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The significance of International Cooperation and Associated Travels for the Development of Women's Football in Jordan

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Abstract: The long running-battle for equality in sports has now reached a new peak in women's soccer. An increasing number of countries newly add women's soccer programs and several existing national teams fight for a further professionalization and equal payments. This demand is part of an empowerment process. In soccer, women still form a marginalized group, but they increasingly gain more scope within the social subsystem "soccer". In this context, sports have a considerable social and spatial significance on the individual, socio-cultural and structural level.

This article focusses on one aspect of this multi-layer empowerment process and deals with the influences related to international cooperation, like traveling of delegates and teams as a form of sports tourism. The main goal is to carve out the increasing importance of such travel activities for a further development of sports and through sports. Therefore, the article raises the question, which role do international cooperation and associated travel activities play within the sports development context and do they foster structural and social developments in a certain regional context? What are the most common ways of exchange within the sports sector? Which role do particular settings and regional backgrounds play?

With regard to women's football in Arab countries, this article deals with the developments in Jordan. In Jordan, the deregulation of the ban on headscarves and the support by HRH Prince Ali bin al-Hussein, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), former FIFA vice-president and half-brother of King Abdullah II, have achieved a decisive boost. Prior to the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2016 and the Asian Cup 2018, JFA has signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with different associations. These MoU play a vital role because they are important for the transfer of knowledge, the structural developments in Jordanian women's football and include several travel activities.

Keywords: women's football, empowerment, development, cooperation, sports tourism, Jordan

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1 Women's football and the international gaze

“Women's football is flourishing, on the pitch and off it. The sport is going mainstream, thanks to growing funds and improving skill levels” (The Economist, 2019).

This quote addresses the worldwide growth of women's football. Despite a history of prohibitions, special regulations and sport-specific prejudices, football is now a popular sport for women worldwide (Müller, 2009, p. 300; FIFA, 2018a). Elling & Knoppers illustrate this increasing popularity in the case of the Netherlands: “Since the national soccer federation ended its ban on women's soccer in 1971, it has become the largest team sport – together with volleyball and field hockey – among girls and women” (Elling & Knoppers, 2005, p. 257).

The development of women's football is not only taking place in the field of competitive sports, but also at the grassroots: “At grassroots level, we have seen more investment in projects dedicated to women's football. The *FIFA Forward Programme* has enabled our member associations to allocate record levels of investment to women's football projects” (FIFA, 2018a). The number of projects rises worldwide. There are not only projects in already established women's football nations, but also in regions where women's football has not been common so far, for instance in some Arab countries. In Iran, women can now watch football matches within the stadiums and women's football activities are generally increasing (FIFA, 2018b). In Jordan, the deregulation of the ban on headscarves and the support by HRH Prince Ali bin al-Hussein, president of the *Jordan Football Association* (JFA), former FIFA vice-president and half-brother of King Abdullah II, have achieved a decisive boost (Lettenbauer, 2014). Prince Ali is highlighted in various media reports as an “advocate of women's soccer locally and globally, and a voice for equality in sports” (Schneider, 2018).

Rules and standards concerning headscarves in football had a massive impact in Arab countries. Based on the principle that no one should be discriminated against because of cultural customs, FIFA decided in 2012 to allow headscarves in football. According to Hamzeh, this allows about 600 million Muslim women to participate in a football game (Hamzeh, 2015, p. 526). Furthermore, the lifting of the ban also creates a new market for the sports industry. Sporting goods manufacturers now produce football clothing for Muslim female athletes (FAZ, 2017b). This shows how influential decisions by global sports organizations can be. According to Bale, there is an increasing spread of the game supported by global sports organizations, which causes significant changes in the world of sports (Bale, 2003, pp. 37–58). In his book *Sports Geography*, the globalization in sports includes for example this growing influence of international sports organizations (e. g. FIFA, IOC) and their major sports events as well as international

migration of athletes and the increasing number of international cooperation in sports (Bale, 2003, p. 37). These factors significantly strengthen external influences and trigger cultural and social change on the national scale (Bale, 2003, pp. 37–58). Especially major sports events organized by FIFA often lead to an intensified development of women's football on the national level (Tiesler, 2012, p. 113; Maier, 2020, Interview 11).

