

# Football and Nation Building in Colombia

The Only Thing That Unites Us

Peter J. Watson



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Football and Nation Building  
in Colombia (2010–2018)

*The Only Thing That Unites Us*

Peter J. Watson

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# Glossary

- Adefútbol – Asociación Colombiana de Fútbol (Colombian Football Association): original governing body of football in Colombia, eventually replaced by Dimayor and the FCF
- AUC – Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia): paramilitary organization
- Bacrim – shortened form of *bandas criminales*; name for criminal groups that often had paramilitary origins
- barra* – an organized group of fans of a football club
- barrismo social* – the movement of social and community development acts carried out by the *barras* of football clubs in Colombia
- barrista* – a member of a *barra*
- Casa de Nariño (Palacio de Nariño) – the presidential palace of Colombia
- CLSCCF – Comité Local para la Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol (Local Committee for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football)
- CNSCCF – Comisión Nacional para la Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol (National Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football)
- COC – Comité Olímpico Colombiano (Colombian Olympic Committee)
- Coldeportes – Departamento Administrativo del Deporte, la Recreación, la Actividad Física y el Aprovechamiento del Tiempo Libre (Administrative Department of Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity and Exploitation of Free Time); as of 13 June 2019, Coldeportes became the Sports Ministry
- Colombia Joven – Colombian Administrative Department that administers matters related to Colombian children and adolescents
- Colombianitos – Colombian NGO
- Comandos Azules – *barra* of Millonarios Fútbol Club, a professional football team from Bogotá

CONMEBOL – Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (South American Football Confederation); governing body of football in South America

Con-Texto Urbano – Colombian NGO and member of the Red Gol y Paz network

Copa América – South American football competition for national teams

Copa Libertadores – South American club football competition

Costeño – name for an inhabitant or person originating from the Colombian Caribbean coast

CTSCCF – Comisión Técnica Nacional de Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol (National Technical Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football)

Deporte Social Comunitario – Social and Community Sport Section of Coldeportes

Dimayor – División Mayor del Fútbol Profesional Colombiano (Major Division of Colombian Professional Football); organization responsible for professional football leagues and tournaments in Colombia

El Dorado – name given to the first years of the Colombian professional league organized by Dimayor (1949–1954)

ELN – Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army); a revolutionary left-wing armed group in Colombia

ESDEPAZ – Escuelas Deportivas para la Paz (Sport Schools for Peace); Coldeportes' project for sports schools with an additional focus on SDP; established originally in the departments of Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca

ESMAD – Escuadrones Móviles Antidisturbios (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron)

*estratos sociales* – classification of social classes in Colombia (from one to six)

ETCR (formerly ZVTN) – Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation); FARC demobilization and transition camps established after the peace agreement

FARC – formerly the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia); from 27 August 2017 the name changed to the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (Common Alternative Revolutionary Force) as FARC became a political party following the peace agreement

FCF – Federación Colombiana de Fútbol (Colombian Football Federation); the governing body of football in Colombia, responsible for national men's and women's teams

FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association; international governing body for world football

- FJMBN – Fundación Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto; NGO set up to promote peace and coexistence between Colombian *barras* and *barrismo social* following the murder of an América fan whose name is commemorated in the foundation name
- Fútbol Con Corazón – Colombian NGO; member of the Gol y Paz network
- GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH; German government agency for international development
- Gol y Paz network – NGO network for football-based SDP projects in Colombia; currently comprising eleven member NGO organizations
- Goles en Paz – project launched in Bogotá to try to end violence between *barras* of Santa Fe and Millonarios
- Golombiao – football-based SDP campaign launched in 2003 by Colombia Joven
- Guardia Albi-Roja Sur – *barra* of Santa Fe, a professional football team from Bogotá
- Holocausto Norte – *barra* of Once Caldas, a professional football team from Manizales
- Los del Sur – *barra* of Nacional, a professional football team from Medellín
- M-19 – Colombian left-wing guerrilla group
- MDGs – Millennium Development Goals; a series of eight development goals for the world established by the UN in 2000
- NGO – non-governmental organization
- NVivo – a qualitative data analysis software package used to analyze speech and tweet data
- PAHD – Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado (Programme for Humanitarian Attention to Demobilized Persons)
- Paisa – name for someone coming from the department of Antioquia
- PDD – Plan Decenal del Deporte, la Recreación, la Educación Física y la Actividad física, para el Desarrollo Humano, la Convivencia y la Paz, 2009–2019 (The Ten-Year Plan for Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity, for Human Development, Coexistence and Peace)
- PDSCCF – Plan Decenal de Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol, 2014–2024 (Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football)
- Poder del Fútbol – survey carried out as part of the PDSCCF
- Promotores y monitores – sport and recreation coaches employed by Coldeportes to coach and promote sport, physical activity and recreation in the ZVTN/ETCR and surrounding local communities

Rolo – name for someone from Bogotá

SDP – Sport for Development and Peace

SDP IWG – Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, set up by the UN

*Selección* – the national football team; mostly referring to the Colombian national team in this book

Supérate Intercolegiados – Colombian national multisport schools competition

Tiempo de Juego – Colombian NGO and member of the Gol y Paz network

UN – United Nations

UNOSDP – United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace

Valluno – name for someone from the Valle del Cauca

ZVTN – Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización (Transitional Pathway Zones for Normalization); FARC demobilization and reintegration camps; the name would change to ECTR



# Introduction

On 5 July 2014, President Juan Manuel Santos gave his first televised address to the Colombian nation following his re-election on 15 June. After a video featuring the national anthem, replete with images of Colombia's geographical, demographic and cultural diversity as well as national symbols and monuments, Colombians watching across the country listened to Santos who was dressed in the yellow national football shirt. For the next five minutes and twenty seconds, Santos used the important occasion of his first speech in his second term as president to talk about how football could benefit the nation. His message was clear:

From henceforth, I invite those who supported our proposals, but also those who voted for other options or those who did not vote, to unite towards the construction of a just peace, a peace with truth, a peace with reconciliation ... a peace with unity. We can achieve everything, everything, if we work like the Colombian national football team – united for a country! This is the great lesson that we were taught by those admirable Colombians, those great sportsmen and great human beings who represented us in the World Cup. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014g)<sup>1</sup>

Santos made a strident call for peace and national unity, linking the characteristics, effort and style of the men's national team with those of Colombia and Colombians as a whole. The national team, through Santos's rhetoric, became metonymic of the nation, representative of a brighter future, of what could be achieved with unity of purpose, determination and talent. Peace, unity and football were closely linked.

The Colombian national men's football team had just been knocked out of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, losing 1–2 in the quarterfinals to the hosts, in a match most Colombians feel they were robbed after a 'goal' by captain

1 All translations from Spanish by the author. All quotations from speeches and tweets by Santos and from laws and public policies have been translated from the original Spanish. This is also the case for quotations from academic work originally in Spanish.

Mario Yepes was disallowed.<sup>2</sup> It was the best ever performance by Colombia in a World Cup. In their four previous appearances (in 1962, 1990, 1994 and 1998, respectively) Colombia had only reached the second round once, in 1990, following a famous 1–1 draw with eventual winners West Germany before a disappointing loss to Cameroon. In 2014, Colombia beat Greece 3–0, the Côte d’Ivoire 2–1 and Japan 4–1 in the first round, results achieved with some at times dazzling and imaginative football, and, as second-leading goal scorers in the competition after their second round 2–0 win against Uruguay, were one of the most attractive teams to watch for the neutral. The team won the Fair Play Award, their playmaker James Rodríguez was the top scorer and breakout star of the competition and his spectacular goal against Uruguay won the FIFA Puskás Award for goal of the year. The lead up to the competition coincided with the final stages of the presidential election, and football and peace dominated the political and social arena. Football fever and optimism gripped the nation, as it was the first time that the national team had qualified for the World Cup since 1998. Santos attempted to translate this positivity and excitement into similar feelings for his political project of peace with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) (FARC). Negotiations were ongoing in Havana, Cuba, but the country was divided over the process, and so peace became the defining issue of the election. Both Santos and his principal rival, Óscar Iván Zuluaga, professed their support for the national team alongside their policy messages as the election and Colombia’s first match of the World Cup versus Greece approached. Colombia won the game 3–0 with a confident display of attacking football featuring joyous, coordinated dancing celebrations from the players after each goal. Colombians celebrated this convincing victory, and Santos was duly elected. Though Santos does not mention the impact of the *Selección’s* success on his election victory in his autobiography (Santos 2019), his director of communications, Juan Carlos Torres, believed that the victory and national happiness that it engendered contributed to Santos’s win: ‘I believe that the good performance of the National team in the World Cup and the use of sporting metaphors in the President’s speeches influenced, to some extent, Santos’ victory in the second round of the elections’ (personal interview 14 December 2017).

The use of sporting metaphors and football-based sporting nationalism was not limited to the re-election campaign and the 2014 World Cup but was used on every occasion possible. For example, following his televised speech, Santos reiterated the message in the installation of Congress on 20 July 2014, proclaiming:

Those guys taught us the greatest lesson: that everything, everything can

<sup>2</sup> The hashtag #EraGoldeYepes (#ItWasAGoalByYepes) trended at the time, and still is resuscitated on anniversaries and at the time of other national football team controversies.

be achieved if we work united for a country! They taught us that it is worth dreaming because we can make dreams reality. They showed us that we are not shackled to the chains of the past and that it is time to build the future that we want and deserve. (*El Universal* 2014)

This book argues that this was a continuous discourse strategy, relying on moments of excessive patriotism engendered by football success to foster and strengthen emotional and psychological linkages between citizen and nation, in order to gain support for a ‘New Colombia’ of peace and unity. This strategy was built on the President’s understanding, and the population’s acceptance, of football’s power as a unifying symbol and activity in Colombia, one of very few with the power to override the many divides that have fragmented the nation and impeded the construction of a unified nation-state. However, unlike other times when football nationalism has been deployed by Colombian or other Latin American leaders, this was not solely a rhetorical strategy, nor was it limited to speeches. Football was not only used as a strategy to gain popular support nor as a political soporific or masking device, as has been the case in other examples of sporting nationalism. It targeted factors at the heart of Colombia’s nation-building problems and national divisions and was an active rather than purely symbolic agent for change at micro, meso and macro levels.

This book investigates how and why football was deployed by the Santos government towards nation building during his presidency. It analyzes the three prongs of the Santos government strategy, namely: 1) presidential rhetoric about football in official speeches and Twitter broadcasts, 2) football-specific legislation and public policies and 3) government-organized Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) campaigns. It argues that football was a tool deployed constantly in diverse ways to target and remedy the factors that have destabilized and fragmented the sense of nation in Colombia, and in more deliberate, nuanced and progressive ways than had been attempted before, certainly in Colombia. Football, for instance, was positioned by the Santos government through rhetoric, legislation and SDP projects to tackle issues such as reducing the violence that have destabilized and fragmented communities across the nation, violence that have had a formative and transformative effect on national, regional, local and individual identities, as well as to reach out to include previously marginalized or excluded groups in the national territory. Football was used for aims such as these not just by Santos and Coldeportes,<sup>3</sup> the administrative department for sport, but by a wide variety of government ministries, administrative departments and agencies, including Colombia Joven, the Interior Ministry, the Colombian

3 Coldeportes became a full Ministry, known as Mindeporte, in June 2019, under the Duque presidency. Throughout this book I shall refer to it as Coldeportes as it was known during the Santos government.

Foreign Ministry, the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization, the Ministry for Health and Social Protection and the Unit for Victims.

The Santos government reliance on and deployment of football for nation building was the most concerted and multi-faceted project so far attempted by politicians in Latin America. Sport, and football in particular, has often served political leaders across Latin America. It has been used as a projection of the nation's modernization by the likes of Médici in Brazil, with stadium-building projects and the national football team success announcing Brazil's global position, and in Mexico with the hosting of the Olympics and World Cups. It has been used as a soporific to mask internal problems and State terror by the Argentinian military junta, and sporting success has been celebrated by a range of political leaders as evidence of a nation moving forward, and as an excuse for a nation to unite behind their sporting ambassadors. Rhetoric has been accompanied across Latin America by infrastructure projects, funding for clubs and physical education, but it has not been put to use in such a systematic way as in Colombia to address the causes and effects of national conflict and division, and to build peace in a post-conflict State. The Colombian national men's team was projected as a potent symbol of the Colombian collective, and a way in which to include previously excluded members of the territory. Football was strengthened as a time and space for Colombians to connect or re-connect with the nation, a way in which Colombians could recognize one another in their 'Colombianness', and accept the belonging of other Colombians within the nation.

A sense of Colombianness has been difficult to establish in a country of strong regional identities that have been privileged over national identifications, and polarizing divisions. The men's national football team has often served as the most potent national unifying symbol, positioned by politicians and the media as exemplifying what Colombian characteristics are, and where a representative and recognizable Colombian identity can be found. Football also serves to connect State and citizens, not just psychologically, but also allowing the State to establish a visible presence in vulnerable and marginalized peripheral communities. With football-based SDP projects, the State performs functions in the provision of facilities and opportunities, thereby attempting to activate the citizenship of those in peripheral communities and establish spaces for negotiation between State and citizens. Football was empowered by legislation to this end, to become an institution to support existing bodies and structures to promote good citizenship and values beneficial to the nation-state. Football campaigns could tackle ongoing issues in education, health and gender equity, as well as seeking to reduce involvement in violence and vice and underline the values of teamwork, respect, conflict resolution and coexistence. Football was a central element of peace-building activities, most notably in the FARC demobilization and reintegration camps created after the peace agreement, but also in other vulnerable communities across the Colombian territory. I argue, therefore, that football was put to

a much greater and concerted use by Santos for his national unity project than has been seen before in Colombia or elsewhere in the region. His three-pronged football nationalism strategy also demonstrated new methods for strengthening psychological affiliations between citizens, between citizens and the State and for including previously excluded Colombians into the national 'us'.

The multi-faceted nature of Santos's football for national unity project and its aims requires that this book straddles fields such as history, politics, sports studies, peace and conflict studies and discourse analysis. This interdisciplinary approach is essential to analyze the various strands of the strategy in detail, in order to evaluate the reasons, methods and aims behind Santos's football nationalism project. Much analysis of sporting nationalism in Latin American has come from either a politico-historical or sociological perspective, but the combination of approaches included is essential to assess how the different strands of Santos's strategy interrelate and address the national issues that were targeted. Analyzing this government deployment of football for peace building and nation building contributes to and develops a number of burgeoning fields of academic research in addition to the field of study of sporting nationalism in Latin America and the rest of the world. Little has been written, for instance, on Colombia's use of SDP. There has been research on how football has contributed to rebuilding community trust, reconciliation and reintegration following conflict in various parts of the world – for example on Football for Peace projects in Israel bringing together Jewish, Bedouin, Arab and Circassian communities (Sugden 2006; Schulenkorf and Sugden 2011; Schulenkorf et al. 2014), and the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya (Willis 2000; Coalter 2010; Wamucii 2012) – but little yet on Colombia. Football was a regular element of life in the FARC transition camps following the peace agreement, as chapter five will discuss. Much can be learned about this experience of SDP in the Colombian context, to evaluate and advance the existing projects in Colombia, and to inform and aid the development of future programmes in Colombia and elsewhere. The fact that the project in the transition camps was part of a wider governmental strategy that boosted the role of Coldeportes, the Administrative Department for Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity and Exploitation of Free Time, and in particular the promotion of *Deporte Social Comunitario* (Social and Community Sport) projects in peripheral and vulnerable regions and sectors of Colombia, is also significant. Studies do not always look at the wider scale of SDP projects, tending to focus on specific projects. The national scale and context of how SDP is implemented can be forgotten and is therefore worthy of study in terms of how it contributes to a strategy for the nation as a whole.

This book also contributes to understanding how social media channels, such as Twitter, are deployed by politicians, an area of communications research that is only in its first decade of academic investigation. This book demonstrates how Twitter, nation building and sport converge, something

yet to have been considered in academia. This phenomenon is analyzed by investigating how hashtags and aesthetic functions of Twitter, such as the inclusion of photos, images, videos and emojis, contribute to enhancing the affiliative psychological qualities of the message, and thus facilitate the strengthening of the imagined national community.

Another field to which this book contributes is that of legislation and public policies in sport. Legislation originally envisioned as a way to counter and prevent violence in professional football was developed under the Santos regime to have a social development and nation-building role, empowering and including citizens and stigmatized groups, culminating with the Plan Decenal de Seguridad Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol 2014–2024 (PDSCCF) (Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football). This plan was described by Juber Ariza, one of the directors of the PDSCCF from the Interior Ministry, as ‘the only plan in the world in which football is a public policy’ (personal interview 6 October 2017) and a public policy that ascribes nation building potential to football. Ariza went on to say:

Our greatest contribution to the creation of the plan was converting football into a tool for social transformation and for coexistence. That looks towards the future, towards the country that we all want to build, in which we dismantle the obstacles that prevent Colombians from living in peace [...] It has political content, a political vision, a transformative political message. In other words, the plan is not neutral regarding the reality of the country. It has the clear intention to strengthen democracy, to build citizenship, to make a culture of tolerance possible. (personal interview 6 October 2017)

This intention makes the legislation and public policy important to research, as a unique football for nation-building strategy in the continent. In a July 2019 event discussing the state of play of the PDSCCF, Argentine sociologist Pablo Alabarces commented that he was in ‘the only Latin American country that has developed public policies through collaboration and dialogue to deal with violence and security in football’ (*Prensa Personería Bogotá* 2019a). This book analyzes how this legislative process developed and its national aims and offers an appraisal of what has been achieved and what difficulties have been encountered with the PDSCCF at this stage of its implementation.

It is also important to clarify the scope of this book. It aims to analyze the ways in which football has been deployed by the Colombian State under Santos, the reasons and aims for which it has been used and the content and methods of these various strategies. It does not intend to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the various governmental strategies on the ground, though some observations are given, particularly relating to the early progress and impact of the PDSCCF. Relating to the speeches and tweets, the focus is on the content, frequency and message, focusing on the production strategies and the strategy behind them relating to Santos’s national unity and peace project, and not on attempting to gauge whether the strategy was

successful. The response to the speeches and tweets is not considered due to the difficulty in surveying those who would have listened to the speeches. It would be more possible to examine responses to tweets, looking, for example, at the quantity of views, likes and type of replies. This is a potential area for future work. Similarly, the success or otherwise of SDP projects and legislation is not analyzed here, as the aim is to evaluate how legislation initially targeted at dealing with violence in Colombian professional football evolved to have a wider social development role targeting nation-building issues in the PDSCCF and how this also mapped onto other State uses and messages about football's role in the nation. Regarding the government-based SDP projects, again, the focus of analysis is on the government strategy that evolved to embrace and roll out the use of football as a development tool, and the extent to which it has been deployed. There is some evaluation of the PDSCCF and the problems with implementation that it has faced, as well as some responses to key events of the Coldeportes' project in the ETCRs. However, as the majority of the interviews conducted were with figures involved with the government-side of the projects and analysis is made of the content of legislation, public policy documents and Coldeportes Strategic Action Plans, the focus of this book concentrates on the development, content and reasons for the multi-faceted football strategy rather than its results.

There is no doubt that more work will emerge in the future on sport in the FARC transition camps, the PDSCCF, *barrismo social* projects and Coldeportes' Social and Community Sport programmes, for example. Such work will have had the time, money, access and human resources to produce results from ethnographic research, and, therefore, will be able to evaluate the positive and negative impacts of these projects in greater detail. This is beyond the scope of this particular work. Due to safety considerations, no visits were undertaken to the FARC camps, although there was the opportunity to meet the Coldeportes' *promotores* and *monitores* who were responsible for the provision of sport and recreation opportunities in these camps and in the local communities around them. It is possible to access interviews from participants in these projects in newspapers and on YouTube videos, for instance, allowing a limited appraisal, but a broader corpus of replies and observation is necessary to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the project. The same limitations prevent a fuller analysis of the effectiveness and results of *barrismo social* projects, of Golombiao (a football for development and peace methodology and project run by the Colombia Joven administrative department, discussed in chapter five) and of other Coldeportes' projects run by the Social and Community Sport section. These topics all merit future academic attention.

This book focuses on analysis of government-based SDP projects and not those, for example, of NGOs. Several directors of NGOs – particularly those involved in the Gol y Paz (Goal and Peace) network – were interviewed and were extremely insightful, giving a wider perspective of football's use in marginalized and vulnerable communities. Several of these

directors participated in the construction of the PDSCCF. Much of the SDP methodology employed and short- and long-term aims are shared by all those running SDP projects in Colombia, whether these are governmental, NGO, by private companies or social movements. Esteban Reyes, a director of *Tiempo de Juego*, commented, 'Whenever you go to work in isolated communities in different parts of Colombia, you will always find that there is an organization doing social work using football' (personal interview 19 October 2017). The amount of these football-based SDP projects and their shared objectives of reducing violence, building citizen values and encouraging coexistence, demonstrates, therefore, that football is recognized across Colombia as having a significant developmental role. It will be important for research to be undertaken that analyzes such projects across the territory, so that lessons can be learned and its contribution to reducing violence and diverse social problems evaluated, for the benefit of future projects in Colombia and elsewhere.

### The problems with nation building and national identity in Colombia

From a historical and political perspective, this book also contributes to the study of Colombia's struggles to build nation since independence, as well as providing a different perspective of the Colombian peace process, a subject that has already received, and continues to garner considerable academic attention. When Santos became President, he faced the same challenge that most Colombian presidents have confronted: the difficulty in marrying the Colombian State with the Colombian nation. Chasteen notes that on gaining independence, countries like Colombia were 'states in search of nationhood' (2003: xviii); for many academics who write on Colombia, this 'need to create an "imagined community" out of a geographical space' (Schlesinger 1987: 222), in which the people who find themselves in Colombian territory feel themselves to be and recognize one another as being Colombian, has yet to be achieved. Livingstone asks whether the task of nation building has successfully been completed (2003: 60); Pécaut argues that the 'country has not yet been fully constructed as a country' (cited in Palacios 2006: 261); and Lobo suggests that Colombia 'has something of a vexed relationship with its own nation-ness' (2013: 354).

Smith writes that a nation is 'a predominantly spatial or territorial conception. According to this view, nations must possess compact, well-defined territories. People and territory must, as it were, belong to each other' (1991: 9). Colombia has found it difficult to reconcile its people and territory. In terms of space, Colombia struggled to define where it was, given the inaccessibility of much of the terrain notionally under State control after independence, and difficulty in mapping the land. It also suffered losses of territory, most painfully the loss of Panama in 1903. Colombia's vast geography and the difficulty of transport and communication embedded strong regional identities and loyalties that are privileged over nationalist



sentiment, impeding a sense of ‘Colombianness’. The extent of this regionalism and regional differences in identity has led to Colombia variously being described as ‘a kind of archipelago’ (Pearce 1990: 13), a ‘country of nations’ (LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 21) or a ‘mosaic of isolated regions’ (Palacios 2006: 5). Safford and Palacios argue that topographical difficulties have meant that ‘Colombia’s history has been shaped by its spatial fragmentation’ (2002: ix), topographical factors being at the very root of its ongoing problems to build nation, creating heterogeneous identities and cultures that are difficult to accommodate within an all-embracing national identity.

Others argue that there are two Colombias: an inner Colombia, including the more urban and developed communities; and an outer rural Colombia, less developed and less included within the nation. This idea of an inner and outer Colombia is a geographical as well as psychological marker, ascribing who and where are ‘within’ the nation, and who and where are marginalized. The outer Colombia and its inhabitants are on the periphery, in terms of State recognition, presence and provision of citizen rights. This is where anti-State actors dispute State hegemony, where law does not hold, the State is weak or absent and where vulnerable indigenous or AfroColombian communities tend to live. Kilcullen proposes that Colombia is ‘really two countries, or rather one country embedded within another’ (2016: 67), and Pearce argues:

There is a Colombia which is constitutional and legalistic, which boasts all the trappings of a modern polity. This is the Colombia which is often described in the world’s press as the most democratic country in Latin America. But there is also a ‘real’ Colombia of the people where the rule of law barely holds, deprivation and poverty are the norm and democracy is just a word. (Pearce 1990: 4–5)

This idea of there being two Colombias is helpful in articulating struggles to create a unified nation, and explains why, as is shown in chapter three, Santos was at such pains to regularly tell Colombians that the national team represented the whole of Colombia. In addition to strong regional identities superceding national identifications, Colombia has been defined by a series of geographical, racial, political, social and economic dichotomies or oppositions that impede the sense of the people feeling like they belonged to the territory and recognizing others as belonging to the same national in-group. These historical dichotomies include urban versus rural, developed versus under-developed, legal versus illegal, Liberal versus Conservative, rich versus poor, white versus non-white and Spanish-speaking versus non-Spanish-speaking. The most significant iteration of national polarization that most preoccupied Santos was the ‘Yes’ versus ‘No’ debate regarding the peace talks between the government and the long-time enemies of the State, the FARC, and the subsequent plebiscite to ratify the agreement. Colombia’s people, historically, have been a nation divided, with more reasons to pull apart than unify. Indeed, it has often been more common for a national ‘us’

to be identified against a ‘them’ who also are Colombian. This would be true in the case of how the FARC and other left-wing guerrilla groups such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (National Liberation Army), their supporters and left-wing political groups have been ‘othered’ and cast as terrorists in political and media rhetoric by the likes of Santos’s predecessor, Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010). López de la Roche used Bajtin’s terminology to describe Uribe’s style of rhetoric as ‘monologic’ or ‘monoglossic’ (2015: 5), in which there was the constant and reiterated production of an anti-FARC nationalism related with the definition in speeches of FARC as public enemy number one of Colombians (6). Uribe’s was an exclusionary discourse that contrasted sharply with Santos’s inclusive rhetoric. These enduring and embedded oppositions have meant that Colombia lacks a national identity, as Bushnell points out:

It is thus a commonplace to say (with Colombians often saying first and loudest) that the country lacks a true national identity or a proper spirit of nationalism, at least as compared to most of its Latin American neighbours. Indeed hyperbolic nationalism is not common in Colombia; and the national character, if such a thing can be said to exist, is a composite of sometimes contradictory traits. (Bushnell 1991: viii)

Strong regionalist tendencies and regional identities, however, have been a ‘determining element in Colombian history and political imagination’ (Bolívar Ramírez 2018: 583). Given geographical separation and lack of communication, but also as a consequence of regionally specific political and cultural projects (Appelbaum 2007: 35–41), strong regional identities developed that persist to this day, which mean that Colombians may often define themselves as *costeños*, *paisas*, *rolos*, *vallunos* and so forth before being Colombian. These privileged regional identities impeded a sense of identification with the central State, particularly as certain predominantly white, highland regions, such as Antioquia, saw themselves as being hierarchically superior to other peripheral regions inhabited by blacks and indigenous Colombians. These regional identities have often come into conflict on the football pitch, with clubs being the expression of regional pride. During the golden generation of the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was often the accusation of *rosca paisa* (bias towards players from Antioquia) levelled at national coach Francisco Maturana from fans of the Barranquilla, Bogotá and Cali-based teams in particular, arguing that Maturana favoured players from this region. Bolívar Ramírez also shows the relationship between football and regional identity in Antioquia in the 1950s and 1960s. She discusses how footballers found it difficult to reconcile their status as footballers and *antioqueños* given that sport was not seen as an activity in keeping with the industry and endeavour typical of the region and how the building of the Atanasio Girardot Stadium was a matter of regional pride, asserting the predominance of Medellín as a sporting centre in Colombia (2018: 587). Regional identities and considerations are privileged over national ones.

Smith outlined five vital characteristics for national identity: 1) a historic territory or homeland; 2) common myths and historical memories; 3) a common, mass public culture; 4) common legal rights and duties for all members; and 5) a common economy with territorial mobility for members (1991: 14). Colombia has problems with each prerequisite. The territory has often been unknown, with frontiers being liminal and contested, and although the national territory and the ‘map-as-logo’ (Anderson 1991: 175) is now recognized and defined as a symbol, much of the territory has been violently contested between the State and a variety of anti-State actors. This means that it has been difficult to imagine the homeland, which Billig sees as being as important when imagining oneself to be a member of the national community (1995: 74). Second, national myths and memories are often linked to trauma or tragedy rather than moments of pride and heroism, and are related to oppositional or exclusionary incidents rather than unifying moments. Third, regional differences and identities prevented or problematized a mass public culture, although this is where football offers itself as the most accepted mass popular interest. This power of football in Colombia was investigated by the ‘Power of Football’ survey, discussed in chapter four, a document that justified the Santos government and Coldeportes’ programmes using football for development and peace. Fourth, rights may be enshrined in laws and the Constitution, but, in practice, they remain on paper as Gabriel García Márquez commented: ‘The constitution, the laws ... everything in Colombia is magnificent, everything on paper. It has no connection with reality’ (cited in Dennis 2006: 102). Finally, many Colombians have been excluded from the legal community and economy, and have reverted to the black market or the drug trade. The diverse violences of the Colombian conflict have meant that many contested areas are no-go zones, and have caused massive displacement.

These problems explain the weakness of Colombian nationalism, failing Gellner’s assertion that the ‘political and the national unit should be congruent’ (2006: 1). The apparatus of State, including political, legal, juridical and security institutions, may be in place, but the State fails to exercise the monopoly of power and exert its presence over the entirety of the territory, and many Colombians are not minded to include themselves emotionally and psychologically with the State. A long line of presidents has failed to convince Colombians that they were part of ‘an imagined political community’ with a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 1991: 6–7). The elite national project did not deepen to include all inhabitants of the Colombian territory. The political elite has failed to find ways for Colombians to identify one another. The need for citizens to imagine and recognize one another means that ‘nationalism contains a strong social, psychological dimension’ (Billig 1995: 10), which requires an ‘affirmative action of people who identify themselves with the nation-state and who adopt this nation-state as theirs’ (Grotenhuis 2016: 20). Billig cites Tajfel in saying that ‘a nation will only exist if a body of people feel themselves to

be a nation' (1981: 229 cited in Billig 1995: 66), and Hall adds that 'people are not only legal citizens of a nation, they participate in the *idea* of nation as represented in its national culture' (Hall 1992: 292). Colombians do not always feel Colombian, or if they do, they might have a stronger identity that either relegates their 'Colombianness' to a secondary position (such as a regional identity), or might even exclude them from an elite, top-down or majority in-group definition of 'Colombianness' (such as being a member of the FARC). As Hobsbawm notes, 'we cannot assume that for most people national identification – when it exists – excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being' (1990: 11). This psychological factor must be appealed to for Colombianness to become the 'endemic condition' that strong nations require, and not either an 'intermittent mood' (Billig 1995: 6) or a secondary identity. This requires traditions to be 'invented' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) that appeal to a wide national audience, as the constructivist school of researchers, such as Gellner and Hobsbawm, argue is an ongoing preoccupation. Myths, traditions and heroes will be selected to mark and define crucial foundational and transformational moments in the nation's history and will be celebrated with national days and monuments, but a nation must also adapt to ever-changing circumstances that require the national narrative to be updated or re-invented. The national construct is, therefore, 'a mixture of old and new, of traditional elements and new inventions to build a contextual story of "we"' (Grotenhuis 2016: 26). Hobsbawm points out that national identification 'can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods' (1990: 11), and Hall also emphasizes that cultural identity 'is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being"', as identities 'undergo constant transformation. Far from being fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to their own continuous "play" of history, culture and power' (1990: 225). In Santos's Colombia, there was a need to reinvent and project what Colombia could be with an end to the conflict with the FARC that had shaped so much of the national imaginary and narrative since 1964, creating a new Colombian identity that included the FARC and the areas previously under their control. This new national narrative required support from powerful affiliative moments and symbols to override previous privileged identities and imaginaries. For Santos, football, and the national men's team in particular, served as a way of creating a psychological attachment and affiliation that could privilege Colombianness. Football has the emotional appeal, is a mass public cultural practice and interest and can override, or at least temporarily displace, existing oppositions and identities that otherwise impede the imagination and mutual recognition of being Colombian. Since much of Santos's national unity project focused on ending the conflict with the FARC and creating the conditions for peace, being a supporter of the national football team was a propitious site to allow former FARC members into the national in-group, and for other Colombians to accept and recognize them as Colombians.

## The weak State

The difficulties of the Colombian State to forge a national identity are, in the eyes of many, down to the inability to establish hegemony over its territory (Dix 1977: 72; Livingstone 2003: 149; Dennis 2006: 91; Palacios 2006: xiii; LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 61). Hylton blames the State's 'chronic deficit' for its failure to establish its authority and institutions (2006: 11–12), leading to a situation of 'parcellized sovereignty' (12) where other anti-State actors effectively wield control or contest it. Richani blames the 'perpetual crises' of State hegemony (2002: 100–101) and 'dysfunction of institutions' (15) for the persistence of violence. He is referring to recurring bipartisan conflict between Liberal and Conservative supporters, and to the protracted war involving various guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, drug cartels, *bandas criminales* (Bacrim) and State forces. The central State has not been present in many peripheral areas, and authority has traditionally been wielded by regional elites and party chiefs through whom benefits for citizens have been granted in return for support. Both Hylton and Livingstone believe that the Colombian State has never administered the totality of its territory (Hylton 2006: 11–12; Livingstone 2003: 59); issues really came to a head during the presidency of Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002) when he granted the FARC control of the Caguán region before peace talks. This concession, in addition to the power of paramilitary organizations such as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia) in the Magdalena Medio and elsewhere, meant that the nation-state was debilitated. This produced the effect of a disintegrating nation in which State sovereignty was severely jeopardized, where guerrilla groups imposed their own laws in zones under their control, leading to citizens contemplating the break-up of the nation into the Republic of Colombia, the Republic of Caguán and the Republic of the Magdalena Medio (Suárez 2008: 413).

Hegemony across the Colombian territory has long been contested. Following Independence, factions soon developed with differing versions of how they envisaged New Granada's development. By the 1840s, these factions had crystallized into the Liberal and Conservative parties. These two parties became the first, and most important, national institutions capable of creating linkages across regions, class and race, and would dominate Colombian politics for the next 150 years (Pearce 1990: 119; Wilde 1978: 35; Hoskin 1998: 50; Bushnell 1991: 94). Members of the elite sided with one party or another, and then in their private fiefdoms enlisted cross-class and multi-ethnic support from those who relied on them for services and livelihoods. In this way, political loyalties and dependencies were established down party lines, creating enduring chains of clientelism and patronage. The two parties were both responsible for nation building, but also for exacerbating and embedding national fissures. As the parties built support across different classes, regions and races, they helped to foster inclusivity and common identities developed. Conversely, the bipartisan and highly factionalized nature of these identities

also led to regular conflict. LaRosa and Mejía argue that ‘Colombian nation building is therefore tied to political partisanship. Having either a Liberal or Conservative political affiliation formed an essential part of what it meant to be Colombian’ (2012: 61). Hylton agrees: ‘[C]itizenship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Colombia did not entail a sense of common belonging within the nation, represented by central government, but rather an exclusive membership in one of two political parties’ (2006: 12). These bipartisan rivalries would lead to a series of civil wars, including the Thousand Days War (1899–1902), culminating with the savagery of La Violencia, following the assassination of Liberal politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. The strength of opposition and bouts of violence between the two parties meant that enduring ‘hereditary hatreds’ (Bushnell 1991: 182) became embedded and complicated national unity, as well as meaning that violence became memorable as a national myth. Conflicts within the nation were more memorable than against a neighbouring nation, complicating the consolidation of a national ‘us’ against an external ‘other’, and entrenching differing versions of a national ‘us’ in often-violent opposition. Hobsbawm argues that ‘there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless peoples than to unite them against outsiders’ (1990: 91); unfortunately, Colombian citizens were urged to fight against one another, most traumatically in the national memory in La Violencia. Many others have found themselves to be trapped in the crossfire, where admitting any allegiance can be fatal.

When Liberal and Conservative elites managed to work together, it was often to preserve class interests when confronted by emerging social movements. These ‘conversations among gentlemen’ (Wilde 1978) or ‘consociational pacts’ (Hartlyn 1989: 308) when elites from both parties worked together managed to restrict political access to other classes and political movements more than any other Latin American nation, and to ensure that in Colombia nation building remained an elite project. Subordinate groups were subsumed through ‘networks of patronage and clientelism’ (Hylton 2006: 12) and following civil war violence the same elites remained in power. Colombian elites have rarely had the interests of subordinate classes in mind and this ‘extraordinary consensus within the Colombian elite’ (Livingstone 2003: 96) has excluded subordinate classes and suppressed lower class mobilizations (Pearce 1990: 10; Uprimny Yepes 2001: 41; Dennis 2006: 93; Hylton 2006: 4). This exclusion not only contributed to the loss of legitimacy of State institutions given their lack of representativeness, but also to a growing dissatisfaction and antipathy towards democratic processes. The Frente Nacional (National Front) years (1958–1974), when Liberals and Conservatives took turns in government, further excluded the working and rural classes, and led to left-wing movements turning to violence with the emergence of groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC) and the 19th of April Movement (M-19). From La Violencia (1948–1958) onwards, the

State continued ‘to demonstrate that it is incapable of providing basic public goods: defence, security and justice’ (Bejarano 2001: 70). The army proved unable to defeat guerrilla forces, drug cartels forced the State to cave in on policy and paramilitary forces were created to fill the void of the State and protect landowners and businesses from ‘subversives’. A climate of seemingly unchecked violence and impunity reigned in certain areas, destabilizing any semblance of government strength. Palacios argues that ‘in a country of *de facto* powers, the police, the judiciary, and the electoral system are façades’ (2006: 264), and this compromises the legitimacy of the State and, therefore, the semblance of nation. Colombia falls into Gellner’s category of a State that ‘lack[s] either the will or the means to enforce their monopoly of legitimate violence, and which, nonetheless, remain[s], in many respects, recognizable “states”’ (2006: 3–4), and it therefore struggles to establish nation given this lack of hegemony. Gellner (2006) and Hobsbawm (1990) both argue that the nation can only originate in a situation where the State is able to establish its authority and power over the citizens and the territory. Billig writes that ‘the battle for nationhood is a battle for hegemony, by which a part claims to speak for the whole nation and to represent the national essence’ (1995: 27). In Colombia, many regions were effectively not under State jurisdiction and the FARC took up State responsibilities of building infrastructure and supplying security and services (Richani 2002: 77 and 80; Hylton 2006: 88). In these ‘governance voids’ (Koonings and Kruijt 1999: 12), the State was not speaking to the entire nation, contrasting national projects were being articulated and evidence of State failure and national fragmentation were all too obvious.

### Colombia versus Narcolombia: a history of violence

The weak State, opposition between Liberals and Conservatives and failure to deepen the national project has frequently found expression in conflict, to the extent that Colombia became synonymous with violence, criminality and insecurity. Billig suggests that the ‘major test [of nationhood] is international, for the nation will seek recognition from established nations’ (1995: 85), and in the global gaze, the heterogeneity of violences, challenges to the State by a variety of actors and notoriety of drug cartels compromised the integrity of the Colombian State and nation. I term this image of Colombia as ‘Narcolombia’, and it will be argued in chapter two that Colombia has often played against this ‘Narcolombia’ ‘other’ when attempting to establish a national identity around football (Watson 2015; 2018a). The football team is positioned as playing to demonstrate a ‘New Colombia’, trying to cleanse its former image and build a new nation brand with chapter three showing how Santos used the *Selección* for this purpose. Violence has become an almost indelible aspect of the Colombian identity, and all living Colombians will have experienced its impact. Incidents of shocking and spectacular violence, such as the army storming the Palace of Justice on 6 November 1985, the

assassination of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán on 18 August 1989, the bombing of the Avianca Flight 203 and tales of massacres by the FARC, such as Bojayá, or paramilitaries, such as Mapiripán, have become defining moments in the national memory. In Colombia, ‘memory as trauma weighs as heavily as memory as heroic celebration’ (Sánchez in introduction to Hylton 2006: xvi).

Some historians see Colombia’s La Violencia period as a starting point for Modern Colombia. It is the root of many of the nation’s political and social fractures, a period of sustained murder, revenge and trauma that has left an inexpugnable stain on the nation’s collective memory. La Violencia was a watershed moment when new narratives took root and became national memories and sources of collective identification. The multiple narratives of Colombia’s violences have ‘given violence the features of a myth as if it were part of the country’s natural landscape or an unavoidable natural disaster’ (Dennis 2006: 91) and become a point of mutual recognition. I concur with Uprimny who argues that ‘Modern Colombia starts with a negative myth of the Violence, a myth that results in the depoliticization of Colombian life, in the distrust of politics (which itself is a symptom of violence), in the precariousness of collective action’ (2001: 46). This founding myth is ‘an ever-present background of Colombian life and culture. Its interpretation and symbolism [runs] through all musings about the past and present’ (Palacios 2006: 136).

National events such as La Violencia are central to nation building processes. They are too momentous to ignore, and they determine the way in which a nation recovers and rebuilds. Violence, according to Feldman, is formative and impacts on ‘the development of individual and collective identities’ (quoted in Hume 2006: 81). As violence has been a regular feature of the histories of Latin American States, the likes of Koonings and Kruijt (1999) and Arias and Goldstein (2010) see violence as fundamental to the construction of the nation-state. Violence therefore has become institutionalized, a constant feature of what is expected in social and political life, a like-for-like reaction to violence already perpetrated and embedded in a nominally democratic system or to restrict democracy in the ‘interests’ of the nation as a whole. Those with political and economic power resort to it, as do those without power who would challenge or seize it. Consequently, the plural nature of violence, or *violences*, has a deep and lasting impact on individual and collective identities. If national identity is the ‘continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the patterns of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identification of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements’ (Smith: 2004 quoted in Dennis 2006: 91), then the continuous reproduction and memories and myths of violences have come to constitute a significant element of Colombia’s national identity. Violences have intruded into football as well, and created myths that have complicated football’s use as a symbol of a new Colombia. Chapter two discusses some of these: how



the El Dorado (1949–1954) era was used to pacify tensions after the murder of Gaitán, the impact of the ‘narcofootball’ era of the 1980s and early 1990s and the murder of defender Andrés Escobar after the 1994 World Cup, all occasions where football was put in opposition to national violence.

Violence has become the default option in lieu of State failure. It is a daily event; individuals and groups may experience it directly or hear of it via daily interactions or the media. The result is a ‘routinization of violence’ (Koonings and Kruijt 1999: 23), violence becoming banal (Pécaut 1999: 142). On this point, Restrepo writes of a ‘culture of social indifference’ towards violence (2001: 98) and of how ‘the majority of the Colombian population has become accustomed to viewing human rights violations as endemic occurrences or as natural disasters, as normal as landslides or earthquakes’ (96). The multiple violences have a formative and transformative impact upon identities. Not only is violence ‘a machine that demolishes ethnic and community identities’ (Sánchez 2001: 6) but it also reconfigures them in the aftermath. La Violencia is the source of this. Meertens states that ‘its cruel penetration into the most intimate spheres of the peasant family generated a reproduction of violence in personal histories. Sons and daughters of the Violence changed violence into an inevitable evil, into a way of life’ (2001: 154). For men, violence became a method of problem solving, of enrichment, of establishing masculinity, both privately and socially. Women’s lives, too, are transformed by violence. They may experience rape, aggression that punishes them for alleged crimes or supposed complicity in subversive action and/or domestic violence as well as suffering the loss of family, and then undergo displacement. These multifaceted violences disconnect them from an established social network and identity. With the continuing violence, these identities and gender expectations become more embedded, which has significant implications for the construction of more positive communal and national identities. Pearce warns that a major concern for the country is the damage done to ‘socialization spaces’, at levels from family upwards (quoted in Livingstone 2003: 21). The impact of diverse violences is what Santos had to mitigate in order to articulate and embed a new national identity in which the experience of peace displaces the experience of violence, and in which the national ‘brand’ of Colombia is framed around the idea of it being a post-conflict nation. As will be shown in chapter five, football, through government-organized Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) programmes, has served in this capacity as a space and practice to engender new practices, promote coexistence, reintegration and conflict resolution and prevent recruitment into criminal gangs or anti-State organizations, or be lured into criminality and vice. Football was deployed to create the socialization spaces necessary for community rebuilding, a necessary building block for the wider task of nation building.

The fact that violence was so associated with peripheral areas of the country contributed to embedded and enduring ‘hierarchies of value’ (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 79). Colombian regions are imbued with certain reputations and values and are hierarchized, linked to historic

dichotomies. These dichotomies include civilization–barbarism, legality–illegality, inclusion–exclusion, white–non-white and rich–poor. Ramírez gives the example of regions where violence and illegality are particularly significant, such as Putumayo, Caquetá, Guaviare and southwestern Meta, as being seen by both government and citizens as places ‘abandoned by the state’, as ‘forgotten’ regions, ‘outside the pole of “development”’ (2011: 86). Regions in the Colombian Amazon and Pacific Coast, described by Serje as the reverse side of the nation (2005), have accrued a negative image in the national imagination. These departments, long associated with the jungle and narratives of savagery and barbarism, have become the zone of the guerrilla and the drug trafficker, as Wylie discusses (2013). This adds to their ‘terrain of reputation’ (Wade 1995: 51) or, as Radcliffe and Westwood describe it, their ‘imaginative geography’ (1996: 112), dictating how they are perceived in the national imagination. Wade adds:

This cultural geography is not a neutral cultural construction but derives from dominant ideologies and discourses that have a hegemonic status since they are propagated by the most powerful classes and regions of the country. The moral topography is not just a mental map but ‘a mosaic of articulated differences in which heaven and hell, virtue and corruption, caste and class distinctions and the mnemonic function of landscape in sustaining collective memory’ are inscribed (Taussig 1980b: 220). (Wade 1995: 52)

Race is part of this moral topography of Colombia’s periphery, and is intrinsically bound up in Colombia’s regional hierarchy of values, with AfroColombians and indigenous Colombians associated with these peripheral regions. Certain areas in Colombia are certainly racialized (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 27) and derogatory racial stereotypes are thus linked with terrorist or criminal activity. These areas are where the violence is often most present and where citizenship and inclusion within the nation is most precarious and delegitimized. They have not been recognized as being part of the national ‘us’ due to their race, but also where they are from, based on the territories being associated with guerrilla subversion or drug trafficking. The task confronting Santos was to shift these prevailing narratives, not only changing how the regions and people are perceived, but also to change the relationship in how those regions and people perceive the State. Football was positioned to aid this process; through rhetoric footballers are linked to representing the whole of Colombia, and football programmes, opportunities and facilities were taken to vulnerable and peripheral communities. Football provides a space for AfroColombians to represent the nation, a space often denied them, and for Santos to recognize their contribution to Colombia.

Peace building was at the centre of nation building for Colombia under Santos, given the national fragmentation and exclusion caused by the internal conflict. Santos saw it necessary to tackle the fragile relationship between State and nation, and to try to build trust between State institutions, citizens

and previously excluded or anti-State groups. Grotenhuis argues that this interrelation between citizen and State, with both parties ‘fulfil[ing] their obligations’ towards each other and committing towards ‘build[ing] up a stable society’ (2016: 63–64), is needed to address national fragility, and stresses that ‘the process of fostering meaningful social relations and social capital based on trust is part of a nation-building strategy’ (97). Peace-building measures are therefore essential as a first step towards nation building. As will be shown, football has been positioned through rhetoric, Twitter use, legislation and public policy to be a strong tool in peace-building, and therefore nation-building, strategies. It has been deployed in a series of SDP projects, predominantly, but not exclusively, run through the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes, the most important of which occurred in the FARC demobilization and transition camps, as will be discussed in chapter five.

### Book overview

This book comprises five chapters. Chapter one analyzes how football functions, why it has accrued such socio-political potential and how it has been deployed for nation-building projects previously in Latin America, in order to provide a context and framework for how Santos’s project compares and contrasts with previous uses of the sport in the continent. Chapter two continues with the focus on previous sporting nationalism projects, providing a context for football’s importance in Colombia, explaining why football has accrued such potential power. Using the framework of Archetti (1999) and Alabarces (2002: 42–43) for the requirements of football’s use for sporting nationalism based on the Argentinian context, it analyzes how football success was deployed in key moments of Colombia’s history. It argues that football was slow to develop as a potent source of nation building, given the lack of success of the national team in continental and global tournaments, and that its development and national style were stunted by a reliance on foreign players and a sense of inferiority in the Colombian game. It shows that when success did occur in the 1980s and early 1990s, Colombian sporting nationalism was unique in that it positioned Colombia against an ‘other’ that was Colombia itself, the ‘Narcolombia’ image of the country caused by its reputation for violence and drug trafficking (Watson 2015; 2018a). The chapter also examines previous occasions when Colombian politicians used football for sporting nationalism, as a point of comparison for its instrumentalization under Santos.

Chapter three analyzes Santos’s football-specific discourse and tweets. Using a corpus of ninety-nine speeches and more than 1,000 tweets from Santos’s personal account, @JuanManSantos, and the official presidency account, @infopresidencia, an adapted form of critical discourse analysis is used to quantitatively and qualitatively examine the content, frequency and development of Santos’s message. The results demonstrate that men’s football

was empowered by Santos constantly, but particularly at the time of football mega-events, as a symbol of national unity and an example of a nation playing for peace. The ritual of a national men's team match became a propitious time and space for developing emotional attachments to the nation, a sense of national positivity and pride, and inclusion of all Colombians via rhetoric and tweet broadcasts. Santos's discourse proposed that the national team represents all Colombians and was representative of a new nation, and he used it to gain support for the peace process, with the result that the national shirt became politicized and a site of contest of contrasting political opinions. The chapter also argues that Twitter for sporting nationalism became increasingly effectively managed and deployed, as Twitter features, such as hashtags and the use of images, videos and emojis, supported and enhanced the emotive and patriotic impact of the political message, and thus facilitated psychological attachments to the nation.

Legislation and public policies are the subject of chapter four, which looks at how football-specific laws, which originated during the previous Uribe government to tackle the problem of violence around professional football matches, evolved during the Santos presidency. The contention of this chapter is that an intention of the legislation passed during the Santos presidency was to cleanse and strengthen football as a potent national symbol. It tried to remove criminal influence that had blighted football during the 1980s and early 1990s, and the violence that had become an all too visible and regular occurrence in professional football stadia around Colombia. It argues that legislation during the Santos years moved away from solely focusing on sanctions to deter violence and to encompass preventative and pedagogical measures, having taken into account proposals and actions by *barras* and other bottom-up projects of community building. Uniquely in the continent, laws and the PDSCCF public policy included articles to support, promote and empower football as a tool for community development, committing government and local authorities to support and provide activities and workshops to help reduce the likelihood of violence and criminality originating in *barras* and the often-troubled communities from which *barra* members often emerge. The potential for SDP using football was added to legislation, recognizing the peace-building and nation-building potential of the sport. This chapter pays particular attention to the culmination of this legislative process, the content and implementation so far of the PDSCCF and the public policy that fully articulates and sets aims for how football can benefit the nation, aims that entirely resonate with Santos's discourse about football and nation.

Finally, chapter five examines government SDP projects undertaken during the Santos presidency. It focuses on Golombiao, a project of Colombia Joven, and the Coldeportes' provision of sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities in the FARC transition camps and local communities following the peace agreement. It argues that under Santos, SDP projects became a greater priority for Coldeportes, particularly the Social and Community

Sport section, and demonstrates this by recourse to the strategic development plans of the administrative department. Given the extra financial backing and institutional role of Coldeportes under Santos, there was an onus on taking sport to peripheral and vulnerable communities in Colombia. Projects and multi-sport events such as the Games of the Amazonía and Orinoquia and the Peace Games of Brazo de Mompox, supported by Coldeportes, have provided some evidence of State presence, given opportunities to citizens and created new socialization spaces for community encounter. They also give opportunities to briefly shift the prevailing narrative and imagination of regions with particular moral topographies that place them on the periphery of the nation and lower in the national hierarchy of value. In addition, they are accompanied by pedagogical activities and methodologies for SDP, aiming to create 'good' Colombian citizens. Many projects have at their core strategies to reduce violence and confrontation, bearing in mind that the heterogeneous violences from which Colombia has suffered have fractured communities and impeded nation-building efforts. These campaigns complement and enact the functions and potential that Santos ascribed to football in his rhetoric. This chapter focuses on the most visual, and arguably most important project of football serving for nation building, during the Santos presidency, namely how football was used in the *Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR)* (Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation) to where the FARC demobilized following the signing of the peace agreement. Football was a vital bridge for peace building in these camps, providing opportunities for the former guerrillas, local communities and armed forces and police to share their Colombianness at the time of national team matches, as well as facilitate mutual recognition and re-identification processes. The civil war with the FARC has been at the heart of the national divide for more than half a century, and this chapter concludes that football provided Santos with a potential space in which to begin to accommodate those often excluded from the national 'us', those who had been seen by many Colombians as the enemy.

Almost all the Colombians who were interviewed for this book, or with whom I spoke informally during the process, came up with a version of the following phrase from Juber Ariza: 'we all know that football is the only thing that unites us' (personal interview 6 October 2017). The speeches and tweets of Santos encourage and support this view, hence the subtitle of this book. This book, then, analyzes how and why this belief has been put into practice during his presidency, and what this says about the potential role for football for a peace-building and nation-building process in Colombia, and, perhaps, what lessons can be learned from the Colombian experience.



## CHAPTER 1

# Football and nation in Latin America

### Football nationalism

This chapter explains how and why football serves national projects, particularly in Latin America, serving as a theoretical background and point of comparison for Santos's project. Santos is merely the latest of a long history of politicians from different sides of the political spectrum across the globe who have found in football a propitious site for benefitting a range of individual and national projects, realizing its mass popular appeal. For this reason, the impact of sport, and football particularly, for national projects has become increasingly validated by academics who examine the interrelation of sport with politics and social processes at different historical junctures. Hobsbawm states that 'international sport became [...] an expression of national struggle, and sportsmen representing their nation or state, primary expressions of their imagined communities', an occasion when 'even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation [...] The imagined community seems more real as a team of eleven named people' (1990: 143). It is a perfect occasion to distinguish the national 'us' from a foreign 'them', because 'the national boundaries generated by football and the ways in which they are transgressed offer a symbolic space into which people can insert themselves and where their identities can be called up not only as individuals but also as part of the collective subject of the nation' (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 97). A national football team succeeding on a global stage is a source of national pride, and an assertion of national strength to its own citizens and in the international arena.

In Latin America, football has permitted nations to assert their position on the global stage better than any other medium. This explains why football enjoys special significance and detonates such passion on the continent. Goldblatt proposes that 'in Latin America, the nation primarily confronted the world as its football team, and in this sphere the continent could compete and excel like in no other' (2008: 266). This was especially significant in the first third of the twentieth century as these former colonies sought to modernize, establish statehood and national identity, and assert an

international presence. For example, victories by Uruguay in the Olympics in 1924 and 1928 and then hosting and winning the first World Cup in 1930 helped to locate the previously unheralded country on the world map (Campomar 2014: 103–104). The continent has provided the world with arguably the sport's three greatest ever players (Pelé, Maradona and Messi), and Latin American nations have won the World Cup on nine of the twenty-one occasions that it has been held, as well as hosting the tournament in 1930 (Uruguay), 1950 (Brazil), 1962 (Chile), 1970 (Mexico), 1978 (Argentina), 1986 (Mexico again after Colombia pulled out as hosts), and 2014 (Brazil). In many Latin American countries, football has become a fundamental aspect of its history and source of national, regional and local identities, being a greater source of cohesion and expression than usual agents of nation building and provides a means of understanding between different classes and sectors of society (Bonilla 2000: 184).

Football is the most played and watched sport in the continent. Television audiences for football matches regularly gain the highest audience ratings. For example, in Colombia, according to the 'Rating Colombia' website, the Colombia versus England second round World Cup match in 2018 gained an audience rating of 35.2, the highest television audience of any programme in Colombia. The most watched single episode of a television programme was 26.9 for the debut episode of *Escobar, El Patrón del Mal* in 2012. The ten most-watched football matches all have higher audience ratings than any other programme (*Rating Colombia*, 'Records de sintonía en la televisión colombiana', no date provided). Egan Bernal's victory in the Tour de France on 28 July 2019, arguably Colombia's greatest ever victory in a sport, cycling, which is extremely popular in Colombia, had an audience rating of 9.8 (*Rating Colombia* 2019a). This compares to a rating of 16.8 for a relatively meaningless friendly between Colombia and Ecuador on 19 November 2019 (*Rating Colombia* 2019b). Football is understood as being the sport that most successfully manages to cross class, ethnic, gender, religious and regional lines, although conversely it also has the potential to reveal or magnify those lines. The first line of the presentation of the PDSCCF makes it clear that the Colombian government understands football as a unifying force: 'Football is the sport that integrates and transforms us. There is no other sport that identifies us more as a nation; it unites us, ignoring political, racial, sexual preference or religious distinctions' (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 13). The ubiquity of football as a social practice, in the media and in daily discourse, means that we can contemplate a kind of 'sportivization' (Elias and Dunning 1986) and particularly 'footballization' of society (Alabarces 2000: 16; Bromberger 2001: 18). Sport has become fundamental as not only a source of entertainment, play, exercise and profit, but also as a means of social development and cohesion, as a way of hegemonic forces to cement their dominance and of counter-hegemonic efforts to contest this control. Sport's entrenchment in society across the globe makes it a valuable and rich topic, in terms of how it affects and is affected by the temporal



and spatial social and political factors where it is practised and consumed. Giulianotti argues:

Football in any setting provides us with a kind of cultural map, a metaphorical representation, which enhances our understanding of that society [...] its cultural centrality in most societies means that football carries a heavy political and symbolic significance, to the extent that the game can contribute fundamentally to the social actions, practical philosophies and cultural identities of many, many people. (Giulianotti 1999: xii)

This cultural centrality, born of the long association between organized football, the media, politics, business and the public as participants, spectators and consumers, is why it can be mined and deployed towards strengthening psychological ties between citizen and nation.

Giulianotti suggests that 'football is one of the great cultural institutions, like education and the mass media, which shapes and cements national identities throughout the world' (1999: 23). He is correct, but omits one crucial detail: Bromberger argues that football is possibly the only element of a global masculine culture understood by everyone that crosses over regional and generational diversity (2001: 17). The invented tradition of the masculine nature of football is important to highlight as a cultural institution. Though women in football both as spectators and participants have become more prevalent, football has primarily been a signifier of masculine identities and promoted masculine notions of play and practice, and has been exploited in masculine-framed notions of nation building. Chapter three will show that Santos's version of sporting nationalism maintained this masculine dominance, as presidential discourse around football for nation building was restricted to the men's national team; the national women's team were not presented as metonymic for the new united and peaceful nation that Santos projected. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of presidential speeches and Twitter broadcasts in chapter three offers evidence of how the men's and women's national teams differed in their usefulness for Santos's national unity project, and the different ways in which they were spoken about.

There has been a lack of thorough analysis of speech for football nationalism in previous work on Latin American football, and Twitter use for football nationalism is yet to have been analyzed in detail. The tendency has been to focus on keynote speeches at the time of significant football success of the national team rather than examining the constancy of the message throughout a presidency (see, for example, Roldán (2007) and Alabarces (2008), discussing the military junta and the World Cup in Argentina in 1978, or Villena Fiengo (2015) on presidential reactions to Costa Rica and the World Cup in 2002). These moments of footballing triumph or when the sport is firmly in the public gaze serve as perfect occasions for politicians to speak about the nation. When the tournament is over, however, football's usefulness seems to dissipate. This book, however, shows that Santos spoke about football regularly, and not just about the national team. It provides a

comprehensive analysis of Santos's football-related discourse and how the newer phenomenon of Twitter was exploited for creating emotional attachments with the nation. In addition, nation-building processes around football in Latin America have often focused on the impact of the male professional game; Colombia's attempt to empower professional and recreational football (particularly at grassroots level and in vulnerable communities) for social development through legislation is a departure and a novel approach to sporting nationalism on the continent, and is why it merits critical attention. Laws, policies and campaigns add substance to speeches that may only have a temporary emotional charge and impact. Colombian government policies such as the PDSCCF, the culmination of a series of laws that at first simply sought to tackle violence around men's professional matches and eventually would be broadened to embrace and promote Sport for Development and Peace ideals and citizenship values, have put football to a much greater use towards a national unity project than has been in evidence before. Most importantly, the discourse, policies and campaigns involving football took place at a critical juncture in Colombia's history, as Santos negotiated with the FARC to end the longest-lasting internal conflict on the continent and football was used as a peace-building device after the peace agreement was signed. Santos's strategy of football-based sporting nationalism was thus a much more wide ranging and enduring one, with football in Colombia tasked with being much more than simply a symbolic and psychological device to create an emotional affiliation with the nation.

### Football as ritual

Several writers stress football's ritualistic qualities as a reason for its popularity and sociopolitical significance, in addition to its power to engender a source of *communitas*. This leads to its potential manipulation as a potent detonator of identities at all levels (national, regional and communal). Any sport, as Archetti notes, is 'a ritual and a game at the same time, and is, as such, a cultural construction that makes symbolic communication among its participants possible' (Archetti 1998: 93), including fans as 'participants' alongside the players. The football ritual, occurring in a place considered sacred, whether the shrine-like urban stadium (Bromberger 1995: 307; Bar-On 2017: 189) or the local club, puts into conflict, remembers and updates the identities uniting the home team (the 'we' group, the sacred, the heroes), against the away team (the 'them' group, the profane, the enemy) (Oliven and Damo 2001: 11). Bromberger goes into most detail about football's ritualistic qualities (Bromberger 1995: 306–309), which Giulianotti has summarized:

First, games occur in 'particular spatial configurations' (the stadium); playing fields possess sacred qualities, and stadiums generate intense emotional states. Second, as in religious ceremonies, spectators are spatially organised according to power, with political leaders and other VIPS in

full view. Third, football has critical temporal and rhythmic affinities as matches, cup finals and championship seasons follow a regular calendar. Fourth, role distribution is ceremonial; football supporters, while specially robed, engage in intensive ritual acts. Fifth, football has its own organizational framework, from local to global level. Sixth, the football match ritual possesses a sequential order: pre-match preparations, the warm-up period, player entry on to the field, playing the game according to set procedures, and the game's conclusion, followed by supporter exit. Seventh, the football ritual generates *communitas*, a 'communion of minds', as strangers come to share common purposes, identities and causes. (Giulianotti 2005: 3-4)

It is worth stressing several of these ritualistic components in order to explain football's source as a generator of identities. The fact that there is a temporal and spatial rupture with daily life (Ramírez Gallegos 2003: 110) grants matches a special status, and allows members of society who are separated during the 'everyday' (due to location of work or residence, or down class, religious or ethnic lines) to unite for a common purpose. This echoes with Billig's identification of the importance of national ceremonies, 'occasions when ordinary routines are suspended as the State celebrates itself. Then, sentiments of patriotic emotion, which the rest of the year have to be kept far from the business of ordinary life, can surge forth' (1995: 44). National football victories become times of national celebration, and are times when feelings of national pride and unity can be remembered. The paraphernalia worn and carried to the game (football shirts, scarves, hats, banners and flags, for example) is central to the need to be included and to be recognized within the 'in group'. The individual, by wearing the team colours and symbols, not only identifies himself at this ritual, but also is doing so in order to be recognized by others, both those with whom they are claiming affinity or membership, but also in opposition to members of other teams. These team colours and symbols, the emblem of the identities at play, whether local, regional or national (Antezana 2003: 92), have the power to transcend previously divisive factors.

In national games there are also numerous rituals that celebrate the nation and portray it as sacred: the playing and singing of the national anthem, attendance of political leaders and dignitaries, the presence of flags and so on. These national rituals and symbols, coupled with the presence of the players as the nation's representatives on the metaphorical field of battle, and the spectators' presence, songs and displays that proclaim their belonging to the nation, 'ritualize national solidarity' (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009: 23) in an extremely potent manner. The mass media selects and shows these national demonstrations to the domestic and international audience, reinforcing the power and message of the ritual. Football, therefore, becomes a privileged arena for society to see itself, a stage where identities and social tensions can be displayed, reflected, reproduced, composed, recomposed and even challenged (Alabarces 2000: 18; Villena Fiengo 2003: 29). National football

matches become a funder of 'exceptional nationalism' (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009: 58), ripe for political exploitation. Santos certainly exploited any occasion when the national men's team were in action, imbuing these moments of exceptional nationalism and collective emotional attachment with the nation with repeated messages of national unity, peace and football's benefits for Colombia. A men's national team match in Colombia is a ritual that convokes the majority of the population. It is a time when Colombia is arguably at its most united as the nation follows the fortunes of the team, and thus is when the nation is at its most ripe for messages about what the nation could be as a collective. This book analyzes how and why Santos imbued these matches with a specific meaning and significance, making the football shirt and related symbols redolent of messages of unity and peace. Chapter five also examines how and why the national men's team matches served as a time and space for integration and re-identification in the FARC demobilization camps, where previously opposing forces were brought together and football loyalties to the *Selección* were tied to reconciliation and reintegration processes. In terms of the rituals around professional football matches and football as a practice recreationally, chapter four explores efforts to reduce the violence and other problems on these occasions. Football *barras* (organized fan groups) have developed their own rituals for identification, and legislation has been tasked with ensuring violence does not erupt as a result of a clash of identities, as well as attempting to promote practices that bring opposing groups together.

