted in 2012 in places chosen by the respondents. Furthermore, we interviewed only those two subjects, since they provided us with material that reaffirmed what had been collected in newspapers and magazines.

⁷The two colors of Corinthians's uniform.

values – which are two complementing dimensions of the concept; the fourth item exposes a contradiction of that democracy. The last item presents the final considerations of this research.

3 ON THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Moraes (2001) resumed Norberto Bobbio in his reflections on the meaning of democracy, since “political language is notoriously ambiguous. Most terms used in political discourse have several meanings”, as they “underwent a long series of historical changes” (BOBBIO, 1986 in MORAES, 2001, p. 16.). Therefore, the concept of democracy can be understood in many ways, adding “distinct and even opposing ideas to its semantic field” (MORAES, 2001, p. 16).

However, the years of military dictatorship in Brazil have raised an unequivocal expectation with regard to democracy. The demand for it, contained in the agenda of the campaign for “Direct Elections Now!”, converged toward a supposedly universal direction, homogenizing the different meanings contained in democratic aspirations of popular, labor and partisan movements. That homogenization gains ground in the theoretical debate with the text by Carlos Nelson Coutinho (1979), where the author states that democracy in the capitalist system would play the fundamental role of building the political assumptions of socialism. The author acknowledged that there were differences in views and meanings of democracy between political groups claiming to represent the people’s interests. However, he stresses that democracy is “that which unites all opposition members, i. e. the struggle for a regime of formal-political liberties that puts a definite end to the regime of exception” (COUTINHO, 1979, p. 34).

According to Coutinho (1979), in Brazil, the universal value of democracy is identified with the consensus built from the liberties granted in the process of opening underwent by the military regime, which culminated in the campaign “Direct Elections Now!”. He says that no responsible popular group could “question

the importance of that uniting around the struggle for democratic liberties as those are defined, among others, in the current program of MDB”⁸ (Coutinho, 1979, p. 34). This view is challenged by Moraes, since no univocal, universal and/or consensual value can be assigned to democracy. He also understands that within the process of demanding democracy in Brazil, the meanings and directions intended with such a struggle were not unanimous.⁹ Recognizing the “universal value” of democracy did not make its meaning more explicit nor did it increase its status as truth; it only showed a consensus with no inherent practical content (MORAES, 2001, p. 16).

This reflection draws attention to the different meanings of democracy. Thus, while we understand it as “form”, that is, change or opening in political relations, we have to observe the consequences of that process, that is, the content to be advocated. Demonstrating that, Moisés’s (2010) research on the analysis of democracy in different speeches and population segments examined the different understandings of democracy by Brazilians. In that study, he concluded that the definition of democracy expressed by the people “is associated, on the one hand, with its normative support for the regime, that is, to the ideal it involves, and on the other hand, with expectations it raises about its institutions’ practical performance as means to realize those ideals” (MOISÉS, 2010, p. 302).

Next, we will show the meanings of democracy ascribed by subjects in Corinthians’s Democracy. The speeches were divided in two categories: procedural terms and values related to the concept.¹⁰

⁸Brazilian Democratic Movement, an opposition party during the military regime.

⁹Florestan Fernandes lists three segments that advocated different directions for political reopening: 1) the military within the regime, who sought the transition as relaxation of the dictatorship; 2) PMDB, that the author saw as the “liberal” segment of the dictatorship, which, as internal opposition to the regime, realized that “their revolutionary ardor would yield greater dividends if they continued ahead of the government” (FERNANDES, 1986, p. 19); 3), the popular and labor political movements, which could take advantage of the “resentment against the dictatorship and the general awareness of the need for deep changes as a starting point for a structural transformation of society” (FERNANDES, 1986, p. 28).

¹⁰We should clarify that such categories are analytical. There is no absolute separation between the definitions, so that they are rather mixed than different. However, in order to organize the meanings of democracy achieved in research, we chose to differentiate them into categories.

In the former case, we look at how democracy was understood as an operating procedure and how that *modus operandi* was implemented. In that case, we are referring to the establishment of basic conditions for a democratic operation, defined by Moisés (2010) as democratic competition, the right to protest, and free regular, open and competitive elections. Secondly, we analyze the values contained in democracy, based on how it was understood in terms of its most important principles. This perspective, complementary to the former, is understood as the achievement of expected contents and results, in which dimensions such as respect for civil liberties and political and social rights are underscored (DIAMOND, MOLINO in MOISÉS, 2010). However, another dimension – opposing the others – was found as a response, representing a time of contradiction of Corinthians's democratic experience.