In addition, international networks in sports are growing on all levels, too. For example there is a “transnational movement of professional players and coaches” (Amara, 2012, p. 12) and the political will fosters a lot of international cooperation in sports. In this context, sports can help to get in touch with “others” and is increasingly becoming a development model, in order to propel social change (Amara, 2012, p. 131; Bell, 2014). The UN and the EU call upon their member states to use sports in the development context and to stand up for the fundamental right to participate in sports (Wunderlich, 2015, p. 75). Due to this call, the *German Federal Government* has accepted sports as an efficient tool for development cooperation and has steadily expanded its efforts in *sports for development* (BMBF, 2017; DOSB, 2018). This strategy influences the sports-related activities of the *German Football Federation* (DFB) and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), which are in charge of several projects in men's and women's football across the globe (DFB, 2017; GIZ, 2018). In 2018, there were projects e. g. in Jordan, Afghanistan, Brazil, Colombia, and Namibia (BMZ, 2018). They contain different aspects and strategies at home and abroad and include the delegation of experienced coaches to foreign associations, financial support and support with training materials, work camps for coaches and offers for training camps. The range of problems and necessary solutions is diverse and depends on the regional background. But all projects have in common, that they have a considerable social and spatial significance. Sports can be seen as an instrument for empowerment within a certain socio-cultural context. In the dissertation of the author the extent is shown to which women's football contributes to an empowerment on the individual, socio-cultural, and organizational-structural levels.

This article picks out one aspect of this multi-layer empowerment process and deals with the influences related to international cooperation, like traveling of delegates and teams as a form of sports tourism. The main goal is to carve out the increasing importance of such travel activities for a further development of sports and through sports. Therefore, the article raises the question, which role do international cooperation and associated travel activities play within the sports development context and do they foster structural and social developments in a certain regional context? What are the most common ways of exchange within the sports sector? Which role do particular settings and regional backgrounds play? With regard to women's football in Arab countries, these developments are pre-

sented within the national context of Jordan. Prior to the *FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup* 2016 and the *Asian Cup* 2018, JFA has signed several *Memoranda of Understanding* (MoU) with different associations (JFA, 2017b, Lettenbauer, 2014). These MoU play a vital role because they are important for the transfer of knowledge, the structural developments in Jordanian women's football and include several travel activities.

This research is based on a multi-level analysis. Geographic as well as interdisciplinary books and journals were searched to set the basis for a definition of the term "cooperation" as well as "sport" and "development" and their relationship. Since this article includes content, which is so far little-noticed in books and journals, it is necessary to do research on internet platforms and social media (e. g. FIFA, DFB, JFA), in order to obtain current issues and figures. In addition to a comprehensive secondary analysis, consisting of literature and internet research, primary data were also collected. For this purpose, partially structured, problem-centered interviews were conducted to collect and implement opinions of experts from *German Football Federation* (DFB), *Bavarian Football Association* (BFV), and *Jordan Football Association* (JFA). A discussion guide in German and English was developed in advance, sent out and questions were adapted in the course of the survey, according to the newly gained knowledge. The interviews lasted about 20 minutes to two hours and were conducted in person or by telephone, depending on the availability and desire of the experts. Transcripts of all interviews are included in the dissertation of the author (Maier, 2020). In addition to the interviews, DFB, BFV and JFA provided current figures, which contribute to the debate. Since this article reflects only one slight aspect of the dissertation, only suitable parts of the interviews and figures were picked out.

At first, this article introduces the idea of the development of sports and the development through sports as well as the role of international cooperation and the travel activities triggered by it. After setting the scene, the second part of this article presents recent developments of women's football in Jordan, the role of female sports events and the international cooperation related to them. The selection of cooperation is limited to those which were signed by JFA prior to the *FIFA U-17 Women's World* 2016 and the *Asian Cup* 2018. After an overview of signed MoUs, this part further focuses on the MoU between JFA and BFV. This includes the presentation of elements of the MoU and the main travel activities.