### Requirements for football nationalism

Following the introduction and growth of football in Latin America during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, it became a vehicle for the creation of a national imagined community that could eventually include whites, mestizos and blacks, and integrate immigrants to the country and those who had migrated from rural areas to the metropolis. Indeed, football became an early public stage where blacks could represent the nation, gradually overcoming concerns of certain nations who did not want to be perceived by other nations as 'black' nations by fielding black footballers. One infamous example is the Argentinian newspaper *Crítica* publishing an article and cartoon on 3 October 1920 depicting the Brazilian football team as monkeys before an international match between the two countries (*TyCSports* 2020). Another example was in Peru, who did not select black players of Alianza Lima such as Alejandro Villanueva and Miguel Rostaing in 1929 for the Copa América. This was originally due to a dispute between the club and federation, but the Peruvian elite did not necessarily mind their non-selection given the national identity that they wanted to display (Wood 2007: 131). This rather backfired as a poor performance by Peru showed the need for Alianza's black players, and Villanueva was lauded as a hero by President Óscar Benavides following Peru's better performance at the 1936 Olympics (132). Other black players were equally important in

early national successes and for their role in the 'invention' and narration of national styles, particularly José Andrade for Uruguay in their wins in the Olympic Games in 1924 and 1928 and the first World Cup in 1930, and Leônidas da Silva and Domingos da Guia for Brazil in the 1938 World Cup. Their performances showed just how quickly football had grown from being a sport of the elite and British expatriot communities when introduced to the continent, to becoming a mass activity with selection for clubs and nation more based on ability rather than social class. Clubs rapidly formed in urban centres in each country to represent all different sectors of society; clubs represented educational establishments, state institutions, businesses and business sectors, workers, and neighbourhoods with particular social identities, such as migrant communities.

Football as a space for representation of the nation and its citizens responded to ongoing debates across the continent about the state and composition of the nation, a century after independence. Archetti (1999) and Alabarces (2002: 42–43) propose a sequence of processes for sporting nationalism to be constructed, based around the Argentinian experience, but that is also useful to apply elsewhere. First, a process of *criollización* must occur, rites of passage that facilitate and explain the transition from football being a British game to an Argentine one. This combines economic, social and cultural factors removing external influence and elements and replacing them with domestic ones, including the 'vernacularisation' (Giulianotti 2007: 40) of the rules and administration of the game, and the mass media convincing the public of this process of naturalization of the sport. Second, notable success must be achieved, ideally on a continental or global level, and third the footballers responsible for this success must be extolled as part of this epic story of national triumph. Most heroes previously celebrated in Latin America were either heroes of the struggles for independence, or those from literature, not always as accessible to the masses. Archetti notes that 'a nation needs heroes, even in times of peace, and sport provides them' (1998: 97). Finally, there must be a mode of differentiation between a national 'us' and an external 'them'. This should be achieved through a national style of play, usually more narrated than real (Alabarces 2002: 43), but a style that allows the nation to be recognizable and recognized, both by a domestic audience as well as by the 'other'. Bromberger explains that this style is 'part of a collective imaginary' as 'the style does not always correspond to the way the players really play, but rather to a stereotyped image, rooted in tradition, that the collectivity holds up to itself and wishes to present to others' (1995: 303). The style will have been articulated widely and extolled in the press. In a game 'rooted in binary oppositions' (Giulianotti 1999: 9), the national team must be distinct from an 'other', the team embodying the nation in a form of dress (the shirt being the nation's uniform), with style based on accepted stereotypical and agreed characteristics, products of lived experiences or promoted by the press, that is different from the opponent. A geographical, political or historic rivalry will also contribute potently to the difference between the 'we'

group' and the 'other'. Everything about the team should ideally represent 'what we are' as well as 'what we are not'. My contention is that Colombia is unusual in that its primary 'other' is Colombia itself. Colombia's football style since the late 1980s is articulated by desired feelings of unity, happiness and a tropical carnivalesque style, that seeks to erase or obscure domestic and external stereotypes of the country as being violent, criminal and riven with divisions. Colombia's football style is defined against its own troubled image; Colombia not only plays against other nations, but is also playing against how the country perceives itself and is perceived. Chapter two develops this idea, as well as how Colombia's football-based nationalism developed around the four essential ingredients proposed by Archetti and Alabarces, providing a context and comparison for Santos's sporting nationalism project.

For Archetti's proposal of four stages towards the successful deployment of sporting nationalism to occur, other conditions must already be in place. The game must be a mass popular activity, widely practised, mediated and received or spectated across the national territory for the success and heroes to fully resonate. Success achieved in minority sports that receive little media coverage, played only in certain spaces, by certain social classes, are unlikely to create potent inclusive narratives of nation. This is where football functions extremely powerfully as a detonator of nationalism. As a sport that is easy to play, requiring little in the way of equipment and being easily adaptable to numbers and the space available, and being played or spectated by all classes and all groups, football is a mass popular practice. It is also hugely reported, first by newspapers, then specialist newspapers and magazines, and then by radio, television and the Internet. This sporting nationalism does not differ from other ways of generating nationalism that require a recognized and representative entity of the nation that is widely publicized or reported. Although newspapers and print capitalism in Colombia did not have the impact that Anderson (1991) suggested, given transport and communication problems as well as high rates of illiteracy, radio certainly helped to foster a greater sense of belonging and aided in connecting disparate parts of Colombia. Sport was a key part of this. Rendell (2002: 77) and Quitián Roldán (2013a: 33) have shown how radio commentaries of the *Vuelta a Colombia* bicycle race from the 1950s helped Colombians imagine their country (albeit a partial or selective idea of the Colombian nation, as the race only travelled through certain connected areas of the Colombian interior),<sup>1</sup> and the same was true of the football of the *El Dorado* period of Colombian professional football.<sup>2</sup> Cyclists could be imagined racing from town to town,

1 The first *Vuelta a Colombia* in 1951, for instance, only passed through the departments of Cundinamarca, Tolima, Viejo Caldas and Valle del Cauca, and included representative teams from seven departments, Antioquia, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Nariño, Santander, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

2 Only five cities were represented in the first profession league in 1948, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cali, Manizales and Medellín, though Universidad (from Bogotá) played

and football teams from different cities also connected the country by playing against one another. Both sporting spectacles were also used to distract Colombians from La Violencia and pacify bipartisan political rivalries by the Rojas Pinilla government, as shall be discussed in chapter two.

### Political use of football in Latin America

Much research on football in Latin America focuses on how it has been employed by politicians for a range of purposes, for validation of a regime or populist leader, or as a form of 'football as political soporific' (Benedetti cited in Mason 1995: 61). Football has often been derided as being the new opium of the masses, attempting to entertain and distract the masses from social problems. Sebrelí argues that the bread and circus of organized sport has been used by political powers as a symbolic compensation for the miseries of daily life (2005: 155). He also criticizes how elites and nationalist authoritarian governments have manipulated football in order to indoctrinate youth and the masses in socially appropriate and approved behaviour, in removing dissent, in sterilizing the workers' spirit and homogenizing culture. Football supporters, according to Sebrelí, are pacified and lose their identity and footballers become commodified, serving as little more than products in a capitalist international system that exploits them. Giulianotti and Robertson relate how Getúlio Vargas in Brazil and Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina 'institutionalized the political manipulation of football' (2009: 17) and various articles have been dedicated to football's power as a propaganda tool following national victories in World Cups during the military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina (see, for example, Lever 1988; Archetti 2006).

Where Sebrelí and others who argue that football is solely the opium of the masses err is that football is not simply at the behest of hegemonic forces. It is a tool that can be used by counter-hegemonic forces, and examples abound of football being a contested site and tool, for example when 'clubs, stadia, competitions, have acted as powerful catalysts for protest, by awakening rather than anaesthetizing political consciousness' (Bromberger 1995: 295). The 'Y va a caer' (And he will fall) songs against the Pinochet regime in Chile is just one example of stadium protest (Nadel 2014: 141), and the wearing of football shirts in anti-government protests in Argentina (Alabarces 2007: 94) shows how football can be reclaimed as the people's game, rather than that of the hegemonic forces. The Brazilian footballer Sócrates and fellow players at Corinthians in the early 1980s are seen as having a role in contributing to the end of the Brazilian military dictatorship and return to democracy (see, for example, Shirts 1989). Lahud Guedes described this capacity of football, calling it a 'zero institution' (1977), an empty container of potential that can

their home games in Pereira. Teams from Bucaramanga and Pereira joined in 1949, a team from Cúcuta first played in 1950 and Armenia and Santa Marta had teams in the league in 1951.

be filled with any message and manoeuvred towards that particular cause. Football can serve an opposition as much as a ruling party, and can also be used to highlight and demand action for racial, social and gender grievances. In the case of Santos, football has been ‘filled’ with a message of how it can serve towards national unity and there was an attempt to translate words into deeds. It was a concerted and constant strategy exploiting new communication channels such as Twitter, supported by legislation, public policies and increasing awareness and implementation of SDP methodologies, to directly address the fractures at the heart of national division as part of the peace process.

### Women’s football and nation

Football serving for sporting nationalism has tended to be defined in masculine terms. Billig writes that ‘the sports pages are predominantly read by men for pleasure’ (1995: 11), with sport replacing war as a source of pride in national victory against an external enemy. Archetti wrote that football ‘produces an overlap of practical and symbolic constructions of national characteristics, national values and national pride and sorrow. The national will thus come to be perceived as “naturally” masculine. Women excluded from an active participation in this site of national construction can, however, “identify” themselves with the “team as nation”’ (Archetti 1999: 236). Archetti seems to preclude a women’s football team from being able to represent the nation in the same way.

Giulianotti suggests that football is ‘undergoing varying degrees of feminisation’ (1999: xi), with women not only participating more as players, but also as spectators, officials, commentators, journalists and as owners and directors of clubs. It is not easy for women to enter the football arena, traditionally a ‘city without women’ (Sebreli 2005: 259). As Binello et al. note, women in football present a rupture in a very male-dominated and defined world; they are a ‘foreign’ presence and it is necessary to define them (Binello et al. 2000: 34). They have to answer questions about their ability and their sexuality and femininity, and are often compared in terms of masculine exploits, skills and physicality, as well as female stereotypes and roles (Clarke and Clarke 1982: 67). In Latin America, with football often being an integral part of nation building and the construction of local, regional and national identities, the lack of women as part of this football narrative meant that women were not included within this concept of identity construction. Though women’s football was played in Latin America after the game’s introduction to the continent, Nadel describes it as an ‘antinational’ game (2014: 210; 2015: 46). Women’s football was not included in physical education curricula as concerns were raised about its impact upon the health and reproductive capacity of women. Their role as mothers of the nation’s sons could be harmed if they played, and thus women’s football was a threat to the nation’s future. President Vargas banned women’s football in Brazil in



1941 for this reason. The stereotypes of women playing football still present formidable obstacles to be overcome in traditional *machista* societies, even if the opportunities for women to play are greater. The first female football heroes are starting to emerge, particularly in Brazil with Marta's exploits in the 2016 Olympics, as well as the founding of professional leagues, such as in Colombia in 2017, where teams have been set up around existing men's teams and games played before men's league matches at the same stadiums. There is at least the potential for nation construction around football to be framed in terms where women are more included, which will require the women's game to have greater media exposure, which depends on commercial interest. As will be shown, the vast majority of Santos's nation-building rhetoric was based around men's football; the women's national team are not bestowed with similar powers to unite the nation. Women's football in Colombia struggles to overcome the identities associated with women in Latin American culture and society. Men's football is still the principal way in which the nation battles against its foreign opponents for national pride, and that the population is called to unite behind and imagine itself as a national collective.

#### Conclusion: a game anyone can play

As this chapter has shown, football has become a rich and enlightening prism from which to analyze historical, political, social and cultural events and practices in Latin America. Most of the countries in the continent can point to important studies that examine critical aspects of national politics and society from a football perspective, with the possible exceptions of Paraguay (a curious absence given football's importance in the country) and Venezuela (where baseball has traditionally dominated). Football has provided a means to explore issues such as national, regional and local identities, nation-state building at different times, modernization and urbanization, the rise of the working class and social movements, integration of migrants and ethnic minorities, gender questions, the impact of military dictatorships, and violences in society. Major tournaments, important victories and the exploits of leading footballers all provide opportunities for questions about nation and society to be explored given the social capital, media attention and impact that the sport wields. As a zero institution, it is a time and space for messages, representations and symbolism that does not intrinsically belong to anyone, but, much like the ball in the game itself, can be keenly fought over for control and dominance of the message it transmits. Contrasting reactions from politicians and fans to footballers (and athletes in various other sports) taking the knee as an anti-racist statement following the death of George Floyd is just a recent example of football as a contested site for political and social messages.

Although football clearly has problems as a detonator of national identities and fomenting a national collective, its strongest feature is that it is concrete and visual evidence of national or local success of a victory against opposition. It can, therefore, generate feelings of patriotic pride and a linkage between

nation and individual, and foster a sense of imagined national community and recognition in the simultaneity of celebration. The opposition is not always the opponent on the other side of the pitch; a victory can also be deployed against other internal struggles, towards the validation of a national project, or by a movement in opposition to political leadership. This book contributes to the field of study of football in Latin America by examining how victories for the national team, and football in general, were used by Santos in a battle against national disunity, in a struggle to integrate vulnerable or excluded groups around Colombia, in an ongoing effort to convince Colombians of the benefits of peace. The Colombian national team was positioned as the representation of a Colombia playing together, rather than against its own internal enemies. National victories matter when State institutions and traditional nation-building sources lack credibility, are devalued or polarize social opinion. As Biriotti del Burgo asserts, 'it is simply a political fact. Football wins support in Latin America' (1995: 64). Football victories, though temporary, have a strong psychological charge and can be exploited by the likes of Santos to connect citizens as the bubble of patriotic pride lasts. As football is a symbol with high hermeneutic plasticity (Bromberger 2001: 33), offering a number of useful characteristics, it can be mined towards a variety of projects. Santos saw in football the best way to connect Colombians, football being the common culture best placed to override, or at least assuage, the embedded oppositions that have constantly undermined the national project. Historically, 'the majority of Colombians are not conscious of being part of a single people, called upon to share a common inescapable destiny' (Restrepo 2001: 98), and share a common national sense of imposed national fate, and a deep suspicion and lack of confidence in projects that purport to mobilize them towards a desired national goal. This was the problem confronting Santos, the problem of convincing Colombians of the possibility of peace, as well as persuading Colombians to accept their former enemies as fellow members of the national community. He needed to demonstrate that the State could reach out and be present in areas where its hegemony has been either fragile or non-existent, and provide its citizens with the rights that it owes them, in order to build the sense of trust that has been sorely absent. This attempt by Santos to unite the two Colombias through the peace agreement is an example of the ongoing endeavour of building nation and adapting to new political and social processes. This particular process, competing against embedded past myths and identities, needs its own foundational myths and collective memories to succeed. It is through sporting nationalism that Santos found some of these heroic moments necessary to support his national unity project.

## CHAPTER 2

# ‘Football is the only thing that unites us’

## A history of football nationalism in Colombia

### Football for national encounters

Colombia is no different from other Latin American countries in that football served as a nation-building device at specific junctures where football success and significant national moments converged. It did, however, take some years for any suitable success to occur, compared to the Southern Cone countries in particular. This chapter examines these previous moments when football became a suitable tool for exploitation by Colombian politicians as a background for analyzing how and why President Santos employed football during his presidency. It examines what football was used for, what the limitations and problems were and how the nation was imagined and constructed in football terms. It discusses Colombian experiences of football-based sporting nationalism, engaging with Archetti’s analysis of how sporting nationalism was fomented in the Argentine context, focusing particularly on the four conditions that he and Alabarces consider fundamental for sporting nationalism to flourish. The Argentina comparison is useful given the significant study of the relationship between football and nation in this country. Argentinian football, too, has often served as a model or ‘father’ for Colombian football, something to be learned from and ideally surpassed; the Colombian situation, however, differs in various ways. Colombia’s search for its own footballing style and identity that could be deployed effectively towards a nation-building project around the symbolism of the men’s national football team is contrasted to an ‘other’ that is Colombia itself, this other being the ‘Narcolumbia’ of violence, drugs, trauma and criminality. This chapter demonstrates how this opposition against the ‘Narcolumbia’ ‘other’ emerged in a football context, and how the national team was positioned against it. Before Santos, Colombian football struggled to ‘defeat’ this ‘other’ and function successfully for uniting the nation.

Football in Colombia has emerged as one of very few cultural phenomena with the capacity to transcend the multiple embedded factors that have problematized the construction of nation and national identity. As discussed

in the introduction, due to geographical conditions and historical processes, a series of divisive factors such as regionalism, race, political identity and class, allied to a weak State that has struggled to create a hegemonic presence across the Colombian territory, have led to Colombia and 'Colombianness' being defined by inherent and inherited differences rather than shared experiences and 'oneness'. However, many in Colombia recognize football, and specifically the national team, as possessing the power to unite Colombians. Almost everyone interviewed during fieldwork in Colombia made a comment along these lines about football. It is a much-repeated assumed truism in Colombia, said by politicians, the media and fans alike. However, this view of football has been 'proved' during the Santos presidency. In the Power of Football survey commissioned by the Interior Ministry, football's unifying power was seen as the leading reason why football is important in Colombia (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 23). This survey showed that 94 per cent think that football is either important or very important (22), with the national team understood as being a symbol of integration by 96 per cent (42). It is this recognition that allows football to serve a political project in Colombia, particularly one that aims to bring the nation together and aid the peace process as Santos attempted. It is why the national team became a tool to try to include all Colombians in Santos's narrative of 'un solo equipo' (only one team) (Quitíán and Watson 2017) as the World Cup in 2014 and the peace talks in Havana with the FARC converged. It is also why football subsequently became a key element in reintegration and reconciliation processes in the FARC demobilization camps after the signing of the peace agreement, as chapter five will demonstrate. As traditional nation-building institutions and symbols have lost power in Colombia, football, or more specifically, men's football, is a mass practice and cultural phenomenon that can function in this void, alongside other cultural practices that may fulfil a unifying role, such as music, soap operas, festivals and beauty contests (Zuluaga Ceballos 2005: 19). Though traditionally a masculine domain with women relegated to the role of spectators, wives and mothers rather than practitioners, football is a place for *encuentros nacionales* (national agreements or encounters) as opposed to *desencuentros nacionales* (national disagreements or failed encounters) – a space and time where horizontal comradeships and shared experiences are created that can be applied towards a nation-building project, at micro, meso and and macro levels. Football is an escape from a troubled social reality, a space and activity that can override division and trauma through play or spectatorship. Despite this power, political elites before Santos had only employed Colombian football intermittently towards a nation-building objective, and then either through sporadic and largely symbolic empty discourse which was unsupported by government policy or targeted actions. When success occurred in Colombian football, it was deployed predominantly as a pacifying or masking device, tasked with symbolically hiding or healing national problems far beyond its scope to address without necessary support through legislation, public policy or investment.

### Football's unifying power in Colombia

Andrés Dávila Ladrón de Guevara argues that football occupies a role usually undertaken by traditional or institutional nation-building devices, which in Colombia are lacking, have failed or are devalued (1994; Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Londoño 2003; 2006). According to him, football has become the axis point of identities and cultural roots upon which the nationalist sentiment is nourished (1994: 23) in a country that lacks symbols, institutions and idols that can crystallize collective identities and serve as blocks for nation building (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Londoño 2003: 123). Other national myths, founding moments and institutions are associated with enduring hatreds and therefore tied to national tragedy rather than triumph and pride, thereby generating feelings ranging from apathy to fear and antagonism. Football occupies a middle zone between hard and banal forms of nationalism, and feeds off both types of processes to become a potent generator of loyalties, identities and myths. In this middle zone, when the national team enjoys a moment of success, football can provide 'hard' nation-building moments, can fill the void and temporarily salve issues that political or social forces have failed to resolve, building on banal and trivial factors. This is achieved as football and the national team generate narratives and discourses that associate the team, players and the coach with the nation and national identity (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara 2006: 103).

Football is thus a more tangible and less conflictive meeting place for Colombians to imagine themselves as a collective, as a national 'us' represented by eleven footballers. It manages this without the national team being entirely representative of its regions and citizens. Fernández L'Hoeste claims that the Colombia national team has a 'squad with players from all corners of the country' (2015: 87). This is an exaggeration, as a more careful study of the origins of Colombian national team players will testify; nearly a third of Colombian departments have never produced an international player and indigenous Colombians have competed as a separate, national team.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the national team has long been a masculine construct with women being absent from this national imagining. A Colombian national women's team did not emerge until the late 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Women's participation in Colombian football until then had been as spectators at grounds or as part of the spectacle in the roles of beauty queens involved in ceremonial kick offs or cheerleaders. Until recent (limited) televised appearances in World Cups, Olympics and South American championships, Colombian women footballers have not been visualized or imagined as representing the nation.

Despite these exceptions, football is a symbolic meeting place for Colombians. Jiménez Duzán also describes football as a place of national encounter, arguing

1 The Colombian indigenous national team were runners up in the 2015 Copa América Indígena hosted in Chile.

2 A Colombian women's national team first played in the Copa Suramericana in 1998.

that football achieved a miracle by creating opportunities for meeting and agreement in such an unequal country in which each *estrato social* lives apart from the others, something politicians have never achieved (cited in Larrain 2015: 194). This encounter happens through play, spectating or imagining. Football, crucially, also serves as a palliative or escape valve (Jiménez Garcés 2014: 86) from violences that have also become formative of national identity given the heterogeneity and banality of violence in Colombia (Pécaut 1999). It is escapism from a Colombian reality, but as it is a collective escapism, it is formative of national comradeship and togetherness as Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Londoño argue: it is an action that takes place as if it were removed from daily life and creates an alternate reality (2003: 126) from daily individual and communal feelings of powerlessness, fear and trauma. Indeed, football has been employed specifically by elites both as a diversionary tactic to hide unpleasant national realities with the sporting circus entertaining the masses, and as a palliative or mask for national disaster. When success has occurred in Colombian football, first infrequently from Colombian football's professionalization in 1948 until the 1990s, when more regular success arrived, football has also been (over?)celebrated as a source of national pride, a vindication that Colombia is not all 'bad'. In these moments, Ramos Valencia argues that football ended up becoming a unifying element, a symbol of national identity and pride for a population beaten down by corruption, violence, vast economic disparity and humiliation in the airports of the rest the world (Ramos Valencia 1998: 12). We could speculate whether in any other Latin American country football has been tasked with symbolically uniting a country so inherently divided, where the significant 'other' could well be the self-same country, that Colombia that is both domestically and internationally tarnished with the seemingly indelible stain of violence, drug trafficking and internal conflict with significant and enduring anti-State actors. When Colombia plays, it not only plays against the opposing team on the pitch, but also against that negative 'Narcolumbia', trying to score metaphorical goals to improve the country's national image (Watson 2015; 2018). The Colombian national team is tasked with presenting a different face of the nation to the world and to Colombians. It is usual for the nation's football team to have the 'other' of a different nation, often based upon a geographical or historical rivalry. The matches are about a clear identification of 'who we are' against 'who we are not'. In Colombia's case, when they play in the global glare of the football mega-event, it is also a battle of showing 'how we want to be perceived' versus 'how we are perceived as being'. From the 1930s when Colombia first played international matches until the 1980s, this was initially a question of hierarchy and an inferiority complex in relation to the continental powers of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. When Colombia was notorious as the drug capital of the world in the 1980s and 1990s, that image of violence and drugs was the 'other' being fought against on the football pitch. Colombia's style and quality of football needed to overcome an 'other' based on the perception of others and its own citizens of inferiority and notoriety.

Arguably, what makes Colombian football most successful in creating national togetherness is that football seems to belong to the nation. Jaramillo Racines argues that the symbol or identity of the national team does not belong to anyone, but is a general identity with which the whole country identifies (personal interview 3 November). The national team has not been associated with sources of national division nor has it been overly politicized (the issue of Santos's problematic politicization of the shirt will be discussed in chapter three). It was tarnished as a national symbol due to links with the drug cartels in the 1980s and the murder of national team defender Andrés Escobar following his own goal against the USA in Colombia's dismal showing in the 1994 World Cup. How the Santos government has tried to cleanse and strengthen the national team's image to remove any lingering associations with the 'other' 'Narcolombia' will be discussed in chapters three (with regards to his rhetoric) and four (considering laws such as Law 1445 of 2011).

### The requirements for sporting nationalism

Archetti and Alabarces, when considering the needs for sporting nationalism to flourish in the Argentine setting, establish four factors to be essential for success: 1) the 'creolisation' of the game; 2) significant sporting success; 3) sporting heroes that are part of the foundation of the national sporting myth and 4) a practice of differentiation of 'us' versus an 'other', often defined by a national style of play, whether real or imagined (Archetti 1999; Alabarces 2002: 42–43). This formula is only applied to the men's game and not women's football; women are not present in this construction of sporting nationalism, and in *Masculinities* (1999), Archetti rarely considers how women can be included or imagined as being part of the nation through football. This model for sporting nationalism based on the Argentine experience has been applied to other Latin American football scenarios around the promotion of sporting nationalism, particularly where football has emanated outwards from the capital, where sporting successes have arrived earlier than they did in Colombia, where a style was established and articulated in opposed to a British 'other' and where significant national discussions took place around those integrating the national team, both in racial terms and of European migrants. Colombia has a very different process. Whereas Argentine football is largely a history of football in Buenos Aires (Archetti 1999: 9) and thus a vision of football as being a way to 'see' and 'define' a masculine concept of Argentine nationhood is almost entirely based on the capital, the history of Colombian football is that of competing regional centres; no city has dominated.<sup>3</sup>

3 Teams from eleven different cities have won the Colombian first division, with teams from three other cities having finished as runners up. Alan Gilbert (2007) illustrates how only Brazil of South American countries has a similar spread of league championships won by teams from different cities and how the capital has tended to dominate elsewhere in the continent.

If there is a spiritual ‘centre’ for Colombian football, it is Barranquilla rather than the capital Bogotá. It is in Barranquilla where the *Selección* has played home matches since 1989, the city that seemed to have the strongest claim for where football was first played in Colombia, and where the first national Colombian football federation, Adefútbol, was based. Barranquilla, associated with carnival and Caribbean lifestyle, is also more propitious for positive imaginings of Colombia. Much as how Colombia is frequently described as a country of regions and regionalisms, so Colombian football has the same issue, of trying to create a national team, and a national footballing style and identity based on diverse parts and styles related to existing and embedded regional characteristics, both real and imagined. Competing regional identities, both politically and on the football field, have constantly been in play as the nation and national team are discussed. Another key aspect of difference to contrast with Archetti’s arguments and the Argentinian context is that European migration at the end of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth to Colombia was insignificant. Colombia’s struggle was to integrate its own citizens from different Colombian regions rather than those from abroad.

### The multiple births of Colombian football

Ávila Palacios (2012), Santos Molano (2005) and Jaramillo Racines (2010) pinpoint 1892 as the first time that football in Colombia was reported, with Colonel Henry Rowan Lemly, from the USA, introducing football at the Military School in Bogotá. However, football in Colombia does not have a single founding myth, and no one city is responsible for the spread of the game. As Galvis Ramírez (2008), Jaramillo Racines (2010), Zuluaga (2005) and Watson (2018b) all show, Colombian football had multiple births; Bogotá, Barranquilla, Santa Marta and Pasto all loudly claim that the origins of the nation’s football are to be found there at the end of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth. Due to weak transport and communication links and local cities influencing their regions more than the nation’s capital, a different method of football’s diffusion as a game occurred compared to the likes of Argentina, Uruguay and Peru where the capital dominated the early decades of the game, gaining strength in different cities and regions separately before teams from these different locales began to meet and compete. It could thus be surmised that without a sense of control from one single point of origin dictating the game’s development – the first Colombian football federation, Adefútbol (la Asociación Colombiana de Fútbol), was not founded until 1924, and in Caribbean coastal Barranquilla, rather than Bogotá – different identities, rules, forms of practice, and structures in the various regions could hinder, rather than facilitate, a national form of organizing and playing the game. This complicated the ‘creolizing’ of football and hence problematized its use for defining the nation through a style of unified, recognized and codified practice.



Football as a meeting place for the nation was slow to develop. Zuluaga describes the first three decades of the twentieth century as a gradual process of football providing opportunities for classes and regions to 'discover' one another. In the first decade football made possible meetings between people of the same class; in the second decade football led to meetings between cities and regions, and then encounters with neighbouring countries took place in the third decade (2005: 87). Football also began to gain official recognition. Galvis Ramírez tells of Colombian President Carlos E. Restrepo (1910–1914) awarding a trophy for a quadrangular tournament between Bogotá teams on 12 October, the 'Día de la Raza', in 1911 (Galvis Ramírez 2008: 15–16) and President Rafael Reyes and Prince Jaime de Borbón from Spain attending the final of a 'national' tournament only featuring teams from the capital in 1920 (22). Football was linked to national celebrations, as matches featured in celebrations of the Día de la Raza, anniversaries of Colombian Independence and the Battle of Boyacá (Zuluaga 2005: 45). Sport in the 1920s contributed to the national debate around modernization and the degeneration of the Colombian 'race' (Quitíán Roldán 2013: 30) with a growing acceptance of sport's importance for national hygiene, education, healthy entertainment, combatting a sedentary lifestyle and improving the race and beauty (Hernández Acosta 2013: 58). These national discussions led to the passing of Law 80 in 1925, described by Ruiz Patino as the first attempt to formulate a political project around sport (2010: 24) and eventually to the organization of the first National Olympic Games in Cali in December 1928. Hernández Acosta considers these games to be vital for the meeting and integration of different regions of the country (2013: 49); Jaramillo Racines supports this view, stating that the games were a characterization of a nation that sought to be united and sought to integrate its regions (personal interview 3 November 2017). Football was one of the sports played in these games and featured twelve teams, from the departments of Atlántico, Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Huila, Magdalena, Norte de Santander, Santander, Tolima and Valle del Cauca. Football was the most popular sport, the one that gained most attention from the public, and was considered by the newspapers as almost the only important discipline in the Games (Galvis Ramírez 2008: 25). It would be nearly another decade though until Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) recognized Adefútbol in 1937 and not until 1945 that Colombia sent a team to the South American championships. The first official championship had taken place nearly thirty years previously in 1916. The Colombian teams sent in 1945, 1947 and 1949 predominantly consisted of players from Barranquilla, home of Adefútbol, and were criticized for not being representative of the nation as a whole. Poor results and performances confirmed that Colombia, alongside Bolivia and Ecuador, were substantially inferior to the likes of Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru and Chile, as was summarized in several articles in the sports magazine *Estadio* after the 1947 tournament. Scornful writers argued that the teams at the bottom of the table had a lot to learn in order to compete with the rest

of the football teams in America (*Estadio* 1947: 4) and that the ‘small teams’, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, had learned little, displaying a completely rudimentary style of play (*Estadio* 1948: 3).

### El Dorado: first international football recognition

The success that is necessary for sporting nationalism, according to Archetti and Alabarces, first occurred in Colombia from 1948 to 1954, a period now known as El Dorado. This was the first time that Colombian football made a substantial impact on the world game, though little about the league could be said to be Colombian, and its impact came through club football strength rather than national team prowess, and through the feats of a legion of foreign players rather than Colombians. This first Colombian national professional league was formed in 1948, shortly after the murder of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9 April and the shocking outbreak of bipartisan national violence that led to La Violencia. This was a ‘before and after’ moment for football and the nation (Quitíán and Urrea Beltrán 2016: 166), a founding moment where football in Colombia became a recognized national pastime and spectacle as well as a symbolic founding moment for prolonged national violence. The need and possibility for football to counteract national violence emerged at this moment, a demand that would be revisited in other moments of Colombian footballing success, particularly from 1985 to 1994. Since El Dorado, and given the ongoing conflicts in Colombia that included La Violencia, the internal civil war between State, various guerrilla groups and paramilitaries, and the battle against drug cartels, football has been asked to provide some sense of relief from violence and a semblance of unity when success has occurred.

After the assassination of Gaitán and given the subsequent horrific violence, the government needed to find ways to reduce political tension, particularly in urban areas. The creation of the professional football league run by a newly formed organization, the Bogotá-based Dimayor, which quickly came into conflict with Barranquilla-based Adefútbol, was therefore helped and hastened by the government of Mariano Ospina Pérez (1946–1950). There are differing versions of the extent to which President Ospina assisted Dimayor. One of the key figures of Dimayor, Alfonso Senior, at times downplayed the role of government, claiming that it only supported the league by allowing stadium hire<sup>4</sup> and denied there being a relation between the outbreak of violence and the league being rushed into operation with government urging (Ramos Valencia 1998: 54). However, Zuluaga quotes Senior as saying that the government fast-tracked player contracts and travel visas to help new imports arrive as quickly as possible in 1950 when the political situation was particularly precarious (Zuluaga 2005: 55–56). Senior does admit that

4 In Colombia, the stadiums belong to the government, departments or local municipalities. The Palmaseca stadium of Deportivo Cali is the only one currently owned by the club itself.

the government had a keen interest in how football could calm tensions, commenting that the president asked for a football match after the murder of the brother of Liberal leader Darío Echandía in October 1949, as well as asking for professional football to be taken to Tunja where there was considerable political turmoil (Ramos Valencia 1998: 55). A newspaper report of a social event involving President Ospina and Senior after a match between Millonarios and Libertad apparently led Ospina to ask Senior if it would be possible to establish teams in Boyacá or the Santanderes (*Semana* 1949a: 32). Jaramillo Racines shows that stadiums were effective areas for the Ospina government to get messages across, given that there could be up to 90,000 spectators each Sunday watching football. He cites a letter from the government to Dimayor in September 1949 asking for the following actions to be carried out in the stadiums on that particular weekend, possibly the first instance of football being linked to peace in the country:

Firstly: That the entities of national civic action and the Society of Love for Bogotá have requested from this entity support for their pro-peace and national harmony campaign and it is agreed that: 'First Article: To order affiliate clubs, on the next Sunday 11th September 1949, during the celebration of the football matches, to hold a minute of silence. Second Article: To ask the public that attend said matches, that during the minute of silence they should wave white handkerchiefs, and when the minute is over, they should all join in with the following chant "Peace, harmony and nation". Third Article: To ask the local clubs to include in the advertising corresponding to the forthcoming Sunday matches the following phrase "Peace plus harmony equals nation!"' (cited in Jaramillo Racines 2011: 123)

Football was deliberately employed as a pacifying device during El Dorado (Uribe 1976: 9; Zuluaga 2005: 157; Quitián Roldán 2013a; 2013b; Campomar 2014: 207). The very un-Colombian nature of the football matches, given the influx of so many foreign players who were neutral to the Colombian political turmoil, meant that neither party could benefit. Victories of teams were never victories for the Conservatives or Liberals, as the foreign players were outside of the Colombian political partisanship struggle and native players had very little impact. Instead, as Quitián and Urrea Beltrán argue, the presence of neutral Argentinians, Uruguayans and so forth, provided a civilizing effect as they were not linked to political confrontations but rather legitimized ethical and aesthetic values of society linked to modernization (2016: 167).

The press were also conscious of the civilizing and calming effect of football; *Estadio* was always keen to stress the values of sportsmanship, fair play, good behaviour from fans and football's positive effect for society. However, they noted that the government could do more:

Sporting fanaticism that channels passions is preferable to political fanaticism which degenerates passions leading to dangerous hatreds. And if

we admit that this is true, we cannot believe that a government that has emphatically declared their desire to calm hatreds between Colombians does not more support the most efficient way to do so, which is sport. (*Estadio 1950b: 2*)

The Colombian professional league from 1948 to 1954 was a golden period of Colombian club football rather than national team football, particularly as FIFA banned the Colombian team from competing internationally. It was a sporting spectacle of foreign entertainers rather than a time where Colombian football emerged. If anything, it reinforced regional identities rather than a national identity as club teams became the pride of their city, and rival teams fought for acclaim within the city. Colombia was merely the location for a predominantly Latin American cast of football stars to entertain a Colombian public, first in urban areas and then increasingly throughout the country as radio and the press focused on the sport. Football coverage flourished as censorship laws limited political discussion after the events of El Bogotazo and the ensuing murders of Liberal and Conservative supporters across Colombia. The new league took advantage of players' strikes in Argentina and Uruguay to sign some of the most famous players of the day, already known in Colombia given the continental reach of *El Gráfico* magazine (seen by Archetti as so important for Argentine sporting nationalism), ignoring previous contracts the players had. The Bogotá-based club Millonarios began the process by signing Adolfo Pedernera, a move that was a national sensation and led to football talk and transfers hitting the front pages of newspapers and magazines and, quickly, most of the clubs in the league filling their teams with foreign players.<sup>5</sup> Although Colombian football was a backwater at this time, Colombian football fans knew about Pedernera, a member of the famous 'Máquina' forward line of River Plate. Legendary sports newspaper *El Gráfico* from Argentina was sold across the continent, and Argentinian footballers of the status of Pedernera were close to being household names. The excitement caused by his signing was so huge that it was said that the entire country was suffering from 'pedernitis' and the Campín stadium in Bogotá was packed as Pedernera attended his first game after his signing, quickly justifying the record fee Millonarios had paid for his services. Millonarios built on this sensation by returning to Argentina to sign other stars such as Alfredo Di Stéfano (regarded as one of the greatest footballers ever), Néstor Rossi and Julio Cozzi (dubbed the 'goalkeeper of the century' by the Argentine press). Other club owners saw

5 *Semana* magazine, a news magazine that had previously dedicated very little attention to sport, originally gave very little attention to the new professional league, but by the end of the first tournament in 1948 there are regular articles, with Colombian 'Chonto' Gaviria on the cover on 4 December 1948. In the following two years, football coverage is substantial, with Efraín 'el Caimán' Sánchez, Adolfo Pedernera, managers Carlos Aldabe and Adolfo Magallanes, George Mountford and Neil Franklin, and Francisco Zuluaga and Carlos Arango all being featured on the covers.

the economic potential of signing overseas stars to improve gate receipts and associated income, players who were much more famous and supposedly more skilled than Colombian players. As a result, by 1951 more than 60 per cent of the players came from abroad (Campomar 2014: 209; Worswick 2012: 21). There was a tendency for players from the same country to play at the same club; Deportivo Cali were a team of Peruvians, Millonarios and Santa Fe both opted for mostly Argentinians, Pereira chose Paraguayans and Cúcuta fielded mostly Uruguayans. Even some British footballers of the stature of Manchester United's Charlie Mitten and Stoke City and England's Neil Franklin were signed for the league, confirming the status of the Colombian league in the eyes of the Colombian media and supporters as one of quality and repute. Only Atlético Municipal from Medellín (later Atlético Nacional) would resist the tendency and field a team entirely of Colombians. Although the El Dorado era put Colombian football on the world map, it was not Colombian in nature; the mythical team of this era, the Millonarios team known as El Ballet Azul, featuring the likes of Pedernera, Rossi, Di Stéfano and Cozzi only featured two Colombians, and one was the substitute goalkeeper Gabriel Ochoa Uribe, who would later become one of the most successful Colombian coaches. Archetti cites the 1913 Racing team as where Argentine football takes over from British football as the British surnames in Argentine football were replaced by those of Spanish and Italian origin (Archetti 1999: 59), but the Millonarios team cannot carry the same national representative symbolism. Great *Colombian* football, or defined Colombian sporting identities, did not emerge with this team or league. What *did* emerge was football as an urban and media phenomenon, with various clubs across Colombia emerging as representative of their region featuring star foreign players who would become the basis of myths about these clubs and this period of football.

### The 'creolization' of Colombian football and the search for footballing identity

This issue of making football Colombian, or the 'creolization' of football, was an experience undergone much earlier in Argentina. When Archetti discussed the importance of the creolization of football in Argentina, he showed how football moved from being a sport dominated by British names and style of play to being replaced by Argentinian names and a style of play described by the likes of *El Gráfico* journalists Borocotó and Chantecler as being *criollo* or *rioplatense*. The previously dominant club Alumni, featuring many British names, who won ten league titles between 1898 and 1911 were superseded by Racing Club de Avellaneda and Argentinian names as the powerhouse of club football, Racing winning seven consecutive titles between 1913 and 1919. The issues at play in the Argentinian case also involve how Italian and Spanish migrants were assimilated into a style of football that was Argentinian and not British. Borocotó argued for these Latin migrants becoming Argentinian due to simple contact with the geographical and cultural milieu, whereas

Chantecler argues for more of a 'cultural melting pot' creating a hybridized form of football, superior to what goes before, which becomes Argentinian (Archetti 1999: 66–70). The style of play of clubs and the national team became imagined as Argentinian and very distinct to Argentina's 'other', the British, and particularly English, style of football. The Colombian situation is considerably different. As has been mentioned above, foreign stars, particularly from Argentina and Uruguay, dominated the El Dorado league. Although these *rioplatense* stars attracted and dazzled the crowds and heightened the standard of play, the absence of 'Colombianness' from the football spectacle became a point of concern. There was an acceptance in the press that these foreign players were necessary to teach football and to help develop an improved Colombian game, but worries grew at the lack of tangible initiatives from Dimayor, Adefútbol or the newly professional clubs to sow the seeds for Colombian football to take over in due time from the imported footballers. The government did little to help the sport in itself grow at grassroots level or improve infrastructure significantly. Another consequence was that the *criollos* in Colombian football, put in opposition to the imports, were all Colombians first and foremost, and not identified by regional or racial status. It is worth stressing here that the term *criollo* when it was used in the sports sections of newspapers and in sport magazines did refer to all native-born Colombians, irrespective of region or race. *Estadio* frequently refers to how many *criollos* were playing, if the *criollos* had played particularly well in opposition to the imports, how best to protect and improve *criollo* footballers, and the benefits for the *criollo* game. Some examples follow:

We *criollos* have to learn to play football better, and the foreigners are indispensable for this. (*Estadio* 1949a: 12)

The *criollos* show the way (headline). (*Estadio* 1949b: 10)

The eleventh week of the championship was a near-total triumph for national football, as in the majority of matches that took place in the different stadiums around the country, the *criollo* players were better than the imports. (*Estadio* 1949d: 8)

All of this has led to serious consequences. The first of these has been the gradual displacement of the *criollo* players who, in the judgement of the blinded directors, do not produce the same box office success as the foreigners. This would not be so serious if the clubs were dedicated to the training of young *criollo* talents who in the future could defend their colours rather than resorting to the need to depend on expensive imports. (*Estadio* 1949g: 2)

Regional differences and regional identities, so dominant in Colombia's fractured national construct, for once disappear. This situation of the dominance of imported players did, however, help Colombian footballers become symbolically united against the imported 'others' who were dominating

the league, cutting across regional divisions and rivalries. Colombian footballers and Colombian football in general needed support. However, economic and entertainment prerogatives outweighed the development of Colombian football and footballers.

The Colombian league achieved notoriety, and was seen as being a 'pirate' league by foreign football organizations and Argentinian and Uruguayan clubs whose striking players had ignored their contracts to go and play for higher wages in Colombia. Uribe describes the process as human trafficking (1976: 9), seeing the league as stolen, pirated, chameleonic, harlequinesque and misleading, serving only as a way of diverting attention from the atrocities of La Violencia in the countryside, and as an escape from the collective holocaust that the country was blindly marching towards (ibid.). FIFA banned Colombia and Colombian clubs from international competition until the Pact of Lima of 1951 agreed that players should return to their original clubs in 1954. It is, therefore, difficult to categorize El Dorado as a moment of Colombian success; there were great teams, great players and a great spectacle, but no great sense of 'Colombianness' involved. The national game was being stunted by the lack of opportunities for Colombian players. Peláez Restrepo argues that El Dorado crushed the rights of a country to develop and grow its own football (1976: 9), as does Galvis Ramírez who pointed out that although some saw it as a legendary time, for others it was a complete farce as it delayed the development of sport in Colombia (2008: 48).

Instead, El Dorado served as a period for the press to consider the paucity of Colombian sport in relation to more established Latin American powers and the opportunity to use sport to enhance the nation and its citizens. *Estadio* articulated the significance of football and nation in its pages, not only in terms of economic success and entertaining the public, but also as a chance to boost the fortunes of Colombia and Colombians. In an editorial, Gonzalo Rueda Caro wrote:

We understood that those ruling this country should make the most of the new tide of sporting enthusiasm that Dimayor has caused (which, in parentheses, is the greatest Colombian achievement in recent years), and to promote sport in every corner of Colombia. In this way they can convert our country into a true democracy, where every citizen does not only have the right to vote (a precarious right when this mandate is carried out at a distance), but they also, most importantly, have the right to be healthy, the right to encounter along life's path, pleasant distractions, and the happy and noble education that sport provides to a people when they are taught its true meaning and importance. (*Estadio* 1949f)

Sport was seen as an important way of 'haciendo patria', building a nation, and articulated as such in this magazine. As football was not demonstrably progressing from being a spectator sport with commercial benefit for the owners to one that was developing the game via the creation of age group teams for instance, more and better stadia, training facilities and grounds

across the country, or improving the Colombian race, *Estadio* generated the argument that the nation was not benefitting from the El Dorado period and an opportunity for sport to benefit the country was being squandered. The government and club owners were just using the league as a diversionary tactic and pacifying device against political unrest, and as a chance to make money. There was no national aim for Colombian citizens. Here are quotes from 1949, 1950 and 1951 from *Estadio* that discuss the failure to make the football league Colombian, to benefit the nation and show the ongoing preoccupation with the issue:

It is absolutely essential to promote a campaign to raise awareness of the seriousness of the problem of importing footballers. Undoubtedly, they are showing us how to play football, but we have the clear feeling that very little is being done to ensure that these magnificent lessons are being translated into practical benefits for our native sport. Behind the brilliant curtain of professionalism, we are unfairly abandoning our own men. (*Estadio* 1949e: 2)

We believe we have said this enough times; we do not want to launch a patriotic campaign. But we are certain that our future in this sport should be based on discovering and training native footballers, and we are increasingly alarmed that the most powerful entities of our professional league are refusing to give this the opportunity to happen. (*Estadio* 1950a: 2)

Professional football has established itself in Colombia. It has become respected across the world and it has transformed the sporting landscape of the country. Now we should direct all our efforts towards creating our own football, a worthwhile task, one which will definitely be full of difficult decisions and problems, but one that, if it is not started immediately, will then become very difficult to bring together all the fruits of the experiences acquired in the years of professionalism thus far. And, if do not know how to benefit from the millions of pesos invested into creating a fanbase, a spectacle, and world renown for Colombian football, to create a true and genuine national sport, then we can certainly ask ourselves bitterly a question that for many years has been asked by the enemies of the professional game, 'And professionalism, what was the point of it all?' (*Estadio* 1951a: 3)

Apparent in these quotes is the continental footballing hierarchy and sense of footballing inferiority that Colombian journalists such as those in *Estadio* highlight to their readers. Colombian football was not as advanced in its development as the likes of Argentina and Uruguay, and the standard of play was considerably lower. Colombians were aware of the longer and more successful football history of the nations from the Southern Cone, with Olympic gold medals, World Cup victories and final appearances for Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil.

The El Dorado period embedded a sense of Colombian footballing inferiority and its low rank in the continental hierarchy, as well as a requirement



for entertainment and high quality to be vital when envisioning how football should be played. The spectacle was a primary concern as football matches were society occasions. There were often events prior to the football including women's football matches, but these were one-off curiosities rather than a launch pad for women's teams. A match between Santa Fe and Millonarios took place before the men's game, with Santa Fe winning 17–5 (*Estadio* 1949c: 31). Later that year there was a short match between Deportivo Cali and Boca Juniors before the men's teams played (*Estadio* 1949j: 16–17). *Semana* reported that it featured two beauty queen candidates for the Valle del Cauca, Carmen Elisa Arango and Clarita Dominguez (*Semana* 1949c: 30). *Semana* also reports a match between two women's teams in Barranquilla, Estrellas Galesas and Sirenas del Caribe; the aim of the game was to attract the traditional football public of Barranquilla back to the sport. Details show that it was thought that changes were necessary to allow football to be played by women, revealing prevailing attitudes about women and sport: 'Women playing a rough sport such as football demands reducing the field of play to limit the physical exertions that a woman is capable of' (*Semana* 1949b: 27). An association between football and female beauty was present during El Dorado and would become an enduring relationship. Regional and national beauty queens often took ceremonial kick-offs and were photographed with star players, a tradition that has continued to this day of associating beautiful women fans with football through advertising, placing beauty before ability as a desired characteristic for women representing the nation.<sup>6</sup> One particularly striking picture in *Estadio*, titled 'Symphony in black and white', featured white beauty queen Myriam Sojo Zambrano alongside the Afro-Colombian footballer Rigoberto 'Memuerde' García before a football match (*Estadio*, 1951b: 1). This is a notable photograph showing how beauty and football could both represent the nation, bringing together two Colombias, the white civilized Colombia, and the periphery of Afro-Colombia, represented by 'Memuerde' García.<sup>7</sup>

Another impact of the foreign players was that diverse footballing influences became linked with different regions, which complicated the search for a national style of football. Argentina, from where most of the foreign stars in El Dorado came, became Colombia's 'father' in football terms and the measurement of how Colombian football was progressing.

6 It is still easy to find articles about women footballers' beauty in Colombia. A quick search of 'most beautiful footballers in the Colombian league on 5 August 2019, for example, included the following links on the first page: 'Hot and pretty: the beautiful women of Colombian football' (*Futbolred.com* 2019), and 'The Beautiful Players of the Colombian football league' (*La Opinión* 2017).

7 This photo can also be seen accompanying an online article by Francisco Figueroa Turcios on the life of Rigoberto 'Memuerde' García: (<https://lachachara.org/rigoberto-memuerdegarcia-el-barrio-rebolo-le-marco-la-ruta-para-ser-futbolista/>). The title of the photo here is telling 'La bella y la bestia', beauty and the beast.

The likes of Pedernera, Di Stéfano and Rossi were the teachers, the masters, and the Colombian players were the pupils, the novices. Argentina was the model for Colombia's football, and therefore, Argentina became Colombia's football 'other'. Qutián Roldán argues that Argentina was fundamental in the construction of Colombia's footballing identity for this reason, becoming the 'other' that had to be beaten; the pupils had to beat the teacher, or, from a Freudian perspective, the sons had to free themselves from the superiority of their father (2017: 84). The influence of Argentinian players in the league meant that the style that Argentinian footballers played was to be imitated and learned from. Argentine influence in particular so dominated Colombian football that it became extremely difficult to displace in the search for a Colombian style and identity that could be then deployed towards effective sporting nationalism. Additionally, due to the spectacle of El Dorado and the football played by the foreign stars, the need for a Colombian style had to include entertainment. It would not be enough to win by defensive tactics or 'mechanical' play, as good football became inseparably linked to the need for the public to be entertained. Colombian football had to be successful and better than Argentinian football, or at least on a similar level, and it also had to feel different to Argentinian football, to have something recognizably distinct and original that would distinguish it from their 'other' and be a source of Colombian pride. The added complication is that with a country with very strong regionalism and regional identities, this would be very hard to achieve, to be able to define what a Colombian style of football on the pitch actually was that could evoke a shared sense of pride, recognition and identity. The national team could possibly achieve this task, but, up to this point, the national team had not been constituted by players from various parts of the nation, had not been selected on merit and had been banned from playing by FIFA due to El Dorado.

#### The search for success, 1954–1985

After this 'non-Colombian' Colombian golden age of club football, national football success only occurred in isolated moments, and a footballing myth of 'playing like never before but losing like always' (Dávila and Arteaga 1991: 175) became engrained. The El Dorado league, despite demonstrating the superiority of imported football over local football, had at least ensured that football became the most important and mediatized team sport in the country, although other sporting successes, such as in boxing with Antonio 'Kid Pambelé' Cervantes and in cycling with the likes of Martín 'Cochise' Rodríguez, did establish those sports as significant for Colombia; the national print press, sporting magazines and radio shows discussed Colombian inferiority on the football field in comparison to the likes of Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina. Radio in particular – in Colombia radio was much more widespread and accessible than the national printed press that Benedict Anderson (1991) sees as having a key role in nation building – was

fundamental for citizens to learn more about the country and its regions through the broadcasting of football matches. Ramos Valencia argues that the system of radio broadcasters not only connected the people of the Caribbean with those in the far south in Pasto, but also ensured that the sport, and football in particular, became an instrument of unity in a nation of nations (1998: 168). Live broadcasts, debates and news programmes all helped create imaginary links for Colombians around shared sporting moments.

Successive governments did little to promote football beyond rhetoric. During El Dorado, *Estadio* regularly attacked government failures to build stadiums and sports facilities nationwide (*Estadio* 1949h: 2) and the lack of sport programmes in public education (*Estadio* 1949i: 2). In the 1960s, these problems had not disappeared, with the leading sport publication *Afición* frequently criticising the government in their weekly magazine. They highlighted issues such as failing to resolve disputes over the national team and management of football between Adefútbol and Dimayor (*Afición* November 1961b: 1) and not funding national delegations to help prepare for and travel to continental and international sporting tournaments (*Afición* 1962b: 5).

Colombia managed to qualify for the 1962 World Cup in Chile and drew 4–4 with the great Soviet Union, a draw that quickly gained mythic status as a national triumph, despite Colombia losing their other first round group matches against Uruguay (1–2) and Yugoslavia (0–5) and being knocked out of the competition. It was linked to capitalist versus communist considerations by the then President Guillermo Valencia (1962–1966) who said that it was a triumph of democracy over totalitarianism (*GolCaracol.com* 2013), and had added significance for the country given the fears growing of communist influence within Colombia about the independent communist ‘Republics’ formed in the aftermath of La Violencia. It can be seen as the first moment when communists are excluded from the national ‘us’ in relation to imaginaries of the nation around football (Watson 2018c; 2020a). They would not be readmitted until Santos began talking about FARC also being supporters of the national team, as discussed in chapter three. The match against the USSR also featured the first, and to date only, goal scored directly from a corner in a World Cup by Marcos Coll, against the famous Soviet goalkeeper Lev Yashin. This goal, regularly repeated on Colombian television programmes about World Cups ever since, and the feat of coming back from 0–3 and 1–4 down meant that the 1962 team gained hero status in the country, despite losing their other matches. The story of manager Adolfo Pedernera urging the team to loudly sing the national anthem at half time to gain confidence to compete against their Soviet opponents became another legend that stimulated national pride. At this moment football and national identity began to ‘flirt’ with each other, as Roza Rondón puts it (2014: 31), given that this ‘victory’ was gained on an international stage against an acknowledged world and footballing power, and against an ‘enemy’ political system and doctrine. It worked as a source of national pride because it was a Colombian team made up of players from nine different clubs. The coach Pedernera was Argentinian,

however, and that influence remained. There had, in fact, been questions about whether Colombia should even compete in the 1962 World Cup, given the fear of the national team being humiliated by stronger opposition, and the negative impact this would have for the pride of the nation. *Afición*<sup>8</sup> regularly wrote editorials about the significance of the tournament for Colombia and what failure could mean, revealing a sporting inferiority complex: ‘Sincerely, we have to admit that we are the footballing novices, the Cinderella team, the weakest team, and experts give us little chance in the great global joust of the World Cup’ (*Afición* 1962a: 36). They pointed to the lack of organized preparation for the tournament potentially betraying the nation: ‘We must get to work. We must train the national team... either we prepare and we work hard for the national team, or we should give up, lest we go and make fools of ourselves’ (*Afición* 1961a: 6). Football and nation were explicitly united by *Afición*, much as it was by *Estadio* during the El Dorado period. Following the 4–4 draw, *Afición* again gave national importance to the victory, arguing that the team had done more for the nation than its politicians:

This is not a minor event, this is not just a sporting issue as the our country’s politicians have seen it as on more than one occasion. This is an event of such magnitude, of so much resonance, that the triumph of Colombia achieved in Arica will surely echo in every economic space in the country, leading to our coffee becoming more well-known and coveted. [...] Let us praise those 22 men who raised our national flag high, and a fraternal embrace for all those Colombians who build our nation through sport despite having to beg and fight tooth and nail for everything, given the indifference of our leaders. Let us praise the heroes of Arica, the real champions of Colombian foreign policy, because they have been true ambassadors. Their performances have given an incalculable boost to the national profile and been a vital moment for the future of Colombia. (*Afición* 1962c: 1)

The national significance attributed to the draw-as-victory in the press, at the same time removing any political responsibility for the result, confirms the sense that football was something for all Colombians, not owned by the State, something that transcended previous divisions and could be celebrated as a national moment. It also suggested a platform upon which Colombia could finally appear on a global stage. *Afición*’s reaction may be hyperbolic, but we can get a sense of the value that the Colombian press, and, by extension, their readers, attributed to a first successful result by their footballing representatives in a major global tournament.

8 It is worth noting that *Afición*, first a weekly sports newspaper and then a sports magazine, clearly associated the importance of sport with building the nation and national issues. The subline of the title was ‘*haciendo deporte hacemos patria*’ (by playing sport we are building our nation), which underlines this concern and viewpoint of the editors.

A runners-up position in the 1975 Copa América was the only other national team achievement to which the country could point until the mid-1980s when the shoots of a talented football team and culture finally emerged. There was also, unfortunately, the embarrassment of having to give up the hosting of the 1986 World Cup, the only country to relinquish the honour. President Misael Pastrana in 1974 had lobbied FIFA hard to win the hosting rights, but President Belisario Betancur gave up this right in a short speech in 1982. He blamed FIFA's extravagant demands for hotels, transport, communications and stadium facilities and argued that '[t]he World Cup should benefit Colombia, Colombia should not be of benefit to the multinational company of the World Cup' (*El Tiempo* 1982), but it was also true that successive governments had failed to prepare for the games and invest in the necessary infrastructure. FIFA was also nervous about the security of the tournament given guerrilla attacks and drug cartel activity.

#### A golden generation in the darkest years – 1985–1994: the genesis of the Colombian style

The mid-1980s finally saw Colombian club and national teams gaining significant international victories due to a style of football defined and recognized as being Colombian. Previously, dour, defensive tactics that sought to minimize defeats, or win by counter attacking had characterized them, and clubs still recruited foreign players to fill the most important positions in the team. Jaramillo Racines remembered that national team coach, César López Fretes, from Paraguay, saw Colombian teams still struggling to express their own football identity, and Colombian footballers being imitative rather than instinctive, always worrying about what foreign players could do and not believing in their own capabilities (personal interview 3 November 2017).

Indeed, a policy of nationalization of foreign players was pursued to strengthen the national side, and a reliance on foreign coaches persisted as the Colombian Football Federation tried to establish a football school that could lead to success, leaning on outside influences rather than trusting in itself. In the 1970s and early 1980s this included Paraguayan López Fretes (1970), Yugoslavs Todor Veselinović (1972–1973) and Blagoje Vidinić (1976–1979) and Argentinian Carlos Salvador Bilardo (1980–1981), though the 1975 Copa América runners-up position was achieved under a Colombian manager, Efraín 'El Caimán' Sánchez, who was the first Colombian to play in the Argentinian league (once again, success related to Argentina, signifying a notable Colombian achievement).<sup>9</sup> Francisco Maturana, the coach most associated with creating and articulating the eventual Colombian style of

9 After Bilardo's tenure ended in 1981, Colombia relied on native coaches until 2012 when the Argentinian José Néstor Pékerman was appointed. This thirty-one-year period was when a Colombian style of play was finally consolidated and shows a growing faith in Colombian footballing knowhow and ability.

football when it did emerge, stressed the need to have faith in their own game in his 1990 biography and also when interviewed: ‘We’ve always wanted to bring foreigners into our game: Argentinians, Yugoslavs, Brazilians, and Europeans, and in always looking at others, we ignored ourselves’ (Worswick 2016). This importing of football knowhow is indicative of a continuing negative self-image, an acceptance of their hierarchical position and embedded footballing inferiority. There was little attempt to create a hybrid new style that could be Colombian, a fusion of learning from South American and European schools of football as well as ‘Colombian’ characteristics somehow gained by kids playing street and waste-ground football, a Colombian version of the mythical *pibe del potrero* (kid from the wasteground) upon which Argentinian notions of football style are based (Archetti 1999: 180–185). The emphasis was on imitation rather than innovation, and ‘creolization’ had yet to occur.

The lack of identity of Colombian football remained a concern until the 1980s, a constant search hindered by perpetually looking outwards for foreign influences to improve national football. The shirt of the Colombian national team is a case in point in the search for a Colombian football identity. It was not until Ochoa Uribe’s team in the 1980s that the national kit adopted the colours of the national flag. Before then, Colombia had played in a variety of colours and designs (as can be seen below), the changes often copying the colours of other successful teams.



Figure 1: History of Colombian national team shirts, 1937–2015 (picture from ‘Historia de las camisetas de la Selección Colombia’, *Diario Noticias 24 Horas*, 12 February 2015, <<http://diarionoticias24horas.blogspot.co.uk/2015/02/historia-de-las-camisetas-de-la.html>>)

In 1938, Colombia wore a light blue and white shirt, copying the colours of Uruguay and Argentina; the white kit of 1945 seems based on the Real Madrid shirt; the dark blue kit of the 1962 World Cup copied the Millonarios shirts; and then in the 1970s Colombia wore an orange shirt that evoked the

great Dutch side's colours. The emphasis with all these shirts is imitation – rather than producing a shirt that evoked Colombianness, much like the style of football being played. These shirt choices evidence that the search for *nuestro fútbol* (our football) was ongoing, as Peláez Restrepo forlornly wrote:

Our football is still in an identification stage. The presence of coaches from different schools has sown doubts about what our football stands for [...] in our football, there is still so much empiricism, improvisation, and only a unification of criteria would allow you to locate a real style or philosophy. We have always wanted to imitate so many things that consequently we seem to have lost ourselves. (1976: 6)

The change to the yellow, red and blue kit coincided with the 1985 under-nineteen team coached by Luis Alfonso Marroquín that performed above expectations in the South American Championships in Paraguay. Minor success, a national aesthetic, style of kit and play, and press praise converged at an ideal time. The nation was reeling from the trauma of the volcanic eruption that destroyed the town of Armero, the M-19 taking hostages in the Palacio de Justicia and the subsequent brutal re-taking of the building by the army,<sup>10</sup> as well as the impact of the drug cartels upon national violence, criminality, the weakening of the State and its institutions and the country's global image. Marroquín's team provided a breath of fresh air and optimism for the country by displaying a freer and more attacking style of play, playing in the colours of the national flag, and winning to boot. Most Colombian football experts see it as the moment when a Colombian football style emerged, one that fulfilled the desire for spectacle, skill and attacking play. Arias argues that people could identify with a style of play that could be called 'Colombian football', and that the team was something like an instruction manual of what Colombian football should be: fast, precise, full of imagination and individual talent (1991: 60). Peláez Restrepo links this football team, the style that was being articulated and discussed by coach, fans and media and the colours of the kit as an important step towards awakening a dormant sense of sporting nationalism, particularly among the youth (1994: 82).

This first flourish was built upon by Francisco Maturana with the full national team, first with third place in the Copa América in 1987 (after which new footballing hero Carlos 'El Pibe' Valderrama was named Player of the Tournament and the first Colombian to be named Best Player in the

10 Football during this event once again served as a masking device, as the Millonarios versus Unión Magdalena match was televised rather than showing what was happening at the Palacio de Justicia. There are several articles and documentaries that look back on the events of 6 November 1985, such as by journalist Alejandro Pino Calad (Pino Calad 2015) and by *El Espectador* (2017b).

Americas), then with a 1–1 draw against England at Wembley in 1988,<sup>11</sup> and subsequently qualifying for the 1990 and 1994 World Cups. Maturana also managed Atlético Nacional to win the 1989 Copa Libertadores (a first triumph for a Colombian side in this competition), with a team entirely of Colombians, who played an attractive passing style of football. In the 1990 World Cup, Colombia drew 1–1 with eventual winners West Germany thanks to a last-minute goal from Freddy Rincón (another draw being portrayed as a victory, with the added Colombian flourish of Rincón slipping the ball between the German goalkeeper's legs to score), before losing in the last sixteen. The result against West Germany and qualifying for the last sixteen in their first World Cup for twenty-eight years gave Colombians a sense that Colombian football had finally arrived on a global level and could compete with the best in the world. In addition, according to Arias, humiliating defeats and international shame were put behind them as Colombia, finally, managed to consolidate a positive image, and more importantly, a lasting identity (1991: 51).