4 DEMOCRACY AS PROCEDURE AND CLUB MANAGEMENT

In 1989, according to Moisés (2010), 43.9% of Brazilians said they preferred democracy to dictatorship as a political regime.¹¹ In the case of Corinthians's football players, there were great expectations for democracy, as demonstrated in late 1982, with the statements about winning the São Paulo state championship and the 1983 elections for the club's presidency.¹²

However, before those circumstances, in 1981, Corinthians's president Waldemar Pires already announced that his administration would adopt operational procedures that he considered more democratic. In that year, he called such changes "opening" because of its decentralization and closeness among players in order to

¹¹Moisés (2010) based his work on data of the survey "Democratização e Cultura Política". Besides Brazilians who preferred democracy, 19.4% preferred dictatorship, 21.3% were indifferent, and 15.7% did not answer. The survey was conducted within the overall landscape of the 1980s, marked by the clash between democracy and dictatorship. As a brief comparison of the change in the scenario, the data in 2006 were: 71.4% of people preferred democracy while 14.2% would choose a dictatorship, and only 6.9% were indifferent.

¹²Newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*'s headlines for the 1982 state championship were: "Victory of Democracy, says Socrates" (VITÓRIA, 1982b). The newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* reported "The victory of opening" and "End of closed training camps" (VITÓRIA, 1982a; ELIMINAÇÃO, 1982).

build a management style including specialized professionals to head the club's different departments (ISIDORO, 1981).

In 1983, after the club's internal election, Waldemar Pires said that "decentralization [would] be strengthened [...]. Election results support decentralized administration [...] and they allow us to deepen democratic change" (VITÓRIA, 1983). That view of democracy as "decentralization" authorized vice-presidents to autonomously organize their areas of competence. That conception has two consequences. According to Santos (1990), the first one was that decentralizing the club's management meant to make it more compatible with the professionalized operation of a company. According to president Waldemar Pires, deepening democracy focuses precisely on that aspect. It had a particular meaning, understood by him as the movement undertaken to professionalize management, since its result was that not all decisions were centralized on the president, thus ensuring relative autonomy for each department.

This form of organization of the club, conceived based on the establishment of a specialized bureaucracy, has no direct or necessary relationship to democracy, even though Waldemar Pires called it so. In Weberian theory, the establishment of a bureaucracy is a necessary condition for an ideal type of legitimate domination – legal rational domination. As domination, the author understands the "probability of finding obedience to specific (or all) commands within a certain group of people", assuming the formation of an authority that has the power to command (WEBER, 1999a, p. 139). The legitimate character is given when there is acceptance of domination by the dominated (WEBER, 1999a). In the case of rational/legal domination, "the individual holding power of authority is legitimized by that system of rational rules, and its power is legitimate since it is exercised in accordance with rules" (WEBER, 1999b, pp. 197-198). As shown by Weber's reasoning, the conformation of a bureaucracy is related primarily to that form of domination, which, in Corinthians's case, had a legitimate character before the group of players.

Secondly, the football department's autonomy enabled Adilson Monteiro Alves – vice-president for football (since November 1981) – to establish votes among players and the coaching staff to make decisions. In that case, the positive results such as winning the São Paulo state championship also helped win the support of the deliberative council for Alves's management style. Thus, rather than an unconditional defense of the model implemented in the football department, Corinthians's president emphasized the benefits it promoted, which ensured Alves's stay.

Adilson Monteiro Alves explains the emergence of democracy based on a proposition of his own in a 1981 meeting: "I proposed: let's discuss it from there. And they accepted. And then it got going" (TRAVAGLINI, 1983b). Players' participation is seen as something that did not emerge as a group claim, but rather as a suggestion made by the club's official, incorporated after a consultation with players to endorse his method of work.