2 Development of sports and development through sports

To analyze the development of women's football and its effects, this chapter needs to introduce the term "development" and to relate it to sports. There are several varieties to explain the term. This article refers the term to the development or unfolding of something existent. For instance, Kevenhörster & Van den Boom consider development as a normative term, which bundles perceptions of a certain desired social, economic or political change (Kevenhörster & Van den Boom, 2009, p. 19). Ihne & Wilhelm add to these three categories cultural, ecological, individual, and technological dimensions (Ihne & Wilhelm, 2013, p. 7). All perspectives have in common that development is a socio-economic-cultural process, which pursues goals such as respect for human dignity, satisfaction of basic needs, gender equality, or economic growth (Ihne & Wilhelm, 2013, p. 7).

The term "sports" plays a central role in this article as well. The UN provides the following definition:

"Sports are all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include play, recreation, organized casual or competitive sport, and indigenous sports or games" (UN, 2003, p. v).

According to this definition, sports includes a recreational as well as a competitive character. Freyer also provides a broad definition of sports and considers it as a physical, everyday activity, which follows certain rules (Freyer, 2002, p. 12). Sports can have both an active and a passive component. In the age of mass media and increasing sizes of sports facilities, accessibility to sports and thus also its social importance has grown through passive participation (Freyer, 2002, p. 31). Especially the socio-cultural context and changes in this setting are of a special interest in this article. Meier highlights this importance: "Any project in any region of the world is embedded within a specific cultural, political, juridical, economic and social setting which has to be analyzed carefully" (Meier, 2005, p. 8). With this in mind, sports works as a mirror of society, reflecting and incorporating cultural and social norms and is a "microcosm of gender values" (Creedon, 1994). In this context, changing possibilities for women in sports and different regional developments in women's football are relevant for further research.

There are two possible combinations of sports and development: "development of sports" and "development through sports". The first focuses on the promotion of sports and the sports infrastructure in a particular country and the second on the onset of sports as a tool to achieve social, political, and economic development goals (Levermore & Beacom, 2009, p. 8). Both influence each other,

and therefore a “development of sports” causes a “development through sports” and an increasing “development through sports” promotes the “development of sports”. For example, if certain parameters on the national level (e.g. athletes, club teams, leagues) are getting more professional, people involved benefit on the individual level. It also influences social and cultural structures. Conversely, a personal development and social changes in general promote the development of sports. As soon as football is no longer a typical male sport, women will have the opportunity to get involved and to promote the development of women’s football. Both national and cross-border promotions of women’s football can have a positive influence on the development of sports and the development of the people and the communities (DEZA, 2005).

3 The role of international cooperation within the sports development context

An essential part of sports development processes is the collaboration between two or more partners, in order to improve a certain area. These partnerships can work on a local, regional, national or international scale. To have a closer look at this development model, this chapter introduces the term “cooperation” and points out the importance of particular settings and regional backgrounds. Furthermore, this part of the article introduces travel activities as subcomponents of a cooperation. This includes for example trips of delegates and teams for purposes of knowledge exchange and training camps.

According to Brökel, cooperation is a temporary and voluntary collaboration between two organizations, which transfer knowledge. This also refers to the acquisition of knowledge between people in different organizations, to gain new knowledge in both organizations (Brökel, 2016, pp. 19–31). In this context, cooperation can help to gain access to skills and knowledge segments, which have been missing or to encourage new ideas and strategies through mutual exchange (Brökel, 2016, p. 32). Cooperation between different organizations nowadays is crucial in many fields of sports. In football for example, there is different cooperation between club teams or different associations on all scales. In order to start a collaboration, partners sign specific *Memoranda of Understanding* (MoU). Based on such MoU, partners form network structures and provide a platform to develop new collaborative strategies (Knörck, 2019, p. 21). Within these structures, exchange can take place in different ways. It is possible to transfer information, goods, people or services (Heintz & Werron, 2011, p. 363). For instance, there are linguistic interactions between people involved, mutual observations on and

off the sports field as well as the absorption of explicit, codified knowledge by artifacts in which knowledge is stored, e.g. football stadiums or match reports (Brökel, 2016, p. 21).