Qualification for the 1994 World Cup was earned with a 5–0 thrashing of Argentina in Buenos Aires on 5 September 1993. This remarkable result, a footballing parricide, was a triumphant moment for the nation as a whole, as Rozo Rondón explains:

This was a national landmark, not just for the greatness of the result and the insistence that this great event should become embedded in time, but also due to the high charge of 'Colombianness' that this result intrinsically carried. This was not just the eleven wearing shorts and long socks on the pitch who won; no, here it was an entire country that won: *we won*. Given such a victory, it wasn't just the Colombian team that the defeated Argentine fans, including Maradona, in the Monumental stadium were clapping; no, they were clapping all of us Colombians. The eleven on the field wearing the colours of the national flag represented the nation and what is Colombia. In that moment, the boundary between the players as 'them' and the fans as 'us' faded; the players and fans are 'us', the players and fans, *we are Colombia*. (2014: 31)

This victory was significant for many reasons: it was achieved in a style that was perceived to be Colombian;<sup>12</sup> a historical sense of inferiority and hierarchy

11 This was only a friendly match, but as it was against the founding fathers of football in the 'temple' of Wembley, these conditions allowed the game to achieve a potent status of national achievement. Another draw against England in 1995 also became historic and added to the legend of Colombian football's flair, as goalkeeper René Higuita performed a remarkable 'scorpion kick' when saving a goal-bound cross-cum-shot.

12 Or, at least, by the Colombians and Colombian press. In *Masculinities*, written from the Argentinian perspective of enduring a national tragedy in the 5–0 defeat, both Eduardo Archetti and his friend Juancho see the trauma as being significant as Argentinians



was spectacularly overcome, particularly as Diego Maradona had invoked Argentina's historical supremacy in an interview before the game; and it was a chance for Colombians to celebrate a national triumph after years of negative press about drug trafficking, violence, corruption and a state at conflict with guerrilla movements and paramilitaries. The magnitude of this victory, 'the most glorious episode of Colombian football' (Galvis Ramírez 2008: 161), was soon sharply contrasted with Colombia's greatest football disaster, as Colombia crashed out of the 1994 World Cup in the USA in the first round having lost 1–2 to the hosts. An own goal by Andrés Escobar contributed to the defeat and a week or so later, Escobar was murdered in his hometown of Medellín. The population, desperate for success and overly confident, experienced both the exit from the World Cup and Escobar's murder as national tragedies. Escobar's murder, stories of death threats to Maturana and several players during the tournament and revelations of links to drug cartels (see, for example, Araújo Vélez 1995a; 1995b), meant that the memories of this golden generation that had provided such hope for the nation were tarnished.

When Maturana became the national team coach, he built on the rising sense of *colombianidad* in the football team engendered by Marroquin's work by articulating the aspects that made it Colombian. Maturana spoke of integrating recognized regional characteristics into the *Selección* and its football style, applying some of Colombia's 'moral topography' (Wade 1995: 51) to the symbolism of the national team, creating strength out of different constituent parts, and finding worth in regional, and, more problematically, racial stereotypes. In an interview before the 1994 World Cup, when the style and link between team and nation was well established, he outlined the regional components that created the national whole:

[Leonel] Álvarez and Gabriel Gómez are midfielders from Antioquia, a region of hardworking, disciplined people – and they're the ones who have to keep things under control. The fantasy I leave to Asprilla, Rincón, Valderrama – people from Cali and the coast. Those people are always partying; they're harder to discipline. They take care of the creative part. (Price 1994)

There are problems with this imagining of the football team representing the nation, as many parts of the nation are not included. It further embedded characteristics of the black player as creative but undisciplined, capable only of fulfilling certain team roles. There is no role for the capital, for indigenous communities, for many of the peripheral areas of Colombia, though white, mestizo and Afro-Colombian communities are imagined as united within this construct. There is also the question of areas that were de facto FARC strongholds, where the government exercised little or no presence. These,

had taught Colombians to play, and now had been thrashed by a team playing the Argentinian style better than they could (1999: 177). The Colombian pupils/sons had beaten their master/father, reinforcing the idea of a footballing parricide.

too, are not referred to and so it can be argued that Maturana's imagining of the nation within the football team is limited, limiting, unrepresentative and also exclusive (Watson 2015: 53–54). Maturana also articulated how the national football team could create a national community of supporters through football success being an escape valve from the shadow of shame of Colombia's drug reputation, as well as to give cause for optimism and relief from daily traumas related to violence. He said, 'Colombia needed this. [...] This country has suffered a lot. [...] Soccer helps relieve the pain' (Maturana cited in Price 1994). The style of play and approach of the team was part of this imagining of a nation needing to have fun. Visibilizing the more festive, joyful characteristics of Colombians present in the football played on the pitch was also essential for the national symbolism of the football team. This could be seen not just in the often-carefree approach of emblematic goalkeeper René Higuita, regularly escaping from his penalty area to dribble the ball away from danger, or the flair and speed of the likes of Faustino Asprilla and Freddy Rincón, as well as the creative mastery of Valderrama. 'El Pibe' Valderrama and players such as Higuita, Álvarez and Escobar all had very distinctive haircuts that provided a point of cultural reference, as well as symbolically linking supporters and the team with the sale of blonde Afro Valderrama-style wigs worn by the fans.<sup>13</sup> Dávila Ladrón de Guevara summarizes Maturana's construct of the national team as follows:

In football terms, what Maturana proposed was, at the same time, modern and a throwback, scientific but carefree. In reality it was an unexpected but convincing synthesis: to win, but to win by playing well; to gain results, but without giving up the importance of having fun and entertaining; to gain titles, victories, epic footballing moments, but without losing an identity, a style, an image of what football, should be, and in particular Colombian football, in terms of being a generator of aesthetic spectacles. (1994: 23)

The press had an important role in convincing the public of the Colombian nature of Maturana's imagination of the *Selección*. *Semana* reported the birth of the Colombian style of football from the Copa América 1987 onwards, and particularly when qualification for the 1990 World Cup in Italy was gained. Some quotes that indicate this recognition and pride in a football that truly belonged to the nation and could push Colombia into the top positions of the continental – and perhaps even global – hierarchy follow:

13 Valderrama, arguably still the greatest ever Colombian footballer, and certainly the most recognizable on a global stage due to his trademark blond, frizzy afro hairstyle, was always and is still known as 'El Pibe', a term more often associated with Argentinian footballers. The idea of 'el pibe' and 'el potrero' is a key way Borocotó in *El Gráfico* imagined the origins of the Argentinian football style, young boys playing on wastegrounds. It is another nod to Argentinian influence on Colombian football that Valderrama's natural languid, creative, style of play is commemorated with the 'Pibe' nickname.

Maturana became the best interpreter of Colombian football and the symbol of the transformation of national football. The Copa América 1987 showed an authentically Colombian football for the first time, which led the country into the group of the greats of South America. (*Semana* 1988a: 52)

Forty years after professional football in Colombia was founded, we have the best opportunity to bed in our own football, a Colombian football identity. According to the Argentinian coach César Luis Menotti, a country's football should be a faithful reflection of its national idiosyncrasies and characteristics. If this is true, Colombia is starting to have their own football: happy, aggressive and ready to give everything for the cause. (*Semana* 1988b: 49)

This is the most representative national team in our football history. For the first time we can talk about an authentically Colombian football; for the first time talent is more important than rough play and for the first time the Colombian team are not the also rans. (*Semana* 1989b: 97)

The style articulated by both Maturana and the press did not present Colombian football as opposed to an Argentinian 'other'. The 'other' is now the worst of Colombia, the Colombia seen in reports of drug cartel-related violence and the resultant fear, suffering and misery. There is an attempted construction of a 'real' or desired Colombia obscured by perpetual violence and the dominance of negative reporting in domestic and international press. The Colombian nation that the national football team symbolizes is that happy, festive and united Colombia and Colombians that have been trying to break out and rise from a lowly position in the continental hierarchy, both in football and political terms. A significant choice of words in the above quotes is the use of 'an authentically Colombian football'; whether or not the style of football played is authentic or not is a moot point, as how can you ascribe what authentic Colombian characteristics should be? Who decides this and how far back do you go to decide what is truly authentic, particularly as any Colombian identity itself is hard to pin down, and is, like any Latin American nation, a hybrid culture in any case, a mix of indigenous, colonial Hispanic and African slave influences (García Canclini 1989: 71)? García Canclini, when discussing government policy on culture and deciding what art is 'authentic', argues that there are two problems with deciding what can be authentic to the nation:

It idealizes some moment of the past and proposes it as a sociocultural paradigm of the present, it decides that all the testimonies attributed to it are authentic and therefore these moments keep an unchangeable aesthetic, religious or magic power. [...] It forgets that all culture is the result of a process of selection and combination, always renewed, from its sources. In other words, it is a product of a *mise en scène*, in which it chooses and adapts what is going to be represented, according to what the receptors can hear, see and understand. (1989: 187)

In this particular scenario, the description of an ‘authentic’ Colombian football style is simply attributing characteristics that the press (and supporters) idealize, and then linking these to desired, positive features of the nation as a counterpoint to the negativity of previous features of Colombian football (inferior, defensive, unimaginative, depending on foreign influence) and Colombia itself (Narcolombia, violence, disunity, corruption and so forth). The style is a mixture of positive regional attributes leading to a positive and new whole, gaining strength from diversity, but particularly celebrating happy, festive and hard-working features. The press has chosen to see this particular type of football played by Maturana’s team as ‘authentically Colombian’ because it brought together football traits that Colombians had been wanting to see in their own side from football experiences and memories going back to the El Dorado period: success, spectacle, attacking football, and a lack of inferiority. This style was placed in opposition to how Colombia was regularly portrayed and negatively imagined in the news.

This idealized portrayal of the nation was not limited to football; the musical styles of the Caribbean coast such as *porro*, *cumbia* and *vallenato* from the 1940s onwards became more representative of Colombia (Wade 1998: 9–15). Although these Caribbean coastal styles of music could be linked to regional stereotypes and moral topographies of blackness, licentiousness, backwardness and laziness, they were also modern, happy and celebratory. As a counterpoint to a national reputation for violence, this type of imagery was a more positive face to present to the world, and therefore Colombia began to tropicalize itself through these Caribbean genres of music that were deployed to be more representative of a positive national identity. Blanco Arboleda states that Colombia is a country that puts huge emphasis on happiness, partying, *la rumba* and dancing in its collective imaginary, which means that happiness becomes a fundamental piece of the construction of its national identity (2009: 105). The *Selección* also became tropicalized. Not only did Maturana move the national matches away from the capital Bogotá to Barranquilla on the Caribbean coast, but television adverts for these matches, particularly those by main sponsors, the beer company Bavaria, portrayed a very carnivalesque type of football celebration, combining footballers, alcohol, music, dancing and celebrating Colombians. On the Caracol television coverage, when Colombia scored, the goal would be celebrated with a salsa music jingle. Another common jingle on Caracol coverage was ‘Sí, sí, Colombia, sí, sí, Caribe’,<sup>14</sup> a clear expression associating Colombia with a Caribbean image rather than an Andean or Amazonian one for instance. In this way, through the juxtaposition of location, music, televised imagery and the articulation in the press of what the identity of what the team was and

14 A good place to hear these two jingles, that played after a Colombian goal, and the ‘Sí, sí, Colombia, sí, sí, Caribe’ jingle can be heard on the goal highlights of the Caracol Coverage of the Colombia 5 Argentina 0 match with narration by William Vinasco: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2gHnS85xI4> [accessed 20 March 2018].

represented, a positive, happy, festive, Caribbean style was imposed upon the football team in the national imagination.

### Colombia versus Narcolombia

As a consequence of this combination of symbols, the national team and their style of football transcended the purely sporting domain to be employed as an example for how Colombia could overcome national problems. However, it portrayed an imaginary, idealized notion against an unpleasant reality that could not be removed by the temporary and fragile bubble of football success. Jaramillo Racines discussed this situation of how football came to be an example for the nation in other spheres of daily life; however, the problem of football representing a positive image of the nation was built on unstable ground, given how drug money had invaded the football arena, as well as football success being temporary and, therefore, precarious:

In the beginning that was the message about football, and then it transcended football itself. Then they started to talk about this in politics, and in other spheres of life in the country. They started talking about identity, about the importance of our values, of the importance of having our own football, of having a country that was autonomous, that had its own football style. And then, through the successes of the national team, the philosophy grew in other spaces of national life that in order to achieve success hard work is necessary, and you have to be very dedicated. Consequently, a kind of identity and recognition of the national 'being' was generated due to the nation's greatest symbol which was the national football team. This was personified to a great extent by Francisco 'Pacho' Maturana. [...] It was building a country through an imagined construct. This imagined construct was football and particularly Maturana's football played by the *Selección* Colombia which soon became a far loftier vision of the country compared to reality. The country was living a different reality. It was all imagined. It imagined what Colombia and Colombian people should be like. It imagined desired values. But the reality in Colombia was different; the reality was of violence, the reality of football teams who had been completely taken over by drug money. Violence continued as always. In other words, Colombia basically used the national team as an escape. It was an escape. The qualification to the World Cup Italia 90 was an escape. (personal interview 3 November 2017)

From these comments, we can see that Colombia's 'other' in this form of sporting nationalism was Colombia itself. It was important to try to prove that through football Colombia could be seen as something different from how it had been forced to see itself through daily experiences and narratives of the impact of the drug trade and enduring national conflict. The government of President César Gaviria tried to present an alternative reality to itself and the world through its football team. The 5–0 against Argentina

in September 1993 was supposed to be a launch pad for this national representation, a mirror for the nation – a team that had risen through adversity, much as the nation was doing, to find success through hard work, unity and a sense of happiness and enjoyment. However, this representation was already tainted, as one of Pablo Escobar's former henchmen, Jhon Jairo 'Popeye' Velásquez, commented in *The Two Escobars* documentary: 'President Gaviria paid a ton of money to clean Colombia's image. Back then cleaning Colombia's image was like when you have gonorrhoea and pour alcohol on your cock, but the gonorrhoea is strong and it's inside... President Gaviria threw his money away. Back then, *nobody* could fix Colombia's image' (*The Two Escobars* 2010).

The main problem about the success gained by Colombian clubs and the national team in this period from 1985 to 1994 and how it was applied to portraying a different aspect of Colombia, was that it was achieved with drug cartel influence. This is without doubt the aspect of Colombian football that has received most attention from journalists and historians. There is not the room to discuss the details of cartel involvement here (for just a few examples where this issue is explored see the likes of Taylor 1998; Quitián 2007; Araújo Vélez 1995a; 1995b; or *The Two Escobars* 2010), but, crucially, this cartel influence presented major problems when football was charged with giving a positive face for the nation. Dávila Ladrón de Guevara argues that, despite cartel links, the team played in a style contradictory to a 'win at all costs' image associated with the drug business:

There was a difference between the football that we were playing and drug trafficking. However, in hindsight, drug trafficking was clearly hugely immersed in football. They were the owners of the players, the players owed them debts. Let's say that Colombia was completely *narcotizado*, drugged. However, the national team played in a different way, and it was something we had never seen before. Therefore, this presents us with a very interesting contradiction: that a really beautiful style of football was being played in a totally and tremendously violent environment. (personal interview 12 December 2017)

However, the national team was asked by President Gaviria to represent the nation fighting against the scourge of drug trafficking and all the associated problems it brought to Colombia. It was supposed to represent the 'ideal' Colombia, against a Colombian 'reality', the nation versus the narcos, Colombia versus Narcolombia, but it had been infested with the same virus that the nation was trying to cure. How, therefore, could the national team fight against this Narcolombia 'other' when it had been corrupted by the cartels too? Gaviria gave a speech following the 5–0 victory over Argentina, when he awarded the players the Order of Merit and Maturana the Order of Boyacá (the highest award given to Colombians), in which he explicitly linked the victory and efforts of the players with a new future for Colombia away from the negative image constructed by narcotrafficking:

The whole of Colombia has the opportunity to wave our flag high. You have shown us what a new country can be. You have opened a door to the future. You have shown that honest endeavour is enough, and more than enough, to achieve our goals, no matter how difficult they may seem. (*El Tiempo* 1993)

This was part of an advertising campaign trying ‘to mend the country’s image abroad and stoke a sense of nationalism at home through Colombia’s participation in the 1994 World Cup’ (Fattal 2018: 59). Not only did this ring hollow as celebrations following the Argentina match turned violent, leading to dozens of deaths in the capital alone, but revelations about the team in the international press before the 1994 World Cup (see Price 1994, for example), the team’s failure in the tournament alongside latterly confirmed rumours of death threats to the players and manager, and Andrés Escobar’s murder, meant that the national team lost this symbolic ability to lead Colombia forward into a new peaceful and cartel-free era. This tarnished symbol would need to be cleansed before it could be used for sporting nationalism again. The national press, too, had stressed the symbolic importance for the nation of Colombia’s appearance in the World Cups of 1990 and 1994. Qualification was a moment of collective hope, a nationally shared reason to escape internal tragedy, turmoil and international notoriety caused by the drug cartels. The 1990 campaign was such a success because ‘for the first time in a long time, the international press was speaking about Colombia and not talking about drug cartels. Thanks to sport, a new side to the country was shown’ (*Semana* 1990: 58). Later, in the same article, this importance was stressed again: ‘Colombia has been amongst the greats. Maturana and his men have not only given hope to the country, but they have shown a different face of Colombia that for some time has had no source of pride internationally’ (61). *Semana* would continue to emphasize the importance of the national-team-as-national-palliative and as the sole positive representation of Colombia, a place where Colombia and Colombians could find national pride. Following the 5–0 against Argentina, *Semana’s* cover read, ‘Thank you lads! Amidst the darkness of violence, Colombia’s national team gives us a ray of light with qualification to the World Cup’ (*Semana* 1993: cover). The result was attributed epic properties, transcending the sporting arena to pass into the national arena, and highlighting the struggle between Colombia and Narcolombia:

For a population that has sadly become accustomed to bad news – kidnappings, car bombs, assassinations, corruption – a triumph such as Sunday’s game is much more than just a sporting success. It is success for a whole country that has refused to succumb faced with such adversity, and that, through such a victory like the one achieved in River Plate’s stadium, now recovers its confidence. (*Semana* 1993: special supplement ii)

The football team, through a victory of such magnitude, were, according to press coverage, capable of achieving what the State and its institutions could

not accomplish. The dismal early exit in the World Cup in 1994 on the back of a stunning loss against Romania followed by a humiliating defeat by the USA, was thus magnified as another national tragedy as the football team failed in its task to provide hope and the much yearned for national pride. Instead, Colombia disgraced itself as news of Andrés Escobar's death spread around the world. *Semana* demonstrated that the World Cup disaster was not just a sporting moment, but a national disaster:

This goes beyond sport – it is something that will be very difficult to erase from the memory of several generations of Colombians, something that will be very hard to cure, the collective frustration of a whole country. Of a country sorely afflicted by the conflict and other national problems and who had finally felt, for the first time, the right to have a dream. (*Semana* 1994: 100)

The failure of successive governments to protect a potential prize asset for the state in football in the 1980s meant that the achievements on the field from 1985 to 1994 (arguably stretching to 1998 as being the last qualification to a World Cup before 2014) failed to be built upon. Despite the words of President Gaviria after the 5–0 win and other public proclamations by politicians as the golden generation won games, the reality was that State policy had had little to do with advances in Colombian football. Colombian football as a potential source for sporting nationalism had emerged due to coaches such as Marroquín and Maturana finding a way to build on lessons slowly learned from a succession of foreign coaches and football schools and trusting in a more attacking style of football. Any funding for football projects at club or grassroots level unfortunately had more to do with cartel money-laundering than State programmes, funding or policies. Colombia had had the chance to tackle this drug money poisoning of Colombian club football after Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla had warned that the cartels had taken over many league clubs in 1983, but due to his assassination in April 1984, or lack of interest, complicity or simply incompetence, the government failed to act. *Semana* argued this very point in 1989, the year that the league would be cancelled following the murder of referee Álvaro Ortega:

What is clear is that the State, until now, has not looked after national football. Some measures were taken following the accusations that the then Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla made about the existence of money originating from drug trafficking in professional football, but no-one made any effort to enforce or check these. (*Semana* 1989a: 55)

Despite Lara Bonilla's worries and his subsequent murder, nothing was done to deal with the issue.

The stain of drug trafficking influence, the murder of Andrés Escobar and the dismal performance in the 1994 World Cup threatened to create a black hole in Colombian football. Escobar's death in particular could be added to the list of national tragedies, another traumatic and enduring collective



national memory (Larrain 2015: 193), being very symbolic of a talented, hard-working Colombian murdered for one mistake, or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There was a risk that the national football team would become another failed and tarnished national symbol following such spectacular failure when so many hopes were founded upon it, both for a people used to violence, suffering and hardship, and for a nation trying to create a new image for itself.

Indeed, Colombian football entered a period of decline following the 1994 World Cup and Escobar murder, with football becoming embroiled with much of the corruption and violence that was present in the country. Colombia did qualify for the 1998 World Cup but was knocked out in the first round after losses to Romania and England, and a single, uninspiring, victory over Tunisia. The phenomenon of *barras bravas* and fan violence emerged in the 1990s (Villanueva Bustos 2013: 95), meaning that football started to become a security issue in the same way as other violence linked to gangs and street crime. FARC bomb attacks and the kidnapping of the Vice President of the Federación Colombia de Fútbol Hernán Mejía Campuzano jeopardized Colombia's hosting of the 2001 Copa América. It seemed to many that the tournament only went ahead due to FARC promises not to target the event, and sponsor demands, rather than government guarantees. Colombia at least did win the tournament, still their only major tournament victory, but it was devalued due to Argentina's withdrawal and Brazil sending a weakened side due to security fears. Nonetheless, Colombians and the press saw it as a national triumph that transcended sport. *Semana* again wrote 'Thank you guys! Finally, something great!' on its cover (*Semana* 2001).<sup>15</sup> In the corresponding article, once more, *Semana* stresses the national nature of the triumph, and one that is of Colombians and for Colombians, and has been achieved despite the failings of traditional nation-builders:

The Colombian public very quickly entered into a state of euphoria, without doubt encouraged by this new 2001 version of Belisario Betancur's 'Yes we can' slogan from 1982. The country started to make the Copa América into a party, a carnival, filling the stadiums with national flags. The tournament became a type of ceremony, a ritual, as if something

15 An interesting observation is that for the cover photograph, *Semana* have chosen a picture of only the team celebrating. President Andrés Pastrana, who was part of the delegation for awarding the trophy and who made a point of being seen celebrating and hugging the players, is not in the photo. Once again, this is a triumph achieved despite politics – it is a national victory, earned by the Colombian people and for the Colombian people, not a political triumph. During this match, Pastrana is wearing a Colombian football shirt with 'Colombia Campeón' on the front and his full name on the back. Images of Pastrana during the final can be seen in the video 'Celebración Colombia campeón de la Copa América – 29 julio del 2001' on Pastrana's own YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlhJFJqNqAU&feature=youtu.be> (Andrés Pastrana Arango 2015).

deeper than the patriotic symbols and usual tired phrases had led the population to come together and made them feel that the Copa belonged to them, to everyone. (*Semana* 2001: 28–29)

Despite this victory, Colombian football was soon tarnished again as further links between football clubs and organized crime and paramilitary organizations had been exposed.<sup>16</sup> These problems with football as a clean and inclusive image allied to Colombian football entering the doldrums on the pitch, failing to qualify for the World Cup between 1998 and 2014, meant that Colombian football as a potent national symbol was at risk of being as tarnished and inoperative as other national symbols. The 2001 Copa América win was an island of momentary success, and the Maturana school of coaching and ideas became devalued over the years as the *Selección* failed to produce results consistently. A growing trend for the better players to leave the Colombian league for Brazil, Argentina and then Europe meant that the Colombian league became shorn of quality and devalued, and players became deterritorialized to some extent. Ties between player, country, club, city and region were complicated, though individual successes abroad carried some sense of national pride despite them being achieved for a European club rather than Colombia. The construct built by Maturana and the press of a representative, national style of football, clearly evoking the nation, fell into disrepair as Dávila Ladrón de Guevara commented: ‘it was like what happened from 1985 to 2001 and what was built, in terms of the Nation, had fallen into a black hole and left us without any memories, any reference points, without a valid imaginary of something that had managed to move us and have so much impact on us as a country and society’ (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara 2006: 109). It would not be until the successful qualification for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil that national unifying sentiments could be engendered through football, and Santos took this opportunity fully.

#### Conclusion: a symbol waiting to be used

This chapter has discussed how and why football has gained such unifying significance in Colombia and the historical processes that have led the national team in particular to accrue such potential as a nation-building symbol for the country where other symbols have lost such power. When there have been football successes on an international stage achieved by the national team, football has been deployed by presidents to try to mask ongoing national problems and present an alternative and more positive face of the country than the reality would suggest. However, successive governments were more preoccupied with football’s pacifying and entertainment qualities to reduce national tension than as a potential way of mobilizing the

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, the *Semana* article on paramilitary money in football, ‘El dossier del fútbol’ (*Semana* 2010).

masses or using football's unifying qualities for a national project. Rather than funding potential success, politicians were content to wait for victories to occur and then jump on the bandwagon, as Ramos noted ironically, suggesting that politicians only remembered about football when the prizes and flowers were being handed out as a chance to improve their image (1998: 117). Ramos bemoans the fact that football's unifying potential had never been deployed by Colombian politicians for national and social development: 'football and culture are waiting there, waiting for for someone to use them to educate the people – Colombian football is, in its very nature, a multicultural and pluriethnic expression' (204). Businesses and companies had long seen football's potential to advertise their product<sup>17</sup> but politicians had never thought of a campaign using football as an instrument for development, a sport that in reality is the thing that most unites the country (Ramos Valencia 1998: 205). Football was only employed through hollow words celebrating national triumph and not accompanied by concrete actions. President Santos's government and policies towards football would mark a significant point of departure for more deliberate, strategic instrumentalization of football, particularly as a key element of reconciliation in the FARC demobilization camps following the signing of the peace agreement.

Football has been seen as an effective way for the country to unite towards a common goal and tackle national problems that stigmatize the nation in the gaze of both its own citizens and that of the international community, although it was only deployed through rhetoric. Colombian football has been placed through political and media discourse to confront an 'other' that is Colombia itself (Narcolumbia) when it is deployed for sporting nationalism. In order to be most effective in being able to unite the country against Narcolumbia, Colombia had to develop its own style of football that could be recognized as such by press and citizens. This style of football, to counteract the Narcolumbia image and an embedded sense of football inferiority given Colombian football's late development compared to Southern Cone countries, and particularly Argentina, had to be built around positive characteristics as well as uniting stereotypes from around the country to mitigate regional divisions. The problem with the 'authentic' Colombian style promoted by Maturana and the press in the late 1980s and 1990s was that the image was, to some extent, incomplete, failing to include the whole nation in the articulation of the style and symbolism of the team. However, we can argue that despite this absence of certain geographical regions and identities, as well as women and indigenous groups particularly, the desire

17 The most infamous example of this was the beer giant Bavaria sponsoring the national team, and whenever someone scored a goal, if they celebrated by raising one finger in the air as seen on the Bavaria beer commercial, the player would receive more money. The team benefited from this by all celebrating the goals together with their fingers raised. The likes of Araújo Vélez are extremely critical of the national team's celebration being capitalized in this manner (1995a; 1995b).

for national triumph in football after years of failure and underachievement was sufficient for this golden age of Colombian football to have sufficient weight to transcend the sporting sphere and unify a nation desperate for relief from a shared culture of experiencing violence and trauma. More problematically, it had also been corrupted by the very problems against which it was symbolically opposed, with governments failing or unable to take effective action against first cartel and then paramilitary money and influence over clubs. The murder of Andrés Escobar became a very symbolic defeat of the hopes and dreams of the more positive Colombia that it had been positioned to fight for. As a result, for football to be deployed effectively as a means for nation building, it was clear that the national team as a symbol would have to be cleaned and protected, and that political rhetorical gestures celebrating success were as transitory as the momentary bubble of euphoria that football triumph generates. These are the lessons that Santos had to understand when looking to football to support his nation-building attempts and peace with the FARC policy. There was at least a memory and myth of football being positioned as a symbol and agent of peace that could be returned to, mined and strengthened given the growing global movement of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). A number of such projects using football to counteract violence and promote social values had already been established in the country. Football's popularity in Colombia, a symbol untainted at least by political machinations, would mean it could still serve as a unifying symbol should national team success occur.

When Santos assumed the presidency in 2010, this was the football landscape that confronted him: a national team that had failed to qualify for successive World Cups in 2002, 2006 and 2010; a national league shorn of the nation's best players with falling attendances due to a lack of quality and increased incidence of fan-related violence; a lingering shadow of criminal influence and corruption upon both national and club football; a disappearance of the Colombian style articulated by Maturana; and a new generation of players who had gained some successes in Europe but had failed to replace the great personalities of the golden generation of the likes of Valderrama, Asprilla and Higuita in the national colours. Women's football was yet to appear and impact on the national imagination. Over the next eight years, however, football success would re-emerge, both masculine and feminine, and contrary to previous moments of brief glory, President Santos would have a more concrete strategy of how football could best be employed as a vehicle towards national unity, social development, coexistence and his project of peace with the FARC. Football's quality as a national, multicultural and pluriethnic passion, pastime and practice, arguably Colombia's most potent and unifying national symbol, would finally be more strategically deployed towards a more purposeful than rhetorical form of nation building.

## ‘#VamosColombia’

### The footballization of Colombia and nation building by Santos through speeches and tweets

#### Introduction: Santos’s vision for sport

Santos’s two terms in office saw sport given a more significant socio-political dimension than it had previously enjoyed. It was a particularly successful period in terms of individual and collective achievements for Colombian men and women on the world sporting stage. Colombia won eight medals (one gold, three silver and four bronze) at the 2012 Olympic Games in London and another eight (three gold, two silver and three bronze) at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Prior to these Olympics, Colombia had only won twelve medals in total since the country first participated in the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, and only one gold. In the Bolivarian Games, Colombia topped the medal table for the first time since the games began in 1938, in both Trujillo, Peru, in 2013 and in Santa Marta in 2017. There were record medal hauls in the Pan American Games in Guadalajara (84) in 2011 and Toronto (72) in 2015, the previous best medal total being 47. In football, Colombia hosted its first major global tournament in 2011, the U20 World Cup, and then in 2014 the national men’s team reached the quarterfinals in the World Cup in Brazil, before losing to the hosts. This was the nation’s best ever performance in the World Cup, and for a brief period Colombia were ranked third in the FIFA rankings. They also qualified for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, but lost to England in the second round. The national women’s football team also emerged, being runners-up in the Copa América in 2010 and 2014, and performing creditably in the World Cup in 2015. Colombian cyclists such as Nairo Quintana, Rigoberto Urán and Mariana Pajón also had major successes on the road and BMX course, triumphs that were celebrated in a country with a proud history of cycling and passion for the sport.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to argue that all this success can be attributed to policies and support from the Santos presidency. Santos certainly increased the budget for

<sup>1</sup> Matt Rendell in his book *Kings of the Mountain* (2012) and David Quitián Roldán (2013a) have discussed the importance of cycling for nation building in Colombia.

Coldeportes, as Table 1 demonstrates below. In October 2017 Santos stated, ‘We have tripled the sport budget. The previous government in total invested 0.7 billion pesos. Between 2011 and 2017, we have invested 2.6 billion pesos’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2017a), and his supporters will point to the effect that this greater investment had on sporting success. In answers supplied from the office of the Coldeportes Subdirector Dr Afranio Restrepo,<sup>2</sup> they state that the Santos government ‘is the one that has shown greatest commitment to sport and has generated the greatest development in sport’ (personal communication 31 January 2018). They also underline the increased role for sport towards social transformation, stating that ‘there is a greater commitment to sport as a tool for reconciliation and resocialization due to the fact that we have opened a historic opportunity for social transformation’ and that ‘sport as a tool for coexistence and peace is important for the current government’. It is, of course, unsurprising that Coldeportes should state this, but it does mark a defined stance for sport given the focus of the Santos presidency and political reality, seeing sporting success and its social impact as a potentially powerful tool for national unification.

Table 1: Coldeportes’ budget, 2010–2018

Year	Budget	Increase/Decrease on previous year
2010 (Decreto 4996)	142,593,319,181 pesos	
2011 (Decreto 4803)	145,817,414,686 pesos	+ 3,224,095,505 pesos
2012 (Decreto 4790)	248,123,313,894 pesos	+ 102,305,899,208 pesos
2013 (Decreto 2715)	334,888,914,916 pesos	+ 86,765,601,022 pesos
2014 (Decreto 3036)	356,320,043,772 pesos	+ 21,431,128,856 pesos
2015 (Decreto 2710)	487,849,303,300 pesos	+ 131,529,259,528 pesos
2016 (Decreto 2550)	414,191,325,274 pesos	– 73,657,978,026 pesos
2017 (Decreto 2170)	398,858,817,800 pesos	– 15,332,507,474 pesos
2018 (Decreto 2236)	550,632,814,726 pesos	+ 151,773,996,926 pesos

(All figures from Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, Bogotá)

Santos determined the role that sport and football in particular could play from the start of his presidency, and made adept political use of the sporting success that occurred during his eight years in charge, whether his government was directly responsible for it or not. This is why we see budget

2 I had a meeting with Dr Afranio Restrepo hoping to interview him about Coldeportes and their programmes. He asked me to supply him with the questions I wished to ask, and several weeks later, his office sent me detailed replies.

increases supported with regular discourse on the benefits of sport for the nation, legislation and public policies aiming to strengthen sport for national benefit and sport for development and peace projects targeting previously marginalized and vulnerable areas.

During the Santos presidency, we therefore see a three-pronged strategy of using sport to support his national unity project, a strategy comprising 1) regular discourse and tweets, 2) legislation and public policies (discussed in chapter four) and 3) SDP campaigns (the subject of chapter five). Football was the principal sporting vessel for Santos's sporting nationalism as the most visible and popular sport in the country. Santos was quick to show an appreciation for football's potential for being a space and time allowing for local, regional and national encounters, a generator of peace and social transformation and activation of citizenship. Sociologist Alejandro Villanueva, who was part of the consultancy team for the Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football 2014–2024 (henceforth referred to as the PDSCCF and analyzed in chapter four), agrees that Santos sought to take advantage of football's popularity and convening power in the country, saying 'since the start of his first term as President, it was clear that sport and football entered into a process of politicization that was very much akin to his style of government' (personal interview 7 October 2017), referring to Santos's discourse that constantly emphasized the aim of a more united and peaceful Colombia. Santos, throughout his presidency, made every effort to visibilize himself as a football fan, showing some affiliation, knowledge and history of the club he follows, Santa Fe, attending training sessions with the national men's and women's teams (see *La Vanguardia* 2011 and *El País* 2011), and wearing the national shirt on numerous occasions, particularly during the World Cup in 2014. In this way, he included himself within the nation as a fan as well as a politician, though also potentially jeopardizing the national shirt as a unifying symbol given the political polarization in the country over the peace process with the FARC. Regarding Santos's football interest, his former head of communications Juan Carlos Torres said 'he is not fanatical about it, but he is a football fan. And, at a government level, from the very start he was determined to support sport in general in Colombia, and football in particular' (personal interview 14 December 2017).

This chapter discusses the 'sportification' and, in particular, the 'footballization' (Bromberger 2001: 18) of Colombian politics through speech and Twitter use. Torres believes that 'Santos could be the president who has spoken most about sport or football' (personal interview 14 December 2017). Here, the frequency, content and political aims of the sport-specific speeches delivered during his presidency and the tweets from Santos's personal Twitter account (@JuanManSantos) and of the Presidencia de la República de Colombia account (@infopresidencia) are analyzed. Football and the *Selección* were regularly and deliberately deployed through these 'discourse events' (Fairclough 1995) to gain national support for Santos's

political goals. These discourse events regularly coincided with mega-events such as the World Cup and the Olympics, as well as competitions that Colombia hosted from 2010 to 2018. Santos's goals included to earn support for the peace negotiations with the FARC and subsequent management of post-agreement Colombia, alongside a reduction of violence and culture of violence; the creation of a more unified country with greater self-esteem; and an attempt to improve Colombia's image or 'nation brand' as a much safer post-conflict nation that welcomed tourism and foreign investment. The convenient sporting success of a record number of Colombian teams and athletes enabled Santos to keep his political message in the public eye and ear, legitimize his government's actions, justify and empower the role of sport and football towards national and social improvement and then deploy athletes as role models, ambassadors and examples towards furthering his political aims. How this was attempted will be examined through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of these public speeches and Twitter broadcasts, also discussing the 'aestheticization' of the discourse event. It will be argued that the spoken (heard) and written (seen) word has been strengthened with a bombardment of national symbols designed to link support for sport with support for the President, and, by extension, the nation's advancement and unity. International football matches, already important national occasions where the nation can imagine itself as a collective unit supporting the *Selección*, were more politically charged, and became contested sites for contrasting versions of nation and its identity.

In Colombia, football and the national men's team above all, has become an instrument of mobilization and of motivation for people to achieve important things (Jaramillo Racines personal interview 3 November 2017). National team and national progress were conjoined. Pastor notes that it was as if two important processes were moving forwards together, a sporting project led by José Néstor Pékerman, the Argentinian coach of the national football team, and a political process led by Santos (2018: 68). The *Selección* was positioned and empowered by Santos through speeches as a metonym for Colombia. The national team, therefore, became a presentation card for the nation, at the forefront of a country creating a new, peaceful destiny under Santos and articulated as such by him, a potent source of furthering a new identity. Villanueva describes this process:

Santos definitely sold the idea that speeches about football and sport generate national identity. [...] In other words, if you mix together sport and identity, and if you have a coherent and powerful speech, then it becomes a coherent and strong message. (personal interview 7 October 2017)

This chapter, then, argues that football was an essential part of President Santos's communication strategy towards nation building, an opinion with which Torres agrees. When asked if football had helped towards Santos's nation-building project, he answered:



Without doubt. It has been an important element in government communication to encourage values that the government wants to inspire in Colombians, such as unity, solidarity, discipline, the value of talent and of personal effort, and of working together as a team. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

### Previous work on Santos's sporting discourse

Latin American politicians have long extolled the virtues of their national football team and, through speeches following significant success, linked these virtues with their own political project. However, studies tend to focus only on the speeches delivered at the moment of victory, or when the mega-event begins and the global eye is concentrated on the host nation. Less research focuses on sporting nationalism through discourse when there has been a constant association of sporting performance with national representations. The process of analyzing speeches has been facilitated, as there are now video cameras and recorders at every appearance by a national leader. Recordings can be instantly uploaded<sup>3</sup> or transcribed and publicized on press, official or unofficial websites.<sup>4</sup> Given the immediacy of information, there is an increased need for politicians to broadcast their message through a variety of means and channels, and bypass traditional media outlets that may edit or adapt their message.

Studies by Colombian writers on rhetoric by political leaders during the armed conflict up to and including Santos's first presidential term have been summarized by Olave (2014), who categorizes work by their focus on the *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* of the discourse. Many scholars have analyzed the discourse of Santos's presidential predecessor Álvaro Uribe, and how his speeches criminalized, othered, delegitimized and disqualified the FARC in order to delimit clear identity borders between the 'national us' and an 'enemy them' (Galaviz 2006; Borja-Orozco et al. 2008: 582; Olave 2012b: 161; Olave 2014: 169–170; Cardona Zuleta and Londoño Álvarez 2018: 59). Santos was part of this rhetorical tactic as Uribe's Minister of Defence from July 2006 to May 2009 and explained that at this time terms for the FARC such as 'guerrillas' or 'subversives' that could ascribe some political origin for the FARC and thus to some extent legitimize their actions were no longer used, in favour of terms such as 'terrorists', 'narcoterrorists' or 'bandits' (Santos 2019: 270). Not only did this criminalize and delegitimize the FARC domestically,

3 The 'Presidencia de la República – Colombia' channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/SIGCOLOMBIA>) records and posts speeches and visits in the 'El Presidente Hoy' section of the channel for example.

4 Speeches by Santos were transcribed and published on the Presidencia de la República website in the Sala de Prensa section, with the audio and video also available (<http://es.presidencia.gov.co/Paginas/HomePrensa.aspx>). The speeches of the Santos presidencies are now archived, but, at the time of writing, still on the site.

but it was also in tune with the global US-led anti-terrorist rhetoric of the time following the September 11 attacks and the War on Terror. The FARC were, therefore, firmly situated by Uribe in the 'Narcolombia' other discussed in the previous chapter. However, when the peace negotiations began and as they advanced towards the eventual agreement, a change of narrative tone and repositioning of the FARC was necessary in order to gain public support for the peace process. Terms used by Santos when talking about the FARC were softened and the 'terrorist' and 'criminal' terms were eliminated as the narrative ground needed to be prepared for the expansion of the 'national us' that would include the former 'enemy them'.

Regarding Santos's rhetoric more generally, López de la Roche notes the contrast between Uribe's monologic, strident anti-FARC rhetoric that divided Colombia into either supporters of Uribe's democratic security policy or supporters of the FARC, and Santos's rhetoric as president, particularly from 2012 onwards when it was revealed that initial peace talks with FARC representatives had taken place, which meant an important and unexpected repositioning of hegemonic politics and political discourse in recent years in Colombia (2015: 10). This shift in discourse that cautiously and gradually re-legitimized FARC as political actors and Colombian citizens had implications. Uribe and his supporters accused Santos of betrayal and intensified their anti-FARC stance and tone as national debate about the peace talks rapidly polarized around two competing narrative visions of the Colombian 'us' that either included or excluded the FARC. Cardona Zuleta and Londoño Álvarez also argue for a clear difference between the FARC-related discourse of the Uribe and Santos presidencies, arguing that Santos's rhetoric evidenced a government willingness to explore other alternatives to end the armed conflict with the FARC, opening up the possibility of negotiation (2018: 53). This distinction is important; although Santos in his first term of government continued to use 'narcoterrorist' and 'criminal' to define the FARC, he also accepted from 2011 onwards, when Law 1448 was approved by the Senate, that there had been an armed conflict<sup>5</sup> (a definition that Uribe refused to countenance), which opened up the path to peace negotiations. López de la Roche highlights words from Santos's speech celebrating his first presidential election victory on 20 June 2010 to highlight a new discourse of national unity and attempts at repairing national divisions and polarization: 'I am and I will be the President of national unity, let us turn the page on hatreds; no more senseless confrontations, no more divisions' (2015: 10). López de la Roche also argues that in the first two years of the peace talks, Santos lacked

5 Law 1448 was a hugely significant moment in Santos' presidency as this law effectively acknowledged that there was an armed conflict in Colombia, a designation that facilitated the eventual peace negotiations as well as assistance and reparations for victims of the conflict. This designation was a significant battleground between Santos and Uribe who refused to accept this term, arguing that FARC was a terrorist organization and were not fighting a civil war.

a persuasive communication strategy to gain the support of Colombians for the process (23). In football, as we shall see, Santos found a potential channel to strengthen his communications about the peace process, a propitious more politically neutral site to gain support for his national unity project and the peace negotiations.

Santos uses his autobiography to defend and justify the different phases of the way he spoke and acted towards the FARC during his different political roles. He treads a precariously thin line at times, attempting to defend himself from accusations of political opportunism based on his shifting position of fighting or making peace with the FARC, and being more concerned with his political legacy and with winning the Nobel Peace Prize rather than the best for the country. These accusations are understandable. During his political career he worked behind the Samper government's back on a plan to create the grounds for peace negotiations to end the Colombian conflict, having secret negotiations with leaders of the AUC, the FARC and the ELN. When news of these discussions emerged, Samper accused Santos of a conspiracy and the plan foundered, with Santos admitting the error of working without the knowledge of the government (Santos 2019: 85). Santos then opposed the negotiations between the Pastrana government and the FARC between 1999 and 2002 in Caguán, or at least the way in which they were staged. He argues that not only was the government negotiating from a position of weakness (Santos 2019: 95), but also that far too many political themes were on the table, and that only issues directly related to ending the conflict should be a subject of negotiation (110). Then, as Uribe's Minister of Defence, Santos was responsible for the most successful period of government action in the war against the FARC, killing or capturing some of the FARC's leaders, freeing FARC hostages in the spectacular Operation Jaque and significantly reducing FARC's area of control and numbers. He describes himself in his autobiography as the 'greatest scourge of the FARC' (146, 164), and this as his 'hawk' period (120). He constantly denounced FARC as narcoterrorists and criminals and was strident in his condemnation of their attacks. This delegitimization of their actions during the conflict remains in his book, labelling FARC actions such as car bombs, kidnapping and bombing oil pipelines as terrorist actions. However, he also states that the FARC were more than just terrorists, being an irregular army with an ideological position based around a series of social and economic claims (272), attempting to explain how his rhetoric shifted away from demonizing the FARC to placing them within the new Colombian national collective. This move from political hawk to dove is a difficult shift to reconcile, but he attempts to do so arguing that his period as Minister of Defence does not contradict his enduring pursuit of peace (164), as it was essential to pursue peace through waging a war on the FARC that would weaken them sufficiently to force them to the negotiating table. He states that 'the war that I waged, I waged for peace' (ibid.) and that 'a real soldier, a soldier with honour, does not fight out of hatred, but for peace to triumph' (145). This argument does not always convince, but does explain

the communication strategy that he would pursue from 2012 onwards, as well as how a non-political arena such as sport could facilitate such a strategy.

Santos never mentions sport-related speeches or policy in his autobiography, but academics have commented on how he deployed the *Selección* before and during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, footballizing the presidential election in which he sought re-election against Óscar Iván Zuluaga. Villanueva and Rodríguez-Melendro demonstrate how Santos employed various popular imaginary constructs such as unity, identity and strength based on victories of the *Selección*, as according to the president, this team represented a feeling of nationality (2016: 125). Quitián Roldán (2014) believes that, through discourse, Santos instrumentalized the team around the idea of it representing ‘one sole country and people’. Roa Vargas and Salcedo Rodríguez argue that the *Selección* was able to revitalize a national feeling that was truly identifiable as it served as a means of unifying people irrespective of regional or class divisions (2014: 46) and how the team was manipulated and exploited by the media, political elites and economic groups by creating an imaginary construct through advertising (ibid.), but only briefly refer to Santos. They state that Santos constantly sought to show his support for the national team and through metaphors relate it to the peace negotiations with the FARC, the sole political cause of his government (50) and mention the constant use of the first-person plural in tweets and speeches, ‘our country’, ‘our *selección*’, ‘our peace’ (ibid.).

More detailed analyses of how Santos spoke of the nation and football can be found in university dissertations by Baquero (2016) and Prada (2017). Baquero discusses Santos’s ‘Operation Mandela’, the attempt by Santos through ‘sporting governance’ (2016: 14) to maintain power and gain legitimacy through capitalizing on the popularity of the *Selección*, comparing his policies with those of Nelson Mandela around the 1995 Rugby World Cup hosted and won by South Africa. Arguing that Santos was incapable of connecting with the population (28), Baquero focuses on how the team was deployed as part of the re-election campaign in 2014. An interview with Santos’s campaign manager, Ángel Becassino, reveals the strategy of using football metaphors such as the need for Santos to have a ‘second half’ so that the nation can ‘win’, as the ‘first half’ (his first four-year term) is only for setting up the ‘game’. Baquero sees Santos’s sporting governance as a method to stay in power, rather than a nation-building process. Prada, on the other hand, quantitatively assesses and categorizes the actual speech content. Prada uses the categories ‘Sport’, ‘Unity’, ‘Exemplification’, ‘Cultural Change’, ‘Legitimation’, ‘Pacification’, ‘Idea of a country’, ‘Promises’, ‘Metaphors’, ‘Persuasion’ and ‘Suppression’ (2017: 61) to classify speech content, then gives examples to relate to Santos’s political project. He concludes that Santos made political capital from sport in his speeches, as much for self-legitimation and for promoting the idea of a country as for seeking to unify Colombian society and to try to gain support from dissenting political groups or forgotten sectors of society (74). Like Baquero, Prada only uses speeches as a source, ignoring

the rich terrain of Twitter. Twitter has a greater and more immediate reach than speeches, and therefore merits inclusion when analyzing presidential discourse. Prada's categories are a useful way of categorizing discourse content; however, this study proposes that speech content can be better categorized into three categories: 1) legitimation; 2) justification of and empowering sport for the nation; and 3) deployment. With Twitter, we also see an information and reaction category. Not only was Twitter ignored by Baquero and Prada, they do not consider the aestheticization of the discourse event, the empowering of football symbols, the significance of location and event as well as the timing of the discourse.

### Public discourse, narratives of the nation and football

Politicians need to find ways for the 'loudness' of their message about actions and policies to be magnified. Being heard and seen has been facilitated as technology has developed, with radio and television allowing politicians to 'speak softly to millions, using an intimate rhetoric quite new to political oratory' (Billig 1995: 96; Jamieson 1988). The internet and social media present new channels, challenging 'official' or established sources of information and, therefore, provide alternative versions of hegemonic 'narratives of the nation' (Hall 1992: 293). The speed and scope of communication have been transformed (Ausserhofer and Maireder 2013: 291) and so media strategies have adapted to demonstrate that the political leader is leading the debate or shaping the reaction. Discourse remains crucial for the success of a political project: 'Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society and culture, including power relations' (Titscher et al. 2000: 146). Presidents are in a privileged position to have a transformative or constructive effect upon society and culture, and are best placed to articulate narratives that give meaning to the nation and its identity. It is important, according to Hall, that citizens who imagine themselves to be a part of the national imagined community are connected through these narratives (1992: 293); it is through football that Santos sought to gain support for his national narrative. The negotiations with the FARC and subsequent reconciliation and reintegration process led to national polarization, and so the metaphor of 'one sole country', best represented by the *Selección*, was deployed to accommodate and include former combatants within an acceptable concept of the nation for uncertain citizens. The idea is that everyone supports the national team, even former guerrillas, so this is a shared point of encounter and understanding. It can then be projected onto different realities, including building a nation. Gellner argues that 'two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating' and 'two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the

same nation' (2006: 6–7); in the Colombian scenario, FARC have often been imagined as being 'outside' the nation, including by Santos in his time as Minister of Defence, or as part of the 'other' 'Narcolumbia' discussed in the previous chapter. However, if they are included within the nation as fans of the *Selección*, then it establishes a potential space for recognition and acceptance. It is not an all-embracing nor unproblematic site to begin construction of a sense of horizontal comradeship, and does not erase previous perceived 'crimes', but at least it is the foundation enabling what we may call a 'fantasy of incorporation' (Hall 1996: 3).

Football helped Santos find a wider range of recipients for political messages. Tweets can be retweeted and reproduced in newspapers, radio and television programmes, allowing Santos to access the sports news rather than solely the political sections. Billig writes 'sport does not confine itself to the playing field and its marked territory in the newspapers. It intrudes upon political discourse' (1995: 123); Rozo Rondón (2016) shows that in Colombia, sporting mega-events become lead headlines, displacing major current affairs. The reverse is also true, with political discourse invading the sports sections. Santos frequently gave interviews after attending Colombia matches; added to comments on the match, he adroitly included political messages that then appeared in the sports sections in the media. His statements after Colombia's 2–0 victory against Uruguay in the 2014 World Cup are one example:

All of Colombia is supporting our *Selección*, all Colombia feels proud of our *Selección*, because our *Selección* is showing us a way forward: that when you dream about achieving great things and work hard towards them, then these objectives can be achieved. And that is what the *Selección* is telling us all. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014e)

Santos had watched the Uruguay game with Naval Academy cadets, and spoke wearing the Colombian football shirt, surrounded by cadets also wearing football shirts as well as naval caps. His discourse of unity (the repetition of 'all Colombia') and the team exemplifying a nation working together was reinforced with national symbols and the support of a national institution.<sup>6</sup> The military, often a devalued institution given human rights abuses accusations during the conflict and in particular following the so-called 'False Positives' scandal<sup>7</sup> here also gets a symbolic boost as the

6 One of the largest Colombian channels, Caracol, broadcast a segment on Santos' reaction (*Noticias Caracol* 2014). The *Presidencia de la República* also uploaded the speech in a news article (*Presidencia de la República* 2014).

7 The 'False Positives' scandal saw members of the military luring poor or mentally impaired civilians to work in rural or peripheral areas of the country, where they were killed and then presented as members of the FARC or ELN killed in combat by the army. The first evidence of this ploy by the military came to light in 2008, when Santos was still Minister of Defence. Reports have estimated that there may

young cadets (perhaps less likely to be tarnished by previous military actions) are associated with the football team and nation as fans.

National ceremonies and rituals are accepted as being significant events for the celebrating and remembering of unifying characteristics and shared history, identity and culture of a nation (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 14; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992: 11–12; Smith 1991: 16; Gellner 2006: 56). International football matches serve as modern national ceremonies, which are more regular than annual national rituals, and may have more convening power. Gellner argues that ‘a modern streamlined, on-wheels high culture celebrates itself in song and dance, which it borrows (stylizing it in the process) from a folk culture which it fondly believes itself to be perpetuating, defending and reaffirming’ (2006: 56–57). Football matches can be added to song and dance as a way of celebrating nation; indeed, song and dance are heavily involved when the nation is celebrated around football. Not only are there chants by the fans but also jingles during football radio and television transmissions eventually become embedded as part of the football culture. The ‘*Sí sí Colombia, sí sí Caribe*’ sting played after goals were scored in the 1980s and 1990s and the dance goal celebrations of the national team in the 2014 and 2018 World Cups aid with identity construction, particularly the more positive, festive and tropical image that Santos offers as representative of the ‘new’ Colombia. At the time of important international matches, daily routine is displaced by the excitement and celebration of the match. The nation celebrates itself, patriotic emotion can be unleashed and national symbols are at their most prevalent and potent as flags appear everywhere (Billig 1995: 44). In many ways, with football, the national shirt supplements the flag; in Colombia, the national shirt is widely worn daily, as well as during moments of exceptional nationalism and political and social events, such as political and social protest. Through the football shirt, the nation is flagged, reminders of the nation are omnipresent and patriotic messages prevail in resultant discourse, accentuating ‘flattering stereotypes of themselves’ (66). These moments are a fertile terrain for the political leader to attempt to shape the celebration through discourse, deploying the patriotism and collective identity established by the national team as an identifying factor (Loureiro Cornelsen 2018: 16), ‘officializing’ and explaining the victory as the national spokesperson.

## Methodology

This book looks at the message broadcasted, and not at the response. The focus lies in examining the linguistic content of speeches and tweets, the

have been more than 3,000 innocent victims of the army (Human Rights Watch 2015).

aesthetics around the discursive event and how this content aims to build nation. A discursive event is defined as an ‘instance of language use, analysed as text, discursive practice, social practice’ (Titscher et al. 2000: 148). For the purposes of this study, critical discourse analysis, proposed by Fairclough (1995; 2003), has been adapted. Titscher et al. describe Fairclough’s method of textual analysis as being ‘based on the three components, description, interpretation and explanation. Linguistic properties are described, the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive practice and the text is interpreted, and the relationship between discursive and social practice is described’ (2000: 153). Hence, the speeches by Santos with a sporting focus, as well as the tweets from the @JuanManSantos and @infopresidencia accounts were examined qualitatively and quantitatively for linguistic content, categorizing the content into thematic and linguistic ‘nodes’; images, such as photos and emojis, from tweets were also copied into NVivo and coded according to the themes they included. Videos embedded in a tweet were transcribed and then coded. The results are discussed and then explained as to how the content applies to Santos’s political strategy for nation building.

The speeches used to form the corpus were taken from transcripts of speeches given by Santos during his two mandates as President, with transcripts coming from the *Presidencia de la República de Colombia* website. Speeches that were specifically related in their titles to all sports were chosen to form the corpus, not just football-specific speeches. Only speeches from the presidency website have been analyzed; Santos spoke about sport on other occasions, whether in radio or television interviews, or on the campaign trail, or in passing in speeches focused on other topics, but these have not been included, as full transcripts are not usually given. These decisions left a body of ninety-nine speeches to be analyzed.

Regarding Twitter, both the Juan Manuel Santos and the Presidency account were selected for analysis, given their official status and where the President’s messages were broadcasted. At the end of his Presidency, there had been more than 17,600 tweets from the @JuanManSantos account, and more than 92,000 from the @infopresidencia account. Santos joined Twitter in August 2009; when he was succeeded by Iván Duque, he had 5.29 million followers; this figure had increased substantially since the start of his presidency. According to *Dinero* (2012), Santos at the time had 756,363 followers. By 31 May 2017, this figure had risen to 4,849,724 followers (*CNN Latinoamérica* 2017), with Santos being one of the most followed presidents in Latin America. This sizeable increase in followers explains why Twitter has become an important method of communicating, why strategies have been designed to make most effective use of it, and why, therefore, it merits academic attention. Given the huge amount of tweets to search through, more criteria were used about which tweets would be selected for analysis. Tweets about individual athletes from non-football sports were not included; this eliminated many tweets during the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012



and 2016, the various multi-sports events in which Colombian athletes have participated, such as the Pan American Games and the Bolivarian Games, as well as the regular achievements of cyclists, athletes, boxers, tennis players and others. The actual total of sports-related tweets is therefore greater than the figures in this study. All football-related tweets were of course included (club and international, male and female, at all age groups and also indoor football), as were tweets about multi-sports events where football is included. Tweets about legislation and sports policy (including campaigns, budget and infrastructure projects) were included, as were those where the virtues of sport in general were extolled. The eventual result was a total of 1,048 tweets that were analyzed, 540 from @infopresidencia and 508 from @JuanManSantos.

To analyze the speech and tweet data, each relevant speech or tweet was copied into the NVivo software and categorized by the date it was released. Then, a series of 'nodes' were created according to the themes and language expected to appear as recurring elements and content of the speeches and tweets. A node is a catching point or a folder where all references to the same word or the same theme are stored. Several nodes had sub-nodes within them, and other nodes were added during the coding process as new trends and tendencies were observed. The next step was to highlight relevant words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, images, emojis and videos in the speeches and tweets and link them to these nodes. This step is the 'coding' process. Therefore, exact words or phrases, different versions of a word or synonyms, or longer phrases or sentences when a particular meaning was conveyed, could all be coded to the same node. There are times when judgement calls were made as to a 'best fit' node for a particular phrase or sentence, and perhaps other researchers would categorize them differently, but the aim was always to be as consistent as possible. A series of 'queries' and searches were run after the coding process had been completed to check that, as far as possible, no exact words or phrases had been left uncoded. It is, however, possible that some phrases were missed.

Speeches and tweets were also classified into themes. Speech classifications included the reasons why Santos was speaking about sport (Appointments, Campaigns, Inaugurations, Presentations and Awards Ceremonies, Visits, Sporting events, Legislation); tweets were also classified according to what 'extra' content they contained, namely tweets with images or pictures, tweets with GIFs, and tweets with videos. This type of classification was used in order to be able to show how the significance of aestheticizing the discourse event has developed over time in tweets and how words and message were backed up and empowered by image.

Pictures, photos, GIFs and adverts that appeared embedded in tweets were coded by the content of the image, including text, the event itself, national symbols and people present and other relevant details. To give an example, here is a photo of Santos (second from left) inaugurating the Armando Tuirán stadium in Sahagún, Córdoba (@infopresidencia 6:56pm, 3 June 2016).



Figure 2: Santos inaugurating Armando Tuirán Paternina stadium (@infopresidencia 6:56pm, 3 June 2016)

This particular image was coded at the following nodes: ‘Santos pictures’, ‘Pictures of athletes’, ‘National symbol or ceremony’ (the national shirt is taken to be a national symbol), ‘Government support for sport/Infrastructure’ (as it is a stadium opening) and ‘peace and sport’ (given the yellow football shirt with the ‘peace’ message). This is also an example of Santos wearing the Colombian football shirt, in this case the white shirt to be worn in the Copa América Centenario, the significance of which is discussed later in this chapter.

Once all speeches and tweets had been coded, a series of queries were run to produce the results that will be discussed. The main types of queries run related to relationships between nodes; for example, how often particular themes, such as ‘national men’s team’ and ‘peace and coexistence’ appear close to each other or in the same tweet, the frequency of nodes appearing in certain years or at the time of mega-events such as the World Cups in 2014 and 2018, and the frequency of nodes within particular speeches.

In the majority of the tables that will be presented to show results, there are usually two columns. The first, ‘number of sources’ refers to how many speeches or tweets contained a word, picture or phrase that was coded to a particular node. The total ‘number of references’ refers to how many times words, pictures or phrases were coded to the node, as in various speeches or tweets the same theme or phrase will appear more than once. Just to demonstrate with one node at random, in the tweet results, the node ‘National men’s team’ appeared in a total of 381 individual tweets, and it was coded 514 times in total, showing multiple references to the national men’s team in many tweets.

### Santos's sport-related speech strategy

Santos used his discourse around sport, and football in particular, to build himself into the national 'footballsphere', and also the nation. He created a triangular relationship of correspondence between himself, football and nation, with the fates of all three becoming interrelated. For Santos, football not only served his political message but also served for political consolidation and legitimation. It located Santos in the nation as the leader, the chief celebrator of sporting success and a main articulator of football representations and how football could serve the nation. Villanueva believes that this was a deliberate effort that began as soon as Santos became president, advantageous in that it allowed him to get his message to the people more effectively:

He managed to 'sportify' and 'footballize' society through daily speeches. Any time that Santos wanted to reach the population, instead of giving a traditional political speech, a speech using terms that people don't understand, a traditional rhetorical speech, he transformed the usual lines and messages by talking about cycling, about BMX, and about football. (personal interview 7 October 2017)

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) also used this tactic of football language or the subject and occasion of a football event in order to reach the wider public. Mascarenhas et al. describe Lula as being eloquent and fluent in the language of football, the so-called 'futebolês' (2014: 496), in a country where speaking about football is a way of speaking about the country (*ibid.*). In their study of Lula's football-related discourse (which only focuses on speeches rather than Twitter), they identify 101 speeches containing football metaphors, 70 containing praise for Corinthians (the Brazilian club side Lula supports), 70 speeches about government actions in the sporting sector (building stadiums and facilities, for example) and 68 other speeches with references to football (497). They identify that football metaphors were often used to associate football leadership with governing, metaphors also used by Santos as Baquero (2016) demonstrates about Santos's re-election campaign, as well as associating himself with the Brazilian football fan population as a fan himself in order to communicate and to cultivate a popular, national and modern feeling (Mascarenhas et al. 2014: 514). Many of Lula's speeches were based around the future holding of the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, in which sport was fundamental to the repositioning of Brazil in global geopolitics and for national development (510). All these characteristics discussed by Mascarenhas et al. also appear in Santos's speeches and tweets. Santos attempted to show himself as a football fan, establishing a more horizontal relationship with the Colombian population; he demonstrated his government's commitment to sport by illustrating the budget dedicated to sport and the amount of sporting facilities and infrastructure built; he used football and football events to rebrand Colombia

to a domestic and international audience in order to remove ‘Narcolombia’ imaginaries and welcome new economic investment and tourism into the ‘New Colombia’ that he projected. What sets him apart from Lula and the sporting nationalistic discourse of previous Latin American leaders who have been tempted into using football success as a symbol of national unity, is that football was directed towards supporting Santos’s peace process with the FARC, and that the rhetoric was supported by public policies, laws and SDP projects. The football-based national unity project that Santos proposed was tasked with helping to resolve the longest internal conflict in the continent, as well as the violence that has plagued the nation for decades. This differentiates it from the regularly cited football-based political projects of Médiçi in Brazil or the military dictatorship in Argentina who hosted the 1978 World Cup, for instance, which deployed football as a smokescreen. Both these regimes spoke of football, made use of the national team and World Cup triumphs, built stadiums and improved infrastructure (see, for example Mason 1995: 64–74), but a football for national peace project is more unique in the continent.