One of the leaders of the movement, Sócrates, advocated voting as the main aspect of Corinthians's democratic experience, as a concrete democracy action (SÓCRATES; GOZZI, 2002, p. 67). For him, that was a process of political education that would culminate in a privileged space for citizenship for athletes:

Any issue was taken to vote. Anyone could submit a matter to be voted. When should we travel? What time should we travel? Where should we be for training camp? Everything was discussed. [...] Gradually, we started to show people with whom we related professionally that voting was fundamental (SÓCRATES; GOZZI, 2002, p 67-68).

Democratic experience came true for Socrates in the discussion of "all matters, from those related to the profession to the country's current situation" (SÓCRATES; GOZZI, 2002, p 67). The choice of a player as the team's coach was considered the apex by Socrates, "being the strongest proof that democracy [was] established" (SÓCRATES; GOZZI, 2002, p 67). Voting allowed to experience democracy in its participatory form, according to which

decisions were directly made by actors themselves (BOBBIO, 2000).¹³

However, even though voting procedures were very important, it is prudent to say that, according to Moraes (2001), democracy cannot be seen as an absolute value in itself. The author criticizes Coutinho's (1979) view of democracy as universal by saying that every democratic form inevitably has a practical content that should be analyzed, in addition to a model for political operation.

Wladimir's speech points in that direction, at the time of his joint election with Zé Maria, a member of the club's council, when he described this particular election as an aspect of co-management that was taking its first steps. For him, it is precisely that point that could advance the democratic experiment (A DEMOCRACIA..., 1983b), since

it provided [them] with the possibility of further strengthening [they] to participate with the club's board in the future. With this, [they] could assert a more effective, more active participation of players in Corinthians's policies [...] allowing discussions to be free and all voices be heard without discrimination (VITÓRIA, 1983).

In this case, Wladimir's statements to *Placar* Magazine, which emphasized the aspect he called "co-management", show that he saw the democratic meaning of the experience as participation in the deliberative council, because it is there that players would be representing their interests within the club's power struggle. So, only the votes within the football department, for the player, were not enough. Although the above aspects referred to democracy procedures, it is co-management that would better fit in a more proceduralist view in which competition, participation and peaceful challenge to power became possible (MOISÉS, 2010).

¹³According to Bobbio (2000, p. 18), there are differences between the way democracy was thought, which he called "ideal", and how it was constituted in reality, as "raw material". One of them is that in its ideal form, democracy was participatory, direct – an element that, in raw material, became impossible in that governance system. Thus, participatory democracy has historically existed only in specific moments or spaces.

5 LIBERTIES AND RESPONSIBILITY AS VALUES OF DEMOCRACY

Moisés's (2010) studies show that in 1989, 40.4% of Brazilians associated democracy to values related to liberties. According to the author's analysis, the justification for that percentage is that the perceived lack of liberties at the time influenced answers. As in Moisés's research, values related to liberties were present in concepts enunciated by the subjects of Corinthians's Democracy, but they included a consequence: responsibility.

According to Adilson Monteiro Alves, "there was no absolute authority, but rather freedom and responsibility" (CASAGRANDE, 1983). For that leader, the meaning of democracy can be found in his answer to *Placar* magazine's question about the possibility that players decided that pre-match training camps were not needed. To this question, Alves answered: "Then it is no longer democracy, it becomes anarchy, they become a group of incompetent and irresponsible people. Responsibility is a foundation of democracy" (A DEMOCRACIA..., 1983c). Wladimir said that freedom arising out of that process allowed players to decide about their leisure and they could exercise it openly as long as they took responsibility for the consequences.¹⁴

A view that also covers the issue of responsibility, although more coercive, is that of coach Mário Travaglini. According to him, the democratic meaning was related to his work style, recognized by the fact that he did not scream, he respected and listened to players' views about game tactics. According to the coach, that was the essence of democracy, that "[he] implemented, and Adilson came soon after that". According to him, his way of working meant that "[he was] not paternalistic. [He was] coherent. [...] That's democracy, after all. Giving conditions for the group to control itself for its own benefit" (A DEMOCRACIA..., 1983a).

¹⁴In an interview on March 10, 2012, Wladimir said that "it was wonderful because we knew that if we lost, we were done, it would end. People would blame it all on lack of training camps. Players would finish training and stay at Bar da Torre, down in São Jorge Park, and have a beer – Sócrates, Juninho, Casagrande. We did everything openly, we had nothing to hide from anyone".