Travel activities are also possible subcomponents of a cooperation. This includes for example trips of selected delegates and teams. Zademach & Rimkus integrate trips from delegates into existing systematizations of temporary clusters as platforms of inter-organizational knowledge transfer (Zademach & Rimkus, 2016).

If governments support a cooperation, sports is also an instrument of foreign affairs. Holzweissig refers to this motivation as “diplomacy in sweat suit” (Holzweissig, 1981). Besides trips of delegates, there are also trips of teams. These include training camps with several practices and matches. According to Schwark, training camps are a young phenomenon, which is now a profitable segment in sports tourism (Schwark, 2016, p. 193). In most cases, training camps take place in climatically and infrastructural advantaged areas. Popular destinations are for example Mallorca for cyclists or Mediterranean countries (e.g. Spain, Portugal) in general, and the Gulf States (e.g. Qatar) for footballers (Schwark, 2016, pp. 195–196). Training camps serve to enhance athletic performance, but also support self-marketing (Schwark, 2016, p. 194). Both associations and club teams therefore set up long-term cooperation treaties with different associations or destinations.

This article will have a closer look at cooperation, which JFA has signed prior to the FIFA U-17 Women’s World Cup 2016 and the Asian Cup 2018 in Jordan. There was for example a MoU signed between JFA and the *Bavarian Football Federation* (BFV), which focuses on the development of women’s football and includes different ways of knowledge exchange, trips of delegates as well as training camps. Before having a look at this cooperation, it is necessary to point out that to cooperate does not necessarily mean to be successful. According to Brökel, the success of collaboration is dependent on various influencing factors, such as trust, openness, ability to cooperate, willingness to compromise, or empathy. Spatial proximity is usually beneficial as meetings can take place more frequently, travel and transportation costs are lower, as well as similar regional backgrounds with similar social and cultural settings increase the chances of success (Brökel, 2016, p. 32). Therefore, in every cooperation it is necessary to consider regional settings. In both countries, Germany and Jordan, women have to face disadvantages in sports. The impact is to a different extent and in a different stage, but both undergo processes of female empowerment. The cross-border influence contributes to social change.

4 International cooperation fosters structural and social developments in Jordanian women's football

4.1 Development of women's football in Jordan

In order to describe international cooperation prior to FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2016 and the Asian Cup 2018, it is necessary to introduce specific regional settings and crucial steps in the development of women's football in Jordan. To understand the barriers for women's football in Jordan, this chapter starts with Hamzeh, who points out that the Western perspective often represents Muslim women as the "others", who have to be relieved from the clutches of their culture (Hamzeh, 2015, p. 518). According to Hamzeh this was supported by:

"Western colonialist narratives that focus on their bodies and way of dress. Through enthusiastic mainstream corporate Western media outlets as well as a large academic literature, muslim women – especially those wearing a head cover – are constructed as passive, oppressed, devoid of subjectivity and agency" (Hamzeh, 2015, p. 518).

In contrast to that, Jordanian women's rights activist, author and football association official Rana Hussein stresses that there has been a significant change in the role of women in Jordan compared to the last 20 years (Maier, 2020, Interview 4). Hamzeh also argues that there is an increasing number of female activists in Muslim countries and highlights the fight of Jordanian female players against the ban on headscarves, which has forced FIFA to change its rules in 2012 (Hamzeh, 2015, p. 517). Besides that, the founding of the first women's national team in Jordan is the result of female initiatives. Female sports students trained weekly together at the University of Jordan. In 2004/2005, they started to contact JFA-officials in order to create the first women's national team. The association began to recruit talented players then and in 2005, Jordan's first women's national team was formed (FIFA, 2016). Not only in Jordan, but also in other Arab countries there are such initiatives to form women's national teams. Rana Hussein talks about those developments:

"If you have a look in the region now, most countries have women's national teams now. Maybe not the ones with trouble right now, but especially the ones in the gulf. Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain and all the gas countries for example have teams. Besides that, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq. So, this game is expanding in the region. Of course, FIFA played a role, because FIFA encourages the federation with more money when focusing on women. This is very important and expanding football in general in the world" (Maier, 2020, Interview 4).