Table 2 shows the number of sport-centred speeches given during his presidency:

Table 2: Sports-focused speeches per year

Year	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018**	Total
Sports speeches	5	16	9	19	17	9	12	6	7	99
(football-centred in brackets)	(2)	(12)	(2)	(5)	(10)	(2)	(1)	(0)	(4)	(35)

(\* speeches from August to end of December. \*\* speeches only from January to end of July)

Santos benefitted from the preparations for the Under 20 Football World Cup that Colombia hosted in 2011. This was the first major global tournament that Colombia had hosted and second major football tournament after hosting the Copa América in 2001. From Table 2, we can see that this occasion gave Santos many opportunities to discuss football and Colombia to a domestic audience, but also to nation-brand to a foreign one. The opportunity to talk about football and nation also presented itself in 2014 and 2018 with the World Cups in Brazil and Russia. Surprisingly, there are fewer football-specific speeches in 2015 and 2016 when the Copa América was being played; unlike in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2018, Santos did not deliver a speech and hand over the flag to the national football team before they travelled to the 2016 Copa América Centenario, a curious omission, as it

could be considered a perfect opportunity to unite the national team and the peace process that would be voted on in October that year. However, as shall be seen in the Twitter section, 2016 sees the greatest number of tweets about sport, and the most mentions of peace as well. This is due to the fact that social media was a major political battleground to garner support in the plebiscite vote, a battle that the 'No' arguably won given the eventual result. In 2012 and 2016, there was a greater focus on multi-sport events with the Olympics and Paralympics in London and Rio de Janeiro. Football was the central topic of more than a third of the sport-specific speeches delivered (35 of 99) during the Santos presidency, but was mentioned in the majority of speeches about sport.

### Selling Colombia's image abroad

Santos usually addressed a Colombian audience to construct a sense of nation around sport, but he also used discourse to attempt to remould Colombia's external image. A nation, after all, needs external recognition to shape and validate its own identity, and to establish a place within the international body of nations. In his book focusing on the advertising and branding campaigns trying to encourage FARC guerrillas to demobilize of the Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado (PAHD) (Programme for Humanitarian Attention to Demobilised Persons) who worked with the consumer marketing firm Lowe/SSP3, Fattal discusses the importance of Colombia's own self-branding project, arguing that there was a 'larger branding project: the Colombian nation-state. As Colombia sought to carve out its own space in the neo-liberal world order, it resorted to nation-branding to attract tourists and foreign investment' (2018: 22). In order to encourage this tourism and investment, the Santos government positioned Colombia 'as a "postconflict" nation-state. At the crux of this renarration of the nation is the idea of a country that has stepped back from the brink of a "failed state" status and is now secure and ripe for investment' (109). This was a process that had begun during the Uribe government in 2005 with the 'Colombia is Passion' campaign as a serious attempt to debunk Colombia's international reputation for drug trafficking, violence and insecurity, all factors that would clearly dissuade international investment and tourism as well as the market for Colombia's own exports (Restrepo et al. 2008: 24). The 'Colombia is Passion' tourism and marketing campaign launched Colombia's nation-brand as a beautiful and diverse country defined by creativity, hard work, resistance, talent, commitment and happiness. Worthy of note is that sport was a facet of this campaign, given the launch of the 'Colombia es Pasión -Coldeportes' professional cycling team that competed in many international races. This nation branding campaign should be seen as a State project, rather than a government-specific project. A sense of continuity of the nation brand is important, and the fundamental identity elements of the 'Colombia is Passion' campaign continued in Santos's own messages and subsequent national

marketing campaigns such as the ‘Colombia, Magical Realism’ tourism campaign launched in 2013.

The Under 20 World Cup in 2011 gave Santos the chance to improve the country’s national brand internationally, by showing that it was capable of hosting a major sport tournament without the security risks that had been all too evident in 2001 when they hosted the Copa América. A key component of hosting sports mega-events is to improve a country’s prestige in the international eye (Strenk 1979; Black 2007; Finlay and Xin 2010; Grix 2012). Knott et al. argue that sport mega-events ‘should be included in the list of brand identity “communicators” given how these tournaments aid a repositioning of a nation brand image’ (2017: 901). Roche goes into more detail:

The staging of international mega-events was and remains important in the ‘story of a country’, a people, a nation. They represented and continue to represent key occasions in which nations could construct and present images of themselves for recognition in relation to other nations and in the eyes of the world. They represented and continue to represent key occasions in which national ‘tradition’ and ‘community’ including a national past, present and future national ‘progress’, potential and ‘destiny’ could be invented and imagined not just by and for leaders and citizens of the host nation, but also by and for the publics of other nations. (2000: 6)

This returns to Hobsbawm and Ranger’s idea of the invention of tradition for a nation (1992). This has, of course, been attempted before in Latin America, most notoriously by the military junta in Argentina when they hosted the 1978 World Cup. Mason argues that the dictatorship ‘hoped to use the staging of the World Cup in 1978 to enhance the legitimacy of the regime both at home and abroad’ (1995: 74), and Roldán agrees, writing that the main aim of the tournament was to achieve domestic unity and silence the critics from abroad (2007: 133). This mission was supported by much of the Argentinian press (Roldán 2007; Borrelli and Oszust 2018). Whereas the junta used the tournament to conceal the atrocities committed from the world gaze, Santos rebranded Colombia as a new country, acknowledging the violence of the past but seeking to negotiate peace with former enemies and move forward to a post-conflict, peaceful national status.

Although the Under 20 World Cup does not attract as much attention as the senior World Cup, it was nonetheless a propitious moment for Colombia to present a new face other than the ‘Narcolumbia’ image of the country that has prevailed internationally since the Pablo Escobar years, and was a first sporting opportunity to do so under Santos. Through the tournament introductory video, the ‘New Colombia’ presented was based on images emphasizing diversity and exoticism, a combination of history and modernity. A boy dribbles a football around the tournament cities, and we see images of colonial Cartagena juxtaposed with modern Medellín, the salsa of Cali and the carnival of Barranquilla, the rurality of the *eje cafetero* (coffee zone) and

the urban development of Bogotá. The women are beautiful, the people are happy and the boy becomes symbolic of the world learning about Colombia and all it has to offer through football (*Visa Colombia* 2011).<sup>8</sup> Coffee, Colombia's most famous legal export, also features in the chosen tournament logo of a coffee cup looking like a football. According to the description of the stamp released to commemorate the tournament

[t]he cup [...] is like a football, exemplifying the passion that characterizes Colombia as the host nation. This round shape also represents the unity between the different cultures that will participate in the tournament from 29th July to 20th August [...] the use of very patriotic, vibrant colours communicates passionate feelings, transmitting energy, dynamism and strength. In this way, the *tricolor* flag will travel around the different continents being the ambassador of our traditions and customs. (*MinTIC* 2011)

Several international events gave Santos the chance to advertise this new Colombia. When Santos spoke at FIFA events to promote the tournament, he was speaking to the world about Colombia. The message was of a country transforming, distancing itself from a troubled past, finally able to show its diversity and the 'true' nature of the people. The 'real' Colombia was now emerging:

We are in the process of showing you the reality that Colombia now enjoys to many people who still think that we are living in the past, and who come to Colombia with many misgivings ... this is a magnificent opportunity to sell this new image, this new Colombian reality, the new reality that we are living in. (*Minuto30.com* 2011)

The key word above is 'reality', or the reality Santos chose and wanted to project. When the official logo was launched, Santos commented, 'This is a golden opportunity in which Colombia will show that it is not a symbol of violence, but instead it is a country that has given itself the right to dream' (*Colombia.com* 2010). Through football, Colombia was once again confronting its 'Narcolombia' other. He repeated this sentiment during his speech for the opening ceremony, when the new Colombia, as Santos would have it, was displayed:

This is a golden opportunity to show that Colombia is not synonymous with violence, but, completely to the contrary, is synonymous with unity, fraternity, of enterprise and happiness. Colombia is a country that

8 The song for the tournament, *Nuestra Fiesta* (Our Party), by Jorge Celedón and Jimmy Zambrano, similarly emphasized desired takeaway messages such as 'Feel the happiness/Live the emotion/Enjoy life/ Colombia is love' (Celedón 2011). The *vallenato* style of music of Celedón and Zambrano also aided the festive, tropical image of the country and continued linkages between sport and this type of music.

has earned the right to dream, and that is working hard to achieve its dreams [...] The world is starting to understand that we are on the cusp of a new dawn, and that in this World Cup we are going to show that the positive future of Colombia will not be a false dawn [...] we have the goal of showing a Colombia that is progressing, a hospitable Colombia, a Colombia that is attractive for the whole world. (*Futbolred.com* 2011)

The onus is on the concept of a new Colombia with a new dream and destiny, and these are messages that throughout the rest of his presidency Santos conveyed regularly to Colombians, particularly after the peace negotiations with the FARC were announced, in an attempt to convince Colombians of the possibilities of peace. This positive vision of the future effectively went into rhetorical battle with the counter narrative from Uribe and his supporters who painted a more apocalyptic vision of Colombia, a narrative that focused on provoking the fear, anger and indignation of Colombians about the calamities that would befall the country should negotiations with the FARC be successful. When Santos was given the occasion to speak to a foreign audience, his 'New Colombia' image brand was always promoted and defended vigorously, inviting tourism and investment. Colombia was portrayed as a nation progressing, emerging from the darkness of the past, showing the 'aspirational image of the country's postconflict future' (Fattal 2018: 10). This was certainly the case in arguably his most high-profile speech to an international audience, his acceptance speech on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December 2016 (Santos 2019: 577–589).

### Trends in Santos's speeches

When Santos spoke about sport, there was a repeated but flexible structure for these speeches, though certain elements did change from year to year or enjoy more focus, depending on current political priorities. Generally, the structure included: the Santos government commitment to sport; praise for recent sporting successes and portraying this as a golden period in Colombian sport; athletes were proclaimed as ambassadors and examples for the Colombian people; the benefits of sport for Colombian individuals and society in general were extolled (often mentioning the example of Mandela's use of the rugby World Cup in South Africa in 1997); the *Supérate* (in English, 'Go beyond' or 'Outdo yourself') campaign in schools was promoted as an example of the campaigns his government had introduced. The national football team was mentioned more than any other as having a key role to play though all sporting success was deployed in a similar fashion. The constant narrative was that in sport, through hard work, discipline, talent and the support from government, in a scenario where everyone is working together in peace, adversity could be overcome to produce success and a more positive, optimistic future. Through these speeches and tweets, Santos



created a sense of nation as a “faith-achievement” group, able to surmount obstacles and hardships’ (Smith 1991: 17). It was not difficult to associate this sporting narrative with the Colombian situation, a nation working together to overcome historic adversity to build a more united, prosperous and peaceful Colombia.

From this general structure, nodes that were used to analyze regularly repeated language, themes and ideas, and data results, we can argue that the content of his sport-related speeches fell into three broad categories:

- 1) Legitimation tactics: Santos underlined his credentials to ‘lead’ and celebrate sporting success. This included proving his and his government’s commitment to sport, government actions and the sporting success attained.
- 2) Justification and empowering sport towards nation building: here Santos illustrated the benefits of sport for individuals and society, referring to examples.
- 3) Deployment of sport towards nation building: where Santos deliberately applied sporting lessons and examples to strengthen a greater sense of ‘Colombianness’ or gain support for policies and campaigns. This included stimulating positive and optimistic feelings about the nation, promoting peace and unity, and deploying athletes and teams as examples and ambassadors towards solving perceived Colombian problems.

There is some crossover with this suggestion of categories, but it is a helpful way of analyzing the way in which the ‘footballization’ of politics occurred.

### Legitimation

It is essential that a government is able to prove its actions and achievements. Therefore, inevitably, a substantial proportion of node categories relate to Santos legitimizing his commitment to sport and, initially, what his government would try to do, and, increasingly, actually achieved. Table 3, below, shows node categories and references that fall into the category of legitimation.

The most salient results are all the figures for the ‘Sport as priority for government’ node and subnodes within that category (‘Budget’, ‘Colombia hosting tournaments’, ‘Infrastructure’, ‘Promotion of sport’, ‘Stopping crime’, ‘Support for tournaments’ and ‘Talent spotting’). Several laws introduced during his presidency to tackle fan violence and cleanse football as a national symbol following previous associations with criminality (discussed in chapter four) are referred to, showing that his government is acting on their words. However, the PDSCCF, potentially the most significant and relevant public policy, was never mentioned. This is an astonishing absence, given that the content and objectives of the Plan entirely resonate with the aims of Santos’s discourse strategy around sport and football. A huge opportunity

Table 3: Government legitimization node results (ranked by most speeches)

Node category	Total number of speeches	Total number of references
Sport as priority for government	48	86
Coldeportes	46	83
Infrastructure (Sport as priority for government)	44	102
' <i>Supérate</i> ' project	44	63
Budget (Sport as priority for government)	42	93
Colombia hosting tournaments (Sport as priority for government)	41	96
Promotion of sport (Sport as priority for government)	40	75
Talent-spotting (Sport as priority for government)	33	49
Support for tournaments (Sport as priority for government)	25	36
Leadership (Coldeportes)	13	20
Santos sport memories	11	13
Football legislation	7	12
Infrastructure projects (Coldeportes)	7	7
'Agreement for Prosperity' (Football legislation)	5	13
'Football Law 1445' (Football legislation)	4	9
Santos as Santa Fe Fan	4	6
Stopping crime (Sport as priority for government)	2	15
'Sports Law' (Football legislation)	2	3
' <i>Deportista Apoyar</i> ' (Supporting Athletes) project	2	2
Santos as sports fan/player	2	2
'Golombiao' campaign	1	4
'Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football' (Football legislation)	0	0

to unite football success, national development and government public policy promotion was not capitalized upon, and it underlines the argument, discussed in detail in the following chapter, about why the PDSCCF has not been more fully implemented to date. Equally, Golombiao, a football-based SDP campaign for football's use for social transformation run by the Colombia Joven section of government (discussed in chapter five) was only mentioned on one occasion. Again, this feels like an opportunity lost, to promote a campaign whose objectives tallied with the nation-building aims of government.

In the speeches there was an oft-stated and evident commitment to sport being a priority for government. This was stressed in Santos's speeches at the start of his first term:

As the new director of Coldeportes [Jairo Clopatovsky] has said, we want to put sport at the forefront of our government policy. (*Presidencia de la República* 2010a)

I have always enjoyed sport, and for this reason, as President of the Republic, I want to give sport every possible support over the next four years. (*Presidencia de la República* 2010b)

Santos quickly showed his personal interest in sport, something he mentioned periodically as a way of trying to create a relationship with the audience. In the ceremony for the Sportsman of the Year award in December of his first year as president, he spoke of his own football memories:

Although it might be politically inopportune to mention it, I must confess that I've been a Santa Fe fan all my life. My father was the founder and first President of Santa Fe. I remember that I didn't miss a match in the era of Bebilacua, Panzuto, Perazzo, 'Zipa' González, 'Mono' Tovar and 'Chiquito' Aponte. (*Presidencia de la República* 2010b)

Santos often took the opportunity to open new sporting facilities and stadiums as evidence of his commitment to sport (see, for example, speeches in Cúcuta and La Ceja, Antioquia in 2013; Palmira in 2014; San Andrés and Andes, Antioquia in 2015; Apulo, Cundinamarca and Sahagún, Córdoba in 2016 – the variety of regions also demonstrating how Santos travelled around the country to ensure that many areas benefit from infrastructure projects). In these and elsewhere he talked about his government's greater budgetary investment in sport, commitment to supporting sport development, hosting tournaments and finding talent. This is not a new tactic; Latin American leaders have frequently highlighted a commitment to sporting infrastructure as being beneficial to the nation. Mason gives the example of the Médici regime in Brazil building thirteen new stadiums, including nine in less developed regions (1995: 64), as well as the efforts of the Perón government slogans such as "Perón sponsors sports" and "Perón, the first sportsman" (66). As mentioned above, President Lula

of Brazil spoke on 70 occasions about governmental actions in the sporting sector (Mascarenhas et al. 2014: 497). In Santos's final year of government, such references served to assure his legacy. In his speech announcing the law to create a Ministry of Sport in April 2018, Santos summarized all his government's achievements in sport:

Coldeportes used to be an institution that was part of the Culture Ministry. We changed this; we made Coldeportes into an Administrative Department at the same level as, for example, the Department of National Planning, and we invited the Director of Coldeportes to be part of the Cabinet. This was not just a clear sign of the importance that sport would have in my government, but we also showed this support through the budget. When we arrived, the budget of Coldeportes, of sport in Colombia, was nearly 0.7 billion pesos. Now it is nearly four times that amount, 2.6 billion pesos. You all know that love for something in politics is shown through the budget! And that is what shows how important sport is for this government. (*Presidencia de la República* 2018a)

Given the frequency of references to sport being a priority for government and what the government was doing and had achieved, it can be argued that it facilitated the credence given to the subsequent justification and empowering of sport towards national benefit and its deployment in his speeches.

### Justification of sport and its deployment

Before examining the results in terms of nodes data, it is worth returning to Santos's chief of communications, Juan Carlos Torres, to understand what their tactics were involving sport, and then see how these have been implemented. Torres first stated that Santos is convinced about the values and lessons that can be gained from sport individually and collectively:

He is convinced that sport is not just something for recreation or for physical fitness, but is something that also benefits social and personal values. And he repeats this a lot in his speeches, that sport teaches discipline, that sport teaches the value of fair play, that sport teaches the value of team work and solidarity, and many other positive values. And when we find and train athletes, we are also training people to be better citizens, better human beings. That is the reason why he is so committed to sport. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

It is, therefore, a personal and political conviction for Santos that sport has benefits that complement (or replace) existing character and society-forming institutions and processes. The sheer constancy of this message, targeted at solving national problems, is one of the aspects that makes Santos's rhetorical strategy different from other football-based sporting nationalism discourse used elsewhere at other times in Latin America. A look at Table 4 below shows how often these values were extolled.

Table 4: Results for benefits of sport for individuals and benefits of sport for society nodes

Node name	Number of speeches	Number of total references
<b>Benefits of sport for individuals</b>	10	11
Values	44	63
Team work	33	39
Overcoming adversity	32	50
Good human beings	28	33
Commitment, determination	24	39
Discipline	19	24
Pursuit of excellence	19	26
Health	14	17
Fair play	11	16
Good citizens	10	10
Self-belief	7	12
Happiness	4	5
Humility	2	2
Loyalty	1	1
<b>Benefits of sport for society</b>	65	114
Sport unifying power	58	150
Positive face of Colombia	57	111
Sport for education	41	81
Colombian pride and self-esteem	40	78
Example of progress	37	60
Hope and optimism	24	46
Sport and healthy society	14	25
Distancing youth from vice	9	9
Good news for Colombia	9	10
Sport as giving opportunities	5	5
<b>Benefits for youth</b>	30	41
Better future	32	59
Peace and coexistence	42	151

(Nodes not in bold were subnodes of the nodes above them in bold)

As we can see from Table 4, Santos talked a great deal about the benefits of sport for Colombia and Colombians. General references to the ‘Benefits of sport for society’ appeared in about two-thirds of his speeches (65 of 99), with 114 references in all. ‘Sport unifying power’ references occurred in a similarly large number of speeches (58 of 99), and had the third most total references of all the nodes, after “our” use’ and ‘peace and coexistence’ (see Table 5). The qualities that sport provides were targeted at what Santos saw as being problems prevalent in Colombian society. It is no surprise that the idea of sport bringing people together was one of the most common themes, given Colombia’s historic problems of violence, regionalism and regional identities prevailing over national identity, social, economic, racial and political polarization and a lack of trust. ‘Sport unifying power’ leads the way, but the importance of ‘team work’ was regularly mentioned (appearing in 33 speeches), as was the importance of sport for ‘peace and coexistence’, which was the second most mentioned theme with 151 references in total. The use of ‘all’ in different forms abounded when referring to the Colombian nation. ‘All Colombians’ was used on 136 occasions, there were 97 examples of coding at ‘All’ (usually when Santos refers to the amount of the Colombian population), 29 uses of ‘the whole country’ and 27 uses of ‘all Colombia’. We can, therefore, observe that one of Santos’s main messages across his speeches was unity, and the importance of Colombia coming together through sport, and by supporting the national football team in particular.

This unifying rhetoric of togetherness embracing and including all Colombians as being fans of the *Selección* is a contrast to and a way of remedying the daily discourse of polarizing confrontation produced by his predecessor Álvaro Uribe’s government that led to a profound deterioration of confidence between different sectors of the population (López de la Roche 2015: 6). As Santos was a key figure of the Uribe government as the Minister of Defence, he therefore contributed to this polarizing discourse, as he admits in this autobiography. He writes, ‘I abided by the instruction [...] and when I spoke about the guerrillas I called them terrorists or bandits, as did all the military figures, policemen and and everyone in government’ (Santos 2019: 273), thereby casting them out of the imagined Colombian collective. This narrative tactic that Santos describes as part of a ‘semantic war in which the opponent is disqualified through the words used to describe him’ (Santos 2019: 269) continued in the early years of his presidency, as several writers have demonstrated. Olave quotes a Santos speech from 14 May 2011 following the passing of Law 1448 in which Santos said, ‘If we have called them narcoterrorists, it is because they are narcoterrorists; they traffic drugs and carry out terrorist acts and so they will continue to be called narcoterrorists’ (2012b: 163), and Rivero Santos shows that in speeches to the United Nations on 24 September 2010 and 29 September 2012, Santos associated the FARC with the ongoing preoccupation with global terrorism in order to neutralize the negative vision of Colombia through terrorism

not being seen as a problem exclusive to Colombia (Rivero Santos 2013: 299). This rhetorical tactic was softened to some extent from the World Cup 2014 onwards, but would continue until 2015 when Santos spoke in an interview with Canal RCN about scaling back this semantic disqualification and delegitimization of the FARC, saying that it was time to ‘leave behind the verbal violence, begin to de-escalate the language, for example instead of calling them “those bandits, drug traffickers or terrorists” to call them the FARC’ (*BluRadio* 2015). Football offered a suitable site for the subtle inclusion of the FARC in the national ‘us’, a way of forgetting political enmities and creating a sense of ‘All Colombia’ as opposed to a Colombia separated by Uribe’s discourse into ‘good and bad, friends and enemies’ (López de la Roche 2015: 6). Table 5, which shows the most commonly occurring nodes in speeches and in total number of references, demonstrates just how often the theme of unity or togetherness was expressed:

The tendency for Santos to use the inclusive ‘we’ form in his speeches rather than the ‘I’ form leads to the extremely common use of ‘our’ in speeches (471 separate uses in total) and other pronominal forms of the first-person plural (‘ourselves’, for example, appears on 629 occasions). Olave (2012a) establishes that there are two main uses of ‘we’ in Santos’s speeches, namely the ‘We, the State’ which delimits that border between State and common citizen, and the ‘We, the nation’ which is used to erase the dividing line between the two in order to establish a more common identification and sentiment (Olave 2012a: 62). This use of first-person plural pronouns and particularly the ‘We, the nation’ was used a great deal in relation to the national men’s football team in order to foster a sense of horizontal relationship between Santos and the population as fans of the football team; ‘our *selección*’ was used on 66 separate occasions, including everyone as fans of the team, and therefore everyone is represented by it. In comparison, ‘my’ was used on only 124 occasions. This is an example of the ‘routine deixis which is continually pointing to the national homeland’ (Billig 1995: 11), the use of those small words that evoke a sense of togetherness and belonging, a sense of a national ‘we’ and ‘us’. Fairclough argues that the ‘use of “we” reduces hierarchy and distance by implying that all of “us” are in the same boat’ (1995: 76) and says that ‘pronouns are usually worth attending to in texts’ (149) as they are actively used to create groups and communities through who is included and who are excluded. It is a tactic frequently used by leaders, stressing the national collective and sense of unity through the ‘we’ form. The use of the ‘powerful inclusive “us”’ (Alabarces 2008: 16; Borrelli and Oszust 2018: 20) became very prevalent in Argentinian political and media discourse during the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, which associated government and sporting actions with those of the whole population (Alabarces 2008: 16). Villena Fiengo analyzed the speech of Costa Rican President Miguel Ángel Rodríguez after the Costa Rican team’s success in qualification for the 2002 World Cup, highlighting the repeated use of ‘Yes, we can!’ (2015: 78). In one of the few articles thus far that has

Table 5: Most common speech nodes

Node name	Number of speeches	Number of total references
'Our' use	91	471
All Colombians	69	136
Make history	68	142
Benefits of sport for society	65	114
National team men	60	108
Sport unifying power (Benefits of sport for society)	58	150
Happiness (Santos emotions)	57	118
Positive face of Colombia (Benefits of sport for society)	57	111
Colombia sporting triumph	50	100
Pride (Santos emotions)	49	93
Sports stars as examples	48	129
Sport as priority for government	48	86
'All'	47	97
Coldeportes	46	83
Supérate campaign	44	63
Values (Benefits of sport for individuals)	44	63
Infrastructure (Sport as priority for government)	44	102
Peace and coexistence	42	151
Budget (Sport as priority for government)	42	93
Sport for education (Benefits of sport for society)	41	81

(Nodes in brackets are where the node was categorized as a sub-node. All nodes mentioned in more than 40 speeches included.)

studied Santos's speeches, Suárez González et al. discovered that in the 128 discursive segments that formed the corpus of the study, a greater use of constructions including the first-person plural was in evidence (2013: 774).



They argue that this more common use of first-person plural pronouns and verbs means that the speaker not only places himself within the collective, but also legitimizes himself and assumes the authority for the group (Suárez González et al. 2013: 774). As Santos struggled to establish connections with the Colombian public, this regular use of ‘we’ and related pronouns was a linguistic tactic to create a sense of proximity and inclusion with the Colombian nation as sports fans, and particularly fans of the *Selección*. Whereas the Argentinian ‘we’ based around the World Cup in 1978 hid and silenced opposition to the military dictatorship, Santos’s ‘we’ attempted to include those previously excluded.

When Santos spoke of ‘us’ related to sport, particularly from 2014 onwards when the FARC as ‘narcoterrorist’ rhetoric was softened, no one was excluded, unlike in previous generations. The multicultural and multi-ethnic nation was united, male or female, wherever they were. The assumption was that everyone would be able to identify with someone in the team or the team. The football team is one place where Afrocolombians, who are often geographically, socially and metaphorically on the periphery and find it hard to represent the nation, can certainly come to the fore. In certain speeches, Santos lauded the Afrocolombian contribution to Colombian sporting success, such as when welcoming medal winners to the Casa de Nariño after the London Olympics. Santos said:

I also want to pay homage to the Afrocolombian population who have represented us so well in sport. Four of the medals from London returned home around the necks of black Colombians, who made us feel proud, very proud, of our Afrocolombian heritage. (*Presidencia de la República* 2012b)

Similar comments occurred when visiting Urabá shortly after the 2016 Olympics, as he praised black athletes such as Caterine Ibargüen and boxer Yuberjen Martínez for their success. It was a tactic Santos often used; when visiting a region, he thanked that region for the efforts of a local sports star, so helping the region feel pride for its contribution to national victories, also symbolically including the region within the nation. It functioned even better when these athletes were part of a team, as with the football team. Before the 2018 World Cup various regions and towns were thanked for producing the likes of Yerry Mina (from Guachené in Cauca) and Carlos Sánchez (from Quibdó in Chocó) and others who originate from poorer regions of the country, which have often been hard hit by the Colombian conflict (*Presidencia de la República* 2018b). The importance of black Colombians is also seen in the ‘tropical’ associations linked to the team’s image, closely associated through the music and dance of the Caribbean, as was discussed in chapter two. Pablo Armero, from Tumaco, Nariño, in the Colombian Pacific, often orchestrated the 2014 goal celebration dances, and several videos of Mina, Cuadrado and others leading dances during the 2018 World Cup went viral, strengthening such associations of the happy,

tropical Colombia.<sup>9</sup> It is somewhat harder for similar associations to be made for indigenous Colombians. Though indigenous Colombians appeared in videos embedded in tweets as supporters of the football team, no player from an indigenous background had represented the *Selección*, and very few had made it into professional football, until Luis Díaz made his debut in 2018 after the World Cup.<sup>10</sup> In fact, there was a separate indigenous Colombian football league, launched in 2013, run by the Colombian National Indigenous Organization (ONIC), and an occasional indigenous national Colombian team that has competed against the indigenous sides of other South American countries. Santos did congratulate the team in 2015 when they finished second in the Copa América Indígena, and both he and the @infopresidencia account tweeted about the team's progress (nine tweets in total – there were no references to indigenous football since 2015) and referred to this effort in two speeches as well as recording a video conference with the team wishing them luck. During this, Santos said 'remember that from this moment on you are Colombian ambassadors. Colombian football now has a certain prestige, and you are going to add to this prestige' (*Presidencia de la República* 2015). The indigenous team was also claimed to be and portrayed as representing all of Colombia and not just the indigenous communities. Tellingly, as can be seen in the video, they do not wear the same national tracksuits as the national men's team (or women's team), nor do they wear the same shirt, which then problematizes just how representative of the nation they are. The fact that there is an ethnically separate team that wears a different kit from the men's or women's team suggests a lack of inclusion within the national symbol that the national football shirt has become, and therefore a certain marginalization from the nation.

From 2014 onwards, Santos even included the FARC within the Colombian 'us' that he was asking the listener/reader to imagine, a group that had long been seen as enemies of the nation and that he had frequently denominated as narcoterrorists or criminals as Minister of Defence and in the first few years of his presidency. This, then, is a significant narrative shift, and football is

9 See, for example, 'El baile de Yerry Mina y Juan Guillermo Cuadrado en la goleada de Colombia ante Polonia', *Infobae* 24 June 2018, <https://www.infobae.com/america/deportes/mundial-rusia-2018/2018/06/24/el-baile-de-yerry-mina-y-juan-guillermo-cuadrado-en-la-goleada-de-colombia-ante-polonia/> [accessed 25 April 2019], and 'Selección Colombia baila Caiste en la trampa (Salsa Choke) – Yerri Mina, Cuadrado y Monjica [sic]', DJ Sammy Barbosa YouTube channel published 30 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRjNwxEyxs> [accessed 25 April 2019].

10 Díaz became the first indigenous player to represent Colombia when he made his debut for the national team against Argentina on 27 August 2018. Díaz has Wayuu ethnicity and was in the squad for the Copa América Indígena 2015, impressing enough to be signed for leading Colombian side Junior after the tournament. He has since moved to English giants Liverpool and was joint top scorer in the Copa América 2021 tournament.

the terrain for this inclusion. There were two speeches when the FARC were specifically included as national team fans and ‘allowed’ into the national ‘in group’:

It does not matter what party you belong to, it does not matter what religion you belong to, it does not matter whatever the differences may be. Even those people we are talking with to end the conflict, they will also be supporting you. All Colombia will be supporting you. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014b)

And I believe that there have been no greater reasons for unity in the recent past. Everyone in the country, everyone, from the guerrilla member to their greatest enemy, everyone is uniting behind you, behind the Colombian national team. (*Presidencia de la República* 2015)

Both occasions were during ceremonies full of national symbols, when the national football team visited the Casa de Nariño presidential palace to be handed the Colombian flag. The first quote was part of the speech before the team travelled to Brazil for the World Cup, and was also before the presidential election, so the FARC topic was a major issue. Santos used the occasion to state that FARC members should now be seen as Colombians, not as some external ‘them’ or enemy. This message had also been promoted with the ‘Colombia is saving you a seat’ (*MinDefensa* 2014) advertisement campaign, where people from all over Colombia, including celebrities and members of the armed forces, patted an empty seat beside them and said they were saving the place for a demobilized guerrilla to watch the World Cup matches with them. This advert was another of those produced by the PAHD and Lowe/SSP3, part of the demobilization ‘brand’ (Fattal 2018: 18) that had the aim of rebranding the military, striking at the human, emotional side of the guerrilla, to show him/her that there was a way out of the conflict and the chance to enjoy the excitement of the World Cup. With this particular advert, the national mood of the peace negotiations and the optimism and excitement of the World Cup were reunited. It was the second advertising campaign during the Santos presidency based on national excitement for a football tournament, following the ‘Come back and play’ campaign of 2011 based around Colombia hosting the Under 20 World Cup (*MinDefensa* 2011), in which footballs signed by the national football team and with the sticker ‘Demobilize, come back and play’ on are thrown out from military helicopters over the jungles of Colombia, ostensibly to the guerrillas hiding below. This is a striking re-imagining of military bombardments, showing a benevolent side to the military, and also includes the message of football being a space in which the nation as a footballing family unites: ‘*Guerrillero*, your family and Colombia are waiting for you so we can become one sole team’. Fattal quotes one of the Lowe/SSP3 marketing strategists as describing these campaigns and others like them as ‘attacking the heart’ of the guerrilla (2018: 84). The advert calculates that the national excitement of the Colombian football

team returning to the World Cup for the first time in sixteen years has the potential to motivate the guerrilla to demobilize and presents the image of the State and the population benevolently welcoming back the prodigal son to the family fold to enjoy football together. Fattal quotes Juan Felipe Hoyos García who emphasizes this point: ‘the moral of this story is not only that the demobilized is a lost son who is accepted upon his return, but that his return reinforces the paternal relationship between the State and its subject’ (Hoyos García 2011: 82). According to Fattal, ‘Lowe/SSP3 emphasizes the impact of its work on the “national mood”’ (2018: 86). These adverts, both of which show the importance of football as a space for national (re)encounter and togetherness, contributes to Santos’s ongoing and repeated rhetoric bringing together football, unity and peace, rhetoric that can be seen as its own advertising campaign selling the idea of a peaceful and united future for the country. Events such as the Golpe de Estadio 2 event in Llanogrande during the 2018 World Cup (discussed in chapter five) became the visual proof of this message.

The second quote including the FARC as part of the national ‘us’ supporting the *Selección* comes from a similar ceremony before the 2015 Copa América in Chile, and was a continuation of the same message of inclusion. Given the amount of national symbols present, in a moment of patriotic excitement and expectation when the nation is celebrated, it was significant that the FARC should be rhetorically integrated into the national celebration. As designated enemies of the State, FARC were outside the national ‘fan group’; the style of the national team and its symbolism for the nation has been directed against rebel, criminal and terrorist groups responsible for the negative stereotypes often associated with Colombia and Colombians. Santos including the FARC within the national fan group was a significant rhetorical departure, particularly given the discourse strategy of Uribe whose anti-FARC rhetoric catalyzed and nourished the feelings of hatred and rejection of Colombians towards the FARC’s ongoing practice of kidnapping and extortion (López de la Roche 2015: 6), as well as his own frequent choice of ‘terrorists’ and ‘criminals’ to describe the FARC. However, for many Colombians this inclusion was (and continues to be) unacceptable or difficult to accommodate given the decades-long situation of ‘them and us’ in political rhetoric that shaped how the nation thought of itself, opinions that Uribe had fostered and subsequently used to promote opposition to Santos and to the plebiscite to ratify the peace agreement with the FARC.

Torres reinforces the importance of using speeches of sport to create a greater sense of togetherness as Colombians, involving everyone in the territory and the diaspora. He said:

In speeches we tried, *due to the President’s instructions* and also due to those of his communications team, to use football as a way of unifying the country. *We did this deliberately* and we used it in many speeches and

statements, especially in the period leading up to and after the World Cup in 2014. (personal interview 14 December 2017; italics my own)

When a query was run to see how often there was a convergence of the node ‘National men’s football team’ with other nodes that involve the idea of unity, we can see just how often this immediate connection of team and unity occurred in Santos’s speeches. The nodes of ‘National men’s football team’ and ‘Sport’s unifying power’ converge in close proximity in 14 speeches with 21 specific references. Some examples, taken from different years to show the continuity of this association of *Selección* and unity, include:

What we are seeing with the national team, the whole country united, the whole country following the team, that is what the great countries do. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014d)

Every time that the national team plays, the whole country is united, we leave any differences behind us, and this is very important. (*Presidencia de la República* 2017b)

Our national team is something that represents the unity of the country for me. Every time the *Selección* plays, the country unites, and this is what we Colombians need. (*Presidencia de la República* 2018a)

Union was stressed as being necessary and important for Colombia. Other queries relating to the ‘National men’s football team’ node and converging nodes giving a sense of union gave the following results in table 6:

Table 6: Results for node convergences between the men’s football team and unity

Query	Total speeches	Total references in speeches
National men’s team + nuestro (our) use	35	57
National men’s football team + sport’s unifying power	13	21
National men’s football team + ‘All’	13	17
National men’s football team + ‘All Colombia’	5	6
National men’s football team + ‘All Colombians	6	6
National men’s football team + ‘the whole of the country’	2	3
National men’s football team + team work	1	1

It should be noted that these results show where the two nodes immediately converge, that is, are in extremely close proximity within the speech. There

are many other occasions when the football team and unity are also related though not as immediately.

There were certain landmark speeches where the national men's team and unity were extremely strongly related. These occurred at the most potent occasions for football and nation to interrelate symbolically, at the time of World Cups. In both 2014 and 2018, Santos exploited the mega-event occasion and excitement of Colombians to deliver speeches that sought to create a sense of unity. The speech Santos gave when the World Cup trophy visited Colombia in 2014 before the tournament demonstrates this clearly.

Football unites us as a nation. It unites us because every Colombian is excited to know that we are in the best four teams in the world according to FIFA, and we all feel proud of this achievement. It unites us because football and sport teach us a series of principles and values which are so important for a person or society: team work, knowing how to win, knowing how to lose, discipline, effort. Football unites us as a nation because it teaches us to rise up against adversity. I remember when we were losing 0-3 against Chile, and then we scored one goal, then another, and when we scored the third that was a tremendous moment. Football unites us as a nation. When 'el Tigre' Falcao got injured, all of Colombia was shocked; it was a collective shock, you could feel it in the air. But now all Colombia is praying for him and willing him on for a quick recovery so that he can score some goals in the World Cup. That's what I told him personally a few days ago. Football also unites us because it fills us with optimism, and football stars, our stars, also teach us lessons about optimism, like Falcao when I greeted him and I asked him 'How are you feeling?', and he told me 'Optimistic. I'm going to be there, don't you worry Mr President, tell our country that I'll be there in that World Cup'. That optimism is what should radiate throughout the country, the optimism that leads us to think big, to achieve the objectives that we set for ourselves. Sport also teaches us that all Colombians, all of us, are children of the same nation, that we are brothers and sisters. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014a)

Here, phrases abound that empower football as a tool for unification, where football is converted into a metonym for the Colombian nation. Apart from the anaphora of 'football unites us', we can observe the constant use of the first-person plural form and the regular use of 'all'. The last sentence is particularly potent in this regard, stressing the importance of togetherness and familiarity, as well as the reference to 'the same nation'. This reference is also interesting as it presupposes that there have been doubts about whether Colombia has really been just one nation. Another example of this need to stress the 'one country' idea is the 'Un Solo País, #UnaSolaHinchada' (One Sole Country #OneSoleFangroup) slogan alongside the 2016 Copa América Centenario tournament. It illustrates that Santos felt the need to reiterate Colombia being a single entity, and not one with challenges to governmental

sovereignty where parastates exist and where the government does not exercise authority. In addition to the specific phrases evoking unity, the nation was invited to imagine itself united in experiencing the same feelings of football's vicissitudes, and subsequent pride, excitement and optimism. Santos then addressed the nation as a collective fan group articulating the lessons that the country can learn, rising from adversity, having dreams and objectives, being optimistic and replicating such values as discipline, hard work and working together.

The same tendencies reoccurred in the speech that Santos gave when the national team received the national flag from the president before travelling to Brazil in 2014. Some notable excerpts from this speech where the national team becomes metonymic for the nation and Colombian unity were reinforced are the following:

This team led by coach Pékerman is for the next fifty days the maximum symbol of national unity. The flag which I have just given to Mario Alberto Yepes, the captain of the team is exactly that. I am giving him the flag of our country, so that this team represents us as it best knows how: with determination, with courage, with sporting spirit and with the desire to triumph in Brazil. That national unity that you represent is very important at this time for the country. When we are watching your matches, all the differences in the country are going to disappear, because behind you are 47 million Colombians [...]

Every goal that you score will make the the whole Colombian nation excited. Every goal that you save will make Colombian hearts beat stronger [...]

As the national shirt says 'we are all united', but you also think big, and it is exactly by thinking big that we have managed to get to where we are in football and in sport in general. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014b)

This is the same speech where the FARC are also invited into the nation as part of the 'national unity' that Santos describes. Santos endeavoured to erase potential differences, whether geographical, political or economic, and depicted a nation dressed in yellow, red and blue, following the national football team, celebrating together, demonstrating selected positive Colombian characteristics. The hashtag on the national shirt for the tournament, '#UnidosPorUnPaís' (#UnitedForACountry),<sup>11</sup> which Santos refers to, links national team, a national symbol, political narrative, supporter, citizen and social media's affiliative potential in a very effective manner. O'Donnell writes that 'one of the commonest features of sports reporting is the metonym whereby the nation is presented as a single sentient being' (1994: 353); this occurs not just in press reporting, but also in political discourse related to sport. Radcliffe and Westwood, when discussing their idea of 'correlative imaginaries', which

11 I believe this to be the first time a hashtag has appeared on a national team shirt, and perhaps also any professional football team kit.

they describe as sites, activities, events, artefacts and so forth that ‘generate and sustain an ideational horizontal integration with a shared space, through a form of interpellation which correlates subjectivities and social spaces’ (1996: 28), argue that in many places in Latin America ‘football is the most powerful evocation of a correlative identity’ (98). Conscious of this belief, the national football team was deployed by Santos through discourse events, spoken or textual, to collect contrasting identities from across the national geography and reattach the diaspora into an imagined horizontal collective.

After Colombia’s successful World Cup 2014, Santos used his first official speech to the nation following his re-election to congratulate the *Selección*, and relaunch his political project around the symbolic power of the football team. In a televised address following the national anthem (a video celebrating the diversity of the country and people, full of recognizable images and symbols, combining tradition with modernity), wearing the football shirt, with the backdrop of the Colombian flag and the Colombian shield on the lectern, Santos reiterated the necessity and power of a Colombian nation working together.<sup>12</sup> The message of peace was prominent in this imagining of the nation alongside football:

From henceforth, I invite those who supported our proposals, but also those who voted for other options or those who did not vote, to unite towards the construction of a just peace, a peace with truth, a peace with reconciliation... a peace with unity. We can achieve everything, everything, if we work like the Colombian national football team – united for a country! This is the great lesson that we were taught by those admirable Colombians, those great sportsmen and great human beings who represented us in the World Cup [...]

The *Selección* united us as a country, and it showed us the best of Colombians: that talent, that ability to fight, that determination that we saw yesterday, for example, in that second half when we were only minutes away from glory. What commitment from our players! That is what Colombia is! That is how we are going to win that other great match that we are playing, that of peace with social prosperity! (*Presidencia de la República 2014g*)

In addition to the continued messages of unity and peace inspired by football, as well as lessons and values that the country can learn for self-improvement, Santos took the chance to praise the nation for the real or imagined national values on show. This is a requirement for politicians to undertake, as Billig underlines:

Convention dictates that the politician follows Aristotle’s recommendation to “praise Athenians to Athenians”. The nation, in being hailed, should

12 This video can be seen on the *Presidencia de la República* YouTube channel, at the following address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZFxoRjVUYo>.



be rhetorically complimented [...] Politicians not only live in the eye of the country, but they represent the nation to itself. In addressing the imagined national audience, they dress it in rhetorical finery and, then, these speakers-as-outfitter hold a mirror so the nation can admire itself. (Billig 1995: 97–98)

It is often revealing what ‘national’ characteristics have been chosen by Latin American leaders to promote that their national team has supposedly demonstrated on the pitch. These characteristics are usually associated to their particular political project. President Médici after Brazil’s triumph in the 1970 World Cup in Mexico said, ‘I identify this victory won in the brotherhood of good sportsmanship with the rise of faith in our fight for national development’ (cited in Mason 1995: 64), highlighting how football was positioned to help with national integration as well as a modernizing process for Brazil. When the Argentinian Under 20 team won the 1979 World Cup, General Videla proclaimed that they ‘have given an unmistakable proof of discipline, of order which shows, above all, an understanding of the principle of authority’ (cited in Roldán 2007: 137), focusing on the qualities of discipline and order prized by the dictatorship for Argentina. Villena Fiengo argues that President Rodríguez of Costa Rica in his speech when Costa Rica qualified for the World Cup in 2002 ‘stresses, as key to the international success of the team, the adherence to various values expressed in business jargon, terms like excellence, discipline, teamwork, competitiveness, and so on. [...] He renews the national axiology, replacing the values of bucolic nationalism with a set of values more suited to the demands of neoliberal globalization’ (2015: 78). The national vision of the president is attached to the style and performance of the players on the pitch, often recuperating lost values of the country (in the Argentinian case), or displaying new ones allied to a bright future for the country (as shown by the examples of Brazil and Costa Rica).

Santos selected characteristics based on his political project of a ‘New Colombia’ where peace and happiness is possible, where Colombians can work together. He elected to praise the ‘Colombian’ characteristics of determination, discipline, working together and fighting against adversity, as well as fair play,<sup>13</sup> dignity, talent and self-belief. There was also an evocation of the imagined Colombian football style, as he claims that the team ‘brought joy and good football to the World Cup’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2014g). Here the president evoked and reinforced the way that Colombians are imagined and portrayed to play football, as constructed

13 Colombia won the FIFA Fair Play award for the tournament, having only received five yellow cards in the five games they played. However, the game against Brazil featured fifty-four fouls, the most fouls of any match in the competition, and Brazilian fans were incensed by a very physical challenge on their hero Neymar by Juan Camilo Zuñiga, which broke a vertebra in his spine and knocked him out of the World Cup.

by Maturana and the Colombian press with the golden generation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Happiness, fun and a more Caribbean, tropical image of the country are a key part of this invention of style, and these elements were conspicuous with the synchronized goal celebration dances first seen in Colombia's 3–0 win against Greece in their first match of the tournament. These dances captured the imagination of the world audience watching the games, perhaps created a new image of Colombia and helped to dispel lingering negative associations of Colombia with violence and drug trafficking. With Santos and his peace talks being the 'new news' and the football team also being represented as a new positive international face of Colombia, a different narrative for the nation could be promoted. The government and Colombian ambassadors were also strenuous in protecting the country's reputation. They condemned a Belgian cartoon and a meme tweeted by Dutch actor Nicolette Van Dam, which both showed Colombian footballers sniffing a line of the spray used by referees to show where footballers should stand away from free kicks as if it was cocaine. Both the cartoonist and actor apologized for the insult to the nation following the furious backlash from the Colombian press and social media reactions (*La Vanguardia* 2014; *Huffington Post* 2014). Colombia's brand image abroad, as already discussed, was paramount to Santos's nation-building project; in addition to praising the nation, its defence against these slights related to the 'other' Colombia of the past are also required. We return to the idea that a 'New Colombia' was emerging, a safe Colombia suitable for tourism and economic investment with football being a pivotal way of promoting this brand. 'New Colombia' was mentioned in six speeches with ten references. In several of these the national men's team is conjoined with this idea of a new country, such as:

Coach Pékerman said to me 'Mr President, thank you for the support that you have given the national team', but this team is the clearest, most palpable, demonstration of this new Colombia that is emerging, this new Colombia that you are giving us. (*Presidencia de la República* 2013)

The message was one of a positive future being ushered in under Santos, and demonstrated through sport.

Torres cites the importance of sports news being positive ones; sporting success gives the impression that Colombia is progressing, that Colombia is competing on a world stage, that there are grounds for optimism in the country. Sport relegates the usual negative news to a second plane, remembering that the country has suffered from its fair share of negative press. Torres said:

I wouldn't say that there was a defined strategy for using sport in speeches, but there was an instruction: make the most of good sporting news to inspire and generate an atmosphere of unity and optimism in the country [...] Sport is a permanent source of good news. Sport is a

permanent source of good examples. Therefore, he asked, with good reason, that whenever we have some sporting event, we link it to the speech that we are making, and in fact, this what we did [...] We always used these sporting victories as a hook to stimulate positivity and unity in the country. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

Any sporting triumph provided an opportunity to claim that Colombia was progressing and nurtured a more positive national mood. Table 7 shows all references that create a sense of positivity around the nation and sporting performance:

Table 7: Node results in speeches related to creating positive feeling of the nation

Node	Number of speeches	Number of references
Make history	68	142
Happiness (Santos emotions)	57	118
Positive face of Colombia	57	111
Pride (Santos emotions)	49	91
Colombian pride and self-esteem (Benefits of sport for society)	40	78
Example of progress (Benefits of sport for society)	37	60
Excitement (Santos emotions)	33	51
Better future	32	59
Enthusiasm (Santos emotions)	32	53
Colombia in a good state	30	45
Dream	30	51
Hope and optimism (Benefits of sport for society)	24	46
Colombia as sporting power	21	32
Good news for Colombia (Benefits of sport for society)	9	10
Self-belief (Benefits of sport for individuals)	7	12
New Colombia	6	10
Happiness (Benefits of sport for individuals)	4	5

From the node categories above and results, it is evident how positive news about sport was linked in a variety of ways and terms in which Colombia was portrayed in a similarly positive way, as a nation advancing. The high results in the ‘making history’ node relate to the various sporting successes being ‘historic’ ones, evidencing a rupture from the past of failure or inferiority, and turning into competitors in the highest echelons of world sport. The ‘Colombia as sporting power’ and ‘better future’ references were used in the same way. This was another way of Santos praising the nation, taking advantage of unprecedented Colombian sporting success. Dávila Ladrón de Guevara talks of the national team alongside the new generation of Colombian athletes creating a rupture from the past national ethos of ‘winning without winning’ (2014: 18). In the past, Colombians have looked good, or have fought hard, but not won (the idea of ‘we played like never before and we lost like always’), but Colombians were now winning and so this success could be deployed as part of a national narrative of the nation progressing under Santos’s policies. The positive news provided by national team triumphs or other athletes’ victories allowed Santos to link the success with his government’s commitment and support for sport (legitimation tactics), justifying and empowering the role of in society, and then deploying sport towards desired benefits for the nation.

Continuing with the results in Table 7, after the 142 references to ‘making history’ we see numerous positive emotional reactions, often used when Santos reacted to sporting triumphs. Santos’s reactions of happiness, enthusiasm, pride or excitement were then presented as collective feelings shared by the nation. Comments in speeches such as ‘you made us very happy’ (*Presidencia de la República* 4 July 2014) after the loss against Brazil in the 2014 World Cup or the four different references in the speech after the Uruguay game in the previous round – ‘Colombia is happy’, ‘we are all happy’, ‘all Colombia is happy’, ‘of course we are all happy’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2014e) – were proposed as collective, national reactions. These victories also stimulate national pride, hope and optimism, as well as showing the positive face of Colombia, which we can see are also common themes. Following the Brazil game ‘the whole world is admiring Colombia thanks to the *Selección*’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2014f), for instance. The Colombian team was positioned early in his presidency as being ‘our ambassadors, our best representatives of the good image of Colombia’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2012a), but all athletes have the same ambassadorial power. The Santos government helped them achieve this, as this quote shows: ‘we have helped our sportsmen and women in every age group or sport like never before. the cyclists, the footballers, the weightlifters, all of those who are giving Colombia a good name’ (*Presidencia de la República* 2016). If Colombians were continuously hearing that alongside sporting success stories the nation was progressing (60 references) or the nation was becoming a sporting power (32 references) or Colombia was in a good

state (45 references) and has a better future (59 references), then the nation could feel better about itself. Sporting success is an escape valve away from daily trauma, as was discussed in chapter two. Torres spoke of this need to promote good news:

The President is aware that in Colombia people are often very influenced by bad news, by the problems of violence, by the media that always privilege bad news, whether here or elsewhere. The political opposition always emphasizes the bad news, as any opposition would do anywhere in the world. Sport is a permanent source of good examples. Therefore, he asks us, with good reason, that whenever there is a sporting event, we link it to the speech that we are making. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

Through this promotion by Santos of good news provided by sport, national confidence and pride could be enhanced, necessary ingredients to help a nation imagine itself as a collective.

Inserting a message of peace with the FARC among messages of football-inspired positivity was a way of trying to avoid the polarization that the issue was causing. The World Cup of 2014 and celebration of Colombia’s best ever performance allowed the topic to be more accepted. When asked whether it was problematic for football to be deployed towards gaining support for such a nationally divisive issue, Dávila Ladrón de Guevara answered, ‘No, I think that they were smart about this as well, because they found it hard to put the issue of peace on people’s agendas in good terms, and perhaps the only time that they managed to do this was during the World Cup’ (personal interview 12 December 2017). As already noted earlier, the node ‘peace and coexistence’ has the second most references (151) of all those selected, and there is an obvious trend for these references to national peace to emerge from 2013 onwards, as can be seen in Table 8. This shows how frequently references to ‘peace and coexistence’ and ‘sport’s unifying power’ appear in each year of Santos’s government.

Table 8: Frequency of ‘peace and coexistence’ and ‘sport’s unifying power’ nodes by years

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Peace and coexistence	1	3/18	1	6/25	9/20	5/10	11/64	3/5	3/7
Sport’s unifying power	1	12/38	2/5	11/25	14/38	4/11	6/7	3/8	5/17

(Where there are two numbers, the first figure is the number of speeches and the second figure is the total number of references.)

We can see from Table 8 the years where Santos most tried to get across his message of national unity and peace, and these occur, predictably, in years when mega-events and significant political events converged. The year 2011 was the one of Colombia hosting the Under 20 World Cup, and when Santos was beginning to establish his political priorities. In 2011, most references to peace were associated with bringing an end to violence around Colombian professional football league matches, particularly in major speeches about the Acuerdo para la Prosperidad en el Fútbol (Agreement for Prosperity in Football), and Law 1445. In his speech about Law 1445, Santos referred to peace and coexistence on several occasions:

The Agreement is just one part of a total government effort for our football to be sustainable, clean, transparent and peaceful [...] What we cannot tolerate is that the violent and dangerous behaviour of some fans turns stadiums into battlefields and not the peaceful scenarios that they should be [...] We want sporting events to be spaces for coexistence that families can attend without fear. (*Presidencia de la República* 2011)

A narrative of national peace replaced these types of quotes as the negotiations with the FARC were announced. The number of tweets increased alongside the excitement of the qualification for the World Cup in 2013, the World Cup itself in 2014, and then, to a much greater extent, in 2016, the year of the plebiscite. As Torres confirmed, this association of peace and sport was a deliberate policy: 'I can confirm that whenever he is opening something or closing some sporting event, the word "peace" appears once or twice, because he links sport and peace. That is always going to appear in his speech because peace is the core message and legacy of his presidency' (personal interview 14 December 2017). This particular rhetorical sporting nationalism strategy of football for peace is an aspect that separates Santos from previous examples of sporting nationalism in Latin America. No other government has focused so much on how football can help end a national conflict and create the conditions for peace in a post-conflict scenario. Peace was a key issue in the 2014 presidential campaign, and so it appeared frequently in sports speeches from 2013 onwards, linking the prevailing mood of national sporting optimism and positivity with a vision of a peaceful and united Colombia. For instance, at the closing of the Supérate games in 2013, the theme of peace was regularly mentioned in a speech full of references to sport's individual and collective benefits. Sport was defined as a key part of building peace, and a culture of peace: 'The important thing is sport, competition, that boys and girls can participate, that schools can get excited, that they can support each other. That is the important thing, because that is how to build peace. That is how to build a country' (*Presidencia de la República* 2013). The message continued in 2014. The speech thanking the national team after the World Cup has already been cited as the most important example of where *la Selección* became politically charged with a message of peace, but other

examples abound. One example is a speech he gave at the closing ceremony of the ‘Mini World Cup of Citizen Security and Coexistence’.<sup>14</sup> Some key excerpts follow:

I'd like to tell you that this simple, small event, fills me with excitement and pleasure because this is yet another way to build peace in this country, to go about bringing reconciliation to this nation [...]

I want to congratulate General Palomino, and you General Guatibonza, for this important initiative, using sport as a way of bringing about reconciliation, sowing the seeds for the future, promoting those values and principles that are so important in any society [...]

We can encourage this type of events and this type of reconciliation, and this will lead to less violence, less delinquency and less criminality. Therefore this is a more comprehensive, all-encompassing way of seeing security and citizen coexistence. (*Presidencia de la República* 2014c)

Again, the message was of sport and specifically football's capacity to be a site of socialization, reconciliation and coexistence around a shared activity, and once again addressing a young audience.

The campaign for the plebiscite to ratify the peace agreement with the FARC explains why in 2016 there was a peak of references to peace, as shown in Table 8. Peace was referred to on 64 occasions, and only failed to appear in one of the twelve sport-related speeches of that year. Success at the Olympics and Paralympics was deployed more than football in 2016, as the national team disappointed in the Copa América Centenario. Nonetheless, opening and closing ceremonies, flag presenting ceremonies, congratulation speeches and stadium inaugurations remained a propitious site for campaigning for peace. In the opening of the ‘The Stadium for Peace’ in Apulo, Cundinamarca, Santos mentioned peace alongside sport throughout. Some examples include:

A stadium that will allow us to carry on developing in sport, but with the permanent symbolism of reconciliation, of respect for differences, that is what makes a society that can live together in peace [...].

This is not my peace, this is not Juan Manuel Santos' peace. Peace does not belong to the President, nor does it belong to my government. Peace belongs to all Colombians, to all of you. (*Presidencia de la República* 7 May 2016)

The 2018 World Cup provided a final chance for Santos to deploy football for national unity. The speech at the Casa de Nariño when the flag was handed over provides a microcosm of his sports speeches and overall strategy

<sup>14</sup> This was a mini-football tournament to stimulate dialogue, friendship and peace through football, organized by the Police Force in Bogotá for young people from 20 neighbourhoods in the city.

of footballizing the nation.<sup>15</sup> He legitimized his government's actions and support for sport:

We wanted to give sport the importance that it merits. From the first day of this government we gave sport the highest priority. We quadrupled the budget, and we started to win competitions left, right and centre. (*Presidencia de la República* 24 May 2018)

He justified the importance of sport and explained the benefits for Colombia:

Sport teaches children the values of team work, of being disciplined, of making an effort. (*Presidencia de la República* 24 May 2018)

The national team was pushed as being metonymic for the nation, and of a nation progressing, as examples and ambassadors of 'Colombianness':

The national team is the most representative example of our sport at this time [...]

Our national team inspires us to keep moving forward. Every time they score a goal the country is excited. (*Presidencia de la República* 24 May 2018)

And, as usual, the national team was presented as a symbol of unity in which every Colombian is present and accepted as a fan and as a Colombian:

Our national team is what unites Colombians. All Colombia unites every time they play, all Colombia supports them, all Colombia loves them. (*Presidencia de la República* 24 May 2018)

The main players were praised, as being examples of their towns and regions, those regions were thanked and the portrayal of the football team as being representative of the entire country was reinforced. He concluded with yet another statement of this national unity behind their heroic sporting representatives, one final example of nation building through the football team:

The whole country will be paying attention, they will be supporting you. Every time that you hear something there in Russia about Colombia, it is because we are all united, the whole country, behind our national team. (*Presidencia de la República* 24 May 2018)

15 Ceremonial events where Santos invited teams to the Casa de Nariño to hand the Colombian flag to teams representing the country in major tournaments seem to be limited to the men's football team (in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2018 – though not 2016 for the Copa América Centenario), the Under 20 football team (2011), the Olympics and Paralympics teams (in 2012 and 2016 and in 2014 for the Youth Olympics), and teams for the Pan American Games (2011 and 2015), Juegos Suramericanos (2014 and 2018) and Bolivarian Games (2013 and 2017). The women's football team did not receive the honour before the World Cup or Copa América Femenina.



In the presence of national football heroes, surrounded by national symbols in the presidential palace, with Santos wearing the same football tracksuit top as the team, and awarding the country's highest honour, the Order of Boyacá, to Pékerman, it is hard to imagine a more potent symbolic discursive event to construct nation through football.

### Twitter use and strategy

During the Santos presidency, there was an evolution in how Twitter was deployed as another channel for broadcasting his political and national messages. Awareness increased about how this microblogging platform could influence an increasingly wide audience, infiltrate other areas of the media and create online 'ambient affiliations' (Zappavigna 2011; 2012) that could stimulate a greater sense of the imagined community. Twitter, as well as other social media platforms such as WhatsApp, ended up being a major influence and battleground during the 2016 plebiscite campaign in particular, a battleground that the Santos government and communication team arguably lost given the result. As Twitter has developed, allowing links, pictures, videos and audio to be embedded in tweets, as well as doubling the character limit from 140 to 280 and promoting trending topics and popular hashtags, its use for a political project increased. It has, therefore, rapidly become 'an essential space in electronic communications for governments to reach its constituents' (Lux Wigand 2010: 66).

Study of how Twitter can benefit politicians and of tactics used by politicians has become more common, particularly given the importance this platform had for Donald Trump whose use of Twitter served as a blueprint for many other politicians across the world. Twitter favours a more 'comparatively adult kind of interaction' (Grant et al. 2010: 581) compared to other microblogging sites and social networks, thus addressing an active political audience (Parmelee and Bichard 2013: 6). It provides another manner to broadcast political messages, in their own terms, unfiltered by press or political commentators, directly to their audience in a cheap and effective way (Theocharis et al. 2016: 1007; Grant et al. 2010: 579; Graham et al. 2016: 766; Parmelee and Bichard 2013: 11–12; Coesemans and De Cock 2017: 39). Although Twitter is an excellent way for politicians to communicate and interact with their audience, most politicians, and Santos would certainly be included in this bracket, solely use Twitter for self-promotion and broadcasting, rather than discussion (Theocharis et al. 2016: 1009; Grant et al. 2010; Parmelee and Bichard 2013: 9; Lyons and Veenstra 2016: 9; Ausserhofer and Maireder 2013: 293; Graham et al. 2016: 768). Despite Santos and other politicians not using the full interactive potential of Twitter, it still fashions a sense of proximity, and therefore affiliation, from the individual towards the 'celebrity', to access a more personal and immediate side of the public figure that would otherwise be unobtainable (Theocharis et al. 2016: 1010). The homepage and newsfeed that Twitter

creates, according to Papacharissi (2002: 644), can become ‘a carefully controlled performance through which self-presentation is achieved under optimal conditions’ (see also Marwick and boyd 2011: 115). Colliander et al. discuss this balancing act that politicians need to play on social media, describing it as a ‘self-presentational tug-of-war’ (2017: 277) between how to strike the balance between the professional and business-like politician and the normal human being at home. Colliander et al. relate this balancing act to Erving Goffman’s (1990) concept of front-stage and back-stage behaviour. Unlike with his speeches, when the ‘formal’ and ‘public’ Santos was ‘acting’ the role of the serious politician, through tweets Santos could show his ‘informal, private’ side. Santos often struggled to connect with the electorate; his regular tweets during football matches helped to present Santos in a more ‘side-to-side’ rather than ‘above–below’ network of virtual relations. Football in Colombia facilitates these horizontal imagined affiliations that can be developed in the private sphere through comments about a goal or celebrating a win. Sport and entertainment lead to ‘massive real-time spikes in global Twitter activity’ (Weller et al. 2014: xxx), and sport is one of the most frequent topics of updates and comment on Twitter (Highfield 2014: 249; Zappavigna 2012: 19). Given the popularity of football, international matches gave Santos the perfect opportunity to join the online conversation of the virtual community and insert political topics and messages while doing so.

Santos’s Twitter use has not been studied significantly to date. Rodríguez et al. (2015) examined Santos’s tweet tendencies alongside other major Colombian political figures to investigate how they contributed to political polarization around the peace process. They found that he ‘does not contribute to polarization or sectarianism’ with 51.1 per cent of his tweets ‘attempt[ing] to generate optimism during the peace talks. They argue that Santos ‘has not taken advantage of Twitter’s potential’ (Rodríguez et al. 2015: 2), referring to a period where Santos tended to tweet famous quotations rather than his own statements. Up to the time of the publication of this article, this conclusion is valid, although use certainly improved in his second term in office. They describe his tweeting frequency as ‘much more moderate’ than other figures in the study such as former president Álvaro Uribe (ibid.). This frequency of tweets and effective use of Twitter by both the @JuanManSantos and @infopresidencia accounts without question grew and became more effective over his presidency, as will now be demonstrated.

### Results on Twitter use

For this analysis, tweets were coded from the @JuanManSantos personal account and the @infopresidencia account. The latter serves as a diary and register of the president’s activities, provides links to news articles and speeches

on the *Presidencia de la República* website and raises awareness of presidential campaigns. It is a more formal account than the @JuanManSantos account, which while also containing similar tweets to @infopresidencia also has a more personal side.