This passage connects his democratic way of working with his conception of responsibility.

Linking responsibility to democracy was not exclusive of Corinthians's phenomenon. Democratic theory authors such as Guillermo O'Donnell (2011) related the idea to that type of regime. For the author, a voting mechanism is not enough to establish clean competitions for the exercise of power. Other freedom devices are needed, such as freedom of speech. However, the existence of some liberties can cancel others, so that in order to avoid that, judging limits are set on them (O'Donnell, 2011). It is by establishing those limits, both internal and external, that we can find the definitions of democracy listed above. They support the liberties and are part of the democratic game, in which "a commitment is necessary to the understanding that man (*sic*) is or can be converted into a responsible agent, able to understand and meet the norms and to be responsible for his faults" (FULLER, 1994 in O'DONNELL, 2011, p. 44).

Thus, responsibility emphasized as a complement to freedom is a component of democracy. Such elements were constantly emphasized by subjects of Corinthians's movement to differentiate themselves from the idea – then current – relating democracy to the more mundane sense of anarchy – as is evident in Adilson's speech opening this section.¹⁵ In a military regime context, liberties were restricted, so experiencing them could raise questions about their contents, fostering mistaken views about it. Hence the need to constantly emphasize that subjects of right are also subjects of duty, so that this view needed to be publicized and accepted, strengthening an idea of democracy that does not opposed order.

6 CONTRADICTIONS OF A DEMOCRACY

The distinct conceptions of democracy can complement each other, but this is not a necessary relationship, so that they may

¹⁵The speech is as follows: "Then there is no longer democracy, it becomes anarchy, they become a group of incompetent and irresponsible guys. Responsibility is a foundation of democracy."

be even opposites (MOISÉS, 2010) as occurred in Corinthians's Democracy. Some outside opinions help us to understand the different meanings that were presented to it. A newspaper *Folha São Paulo*'s editorial focusing on another aspect as a metaphor of reality, said that Corinthians's experience expressed something different:

What is actually happening at Corinthians is simply the attempt to replace the boarding school discipline to which the players were subjected – there as in all clubs – with an adult regime, that is, one based on self-discipline. And linked to that, there is an experience of participation by athletes in the team they are part of (EDITORIAL, 1983).

This idea of opposing forms of discipline can be analyzed based on Foucault's views. The author states that discipline is a way of exercising power, and power is a relation of forces. Thus, even if an externally imposed mode is replaced with a more internalized one, the purpose of democracy guided by discipline is that players or citizens learn and submit to forms of exercising power and unequal power relations (KOHAN, 2003). Approaching this point of view, the editorial continued expanding that idea: "Realistically, Corinthians's Democracy would have been a success if it proved that players' dignity is not incompatible with good management or sports discipline" (EDITORIAL, 1983).

Coach Mário Travaglini, whose actions were guided by respect for players and the need for responsibility, asserted that such style was nothing new to his work: "This democratic and open experience we had this year and a half was not new to me. I've always acted like that in Palmeiras, Vasco da Gama and Fluminense" (TRAVAGLINI, 1983b). In his speech, the coach expressed that at first there was nothing that made Corinthians's democracy particular or exceptional. However, that form of exercising power, in his view, ended up escaping his domain, because "when the motto 'democracy' was launched in the club's March election, the thing opened even more and of course there was more pressure. [...] I myself felt I was starting to wear out, with too

much demand, and perhaps asking too much” (OS TÉCNICOS..., 1983). It is evident that, for him, democracy was not exactly the way he planned to define his work, since he resigned immediately after such designation.

Jorge Vieira, another coach working during Corinthians’s Democracy, was a bit more incisive than Mário Travaglini. He claimed that discipline should be present in democracy and related it to hierarchy. Since he was hired by the club, he established contract bases making it clear that he would not lose the power to decide on players: “I am a man of dialogue, but everything has a limit. There is the last word, the power of decision, which belongs to the coach. There has to be discipline, respect and hierarchy. Without that, there is no progress” (JORGE, 1983). He said: “I make my democracy. I determine what should be done, and players have been following it” (E A DEMOCRACIA..., 1983).