According to Torres, Santos uses Twitter personally, though his communication team advised him. Sport provided a common reason to tweet: ‘I know that the President is very aware of any sporting event and ready to send congratulatory or supporting tweets to the athletes’ (personal interview 14 December 2017). The input of advisors came with the more elaborate tweets containing videos, links, GIFs and certain hashtags, which, according to Torres, Santos did not have time to fully be aware of: ‘he is aware of his account and what is tweeted, but he does not have the time to know more, for example, to know what the trending topic is or what the latest hashtags, memes or GIFs are’ (ibid.). Twitter’s use by the Santos communication team increased over his presidency, both in frequency and in sophistication, as we can see in Table 9 and in Table 10:

Table 9: Sports-specific tweets per year

	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018**	Total
@JuanManSantos	0	38	48	91	78	62	86	62	43	508
@infopresidencia	0	18	64	30	88	40	170	54	76	540
Total	0	56	112	121	166	102	256	116	119	1048

(\* from 1 August 2010; \*\* up until 1 August 2018)

As we can see from Table 9, after a slow start in the first year of the Presidency, Twitter use increased as the power of the medium became apparent. As with the results for speeches, there were more tweets broadcast during years of major sporting events. Bearing in mind that not all sporting tweets were included in the Twitter study, the figures would be even greater if tweets regarding individual winners at the Olympics, Paralympics, Pan American Games and Bolivarian Games had been included, not to mention victories in other sports. Even so, the Olympic and Paralympic years of 2012 and particularly 2016 saw many sport-related tweets. The year 2016 showed the most sport-specific Twitter activity, related to the peace plebiscite when Santos was working hard to convince the electorate to vote ‘Yes’, competing against the barrage of tweets from the ‘No’ campaign and Uribe supporters. There were also spikes in Twitter activity during the Under 20 World Cup in 2011, and the World Cups in 2014 and 2018, as we can see in Table 10:

Table 10: Tweets during football mega-events

	Under 20 World Cup, 29 July– 20 August 2011	World Cup, 12 June– 13 July 2014	World Cup, 14 June– 15 July 2018	Total
@JuanManSantos	12	51	21	84
@infopresidencia	12	47	31	90
Total	24	98	52	174

Comparing the results in Tables 9 and 10, we observe that these mega-events allowed Santos to connect with the Colombian Twittersphere for a variety of purposes, whether presenting himself as a fan and showing his personal side, combining sporting success and political messages for the nation or informing the nation of his government's commitment to sport. In 2014 particularly, 51/78 sport-related tweets occurred during the World Cup, Santos riding on the patriotic tide of optimism following the *Selección's* performances. In 2018 nearly half of his sport-focused tweets were broadcast during the World Cup (21/43). These figures do not include tweets related to the World Cup before the tournament or in the aftermath, for example tweets related to the flag-giving ceremonies. Santos usually tweeted at least three times about *Selección* matches, one tweet before, one after any goal scored and a tweet at the end about the result. It is worth mentioning here that there are no such tweets during matches of the women's football team, who Santos rarely tweeted about. The men's team were tweeted about on 381 occasions over the two accounts. However, the women's team only were tweeted about 24 times, a telling disparity about which team was more important in Santos's opinion and how women's football struggles to represent the nation. This point will be discussed in more detail later.

Regarding sophistication of content, Table 11 shows the increasing use of the hashtag in tweets, Table 12 the most commonly used hashtags and Table 13 the number of videos, pictures and GIFs included in tweets over the presidency.

Table 11: Hashtags used in tweets

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Hashtags	0	4	23	9	58	44	232	85	93	548

As we can from Table 11, it is only from 2012 when the hashtag became commonplace and then with greater regularity in 2014. It is worth remembering

that in 2014, the World Cup shirt started to have #UnidosPorUnPaís (#UnitedForACountry) on the collar, conscious of the phenomenon of hashtag communities. This hashtag appears in six tweets in 2014, most notably one on 14 June when a tweet read ‘A message for the @FCFSeleccionCol, pride of every Colombian! Let’s go #Col, #UnitedForACountry’ and also included a video of Santos saying:

Today, more than being the Colombian President, more than a presidential candidate, I am a fan of the *selección*, of my *selección*, of our *selección*. Because it is an example of respect and friendship between our regions. It belongs to our people, because it unites us, and it makes us look at the country from the same side. Let’s go Colombia, so that the whole world knows what we are made of. (@JuanManSantos 3:40pm, 14 June 2014)

In addition to the vocabulary evoking togetherness and the representativeness of the football team-as-nation, the hashtag becomes an additional tool fostering community.

Zappavigna (2011; 2012) discusses how hashtags create community through a process of ambient affiliation. Using them creates ‘searchable talk’ (Zappavigna 2012: 1), which is ‘online conversation where people render their talk more findable and hence more affiliative. Talk using this kind of graphological expression amplifies the potential for users to connect with each other and so establish interpersonal bonds’ (95). Hashtags such as #UnitedForACountry can be searched on Twitter, allowing users to read previous messages, and then add themselves to this virtual imagined community by using the same hashtag. Zappavigna writes ‘hashtags play a role in coordinating such mass expression of value by focusing it around a particular ideational target. In other words, hashtags align users into “overlapping communities of attitudinal rapport”’ (Martin 2004: 323 cited in Zappavigna 2012: 39). Mutual identifications are conceived through these hashtag interactions based on horizontal recognition of being fans of the *Selección*, and becomes another tool towards fostering more collective Colombianness. These hashtags are not only confined to the presidency, the Colombian Football Federation, players and fans, but are promoted by sports programmes on radio and television, the media and major sponsors of the team. Tweeting and using match or tournament-specific hashtags, in fact, have become another part of the ritual leading up to, during and after football matches and will often trend on the day of the match. Many club and national teams now have their own specific hashtag that has become an integral part of their brand. This process of adoption of hashtags by a ‘critical mass of users’ (Huang et al. 2010: 173) helps the community to grow around messages related to a nationally recognized symbol and popular interest. This theory explains why hashtags became increasingly common in Santos and presidency tweets. They tapped into previously created hashtags for tournament campaigns, and related political messages to the community alongside messages of support, deploying football’s power towards a political

project. New hashtags were created for each campaign; in 2016, the year of most tweets and most hashtags (see Tables 10 and 11), the hashtag adopted by the critical mass was #UnaSolaHinchada (#OneSoleFangroup), which was often used in tweets by Santos and the Presidencia account after ‘Un Solo País’ (One Sole Country). #UnaSolaHinchada was the one of the most used hashtags during the Santos presidency, used in 30 tweets with 50 references, and appeared alongside national symbols and unifying language in the tweet and accompanying graphics. For example, a tweet on 8 June 2016 before the Colombia versus Paraguay game in the Copa América read ‘Let’s go @FCFSeleccionCol for the dream of the #CopaAmerica! A united country accompanies you. #UnaSolaHinchada #COLvsPAR’. It is accompanied by three emojis, of the Colombian and Paraguayan flags and a football and then the image below:



Figure 3: One Sole Country, One Sole Fangroup  
(@JuanManSantos 3:34am, 8 June 2016)

This type of tweet became the common format around national football team matches. The inclusive language was combined with hashtags and images of national symbols and inspiring images to enhance positive feelings of community. The most commonly used hashtags are shown in Table 12, alongside the year they most frequently occurred.

Table 12 confirms the policy of deliberate, strategic and repeated hashtags. The #FútbolEnPaz (#FootballInPeace) hashtag is an anomaly, as it was used in 2014 most commonly, but these references appear urging the celebration of football successes in a peaceful manner. The image used with this hashtag is that of the PDSCCF campaign poster, and this is the only time that the PDSCCF is referred to, a surprising oversight given the content of the Plan and how it could have been deployed. Returning to the most common hashtags, similar messages of unity, peace, positivity and patriotism prevail, followed by legitimization or campaign messages. Other common hashtags are based on tournaments, which help the searchability of the tweet and its

Table 12: Most commonly used hashtags

Hashtag	Number of tweets	Total references	Most common year (brackets show tweets in that year of total amount)
#VamosColombia (#LetsGoColombia)	46	48	2017 (19/48)
#Rusia2018	39	39	2018 (24/39)
#UnaSolaHinchada (#OneSoleFangroup)	30	50	2016 (50/50)
#CreoEnColombia (#IBelieveInColombia)	23	27	2016 (26/27)
#TodosConLaTricolor (#EveryoneWithTheTricolor)	23	26	2018 (26/26)
#ConLaTricolorPuesta (WithTheTricolorOn)	21	22	2017 (14/22)
#ColombiaOroYPaz (#ColombiaGoldAndPeace)	18	19	2016 (13/19)
#VamosMiSelección (#LetsGoMyTeam)	14	15	2018 (8/17)
#ColombiaFábricaDeCampeones (#ColombiaFactoryOfChampions)	12	12	2018 (12/12)
#MásRecursosMásDeporte (#MoreResourcesMoreSport)	10	17	2016 (17/17)
#SíALaPaz (#YesToPeace)	10	14	2016 (14/14)
#SíAlMinisterioDeDeporte (#YesToTheSportMinistry)	10	10	2018 (10/10)
#FútbolEnPaz (#FootballInPeace)	10	10	2014 (9/10)

inclusion in common trends, as well as enhancing the chance of the tweet being reported in the press. It should be stressed that these hashtags, particularly those related to tournaments, were not limited to government production but were in wide use by the media, sponsors, players and fans.

## Aestheticization of tweets – strengthening the message

More evidence of a cogent strategy of exploiting Twitter’s potential is apparent in more frequent inclusion of different graphics. Table 13 shows how often these visual enhancements occurred, which flagged the nation through showing national symbols and heroes, subtly reminding readers of their nationality, as well as catching the eye of the audience.

Table 13: Use of images, GIFs, videos and emojis in tweets

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Images	0	0	4	7	39	36	132	59	59
Videos	0	0	2	3	10	6	46	19	16
GIFs	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	2	3
Colombian flag emoji	0	0	0	0	0	3	59	27	38
Football emoji	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	6	19
Peace emoji	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
Pictures of athletes	0	0	3	5	15	22	72	48	33
Pictures of Santos	0	0	3	7	25	16	39	29	24

There is a tentative start in 2012 to adding images to tweets, regularly showing photos of athletes alongside Santos,<sup>16</sup> but the trend progressed in 2014 and then peaked in 2016, the year of the peace plebiscite, the Olympics, Paralympics and Copa América Centenario. Santos appeared alongside athletes in 78 tweets and in 89 pictures during his Presidency. With the national team, he was pictured in 14 tweets, with 18 pictures. These photos were an attempt at self-legitimation and part of a popularity drive, a common practice for politicians, as Goldlust notes (1987: 124), as well as associating the president and team with the nation through the plethora of flags and badges on the kit and surrounding area. The videos and GIFs function similarly. Videos are full of images that symbolically link the *Selección* with Colombians of all ages, male and female, from across the land, alongside recognizable geographical landscapes and monuments, and are full of national symbols like flags, *sombreros vueltiaos*<sup>17</sup> and the kit. The music is inspiring, rising to a

16 In photo opportunities with the national football team, as a general rule, Santos stood next to Falcao, James or coach Pékerman, arguably the most popular figures of the *Selección*.

17 A traditional Colombian wide-brimmed hat with black decorations that has become a national symbol.



crescendo as the video progresses and the message is one of a nation symbolized by the *Selección* overcoming adversity to triumph with the support of the whole of Colombia. One example of this follows; both the text of the tweet and accompanying video are full of nation-building intent:

It does not matter how great the adversities are, today our @FCFSeleccionCol will show on the pitch that nothing is impossible for Colombians. We are united, 50 million hearts will be supporting them. Let's go #TodosConLaTricolor! (@infopresidencia 10:32am, 24 June 2018)

The images show young and old, male and female, rural and urban, traditional and modern, and encompass the diversity of the Colombian nation, united around the passion for the football team. The goals and celebrations of the footballers evoke the fun and happiness of the Colombian nation, and are accompanied by images of all types of Colombians celebrating together. Larraín, when talking about how the footballers' goal dance celebrations in the 2014 World Cup became appropriated as symbolically indicative of a new Colombian national image and brand, commented that any aesthetic is political (2015: 204), and this is very much the case with the aestheticization of the text event. This video and similar ones produced for other important football matches are moments of 'exceptional nationalism' (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009: 58), of a surfeit of potent patriotic imagery designed to stimulate positivity, success and togetherness around a joint footballing and national project.

Santos's communication team obviously had the aestheticization of the discourse event in mind for maximizing impact when he talks about sport and nation. Smith writes:

In many ways, national symbols, customs and ceremonies are the most potent and durable aspects of nationalism. They embody its basic concepts, making them visible and distinct for every member, communicating the tenets of an abstract ideology in palpable, concrete terms that evoke instant emotional responses from all strata of the community. (1991: 77)

Torres confirmed this appeal to emotion, and how speech and images combine towards eliciting a desired response: 'in the President's speeches we used sport and football imagery as a way of stimulating emotions towards something that unites us and brings us together' (personal interview 14 December 2017). Tweets were even more powerful ways of evoking affiliative emotions through football and national imagery, particularly as the yellow football shirt is a potent national icon that is claimed by and belongs to the people. National matches become national ceremonies replete with patriotic imagery and are fully exploited via related and timed political discourse. The shirt is charged as the most potent evidence of national unity, and is displayed to maximum effect. Santos himself in these football celebrations always wore either the shirt itself, or at least a tracksuit top. Of this habit, Torres said, 'He likes to do it, and, obviously, when he puts the shirt

on, he does it because all Colombians do it. Let's say that it isn't something strategic, but something he likes to do' (personal interview 14 December 2017). It may not be strategic but it certainly served a purpose, and at times it also carried a political message. On 9 November 2015, Santos sent a tweet before attending a match showing the shirt he would be wearing:



Figure 4: Santos's controversial football shirt (Translation: 'I am playing for peace', @JuanManSantos 3:48pm, 8 October 2015)

The shirt could not be used for a more blatant political message. The peace project with the FARC message occupies a symbol seen by many Colombians as apolitical. The white shirt for the Copa América Centenario also became a vessel for a message of peace and politicization, and was worn by Santos at a number of events in 2016 where speeches were given about sport and then associated with national peace. Ceremonial football events were also tweeted about with the text enlivened by image and video, accompanied by affiliation-creating hashtags. Every single detail and way of conveying an idea of Colombianness, as Santos perceived it, was exploited for promoting the inevitability of national togetherness around the football team and the positive imaginaries that the team and each member could elicit. Andermann and Rowe define the image as 'not solely as representations of cultural history, but as depositories and instruments of power' (2005: 3) and this is certainly the case of the national football shirt. It is a symbol for 'national agreements' rather than 'national disagreements' with a power to overcome differences and create socialization spaces as well as a representative power. Of course, the deployment of the national shirt towards Santos's political goals as well as his version of Colombian national identity make the shirt a site for the contestation of identity and message. Smith writes that 'what we mean by national identity comprises both a cultural and political identity and is located in a political community as well as a cultural one. This is significant because it means that

any attempt to forge a national identity is also a political action with political consequences' (1991: 99). Therefore, there were political consequences due to Santos footballizing his message and using the shirt to do so. The above image was adapted in a meme by political opponents, suggesting who Santos was really 'playing for' as can be seen below in a tweet:



Figure 5: Meme of Santos's shirt message (Translation of shirt: I am playing for the FARC)

As discussed in chapter one, football serves as a zero institution (Lahud Guedes 1977; Qutián and Watson 2017), which allows itself to be moulded to the needs of any master. Bromberger refers to football's high hermeneutic plasticity to describe the same effect (2001: 33), and Hoberman writes that 'sport functions as an undifferentiated vehicle of self-assertion by the state. The specific form it takes as a culture is inconsequential; that it should serve the greater glory of the state – any state – is the sole criterion for its appropriation and use' (1984: 1). It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Selección* has been a terrain for countering political and social views, both from legitimate political opponents as well as the FARC. Santos, Villanueva asserts, completely footballized his re-election campaign (personal interview 7 October 2017) in 2014, but his opponent Zuluaga also displayed his fan credentials. After Colombia's 3–0 win over Greece in their first match of the 2014 World Cup, Santos and Zuluaga (both wearing the Colombian shirt) gave their reactions, eager to gain votes on the day before the election. Santos said, 'Let's go Colombia! We have a national team, we have the ability to win, we have started on the right foot in the World Cup [...] and tomorrow peace is going to win as well', emphasizing his campaign commitment to the peace process. Zuluaga said, '[T]his Colombia victory makes us all excited and tomorrow we have to shoot to win the presidency' (*El Espectador* 2014), like Santos using football metaphors for a political cause.

During the 2016 plebiscite campaign, supporters of both sides wore the shirt to attempt to legitimize the bearer's message, attempting to show the patriotism of the wearer and the validity of their proposals for the nation. Jaramillo Racines points out: 'If you look at the opposition protests against Santos at the start of the year in February [2017], what was the most distinctive thing that you could see among the *uribistas*? They were all wearing the Colombian football shirt!' (personal interview 3 November 2017).<sup>18</sup> The shirt remains an easy icon to politicize for personal and political benefit, though, as Jaramillo Racines argues, it really belongs to no one: 'the symbol of the Colombian national team is a symbol that we all identify with, whether we are on the right, on the left or in the centre, you see? In other words, the symbol doesn't belong to anyone'. The shirt as a symbolic site for political contest therefore can fracture its unifying power, although it is also the case that the reaction to a politician wearing the shirt can lead to rejection for the cynicism involved in 'corrupting' an apolitical symbol. Santos and his communications team were aware of the balancing act in this regard, realizing that the negotiations with the FARC were polarizing the country. Torres described this fine line of deploying sport towards national peace:

We always linked sport and football with the final aim of peace, with values of peace, with the value of unity, of solidarity, of reconciliation, of teamwork, but never directly with the peace process with the FARC, because we knew that this would be shocking for half of Colombians who disagreed with the peace process. We never mixed the FARC and sport. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

The two examples mentioned previously of where the FARC were specifically referred to in speeches do contradict Torres' comments, although these really just acknowledge the FARC as fans of the national team. The white shirt for the Copa América Centenario may have tipped the balance, however, towards a too overt message in favour of peace; Torres believed that the decision to change the colour of the shirt from the colours of the flag had nothing to do with Santos or the government, but admits that Santos thought it was great when he found out, and Santos certainly wore it regularly on the campaign trail in 2016 for the plebiscite approving the peace deal, allying football, personal politics and peace.

18 The tendency to attempt to link the shirt with political movements has continued since. Iván Duque, who succeeded Santos as president, has tweeted pictures of himself in the shirt. Following the Consultation against Corruption vote in August 2018, leaders of the campaign in favour of introducing measures to combat political corruption, Ángelica Lozano and Claudia López, were both wearing the football shirt when the results were announced. The shirt was also regularly visible in the national protests in 2021.

### The FARC's football rhetoric

The FARC also took advantage of the peace process and Santos's discourse of 'All Colombia' that legitimized the FARC as fans of the *Selección* and invited them to enjoy football as part of the nation. FARC included and validated themselves within the national *mancha amarilla*,<sup>19</sup> as Quitián and Watson describe (2017). This was a way in which the FARC could start to 're-brand' itself following years in which it was branded by the State and press as terrorists and an enemy to the nation, part of the 'Narcolumbia' imaginary discussed in chapter two. During the conflict, 'The FARC [could not] brand itself, although it [could] be branded by others – including its sworn enemy' (Fattal 2018: 61). Fattal quotes Sergio Marín, the FARC's director of propaganda and communication, who admitted 'politically and ideologically we have to recognize that they hit us hard, because we had no way of answering the state's propaganda. They had an open field when it came to political and ideological issues, because they could give a one-sided portrayal' (Fattal 2018: 61). López de la Roche notes that the main media companies also supported Uribe's governmental discourse that made the FARC into Colombia's public enemy number one (2015: 9). Taking the opportunity to show themselves as football fans served to humanize themselves as football fans like any other Colombian, caught up in the excitement of the World Cup qualifications and subsequent tournament, with a patriotic pride in the efforts of the *Selección*. During the ongoing peace talks in Havana, FARC leaders and negotiators wore the football shirt when the team were playing and professed their support through press conferences and social media. Following the 3–3 draw against Chile in October 2013 when Colombia secured qualification for the 2014 World Cup, spokesman *alias* Ricardo Téllez declared:

We are very happy about the draw gained in Barranquilla against the brave Araucanians from Chile, a people that have never been subdued. We are also part of the happiness and celebrations that there are in Colombia. Sport unites peoples and nations. (*Semana* 2013)

They also sent an open letter to the *Selección* prior to the Greece match, identifying themselves as fans and the team as a symbol of a united Colombia:

We want to express our recognition, raise our voice in support and show our desire for success and glory on Brazilian turf. In the name of the men and women of the FARC, today negotiating for peace and social justice for all, we reiterate our admiration for every single step taken on the road towards the World Cup and we hope for new triumphs that will

19 The Colombian supporters at international games are often referred to as the 'mancha amarilla', literally the yellow stain or expanse, given the number of yellow national team replica shirts being worn in the stands.

make every compatriot's heart full of joy. We will be with the *Selección* in the good times and the bad, supporting them to the very end, and hoping that the squad who are representing the Colombia that we want to see united, who represent the same nation that we belong to, will, like us, be playing for peace [...] we have the dream that football, as part of the path towards respect and tolerance, can, at this time, grant us some moments of joy or entertainment that can ease minds, and moderate feelings, and help us find the best path towards reconciliation. (*Diario Registrado* 2014)

Not only did FARC place themselves within the national 'us' ('the same nation that we belong to') but they also expressed their commitment to the peace progress, to social justice, to reconciliation and national unity. This resonated with Santos's ongoing message. The FARC representatives wearing the national shirt was very controversial, with many Colombians refusing to accept them wearing the shirt or imagine the former combatants as being fans like them. It was a gesture that could not easily overcome years of distrust and hatred towards the FARC, a symbolic representation that sat uneasily alongside them on occasion wearing shirts with photos commemorating dead former colleagues (López de la Roche 2015: 24).

FARC continued to deploy football since the peace talks. As will be seen in chapter five, football has been a key, and very visual, symbolic socialization space for re-encounter between the FARC, public bodies such as the police and army and Colombian citizens. Football has been a common activity in the transition camps. Men's and women's matches between FARC and the community gave the FARC a media space to talk about the symbolic nature of football and their reinsertion into the community. Football also served as a way to outline some of their own political objectives. FARC sports spokesman *alias* Walter Mendoza<sup>20</sup> outlined FARC's vision for football as follows:

Sport, and especially football, has the power to integrate, has a significant ability to bring people together. But we want to go further than that. We don't want it just to be an anaesthetic, a distractor, nor an umbrella that the State uses to hide the real problems that the country has [...] I, as a Colombian, as a patriot, I feel that nationalism, that love for the country, and those young men [the national team] are representing the country. Therefore, you support them as well and you know that they are a representation of ourselves on a global level, where people are going to watch us, they are going to see us. Therefore, these things are common feelings; a love of the country, a love of our lands, our people, and we think these things too, you see? But, in truth, those who rule the country don't think in this way. They only think of how to do business and how

20 Mendoza has since renounced the peace process and has returned to arms.

to make more money. We think in a different way. (personal interview 11 October 2017)

Mendoza speaks of football helping with Colombia's ongoing social problems, rather than being an 'anaesthetic' or an 'umbrella' to hide them. He also confirms the emotions that football generates in Colombia, the national team being an emotive way of inspiring a horizontal imagining of the nation, of Colombians united in love of their country by their football team. He, like Santos, recognizes the national team and football as a shared symbol in a nation without other binding symbols. This acknowledgement explains why football was part of Santos's 'one sole country' narrative and why it became a common symbolic representation of reintegration in the FARC demobilization camps, an acceptable and recognized symbol and practice for all sides.

### Most common tweet topics

Returning to Twitter analysis, the results shown by the most common nodes mentioned in the tweets are similar to those from the speeches. If we group the results into categories, they would fall into legitimation, justification and empowering of sport and its deployment, as with the speeches, but then also tweets giving information and reaction. There is less of a trend to justify sport given the restricted length of tweets (these comments do still appear in embedded videos), and more tweets that react to a goal scored, or the end of the match, with messages of congratulations, happiness and gratitude. The most common tweet nodes, in terms of the number of sources in which they appear and the total number of references, can be seen in Table 14.

The national team receive by far the most references, though it should be noted again that tweets related to other specific sports were not included in this study. The leading players, Radamel Falcao and James Rodríguez, are regularly referenced (58 and 62 references, respectively), as is the coach Pékerman (46 mentions). Team, players and coach can all be deployed as examples, ambassadors and heroes of the nation as we have already seen (there are 56 references to 'Examples and heroes', and 41 references to 'Ambassadors or representing'). A total of 163 tweets include references to or images of national symbols or ceremonies. These tweets include reports, pictures and videos of ceremonies involving Santos and the presence of symbols such as the national flag, shield or shirt. Emojis of the national flag were not added to this count, so the incidence of 'flagging' in tweets is more common. As with the speech results, many tweets include notions of togetherness and community creation, notably "'Our" use', 'All', and 'unity' and 'support' can also be put alongside these themes, as often references to support were calls for everyone to support the national team, or affirmations that everyone is supporting the national team. The nodes of 'unity' and 'peace and sport' are again among the most common, showing how sport is directed towards addressing national

Table 14: Most common tweet nodes in sources and total references (image-related nodes not included)

Node	Number of sources	Number of references
National men's team	381	514
'Our' use	168	322
National symbol or ceremony	163	205
'All'	148	174
Support	130	143
Peace and sport	127	194
Unity	111	136
Congratulations	111	115
Pride and optimism	104	112
Gratitude	95	114
Olympic games	80	98
Hosting and support for tournaments	74	85
Non-football sporting triumph	68	88
World Cup Russia	65	75
Positive face of Colombia	63	67

prerogatives. As with the speech results, sport is deployed towards creating positive emotions and associating these feelings with similar feelings about the nation. In addition to the high amount of mentions of 'Pride and optimism', 'Positive face of Colombia' and messages of 'Congratulations' and 'Gratitude', other regular nodes appearing were 'Dream' (61 references), 'Making history' (54 references), 'Fun and fiesta' (45 references). Post-match reactions also included 35 mentions of 'Excitement', and 66 for 'Happy'.

#### Government self-legitimation in tweets

Apart from using football matches and other sporting successes to join the conversation and insinuate political messages into the online community, Twitter was a medium for legitimation of the government's commitment to sport. These tweets also occurred regularly, as Table 15 demonstrates.

The regular appearance of comments about budget increases, infrastructure projects and political campaigns show a government in action. These tweets confirming the government's commitment to sport are also accompanied by pictures and videos with extra statistics and visual images, and



Table 15: Tweet mentions legitimizing the Santos government

Nodes	Number of sources	Total number of references
Hosting and support for tournaments	74	85
Government support for sport	55	67
Infrastructure	50	72
Supérate campaign	49	59
Campaigns	44	60
Coldeportes	33	39
Budget	28	37
Legislation	25	26
Finding new talent	18	21
Ministry of Sport	15	18
Rewards	12	13

according to the results, unsurprisingly, are most common in 2014 (the re-election year) and in his last year of government to assure a positive legacy. Of the 55 sources where ‘Government support for sport’ is mentioned, 18 occur in 2014, and 22 from August 2017 to July 2018. Towards the end of his second term, the following tweet is a perfect example where sport was positioned towards creating unity and positive feelings of a nation advancing, and where governmental contribution to success was outlined.

There was also a promotional hashtag and a video embedded to give further information about budget, infrastructure projects and sporting success:

Sport unites us and fills us with joy. With better facilities, training and budget we will continue to strengthen this sector. I invite you all to know how over the last 8 years we have contributed to make #Colombia FábricaDeCampeones [#ColombiaFactoryOfChampions] <https://goo.gl/8chSDC>. (@JuanManSantos 2:42pm, 24 May 2018)

The @infopresidencia account in the same period promoted the same statistics about budget, infrastructure projects and success achieved, using the same hashtag and emojis of gold medals and the Colombian flag to link success and national symbol.

When infrastructure projects were inaugurated by Santos, they also provided opportunities for tweets linking sport and social benefit, as well as demonstrating a commitment to providing facilities across the country and establishing a State presence. Here are two examples, both from 2015:

The young people of Meta have greater wellbeing and opportunities with the investment in 4 new infrastructure projects for sport. (@infopresidencia 1:30pm, 19 April 2015)

We delivered the 'Independence' Sports Complex in #Buenaventura. It will benefit 16000 people who will make peace through sport. (@JuanManSantos 6:19pm, 12 November 2015)

Similar processes occur when promoting legislation designed to improve sport and country. When Law 1445, the so-called 'Sport Law' was approved (discussed in chapter four), tweets were posted to promote peace in football and strengthen the sport for national benefit, as we can see from these examples:

Let us strengthen football, which has been our banner sport. (@JuanManSantos 2:47pm, 12 March 2011)

I have just approved the Sport Law. I hope that football moves forward. I invite you to play sport, the best way to be healthy. (@JuanManSantos 2:54pm, 12 May 2011)

With the Sport Law we are going to become greats in the sporting world. Colombians, I invite you to play sport. (@JuanManSantos 5:50pm 24 May 2011)

Even in these short tweets, posted when there was a 140-character limit, there is an attempt to propose sport towards national benefit through legislation.

The benefits of sport for individuals and society were a regular topic, as sport was instrumentalized towards perceived problems of Colombian society, as well as showing Colombia in a positive light to improve its image. In Table 16, we can see the results for these types of nodes.

The tendency is very similar to the results with speeches. Peace and unity are the most common topics, a sense of positivity and pride is engendered, and adversity can be overcome by hard work and togetherness to lead to a new country and future. The *Selección* was regularly associated with these benefits for society, and most obviously during the mega-events of the World Cup. The tweets during the World Cup and other social media interventions were a significant part of a concerted campaign to create a national collective around the football team, adding to other media and commercial processes also exploiting the tournament in Brazil, as Roa Vargas and Salcedo Rodríguez note (2014: 47).

During the 2014 World Cup, each win provided another moment for Santos to broadcast short celebratory messages, that instilled positivity, built national self-confidence, extolled 'Colombian' virtues, and unified the nation. Several also included pictures of Santos celebrating in the national shirt. Here is a tweet sample across the period of Colombia's participation showing how Santos's message was conveyed:

Table 16: Tweets referring to sport benefits for Colombian society and individuals

Nodes	Number of sources	Total number of references
Peace and sport	127	194
Unity	111	136
Pride and optimism	104	112
Positive face of Colombia	63	67
Dream	56	61
Benefits for youth	48	57
Discipline/Hard work, etc.	46	48
Education	30	35
Overcome adversity	28	31
Colombian characteristics	26	28
Benefits for Colombia	25	26
Bringing people together/Team work	21	25
Self-belief	11	12
Opportunities	10	10
Less crime and vice	8	9
Fair play	6	6

Colombia united will never be defeated! #VamosColombia #TodosPorLaPaz. (@JuanManSantos 7:01pm, 14 June 2014).

47 million Colombians supporting our national team, symbol of unity, the unity we need on all fronts. Let's go Colombia! (@JuanManSantos 4:32pm, 19 June 2014)

Let's go @FCFSeleccionCol!!! The hearts of every Colombian are with you, enjoying and celebrating in peace!!! (@JuanManSantos 8:01pm, 4 July 2014)

Thank you my *Selección!* Thank you for showing us what we can achieve when we work together in peace [*message on accompanying video, words spoken by an anonymous voiceover*] 'Thank you for turning us into one family, thank you for showing us that we can dream, thank you for showing the world what we are made of, thank you for teaching us what can be achieved when we work together. Thank you my *Selección*. For putting our country's name in lights. Thank you. Because more than just

a result, you have showed the world and ourselves what can be achieved if we work together in peace. Thank you. For this reason, the President of the Republic joins 47 million other Colombians to thank you.' (@JuanManSantos 4:34pm, 5 July 2014)

Thank you very much to coach Pékerman and his coaching team, they reminded us of how Colombia should play, and the importance of dreaming [*accompanied by photo of Santos in the national shirt with Pékerman*]. (@JuanManSantos 9:25pm, 6 July 2014)

As we can see from this series of selected tweets, Santos speaks for the whole nation, placing the country behind the *Selección* in a united front of support. Their achievements show what can be achieved with unity, including the aim of peace. These messages by Santos were supported and re-transmitted by the @infopresidencia account:

Our *selección* is in charge of showing #lobuenodeColombia [#TheGood ThingsOfColombia] on the pitch. (@infopresidencia 9:00am, 22 June 2014)

The world admires Colombia thanks to their national team. (@infopresidencia 4:18pm, 4 July 2014)

The football team was a representation of how Santos wanted the nation to be recognized. It is the nation's calling card to the world. The message then becomes one that Colombia can overcome other obstacles to achieve other goals through similar qualities shown by the national team. Torres confirmed this tactic:

The Colombian national team's excellent campaign served us as a metaphor to show the chance for transformation and success of the country. The message is this: if the guys in the national team have been capable of getting so far, then all Colombians are capable of achieving great goals; if they can play in the best teams in the world and are producing the goods, then we Colombians can dream big and compete with the best. We can achieve peace, and we can achieve progress, and we can develop good infrastructure and we can aim for ambitious targets, like being the most educated country in Latin America by 2025, or eradicating extreme poverty by 2020. Sport always served us to show what we Colombians are made of, that we have potential and the belief to achieve what we want. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

The 2018 World Cup saw the same tactics, the football team presented as metonymic of Colombia. The same messages of unity and positivity stand out, and were enhanced by images, photos and videos, strengthening the emotive quality of the text and affiliative effect. Some of the pictures that best illustrate this are below:



Figure 6: Together we are stronger (Translation: ‘Together we are stronger. Nothing is too big for us! United we are going to make history!’ (@infopresidencia 10:17am, 3 July 2018))

A message of unity, a nation moving forward, symbolized by footballers celebrating together and enhanced by the backdrop of the flag, the colours of which we can see in each of the following images too.

Figure 7: Putting on the 10 shirt (Translation: ‘To put on the 10: A Colombian who is always ready to help his family, friends or work colleagues. A fan who really knows what solidarity means’ (@infopresidencia, 11:49pm, 11 June 2018))



A message of unity, solidarity and helping each other, around a football metaphor of the number 10 shirt (the playmaker of the team) giving opportunities to others.



Figure 8: Let’s go Colombia! (Translation: ‘Let’s go Colombia! Share this Falcao with that friend who has faith in you in the hardest moments’ (@infopresidencia 11:10am, 18 June 2018))

With this image, Falcao, playing in the World Cup after missing 2014 due to injury, symbolizes the ability to overcome adversity.



Figure 9: Colombian characteristics (Translation: ‘1. Calm 2. Prepared. 3. Happy 4. Proud 5. Confident 6. Certain 7. Motivated 8. Lucky 9. Winner 10. Inspired 11. Ready 12. Optimistic’ (@infopresidencia 6:10am, 28 June 2018))

Here the main players are associated with positive Colombian characteristics, and readers are asked with which player they most associate their mood.



Figure 10: Football union (Translation ‘Union: 50 million hearts united by a same dream’ (@infopresidencia 6:29pm, 28 June 2018))

Another message of a Colombia united behind the team, with the same dream.

All the above images were accompanied by the tweet text, including hashtags and emojis as well as emotive language; all elements combine to create a formidable cocktail of ambient affiliation that empowers the *Selección* as the representation of a united nation, and of a nation united as one behind their representatives. The national team is the principal operator of the notion of ‘one sole country’ (Quitián and Watson 2017) most promoted in 2016 with the slogan ‘Un Solo País #UnaSolaHinchada’ (One Sole Country, #OneSoleFangroup). Even after Colombia’s defeat on penalties to England in the second round, in a bad tempered and ill-disciplined match, any criticism of the team was avoided. The footballers, after all, are some of the few heroes that Colombia has with greater convening authority and capacity that politicians cannot rival. Santos simply chose to congratulate the team for a blameless World Cup campaign with the following tweet: ‘We will always be proud of our @FCFSeleccionCol. Thank you!’ – including a Colombian flag emoji and then the following picture, which best concludes how Santos sees the national team serving Colombia as a whole, as a force for unity, patriotism, celebration, optimism, self and national confidence, pride and improving the image of Colombia.



Figure 11: Thank you, *Selección* (Translation: ‘Thank you my national team! For uniting a country. For showing that we know how to play fair. For making us more patriotic than ever before. For inviting us to all be part of the *tricolor*. For allowing us to make history. For giving us the chance to cheer with and embrace friends and strangers. For giving us reasons to celebrate. For being humble and wearing your hearts on your sleeves on the pitch. For making us excited. For bringing us so much happiness. For allowing us to show our flag on every street and face. For making us feel proud of our country. For getting us to the World Cup. With admiration and respect, Colombia’ (@JuanManSantos 5:36pm, 3 July 2018))

### Talking and tweeting about women's football

The majority of this chapter has focused on how the men's team was used. To what extent has women's football and, in particular, the *Selección Femenina* (national women's team) been deployed for a similar purpose? After all, Hobsbawm speaks of 'eleven people', not eleven men, making the nation seem more real as a football team (1990: 148). Several female athletes were regularly extolled as examples and ambassadors of the nation, most notably the double Olympic gold-winning BMX cyclist Mariana Pajón and champion triple jumper Caterine Ibargüen. Pajón is mentioned in 17 speeches and is referenced 33 times and Ibargüen in 16 speeches. Both have had speeches dedicated to them and Pajón has had a BMX facility built in her honour. Are the women's football team cited as regularly, or as the male football team? After all, during the Santos presidency they were runners up in the Copa América in 2010 and 2014 and came fourth in 2018, were runners up in the Pan American Games in 2015 and fourth in 2011, and qualified for the World Cup in 2011 (knocked out in the group stage) and in 2015 (out in the second round). They also qualified for the Olympics in both 2012 and 2016. Their record is not dissimilar to the men's team who, for instance, have a best of third place in the Copa América in the three tournaments during Santos's presidency and only qualified for the Olympics in 2016, reaching the quarterfinals.

The answer is no, as a look at the numbers of mentions and references reveals. The women's national team are only mentioned in four speeches, once in 2010 and on three occasions in 2013. All the 2013 mentions congratulate the indoor football team who were World Champions in Barrancabermeja. Only in 2010 does Santos ever refer to the full national side, in the 'Sports person of the year' ceremony after four months in office. He said:

Elsewhere, a second source of enormous happiness this year were our courageous women footballers. They have taught us men a valuable lesson! They are a group of pretty young girls who have shown an important sporting maturity and a true sense of patriotism, representing us with excellent results on a global stage. (*Presidencia de la República* 2010b)

Although certain linguistic themes used for the national men's team appear here – use of 'our', references to happiness, the team representing the nation on a world stage – the phrase 'pretty young girls' stands out. The diminutive form ('jovencitas' in the original Spanish is the diminutive form of 'jóvenes') is never used for the men, nor are they ever praised for being good looking. Santos falls back on praising female beauty rather than footballing ability, lapsing into traditional ways in which Colombian women represent the nation, most famously through the hundreds of beauty contests in Colombia and the global Miss Universe contest. Bolívar Ramírez has argued that these beauty contests have long been a site for the construction of national imaginaries by attributing specific values to the women and social groups that participate in them (2007: 72).



Women's football was referred to slightly more frequently on Twitter. There were 17 tweets in total with 21 references. Several of these, however, related to the indoor football team and the Under 17 team. Of these, ten tweets come from the @infopresidencia account, and seven from @JuanManSantos, though the last time the Santos account does so is in June 2015. For three years Santos did not comment on the *Selección Femenina's* efforts or performances, despite their appearances in international tournaments. He only took interest during the 2015 World Cup, when he tweeted:

Today our @FCFSeleccionCol [*same tweet handle for both men and women*] will be holding our flag high, the superpowerful girls are playing against England. Let's win! (@JuanManSantos 9:23pm, 17 June 2015)

Congratulations to the superpowerful girls of the @FCFSeleccionCol. A memorable performance in the @FIFAWWC reaching the last 16. We are proud! (@JuanManSantos 3:05am, 23 June 2015)

These are the only two tweets about that tournament, none celebrating the win against France, nor the draw with Mexico, not even the spectacular goal by Daniela Montoya against Mexico, which was selected as the second best goal of the tournament (contrast this with the national celebration of James Rodríguez's goal against Uruguay in the second round of the 2014 World Cup, which won the goal of the year award). There were none before the tournament empowering the women's team as representative of the whole nation, or saying that all Colombia was supporting them, as occurred before every men's tournament. They were not welcomed to the Casa de Nariño to be given the flag as ambassadors of the nation carrying the hopes of Colombians on their shoulders. Over the eight years of government, there are very few tweets wishing them luck, celebrating goals scored or congratulating them on victories, something that practically always occurred when the men's team were playing. Santos did not tweet at all about them during the 2016 Olympics or 2018 Copa América. Clearly, in Santos's eyes at least, they were not as powerful a symbol as the men's team and did not have the same convening power to construct nation nor create powerful affiliative emotions, despite their nickname of the 'superpoderosas', the 'superpowerful girls'. The assumption is that not enough Colombians are as interested, and a vicious circle is apparent. We can conclude that, if speeches and tweets are a good indicator of priorities of whom Santos determines as most potently representing his national project through sport, then women are not part of this nation-building project conducted through football. The men's team are charged with the task, and the women's team is almost ignored for this purpose. Once again, the forging of a nation's identity, as is often the case in the patriarchal Latin American societies, is framed around masculine examples.<sup>21</sup>

21 For a more detailed appraisal of the Colombian women's national football team and their use for nation building under Santos, see Watson (2020b).

### Conclusion: talking a good game?

This chapter has shown that discourse on football was a consistent strategy used to support Santos's political priorities. Through sporting success, especially in times of mega-events, feelings of national positivity, optimism and self-esteem were engendered and bolstered as the nation, in its entirety, was symbolically placed as a united collective behind the nation's sporting representatives, who are portrayed as national ambassadors, examples and heroes. Santos used these broadcasts to legitimize and earn support for his government, justify and empower the use of sport for social and national benefit, deploy sport towards that end, as well as react to sporting triumphs achieved. Through continuous and repeated references to unity through sport, and most regularly and successfully through the men's national team, Santos attempted to build a greater Colombian togetherness that related to political projects at key occasions, namely his re-election in 2014 and the plebiscite to ratify the peace agreement with the FARC. Football was not a sporadically used tool, only useful during a World Cup, as was the case in Argentina in 1978, or in other cases when a national team gained some success. Santos seized every national team match, recognizing the national ritual that they have become, as a chance to contribute to and lead the celebration of Colombianness. The emotivism of these events and exceptional nationalism stimulated by the flags, national shirts and deluge of media reporting of the football event was increasingly effectively exploited in speech and tweet to facilitate affiliative processes and develop socialization spaces, attempting, subtly, to insinuate messages of national peace. This is a different rhetorical message delivered through sport than those discursive sporting nationalism projects in Brazil or Argentina under Médiçi, Perón or the military dictatorship. In the same way as the area around the speech is populated by national symbols, or people who can stimulate feelings of recognition and loyalty (like football stars Falcao or James Rodríguez), tweets have been aesthetically enhanced to enhance affiliative feelings and 'flag' the nation more thoroughly. Although female athletes were also deployed as representative unifying figures, Santos turned most regularly to the men's football team as agent *par excellence* for this discursive unifying project, failing to acknowledge the potential of the women's team to perform a similar role. Although he has attempted not to take total possession of responsibility for sport success, it has still been a source for legitimizing tactics to promote his financial, legislative and structural support for sport, although, curiously, certain legislative achievements, such as the PDSCCF, were forgotten. This, and the politicizing of the football shirt, has meant that football, and the shirt above all, became another symbolic battleground in the polarizing debate about Colombia's future. Schlesinger writes that 'the national culture constitutes an inescapable reference point, but it does not resolve all of the problems of collective identity. What it does do is to constitute the boundaries for *versions* of national identity' (1987: 244); this is certainly the case with the

Colombian national team as an unescapable cultural entity given the media frenzy around national matches. Those against the peace deal contested the version of national identity through the national team promoted by Santos as a point where all Colombians were included, most problematically the FARC. Those in opposition wore the shirt to validate an alternative version of Colombia and Colombian identity and who is included in the 'us' group, leading to a shirt that previously 'belonged' to the people and not to a political project becoming a contested site of meaning.

Football can work for any political project and represent any desired meaning; Santos, through all available communication channels, positioned the national team as a metonymic image of Colombia. He attempted to 'fill' the national football team with his message, primarily to Colombians, but also to an international audience, of Colombia moving away from a divided and violent past, towards a more optimistic, peaceful and united national future. This consistent discourse strategy also facilitated the use of football in government SDP programmes towards achieving these aims, as we shall see in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

# ‘The route for action’

## Football-specific legislation and public policy

### Introduction: tackling violence in football

This chapter examines the football-specific laws, public policies and consultation documents that were introduced during Santos’s presidency. The aim is to examine to what extent this legislation has been employed as part of a deliberate and strategic deployment of football towards nation building in Colombia, accompanying the rhetoric analyzed in the previous chapter and SDP projects and whether legislative aims resonate with these. The course of football legislation will be charted from initial attempts to deal with the problem of fan violence in and around the male professional game to the scope expanding to officialize football as a tool for social development and community transformation. This chapter argues that this scope widened under Santos’s government. Although the three ‘pillars’ of pre-Santos football-specific legislation were security, comfort and coexistence, and these initial laws did acknowledge bottom-up processes of community building conducted by organized football fan groups, the focus of the legislation was on security and managing the match day experience. The emphasis was on regulating behaviour and reducing the violence in and around stadiums with a bias towards sanction and punishment, rather than using football as a convening point of encounter to include and listen to those who felt marginalized or ‘othered’ due to political or media representations of the violence around football and in society more widely. There was less awareness and focus on how football could reach back out to the communities from the stadiums in order to have a transformative effect. Under Santos, the tone and content of the legislation, and the processes behind the construction of public policy documents, shifted towards expanding football’s role as a place for encounter for top-down and bottom-up nation and community building processes. This is what makes the legislation significant for this book: the laws and public policies related to football that were introduced under Santos envisioned a much more significant role for football in the country and endowed it with nation-building capacity. The Plan Decenal de Seguridad, Comodidad y Convivencia en el Fútbol 2014–2024 (henceforth

the PDSCCF) (Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football), the culmination of the football-specific legislation analyzed in this chapter, is a groundbreaking public policy in this respect. It built upon pre-existing laws and decrees around professional football, put coexistence at the forefront of the policy and articulated objectives and specified processes that made football at both the professional and recreational level a tool for addressing social problems that have fractured Colombian society. These social problems include integrating those from vulnerable and peripheral groups and teaching citizen rights and promoting certain behaviours to reduce the likelihood of violence or succumbing to vice or crime, issues that problematize the strength of an inclusive national identity and concept of a united nation. It is this aspect of the legislation and public policies that complements presidential discourse about football, the shift towards strengthening sport's social development role and greater implementation of SDP campaigns through various ministries and administrative departments. Football's role as a unifying and developmental symbol and activity was officialized by State policy under Santos, unlike many other instances when football has only been championed rhetorically as a source of national unity and national identity.

This legislation has fitted in with Santos's three-pronged strategy of nation building through football, also involving official rhetoric in speeches and tweets and football-based SDP campaigns. This 'footballizing' of Colombian politics and society complemented the ongoing peace negotiations with the FARC and plans for the post-conflict scenario. As was demonstrated in chapter two, historically, football has only been 'spoken' about in terms of strengthening a sense of 'Colombianness' against a Narcolombia 'other' that excluded Colombians entangled by location or circumstance in this peripheral group linked to antistate actors, criminality, violence or subversion. Members of organized football fan groups (*barras*) have found themselves included in this othered group, due to media reports of fan violence and associations with criminality and delinquency. These representations weakened football as a positive unifying national symbol. Under Santos, as evidenced in the previous chapter, the national 'us' he spoke about through football reached out to include those previously othered, and the spoken word was strengthened by legislative processes, and, most crucially, by some concrete actions.

This chapter investigates what aspects of the laws and public policies impact on nation building, looking, for instance, at how often marginalized Colombians, such as *barra* members, have had their citizenship theoretically activated by the legislation. Through legislation aimed at improving security, comfort and coexistence at football stadiums, there was an attempt to recast professional football matches as a time and space for socialization and for inclusion, rather than as an all-too visual representation of divisive partisan regional or city loyalties expressed by violent acts. It will also consider to what extent the legislation has been successfully implemented and the objectives

realized to date; are the often very ambitious and groundbreaking policies and aims being achieved and are Colombians of different *estratos sociales*, races, genders, regions and politics benefitting? And, therefore, is the legislation contributing to nation building in an effective manner? Or, have these laws and public policies merely become yet another unenforced document, with promises on paper largely remaining there?

The legislation and public policies referred to in this chapter are listed in Table 17. A number of these laws were in place before Santos assumed the Presidency on 7 August 2010. Therefore, it is important to evaluate to what extent the legislation enacted during his mandate either continued a process that commenced under the presidency of Álvaro Uribe, or whether focus shifted or evolved to align with the policies of the Santos government, which saw football, as a symbol and activity, propitious for exploiting to aid the imagining of a more inclusive and united national community. Under both Uribe and Santos the idea of security has dominated as a discourse of guaranteeing citizen coexistence (Puentes Sánchez 2015: 242), but their methods and rhetoric were very different. Uribe pursued a harder line regarding the nation's security, particularly in the fight against the FARC. He sought to exclude, delegitimize or marginalize those supporting them from the national community. Santos promoted a more inclusive and integrative national concept, characterized by the peace process. This chapter investigates how football-specific legislation contributed to this process, particularly regarding security and coexistence and how it positioned football as a potentially significant tool in a post-peace agreement nation. It argues that under Santos, both professional and recreational football were harnessed and applied to enduring social and political issues (for instance, citizen inclusion/exclusion, integration and reconciliation, peace and violence) in a more calculated manner with legislation supporting the discourse. Football was 'officialized' as a practice that takes on nation-building and national identity construction tasks, aiding other institutions with a similar role. Santos, adroitly, realized that football, as a sport, continues to make possible a space for agreement and encounter between Colombians (Coldeportes 2013: 9) and that therefore it had a lot of untapped potential. In the *Barras Construyendo País* (*Barras Building a Country*) report, which documents a consultation carried out by Coldeportes among football fans, conducted in 2013 (the title of the consultation is obviously significant), two features of nation building are highlighted that football can address: coexistence and activating citizenship. The report also recognizes the unifying power of national football and football as an activity and spectator sport: 'in terms of a site of coexistence and for the full expression of citizenship, there is no other place that manages to congregate a bigger audience, no shirt that manages to unite as well as the shirt of the national football team' (72). This chapter examines how this potential was enabled by legislation.

Table 17: Legislation, public policies and consultations related to football

Date	Law Number (national unless stated)	Name
<b>Prior to Santos Government</b>		
18/1/1995	Law 181	'By which regulations are dictated for the development of sport, recreation, the exploitation of free time and Physical Education, and the National System of Sport is created.'
31/5/2004	Decree 164 (by the Mayoralty of Bogotá)	'By which the "Goles en Paz" (Goals in Peace) Committee for Security and Coexistence for football matches is created.'
2009	N/A	The Ten-Year Plan for Sport, Recreation, Physical Education, for Human Development, Coexistence and Peace 2009–2019
5/1/2009	Law 1270	'By which the National Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football is created and other regulations are dictated'
15/4/2009	Decree 1267	'By which Article 7 of Law 1270 of 2009 is established'
23/11/2009	Law 1356	'By which the Security Law is expedited in sporting events'
19/5/2010	Decree 1717	'By which the Protocol for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football is adopted and other regulations are dictated'
<b>Under Santos Government (August 2010–August 2018)</b>		
12/5/2011	Law 1445	'By which Law 181 of 1995 is modified, the regulations of which were contradictory, and other regulations are dictated in relation to professional sport' (widely known as Ley del Fútbol, the Football Law)
24/6/2011	Law 1453	'By which the penal code, the penal procedural code, the Code of infancy and adolescence, the rules on extinction of dominion are reformed, and other regulations related to security are dictated.'



Date	Law Number (national unless stated)	Name
3/11/2011	Decree 4183	'By which the Colombian Institute of Sport, Coldeportes, a national public establishment is transformed into the Administrative Department for Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity and Exploitation of Free Time, Coldeportes, and its objective, structure and roles are determined.'
18/1/2012	Decree 0079	'By which Laws 1445 y 1453 de 2011 are established'
16/5/2012	Decree 1007	'By which the Statute for Fans in Colombia is expedited'
2013	N/A	The ' <i>Barras Building a Country</i> ' report
2014	N/A	The ' <i>Power of Football</i> ' report
June 2014	N/A	The Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football 2014–2024
3/9/2019	Law 1967	'By which the Administrative Department for Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity and Exploitation of Free Time, Coldeportes, is transformed into the Ministry of Sport'

### A greater role for Coldeportes

A significant first step taken by Santos to give sport a greater role in politics and society was to convert Coldeportes into an administrative department, a decision ratified by Decree 4183 in November 2011. Hitherto, Coldeportes was under the auspices of the Education Ministry, having previously been part of the Culture Ministry. This promotion meant Coldeportes became an independent institution wielding similar powers to full Ministries with its own defined budget. Additionally, the directors of Coldeportes during the Santos presidency – Jairo Clopatofsky (2010–2012), Andrés Botero (2012–2016) and Clara Luz Roldán (2016–2018) – had a seat in Santos's cabinet and therefore had a say in the wider decision-making processes of government. This had never happened previously; Torres stated that Coldeportes was accorded this position because Santos 'considers sport to be an activity that intersects with many other department projects in government' (personal interview 14 December 2017). In October 2017, Santos sought to empower Coldeportes by proposing to make it a full Ministry; the first version of the

decree to approve this was introduced to Congress on 3 April 2018. Speaking before Coldeportes did become a full Ministry, according to the office of Dr Afranio Restrepo, ‘the sector will become stronger, giving Coldeportes more weight and political influence, and opening the path towards future reforms that will continue to improve it further’ (personal communication 31 January 2018).<sup>1</sup> With this increased role, Coldeportes could expect to exercise a more prominent role and work with other Ministries with, theoretically, greater ease.

Coldeportes, as established by Law 181 of 1995, when the National System of Sport was created, should ‘coordinate, articulate, decentralize and implement public policies for sport, recreation, physical education and physical activity in the country’ (Coldeportes 2009: 20), and has several responsibilities that have a direct impact on nation building. First, in article 52 of the 1991 Colombian constitution, the rights of citizens for sport, recreation, physical education and physical activity are established:

The practising of sport, its recreational manifestation, whether competitive or personal, have a role towards the integral development of people, helping them maintain and improve a human being’s health. Sport and recreation are part of education and constitute a public and social expense. The right of everyone to recreation, the practice of sport and making the most of free time is recognised. (Coldeportes 2009: 20)

Coldeportes should guarantee that all Colombians have the chance to participate in sport, recreation or physical education, and have access to suitable infrastructure, equipment and opportunities. The provision of these is often lacking in rural and peripheral regions, where the State has often been absent, and particularly in Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. The lack of these facilities, or their uneven spread across the national territory, leads to sentiments of exclusion. As Smith discusses, States that fail to provide equal civil, legal and political rights to all citizens can struggle to include those disenfranchised within the country (1991: 10). Walter Mendoza, the sports spokesperson for the FARC, said that they had assumed responsibility to provide facilities in areas under their jurisdiction during the conflict: ‘We in the FARC did not just build sports facilities, we also dedicated ourselves to building schools, health centres, bridges and roads’ (personal interview 11 October 2017). It is noteworthy that FARC considered the building of sporting facilities to be of similar importance to schools and health centres for communities. FARC were also aware of ‘hearts and minds’ priorities to gain support in communities where the State was absent; providing basic human needs, such as education and health provision, as well as leisure and sport facilities, contests the hegemony of the State as well as creating loyalties towards those providing citizen requirements.

1 Coldeportes became a full Ministry on 13 June 2019.

A second responsibility involves Coldeportes locating and developing sporting talent to represent Colombia. As has been discussed previously, sporting success and heroes can serve for nation building, generating shared feelings of pride and a positive image of the nation through its sporting representatives. These successes and heroes are often exploited by politicians to evidence supposed national positive characteristics to inspire the nation's citizens, a tactic Santos fully exploited, as was shown in the previous chapter. These feelings of pride extend to all Colombians, hence why national football team matches became potent venues of mutual recognition and inclusion in the FARC demobilization camps after the signing of the peace agreement, which will be explored further in chapter five.

Third, the Deporte Social Comunitario (Social and Community Sport) department within Coldeportes had its profile raised, especially given the potential post-conflict scenario raised by the peace talks with the FARC. This department has among its responsibilities to promote the use of sport towards social development and transformation. It is this department that has been in charge of the project to send sport, recreation, physical education and physical activity coaches to the Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización (ZVTN) (Transitional Pathway Zones for Normalization), later renamed the Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR) (Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation), discussed in chapter five.

Gisela Gómez, a contractor in the Social and Community Sport department, highlighted the modifications that Coldeportes had to make following first its conversion to be an administrative department, and potentially to a full Ministry, highlighting the role of finding talent and also generating social development and transformation through sport:

One is local community sport which goes beyond trying to identify future stars or people with strong potential in a particular sport. More than just talent-spotting, as we could call it, what stands out is the intention to build and strengthen the social fabric through sport. Sport in this case is certainly a method or tool that allows us to teach values, for example solidarity, respect, tolerance, which are important in situations such as the transition of people returning to civil life [...] Social and community sport definitely has that aim. I don't know whether this is overly ambitious, but helping to develop a person, or to make people better Colombians, is a way of creating social links, strengthening the social fabric through sport. (personal interview 10 November 2017)

There is a clear nation-building perspective here that corresponds to Santos's vision for how sport should function in Colombia, in terms of developing community feelings of solidarity, tolerance and respect, and creating good citizens. In addition, playing sport is a daily activity that generates social encounters; Billig argues that 'an identity is to be found in the embodied habits of social life' (1995: 7) and these popular recreational habits have

been damaged by the Colombian conflict. Sánchez argues that violence has become so embedded that streets ‘have become landscapes of fear’ and ‘violence has destroyed civic traditions that now must be reinvented’ (2001: 14). Sport, and football more than most, can rebuild some of these practices as a normalization of recreational activity strengthens community ties.

### Violence in Colombian football and the need for legislation

Legislation directed at attempting to resolve the violence within Colombian club football predates the Santos regime. It is, therefore, important to establish the football background to explain the context of the legislation and policies that have been enacted, as well as to discuss the top-down and bottom-up processes that have influenced the shape and focus of these laws.

Colombian football at the end of the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century had become a tarnished symbol for two principal reasons: 1) corruption and money laundering linked to involvement in football by criminal organizations such as drug cartels and paramilitary organizations and 2) the growing violence in and around stadiums between and within *barras*. Chapter two discussed how the image of the national team became sullied as links to cartels were exposed. The murder of Andrés Escobar after the World Cup in 1994 was a watershed moment, but other events such as the murder of referee Álvaro Ortega in 1989 and goalkeeper René Higuita visiting Pablo Escobar when he was detained in La Catedral prison, meant that professional football in Colombia, and by extension the national team, was associated with criminality, thus becoming part of the ‘Narcocolombia’ ‘other’ that it had been positioned against (Watson 2018a).<sup>2</sup> Araújo Vélez wrote that in 1988 and 1989 football was part of the Colombian conflict, as each cartel was represented by a particular team and that the team had an obligation to win. The cartels of Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, Pablo Escobar and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela were, in reality, represented by the kits of Millonarios, Nacional and América (Araújo Vélez 1995a).

Cartels were not alone in corrupting Colombian football. An article in *Semana*, ‘El dossier del fútbol’, on 27 January 2010, brought to light a series of recordings with former paramilitary leaders such as ‘Don Julio’, ‘Macaco’ and ‘Jorge 40’, which revealed how paramilitary organizations had used smaller clubs in the first and second divisions to launder money. If the

2 Even the qualification for the 1998 World Cup In France was damaged; after scoring the crucial winning goal against Ecuador, Antony De Ávila dedicated the goal to the jailed leaders of the Cali cartel, Gilberto and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela who had owned the América club where De Ávila had played for the majority of his career. The video clip of De Ávila’s goal and dedication at the end of the match can be seen in the following YouTube clip: ‘Cuando la Selección Colombia le dedicó un gol a narcos’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4tm4HEjMo>, video published 29 September 2016 (*La Videoteca Tricolor* 2016).

criminal influence staining clubs, and, by extension, the national team, was not removed, then football's deployment as a unifying national symbol against a 'Narcolumbia' other, could not work, and nor could it present a positive face of Colombia.

Violence between sets of rival fans (or indeed between different *barras* of the same club or individuals of the same *barra*) had been a growing problem in Colombia since the early 1990s (Villanueva Bustos 2013: 94; Arroyo Chicaiza 2014: 48). This is not the place for an extensive analysis of the phenomenon, but fan violence had become another manifestation of a national culture of violence (Puentes Sánchez 2015: 253) that permeated the country. Luis Bermúdez, father of a murdered football fan Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto, whose death brought about the fans' foundation that bears his name, recalled that 'whole groups of *barras* fought against each other, and these weren't just punch ups, but people were left dead afterwards. Because here a fight is settled with guns and blades. These conflicts were taken into the stadiums' (personal interview 14 November 2017). Villanueva Bustos sees *barra* violence as new forms of the expression of identities (2013: 95) from a particular segment of urban society who feel excluded, invisible, deprived of their rights as citizens, lacking opportunities for personal development and stigmatized due to their social conditions and behaviour. Media reporting and the reaction of authorities ensured that *barras* were placed into the 'other' Narcolumbia category, due to their associations with violence, drugs and criminality. As the *Barras Construyendo País (Barras Building a Country)* report highlighted, 'the new generations do not identify with a citizenship project that definitely does not provide the resources or conditions for their collective and individual development, nor to become social subjects with the potential to engage politically in a more democratic manner' (Coldeportes 2013: 33). Media reporting on regular deaths and fights demonized these fan groups and had the knock-on effect of presenting the act of going to matches as an unsafe experience. The *Poder del Fútbol (Power of Football)* survey published in 2014 confirmed these negative impressions of the professional football experience, showing that 78 per cent of women and 70 per cent of men interviewed thought that going to the stadium was dangerous (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 88). With there often being deaths in the aftermath of national team matches, most notoriously in celebrations in the wake of Colombia's 5–0 victory against Argentina in Buenos Aires to qualify for the 1994 World Cup,<sup>3</sup> there was a political imperative to implement policies to reduce violence in and around football stadiums, as well as to find ways to negotiate and include disaffected urban youth. If people could not enjoy professional football peacefully and safely, if families were unwilling

3 It has become common in Colombia for either the government or mayors to declare a *Ley Seca*, a ban on alcohol, on match days of particular importance, fearing celebrations could lead to violence. This was the case for several matches of the 2014 and 2018 World Cups.

to attend games, if women felt marginalized from a very masculine environment, then football at the highest level could hardly become a tool for the fostering of national unity and the football spectacle would continue to be tarnished. Peace in football needed to become a microcosm for peace in the country as the *Barras Building a Country* report summarized: ‘When football in peace is proposed, a country at peace is also being proposed, where coexistence reflects the state of happiness and celebration that Colombians hope to feel soon’ (Coldeportes 2013: 72). Here we can see the influence of the ongoing peace negotiations with the FARC, with efforts to involve *barra* representatives in finding solutions to prevent existing social conditions finding an expression in violence around football grounds. We also see the ‘happiness and celebration’ reference promoted as the symbol of how Santos wished Colombia to be seen externally. It underlines the role football has as a symbolic meeting place, the football pitch-as-country metaphor.

#### Negotiations between State and *barras*

Responses to the phenomenon of violence in and around football stadiums differed originally depending on the city, as there was no national law standardizing the holding and policing of football matches. As most stadiums in the country are not owned by the clubs themselves but by the government or municipality, the responsibility for the maintenance of the facilities, the security and logistical procedures falls on both local and State officials in tandem with the clubs. The other authorities responsible for governing Colombian football are the Federación Colombiana de Fútbol (FCF) (the FIFA-affiliated governing body for football in Colombia, in charge of the national sides) and Dimayor (in charge of club and league football), as well as Coldeportes. This means that there was the potential for conflicting interests and responsibilities as well as over-bureaucratization in the running of football and differing ideas of how to deal with football-related violence, between these football bodies, the clubs, local and national authorities, as well as emergency and security forces. Accordingly, in each city there was a tension between punishing fan violence and seeking ways for preventing its occurrence. Across various Colombian cities, different campaigns took place that saw a process of negotiation between authorities and fans. According to Alirio Amaya,<sup>4</sup> authorities realized that ‘dialogue with fans and the dialogue between institutions was vital’ (*Procuraduría General de Colombia* 22 August 2017a).

4 Alirio Amaya has been heavily involved in finding solutions to football violence in various roles and capacities for nearly two decades, working for Coldeportes, the Technical Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football (CTSCCF) as well as the first projects between Millonarios and Santa Fe fans, *Jugando Limpio Todos Ganamos* (Playing Fair We All Win) and *Goles en Paz* (Goals in Peace).