Although Jorge Vieira accepted discussions and votes, his transcribed speeches show a view of democracy in which hierarchy was absolute, since it did not allow challenges to authority. When he says that he defined his democracy, he denies the existence of pre-defined procedures that would organize its operation and guarantee it. In this case, he takes control of the team so as to cancel participatory democracy, promoting personalistic management that is actually closer to an autocracy than to a democracy.

The contradictions between Jorge Vieira’s and Mario Travaglini’s views were explicit on one occasion when Sócrates arrived late for a training session. Jorge Vieira tried to act according to his hierarchy-based democracy, demanding punishment for the player. In that episode, he asked the club’s board to establish a table of fines for such violations, which was confirmed by Adilson Monteiro Alves in an interview on *Placar Magazine*. The vice president said there was regulation providing for those punishments, “discussed by the group and approved by players” (TIMÃO, 1983). However, player Biro-Biro said he was not aware of the regulation or the meeting that had approved it (TIMÃO, 1983). That episode demonstrates one of

the contradictions established during the Corinthians's Democracy period, confirming the authoritarian management view found in Jorge Vieira's and Mario Travaglini's speeches.¹⁶

This example also demonstrates an undemocratic moment of Corinthians's experience. As pointed out by Coutinho (1979), in a broad definition, democracy is understood as a form based "on a dialectics of pluralism," that is, on the existence of collective subjects' autonomy (COUTINHO, 1979, p. 40). This element was lost in the contradictions of Corinthians's experience, which opposed its democratic meaning. As much as those views were restricted to coaches, they ultimately organized the team and, as in the emblematic case of Casagrande, they had the right to cut players from games.

7 FINAL REMARKS

The different meanings obtained from subjects' speech on Corinthians's Democracy are mainly linked to democratic procedures, in which a significant change was perceived. That change – the introduction of voting – was allowed by the autonomy granted to the football department. Other speeches show views related to the values of democracy, such as freedom – the result of the long period in Brazilian history when they were restricted – and strengthen the scenario of paternalism in football where players were devoid of their status as political subjects. Still, we realize that the movement's concepts and practice sometimes became contradictory.

We can understand that democracy contained in Corinthians's movement was not absolutely opposed to unequal forms of power historically established in football, which made players into

¹⁶Another moment of contradiction in Corinthians's Democracy occurred in the case of Jorge Vieira's dismissal, when he attempted to exclude Casagrande from the group that was going to play a match, but since he was not backed by Adilson Monteiro Alves, he eventually resigned. In that episode, the board decided to punish Casagrande, suspending him from the team for two months and then putting him for sale, which upset the player. The hiring of goalkeeper Leão, whose decision was made without the participation of the majority of the group of players, also illustrates the limits and contradictions of the movement's meanings of democracy.

atomized subjects and the weakest links in that structure. As much as their participation was allowed – considered democratic – it did not happen based on more radical forms of power division such as participation of more players in the club's deliberative council or other power instances. Therefore, participation can also be understood not as an alternative or radical transformation in democracy, but as a complement in quantitative terms, without concretely changing the established power structure, since, as in some representative regimes, even though the possibility of being part of the choice of representatives increased, that does not necessarily mean a corresponding increase in individuals' power to take part in decisions (BOBBIO; MATTEUCCI; PASQUINO, 1986).

Although it had contradictions, the plurality contained in Corinthians's Democracy allows us to envision a time when sports and politics established an exceptional relationship. In this case, such relationship was not directed towards manipulating the sport in favor of one or other political regime,¹⁷ but it rather allowed players to place themselves as historical and political subjects. Above all, that experience has brought the possibility of some form of players' participation in power, either internal to the club, to training, to the right of opinion or even for them to become aware of and exercise their role as citizens, and that is a possible legacy that Corinthians's Democracy left to Brazilian football.

¹⁷In Brazilian physical education in the mid-1980s, there was a strong debate criticizing high-competition sports due to their instrumentation to serve to maintain the status quo. Such theorists, influenced by critical theory, denounced the way sports were used to strengthen the values of the capitalist system (BRACHT, 1986). Such criticism also came from those who reported the role played by Brazilian physical education, through its hegemonic sports content, to support the military dictatorship (CASTELLANI FILHO, 1988). Other authors have also addressed similar issues, such as Ghiraldelli Junior (1988) and Oliveira (1993).

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Received on: April 25, 2013

Approved on: September 16, 2013