Before any national legislation was contemplated, the first decree addressing fan violence was passed by the Mayoralty of Bogotá with Decree 164 of 2004, entitled 'By which the "Goles en Paz" (Goals in Peace) Committee for Security and Coexistence for football matches is created'. This was a starting point for subsequent national legislation. The aim of *Goles en Paz* was to end violence between *barras* of the major Bogotá clubs, Santa Fe and Millonarios. It involved football tournaments, musical events, workshops, academic forums and Pacts of Coexistence (López n.d.). Decree 164 established the need for a committee for security and coexistence to establish a protocol for risk assessments and security for all professional football matches in the capital, and take necessary measures to protect the public. It also expedited the need for actions and events to prevent violence, including education programmes about the risks of alcohol and drugs. Of interest here is that the focus of the decree was not solely on policing football matches effectively, but equally as importantly, to involve fans in preventative and pedagogical events to reduce violence and promote spaces of coexistence and dialogue. This inclusion responds to a historical Colombian problem of 'the absence of national narrative that included the common citizen' and therefore there being a vital need to design cultural policies to address diverse national communities (Suárez 2008: 412). This fan voice can be increasingly seen in the national laws subsequently introduced, but particularly in those introduced during the Santos presidency, such as Decree 1007, the Statute for Fans, and the PDSCCF.

As for the *barras*, their motivation to become involved with authorities to solve the problems, the self-organization and taking of responsibilities as an organized social group or movement, corresponds to an attempt to remove societal stigmatization of their identities and a resignification and activation of their rights and duties as citizens. In a study about the activities of the *Holocausto Norte barra* of the Manizales club Once Caldas, fans claimed that they felt like second-class citizens:

A second-class citizen is understood as those people, in the words of a young fan, as 'the worst of the city, they are the ogres, the bogeymen, identified with being the worst of Manizales.' This is a concept that leads to stadiums being closed to fans or the continuous signalling of them being 'a *persona non grata* for the city', which leads to every *barra* member becoming homogenized and characterised as being a violent troublemaker. (Londoño Jaramillo and Pinilla Sepúlveda 2009: 81)

The aims, therefore, of the *Holocausto Norte barra* involved in the *Hinchas por Manizales* (Fans for Manizales) project created to reduce fan-related violence around football matches, was to generate new processes to establish themselves, as individuals and as a collective, as first-class citizens and be recognized as such by authorities and society at large. It was also to reclaim their rights and assume their duties as citizens to transform existing relations and their own environment (Londoño Jaramillo and Pinilla Sepúlveda 2009:

76–77). Raúl Martínez Hoyos (2017) from the Los del Sur *barra* of Nacional details similar work for the same ends undertaken by his *barra*. The *barras* involved in projects such as *Jugando Limpio Todos Ganamos* (Playing Fair We All Win) and *Goles en Paz* in Bogotá, *Quilla Goles por la Convivencia* (Quilla Goals for Coexistence) in Barranquilla, *La Tribuna Multicolor* (The Multicoloured Stand) in Cartagena and other projects in Cúcuta, Neiva and Medellín, all had the same aims of renegotiating their status as citizens, their identities and their duties and rights. They realized that they could be an active part of the prevention of football-related violence and ensure that measures taken to deal with the issue were cognizant of underlying social problems and tackled these at source.

The Juan Manuel Bermúdez Nieto Foundation (FJMBN)<sup>5</sup> had the aim of promoting dialogue and peace between rival *barras* of different clubs, and eventually the promotion of *barrismo social*, acts whereby *barras* took responsibility for social and community actions towards coexistence and education. Amaya acknowledged the significance of the foundation, saying, ‘The Foundation started to do something important, and that was the political and social development of the guys in the *barra*’ (personal interview 23 October 2017).

This idea of *barrismo social* is at the heart of the attempt of organized fan groups for resignification and the activation of citizenship. It is a form of bottom-up citizenship, proposed and articulated by different *barras*, made appropriate to their social circumstances and spearheaded by the FJMBN in their attempt to influence subsequent legislation. It exists because of State and institutional failures. The FJMBN defines *barrismo social* as:

An approach to reformulate the forms of expression and practice of *barra* members which currently impact negatively on the individual, on the *barras* and on the community, as well as to give potential to their positive characteristics. It also intends to establish a role for the *barras* as an actor in the football universe which is now dominated by globalization and mercantilist dynamics. This alternative proposal is based on educational processes such as knowledge exchange, which collect social values, rules, beliefs, ideals and feelings, and allows *barra* members, without losing their essence and identity, to resignify the reality which encompasses their passion for the football world, and, at the same time, allows them to assume their identity as social and political subjects. The proposal implies the construction of new and different relationships with the State, which until now has limited itself to temporary and fleeting attention to young people and to judicial processes, with the aim of participation in the design, decision-making and implementation of public policies. (Arroyo Chicaiza 2014: 124)

5 The FJMBN is a not-for-profit organization that assembled *barra* representatives from across the country and provided them with a meeting point and organizational hub. It has been a leading proponent of *barrismo social*.



Ernesto Herrera, a *barra* leader from the La Guardia Albi-Roja Sur who support Santa Fe, believes that *barrismo social* is what each different group makes it, though the above definition holds. Herrera said:

I believe that the issue of *barrismo social*, the strategy of *barrismo social*, is destined to help young *barra* members on the path towards working effectively. I think that this is effective work because we are talking about being enterprising, we're talking about giving them an education, we're talking about developing a culture of peace, we're talking about the community and environment. In other words, this project has a very wide vision. (personal interview 14 November 2017)

It is a process that emerged to respond to social conditions and a failure of State institutions to guarantee education, training and opportunities. It is also an assumption of collective responsibility to adopt the power of the collective identity of the *barra* to empower themselves as a group within society and renegotiate their relationship with both authorities and society at large. It has been so successfully managed and proposed, by both individual *barras* and by the FJMBN, that it has been included in all football-specific legislation since 2009. This is a bottom-up process that President Santos had little to do with. Although he would speak about the need to include fans as part of the process of reducing violence, *barrismo social* was never mentioned in any of his speeches, although it resonates with his narrative of football serving individuals and communities and promoting collective values.

#### Pre-Santos legislation: Laws 1270 and 1356 and Decrees 1267 and 1717

The laws and decrees passed towards the end of the Uribe government in 2009 and 2010 were the institutional answer to the ongoing problems of fan-related football violence. They attempted to establish bodies to find solutions to the problem and standardize State responses, rather than having the wider nation-building perspective that would emerge with Santos and eventually translate into the PDSCCF. Although aware of *barrismo social* due to the impact of the fans groups, these initial laws had a focus on the security aspect of professional football matches, and not on how football could be deployed more widely to solve existing social problems. The 'coexistence' aspect related more to fans getting along with one another, rather than how football could be a space for coexistence between other groups across the national territory. Law 1270 created the National Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football (CNSCCF) as the 'The assessing institution of the National Government for the implementation of policies, plans and programmes, as well as the execution of strategies aimed at maintaining the security, comfort and coexistence in the organization and practice of the sporting spectacle' (Article 1°, Law 1270 de 2009). It also established the legal need for each municipality with a professional football team to have a Local Commission for Security, Comfort and Coexistence

in Football (CLSCCF) to deal with issues at a local level. Decree 1267 would further specify the roles and relationship between the CNSCCF and CLSCCFs. The responsibilities of the CNSCCF were specified, with a focus not just on security but also comfort (relating to the experience of attending matches, suitable facilities and infrastructure) and coexistence around professional football, while ensuring that the rights of all those in and around football matches are respected. The aim was to create the necessary conditions through regulation and control, but also through research and analysis, to address violence in professional football grounds. Another objective was to create the conditions for football to be a generator of spaces of encounter between football fans, for the promotion of values of coexistence, for football to have a transformative social effect empowering fans and *barras* as social actors with rights to be observed. Football as an event and spectacle should be a safe, comfortable and welcoming space for fans of all ages, genders, classes and regions to meet, recognizing that football is a common practice and interest for Colombians. It was a first legislative step to ensure that football stadiums would return to being inclusion zones, propitious sites for unifying rather than oppositional feelings around the football experience.

The role of the FJMBN should not be underestimated in ensuring that the fan voice was present in three articles of Law 1270 (precisely in article 3, paragraphs 20, 21 and 22). These paragraphs state that the role of the CNSCCF should include a diagnosis of the causes of violence in football and propose solutions in accordance with the expressions of *barrismo social* (paragraph 20); the adoption of pedagogical measures, meeting spaces and reflection in which social problems are studied that affect youths and may eventually lead to violent behaviour as fans (paragraph 21); and developing activities that promote coexistence, participation and the exercising of citizenship in accordance with the aims of *barrismo social* (Congreso de Colombia 2009). The FJMBN had mobilized to ensure that the first version of the law, Law 035, proposed by the governor of Cundinamarca Andrés González, did not succeed. That initial draft of the law did not contain ideas of *barrismo social* or of fan involvement in finding solutions. According to Amaya:

If you read the text, it was legislation that only included punishment [...] in other words, it was not aimed at dealing with the sociocultural problems that young *barra* members have that can lead to undesirable behaviour inside and outside of the stadiums. (personal interview 23 October 2017)

The FJMBN had managed to establish alliances, including with former Colombian football great Willington Ortiz, then a Colombian senator representing the Afro-Colombian communities, in order to get their voice heard in the Colombian congress when the law was debated. Bermúdez remembered that ‘nearly all the *barras* in the country were there, apart from

Nacional who didn't go, and only some of the Comandos Azules (one of the Millonarios *barras*) went. Of the rest, nearly everybody went. Eighteen *barras* were in the congress' (personal interview 14 November 2017). It was a significant moment for *barras*, managing to have a direct impact on legislation, and in that they were recognized as Colombian citizens and legitimate collectives with an active role to play in security and coexistence issues within wider society. Arroyo Chicaiza concludes that 'for the first time on a national level, *barrismo social* was considered, and it became established, as a tool to promote coexistence, participation and the exercising of citizenship of football *barra* members' (2014: III). Puentes Sánchez sees the fact that authorities had both worked with *barras* and seen fit to accept their input as an important step towards transforming traditional security policies through participation and dialogue with citizens (2015: 243). The actions of the FJMBN ensured that laws were not purely punitive in nature, but instead contemplated preventative measures that supported citizen rights. This process of involvement has continued with laws and public policies that have been passed during the Santos presidency. The *Barras Building a Country* report and the consultation process for the PDSCCF are evidence of this inclusion.

Law 1356 specified the actions at football matches that would be considered as crimes, adapting the existing National Police Code. It also detailed the necessary facilities that stadiums would have to provide in the top division of the league. The onus is not totally on crime and punishment, as chapter four of the law requires the Ministries of Education, Culture, Communications and Coldeportes as well as local authorities and municipalities to organize 'educational and preventative campaigns aimed at avoiding violence in sport stadiums in the media, radio, television, as well as in schools, colleges, universities and other educational centres' (Ministerio del Interior 2009b). The suggestion to work with NGOs was also included in the law to support these educational campaigns. It was another step towards using football for social development, attempting to take advantage of the work of pre-existing football-based social projects, though not as yet to the extent that would be required in the PDSCCF. The law did not, however, include the *barras* as part of the process, and there is no mention of *barrismo social*. Decree 1717, meanwhile, is a standardization blueprint (Decreto 1717: 4) that goes into minute detail about the specific requirements for stadiums, including facilities, services, security and emergency procedures and general logistics for every aspect of the match day. It was a decree considering the pillars of 'security' and 'comfort', limited to matchday considerations. Decree 1717 also informed the *barras* about what could be brought into the stadium (for example, banners and musical instruments) and behaviour would be permitted, though as emerged in the *Barras Building a Country* report and the PDSCCF, a significant problem with this decree was there was a clear failure to socialize it to fans.

### A statement of intent: the 'Football Law'

When Santos became President, he realized that there would be some early opportunities to exploit football's national significance with the hosting of the Under 20 World Cup in 2011 and also with the qualifying campaign beginning for the 2014 World Cup. Therefore, the approval of Law 1445, the 'Football Law', on 12 May 2011 came at an important juncture for Colombian football and the nation, Santos trying to put into place measures that would cleanse football as a symbol and create conditions for a more festive and peaceful atmosphere around football matches as well as uniting the nation around football. He had already taken the opportunity of a speech at the Sports Personality of the Year ceremony on 1 December 2010 to emphasize his commitment to sport, how he saw it benefiting national unity and how it needed to be protected. While acknowledging football successes and his and the nation's pride in its footballers, he laid the basis for forthcoming legislation to strengthen football as a national symbol, vital for it to be able to function fully towards national cohesion: 'I believe that we deserve good football; you will have in me the best possible ally to help move Colombian football forwards. But we need to be realistic and I want to be clear: either we change football or football is finished for us, because as things are, things are not going well' (*Presidencia de la República* 2010b). This referred to the salient issues of fan violence and enduring corruption and money laundering blighting Colombian football, and Santos's intent to tackle them through legislation.

In terms of nation building, the most relevant objective of the law is the attempt to cleanse football's image by requiring greater transparency of club finances and control over club ownership. This would prevent the criminal influences that had tarnished football in the 1980s and 1990s, and led football to be associated with the notorious image of the country from which President Gaviria was trying to disassociate Colombia. The articles relating to the transparency of club ownership and shareholders intended to remove any lingering remnants of criminal influence including of drug cartels and paramilitary groups. The articles dealing with violence effectively have the same intention. It is difficult to ascertain whether the Football Law was a deliberate strategy to cleanse football of links to corruption so that it could be used more effectively as a nation-building, unifying device. When asked about whether Santos had this in mind, Juan Carlos Torres was unsure:

I don't believe that this was really a fundamental idea in Santos' mind when he thought about football or sport during his government, particularly as there had been ongoing efforts to cleanse football from previous governments. That really had been the case from about 2000 onwards. What Santos has done with football is to support it financially, logistically, institutionally, and transform it into a symbol of national unity. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

Amaya agreed with this assessment, seeing legislation introduced as an ongoing and evolving process that has had as much to do with pressure from below as a strategy from above:

What has happened in terms of national policy towards football has been more due to pressure from below through processes that have become more consolidated, by clearer understanding of the phenomenon, and then have taken root politically through legislation. But if somebody were to argue that what has been achieved has been a process led by political powers, I personally don't believe it. (personal interview 23 October 2017)

Whether there was a deliberate attempt to clean football as a symbol is unclear, but we can argue that it has had that effect. If football at a national level was to function as a practice and symbol that could unite the country, then previous stains had to be removed for it to be accepted as a suitable terrain for national pride. The law was accompanied by rhetoric that envisaged a nation-building role for the sport in terms of what it could represent for Colombians. When the law was passed, Santos gave a long speech outlining its content as well as its wider aims.<sup>6</sup> Santos referred to the unfortunate image of Colombia and Colombian football in the past, and how sport could assist in uniting the nation and portray a new image:

The world must know that we will not be beaten down by that shameful past. We will not accept continuing to have a bad reputation and not acting! On various occasions I have spoken about the book upon which the film *Invictus* is based, which tells the story of how Nelson Mandela managed to unite his country through rugby. It also describes how that united population managed to get behind the South African national side and propel them all the way to become World Champions [...] today, we have retaken command of this ship to sail it in a better direction. If at any time we had fallen, our promise to you, our commitment, is that we will rise and become great. (*Presidencia de la República* 2011)

It is clear what Santos sees as a longer objective of the Football Law and of football in general, as well as the inspiration that Mandela's use of rugby provided. The emphasis is on how a nation can pull together around football, for it to become a place of unity, passion and pride, and how matches at both club and national level should be symbolic of peace and coexistence. This speech makes it clear that football has significant nation building potential, provided that the problems associated with criminal influence that had blighted it were eradicated. With the Under 20 World Cup on the horizon, it was a perfect chance to associate the law with a vision of national footballing pride, hope and success.

6 This was actually the only speech that Santos gave about a law relating to sport, aside from one in April 2018 to announce the plan to promote Coldeportes to be a full Ministry.

There was also a commitment to involve fans as part of the solution, and a call for all those involved to collaborate on the national football project. He had met fans at the 'Agreement for Prosperity in Football' event on 12 March 2011, and in the speech announcing Law 1445 he said:

At the 'Agreement for Prosperity in Football' we committed to working hand-in-hand with the fans. We did this because we believe that the majority of *barras* are made up of good fans who have a healthy passion for their teams. Moreover, we are convinced that the *barras* are part of the solution and not part of the problem. We want sporting events to be spaces for coexistence. (*Presidencia de la República* 2011)

This statement is in keeping with the more inclusive rhetoric of Santos that purports to include citizenship more actively in decision-making, as well as making football a nodal point for encounter, uniting top-down and bottom-up processes of community development. Law 1445, however, makes no provision for involving fans groups in the processes involved. There is no mention of *barrismo social* in any of the six *títulos* that make up the law. The only link to it comes in *título* V, article 13, where it specifies that fines collected by Coldeportes for infractions of the law should be destined towards 'socialization programmes and pedagogical training which promote peace, tranquillity and coexistence in stadiums and sporting scenarios' (Ministerio del Interior 2011). The emphasis is otherwise purely on control and punishment rather than prevention and thus does not add to Law 1270's opening of possibilities for strengthening fan-generated movements tackling issues that jeopardize security and coexistence in and around sporting venues. Equally, there is no contemplation of any football other than professional men's football, nor deploying it towards social transformation in this particular document. This particular law's value for how football can be deployed for nation building is centred on imposing the State's authority towards cleansing national football's image articulated around men's football.

#### Acknowledging fans' rights: the 'Statute for Fans'

Decree 1007 of 16 May 2012 differed from the laws already discussed in that it was dedicated to the rights and responsibilities of the fans and *barras*, and articulated the social transformative role of football that it could entail. This need to combine sport and social development was outlined in the Strategic Action Plans of Coldeportes at the start of the Santos presidency (see chapter five), so this shift in focus from punishment to collaborative work resonates with a wider strategy centred on negotiation. Although there had been one or two articles in previous laws that had addressed fan responsibilities and the need to promote *barrismo social*, educational campaigns and opportunities, little had been done to specify what fans could do and had the right to expect. The 'Statute for Fans' ensured that they were recognized as citizens, customers and active participants in the football world and the nation. It

also further outlined their responsibilities for ensuring a peaceful football experience, establishing their duties alongside those of the various football governing authorities and emergency and security forces. Puentes Sánchez describes the law as trying to balance the raft of sanctions that had already been legally established with a series for rights for fans that they had felt had been infringed upon, as well as being vindication of the social demands for signs of shared responsibility in the process of making football a tool for peaceful coexistence (2015: 255). It should be noted that these rights of *barras* and their members are not limited to just football, but also wider society. *Barrismo social*, after all, reaches back out to the community, and *barristas*' claim for social rights to travel,<sup>7</sup> perform their identities and have stigmas associated with them removed are the claims of any citizen.

This decree put more onus on *barrismo social* and the positive work that fan groups could undertake, giving a more proactive and inclusive approach to reducing violence and improving security and coexistence. The initial dispositions of the document refer to the articles in Law 1270 that first made official the idea of *barrismo social* and supposedly ensured the duty of the CNSCCF to 'diagnose the causes of football violence and to propose solutions in accordance with expressions of *barrismo social*, as well as proposing the adoption of pedagogical measures and spaces for meeting and reflection in which social problems which affect young people and impact negatively upon fan behaviour are studied' (2021b: 1). *Barristas* were given the right, in Articles 34 and 36, to participate in the formulation of public policies towards *barrismo social*, and in the formulation of the PDSCCF (article 38), which was already being planned. However, the lack of a vote in the CLSCCF re-underlined the unequal relationship between football authorities and fans (Puentes Sánchez 2015: 256). Once again, the decree was poorly socialized as the *Barras Building a Country* report concluded (Coldeportes 2013: 55), and it was not clear who would be enforcing the duty of the CNSCCF and CLSCCFs to fulfil their responsibilities promoting *barrismo social*, nor how projects would be funded. The fact that the need for the PDSCCF had already been realized reveals two facts; first, that in just three years of the creation of laws and decrees, a number of problems and conflicts had already emerged, in terms of who had responsibility for the implementing of all the various articles and what the guarantees were for their enforcement. Second, there was a government commitment to strengthen football as a vessel for national cohesion, as well as a tool for security, coexistence and social development. The pillar of coexistence was becoming a greater focus of legislation. The difficulty again here is establishing whether this particular decree is part of a Santos strategy towards reducing violence and creating spaces for communal encounter and social transformation, or if it is the

7 A regular complaint of *barras* is that away fans have often been prevented or banned from attending games in different cities due to fears of violence, effectively being prohibited from free travel around the country.

continuation of an ongoing process, pushed more from below. Amaya's view would suggest that the hypothesis of the ongoing process is more likely here, given his role in the writing of the decree and his personal position seeing *barrismo social* as having a key role to play as well as ensuring the rights of the fans as political subjects are respected:

They were thinking about the laws from a perspective of punishment, and I was thinking about it as a way of guaranteeing rights for fans [...] We were thinking of a law in which we revised behaviours that had been typified in the penal code or in ordinary justice, and we aimed to produce something different. Therefore, this led to the Statute for Fans which comprised 41 or 42 articles, only one of which makes references to the punishments established in Law 1445. (personal interview 23 October 2017)

In summary, this decree renewed the importance of the fans as legitimate actors and activates their rights within the professional football sphere. There is an emphasis on establishing methods that allow for social inclusion and the promotion of coexistence through prevention, participation and education rather than punishment, established in articles 23 and 24, which dictate that fans have the right to know the measures designed by authorities to implement preventative actions including pedagogical activities, creating 'meeting spaces' and activities studying the roots of social problems (article 23) and the right to expect these activities to be organized by the CNSCCF and CLSCCFs (article 24). The contents of the decree meant that focus needed to move away from solely upon the stadium experience and consider the communities from which the *barristas* emerge. There is, therefore, a strong link between this decree and the subsequent PDSCCF.

### *Barras Building a Country*

The process promoting negotiation and involvement between authorities and citizens continued with the *Barras Building a Country* report, published in 2013. It was conceived as a consultation process towards the subsequent PDSCCF. The CNSCCF organized thirteen workshops across the country<sup>8</sup> for 387 *barra* representatives, which aimed to address fans' concerns and allowed them to air their views on how football should move forward and what the PDSCCF should include. This was the first time that Coldeportes in forty-four years had destined funds to discuss public policy with those whom it directly affected (Coldeportes 2013: 9; Amaya 2017: 182). The name of the report is significant, reaffirming that football is a nation-building tool, and that previously excluded *barras* are part of the process in ensuring a successful role for football to tackle social problems across the country.

<sup>8</sup> These took place in Bucaramanga, Cúcuta, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Manizales, Pereira, Armenia, Tunja, Medellín, Pasto, Cali, Santa Marta and Bogotá.



This document contained a wider exploration of the principles of *barrismo social* and types of activities that could be carried out across the nation. *Barrismo social* was seen to be developing from solely football-based projects into a political and social project with the aim of promoting the full exercise of citizenship (Coldeportes 2013: 22) of both their members and their wider communities. This resonates with the Santos rhetoric regarding the transformative and unifying power of football, particularly given football's power to reintegrate communities formed by individuals that may be divided down existing social borders, such as class, race, location or politics, or have been affected by violence and the Colombian conflict in all its manifestations. The idea is to empower, educate, democratize and organize the *barra*, being aware of the *barras*' representative power and their attempts to 'contribute towards a more positive resignification of the images held by Colombian society of the *barra brava* concept' (46). Much would depend on the *barra* leadership structures; there was some concern that *barras* had the potential to be or already had been infiltrated by organized *bandas criminales* (Bacrim – criminal groups), given the socially deprived origins of many fans and the continuing existence of networks between Bacrim and street gangs. There was concern from authorities that the leadership of fan groups was unable or unwilling to tackle such problems, or prevent infiltration from Bacrim that already had established structures in urban areas. Nonetheless, *Barras Building a Country* stresses the need to support *barras* and help their organization, as well as to establish clear bilateral relationships in order to deal jointly with problems of violence:

It is absolutely essential to establish recognition and understanding of the popular *barras* and organized *barras*. Recognition of the other is a fundamental base upon which to build agreement and common values. A second aspect will be to establish a clear limit to this relationship, making it clear that the club will never tolerate any behaviour which leads to violence or unacceptable pressure towards players or management. A third point has as its basis the transparency of this relationship which allows channels of communication and information to be established with organized *barras* through mechanisms of democratic, transparent and legitimate representation. (Coldeportes 2013: 96)

The various laws and decrees that were now in place should supposedly establish guidelines for their behaviour, but also, importantly, guarantee their rights as citizens, first and foremost, and not lead them to be perceived and stigmatized as hooligans, being thus targeted as the sole problem of football-related violence (Coldeportes 2013: 57). Fan representatives also stated the need for existence of a national protocol capable of having a positive impact (66). It seemed that procedures required to be put in place by law (such as travel to away games, communication procedures with CLSCCFs, what could and could not be brought in to the stadium as part of fan displays and access to stadiums) were simply not being implemented consistently across

the country. Another criticism made by *barristas* was that the CLSCCFs were exclusively focused on security and had forgotten or were ignoring the issues of comfort and coexistence that were of equal significance in the constitution of the Commissions (97–98). The focus was on social control, repressing and punishing violence rather than the workshops and cooperation stipulated in Law 1270 and Decree 1007. These failures risked leading fans to lose confidence in official institutions, undermining the entire project and weakening football's potential. There was still a tension between the pillars of security and coexistence, limiting the potential of *barrismo social* projects and restricting collaborative pedagogical work.

*Barras Building a Country* should be seen as a significant document marking a transition from prioritizing security through control over coexistence in football policy. The study evidences a greater focus on how football can transform communities that is consistent with Santos's rhetoric on inclusion and unity imagined through the practice and support of football, and the role of sport in creating socialization spaces and reconciliation. It demonstrates official recognition of the positive aspects of *barras* in their communities. It was a staging point towards the PDSCCF, which has a greater focus on prevention and football as a developmental tool. The document seems in keeping with the prevailing political tendency under Santos towards collaboration and negotiation rather than obligation, and inclusion rather than exclusion, given the now publicly acknowledged peace talks in Havana. It is significant that this was a document produced through public consultation, unlike many other laws. The State reached out to negotiate, include and empower, proof of football being a meeting ground where decisions can be taken to benefit interest groups, citizens, communities and, by extension, the nation. The people that the State collaborated with is also significant, representatives of groups that had been excluded and victimized given their stereotypical identities as being on the margins of society and linkages with anti-social behaviour and delinquency. This is significant as football became a point of encounter between the State and these previously marginalized groups and a means of imagining – and enacting – a different relation between them.

#### The Ten-Year Plan for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football – consultation phase

The PDSCCF was the result of President Santos's request to his Interior Minister Aurelio Iragorri to find an integrating element for peace and post-conflict in Colombia (*Semana* 2014a). With peace negotiations with the FARC under way and always likely to prove controversial and polarizing, Santos needed something to unite the nation. Football was the best candidate, taking into account the approaching World Cup. Given the ongoing process of trying to solve problems with football-related violence, the PDSCCF emerged at the perfect time for Santos to address two issues, widening

football's implementation to address social problems at both the professional and recreational levels. Juber Ariza, director of the plan in the Interior Ministry, said:

The Plan was conceived to help organize the issues within professional football. It was for football to have a more structured dimension, so that people would return to stadiums, for football to be a way of integrating society, for it to become a spectacle that could benefit the building of a culture of tolerance. But the biggest impact that we had was making football into a tool for social transformation and for coexistence. That is looking towards the future, looking towards the country that we all want to build. (personal interview 6 October 2017)

Ariza's words are fundamental as evidence for the groundbreaking nature of the document, as a deliberate policy of making greater use of football for nation building. Whereas the principal focus of laws prior to the Statute for Fans had been on security at professional football games, with a limited provision for football's role in addressing the source of violence among fans groups, the PDSCCF envisioned a much more substantial role for the sport on a national level. Recreational football also became an important space for consideration and action. Football was distinguished as having nation-building properties as Ariza outlines, being a tool for social integration, for encouraging coexistence and reducing violence. The comment about 'looking towards the future' is indicative of the government seeing football as having a potentially significant role to play in a future that contemplated a post-conflict process with the FARC should the peace negotiations be successful. Although the public policy still originates from a need to solve problems with professional football, it expands to define a role for recreational football as part of Sport for Development and Peace processes to transform society. The objectives for the public policy, particularly those in Section 4 'to promote social and community development, making use of recreational football as a tool for citizenship building for peace and coexistence' (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 141–170) are linked to the UN's Millennium Development Goals and applied to a Colombian context (144). Football is defined as an inclusion site, and a place to build citizenship, educate on health, equality and rights, and promote a culture of peace and coexistence. These aims in a public policy document for football underline the importance for football for the Santos government and resonate entirely with Santos's rhetoric.

Note that at this stage the reference to professional football only relates to the men's game, as the women's professional league would not start until 2017. Women's professional football is never mentioned. In a document that has the explicitly expressed intention to use football for social transformation and nation building, it is significant that the male game is privileged in terms of this aim. As was shown in chapter three, success for the women's national football team was not articulated in the same terms, nor anywhere near as regularly, as men's football, in terms of its representative role for the

nation. It does not have the same unifying or symbolic potential that the *selección masculina* wields, or, at least, it was not given the chance to do so by Santos. The PDSCCF confirms this situation, with a social transformation and nation-building role for women's football, or mixed football, confined to the recreational or junior level.

The outlook of the Plan expanded from the previously discussed laws and decrees, due to the influence of the NGOs that became involved, and the vision of other project leaders, to encompass recreational football and football's potential social transformation role for all. Ariza confirmed the significance of the document as a response to political and social problems of the country, particularly given the political background of negotiations with the FARC and Santos's policies in general:

The Plan is not neutral towards the reality of the country. It has a clear intention to strengthen democracy, to build citizenship, to foster a culture of tolerance. In other words, football is not seen here in this development plan as just a simple sport, or a sport that we just enjoy. No. It is also showing a way to transform communities, how we can transform people's souls. (personal interview 6 October 2017)

Ariza underlined that the Plan gave football a role in not only addressing current social problems in Colombia, but also positioning it in readiness to be applied in a post-conflict Colombia, supported by a survey proving the role it could play in social development. This is a role for football that had been applied only in rhetoric by previous governments during times of football success, but without the evidence and plans to give it actual power to transform society. This is what makes the PDSCCF such a potentially significant document, officializing football as a nation-building tool in Santos's Colombia.

The Interior Ministry chose three football-based NGOs to conduct the consultancy work on the PDSCCF: Colombianitos, Tiempo de Juego and Con-Texto Urbano.<sup>9</sup> According to Ana Arizabaleta, then of Colombianitos, and Esteban Reyes of Tiempo de Juego (who as directors of the organizations were among those responsible for the work), the Interior Ministry wanted a greater focus on social transformation rather than control and punishment, and was aware of the work of Jurgen Griesbeck (personal interviews 3 November 2017 and 19 October 2017). Griesbeck, along with Alejandro Arenas (director of Con-Texto Urbano), had developed a methodology of football for peace in Medellín after the murder of Andrés Escobar, which had the aim of teaching boys and girls about conflict resolution, coexistence, gender equity, health issues and drug education among other issues through

9 The research process into the PDSCCF was officially announced by Irigorri's predecessor, Fernando Carrillo Flórez, prior to a World Cup qualifying match against Perú on 11 June 2013. A budget of 5,169 million pesos was to be invested in developing the plan, according to Carrillo Flórez 'the first time such a significant budget has been invested in a football-related policy' (*El Heraldo* 2013).

football. It is important to highlight the shift to football *for boys and girls*, playing and learning together. The aim was also to try to give children in vulnerable communities opportunities to avoid them being recruited into gangs, paramilitaries, guerrillas or criminal organizations. The football for peace methodology had been adopted by the government, through Colombia Joven, for the Golombiao project since 2003, which is discussed in chapter five. Football as a tool for education and social development was, therefore, already on the government's radar.

The PDSCCF continued a commitment towards collaboration and broad consultation. The NGOs responsible looked at tackling the social roots of violence in football from a preventative perspective rather than through punishment, and in the communities as much as in the stadiums. Reyes described this approach: 'what we told ourselves was, let's not just look at this as a problem of *barra* violence and security, but let's look at this as a problem of coexistence and of public order too' (personal interview 19 October 2017). During the consultation process, they attempted to give every group with some kind of interest in football a chance to contribute. Ana Arizabaleta underlined this central consideration; 'we really valued the consultation aspect. We dedicated a lot of resources to every group so that every part of the country could feel represented in some way in what would lead to the creation of the policy document' (personal interview 3 November 2017). This can be seen in the various projects that went alongside the production of the PDSCCF, which were as follows:

1. *Hincha Responsable* ('Responsible Fan): a project between *barristas* (male and female) in six communities in Bogotá, Cali and Medellín, working on creating links between the *barra* and local community.
2. *Torneo Fútbol por la Paz* ('The Football for Peace' tournament): a tournament held in San Andrés for mixed *barra* teams, played according to the football for peace methodology. This involved passing on the methodology to *barra* representatives prior to the tournament.
3. Training the CLSCCFs.
4. Producing published guides about the football for peace methodology and the training processes and protocols involving the methodology to prevent violence around football matches.
5. Three investigations into 1) existing football legislation in Colombia; 2) academic research relating to football and violence in Colombia and 3) existing corporate social responsibility projects of Colombian clubs.
6. A communications strategy: this involved a website, two documentaries and three videos (about the construction of the public policy, the football for peace methodology and the *Hincha Responsable* project), and adverts. (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 9–10)
7. The *Poder del fútbol* ('Power of Football') survey.

The consultation process involved a series of national and regional forums. These included a forum of experts (academics, journalists, referees, coaches,

former players, representatives from government and local bodies involved in football), regional forums (for fans, those living near stadiums, local government representatives, NGOs and so forth) and the *Power of Football* national survey. Forums of international experts and the State then validated their findings and conclusions, before the final public policy was published in 2014. These consultation processes, as well as the contents of the PDSCCF, evidence the continuing process of creating what Sandra Morales has called ‘new sporting citizenships’ (referenced by Alejandro Villanueva personal interview 7 October 2017). The focus on dialogue, consultation, participation and empowering of citizens who are involved or have an interest in sport, in this case football, is a significant process. Villanueva sees it as one of the most fundamental aspects of the PDSCCF:

It thinks about sporting citizenships with a focus on human rights, with a focus on inclusion, with a focus on competition since we are in the world of sport, but fundamentally with a focus on building coexistence in the framework of the tension that sport and competition usually generate. I think that is the most important element of the Ten-Year Plan. (personal interview 7 October 2017)

Through the PDSCCF, originally in consultation and then in the document itself, there is an activation of citizenship, and football takes on roles to address problems that the State has struggled to address and that have problematized national unity. The consultation process attempted to involve the different *estratos sociales* and representatives of indigenous, black and vulnerable communities in various regions of Colombia, and interviewed both men and women. In theory, through putting the document into practice, the PDSCCF should help to transform communities wherever it is deployed, cutting across gender, class, ethnic or political lines, supporting State and regional institutions to tackle issues and give and inform on citizen rights. Football is positioned as a device to tackle issues of security and coexistence at micro, meso and macro levels, creating new pedagogical and socialization spaces to give opportunities, education and training to those whose rights have been disenfranchised. It has a role in trying to connect citizens and State, and thus State with nation. There is some privileging involved here in terms of to whom the Plan is destined. More of the general and specific aims contained within the Plan relate to professional football, and therefore apply most to those cities where professional football is played. The part of the Plan that speaks of how recreational football can be deployed towards social development and transformation in theory should give more citizen parity, and function in any region or community, irrespective of class, gender, race or political affiliation. In practice, there is no obligation for mayors or governors to implement the Plan; it is up to their decision, whims or whether they have resources, so there is a risk of uneven coverage of the Plan. This, as shall be discussed, is one of the Plan’s greatest weaknesses.

### The PDSCCF: content

In the introduction to the PDSCCF by Interior Minister Iragorri, the national aim for football was proposed, attributing extremely potent nation-building features to the sport. Football can be the ‘principal tool for generating coexistence’ (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 15–16) and is described as ‘a pedagogical tool which through play allows the teaching of values, citizenship, coexistence, tolerance and respect for others, a tool which can be used in the same way irrespective of socioeconomic class, ethnic group or gender’ (14). This declaration not only resonates with the Santos rhetoric about the unifying and integrating power of football, but also marks a departure from the principle thrust of previous legislation around football proposed by the Interior Ministry, where security was the main point of concern. With the PDSCCF, the emphasis shifts to coexistence and integration, with a much wider scope of impact for football outlined. Dealing with problems around professional football is still central, but football is proposed as a tool to tackle not just violence in the stadia, but the roots of violence in communities across the country, expanding the narrow focus of existing football legislation. This factor makes the PDSCCF such a significant policy document in terms of how football is conceived for the nation. Football is articulated as a meeting and inclusion point, where top-down and bottom-up processes of nation building can occur and be strengthened.

The language deployed throughout the document deals less with punishment and restricting measures, but more with negotiation and cooperation, using football as a propitious space for encounter to solve social issues. The declaration by Iragorri and vision for football in the PDSCCF is based on the results of the *Power of Football* survey, which highlights football’s popularity irrespective of gender, race or region. A figure of 94 per cent of those interviewed saw football as either important or very important with 58 per cent of women seeing football as important compared to 72 per cent of men, allowing football to be considered as a sport that is no longer solely masculine (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 22). A total of 80 per cent of Afro-Colombians see football as important, compared to 82 per cent of indigenous Colombians (73). These two particular sectors also revealed very high results in football’s potential importance; football was seen as being important for youth by 96 per cent of Afro-Colombians and 100 per cent of indigenous Colombians, important for education by 92 per cent and 93 per cent respectively, important for their community by 94 per cent and 95 per cent respectively, and finally the Colombian men’s national team was perceived as being important as a symbol of integration by 100 per cent of Afro-Colombians and 99 per cent indigenous Colombians (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 74–75). These figures support the use of football as an integrative and transformative tool that can promote a greater sense of national cohesion and understanding between and among communities that have historically been riven with divisions or have felt excluded by the State. Both Alejandro Villanueva and Juber Ariza cite

the importance of the *Power of Football* survey to prove what had previously only been said about football's power to unite in Colombia:

There was an excellent study carried out by the National Consultancy Centre which says that when popular classes, middle classes and upper classes interrelate they do so through football.

AfroColombian, indigenous communities and urban communities tend to socialize through football. Therefore, the survey validated many aspects of football that had just been talked about, and had not been studied in more than sixty years. I think that is a great achievement of the Ten-Year Plan. (Alejandro Villanueva personal interview 7 October 2017)

We didn't just demonstrate what football meant for Colombians, but also the things that prevent football from uniting us, the obstacles that it has. And we also measured the impact of football on the economy, the impact of football on communication. Therefore, for anyone who wants to design a public policy around football, or a local policy, or a project by a social organization or business using football, this study shows you all about the subject with concrete data and indicators and what objectives you need to set yourself. This all meant that we can understand that football has huge potential, and therefore we gave it weight, we gave it a grounding. It stopped being just an abstract idea to become something real and something measurable. Now we all know for sure that football is the only thing that unites Colombians. (Juber Ariza personal interview 6 October 2017)

The timing of the survey and the publishing of the PDSCCF may have helped football's positive ratings; after a wobbly start in the World Cup qualifying matches, new Argentinian manager José Pékerman led the national men's team on a run of performances that culminated in Colombia qualifying for the World Cup 2014. This achievement meant a wave of national euphoria and pride in the national team that had largely been absent since the Copa América victory in 2001. The survey process started as Colombia's qualification seemed assured and lasted until after they formally qualified following a 3–3 draw against Chile. The PDSCCF was launched on 29 July 2014 only a few weeks after Colombia's successful tournament, with some adverts for it aired during the competition, though, strangely, no presidential tweets or speeches. With football fever and pride in the national team at a historic high (only the 5–0 victory over Argentina in Buenos Aires in 1993 can compare), this was a perfect time for the Plan to be put into operation. Bearing this in mind, and knowing football's value as political currency, it is clearly stated that this project was one that President Santos was leading, with two name-checks in the introduction linked to the Plan's aims:

The Ten-Year Plan is an initiative of the President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos, so that we can all, for once and forever, overcome the threats to the sport that brings us so much happiness, and which the



majority of Colombians have played at some point in our lives. We call on football to help bring down the walls of violence which prevent us to look towards a future of coexistence with confidence. (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 13)

The Ten-Year Plan 2014-2024 is a great tactical play for coexistence by President Juan Manuel Santos. The commitment of the National Government is to carry out every single one of the points detailed by this document. Football is coexistence. We are going to defeat violence and guarantee that every Colombian can enjoy football in peace. (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 16)

Once again, this language corresponds entirely with Santos's discourse about the power of football for national benefit. Santos referring to the fact that football has been practiced by the majority of Colombians in their life reminds us of Hobsbawm's comments about how the national team functions to help imagine the nation:

What has made sport so uniquely effective a medium for inculcating national feelings, at all events for males, is the ease with which even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation as symbolized by young persons excelling at what practically every man wants, or at one time in life has wanted, to be good at. The imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. (Hobsbawm 1990: 143)

It does seem that Santos is not just addressing men as those who have played football, or have had happy memories around football. The *Power of Football* survey showed that 53 per cent of women had played football in school (Ministerio del Interior 2014b: 54) and 37 per cent had played in their neighbourhood (50), though only 12 per cent of women continue to play (31). The above reference to 'bring down the walls of violence which prevent us to look towards a future of coexistence with confidence' is a clear reference to the peace talks with the FARC – the violence to be defeated is not just that between rival football fans but violence in Colombia more widely.

The PDSCCF sets out a ten-year vision for how Colombian football should progress. It does so by stating fifteen general objectives, thirty-one specific objectives and one hundred and sixty-nine activities to undertake. One of the most obvious details lacking from all of these objectives and activities is the absence of a specific timescale. Another omission is the lack of provisions for women's organized football, either at professional or amateur level. Although women are mentioned and targeted in the recreational aspects of football and in the plans to involve girls in social development programmes, there is no reference whatsoever of helping to advance the female game. No provisions are made for professional men's clubs starting women's teams, either professionally or in the junior ranks, nor to create a professional women's league or to support the existing amateur structures. It is a huge oversight to fail to

consider developing the women's game in a document aiming to improve the professional game and charge it with developing national cohesion. Developing a women's league would give Colombian women footballers greater visibility, make them important symbols for girls across the nation and give greater recognition and representation in the country, as well as allowing women to be explicitly included in a key national symbol and related discourse. The omission of women's professional football, and the lack of references to achievements by the women's national team in speeches and tweets by Santos discussed previously, effectively reveals that the women's game does not have the same potential to unify or represent the nation as potently as men's football in the eyes of the Santos government. Women's professional football is not a nation-building tool, though the participation of women and girls in recreational football is important to tackle social problems.

The PDSCCF outlines a short-term aim and a long-term aim for football:

The Ten-Year Plan has two main perspectives. The first is a short-term perspective which is aimed at control and prevention of manifestations of violence associated with football, through the consolidation of police measures and actions, the strengthening of the National Commission and Local Commissions for Security, Comfort and Coexistence in Football, the development of contingency plans and protocols for security that will be applied inside and outside of football stadiums, and the improvement of technology in stadiums. There is also a long-term strategy, consisting of action to promote education in coexistence and human rights, the creation of opportunities for young people in education, work and the enjoyment of free time, training for the participation in and the opening up of discussion spaces so that young people can play a part in the development of public policies that affect them. (Ministerio del Interior, 2014a: 14)

The overall vision is that by 2024:

[b]y realising the Ten Year Plan for Football, this sport in Colombia will fulfill an integrating, cohesive and transformational role in society and will have contributed to the consolidation of a culture of peace, participation, enterprise and prosperity which will affect the whole population, especially, boys, girls, young people, women and ethnic communities, and will have provided great international victories. (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 77)

The language in the aims and ten-year vision marked a departure from the previous focus of previous legislation, where security, punishment and control were in ascendancy, and coexistence and fan and stakeholder involvement were restricted to one or two articles. The scope for social development and the emphasis on citizenship rights, negotiation and creating spaces for encounter prevail. The PDSCCF was not only therefore a concerted attempt to address social problems, support pre-existing nation-building institutions and help social transformation, but was also an admission of the failures of implementation of the legislation that had been approved in the previous

four years. The short-term aim, stated above, accepts that the problem of violence in and around football stadiums has not been solved, nor have the protocols for stadium improvements, facilities and security plans been fully implemented. The section detailing the objectives of the PDSCCF points to problems caused by a ‘proliferation of rules’ (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 78) and failing to establish the responsibilities of the various administrative bodies involved in professional football. It has been difficult to ‘establish a clear hierarchy for responsibilities’ and ‘it is worrying to see the disarticulation and at times contradiction which exists between the national, departmental and local laws and public policies’ (ibid.). The confusion caused by the plethora of laws and the failure to educate fans, clubs, authorities and general stadium personnel on their content and of their rights and responsibilities has led to disparities in their implementation. The solution to this, perhaps inevitably as the cynics might point out, is to create another law! The objective is to ‘promote a will for a law or code which will bring together, clarify, harmonize, unify and structure the existing legislation relating to security, comfort and coexistence in football as a spectacle’ (2014a: 82). This law has yet to appear on the statutes.<sup>10</sup>

The bodies created by the laws to deal with the problem are not exempt from blame. The CNSCCF is criticized for a lack of strategic direction and the failure to establish roles and a vision of their work, for not having a ‘binding force’ that obliges CLSCCFs to follow their directives, for failing to have full and regular participation of those forming the Committee and for being reactive and not proactive in their work. The lack of a budget for the CNSCCF is also highlighted (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 88). Although a number of activities are proposed for CNSCCF and CLSCCF failures to be improved, it is not made clear how a ‘binding power’ for the CNSCCF is actually going to work, nor how the CLSCCFs and clubs are going to be obliged to follow decisions made by the CNSCCF. The same types of measures to train and educate are proposed without it being evident how this will be enforced, or how punished if it fails to occur, as has been the case since 2009 when these bodies were first created.

Much of what is included in terms of dealing with the short-term aim of improving security, comfort and coexistence around professional football is largely repeating what has supposedly already been established with past laws. There is an aim to strengthen fans’ knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and the content of previous legislation with the proposed creation of the ‘Defensoría del Aficionado’ (Fans Advocacy Institution) that would create a

10 A much-criticized reform to the Football Law was delayed as it entered the Senate to be discussed at the end of May 2017. An *El Espectador* (2017a) article noted that ‘the main modifications were not socialized nor shared with the players, the coaches nor any other protagonist of the sport’ and that the law ‘was not socialized nor publically debated, which does not comply with the principles of participation and democratization which the law demands’.

'Fans Handbook' making their rights clear. This institution does not yet exist at the time of writing. *Barrismo social* is again recognized as an important factor in the attempt to reduce football violence, as is the need for authorities to cooperate with official *barras* to implement pedagogical programmes and create workshops to tackle the social problems at the root of stadium disorder. The aim to strengthen *barrismo social* is underlined (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 115) but, once again, aside from the activities proposed, there is no timescale, no budget suggested, no clarity on how these activities are going to be made obligatory, nor who is responsible for them within the CLSCCFs. It is suggested that the government should form a consultation body to develop *barrismo social* nationally, establishing best practice and opening forums for mutual help between *barras*, but there is nothing to indicate that such measures are being implemented.

The longer-term aim of the PDSCCF, that of using football as a pedagogical tool towards social education, coexistence, tolerance and health, has a more optimistic future, mostly because SDP methodologies and programmes predate the PDSCCF, programmes organized by the government (Colombia, for example), and by NGOs. They also echo the strategic aims and action plans of Coldeportes and the Social and Community Sport section, discussed in the next chapter. The influence of the NGOs contracted to do the consultancy work is very apparent, though it is much shorter than the previous section, with fewer objectives.<sup>11</sup> It represents an official commitment to deploy football towards these ends, details how such work can be implemented and what types of issues can be tackled. One notable exception in this section is the absence of how football can be deployed in a post-conflict scenario, but at the time of publication of the PDSCCF, the negotiations with the FARC were not yet resolved. The Plan does reference the UN's Development Goals, and makes references to a key document produced by the UN's Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG), *Harnessing Sports for Development in Peace* (2008), a document that set out best practice for deploying sport towards development and peace. In the Colombian context, the emphasis is also on trying to prevent recruitment into criminal gangs, drug cartels, guerrilla groups or paramilitaries. Therefore, the PDSCCF is officializing the Colombian government's commitment to the use of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) and applying it to the Colombian panorama

11 A result of the PDSCCF was the creation of the Gol y Paz network, Esteban Reyes saying, 'I dare say that the *Gol y Paz* movement would not exist today if we had not made the Ten-Year Plan' (personal interview 19 October 2017). The Gol y Paz project was originally formed in October 2010, comprising a number of NGOs that had projects in specific parts of the country. The process of producing the PDSCCF meant that the organizations decided to work more closely together, realizing that a network would enable them to strengthen their presence across the national territory and create stronger partnerships with government institutions, businesses and transnational organizations with an interest in sponsoring social development work.

with an eye to using sport and particularly football in a potential situation of post-conflict following the peace agreement with the FARC.

The PDSCCF explicitly targets vulnerable communities with these SDP projects, as do the strategic action plans of Coldeportes and the Social Community Sport section discussed in the next chapter. One of the challenges it faces is to take existing projects into more rural parts of Colombia, particularly those that have suffered in the conflict. This has been difficult to achieve previously given the conflict over territory and the lack of State presence, and it will be interesting to see if football programmes can extend into these areas. The PDSCCF also recognizes the need to build pitches and football facilities to help this process in areas where they are badly lacking, noting that in these vulnerable communities ‘the football field constitutes a hugely important space for free time activities and the generation of community and social capital’ (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 150). Success in this will depend on sufficient investment, as well as the State being able to create an active, effective presence in territories where FARC and paramilitaries have previously exercised control, which of course depends on the ongoing post-peace agreement scenario.<sup>12</sup> Coldeportes, rather than the Interior Ministry, is better placed to address this aspect of the PDSCCF. Coldeportes’ work does correspond with the objectives of the PDSCCF, although the PDSCCF is not mentioned in their own documents – the lack of articulation between Coldeportes and the Interior Ministry, as well as other national ministries, regional and municipal governments, is a reason why the plan has not been implemented fully.

As a document, the PDSCCF is impressive. It sets out a vision for how football can have a transformative and unifying impact in Colombia and gives direction about how this can be achieved. Football is given a specified nation-building role through the general and specific objectives, in terms of how the professional game as a spectator sport and business can be deployed in communities through work by State institutions, clubs, private enterprises, NGOs, the educational sector and, crucially, the fans themselves. It also specifies how the recreational game can be instrumentalized as part of SDP initiatives dealing with transforming society and being another cog supporting citizenship-creating institutions. It has a clear role to play in the post-conflict Colombia that Santos made the focus of his presidency, resonating with his aims of finding common activities, times and spaces when the nation could unite and imagine itself as a collective. Juber Ariza describes it as ‘the only plan in the world in which football is a public policy’ and proudly said that ‘anyone who reads the Ten-Year Plan is impressed, because it contains all

12 The *Me la juego por las víctimas* roadshows, organized by the Unit for the Victims to promote citizens’ awareness of their rights and reparations, was an interesting first step towards football being used in conflict-hit zones. Former footballers of the stature of Carlos Valderrama fronted this government campaign, using football to make victims of the conflict aware of their rights.

the answers to every question' (personal interview 6 October 2017). Indeed, those who were interviewed about the content of the project, all saw positive elements that could deal with existing issues in and around football, both in urban and rural areas. The problem is that, in the view of almost everyone, the PDSCCF is not being fully implemented and is at risk of becoming yet another forgotten document.

### Implementation of the PDSCCF

Given the content of the PDSCCF and comparing it with Santos's speeches about the relevance of sport, and particularly football, for Colombia, as well as taking into account the increased role of Coldeportes in government and a greater budget for sport in general, it is difficult to believe that, for many observers, the PDSCCF risks becoming an almost irrelevant document. During fieldwork interviews, the consensus about the plan was that since it was published, very little had been achieved:

Alejandro Villanueva (sociologist, expert on *barras* in Colombia, and author of investigation into academic research on football as part of consultancy process of the Ten-Year Plan):

There is something that is very clear and that is that we don't have a Ten-Year Plan [...] The Plan does not have a process for implementation [...] What do the guys in the *barras* say? 'How come they haven't implemented the Plan and it remains just a very pretty book?' (personal interview 7 October 2017)

David Osorio (displaced victim of conflict and project leader at Tiempo de Juego, Altos de Cazucá):

My view of the Ten-Year Plan is that everything started with a lot of energy. It started with excellent leadership and great aims, from all those involved including the *barras*, the communities and the foundations who worked together to be able to develop it. What happened was something that happens all the time with similar processes, particularly long-term ones; there comes a point when they get lost, or just remain in a vacuum somewhere. (personal interview 2 November 2017)

Esteban Reyes (director of Tiempo de Juego):

The Ten-Year Plan document, in my opinion, has now become something just of academic interest. (personal interview 19 October 2017)

Ernesto Herrera (leader of Santa Fe *barra* La Guardia Albi-Roja Sur):

The Ten-Year Plan was signed in 2014, to be completed by 2024. Not even 3% of it has been carried out so far. (personal interview 14 November 2017)

Julián Maldonado (director of Paíz Pazífico NGO):

I think it has become an invisible document. In other words, it has not been socialized, and it hasn't been given the support or power behind it for

it to have the impact that this document could have. It's content has not been translated into concrete actions. (personal interview 18 October 2017)

The view provided by the office of Dr Afranio Restrepo, subdirector of Coldeportes, is also cognizant of a slow process of implementation: 'the Ten-Year Plan has been implemented slowly. What is lacking is for central government to give impetus and support for the policy in an organized manner so that what has been achieved thus far do not become isolated actions' (personal correspondence 31 January 2018). The most damning indictment of the lack of progress with the implementation of the PDSCCF came from the Attorney General Fernando Carrillo Flórez at the 'La Violencia en el Fútbol no Aguanta' (Violence in Football Will Not Last) conference, an event designed to relaunch the plan. He stated:

Football does not need more laws. It just needs the Ten-Year Plan to be applied, a policy that was created to be enacted and not to be shelved, relegated to the bottom of the priorities of those who are responsible for its implementation. It is yet another law that remains on paper [...] From the Attorney General's office we ask what has happened to that Plan whose creation began precisely when I was the Interior Minister [...] this plan should fill us with pride and become the impetus for an end to the polarization that is hurting every Colombian. (*Procuraduría General de Colombia* 2017a)

This statement amounts to official recognition that the PDSCCF was failing to become a public policy that was being implemented nationally in an organized fashion. It is difficult to see much evidence of what objectives have been achieved since the project was launched. Simple objectives such as having a 'Fans Day' (Ministerio del Interior 2014a: 122) or creating a webpage about the PDSCCF and a media strategy around it have not been achieved, for example. Work does continue with the CNSCCF, the CLSCCFs and the CTSCCF, but there appears to be a sense that these groups tend to react to situations when violence emerges and try to find solutions when they occur, rather than looking to the PDSCCF and implementing measures that were recommended. Alirio Amaya referred to these types of moments in meetings of the CTSCCF: 'In the Commission meetings it's always the same. There, they always tell me "No Alirio, not the Ten-Year Plan again", and I say "Look, it's in the Plan. You've come here to discuss a problem in a stadium, and you discuss a thousand different things, and I tell you once again, it's in the Plan. There it is." That is the reality of things' (personal interview 23 October 2017). There is still time for the PDSCCF to be implemented; a source of optimism for its future was that Carrillo Flórez and Ariza, given their previous involvement with the project, seemed to have an interest in relaunching the project from the Attorney General's office, having hosted the 'La Violencia en el Fútbol No Aguanta' event. According to Ariza, they wrote to the mayors of cities where professional football is played to ask for

information about how the policy is being implemented. Carrillo Flórez's time in office ended in August 2020 and there is the inevitable question about whether his successor, Margarita Cabello Blanco, will monitor its implementation. There are clearly those, such as Amaya, who continue to 'push the cart'<sup>13</sup> for the PDSCCF, cities where the Plan is being implemented (such as Medellín under the mayor Federico Gutiérrez), and many *barras* seem very committed to keeping the PDSCCF in the public eye, but there are a number of problems that explain why the Plan is at risk, and why its potential is being wasted. These problems include: 1) a lack of support from central government, including Santos failing to mention the plan in his sports-specific speeches; 2) a complete lack of interest in the project from the new Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo, who replaced Iragorri shortly after the PDSCCF was published in a cabinet reshuffle; 3) a failure to have a specific office or budget within the Interior Ministry to work on the plan; 4) the public policy carries no sense of obligation and does not generate political power; 5) its implementation in cities depends on the will and interest of the mayors as well as new political leaders; 6) communications have broken down between the Interior Ministry and the NGOs that carried out the project; 7) there is a lack of communication between bodies involved in the plan and that form part of the CNSCCF, the CLSCCFs and CTSCCF; 8) in some sections there is an unwillingness to implement the plan, some seeing it as a plan for the *barras*, of whom they are still suspicious; and finally 9) a lack of overall leadership in pushing the plan, that to some extent, is linked to all the rest of the afore-mentioned problems.

Let us now explore each of these problems in turn. One of the mysteries of the PDSCCF is that President Santos never mentioned it in any of his public speeches or tweeted about it. He spoke at length about Law 1445, outlining its content and benefits for the nation, but this was not the case for the PDSCCF. Given the content of the plan that resonates so closely with Santos's continual message in all of the sport-related speeches that he gave over his presidency, it is amazing that the plan was never mentioned. The plan is a public policy that has at its very core the aim of deploying the nation's most popular sport, a sport that has been proven in the *Powver of Football* survey to have integrative and nation-building qualities that are, furthermore, recognized by the Colombian population, towards the project of uniting the country, creating greater coexistence, reducing violence and helping bring peace to the nation. This is the core message that Santos always proffered when he talked about sport and football in particular. It is baffling that the PDSCCF was never part of such speeches, particularly as it should be able to give concrete evidence about how his government was working towards creating the conditions for peace in the country.

13 In tweets and personal communication, Alirio tends to use the phrase 'empujar la carreta' to talk about the ongoing process of trying to implement the PDSCCF and its policies.



To what extent was the PDSCCF a priority for Santos? Ana Arizabaleta said that they were told during meetings that it was a process that Santos was following: ‘It was a project that was being talked about, because we were told in meetings “The President said...”, “The President called me...”, “The President is pushing for...”. I think there was a period when he was really aware of what was being done’ (personal interview 3 November 2017). She believes that there was some communication between Iragorri and the President during the process, but then other priorities took over. Alejandro Villanueva, however, thought:

The Ten-Year Plan project was not a priority for Santos, because the Ten-Year Plan is designed to deal with coexistence in local football. And coexistence in local football is strongly linked with hegemony of those institutions, such as Dimayor and the Colombian Football Federation, which have been strongly accused of corruption.<sup>14</sup> (personal interview 7 October 2017)

Santos tended to focus his interest on the national team (and particularly the men’s team) rather than the club game when he spoke about football.<sup>15</sup> Rivalries between clubs have meant that the professional club game, and the issues of violence around it, were a less suitable terrain for discourses of unity and giving examples of desirable citizenship, particularly given the historical tendencies towards regionalism that have fragmented a sense of nation and national identity. National team matches were a more obvious focus for this rhetoric given that regional and club rivalries disappear to coalesce behind the acknowledged national symbol of the *Selección*, particularly as the majority of the players in the national squads currently play abroad, and are therefore deterritorialized from regional representations. Santos’s sports-related speeches tended to occur when there was no real sense of potential discord, such as at the inauguration of sporting facilities or major competitions hosted by Colombia, or when an athlete or national team gained notable success and was welcomed to the Casa de Nariño.

When Juan Carlos Torres was asked about why Santos had not spoken about the PDSCCF, he attributed the omission to a lack of communication from those involved with the project at Ministerial level:

If the President didn’t speak about the Ten-Year Plan specifically in his

14 Villanueva was referring here to the case of former FCF President Luis Bedoya who in his trial admitted taking bribes during his tenure.

15 The only occasions when Santos spoke about club football is when he congratulated teams for winning the league, evoked historical memories of triumphs from the past (such as the Millonarios team of the El Dorado period), when Nacional won the Copa Libertadores and referred to himself as being a fan of Santa Fe. There were only 24 mentions of club football across his 99 speeches. References in tweets to club football often refer to the achievements of Colombian players abroad in their clubs, which are unlikely to provoke partisan reactions.

speeches, it's because Coldeportes and the Interior Ministry, who were behind its creation and approval, did not raise the project to a presidential level. In other words, they didn't bring it to the President's attention [...] I can't say if he knew about it or not, nor the extent to which he supported it, but the key thing is that someone should have added it to his agenda as something important that he could say some words about, or at least mention it. It needed Coldeportes to remind him 'Don't forget that we have the Ten-Year Plan for Football' when they sent him information about a forthcoming sporting event that he was attending. I don't know if that happened, but I don't think so. (personal interview 14 December 2017)

This failure to communicate between the Interior Ministry, rather than Coldeportes, which chaired the process of the PDSCCF, and the President's communications team, explains its invisibility in presidential discourse. Coldeportes seemed better at promoting their work when Santos spoke about sport. Perhaps when Santos had the occasion to speak about sport he looked to Coldeportes rather than other ministries that had an involvement with a sporting project, such as Colombia Joven with the 'Golombiao' campaign (Santos spoke about Golombiao when visiting a site in Soacha in 2012), and the Foreign Ministry who ran the 'Diplomacia Deportiva Cultural' (Sporting and Cultural Diplomacy) programme (see Cancillería 2018). Ariza admitted that 'perhaps it would have been better to have had greater commitment from central government' (personal interview 6 October 2017), and maybe this explains why the commitment from central government to support the implementation of the Plan was lacking.

Many of those interviewed about the PDSCCF who were involved in the process blame Juan Fernando Cristo for its lack of implementation. A recurring problem in Colombian politics has been a lack of continuity in policy among those in positions of responsibility. Ana Arizabaleta pointed to this problem, saying 'the issue is that if there is a pet project of the previous guy, well, he's not going to support the same project. I imagine there is also an ego issue. He didn't understand it, and so for him it became a bit like, "there's that little office for the football project, well, that's got nothing to do with me", and very quickly the whole project lost its relevance' (personal interview 3 November 2017). Esteban Reyes shared her opinion of Cristo's lack of interest in the project: 'Iragorri left, Cristo came in, and Cristo didn't give a damn about this project. Let's just say, well, there was no way of getting through to Cristo' (personal interview 19 October 2017). Alirio Amaya also points to Cristo's unwillingness to support the project, saying, 'We are always going to have to depend on the political will of the minister in position. All I can say is that Minister Cristo was disastrous for the project. Appalling' (personal interview 23 October 2017). This lack of interest from Cristo meant that the funding, resources and manpower necessary to implement the recommendations of the PDSCCF were simply not granted at the key moment of it being put into operation. The budget

that was announced by Carrillo Flórez in 2013 was expended in the consultancy process, and there has never been a defined budget since from the Interior Ministry. As the Interior Ministry under Cristo did not assume the leadership role for the plan in terms of creating a specific office for it, other bodies that are a part of the CNSCCF, the CTSCCF or the CLSCCFs have also not necessarily been prepared to invest in the implementation of the plan unless it has been made a specific part of the municipal or regional government actions. In the early years of the Iván Duque presidency there was little obvious impetus provided from the very top and no presidential references to the PDSCCF. There has, in short, been a lack of involved leadership from those nominally in ministerial charge of driving the project forwards.

The lack of obligation for the plan to become part of these municipal government plans and budgets also explains why the PDSCCF has not progressed into concrete deeds. According to the office of Dr Afranio Restrepo of Coldeportes, the PDSCCF has been included in the plans of the following cities where professional football is played: Pasto, Tuluá, Medellín, Cúcuta, Bucaramanga, Barrancabermeja, Tunja, Cartagena, Bogotá and Ibagué.<sup>16</sup> This was the decision of the relevant authorities, and indicates a failure to convince every city authority to implement the plan. There is also no guarantee that future mayors or governors will continue to support the plan's implementation through funding and other institutional support. Ariza described the plan as being like a 'menu' that those interested in implementing it in order to tackle social issues can use. If the plan is going to have the national impact that is its stated aim then it cannot just be a 'menu' option, as Amaya argued: 'These menus can't be menus. This is a public policy. It must be an obligation' (personal interview 23 October 2017). Amaya also admitted that 'a public policy must generate political power and the Ten-Year Plan has not generated political power'. The lack of obligation and the fact that the plan in itself does not create political power, added to the issue that implementing the strategies recommended by the plan will need to come out of municipal budgets rather than a central one, mean that local authorities are less likely to implement the plan unless they can see benefits for the city, and, perhaps cynically, for their own political career. The lack of a timescale stipulated in the plan beyond the ten years of the title and the failure to pinpoint who should be responsible for ensuring the objectives are met, means that a sense of purpose is absent. These factors lead to a lack of national parity in coverage by the plan, and its continuing absence in cities and rural areas, thus failing to provide the new sporting citizenships that the PDSCCF should develop.

The NGOs who were contracted to carry out the consultancy work and produce the document have been marginalized from the process, and there

<sup>16</sup> It has been included in several more cities since this interview took place.

has been no sense of continuity. Esteban Reyes said that between the Interior Ministry and the NGOs there is ‘a complete rift. I believe that there is no channel for communication’ (personal interview 19 October 2017). This has meant that some of the side projects carried out during the consultancy project, such as the *Hinchas Responsables* (Responsible Fans) project, were isolated events that were discontinued, leaving *barras* dissatisfied. In fact, it seems that the second, long-term perspective of the PDSCCF as to how recreational football can be deployed for social development and transformation has been forgotten (by the Interior Ministry at least, as SDP is a key strategic aim of Coldeportes), and the focus remains on solving the problem of violence in professional football. In the afore-mentioned conference that sought to relaunch the PDSCCF, there was no mention whatsoever of actions that needed to be taken to reinvigorate this second section of the plan. The NGOs involved with the plan have strengthened their own network to work together, but their projects are largely independent of government, or have isolated arrangements with local authorities or other foundations and businesses.<sup>17</sup> The Santos government here laid itself open to charges of merely jumping on the bandwagon of existing processes of SDP for their own benefit, and it is a charge difficult to refute, despite their own existing projects. It can be seen as a brief period of exploiting bottom-up processes of nation building using football, or at least community building, co-opting expertise to benefit its own image, but then discarding them once the contract was up and lip service had been paid to the process of creating a public policy. Coldeportes have increased their focus on Social and Community Sport, but this has not been carried out or articulated through the plan, but through their own strategic objectives.

The fact that there has been no sense of purpose or leadership emerging from the Interior Ministry, allied to the multitude of different institutions that have a stake within the PDSCCF means that a lack of institutional intercommunication has impeded progress. This situation could potentially change if the Ministry of Sport were to take over the implementation of the project, but the security and coexistence focus that has always been associated with all football legislation means that it is likely to still be directed by the Interior Ministry.

The fifth problem of why the PDSCCF has not been implemented is the lack of political will. To some extent, it has been branded as a ‘Ten-Year Plan for the *barras*’, which does not take a tough enough line with the *barras*. The *barras* are easy targets for being stigmatized as being drug-taking, violent delinquents, and whenever violent episodes occur many in the press advance the argument that strict enough measures are not being taken by authorities. There are many that still prefer the ‘punish over prevent’ option. Amaya

17 A prime example is the Fundación Selección Colombia, established in 2014 by the Gol y Paz network in tandem with the Colombian Football Federation and the Bavaria company (<https://www.bavaria.co/fundacion-seleccion-colombia>).

revealed this tension among those in powerful positions within the football and institutional hierarchy:

There was a lot of resistance to the Ten-Year Plan within football. I don't think everyone has even read it. I'm convinced that the people in charge of football have not read the Ten-Year Plan in a detailed way in order to understand the great opportunities that it contains. Therefore, there have been many times when people write it off saying 'no, it's just a Ten-Year Plan for *barras*'. (personal interview 23 October 2017)

The fans have a similar perspective. Many have an interest in the implementation of the plan as it gives them more rights and legitimizes their participation in football, as well as obliging authorities to address their concerns, support their *barrismo social* activities and tackle the root causes of violence that emerges from their communities. There is suspicion from the *barras*, though, that the authorities do not want to commit to support these projects, as Ernesto Herrera argued: 'the government is afraid of it, because after they created the document they realized that although there are punishments included, there are also good things for the *barras*. I think that this is part of government fear that the general society begins to organise itself against them' (personal interview 14 November 2017). Herrera believes that an opportunity was lost with the Ten-Year Plan, particularly given the situation with the peace talks in the country, and that the PDSCCF could have been an excellent opportunity to create similar processes and dialogues:

I still say that when this document came out it was the best time to sit down with the *barras*, given the circumstances in the country, the national political moment we were in, that was the best time to put this document into operation. I think it was the perfect time because it talks about peace, about reconciliation, about participation. (personal interview 14 November 2017)

The plan does have a ten-year scope for its implementation, but the end of the Santos presidency marked a crucial juncture for its implementation. The Attorney General's office under Carrillo Flórez appeared to be attempting to raise awareness of the plan, its usefulness and how it should be employed but given the lack of effective leadership from the Interior Ministry and lack of budget, as well as the optional nature of the public policy and unwillingness from many of those in leadership positions to believe in what the document stands for, then the prospects of the plan being fully implemented nationally appear slight. There is no guarantee that forthcoming ministers, mayors and governors will see it among their priorities, and the fans groups are not sufficiently organized or powerful enough nationally to push for it to be implemented. Despite it being a public policy that completely resonated with Santos's oft-stated vision for sports' deployment towards nation building and social development, he failed to charge the policy with the impetus it needed for it to be successful. The PDSCCF is therefore a potentially significant

document, articulating a commitment to using football for nation-building aims, but much of it remains solely on paper at this stage of the ten-year process.

### Conclusion: paper promises

Unlike previous occasions when football-based sporting nationalism was deployed by Colombian presidents, the Santos government appeared to have a clearer and multi-faceted strategy about how football could be more systematically deployed towards social transformation and creating a greater sense of community at micro and macro levels. It should be admitted that this was a more propitious moment for Santos to deploy football than previous governments have enjoyed. The hosting of the Under 20 World Cup in 2011, the successful 2014 World Cup campaign and qualification for the 2018 World Cup and Colombia's most successful period for sporting success in multi-sport events, such as the Olympics and Pan American games, enabled Santos to reap the benefits of these successes, and he did so adeptly. Although the process of introducing legislation did not begin under Santos, the focus of legislation under his government shifted in tone towards prevention rather than punishment, creating new sporting citizenships and the promotion of football for coexistence and reintegration to solve ongoing security issues and create more links between State and citizen, and citizen and nation. Through the laws and public policies introduced under Santos (Law 1445 and the Statute for Fans in particular, as well as the PDSCCF), the conditions were created for football to be a cleaner and more potent symbol of 'Colombianness'. The legislation intends to tackle problems of criminality within clubs, create a safer, welcoming and convivial spectacle at professional club level for fans and reach out to the communities through professional football to address social problems that have led to violence in and around football stadiums. Although authority and control are still important features of legislation and there is a move to strengthening institutions and clarifying their duties, there is a dual process of recognizing citizens' rights, supporting their actions within their communities and a commitment to supporting and leading SDP projects across the national territory. In other words, there is on the statutes a government commitment to support bottom-up projects of nation building, a combination, therefore, of top-down and bottom-up processes. The impact of fan groups, NGOs and others working from below should not be ignored; much of the early groundwork and impetus was created for the legislation by their work, being able to influence government policy on football towards contemplating a different approach from the usual tendency to punish, instead prioritizing education, training, negotiation and the possibilities of methodologies for football for development and peace. The legislation and public policies are a work in progress, with the PDSCCF trying to address the problems and uncertainties created by a plethora of laws and a muddled chain of command

and hierarchy in the decision-making process for the realization of policies. It remains to be seen whether the new project to reform the Sports Law, first mooted in May 2017 but delayed after criticism and still undergoing consultation, will be approved, then be implemented and how the problems will be solved. It is uncertain whether Colombia's ambitious approach to what can be achieved through laws and public policies related to football, certainly compared to other football-based laws on the continent that have a purely punitive approach, can be implemented consistently and effectively. There has been, at least, the attempt to create a legal framework for professional and recreational football to be enhanced as a dynamo for nation building and greater national cohesion in a post-conflict Colombia. However, the Santos government can also be criticized for producing yet more laws and policies that look great on paper and are well intentioned, but have had insufficient tangible impact and is far from achieving many of its objectives at this stage. This recalls Gabriel García Márquez's quote about everything in Colombia seeming wonderful on paper and leaves Santos open to the charge of whether his use of football was in reality just talking a good game and failing to act. The failure of Santos to communicate about the PDSCCF and the Interior Ministry to get behind it after its publication and push for its implementation across the country can be seen as a wasted opportunity, even if there have been some cities and projects that have advanced cautiously with some aspects of the PDSCCF. The PDSCCF is a useful blueprint for what could be done, but without implementation it remains just that. As a policy, it feels misplaced as an Interior Ministry project, and would be better suited perhaps to being governed by the Sport Ministry, where it certainly resonates with Social and Community Sport Projects, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Allied to this legislation, Santos giving more power to Coldeportes and a greater role for the Social and Community Sport section within Coldeportes gave sport a more prominent role in contributing towards the policies pursued during his presidency. Given that a feature of Santos's government was his pursuit of peace with the FARC, sport, and football in particular, was in a position (supported by legislation and public policy) to be deployed in the post-peace agreement scenario. Chapter five looks at specific SDP projects that have been undertaken by Coldeportes and Colombia Joven. Unlike the rather ad hoc nature of previous moments of sporting nationalism around sporting success when rhetoric went unsupported by concrete measures, the Santos government put in place laws and policies to prove football's power and deploy it to tackle some of the issues caused by State failure. Through the *Power of Football* survey and the PDSCCF, football's unifying power was measured and officialized and presented as a viable option for regions and cities to implement. However, the failure of Santos and his Interior Ministry to oblige governors and mayors to adopt the measures and to support the plan with the necessary budget and support means that implementation thus far has been piecemeal and inconsistent.





## Football for peace

### Football-based government SDP campaigns towards nation building

#### Introduction

Attention in this final chapter turns to football's deployment by the government through campaigns and projects towards nation-building aims. The focus will be on projects administered by Coldeportes, but also the Golombiao project of Colombia Joven.<sup>1</sup> These are Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) campaigns that share the nation-building aims for recreational football of the PDSCCF discussed in the previous chapter, although have not necessarily been articulated through the plan, since the PDSCCF was an Interior Ministry public policy. The importance of analyzing these projects is that they put into practice the unifying and social developmental powers that are ascribed to football in Santos's discourse for nation building, and show that football was not merely deployed symbolically and rhetorically at the times of notable national success. Rhetoric rather than concrete action has usually been the case in other sporting nationalism projects. With the campaigns discussed here, the principles of inclusion and coexistence essential for Santos's national unity project were brought to the forefront through programmes in which football was either the main or a significant sport used. The fact that football was a key part of the reintegration programme in the FARC demobilization and transition camps, a moment of historic national significance in terms of the Colombian national project,

1 It is important to note that various other government agencies and ministries deployed football to aid their activities. The Foreign Ministry was responsible for the Sporting and Cultural Diplomacy programme, winner of the International Award for Sport and Peace in December 2017, which sent teams from vulnerable areas to partner countries abroad, and sought to promote social inclusion. The Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization and Agency for Victims has used football regularly in their activities, and the Agency for Attention and Reparations for Victims had a football roadshow called 'Me la juego por la paz' (I am Playing for Peace) featuring the likes of Carlos Valderrama, which used football to let victims in communities that had suffered from the conflict know about their right for reparations.

makes this analysis particularly pertinent. It also adds to the field of SDP studies that have examined the role in peace-building and post-conflict scenarios around the globe.

This chapter demonstrates that under Santos there was an increased deployment of football-based SDP campaigns targeted at addressing the Colombian political and social situation, which complemented the post-conflict process with the FARC, as well as Santos's national unity project. This occurred most symbolically and visibly for the nation in the FARC Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR) (Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation) camps, as football became a venue for opposing forces to swap bullets for balls in matches and events designed to aid reconciliation and coexistence processes. National team matches in 2017 and particularly with the World Cup in 2018 also became moments for former FARC combatants to assert their 'Colombianness' as fans of the national team, and thus share moments of exceptional patriotism with the national 'in group' from which they had previously been excluded, as was argued in chapter two. Santos's government recognized the role recreational and social sport could play as a site for inclusion and for peace building, as well as inculcating positive citizen values, particularly in vulnerable areas where State presence had been limited or absent. SDP programmes with football at their core predate his presidency in Colombia, but this chapter argues that there was a much greater onus, articulation and commitment to SDP under Santos. Football as an undeniably culturally significant sport in Colombia with ample political and social currency, added to institutional, academic and popular recognition of its transformative power, meant it was utilized for a variety of nation and State-building purposes through SDP programmes under Santos, including:

- 1) Supporting the peace process by creating spaces and opportunities for reintegration and reconciliation between former combatants, public forces and the community.
- 2) Re-signifying spaces, people and organizations, particularly those involved in or victims of the Colombian conflict and related violences.
- 3) Facilitating social and regional encounter by creating socialization spaces around competitive, youth, social and recreational sport that help the building of mutual trust and social capital.
- 4) Providing pedagogical activities that supplement, replace or fill the void of the responsibilities of other State institutions that educate on social issues such as health, environment and gender equity, and that provide opportunities for personal development and help form 'better' Colombians.
- 5) Finding new talents, coaching and providing opportunities for young Colombians to progress in sport who can represent the country and provide moments for national celebration, boosting national pride, positivity and self-confidence, as well as moments for symbolic unity where triumphs of the nation can be celebrated.

- 6) Answering the institutional deficit in guaranteeing the rights of Colombian citizens stipulated by the Constitution of 1991 and legislation such as the National System for Sport, by providing opportunities and infrastructure for sport, physical activity, physical education and recreation.
- 7) Giving the State visibility through sport in peripheral areas and communities that historically may have felt abandoned or ignored by the State, providing the opportunity for State and citizens to reconnect.

All of the above features address existing deficits or fissures in the Colombian national project. Through SDP projects, the Santos government attempted to find ways to promote symbols and institutions, reintegrate and include zones and citizens, and alleviate sources of conflict that engender isolation, enmity, polarization and distrust among Colombians. It is important to remember that football as an activity, and the national team as a symbol, are one of very few unifying elements in a nation that lacks symbols, institutions and heroes that can crystallize collective identities and that can serve as the base for nation building (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Londoño 2003: 123) and that football has become the meeting point of different identities that can be integrated based on a spirit of nationalism. Whereas presidential discourse around football tends to function sporadically at the time of national victories, under Santos football was put to work more consistently through SDP campaigns. It functioned daily and in an enduring manner through these campaigns, particularly those in the ETCRs, to synthesize the rather fragile and still controversial new national 'us' and 'New Colombia' promoted by Santos via the rhetorical fusing of the national victories of the 2014 World Cup and the peace process.

As discussed in chapter two, there has been a tendency in Colombian government to focus on elite sport and how it can be deployed towards national benefit. It has been used either as a pacification and distraction device (such as with the El Dorado league) or creating a sense of national unity through rhetorical praising of the sporting heroes and making the victory redolent of desired national characteristics (such as with the team of the mid-1980s to early 1990s). The latter tactic has certainly taken place under Santos, as demonstrated by chapter three. Historically, however, Colombians have not been taught to feel more Colombian through sport in their community, and sporting nationalism has occurred mostly through elite level achievement. However, the promotion and strengthening of social and community sport and an awareness of how recreational sport and SDP projects can also nation-build through creating the conditions for coexistence, integration and developing social values during the Santos government was more novel. To some extent, it is a similar situation to the first three decades of the twentieth century and debates about the Colombian race. Worries about hygiene, health and degeneration of the race led to the first sports law in Colombia, Law 80 de 1925, which promoted physical education and

sport for the whole population rather than just the elites (Hernández Acosta 2013: 45). In this period sport was seen as one of the fundamental factors in developing a modern society in Colombia, as values such as team spirit, the desire to win and discipline in training were considered as part of capitalist society (Morales 2011: 17 in Hernández Acosta 2013: 45). Once again, under Santos, the widespread practice of sport became a way for the government to counteract problems that were affecting the nation, such as violence, and to promote avoiding vice, tolerance, respect and coexistence.

The Santos government studied and took heed of published recommendations from international institutions such as the United Nations via the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) and SDP theory. Subsequent projects showed a commitment to implementing these recommendations. SDP projects in Colombia have received comparatively little critical attention and so the setting of peace negotiations and post-conflict Colombia can provide an important contribution to this particular field. This chapter, then, analyzes how social and community sport and SDP projects with football at their heart, were part of Santos's wider strategy to include more Colombians, particularly those previously 'other' to the nation, and those in vulnerable communities, within the nation, ensuring that football has a more enduring and constant role to play alongside the exceptional moments of national unity engendered by a men's national team match.

### Recognition of football's power for social development in Colombia

Previous chapters have shown that sport, and football specifically, was important for the Santos government in terms of fostering a greater sense of national togetherness and positivity around the symbol of the national football team, and the mythopoeic values that can be learned from football and sport in general. Given the political focus of Santos towards national unity, with the peace with the FARC as a central concern, the symbolic field of football was a privileged site to promote sentiments and acts of peace and unity. The frequency of this message in his discourse demonstrates the linking of football with his political project. Although the Interior Ministry promoted the legislation and PDSCCF, Coldeportes was at the forefront in developing projects that used sport as a motor for social development, peace and togetherness, to support the president's rhetoric. In answer to questions about the significance of SDP under Santos, the office of Dr Afranio Restrepo, the subdirector of Coldeportes, wrote:

Sport as a tool for coexistence and peace is significant for the current administration. If one does a detailed analysis of the National Development Plan – the instrument the government has to determine its four-year planning of its actions, the importance that sport has had over the two terms of the current administration is very evident. In addition, the Ten-Year Plan for Sport (2009–2019, henceforth the PDD) proposes

concrete actions that promotes the development of national sport as a vital axis for generating greater coexistence. (personal communication 31 January 2018)

This reply cites the historic background of the peace process as a contributory factor towards the importance of sport for the Santos government:

There is a greater commitment towards sport as a tool for reconciliation and resocialization, particularly as there was a historic opportunity for social transformation following the peace agreement. However, from its creation, Coldeportes has always had a commitment towards sport as a basis for reconstruction of the social fabric. (personal communication 31 January 2018)

This developmental role of sport for society is legislated by the National System of Sport, introduced by Law 181 in 1995. Duarte Bajiña notes, however, that this role is restricted to one facet in how sport is articulated; since Law 181 only one of the eight ways of developing sport mentioned by the law has the objective of improving the quality of life, which is social and community sport (2011: 15). This has certainly changed, as demonstrated by the action plans for Coldeportes in both 2010–2014, Santos's first presidential term, and in 2014–2018. In the department planning document for 2010–2014, they declare Coldeportes through the PDD as having:

The unique aim of promoting national unity or integration for the construction of a public policy that is in accord with the situation and demands of current society and the national reality, which will orient the sector towards human development, coexistence and peace, based on principles of equality, wellbeing and social development of all Colombian men and women. (Coldeportes 2010: 3)

All facets of sport are thus given a social role. The mission for Coldeportes for the four-year period is

[t]o lead, formulate, direct and evaluate the public policy for sport, recreation and physical activity and to supervise and carry out Inspection, Vigilance and Control of the National System of Sport, based on the criteria of inclusion and social equality, which will contribute to coexistence, peace and prosperity of Colombians. (Coldeportes 2010: 8)

Here we can see the clear emphasis as to how sport, physical activity and recreation should contribute to the wider aims of the Santos government, with specific references to inclusion, social equity, coexistence and peace. It becomes a consideration of all Coldeportes' activities. This emphasis could also be seen in the change of tone and focus in the legislation around football promoted by the Interior Ministry discussed previously. This function is made explicit in the principal objective of Coldeportes; Coldeportes should 'promote wellbeing, quality of life as well as contributing to public health,

education, culture, social cohesion, national awareness and international relations through participation with public and private actors' (Coldeportes 2014a: 2). In the 2014–2018 Coldeportes Strategic Plan, coexistence and peace are again underlined. The vision was, 'By 2019, to position Colombia as a world sporting power and be a leader in the development of coexistence and peace through the formulation and implementation of policies on sport, recreation and physical activity, based on the central criteria of inclusion' (Coldeportes 2014a: 3). The emphasis on Colombia being a leader in constructing spaces for coexistence and peace is instructive as to the importance of sport under Santos and its nation-building potential for creating community, coexistence and unity. As Cortés Díaz writes, 'for the Colombian State, sport is an indispensable part of society construction' (2015: 79). The action plans and campaigns discussed in this chapter resonate entirely with messages in Santos's rhetoric and with his wider political aims of peace with the FARC.

The *Power of Football* survey that was part of the research of the PDSCCF confirms football's currency and power among Colombians and their belief that it can help remedy society's perceived problems, confirming the opinions of many academics who see football in Colombia as one of the few sources of unity in a country lacking unifying symbols (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara 1994; 2006: 104; Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Londoño 2003: 134; Riveros 2014; Celis Hernández 2017; Humanez Blanquicett 2014). For instance, 61 per cent think football helps distance young people from violence and vice and 46 per cent think that football unites people (Ministerio del Interior 2014c: 21). The Colombian national team is seen as a symbol of integration by 96 per cent, with 93 per cent thinking that football is important for youth and 83 per cent believing that it is important for education. Football is important for community at micro, meso and macro levels. A figure of 78 per cent think it is important for their neighbourhood, 82 per cent for their community, 86 per cent for their department, 88 per cent for their city and 92 per cent for Colombia (42). The survey identifies opportunities that these results provide, such as:

Football creates identity. The Colombian National Team is a convening social narrative. National identity can be strengthened through various positive figures such as the players in the *Selección*.

The most representative players in the National Team inspire socially desirable behaviour in young people, of benefit to education about national values and healthy habits.

[...] Colombia needs inclusive and inspiring national narratives, which appeal to the whole population. The country must find these narratives to embrace national diversity.

Football draws back the veil that prevents Colombia from being seen as a rich, diverse and happy society

Football can be the great metaphor of the country.

The love and respect for our football heroes are an example of how Colombians should care for and respect other Colombians and Colombia. (Ministerio del Interior 2014c: 44)

All these opportunities identified are ways that the Colombian nation and a sense of Colombianness can be fostered and strengthened, utilizing the national football team's symbolic value and the transformative and inclusive power of football to address enduring Colombian problems. As discussed in chapter two, football has been used on various occasions when success has occurred to bolster the weak sense of Colombian national identity, where being Colombian has more to do with frustrations and traumas rather than narratives of national heroism or triumph. Alejandro Villanueva commented:

Colombia has been built based on frustration. It is a country whose collective psychology is rooted in political frustration, whether it is from inequality, poverty, unemployment, or how Colombians are seen as criminals by outsiders. The only thing that manages to remove these frustrations are the victories and sporting excitement provided by football. (*Señal Colombia* 2018)

Football more than anything else in Colombia can enhance national cohesion, strengthen identities and find ways to accept, integrate, represent and champion diversity, which, as Wade argues, 'is part and parcel of nation-building' (1998: 4). Managing diversity has often been a historical problem in terms of conceiving an idea of nation and national identity, when instincts towards homogenization have often been articulated, but diversity can also be envisioned as a positive characteristic of nation, as mixture and hybridization can strengthen the national whole. Government has not always mediated Colombia's national diversity effectively, in terms of its people, customs, cultures and regionalisms. Wade writes that 'a nationalist project does not try to deny, suppress or even simply channel an unruly diversity: it actively reconstructs it' (3); football, for Santos, was a way in which this diversity could be represented, articulated and celebrated, remembering that, as Briceño notes, 'In this country football has acquired a different quality compared to all other sports – it manages to reach the farthest, most multicultural corners of Colombia' (*Señal Colombia* 2018).

The *Power of Football* survey highlights how football contributes to national happiness and enhances social capital, as well as its importance for education and social values. 'The interviews ratify football's ability to promote values [...] These are not just sporting values, but that recognition is determined by the potential that it has to develop citizens and improve society' (Ministerio del Interior 2014c: 53). Encouragingly, for a government keen to promote football social projects, the survey revealed that 24 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men already knew about football SDP projects in their city (54), showing the extent to which football was already being deployed by community, NGO or official projects. Section three of the

survey deals specifically with football for social inclusion, concluding that football is important for strengthening society's building blocks: 'football is a language which unites generations, ethnicities and social classes' (61). Those in vulnerable communities also recognized the importance of football for themselves, their communities and Colombia. A total of 71 per cent of those in such communities see football as a way of distancing youth from violence, 10 per cent higher than the national result. The survey identifies a number of opportunities for football to help with these vulnerable communities, including providing education and social advancement, strengthening social and communal relations and preventing youths from becoming involved with gangs and drugs (70). Similar results emerge from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities and similar opportunities identified. In addition, 100 per cent of Afro-Colombians and 99 per cent of indigenous people see the national team as a symbol of integration (74). The survey results, therefore, justified ongoing and subsequent campaigns. Given these convincing results, the ensuing public policy document, the PDSCCF, fell short in detailing more specific objectives and actions that could be taken with recreational football. There is an imbalance in the PDSCCF if we compare the attention it pays to addressing security, comfort and coexistence concerns around professional football (61 pages), compared to football's social development role in the entire nation (29 pages). Remembering that the vision of the public policy is that by 2024 football 'will fulfil a cohesive, integrating and transformative role in society and will have contributed to the consolidation of a culture of peace, participation, entrepreneurship and prosperity which will impact on the whole population' (77), the section on recreational football and social transformation is underdeveloped and is not articulated with ongoing policies and projects undertaken by Coldeportes. The recognition of the need to integrate and develop a more cohesive society in this objective for 2024 shows how certain regions and communities of Colombia have not been fully included within the nation, a problem regularly highlighted by writers on Colombia (see, for instance, Palacios 2006: 5; LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 21; Kilcullen 2016: 67). However, the failure of the Interior Ministry to implement the PDSCCF has been compensated to some extent by the work of the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes, which has the structures in place to undertake these actions with more expertise and focus as an institution responsible for sport, recreation and physical activity.

### The UN and the power of sport

The *Power of Football* survey contextualizes the Colombian situation in response to UN documents that adopted sport as an important tool to tackle the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related social problems. The UN confirmed sport as a tool for development and peace in 2003 and created the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group



(SDP IWG) taskforce to study best practice, problems, solutions, outcomes and then present recommendations. The SDP IWG outlined why sport and the work of the UN should go hand in hand, stating that ‘the world of sport presents a natural partnership for the United Nations system. By its very nature, sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides’ (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace 2003: v). This acknowledges the deployment of sport for nation-building processes, particularly in a country like Colombia. The year 2005 was declared the UN Year of Sport and Physical Education in an effort to promote SDP activities worldwide. In the following year the SDP IWG published a study of experiences from countries where SDP programmes had taken place (SDP IWG 2006), which led to the publication of ‘Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments’ (SDP IWG 2008). This document aimed to: ‘1) increase awareness amongst governments about the development and peace potential of sport, and 2) provide government policy-makers with a solid foundation on which to build their own policies, programmes and initiatives’ (SDP IWG 2008: viii). It details how sport can be deployed towards meeting MDGs and tackling specific social issues, in chapters on Sport and Health, Sport and Child & Youth Development, Sport and Gender, Sport and Persons with Disabilities, and Sport and Peace. The last of these is directly applicable to the Colombian scenario given the peace process with the FARC and subsequent post-conflict situation. Each chapter provides a context of problems, evidence from international projects and then policy and programme recommendations for governments. It is notable that this document was published a year before the PDD was published by Coldeportes where, as we have seen, a wider transformative and nation-building role for sport is detailed. A year later Santos became President, and his National Development Plans and Coldeportes’ action plans contained clear objectives to apply the power of sport to national and social development, peace, coexistence and cohesion. These UN studies clearly served as a blueprint for the Santos government’s own SDP projects. The ‘Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace’ document is referenced in the PDSCCF, the major public policy for football produced under Santos, showing it was known among the Interior Ministry, Coldeportes and other policy-making institutions.

The study shows the key role SDP can play in peace building (SDP IWG 2008: 205), essential to the post-conflict situation in Colombia, and details the various ways that sport produces outcomes essential for nation building. These include ‘building a sense of shared identity and fellowship among groups that might otherwise be inclined to treat each other with distrust, hostility and violence’, creating ‘horizontal connections’, the chance to “re-humanize” opposing groups’, to ‘regain a sense of security and normalcy’ and an opportunity for ‘creating a space for dialogue’

(SDP IWG 2008: 207–208). The ‘horizontal connections’ immediately corresponds with Benedict Anderson’s idea of the needs for a nation, sport providing a means for mutual recognition. The chance to socialize through such an activity, to bridge enduring fissures between groups and include those ‘outside’ the national ‘in group’ helps fortify a sense of social capital, again a pre-requisite for unity at any level and a productive community. The study stresses that sport can ‘promote community identity, coherence and integration’, as well as opportunities for ‘bonding, bridging and linking’ (SDP IWG 2008: 213), which again are directly relevant to the Colombian context of social fragmentation, conflicting identities (political, regional, racial and social) and exclusion. Another comment that may have resonated with the Colombian government is that ‘sport has been particularly important to emerging nations trying to forge a new identity internally and with the rest of the world’ (SDP IWG 2008: 225). Colombia has struggled to create a positive and inclusive national identity (Bushnell 1991: viii) and the spectre of drugs and violence in particular casts a cloud over internal and external perceptions of the country. In sport, national team success in World Cups is one way of transmitting a new image to a mass audience, but stories of the FARC and public forces playing football together in the ETCRs and SDP projects benefitting vulnerable communities are other good news stories that help to alter Colombia’s negative image that directly reference the reasons for that image. In short, all these benefits presented by the document are ones that Colombia needed in Santos’s opinion when he came to power and as the peace talks advanced. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was an increased onus on SDP projects under his government.

### Academic responses to SDP

SDP has become a burgeoning field of study given its global rise as a viable option for social transformation and development supported by the UN, transnational organizations, national governments, NGOs and community action groups. Many articles are based on their observations and analysis of ongoing SDP projects across the globe, examining particularly, but not limited to, NGO work. Projects in Colombia have received little academic attention, limited to articles such as by Duarte Bajiña (2017) on Golombiao as a bioethical project, and by Sobotová et al. (2016) on a project in Soacha. SDP projects in Colombia are burgeoning as the expanding Gol y Paz network shows; Esteban Reyes of Tiempo de Juego, one of the founding organizations of the network, said, ‘Whenever you go to work in remote communities in different parts of Colombia, you will always find an organization that is using football for social work’ (personal interview 19 October 2017). Given this assertion, it seems surprising that such NGO projects and government actions have received very little critical attention. Given the historic juncture in Colombia with the peace agreement with the FARC and

nascent post-conflict situation, and football's role in the process, this chapter addresses this deficit of research on SDP in Colombia in terms of government SDP actions. It demonstrates how programmes such as Golombiao and the Coldeportes' project in the ETCRs integrate into a wider government strategy of nation building, rather than evaluating their methodology and effectiveness in depth. It discusses some of the outcomes, problems and successes related to the aims of Santos's national unity project and ideas about how football can benefit Colombian society.

The SDP 'movement' has come a long way since Kidd described it as 'still in its infancy, woefully underfunded, completely unregulated, poorly planned and coordinated and largely isolated from mainstream development efforts' (2008: 376). SDP projects have been categorized in a variety of ways, depending on the content (Kidd 2008: 376; Darnell 2012: 6; Coalter 2007: 71; Coalter 2010: 1375), desired outcomes (Levermore 2008: 185–186), and those carrying out the projects. Giulianotti identifies 'four distinctive policy domains' that may be behind SDP programmes:

Private/commercial institutions, associated with *neo-liberal* social policies, notably CSR [corporate social responsibility]; mainstream NGOs and community-based organisations, associated with *developmental interventionist* social policies; national and intergovernmental agencies and organisations, and sport federations, associated with *strategic developmentalist* social policies; new social movements and radical NGOs, associated with social policies centred on *social justice*. (Giulianotti 2011c: 761)

Irrespective of the categories posited, all these types of projects are present in Colombia, targeting similar outcomes, and being organized by the institutions Giulianotti describes.

The majority of academics are cautious when assessing the efficiency or otherwise of SDP and how sport actually contributes to tackling social issues. Coalter warns of the 'mythopoeic status of sport and the assumption of inevitably positive outcomes' (2007: 1), and Schulenkorf et al. caution that 'sport itself is not a panacea to cure all social ills' (2014: 374). Sport may have a positive impact but it is essential to create the optimal conditions and processes to ensure this is the case (Papacharisis et al. 2007: 247; Patriksson 1995: 128). Included among the many positive features attributed to sport are its potential to generate social capital (Coalter 2007: 17; Jarvie 2011: 243) and social dialogue through the creation of peaceful spaces (Calderón and Martínez 2015: 1); its ability to teach and foster positive values and desirable attributes (Schulenkorf et al. 2014: 374; Calderón and Martínez 2015: 1), which may enhance the knowledge economy of a society and provide education and opportunities for young people in particular (Jarvie 2011: 243); the ability to fill a development void due to State absence or failure to help towards achieving development goals (Darnell 2012: 2). Sport works because of its popularity and convening power (Lindsey and Grattan 2012: 91; Calderón and Martínez 2015: 1), as well as how adaptable it is to

different political, social, geographic and economic circumstances (Lindsey and Grattan 2012: 91) and, overall, due to the fact that it can be a:

Politically palatable, non-threatening and/or effective tool for bringing together diverse people within and across the borders of nation states. The connection between sport, nationalism and the building of nations in this sense is positioned as an opportunity to work towards the inclusive and peaceful achievement of a functioning and prosperous nation-as-community, one that bypasses or usurps racism, patriarchy or material inequalities that have so often proved difficult in the construction and operation of inclusive and peaceful communities and nations. (Darnell 2012: 3)

The above sums up perfectly how the Santos government conceived football's role in Colombia for nation building. Football is a culturally relevant and cheap tool, wielding the symbolic power to bridge existing social, political, economic, geographic and racial fissures and help peace building and then nation building, as Briceño comments: 'it is a sport that breaks down barriers such as class, culture, religion, region or political preference, and this is why football manages to so easily survive such potential disagreements' (*Señal Colombia* 2018).

Academics have drawn attention to a number of methodological, situational and results-based problems that cast doubt on whether SDP programmes have the desired transformative effect. It should be remembered that sport 'is a tool for tackling cultural violence, but can do nothing significant to alleviate structural violence or direct violence' (Lea-Howarth 2006: 10) and must be part of a wider structure. This is unquestionably true; post-conflict situations are too complex to be resolved by sport alone. Sport, unilaterally, cannot alter existing structures and processes, though it may adapt attitudes and provide opportunities for meeting and negotiation. Where peace is at stake, as in Colombia, 'culturally focused peace initiatives can work only when preceded by military and political accommodations' (Sugden 2006: 238). Sport is a simple and effective entry point, a means to pass the time as reintegration processes advance, or symbolic practice, but cannot on its own address complex, enduring and inherent social disputes and problems. Although there are anecdotal accounts of national team matches leading to a temporary ceasefire of hostilities between the Colombian army and FARC (as fictionally portrayed in the 1998 film *Golpe de Estadio* by Sergio Cabrera), football has had to wait until after the peace agreement for it to become a part of organized post-conflict reintegration and reconciliation processes between State and anti-State forces. The most common cause for concern among academics is how the projects are monitored and evaluated. Many writers argue that proof of successful outcomes often relies on descriptive or anecdotal evidence, rather than concrete, more 'scientific' data (Levermore 2008: 189; 2011: 340; Lindsey and Grattan 2012; Jarvie 2011: 242; Darnell 2012: 89; Coalter

2007: 1; 2010: 1374; Spaaij 2009: 1109; Spaaij, Oxford and Jeanes 2016: 571). Conversely, Nicholls, Giles and Sethna (2010) argue that views of grassroots practitioners and those impacted upon by the programmes are ignored, disregarded or not accorded sufficient weight in understanding the outcomes of the SDP project. They, after all, are those directly affected by the project, and it is vital that their local knowledge, experiences, views and cultural particularities are not ignored (Galtung 1998: 86; Giulianotti 2011c: 765; 2011b: 51; 2011a: 220; Lea-Howarth 2006: 14; Spaaij 2009: 1109; Spaaij, Oxford and Jeanes 2016). It is worth noting at this point that in the Coldeportes' programme of supplying sport, recreation and physical education to the ECTRs, the *promotores* and *monitores* (literally 'promoters' and 'monitors') in charge of providing and running the activities were all people from the areas where the camps were situated, for this reason. Gisela Gómez, a contractor in the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes involved with the project, confirmed that potential candidates for the role of *promotor* or *monitor*

needed to have experience in community projects. They had to have experience in the sports sector, and they had to be leaders, people who were known in the community. This firstly helped to guarantee their access to the ETCR camp, and secondly, many were people who already had experience in community leadership projects. This was important because this work is focused on the community. (personal interview 10 November 2017)

The project was run by the government, but through local people, thereby aiming to help overcome issues such as of mistrust and lack of familiarity with local practices and circumstances. Additionally, 'sport may come to be viewed by marginalised communities as complicit with dominant interests' (Giulianotti 2011c: 772), and this is a risk in Colombian regions where the State has been absent or is viewed with suspicion. The State can be a significant part of the problem (Spaaij 2009: 1109) and there is a danger, therefore, of the status quo being perpetuated (Spaaij, Oxford and Jeanes 2016: 573). It is certainly a key issue where sport has been employed as an ingredient of reintegration processes following the end of the conflict with the FARC. Political ideologies remain a potential source of disagreement and violence. Finally, SDP programmes should, therefore, empower the local community, and be designed appropriate to local case, context and conditions (Duarte Bajaña 2011: 19). They must leave the knowledge, infrastructure and resources for the programmes to be sustainable, ongoing and led by local communities even when the State, NGO or private enterprise abandons or relinquishes control of the project (Schulenkorf et al. 2014: 384; Giulianotti 2011b: 51; Lea-Howarth 2006). In the Colombian case, the lack of infrastructure and resources supplied by central government, particularly in rural and vulnerable communities, has long been considered a factor contributing to these areas feeling excluded from the nation.

### Origins of the football for peace methodology and Golombiao

Football was a fundamental element of SDP campaigns organized by the Colombian government prior to the Santos presidency, with Golombiao being the principal example. Run by Colombia Joven, Golombiao began in 2003 and continued under Santos, though it did not receive the economic support it once enjoyed and was not well connected with new projects that originated from Coldeportes. Golombiao developed from a project in Medellín led by Jürgen Griesbeck and Alejandro Arenas that started in the mid-1990s with the aim of reducing violence in inner city areas. In 2003, their football for peace methodology was adopted by Colombia Joven, and with support from UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the GTZ, Golombiao was rolled out in thirty-nine municipalities, in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, César, Córdoba, Nariño, and Santander and the cities of Quibdó and Bogotá. Much of this area has been immersed in the Colombian conflict, and a deliberate aim of the project and its coordinators was to take the methodology to particularly vulnerable areas (UNICEF Colombia 2015: 366). The second phase from 2006 expanded the programme to a further sixty-nine municipalities in eight departments, and increased the national and local alliances that would permit the programme to be decentralized and become sustainable. According to UNICEF Colombia ‘an estimated 200,000 young people, of whom 15,000 are from indigenous communities, have participated in Golombiao’ (2015: 370), and according to Adriana Rincón, national coordinator of Golombiao for Colombia Joven, it has now been introduced in municipalities of all thirty-two departments (personal interview 17 November 2017).<sup>2</sup>

The description of Golombiao sets out its role towards nation building and social transformation, aiming to generate personal and community change, as well as resignifying spaces and promoting inclusion:

Golombiao is a strategy to promote citizenship skills and peaceful coexistence amongst young people. It uses football to bring them together, and through the establishing, fulfilling and revising of ‘coexistence agreements’, it generates processes of learning and change in individuals, groups, communities and institutions. It emphasizes producing change in family, neighbourhood, community and school locales; it integrates communities, genders and generations around values such as team work, the peaceful resolution of conflict, constructive criticism, tolerance and dialogue. (Mena Tamayo 2006: 5)

2 There has even been a national ‘tournament’ in 2014 for indigenous communities providing an opportunity for national encounter between these marginalized groups, although, one could argue, without integrating them with the nation. Much as with the Copa América Indígena of 2015, indigenous football is still a separate category, even with this Golombiao event.

It promotes seven key values of coexistence, which are: no aggression to others; valuing cultural knowledge; taking group decisions; interaction; communication; looking after each other; and looking after the environment (Mena Tamayo 2006: 14). Although aimed primarily at the young, the methodology is flexible to the geography and situation to which it is proposed, and is adaptable to different age groups and experiences.<sup>3</sup> The hope is that the seeds for future coexistence and civil behaviour are being sown in the nation's young citizens; 'national' citizenship values are being inculcated at a young age through football.

The emphasis of the game (played by mixed teams) is not on scoring more goals, but fulfilling the coexistence objectives decided on before the game, to establish who has best displayed the targeted social values. These objectives focus on social development and transforming community relationships:

Soccer played as Golombiao promotes a process of social development that dovetails from the philosophy of modern sports. Modern sports focus on performance, production and achievement [...] while Golombiao defines life as a process of reflection and collective action, it also aims at building community solidarity, using the transformation power of sports as a tool. (Duarte Bajaña 2017: 370)

The 'other' of the opposing team is changed to become another part of 'us'; players learn to respect, understand and value one another. For this reason, Golombiao, and similar practices involving the same or adapted methodology, can be described as

[a]n inclusion venue where differences should be included instead of being integrated, in the understanding that integration required the ongoing adaptation of the participants to a set of beliefs, norms, values or hegemonic principles, whereas inclusion fosters pluralism in the context of a common social project which keeps changing, shaped by the needs of the population. (Duarte Bajaña 2016: 370)

The focus is on community and, by extension, nation development, as the project has the capacity to outreach to 'meet' other opponents, whether in a footballing or other context. Golombiao, therefore, can potentially fulfil all seven of the nation-building purposes outlined at the start of this chapter that SDP projects built around football can offer. Gruneau believes that 'play, games, and sports ought to be seen as constitutive social practices, whose meanings, metaphoric qualities and regulatory structures are indissolubly connected to the making and remaking of ourselves as agents (individual and collective) in society' (1999: 27). In the case of Golombiao,

3 Versions of Golombiao have been used with demobilized paramilitaries (*La Vanguardia* 2010), and by NGOs like Tiempo de Juego in reconciliation projects with victims and former combatants (Candelaria Lucero, personal interview 31 October 2017).

it is an enhanced constitutive social practice, fashioned according to State directives and with the aim of nation building at the forefront, deliberately created and propagated to tackle the root causes hindering national togetherness, targeting an age group that can help spread these values as they grow older.

Golombiao seems perfect as a ready-made tool to be promoted and broadened under the Santos presidency as it corresponds exactly with his vision for how sport can be deployed. However, the programme did not receive the financial support it might have expected, and, with funding from outside partners being reduced, it suffered from similar problems to the PDSCCF. UNICEF Colombia details a number of problems and weaknesses that the scheme has encountered:

Limited resources, which have been mitigated by reaching out to the private sector; weak monitoring and evaluation, insufficient development of these frameworks; changes at the government level, which had an impact on the development and implementation of the project; heavy bureaucratic processes; competing agendas from the central and local governments; infrastructure: lack of spaces where Golombiao can be played; lack of transport for boys and girls who want to participate but live too far away; vanishing commitment of some partners and lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each partner; fear of armed groups, given the highly sensitive and complex environment in which Golombiao operates; cultural barriers, notably for the participation of adolescent girls; 'invisible' barriers between the young people, which limit the amount of interaction they can have with other young people (e.g., competing gangs/armed groups limiting the communities that participate). Golombiao tournaments have been found to be successful in closing these gaps to some extent; reaching those hardest to reach; to mitigate this effect, the methodology is directly transferred to adolescents and community leaders so that they in turn can disseminate it in their communities and surroundings. (UNICEF Colombia 2015: 372–373)

This report fails to account for the initial problem that Golombiao is just a project and not a public policy (Vega López 2017: 48). Similar to the PDSCCF, there is nothing from above to oblige municipalities and departments to introduce and finance Golombiao, and to create the conditions for sustainability. It is optional, and depends entirely on political will. Adriana Rincón of Colombia Joven is well aware of this problem. She says that the objective is always to 'ensure that the capacity to run the project is left behind in each territory and institutionally', corresponding with the views of the likes of Coalter (2007: 76) and Giulianotti (2011c: 765; 2011a: 220) about the importance of training local participants and leaders to take ownership of the programmes to ensure projects are sustainable. The focus is on creating local alliances and partnerships, but they cannot oblige local authorities. She said:



The ideal situation would be, let's say, if Golombiao were part of a long-term, public policy for youth as a tool that can be implemented during any government. The reality is different, that doesn't happen. Some mayors or municipalities will carry out the project for two or three months. There are more serious projects that last for six months or a year. The problem is that we can't oblige the mayor to keep it going. (personal interview 17 November 2017)

As Colombia Joven now only offers technical and not financial assistance, entering the territory on the invitation of local authorities to train people in the methodology, it also jeopardizes the monitoring of Golombiao. Not all partnerships record and report their results, and Colombia Joven observers are not present:

We used to be able to generate a more formal approach and more control. The partnership meant that the project had to be measured against a binding work agenda. That means that a closer relationship was generated with that particular partner in order to map the work and sessions, to do the project as it should be done, as at times we found that Golombiao was just becoming a recreational activity. (Adriana Rincón personal interview 17 November 2017)

This situation resonates with the concerns of the academics referred to earlier regarding regular analysis of sessions and outcomes (Levermore 2008: 189; 2011: 340; Lindsey and Grattan 2012; Jarvie 2011: 242; Darnell 2012: 89; Coalter 2007: 1; 2010: 1374; Spaaij 2009: 1109; Spaaij, Oxford and Jeanes 2016: 571). Without proper monitoring and evaluation, Golombiao risks becoming little more than a popularity exercise for a local politician, looking for short-term political gains through the popularity of football allied to a social project. Golombiao is supposed to function as a 'plus sport' activity (Coalter 2007: 71), with personal and social outcomes taking precedence over football as the medium. Without the sustained focus on the core values that Golombiao promotes, the longer-term social benefits that supposedly take primacy over sport lose their potential, and it becomes just another recreational kickabout.

The other problem is that Golombiao seems isolated from similar projects operated through Coldeportes. The expertise and participation of Golombiao could be useful for the planning and realization of Social and Community Sport activities, but the administrative departments have failed to find a way to collaborate, according to Rincón.

It would be possible to start to work alongside Coldeportes. Coldeportes could bring the people, we would train them so that the project can get to the kids. But this hasn't worked as we would have liked it to. We have carried out exercises, but they have been small ones with very little impact, and this seems to happen with nearly every other institution. (personal interview 17 November 2017)

They were not even part of the PDSCCF deliberations: ‘we went to the launch and we attended some meetings, but as an active part of the work, of sitting down and seeing what we could bring to the project, nothing happened’ (personal interview 17 November 2017). Judging by Rincón’s frustrations and comments, the potential benefits of Golombiao are not being fully realized for the same reasons that the PDSCCF has largely been inoperative: lack of obligation, lack of resources, lack of political will and failures in cooperation and articulation between respective institutions. Its potential for nation building was not fully realized under Santos.

### Increased emphasis on Social and Community Sport in Coldeportes

Coldeportes had a social vision as part of its *raison d’être* before Santos took over the presidency. Its role was not limited to promoting and improving elite sport. Captain Victor Cedeño of the Investigation Centre of Coldeportes was keen to underline this role:

For a long time now, and throughout the duration of the Colombian armed conflict, the national government through Coldeportes has carried out projects. Coldeportes has led projects to provide opportunities for sport, recreation, physical activity and enjoyment of free time with a series of programmes focused on vulnerable people and communities. (personal interview 13 October 2017)

In support of this, Cedeño described how Coldeportes provided sport and recreational events in Mitú, capital of the department of Vaupés, in 1997, only eight days after FARC had spectacularly taken it over, as well as other short interventions in Bojayá, Vigía del Fuerte and La Sierra de la Macarena following traumatic outbreaks of violence. How lasting these interventions were was not specified. Coldeportes has supported a series of multisport events that have as a principal component the promotion of coexistence and peace and resignification of zones often inextricably linked with the Colombian conflict in the national consciousness and moral topography. The Brazo de Mompo Peace Games are a prime example, first hosted in 1990 in Mompo, Bolívar, and almost annually since. These games invite communities from the Magdalena Medio, Magdalena Sur, Catatumbo, South Bolívar and Montes de María regions of Colombia, zones disputed by guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug smugglers as strategic corridors for control of the drug trade and mineral resources. These are zones that have acquired ‘particular identities’ (Pécaut 1999: 145) in the national imaginary, that potentially exclude them from the national ‘us’. The identities are linked to notions and myths of violence, terror and criminality, where sovereignty and the hegemony of the State has been fragmented and contested by guerrillas, paramilitaries and criminal gangs.

The aim of the games has always been one of inclusion, mutual recognition, conservation of culture and promoting peace and coexistence of those

often affected by the conflict, as can be seen from the first article of the ‘Carta Fundamental’ of the games:

The Community Sport for Peace and Coexistence Games is a programme that prioritises and is interested in the practice of social and community sport, which, as is stated in the National and Departmental Plan for Sport, has the aim of contributing to the creation of spaces for social coexistence, in this way facilitating the chances for integration and sociocultural development of every region and the whole country. (Fundación para Desarrollo Social – Comunitario Santana Paz 2018)

These annual sporting events attempt to ‘normalize’ encounters between and within these regions, showing that routine activities can occur despite violent contests over territory. Messages of coexistence and peace are as important as the sports competitions, with Coldeportes and other institutional support helping to provide at least a façade of State presence. Where violence has a tendency to fragment communities and individualize, Restrepo claiming that due to violence in Colombia there now exists an ‘extreme individualism’ among citizens (2001: 98), sporting events try to reconstruct collectives. Whannel argues that ‘sport also offers a way out of passive individualism. It offers us a greater collectivity to identify with, a way of feeling less of a lone individual. It offers us the team, the county and above all the nation. National sport is a powerful component of national symbolism’ (Whannel 2008: 48). Regional events such as the Brazo de Mompox Peace Games have a similar function, constructing a narrative to compete against the mythologizing of violence (Pécaut 1999: 162). Not only are men and women uniting to represent their towns, but they are competing against and meeting other people and towns with similar experiences, aiding processes of mutual recognition.

Another multisport event (re)uniting other peripheral departments and marginalized communities is the Games of the Amazonía and Orinoquía, in which the departments of Amazonas, Arauca, Caquetá, Casanare, Guainía, Guaviare, Meta, Putumayo, Vaupés and Vichada participate. The first event was held in Arauca in 1992, which also held the second edition in 1994, before it took place in San José del Guaviare in 1997, and Yopal, Casanare in 2005. In 2014, after an absence of nine years, the Games of the Amazonía and Orinoquía returned in Leticia, Amazonas, ‘thanks to the unconditional support of the President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos’ (Coldeportes 2014). A specific law (Law 1578 of 27 September 2012) was passed with his support to ensure that these games should be held every two years. The governor of Amazonas, Carlos Rodríguez Celis, described the importance of the games: ‘This is the best way of integrating the people of the Amazonía and Orinoquía. We showed we could do this, and this event shows that there is sport, there is talent and there is patriotism in this region’ (Coldeportes 2014). The games provide a symbolic meeting point for regional representatives, and give visibility to often-ignored regions of the

country, helping Colombians to imagine one another and resignify regions associated with underdevelopment and criminality, which therefore occupy the bottom rank in the country's moral topographical hierarchy. These departments are described by Serje as being 'the reverse of the nation' (2005), largely uninhabited, undeveloped and uncivilized, still associated with the type of barbarity, cruelty, lawlessness and illness portrayed in one of Colombia's foundational novels, *La Vorágine*, by José Eustasio Rivera (1924). Ramírez reminds us that Amazonian Colombia 'has always existed "at the margin", both geographically and conceptually, with respect to Colombia's central order' (2011: 4). Amazonas, Arauca, Guaviare, Putumayo, Vaupés and Vichada only gained department status in 1991, contributing to their lack of official inclusion. Wylie adds that these regions historically have been seen as 'a kind of topographical underbelly on to which national fears and desires have been projected' (2013: 45). These zones have been demonized as territories controlled by FARC and criminal gangs involved in the drug trade, and have become 'landscapes of fear' (Tuan 1980). Through sport, there is a different vision of the departments projected, sport and cultural celebration 'normalizing' the citizens and regions, recasting preconceptions held by citizens from 'developed', 'inner' Colombia. The challenge is to ensure that these games are given sufficient media attention for this re-imagining of the region to take hold. Given the short duration of the event and limited media coverage, it is questionable how much of a recasting of regional identities can be achieved. Nonetheless, to some extent these departments are integrated into the national practice and enjoyment of sport, and the games provide an opportunity to celebrate the country's linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity. These games can be seen as another part of the Santos policy aiming to include and unite the nation through sport, articulated in the Coldeportes' strategic action plans for Santos's two terms in office. Andrés Botero, Coldeportes director at the time of the Leticia games, confirmed this objective: 'The Games of the Amazonía and Orinoquía [...] are part of the inclusion process that this government and Coldeportes is leading, to achieve the sporting equality that is so desired by more than forty-sevenmillion Colombians' (Coldeportes 2014). At the 2016 games, Danis Rentería, the director of production and development of Coldeportes, also stated the national social development role for the games: 'the social and community sport represented in Coldeportes' programmes and events should be present in every Colombian municipality. We feel very proud of being able to help towards the building of social fabric in this vital region for the country' (Coldeportes 2016). The idea of State 'presence' is worth picking up on here, as the absence of the State in peripheral territories has been one of the factors long impeding the successful construction of nation, remembering that during certain periods of the Colombian conflict, 'it [was] estimated that about 40% of the territory [was] under the control of the guerrilla and other private armies' (Richani 2002: 50). This 'chronic deficit' (Hylton 2006: 11) of the Colombian State meant that areas such

as those brought together by the Games of the Amazonía and Orinoquía and the Brazo de Mompox Peace Games effectively became ‘parastates’ or ‘narcostates’ where the monopoly of force was contested between State and anti-State forces. In these areas, the FARC exercised State functions, built infrastructure, demanded taxes and provided security and justice (Hylton 2006: 88; Richani 2002: 77). Regional multi-sport games organized or sponsored by the government shows that the State is beginning to carry out the functions expected of it, a symbolic sporting reconquest of territory, with an accompanying social message of coexistence and re-encounter.

Cedeño acknowledged that the focus on sport’s social development and transformative function ‘was definitely becoming more evident and visible in vulnerable sectors of the population’ (personal interview 13 October 2017) during the Santos government. Omar Becerra, one of his colleagues in the Coldeportes Investigation Centre, agrees about this new visibility and increased focus of social and community sport:

This all comes from the new administration of Clara Luz Roldán (director of Coldeportes from 2016–2018) as well as a special interest nationally and from the President. Therefore, the obvious aim of this department of Coldeportes is to have a really clear focus on the culture of sport and peace [...] With our work we are trying to develop this new field. (personal interview 13 October 2017)

There has been a growing realization in Coldeportes about the value provided by socialization opportunities around the playing of sport. Coakley writes that ‘socialization occurs through the social interaction that accompanies sport participation. Therefore, the meaning and importance of playing sports is derived through a person’s social relationships and the social and cultural context in which participation occurs’ (2001: 92). Focusing on elite sport provides certain benefits for the nation, those heroes and memorable moments that the nation comes together to admire and celebrate (Alabarces 2002: 42). However, recreational and community sport also provides valuable moments for community dialogue and shared activity, moments that have been reduced in certain vulnerable areas due to the conflict and related violences. Football matches are, therefore, a culturally relevant space and time for social interactions to reoccur, and if pedagogical messages about citizen and community values can be transmitted at this time, then there is an increased benefit that goes beyond the sporting context into the social sphere.

It is not a coincidence that as international acceptance and official awareness in Colombia of the impact of SDP programmes became manifest as Santos became President, more presidential campaigns should be launched, taking advantage of notable sporting success and the increased public gaze given the hosting of the 2011 Under 20 Football World Cup and success in the 2014 World Cup. Success in these tournaments gave Colombians a reason to congregate and celebrate the national victories, for national positivity and values to be espoused via rhetoric, and then used as an impetus to validate

and promote campaigns that could build on a lingering sense of shared and recognized Colombianness. The public policies and campaigns that emerged and were promoted through Coldeportes because of this focus are ones that seek to transform behaviour, beliefs and values that have impeded feelings that help bind communities and the nation together. Mockus et al. argue that ‘a public policy of developing a culture of citizenship is a policy that seeks to transform specific behaviours of the citizenry. It should contain exercises of systematic focus and intervention in problematic areas that affect community life’ (2012: 26). SDP campaigns arising from public policies in Colombia often have as their principal focus the reduction of insecurity and violence, especially in vulnerable communities where the State has been absent or weak. The conflict and related violences have therefore been at their worst in these contested zones, and a culture, or experience, of violence becomes embedded, perpetuating such behaviour. Through values associated with sporting culture, government public policies and campaigns aim to alleviate and transform such habits. Improving citizen safety and confidence in the State’s ability to provide protection is a crucial aspect to address in order to knit together Colombia’s torn social fabric.

The Ten-Year Plan for Sport, Recreation, Physical Education and Physical Activity, for Human Development, Coexistence and Peace 2009–2019 (PDD) established the significance of promoting social and community sport. The public policy did start in 2009, before Santos, but took effect during his presidency. The then-director of Coldeportes, Everth Bustamante, established the aim for the PDD as follows:

By 2019, Colombia will be a nation recognized for the impact generated by its policies and programmes for sport, recreation and physical education on the social and economic development of the country. (Coldeportes 2009: 9)

The clue is in the Plan’s title, referring as it does to human development, coexistence and peace, but it is significant that the first objective mentioned is social development, along with coexistence and public health, before then referring to success in elite sport. The objectives are nation-building ones, conscious of sport’s role in uniting the nation symbolically, and literally, through the practice, spectating and enjoyment of sport, physical exercise and recreation, and these are acknowledged in the PDD:

The participation of sport, recreation, physical education and physical activity in the economy, the mobilization of citizens generated around sporting events, the collective enthusiasm that is generated, the triumphs that are vital for learning about the value of discipline, the fostering of essential values for coexistence, the happiness and disappointment that our athletes cause us, these are all factors for social cohesion that help to define our national character and our vitality as a nation. The promotion, practice and enjoyment of sport, recreation and physical activity, that is to say, their active presence amongst the population, provide indicators

which help to establish a person's sense of happiness and fulfillment [...] they should be considered as essential social benefits and rights, ratified by social policies, and especially towards human development, coexistence and peace. (Coldeportes 2009: 11)

Here we see many of the same sentiments that were so regularly promoted by Santos. There are references to how sport enables the nation to imagine itself as a collective, thereby facilitating mutual recognition and thus national cohesion through the shared emotions engendered by sport in its different guises. Sport promotes individual and collective values that can contribute to solving national problems and reduce hatred, polarization and violence.

Although Cedeño argued that Coldeportes has always had a commitment to sport's development and community functions, the PDD points out past weaknesses: 'The Social and Community Sport section, known previously since the 1980s as "Deporte para Todos" (Sport for All – DPT) is not engaged with the National System for Sport due to the lack of definition and planning of its actions' (Coldeportes 2009: 57). The PDD highlights weaknesses where this power of sport has not fully been harnessed in the past, citing a lack of a deliberate strategy, insufficient funding (15) and the failure to provide infrastructure and opportunities for sport, recreation, physical education and physical activity across the national territory, pointing out that 'the presence of amateur organized sport outside of regional capitals is minimal' (31). The previous focus has been on elite sport rather than giving opportunities to all: 'state action has been directed towards elite competition, and not towards sporting practice for the general population. This is reflected in State investment in major stadia and infrastructure which is almost entirely reserved for professional sport' (55). The aim, therefore, was for the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes to receive more funding, become more articulated with work in different institutions and to extend to peripheral Colombia, both geographically and demographically: 'it is important to articulate this programme with other opportunities for social inclusion for displaced communities, and AfroColombian and indigenous communities, amongst others' (59). Sport should be a means to include within the nation those historically excluded or forgotten.

The action plans for Coldeportes during the two Santos mandates aimed to address these weaknesses, and thus to expand the national 'us' that can locate and recognize each other through the symbolic terrain of sport. This role for sport was defined in Santos's 'Prosperity for All' policy programme during his successful presidential campaign in 2010, where we find the commitment 'to promote recreation, physical education and school and social and community sport to develop spaces for coexistence and peace' (Coldeportes 2010: 33). In the 2010–2014 Strategic Action Plan there is the aim of creating 'meeting spaces which generate social inclusion and cohesion for marginalized sectors of society, who are those that have been identified or have the potential to become involved with conflict and confrontation' (27). The definition of

social and community sport is established here as being ‘the participation in sport for fun, recreation and the physical development of the community. It seeks to provide opportunities for integration, relaxation and creativity. It is carried out through interinstitutional action and community participation in order to improve the quality of life’ (30). The specific objectives for the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes are as follows:

- 1) To articulate the efforts of public and private institutions for the creation and development of social and community sport as part of the National System for Sport.
- 2) To identify and strengthen schools for sport and recreation run by the people, and to guarantee their articulation with sporting and recreational organizations.
- 3) To establish processes with the organizing bodies for amateur sport in order to identify every single social and community sport activity. (30)

These objectives are a starting point for future work for the section. The terms chosen support the findings of the PDD that SDP projects were underdeveloped in terms of articulation, development, implementation and evaluation.

The overall goal is to guarantee rights to sport, focusing particularly on vulnerable communities, articulate and consolidate institutional efforts to implement the system of Social and Community Sport and to ensure a greater geographical coverage (28). This project continued with the strategic plan for 2014–2018, which had the vision of ‘by 2019 positioning Colombia as a global sporting power and being the leader in the development of spaces for coexistence and peace, through the design and implementation of policies for sport, recreation and physical activity, based on inclusion’ (Coldeportes 2013: 3). Again, we see the commitment to SDP programmes and for Colombia to be a world leader in designing, implementing and monitoring such projects to contribute to national cohesion and integration. Under the motto of ‘Everyone for a New Country’, a slogan resonating with typical Santos rhetoric, there are specified objectives to enhance the programmes, monitoring and evaluation of the Social and Community Sport department: ‘To design, implement and carry out the monitoring of the content of Social and Community Sport public policy; to design and implement the Social and Community Sport investigation programme; to design and implement the Training and Positioning programme of Social and Community Sport’ (8). Objectives are also set in terms of how many people will be able to access Social and Community Sport services, specifically 3,475,028 by 2018, in a targeted 710 of the 1,101 municipalities of the country. These figures would rise from 1,000,000 people in 2015 in 600 municipalities (17). This, of course, leaves just over one-third of the nation’s municipalities still without provision, a considerable percentage of the national territory and indicative of the previous deficit. Details are not included about which municipalities are going to be targeted first, but it can be assumed that territories previously



occupied by FARC forces would be a priority to be ‘reclaimed’ by the State through the provision of sport and recreational programmes. These FARC-controlled areas were where the State had not held the monopoly of violence nor established a presence to provide expected State programmes and infrastructure, and thus are where the concept of citizens being included within the national community is at its weakest.

There is a reiterated commitment to expanding operations to cover the Colombian territory, both in this document and frequent interventions from Coldeportes’ directors and chiefs of department. Danis Rentería commented that ‘the major urban centres have excellent recreational facilities, but there are places where there isn’t even adequate sporting infrastructure. That is where Coldeportes must be, where we must focus our attention’ (*Semana* n.d.). It is clear, therefore, from these action plans that SDP programmes would be prioritized during the Santos presidency, targeting vulnerable areas that may have been marginalized in the past, with the aim of using sport as a vehicle for individual and social development and transformation. These programmes should provide the means to integrate more Colombians into the national community and educate them in desired national values.

We should therefore expect to see a budgetary increase in the Social and Community Sport sector to attend to these stated priorities. It has already been demonstrated that the budget for Coldeportes as a whole was increased during the Santos presidency. According to figures from the ‘Promotion and development’ document provided by the Coldeportes Investigation Centre, the Social and Community Sport section received a total of 32.736.000.000 pesos from 2014–2018 broken down year by year, as can be seen in table 18:

Table 18: Social and Community Sport budget, 2014–2018

Year	Budget (in Colombian pesos)
2014	6.000.000.000
2015	6.000.000.000
2016	6.300.000.000
2017	8.450.000.000
2018	5.986.000.000
Total	32.736.000.000

(Coldeportes 2018: 67)

Here we can see an increase in budget during the first two years of Clara Luz Roldán’s tenure as director of Coldeportes (2016–2017), the period Omar Becerra cites as being notable for an increased significance in Social and Community Sport. This period also corresponds with preparation for post-peace agreement Colombia. The year 2017 was a crucial one for

governmental institutions to take advantage of the historic opportunity for national peace and reintegration, in the case of Coldeportes to make use of sport as a symbolic point of encounter given its recognized currency among all Colombians. The high point of 2017 in terms of the budget corresponds to programmes launched in the ETCRs aimed at reincorporating the FARC former combatants and attempting to provide access to sport and establish an institutional presence in these zones.

### Coldeportes in the FARC transition and reintegration camps

The ETCRs were the most potent symbolic terrain where the Social and Community Sport section deployed sport in SDP campaigns. From a national perspective, these were the most crucial and visible evidence of how football could serve as a unifying device in Colombia, uniting State forces and their former enemies, the FARC. As part of the peace agreement, twenty-six transition camps were created around the country to help former FARC combatants reintegrate and reconcile with the local community and with the nation. Along with all the other relevant Colombian ministries, Coldeportes had a role to play as part of this process, acknowledging that FARC members were no longer an enemy of the State and had the same rights as other Colombians. Rentería accepted this responsibility, saying, ‘They are also Colombians who need us to provide their right to recreation and sport. Therefore, and as a contribution to the postconflict situation and peace, we have trained a team of 63 *promotores* and *monitores* who are currently organizing and leading activities in 26 ETCRs’ (*Semana* n.d.). Coldeportes contracted the Fundación Tierra Posible<sup>4</sup> to create a project to send sport and recreation coaches (always referred to by Coldeportes as ‘*promotores*’ and ‘*monitores*’) to each ETCR. In the first phase of the project, from June to December 2017, these *promotores* and *monitores* organized sport, recreational and physical activity sessions for those in the ETCR and the local communities nearby, creating opportunities for exercise and fun for those in the camps, but also opportunities to mix with surrounding communities and public forces. In 2018, a second phase of the project employed a former FARC combatant in the process of being reincorporated from each of the remaining ETCRs (the ETCRs in Vigía del Fuerte, Antioquia and Gallo, Córdoba, were closed in mid-2018), alongside the retained *promotores* and *monitores*, as Fundación Tierra Posible continued the project after gaining the contract from Coldeportes. Given documented evidence from the UNOSDP and academic sources of the success of sport

4 The Fundación Tierra Posible describes itself as an NGO, whose mission is described as follows: ‘It originated to carry out, support, manage, serve, guide, raise awareness, facilitate and propel all types of projects, activities and programmes which promote the integral development of Human Beings’ (<http://www.tierrapossible.org/>).

and recreation activities as part of previous post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration processes, SDP was seen as having a potentially key role

[i]n the agenda of the signed peace agreement, one can consider that sport will be a relevant actor for the reconstruction of the social fabric in this process. Point three of the agenda makes references to the end of the conflict, the giving up of weapons and the reintegration into civil life as part of the legal framework for peace. Point five identifies central support for victims and promotes a truth with justice process related to the serious effects of the armed conflict. These points open the path for sport to be a key actor in different regions where armed violence has been present throughout Colombian territory'. (from document 'Capacitación en cultura de paz para Coldeportes y institutos departamentales del deporte 2017, GIT Información y Estudios del Deporte', provided through personal communication with the Centro de Investigación de Coldeportes)

Coldeportes became a significant actor in the post-conflict period, explaining why Social and Community Sport was given greater projection and budget and why there was a greater commitment to SDP projects in vulnerable communities. Given this historic moment that arguably gave Colombia the best chance in decades to break down barriers that separate Colombians around the idea of the FARC as 'other' to the nation, the characteristics of sport offered the best alternative to reconstruct communities and facilitate reintegration. As discussed earlier, sport would have to work alongside other institutions and projects as part of the wider process. There are, nonetheless, simple benefits that sport itself provides. These include reducing the immediate possibilities of violence, providing a means of entertainment and activity during a time-consuming process and, most crucially, changing the identities around former combatants, so that they no longer are seen as guerrillas, terrorists or enemies, but as equals in the community (Calderón and Martínez 2015: 9–10). The Coldeportes' programme offered potential benefits for all 'sides' involved. From an institutional perspective, there was the chance to be visible in often forgotten or inaccessible communities, finally attending to local needs and thereby increasing confidence in the State, its institutions and functions. The local communities around the ETCRs could gain much-needed sport and recreational infrastructure in order for the programmes to be delivered, given the priority given by the Santos government to the process. The FARC had the chance to resignify itself as an organization and its combatants on an individual level, through using sport as a tool to 'normalize' how they were seen by the wider public. These ideas will be expanded upon later.

A number of those involved with the project, including the *promotores* and *monitores*, confirmed football as being the most popular, and therefore the most successful, sport to use to help with the reintegration and coexistence projects, as well as to keep the demobilized guerrillas occupied. Gisela Gómez said that the most popular sports in the camps were football and volleyball

(personal interview 10 November 2017), and from a diary-style report of involvement in visits to camps in Caldono, Cauca, and La Elvira, Cauca in a dissertation by Mesías Chamorro and Portocarrero Hurtado, we learn that in both camps

[c]ollective work was carried out in the community. The FARC members in the process of reintegration and the *promotores* and *monitores* decided which activities to engage in, as well as the sports in which they wanted to be trained and offered the chance to establish ‘meetings’ with other groups: these were football and indoor football. (2017: 33)

It was not just playing football that provided most opportunities. National team matches, both qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and the tournament itself, allowed former guerrillas, local communities and members of public forces to come together. Juvenal Tangarife, a *promotor* in the Llanogrande camp near Dabeiba, Antioquia, recounted that a match day involved ‘preparing the space where we could all go and watch the match together, to support the team, to cheer for a while, to share the experience and to will the team on so the national team could qualify for the World Cup. And this all served as another factor towards integration without having to play together on a pitch’ (personal interview 24 October 2017). Paulo Martínez, from the Monterredondo camp in Miranda, Cauca, confirmed the same processes there, and showed how the national team and shirt functioned as a shared symbol of mutual recognition. When asked whether the experience of watching the game was a shared one between the FARC members and the community, he answered, ‘Yes of course, of course. We shared all of that with them. Furthermore, they were wearing the national shirt, and they really supported the *selección*, you know. That really mattered for them, and they were always really aware of what was going on in football’ (personal interview 24 October 2017). Identities of being guerrillas (temporarily) took second place to being fans of the national men’s football team, thereby aiding the process of finding ground for mutual confidence between former enemies. Bromberger suggests that football matches are a type of social ritual and ceremony and cites Durkheim’s argument that ceremonies function to ‘secure the continuity of collective consciousness’, ‘to assert for oneself and for others that we belong to the same group’ (1995: 306). When fans wear the same kit they are identifying themselves as part of a collective that is representative of a community, the national shirt being one of the strongest convening symbols for a Colombian collective identity. A *Semana* article underlines this: ‘To say that Colombians “feel the shirt” and that “they are all together” when they are excited by watching the *selección* is not just a trite phrase, but this actually matters; it is a palpable fact’ (*Semana* 2014b). By wearing the national shirt, former FARC soldiers assert their membership in the nation, their own ‘Colombianness’, a trait that was denied to them during the conflict when they were cast as ‘other’ in representations of the nation. President Santos had talked about the metaphorical importance of Colombians wearing the same shirt, saying, ‘Football teaches us all to put

the same shirt on. And what this country needs is just that, that we all put the same shirt on, that we unite instead of being divided, instead of fighting' (*El Comercio* 2013). Watching national team matches together provided a perfect opportunity for FARC members, the local community and public forces to be Colombian together, first and foremost.

In Llanogrande, an event called Golpe de Estadio 2<sup>5</sup> was held to watch a World Cup match from the 2018 tournament, bringing together FARC leaders such as Pastor Alape, paramilitary leaders like 'Ernesto Báez', the director of the original film that the event was named after, Sergio Cabrera and victims of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Yolanda Pérez, a victim of the conflict, said that 'the important thing about this Golpe de Estadio event is that it showed us that the film was not just a film, it could be reality. Being able to talk about this reality and these experiences, when you have a former guerrilla and a former paramilitary soldier alongside you, this shows you how the reincorporation process is going' (*Reincorporación FARC* 2018). From all the videos and media reports of the event, the amount of national team shirts catches the eye, being worn by the FARC, local inhabitants and victims. The shirt becomes a common site of recognition, a clear indication of a national 'us', and during the match a 'communion of minds' (Bromberger 1995: 308) is created when strangers, those from different backgrounds or experiences and those with different political opinions, can celebrate, feel angry or disappointed together, enabling a greater 'sense of cohesion and solidarity' (*ibid.*). This Golpe de Estadio 2 event did not just function at the local level; it gained substantial media attention as an important story during the World Cup, showing how former enemies were uniting around football and how a popular film from the 1990s had become a real event.<sup>7</sup> The convergence of the World Cup, the peace process in evident operation, football bringing together former combatants, victims and public forces was a strong story that helped to embed new significations and identities of those who participated in Golpe de Estadio 2. New associations of benefit to the nation, the local community (as well as the Santos government and FARC) were constructed through such visible progress towards coexistence. The

5 The name is in reference to and commemorates the 1998 Sergio Cabrera film about a fictional account of FARC and army forces watching the Colombia versus Argentina 5–0 match together, a match vital for qualification to the 1994 World Cup.

6 A short documentary was made of this event, featuring interviews with former FARC, ELN and paramilitary commanders, victims of the conflict and Sergio Cabrera, director of the original film, all of whom attended the event in Llanogrande. A link to the documentary is here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWbZXXNMFmMnCnvDowtCrSbdw> Real Documentales, 16 April 2019.

7 See, for instance, Arias Hidalgo, Walter, 'La cancha donde se dio el segundo golpe de estadio', *El Espectador*, 22 June 2018, and Zuleta Valencia, Juan Felipe, 'Abrazos de reconciliación, al calor del partido, en montañas de Dabeiba', *El Colombiano* 21 June 2018.

participants accrued new meanings, albeit briefly, as the World Cup bubble disappeared and ceased to influence a more enduring identity.

At this point, it is important to note that the ETCRs were the object of huge national and international attention following the peace agreement. For decades, the FARC had been a relatively invisible and demonized enemy of the State, largely unknown apart from their military, terrorist or criminal actions. The media attention on the negotiations in Havana began to show a different identity of the FARC commanders, and as the FARC transitioned into the camps and media access was granted, new representations of the foot soldiers were created. Domestic and foreign media told stories giving personal accounts of these FARC men and women, and a new side began to emerge of who the FARC members were, what they cared about, what they thought and what their aspirations were. It was noticeable how often photos and videos showed football being played, and stories of FARC integrating with the community around them were often based around football matches or tournaments played between the FARC, the community and local public forces. It was also obvious that both men and women played football, often together. Camilo Montaña, the *promotor* in La Elvira camp, said that one of the key values on show in the sport activities was this gender equity: 'one of the values that we most see now is the gender issue, because, previously, when the first tournament was organized, women's football was really only a side event, and now we see that men's and women's football has the same importance' (*Fundación Tierra Posible* 2018). The media and the FARC showed football since it was the easiest way to resignify the FARC and provide them with a new 'normal' Colombian identity. By playing football, former guerrillas were shown to be like any other Colombian, and the fact that women were shown playing transmitted a positive message of a lack of gender discrimination. This could be seen as a break with the 'old' *machista* Colombia, and construction of a new model of gender equality in sport. Colombians either seeing or watching the images and reading or listening to the stories saw the human side of these former guerrillas and in so doing, perhaps reconsidered their own preconceptions.

Observers, *promotores* and *monitores* see this new identity of the former FARC combatant as football lover/football player as a crucial part of the process of creating the possibility for peace building and then nation building in Colombia. Grotenhuis writes that 'the nation is about identity, who we are in the sense of "self-identification"' (2016: 28), but it is not just self-identification, but how others within the nation identify other possible members and judge them as whether they should be included or not. The FARC identity has excluded combatants and sympathizers from the national collective. Previously, politicians and the media have placed FARC 'outside' the nation, labelling them as terrorists, guerrillas and criminals fighting against the Colombian nation and its values, particularly when the national 'us' has been articulated around football, as discussed in chapter two. Coakley argues that a benefit of sport participation is that it provides

‘opportunities for other people to see, define, and deal with a person as more than just an athlete’ (2001: 93), but sport also works to enrich the identity of those coming into the sport with a prior set identity. A guerrilla can be re-identified as a fellow football lover or as a fan of a particular football team, for instance. This new identity provides an opportunity for socialization to occur, thus potentially strengthening community ties and mutual confidence. Former FARC members need a new identity in order to be accepted, or selected as fellow members of the nation, as the former identity is incompatible. This is why Santos’s rhetoric, constantly stressing that all Colombians were fans of the national team (mentioning FARC specifically on two occasions as seen in chapter three) was important, using football as a point of acceptable inclusion. Grotenhuis states that ‘the construction of national identity is therefore a process of selection, bringing together those elements that fit well together to create an identity people can and wish to identify with and leaving out elements that could disturb a coherent picture’ (2016: 28). Football is thus a process that enables former FARC members to become compatible with others through a recognizable activity helping to construct a new acceptable identity. Mesías Chamorro and Portocarrero Hurtado write:

The majority of the community members interviewed recognized the excombatants as human beings with the same fears, expectations and emotions as them. This capacity to understand that they are also victims and that they now have new opportunities arose due to the spaces that they could share whenever there was a football match and due to the work of the *promotores* and *monitores*. (2017: 34)

This mutual recognition and respect gained by playing football together was often the most positive experience for the coaches.<sup>8</sup> Bibiana Graciano, from Llanogrande camp, commented:

I really think that the question of football and sport in these zones is incredibly important, because we have seen how groups have become integrated through sport, groups that you never thought would ever see sharing the same space [...] the fact that we organized a tournament where there is a police team, an army team, a team from the local community, a

8 Interviews with the *monitores* and *promotores* took place during a two-day event hosted by Coldeportes on 22–23 October, to which I was invited. In addition to the recorded interviews, I also heard all of them talk about their experiences at the camps and local communities as part of the structured events of the day. The event was designed to provide a way to hear about the experiences, problems, solutions, successes and opinions that the *monitores* and *promotores* had. Activities took place to discuss improvements and further ideas before they returned to the camps for the next stage of the project. Clara Luz Roldán, Danis Rentería, other Coldeportes chiefs and representatives from bodies also involved in the transition camps were present for several hours on the second day of the event.

FARC team, and they all share things and the tournament ended without any problems at all, that showed us that something important is being achieved here. (personal interview 24 October 2017)

She added that there was even a team representing the zone in a regional tournament, comprising the best players of each group, all wearing the same uniform. This wearing of the same uniform is an even stronger symbol of how local and national divisions are being gradually repaired. The creation of a composite team in which the best players of the FARC, public forces and the local community come together, wearing the same kit and playing together, overrides, at least momentarily, the different political 'kits' that differentiate and were historically in opposition. Just as the national shirt is a shirt that can be worn by everyone, at a micro level these kinds of football uniforms are a symbolic tool of inclusion. It is a positive step for the integration of former FARC combatants into the local community, and then the national community that these new identities are being created and that they are ways in which they can integrate into a new collective.

Paulo Martínez from the Miranda camp backed up the importance of football tournaments for integration and breaking down previous identity blocks: 'We organized lots of matches and tournaments. People come from other communities, there is integration, and so that has all helped to break that paradigm of "No, it's that those guys used to be guerrillas". There has been a lot of unity' (personal interview 24 October 2017). Genyer Rojas, who worked at a camp in Mesetas, Meta, adds:

We could give the example of sporting integration, where you see members of the local community, the FARC, the police, even people from the Unillanos university, from the UNAD university, they've all come to take part in the sports events. You know, it's something that's never been seen before. You see the police, a policeman talking with a former guerrilla or with someone who is now demobilized, as part of the same community integrating, going out onto the field or into the camp without any problems at all. (personal interview 24 October 2017)

Johnny Barón, who worked in the Vista Hermosa ECTR in Meta, interviewed by Coldeportes in the same event, put it best as to the national context, and rebuilding of the nation that was occurring:

I had never dealt with former guerrillas before, but they are not that anymore. We realized that they were people, human beings with lots of problems, others who had a very clear political philosophy, and through this process we learned that we are the same, that we are Colombia, that we are a nation. (Coldeportes 2017c)

Football matches where previously opposed sides meet have been one of the most successful ways in which people and places have been resignified and had the chance to be integrated into the local community and the wider nation.



Tidwell writes that a lack of ‘human contact, engagement and bonding’ (1998: 134) contributes to creating hatreds between opposing factions. Throughout the Colombian conflict, there has been a separation of Colombians due to where either State or FARC have exercised authority. Suspicion, distrust and fear exist because of atrocities committed by either side. Pécaut notes that ‘the peasantry hold the military themselves responsible for creating much of the terror [...] it is certainly significant that for many individuals this may be their sole point of contact with the State’ (1999: 153), and FARC have also been demonized by successive presidents and the press. There have been few reasons for the opposing sides, State forces and FARC (as well as the community who have often been caught in the middle) to engage in activities, such as football, that permit bonding, understanding and recognition of shared interests. It is no wonder that Santos repeatedly emphasized the idea of ‘everyone’, ‘the whole country’, ‘all Colombians’ and so forth celebrating football victories together, envisioning football as this bonding opportunity for previously divided communities. These matches helped to build a sense of trust between previously opposed groups, trust that is a fundamental part of nation building, as Grotenhuis argues: ‘Trust is not a luxury good, it is indispensable for a viable nation-state. The sense of belonging and the recognition of the other as part of the definition of a broader “us” will breed trust. Peacemaking, nation-building and state-building start out from the recognition of a shared interest’ (2016: 84). Football is that shared interest as a starting point that can lead to a recognition of other shared interests on a wider scale.

As would be expected, the *promotores* and *monitores* clearly felt that their work was having an effect. As well as giving the example of how the sporting encounters that took place were serving towards the wider aims of reconciliation, coexistence and peace, they also regularly stressed the importance of a sporting provision and opportunity finally arriving in their municipality, the lack of which the community had evidently felt. The fact that they chose to comment on this aspect reveals just how ignored these municipalities had been, how easy it would have felt to be ignored and therefore not included by the State, thereby rupturing identifications between citizen and State and nation. Citizens of many rural regions of Colombia often complain of having been ‘abandoned’ by the State and not getting the help or opportunities that they need, contributing to the lack of attachment to the nation.<sup>9</sup> Several *promotores* and *monitores*, commenting following the training sessions in April and May, picked this out as a crucial aspect of the project:

Jhon Fredy Tarifa Aguirre, from Charras, Guaviare:

[T]hey are now taking into account every zone of the department, even the most remote zones and those that are always forgotten. The most

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Ramírez (2011: 34) who quotes a number of *colonos* and *cocaleros* in the Putumayo region, as an example of rural feelings of abandonment by the government.

important thing is those benefitting are those in rural areas. Usually very few programmes ever get to these rural areas. (Coldeportes 2017b)

Carolina Cardona, from Miranda, Cauca:

I think that this project in the ETCRs is going to have a really big impact in the community, because these are communities that have been forgotten due to the conflict. These were areas that you couldn't get to usually. Programmes like this, particularly those of the State, couldn't get here. (Coldeportes 2017a)

Tarifa reiterated the importance of bringing sport and the State to the community at the Coldeportes' feedback event:

There is very little there in the way of sports. Very little is done in the local communities and villages, there is very little participation in sport. [...] In Charras, Caño Maku, places like that, or in the indigenous communities, in these zones they don't have spaces at the moment where they can play sport properly [...] Unfortunately, no sports training has ever been present in these zones. With Coldeportes, we have been among the first to come to the community of Charras, a community that has been badly affected by violence. (personal interview 24 October 2017)

These, then, are just some examples of vulnerable and peripheral communities that the Social and Community Sport section of Coldeportes has the aim of reaching, zones that have not received the due provision of facilities and opportunities supposedly guaranteed by the constitution. They have found it hard to imagine themselves within the national 'us', lacking as they do in basic provision of sporting facilities or equipment. There is a vast geographical and imagined gulf between professional sportsmen and women and people from peripheral Colombia, as it has been hard to envision similarities in experience or the ability to reach a similar position given the lack of infrastructure and opportunity. The arrival of representatives of Coldeportes in the zones marks an important but easily undoable first step in terms of creating the necessary institutional presence and filling the void vacated by the FARC. However, the communities need more than footballs. Although values are being taught and moments of community togetherness have been created, the programmes are fragile and not particularly sustainable without a guaranteed commitment to provide more equipment, programmes and infrastructure, all problems raised by most coaches during the feedback event. Both Tarifa and Genyer Rojas warned of the imperative to ensure that there was a permanent and lasting impact:

Jhon Fredy Tarifa Aguirre:

I think that more time and focus is need in these communities, especially those indigenous communities. They feel a bit more recognised by the state, but the state has promised them things which have not been fulfilled yet, and so, in this region the community is, well they resent it, and then

they say ‘No, they finally arrive, but then they are going to abandon us again.’ (personal interview 24 October 2017)

Genyer Rojas:

At the moment this project is just starting, and this is just the start of the contribution to peace by Coldeportes, the institution that we are working for, but yes, things are lacking, such as sports facilities, roads and so on. I think that this cannot be forgotten by the central government, private and public institutions, because I think we all have to work together. We can't abandon these people again who we made change their lives. (personal interview 24 October 2017)

Judging by the accounts provided by the *monitor* and *promotor* in each camp, it is clear that much work lies ahead for the Ministry of Sport, as Coldeportes now is. The project has nation-building aims, but is restricted in how successful they can be due to the factors that contributed to the conflict in the first place, and that continue to make the peace agreement difficult to implement and sustain. The sport and recreation activities cannot work in isolation. The UN sees peace building as comprising four main types of activities, ‘providing security, building the socio-economic foundations for long term peace, establishing the political framework for long term peace and fostering reconciliation, healing and justice’ (SDP IWG 2008: 206). This sport and recreation initiative fits into the last of these. It is helping to provide spaces and opportunities for (re)encounter, enabling the chance for mutual understanding and recognition, teaching values of respect, cooperation, coexistence and resignifying the participants in the projects and the territories themselves in the public imagination through media presentation so that there is a greater ease of them being imagined as part of the national community. Football, without doubt, has functioned as the best space and time for these socializing opportunities to occur, whether through play or as spectators. These football matches are, however, a ‘suspended period of entertainment’ (Rookwood and Palmer 2011: 195) that allow the former combatants and community to suspend the realities of life and the struggles involved with the peace process. Lasting peace and full reintegration is a much more complex process, which football on its own cannot provide. One of the coaches, Paulo Martínez, was convinced of the impact the project was having, saying, ‘I believe that we, and I say we, and you as well, because you are here telling the story, I think that we are making history’ (personal interview 24 October 2017).<sup>10</sup> It was wonderful to be present as Clara Luz

10 In one activity on the Coldeportes feedback day for the *promotores y monitores*, they were asked to write one word that best summarized their experiences of the project to date. Many of the words chosen by the *monitores* and *promotores* indicate initial success and progress in establishing the grounds for collective identities to be created between FARC, representatives of public forces and the surrounding communities. The words written on the board for this activity included the

Roldán announced that funding had been delivered and that the project would be continued for at least another year, and to see the cheers and celebration of all the *promotores* and *monitores*. However, many of the doubts and problems of SDP projects discussed earlier in this chapter are present and so further research is required to gauge and evaluate to what extent the project in the ETCRs is having an impact.

### Conclusion: a lasting impact for SDP?

This chapter has shown that there was an increased deployment of SDP programmes targeted at addressing the Colombian political situation, and these projects usually had football as the core sporting medium for the development focus of the programmes. Elite sport was still funded and celebrated, but the Santos government's preoccupation and funding of social sport in vulnerable areas diverged from usual practice, as 'history shows that, when government intervention occurs, priority is often given to elite sport programs, rather than to general sport participation' (Coakley 2001: 393). The recognition of sport's power as a tool for social transformation followed greater awareness and study of the processes, methodologies and results of SDP programmes. The support that the UN and other major development agencies gave to such SDP programmes in the achieving of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly documents recommending strategies and best practice for governments, coincided with the beginning of the Santos government. Consequently, in the development plans of Coldeportes we can see a growing articulation of the importance of Social and Community Sport projects, predominantly aimed at children and adolescents, and in vulnerable communities generally. The aim of all the projects discussed in this chapter, as well as the support for multisport competitions, was to integrate communities, embed citizenship values to young Colombians promoting teamwork, fair play, tolerance, respect, gender equity and conflict resolution among others. These programmes can also help resignify individuals, communities and spaces associated with the conflict and its aftermath, increase State presence and provide opportunities, and provide spaces for encounter and recognition. The programmes in the ETCRs was the most important of these, addressing the most obvious site for national fragmentation, and providing the most visible evidence of the 'New Colombia' that Santos so frequently spoke of, with previous enemies reconciled and working towards peace. This united Colombia had been articulated so frequently through football, especially through the

following: commitment, excellent, perseverance, enriching, knowledge, fulfilling promises, transformation, experiences, love, smile, happiness, passion, hope, equality, resistance, learning, hard work, pride, motivation, history, satisfaction, friendship, projects in action, accessible, 'unlearning' preconceptions, reconciliation, belonging and giving back something.

collective moment of national triumph of the 2014 World Cup as a founding moment, that Santos's presidential campaign for peace was closely associated with the football success. The signing of the peace agreement was a second national success, again supported by football as a visual confirmation of rapprochement (former enemies playing on the same pitch, and supporting the national team together). Football provided a means to begin the reintegration of former FARC combatants within the local and national community, allowing the chance for new identities to emerge, and socialization processes and horizontal recognition to occur. Given that one of the main problems that has impeded nation building in Colombia has been the insecurity resultant from the State forces not possessing the monopoly of violence across the national territory, improving coexistence using football has emerged as a main form of improving security at micro, meso or macro level. Peace-building efforts, with football as a major part of the bonding, bridging and linking effort, is an essential first stage towards nation building. Puentes Sánchez, for instance, argues for coexistence as being an essential basis for building security (2015: 246). Finding new talents who can represent the nation is a felicitous extra for some of the programmes where reintegration, reconciliation and coexistence are the principal aims. There are, of course, programmes such as *Supérate Intercolegiados* (a national schools multisport competition that was a pet project of Santos over his presidency), which aim to find young Colombians who can give Colombia the successes and subsequent feelings of pride, positivity, happiness and togetherness that a number of Colombians have provided the nation during the Santos presidency, in football and a range of other sports. Although elite sport is still promoted, Coldeportes has strengthened and formalized its commitment to providing the rights and opportunities incumbent upon it according to the National System for Sport in 1995. Although this has always been part of its job, and it has provided schemes and opportunities in the past (as has Colombia Joven with *Golombiao*), the Santos government made it more of a priority to complement wider political goals.

It remains to be seen how many of these programmes will continue and if so, in what form and with what modifications. A new government often ends previous projects and introduces new policies and priorities. The legacy of Santos in terms of sport policy for the next decade can be seen in the Coldeportes National Public Policy for the Development of Sport, Recreation, Physical Activity and Enjoyment of Free Time towards a Territory of Peace 2018–2028, the successor to the Ten-Year Plan for Sport 2009–2019 (PDD). This public policy recognizes the advance of SDP over the last decade, eight years of which, of course, were under Santos's government: 'one of the main advances that this public policy presents is conceiving sport as a tool for social transformation, individual satisfaction, essentially connecting with human wellbeing and development in general' (Coldeportes 2018: 11). It goes on to confirm that 'this public policy consider sport as not just an end in itself, but as a means, or an instrument, for the State to generate

social wellbeing' (23), as well as 'sport's malleability' being beneficial for achieving a range of non-sporting objectives, including 'the reduction of crime and drug use amongst youth, the improvement of social inclusion, the promotion of health and community rehabilitation' (ibid.). This is a public policy that, through sport, and most often through football, aims to have a transformative effect on Colombian society, using it in a more systematic fashion to tackle recognized problems that impede national togetherness. This objective was also the aim of the PDSCCF. As a consequence of this recognition, a number of objectives for the department as a whole aim to strengthen, broaden access to and improve SDP programmes. The targets for 2028 include the consolidation of a territory in peace and an improvement in the quality of life of Colombian citizens through continued access to recreation, physical activity and enjoyment of free time (43). One of the 'Strategic Lines' intends to 'strengthen Coldeportes' capacity and technical assistance towards the general population with a focus on the disadvantaged' and establishes the sector and projects to achieve this as being through social and community sport, coexistence and peace, Supérate, new trends and ancestral practices (53). For the Social and Community Sport section, the two main strategies to achieve their goals are a continuation of the schemes that have been analyzed in this chapter, namely, the strengthening of social and community sport across the whole country, and organizing regional or national events for social and community sport (64). It is striking, looking at the document as a whole, just how much content and reference there is to this social role for sport. This is certainly down to the political and social developments in the country and Santos turning to sport as a major tool to bring the country together.

This chapter has not sought to analyze whether the campaigns and objectives are being achieved, nor how effective they are and what problems and successes they are having. This is beyond the remit of this particular study, but deserves to be the subject of further research. Challenges certainly remain for the Colombian government if the public policy objectives for 2018–2028 are to be achieved. Despite the increased budget during the Santos years and greater commitment to SDP, Calderón and Martínez believe that 'much more support is needed from the Colombian state' (2015: 18), and also that support is needed from other actors, mainly private enterprise, while the State develops stronger strategies and means of support (19). The organizing institutions of the Sport and PostConflict conference in Bogotá on 9–10 October 2017, hosted by the Colombian Olympic Committee (COC), published a manifesto during the event, which outlined five major challenges to be tackled through sport:

- 1) To facilitate dialogue between previously polarised social and political actors.
- 2) To generate strategies for social sport which promote coexistence and reconciliation.

- 3) To promote the value of sport as a mediator in conflict and as a tool for helping create conciliatory skills and counsellors at a school and community level.
- 4) To create prevention strategies for the different types of violence associated with postconflict processes.
- 5) To contribute to the training and development of new leaders among communities, the victims, and former combatants through academic programmes at different educational levels. (Comité Olímpico Colombiano 2017)

Some of these challenges are being tackled, as the chapter has shown, but it will be some time before we can fully analyze and discuss how much success such SDP campaigns and strategies have had in terms of creating the conditions for peace, reintegration and reconciliation of former FARC guerrillas, in particular, as well as impacting upon social development locally and nationally. What can be concluded is that the Santos government, across a variety of Ministries and Administrative Departments, have seen SDP projects usually centred on football as a viable tool to integrate more Colombians into the nation. Whether these are former FARC combatants or young Colombians in vulnerable areas, the Santos government moved away from a purely rhetorical or elite level sport strategy to strengthen concepts of the nation through sport.





# Conclusion

## #OneCountryOnAPitch?

This book shows the systematic, innovative and multi-faceted strategy in which President Juan Manuel Santos utilized football for his national unity project during the two terms of his presidency, a use of football that surpassed previous uses of football in the country. Recognizing football as one of a very few factors capable of unifying Colombians and arousing a common emotive sense of affiliation in Colombians with the nation, Santos sought to deploy the power of football to aid his key political project of bringing an end to the conflict with the FARC, and to nation building more widely. Exploiting football was a key government strategy to tackle the enduring political and social problems that have blighted Colombia's struggle to solidify the sense of a Colombian nation and national identity. Victories for the national men's team became times of national celebration, reasons for patriotic pride and positivity, symbolizing the potential for a new, peaceful Colombia. They were portrayed as times when *all* Colombia was celebrating together. The ritual of these matches was bolstered by presidential rhetoric as times and spaces for mutual recognition, reconciliation and re-identification, opportunities for the accommodation of previously excluded members of the Colombian community, such as FARC guerrillas, within the national in-group. Football as an activity was empowered as a tool for social development, capable of supporting a wide variety of government institutions and campaigns for creating better citizens. Santos mined the power and malleability of football more than any other Colombian president had previously, putting it to use to support a variety of projects across the nation promoting inclusion, reconciliation, social education and good citizenship. Whereas other presidents only spoke of football for national benefit at the time of triumph, the Santos government not only spoke about football for the nation constantly over the eight years in power, but took actions to introduce laws, public policies and campaigns to put it to effective use across the national territory. The implementation of policies such as the PDSCCF and campaigns such as Golombio may have been limited and flawed, but the focus on sport for development and peace has at least become more embedded from an institutional level. It is therefore fair to argue that the Santos government marked a

departure in Colombia for the use of football, and sport in general, for nation building. This book shows that the footballization of politics and society in Colombia under Santos progressed from simple previous rhetorical evocations of patriotic pride and togetherness, to being an active tool deployed in marginal and peripheral communities with the universal potential to build Colombianness at micro, meso and macro levels. Furthermore, football was instrumentalized in a much wider manner by a range of State institutions, based on its convening power. As a study carried out between Coldeportes and the Universidad Sergio Arboleda noted:

The central government's systematic interest in sport is relatively recent, and is still developing [...] the Colombian State is learning more every day about the relevance and use which can be attributed to sport, not just for competition, but also to help achieve other non-sporting objectives, such as health, education, and in wider terms, public wellbeing in general. (Quiñones Valero et al. 2014: 36–38)<sup>1</sup>

One of the main aims of this book was to analyze this development of the systematic use of football and how and why the Colombian State under Santos put it to use in a more strategic, widespread and coordinated way than in any previous Colombian government. It illustrates the conviction of the Santos government that football is a powerful agent in Colombia for nation building, ready for use in diverse situations and contexts. It should be remembered that a range of other actors, including the media, private enterprise, NGOs and community-led projects, are all involved in this footballization of society across the national territory. The extent to which society and politics was 'footballized' under Santos, and the importance of football, and sport in general, as a key tool of nation-building impacts upon the study of Colombian politics and society. This book demonstrates that it has a much greater impact than is often credited or studied.

Football has been the principal focus of this book as the most obvious, popular and commonly resorted to sport for national unity in Colombia. Matches of the *Selección* are national events, moments that transcend daily routine and stimulate moments of exceptional nationalism and national focus. No sport can really rival the attention football gets and debate it engenders. It should be stressed, nonetheless, that any significant sporting triumph on the world stage and sport in general was exploited for the same ends. Santos

1 It is worth noting that one of the co-authors of this study is Ernesto Lucena, who took over as Director of Coldeportes as Iván Duque became president, and subsequently became the country's first Minister for Sport as Coldeportes became a Ministry on 5 June 2019. The study analyzed the potential for public policies using sport, physical activity and recreation in the country. This understanding of sport as a means and as a tool suggested a continuation of the strategy of sport for development policies and campaigns introduced during the Santos presidency with Lucena at the head of Coldeportes.

was fortunate to oversee Colombia's most successful period of sporting achievement so far with record medal hauls in global and continental multi-competitions, and conspicuous triumphs in sports such as athletics, cycling, boxing and weightlifting. The same messages around football were repeated at the time of any victory for a Colombian athlete or team, and the benefits of sport for the individual and the collective were underlined once again. Although football is without doubt the most mediated, popular and widely supported and played sport in Colombia, the Santos government endeavoured to promote a wider range of sport, physical activity and recreation to the public. A study undertaken to analyze how Santos spoke about and deployed cycling or athletics would likely reach similar conclusions to what has been presented here about football's deployment.

This book offers a significant contribution to a number of fields, as an interdisciplinary project bringing together a number of research areas in its examination of a systematic and deliberate strategy of nation building using football. As shown in chapter two, how sport, and football in particular, interrelates with and impacts upon historical and social processes has become an increasingly important field of study. Much previous work has focused on the more successful footballing nations of Latin America, particularly Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, with comparatively little attention on the Andean nations whose football development and continental success was less marked, despite sport's importance in modernization, urbanization, and considerations of the nation, national identity and its citizens. There has also been a tendency to focus on the convergence of World Cups and military dictatorships, and how football has served as a distraction device masking national problems or State authoritarianism and violence. This book analyzes a different football national project, a football for peace campaign originally based around rhetorical imaginings of the national team, but then activating professional and recreational football nationwide in concrete projects with established methodologies to address historical fissures that have impeded the construction of an encompassing national identity. It discusses the novel ways in which football was deployed for nation building, which has implications not only for Colombia moving forward, but also for the continent and elsewhere. After all, football will continue to be an occasion for any Latin American nation to see itself and evaluate their national and global standing at the time of participation in a major tournament such as a World Cup. Such a combination of rhetorical, social media, legislative and professional and recreational level sporting projects centred on exploiting football's cultural and social potential have not been contemplated elsewhere to address, mitigate or solve such an array of problems that impact upon the construction of nation, fostering citizenship and an inclusive national identity. The peace process in Colombia was a historic moment, not just nationally, but continentally and globally; studies that discuss aspects of this vital period in Colombia's history are fundamental to support and understand the process. This analysis of how football was strategically deployed to complement and

assist with the peace process and wider national issues that have fragmented citizen attachment to and recognition of the nation is instructive, and can have positive ramifications for similar processes elsewhere. This book adds a new angle to the already rich analyses and studies discussing the peace process and its ongoing implementation.

This book examines new governmental communication strategies using social media, particularly how Twitter can have a role in creating emotional and psychological affiliations with the nation, based on football. Given the attention paid across the nation to national team football matches, and football being the phenomenon most likely to encourage immediate imagined affiliations and mutual identifications, the online real-time conversation of multiple Colombian voices from all corners of the nation and the diaspora is a propitious moment for promoting a sense of Colombianness using the tools Twitter offers. Twitter, therefore, has become an important platform for broadcasting messages fostering sporting nationalism, rapidly and efficiently reaching an audience. Other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram can have a similar effect, and WhatsApp is also a much-used communication application that had a powerful affect on the 2016 plebiscite and other elections and referenda globally. This book suggests how these platforms could be used to discuss the convergence of politics, popular culture and social media.

The book also analyzes a legislative process towards the development of a public policy that is unique in the continent. Similar situations of football-related violence and the social factors behind and related to them, although with their own national and local dynamics, exist across Latin America and elsewhere. This book is a contribution to this field of study of football violence, organized fan groups and their identities, cultures and practices. To what extent do *barrismo social*-type projects elsewhere in Latin America, and can these social projects created by *barras* be exported to other cities with strong traditions of organized *barras* experiencing problems with football violence? These projects, as well as the SDP campaigns analyzed in chapter five, have received little academic attention thus far. Although studies on SDP theory, methods and projects have become more prevalent in the last fifteen years, there has been little study of their impact and implementation in Latin America, let alone Colombia. This seems a curious absence given the increasing prevalence of State, NGO and business projects in Colombia, particularly when we remember that a methodology for football for peace that has gone on to be used in other continents was developed in Medellín in the mid- to late 1990s. Much can be learned, therefore, about and from the Colombian experience and strategy that this book analyzes, particularly of the successes and limitations of Golombiao and sport, physical activity and recreation provision in the FARC demobilization and reincorporation camps and surrounding communities.

Although this book explores key elements of Santos's footballization of Colombian society and politics and the politicization of Colombian football,

there are additional areas that would benefit from further study to extend the work conducted here. There are a number of other campaigns using football for social development in Colombia, originating from Coldeportes and other national, departmental and local government agencies, private enterprises, NGOs and community groups. Investigations into these campaigns, their structures, objectives, methodologies, successes and difficulties and the responses to them of the target population and community and those involved in them would be invaluable. To what extent can these projects and methodologies be developed, evaluated and improved? Can State, NGOs and community groups create lasting alliances and partnerships so that projects can be sustained, bearing in mind power relationships and that political priorities may differ? Are they having the desired impact in the local communities, or do they risk becoming little more than recreational sporting moments that may just be an escape from social problems? To what extent can Afro-Colombian or indigenous groups appropriate these types of projects to promote their own agendas? Indeed, the programmes discussed in chapter five require further study. Due to safety and research ethics limitations, no Golombiao sessions were observed nor were any of the ETCRs visited for this project. I have since had conversations with demobilized members of the FARC who became involved and contracted by Coldeportes as coaches as part of the project, but more fieldwork needs to be done to analyze the experiences and opinions of FARC and community members as well as bottom-up projects that have started up since the Duque presidency weakened and undermined much of the peace process structures and projects. One former FARC member who was employed by Coldeportes has been frustrated in his attempts to get a sports school off the ground in his local community as support from government institutions has evaporated, though the Covid-19 pandemic has also had a detrimental impact. Much can be learned from what has been done and may still be being done, albeit not as part of the original project, in these programmes in different regions of Colombia. These are crucial processes that need to be observed, evaluated, improved and learned from.

Full analysis of the impact of the public policies, particularly the PDSCCF, will take place after 2024 when the timescale for the Plan ends, although events have taken place to evaluate what, if anything, has been accomplished. The Ombudsman's Office of Bogotá, in collaboration with the Attorney General's office, on 12 July 2019, organized one such event.<sup>2</sup> This event tried to give a balance of ongoing efforts to implement

2 The reason for the Attorney General taking an interest in hosting this event lies in that Fernando Carrillo Flórez, the Interior Minister who launched the project, is now the Procurador. Juber Ariza, who drove the project while at the Interior Ministry, is also now working in the Attorney General's office. Alirio Amaya, who has been an integral part of projects for reducing the violence in football in Bogotá and nationally, now works at the Ombudsman's office of Bogotá.

the PDSCCF, principally in Bogotá, but the ombudsmen<sup>3</sup> of other cities such as Medellín, Cali and Bucaramanga also gave information about the PDSCCF's implementation in their cities in one panel. Taking into account that achieving the objectives will take time, the prevailing impression given in this event is that much of the PDSCCF is not being implemented. In the opening comments by Liliana Caballero, the Delegated Attorney for Monitoring of Public Functions, only ten of the thirty cities responded to questions from the Attorney General about how the PDSCCF was being implemented (*Prensa Personería Bogotá* 2019a). Representatives of various Bogotá-based fan groups also outlined various complaints about the lack of implementation of the PDSCCF. Their complaints included a lack of financing, fan groups not being included in meetings or decision-making processes, social activities within the *barras* not being supported by football clubs and authorities and articles in the laws and policy not being observed by the authorities (see *Prensa Personería de Bogotá* 2019a, b and c). Antonio Hernández, a representative of the IDPAC of Bogotá (the District Institute for Communal Participation and Action), who spoke about actions undertaken in Bogotá, admitted that the Ten-Year Plan does not have a concrete action plan (*Prensa Personería Bogotá* 2019b). In the same panel, Rosita Serpa an assessor from the Interior Ministry, commented that 'there is still a lack of knowledge and understanding about the law' and that there was a 'lack of coordination between the different actors' (*Prensa Personería Bogotá* 2019b). The event at least did show that the PDSCCF is still on the agenda of certain cities, but questions remain about its impact on a national level. Three years do remain for the PDSCCF and a comprehensive study of this groundbreaking but flawed document can take place after the conclusion of its projected timescale. It will also be important to establish if other Latin American countries use the PDSCCF as a blueprint for similar policies; if so, can governments avoid the failures of the Santos government to implement such a plan and achieve objectives? Will State policy targeting football violence on the continent remain more security-oriented and repressive? Can *barras* elsewhere in South America pressurize governments or local authorities to be a part of developing similar public policies and projects?

3 The function of the Ombudsmen of each city is to oversee the management of the mayors and other decentralized areas. They ensure the protection and promotion of human rights of citizens, and that due process is being followed in order to guarantee the rights and interests of Colombian citizens. As the PDSCCF is an optional public policy that can be included within the development plan of a city, municipality or region, the ombudsman is responsible for monitoring the implementation or otherwise of policies such as this, particularly one that has implications for the human rights of often-marginalized groups such as *barras*.

## Football and nation beyond Santos

Moving forward beyond the timeframe of this project, following the recognition of football's power and malleability, and its systematic use by the Santos government, it will be instructive to study and compare how and if Santos's successor Iván Duque – a government with a different perspective on the peace process – and future governments will continue the process and deploy football and other sports to suit their own agendas. The Santos government established a more structured basis for football's deployment in a number of areas for national development, showing the possibilities for a strategy for football use for nation building replicable and implementable not just in Colombia, but across the continent with the necessary adjustments and improvements relevant to local circumstances. As has been established in this book, football is an adaptable tool that can serve any master and football has considerable social and political currency in Colombia. The same is true elsewhere in Latin America where football has massive power waiting to be deployed by those who see a use for it. Will other countries learn from the Colombian experience and adapt football's power to address particular local and national issues?

Colombia continues to need positive stories that are seen by a national and global audience. The 'Narcolumbia' image endures and is difficult to shift, particularly as stories about the murders of social leaders and the growing strength of dissident FARC forces have once again hit the national and international news, and worries increase about the Duque government's implementation of the peace agreement. Colombian athletes continue to provide successes that the nation needs to boost its sense of pride and its reputation globally. Caterine Ibargüen's award as IAAF Woman Athlete of the Year in December 2018, Robert Farah and Juan Sebastián Cabal's men's tennis doubles triumph at Wimbledon in July 2019 and cyclist Egan Bernal's stirring and remarkable Tour de France 2019 victory were epic national triumphs, championed by President Duque and the press, and were celebrated as such by Colombians. Even Colombia becoming world champions in the unlikely sport of men's underwater rugby and the women's team gaining the bronze medal in August 2019 merited a congratulatory tweet from Duque (@IvanDuque 6:46pm, 3 August 2019), and is national news in a country that has got used to looking to sport for relief from national negativity. Sport provides opportunities for national optimism, patriotic pride and apolitical unifying moments for a country whose unity remains uncertain. Sporting nationalism, based on elite performance, is vital for the nation and national identity, and will continue to be used by the president to encourage unity because of existing national fragility and political polarization. This type of sporting nationalism is not new in Colombia or elsewhere on the continent (though, as this book demonstrates, how it is transmitted via Twitter and other social media has developed). What is of greater interest is whether the drive for SDP projects

and recreational sport, and football especially, to be a motor for unity at micro, meso and macro levels in Colombia and elsewhere will be continued and developed. This type of sport for nation building has a greater impact in the daily lives of Colombian citizens across the national territory, bearing in mind that elite sporting triumphs are temporary events. However, despite seemingly being relatively politically neutral, such sporting projects are vulnerable to changes in political leadership and government and funding them may not be in the priorities of new leaders.

Iván Duque as president established his football credentials in a way that recalls many of Santos's actions in the first year of his government. Santos made public his support of Santa Fe and the Colombian national team, attending training sessions, wearing the national shirt, acclaiming triumphs and supporting the hosting of tournaments. Duque conducted himself in a similar way during the presidential election campaign in 2018 (Colombian elections always coincide with the men's World Cup, and if Colombia qualifies, then football will always be part of campaign considerations) and in his first year in office. He declared himself an 'incurable romantic with a love of football' and that 'if it weren't for football, I wouldn't have the outlook that I now have on life' (Canal 1 2019). He showed off his football skills on several occasions (see, for example, *Las2Orillas* 2018; and *Diario AS* 2018); he emphasized his long-lasting support for América de Cali (see, for example, *Kienyke* 2018); and he has been photographed on various occasions wearing the national football shirt and has given national shirts to foreign political leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Justin Trudeau (*El Tiempo* 2018). He has also conducted high-profile ceremonies with the national football team, much as Santos did. He presented outgoing national team coach José Pékerman with the national flag and commemorative plaque for his work with the national team and the positive impact of his efforts for the nation in the Casa de Nariño on 17 September 2018, just over a month after becoming president.<sup>4</sup> He invited the national men's team to the presidential palace before the Copa América 2019 in Brazil and gave a speech that could easily have been one that Santos would have given. The following excerpt from that speech contains many similar rhetorical devices and messages that Santos employed:

You are not just going to represent the family that includes every Colombian. When we see you play we will all unite behind one yellow, blue and red flag. You represent a whole country, all of our dreams, our happiness, our anguish. And we always know that you will give your best for this country [...] Our defenders, our forwards, our midfielders, every passage of play, every pass, means that a Colombian is behind you [*sic*].

4 Santos had actually limited Duque's actions here, having awarded Pékerman the Order of Boyacá, the country's highest honour, at the flag-giving ceremony to the national team in the Casa de Nariño before the 2018 World Cup.



You give your best for this country. That's what we saw in the World Cup, a great World Cup [...] You represent a whole country, and the whole country feels proud seeing you here in the home of all Colombians about to leave towards success in a new Copa América, a tournament that I hope will be the Copa América that celebrates the Bicentenary of Colombia. (*Presidencia de la República* 2019a)

Under Duque, Coldeportes was converted into into a full Ministry, with the signing of Law 1967 on 5 June 2019, a process begun by Santos on 4 April 2018. Duque, like Santos, also detailed the benefit that sport could have for the nation, seeing sport as a tool and a means to an end:

We want sport to become a matter of State policy. We want sport to be a fundamental factor in building equality, because we understand that sport also has a close connection with business and, of course, with legality. Because, as sport becomes more embedded across our national territory, we are distancing young people and children from the scourge of violence, from criminality and the temptation of easy money [...] I believe that sport is a unifying factor in our country. We are excited by the leaps of Caterine Ibargüen, we are excited by the pedalling of Mariana Pajón, we are excited by the efforts of all our athletes, our boxers, our weightlifters. (*Presidencia de la República* 2019b)

Once again, there are similarities to Santos's messages here, speaking of the unifying power of sport and sport being able to tackle violence and criminality. There are some subtle differences though appearing, particularly the reference to 'legality', a jab at the FARC and Duque's opposition to elements of the Santos peace process and a nod to Duque's 'Peace with legality' slogan.

Since then, football has proved a less successful terrain for Duque to use for any attempt to unify the nation, despite Colombia being due to be co-hosts of the 2020 Copa América and a seemingly strong chance to win the hosting rights of the Women's World Cup in 2023. Both events would usually provide potentially powerful moments for nation branding and unifying the nation around sport, but a series of scandals, the Covid-19 pandemic and national protests put paid to any sporting nationalism project. Regarding the Women's World Cup hosting bid, when announcing Colombia's candidacy, Duque had said, 'We don't just want our country to take this step to recognize the importance of sport, but also to highlight the importance of the leading role of women in the sporting development of our country' (*El Espectador* 2019). However, various news reports about women's football in Colombia questioned the seriousness with which football authorities take the women's game, events that went viral on social media and that are likely to have harmed Colombia's bid. First, Gabriel Camargo, director of the Deportes Tolima football club, sparked outrage with comments he made when asked about the women's professional league:

That is going badly, it's going badly economically. Apart from problems with the women, who are more alcoholic than the men. Ask the owners of Atlético Huila how much they regret having won the [Copa Libertadores] title and having invested so much money in them. The league is just a breeding ground for lesbians. (*El Espectador* 2018)

Although he eventually apologized, it revealed a lack of support for the women's professional league, which had only been instituted in 2017 to great fanfare. Two years later, at one stage the league looked unlikely to take place, despite the achievement of Atlético Huila in winning the women's Copa Libertadores (a triumph that Duque did not tweet about). The 2019 edition did eventually go ahead, though the length of the tournament was reduced to just three months. The impact of Covid-19 and economic pressures in 2020 led to several professional clubs ending their women's teams, most notably Camargo's Deportes Tolima and Atlético Huila, whose Libertadores victory was clearly not enough for the team to merit being sustained. The 2020 league only featured thirteen teams, as Atlético, Cortuluá, Cúcuta Deportivo, Deportivo Pereira, Once Caldas and Orsomarso also withdrew from the league. The tournament only lasted from 16 October to 13 December, another reduction. Cortuluá did attempt to return in 2021 but eventually withdrew and two more clubs, Deportivo Pasto and Junior, failed to enter teams. Dimayor and the FCF's commitment to the Women's Professional League continues to be questioned and criticized by players, fans and journalists alike, with many suspecting that many club directors see their women's teams as an unwanted financial burden. CONMEBOL's requirement for clubs to have a women's team in order to compete in international competitions such as the Copa Libertadores and the Copa Suramericana seems to be increasingly non-binding.

At a national team level, a video released on 18 February 2019 by national team players Melissa Ortiz and Isabella Echeverri about the lack of professionalism and malpractice of coaches of the women's national team led to more allegations of sexual misconduct by coaches of some of the national junior sides. Subsequently, the coach of the under 17 Colombian women's team, Diego Luna, was convicted and sentenced to 28 months in prison. This series of incidents did, at least, lead to the men's national team players releasing a joint statement supporting their female counterparts. This statement read:

In relation to the events that have taken place regarding the Women's National Team, the players of the National Men's Team has decided to make the following statement to the general public:

1. We reject and condemn any act which harms the mental, physical or emotional health of any woman.
2. We support our compatriots in the Colombian National Women's Team.
3. We expect and urge there to be relevant investigations carried out by judicial bodies as soon as possible.

4. Women's football in every age group must be guaranteed the chance to continue to grow and develop and we will always give all our support to the directors and women footballers that this should be the case. (*Fémina Fútbol* 2019)

This support from the men's team is very welcome, but once again underlines the struggle for women's football to be taken as seriously as the men's game by authorities, and to have the same symbolic and representative power for the nation. These controversies and a lack of evidence of real institutional support for women's football in Colombia, particularly from Dimayor and the FCF, certainly will have contributed to Colombia failing to win the hosting rights to the 2023 Women's World Cup. This was another blow to the women's game in the country. It will be interesting to examine the narrative and responses to women's football over the next few years, and whether another bid can be made, that has evaluated and acted on the failures of the 2023 bid.

Duque's discourse on women's football, or lack thereof, is comparable to that of Santos. The first opportunity for Duque to talk about women's football and the nation came with the Colombian women's gold medal in the Pan American Games in Lima 2019. He did tweet his congratulations:

The colours of our flag are once again raised high thanks to the victory of the National Women's football team in the final of the Panamerican Games @LimaJuegos2019. The whole country is proud of this gold medal for Colombia. Congratulations! #ColombiaTierraDeAtletas [#ColombiaLandofAthletes] (@ivandunque 1:46pm, 10 August 2019)

Features common to Santos tweets are present, such as the use of 'the whole country', references to national symbols, transmitting a sense of national pride and the use of a patriotic hashtag. The #ColombiaLandofAthletes seemed to be the 2019 sport-related slogan promoted by the presidency, the Ministry of Sport, sports teams and federations, and was also used by sponsors and the media. Like Santos, Duque did not go as far to make the women's team representative of the nation, as has been the case with narrative about the men's team. In fact, the responsibility to comment on women's sport and front the 2023 Women's World Cup bid fell to Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez, suggesting women's football is somehow not as important or worthy of male presidential comment. Ramírez fronted the Colombian bid, but also potentially weakened Colombia's chances as she was caught up in two drug-related scandals in 2020 before the host nation was chosen. Her husband was accused of allegedly having business links with drug trafficker 'Memo Fantasma', and then it was revealed that she had bailed out her brother who had been arrested accused of drug trafficking in Miami in 1997. These stories led to her political profile being damaged and her role promoting the nation hosting the tournament to be compromised.

Colombia's planned co-hosting of the men's 2020 Copa América also turned into a disaster for Duque. First, the tournament was postponed in

March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and was rearranged for June 2021, still in Colombia and Argentina. This situation changed in May 2021 as CONMEBOL felt obliged to relocate the tournament to be entirely held in Brazil, due to the Covid situation in Argentina, and to the national social protests in Colombia. These social protests originally erupted on 28 April 2021 against a Duque tax plan, and quickly expanded to include other demands including for a national basic income, full implementation of the peace agreement and greater protection for social and environmental leaders. Huge protests took place in most cities, but were led by those in Cali. The protests were met with brutal repression from the Colombian public forces, particularly the Colombia's Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD), actions that drew considerable international condemnation from the international community and human rights groups. Police actions led to dozens of deaths and injuries among the protests, with several victims such as Lucas Villa in Pereira, becoming martyrs of the cause. There were also accusations of the police sexually assaulting protesters, most infamously in Popayán as a teenage female victim denounced an assault on Facebook before apparently committing suicide.

These protests spilled over into the footballsphere as protesters urged that the Copa América should not be held in Colombia, fearing that it would be used as a smoke screen by the Duque government to cover up the police violence and social conditions and end the protests. Banners saying 'without peace there is no football' and 'football should not be played' were visible in protests, and similar comments became prevalent on social media. A series of memes were widely shared on social media calling for the tournament to be taken away from Colombia. Memes included a mock-up of an infamous presidential campaign photo of Duque balancing a football on his head, with the football replaced by a skull, and a cartoon of a heavily armed ESMAD soldier with a football being proclaimed as the new mascot of the Copa América. Eighteen *barra* groups and football associations united to release a statement on 4 May calling for CONMEBOL to relocate Libertadores matches and the Copa América to be moved away from Colombia, reminding CONMEBOL of Argentina's use of the 1978 World Cup to hide political murders and disappearances. On 14 May, footballers of Deportes Tolima and Deportivo Cali released a joint statement asking for all league matches to be suspended in the country given the violence, showing solidarity with the protesters. League matches due to be held in Cali and other cities badly affected by the protests were already being held elsewhere. These demands by protesters, fans and footballers are striking when we compare them with the 2001 Copa América. In 2001, the people came together to ensure that the competition would take place in Colombia despite bomb attacks and the kidnapping of the FCF Vice President prior to the event (as discussed in chapter two), and fears of other attacks and violence. Twenty years later, the people were demanding that the tournament should be taken away from them, so the government could not use it as a masking device covering social

protest and national problems. Football here becomes a contested venue between the government and the people, and a site of popular national resistance against State oppression.

The situation reached a head on 13 May as Junior faced River Plate in a Copa Libertadores game. Gunshots and sirens outside the Romelio Martínez Stadium in Barranquilla as police faced off against protesters could be heard on the television broadcast, and tear gas used against the protesters wafted into the stadium itself, leading to players and coaches rubbing their eyes in discomfort and the River Plate team cutting short their warm-up and having to retreat inside. River's coach, Marcelo Gallardo, criticized the state of the affairs and the match taking place. The match between Atlético Nacional and the Uruguayan Club Nacional, which was being held in Pereira rather than Medellín, was severely delayed due to public protests. The captain of the Uruguayan team, who were initially unwilling to play the match given the circumstances, criticized the lack of empathy by Atlético Nacional for their fellow citizens, and the coach thanked the Colombian fans for making it clear that they were not protesting against the Uruguayan club. Given football's visibility in the continent, the Colombian situation of protests and police brutality had been further magnified and had become a severe problem for Duque at an international level, as well as for CONMEBOL. As *El Espectador* commented, 'if the Libertadores Cup matches involving Nacional and Junior were an experiment, then it failed, and the whole continent was witness to it' (*El Espectador* 2021). A week later, CONMEBOL removed Colombia as hosts, eventually replacing them with Brazil (itself a hugely contentious decision given the parlous state of Covid-19 cases in the country and Bolsonaro's much criticized health policy against the disease) as Argentina decided to withdraw from hosting. Duque protested the decision, claiming the staging of the tournament should be delayed until November when Colombia could host, but his protests fell on deaf ears as the tournament went ahead. The tournament had become a double-edged sword for Duque's government; to lose hosting rights meant considerable national and international embarrassment, a situation comparable to Belisario Betancur giving up Colombia's hosting of the World Cup in 1986 (see chapter two), and losing the chance to capitalize on football's power as a national unifying device. However, had the tournament taken place in Colombia, it is likely that it would have exposed his government in the international glare as more anti-government protests would have undoubtedly taken place against the tournament, with national and international media attention likely to focus on the root cause of the protests and the brutal police crackdown on them. Either way, football was doing considerable damage to the government. In the tournament itself that took place in empty stadiums in Brazil, Colombia came third, a result that seemed to generate much less fanfare and national pride than it might have done in other circumstances. The whole tournament is a fascinating and compelling case study of how public opinion turned against the holding football, and therefore how football was reclaimed by the Colombian population. The

national team and national football became a symbol won back by the population against the Duque government.

The most obvious lack of continuity of how football was used under Santos compared to Duque is the Coldeportes' project in the ETCRs. It is often the case that the change of government, minister or mayor will end projects spearheaded by their predecessor. This seems to be the case with the sport, physical activity and recreation project in the FARC transition camps. The project was downscaled by the Duque administration after a period of uncertainty in the first months of his presidency, according to Mercedes Torrente, who was coordinator of the project from Fundación Tierra Posible until December 2018 when the second phase ended (personal communication 13 August 2019). This project, which provided the most visible examples of Colombia coming together following the peace agreement and demobilization by the FARC, perhaps was seen to have served its purpose. As discussed in chapter five, it did provide opportunities for re-encounter, socialization, re-identification and reconciliation, and football was the leading activity of the sports provided. The matches between former combatants of the FARC, men and women, with local community and police and armed forces teams were particularly symbolic of the possibilities of the end of the conflict, as were the events arranged in camps such as Llanogrande during the national team matches in the 2018 World Cup. Perhaps the project was downscaled as it was not seen as an essential part of the ongoing peace process, a process that we must remember Duque has been accused of failing or being unwilling to implement given his opposition to various terms of the agreement. It is unclear at the time of writing what the state of the project is, though Torrente said that some of the former FARC members who were contracted in the second phase of the project are still running sport and recreation sessions in the areas around the camps (personal communication). However, the sporting opportunities provided for former FARC guerrillas since the peace agreement led to the remarkable story of the Colombia team for the World Rafting Championships in Tully, Australia, in May 2019. The eight-person team was made up of five former FARC fighters who were part of the Teófilo Forero column, and three people from the Miravalle community near the ETCR to where those FARC fighters had demobilized. That former enemies of the nation would be representing the country in sport would have been unthinkable before the start of the Santos presidency. Before they departed Colombia to compete, the team was given the Colombian flag by Sports Minister Ernesto Lucena, in a ceremony very similar to that conducted many times by Santos as football teams and Olympic teams went off to represent the nation. Lucena said as he presented the flag, 'In Australia you will show a different face of Colombia. In life we are constantly rowing against the current and I'm delighted to deliver this flag to you that symbolizes that after the armed conflict, sport can help build a new future' (*El Tiempo* 2019). In this quote, Lucena recognized that sport has been a major way in which Colombia has tried to present a more

positive image to the world; this example is a particularly powerful symbol of the possibilities for peace in Colombia, a team of former combatants and self-confessed rural farmers working together in unison.

If a former FARC fighter ever represents Colombia on the football pitch, it would be an even more remarkable story. One of the *promotores* interviewed, Paulo Martínez, talked enthusiastically about a very talented young woman he had seen in La Elvira ETCR, and was hoping to get her trials for a professional women's team (personal interview 24 October 2017). As discussed in chapters three and five, football has provided a way for FARC to show themselves to be part of the nation. It seemed that the FARC had the intention of forming a football club to compete in the Colombian professional league (see, for example, *Semana* 2017). Although this intention fell apart due to disagreements and complications between the FARC and Félix Mora who was promoting the idea, a La Paz FC team made up of former fighters on both sides of the conflict and victims has been in operation for several years.<sup>5</sup> In June 2019, La Paz FC travelled to Caen, France, to represent Colombia in the Forum Mondial Normandie pour la Paix. They were also presented with the Colombian flag in a ceremony at the High Performance Centre in Bogotá before they departed for France. Coldeportes' representative Juan José Malveyh said that the team 'is helping to build the country and is a demonstration of sport being the best tool to fight against crime and help the destiny of our young people' (*El País* 2019). Once again, the link between football and nation building is established.

Duque's experiences are a salutary reminder that football does not belong to politicians and is a contested domain and symbol that the population can fight to reclaim. Although Santos was also frequently criticized for his appropriation and politicization of football, he was more fortunate that the national positivity around the national team's re-emergence as an international force could be transferred towards optimism for a national peace project, a concept many weary of violence in the country could accept to a degree. He also perhaps benefited from more visible policies, examples and awareness of football being put to use for reconciliation that lended credence to his claims for football and nation.

Given the ubiquity, popularity and power of football in Colombia, there is no doubt that football will continue to serve a variety of purposes, whether for enrichment, entertainment, gaining power or affecting social development at local, community, city, regional or national levels. This book has shown how President Santos systematically and strategically employed football towards his national unity project. Throughout his presidency, Santos was engaged in a mission, using sport to give a new face to Colombia at home and abroad, hoping that due to his government's efforts, Colombia could be one team,

5 Carl Worswick's article (2017) is excellent on the situation between the FARC and Félix Mora, and FARC's football project in general, and the consternation that the idea of the FARC having a professional team caused in Colombia.

working and playing together. As the frequently used hashtag said during the World Cup in 2014, the point when football, politics, national unity and peace most converged, the aim was always to be #OneCountryOnAPitch.



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