This quote highlights the influence of global sports organizations (e.g. FIFA) which provide incentives for their member associations to invest in women's football. Hosts of FIFA World Cups for example benefit from program-related funds and media support, but they also have to commit themselves to invest a certain amount of money directly into women's football programs (Maier, 2020, Interview 10; Steinbichler, 2013). Such a major sports event also paved the way to further structural developments in Jordan. The country was the host of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2016. This was not only the first FIFA tournament in Jordan, but also the first major FIFA women's tournament in the Middle East (Jordan Embassy USA, 2016). Collet describes the importance for Muslim countries and the region: "Long constrained by cultural and religious conservatism, women's football could make rapid advances in the Muslim world with the holding of the first female World Cup in the Middle East" (Collet, 2015, p. 1). In this tournament, Jordan is the only participating team of the MENA region, comprising 19 predominantly Muslim countries (Arab News, 2016). So the allocation to Jordan was crucial to include at least one team of that region in the tournament. Not only for the MENA region, but also for Jordan, this tournament is an important step. Especially the historical dimension of this assignment as well as the contribution to the national identity are decisive developments. In addition, this event contributes to an infrastructural development. In the tournament, the activities are concentrated at two venues in the capital Amman as well as in the northern cities of Zarqa and Irbid (Collet, 2015, p. 2). The Jordanian government has invested 20 million Jordanian dinars to renovate these four stadiums, each with a capacity of 12,000 to 13,000 seats (Collet, 2015, p. 2). In addition to these renovated sports facilities, 17 new training pitches were built (Maier, 2020, Interview 1). This infrastructure was subsequently used in the next major sports event in 2018. In this year, Jordan hosted the *Asian Cup* (Schneider, 2018). Prior to both events, Jordan started international cooperation in order to prepare herself for both tournaments.

4.2 International cooperation signed by JFA prior to the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2016 and the Asian Cup 2018

The increasing number of regional and international tournaments intensifies regional and international ties. In this context, JFA has signed *Memoranda of Understanding* (MoU) with various associations, such as the *Bavarian Football*

Association, US Soccer or the Norwegian Football Association *Norges Fotballforbund*, and club teams, such as *Olympique Marseille*, or leagues, such as the Spanish League *La Liga* (Lettenbauer, 2014; JFA, 2018; Jordan Times, 2017; Maier, 2020, Interview 7). Both the U-17 Women's National Team and the Women's National Team benefited from these collaborations prior to the tournaments in Jordan, which include frequent travels abroad and guest visits in Jordan.

To prepare for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, the U-17 team traveled to Germany, Spain, Portugal, USA, and several other countries. Besides these trips abroad, Jordan was for example the host for the Bavarian U-16 team and hosted trips of delegates from Bavaria, USA, or Norway. These delegates traveled to Jordan in order to train local referees, coaches and schoolteachers (Twitter JFA, 2015a; Lettenbauer, 2014). The activities were part of a catalog of measures signed with the MoU, which provides general description of main goals and elements of the cooperation. Figure 1 shows selected elements of the MoU between JFA and BFV, which both bodies have signed in 2014 (DFB, 2014).

Elements of the Memorandum of Understanding between JFA and BFV	
Team Exchange	e.g. training camps in Germany and Jordan for German and Jordanian female youth teams
Coaching Courses	e.g. coaching courses in Germany and Jordan managed by German coaching instructors
International tournament preparations	e.g. German support of the LOC for the U-17 Womens World Cup
Women's administrative	e.g. exchange of knowledge and experiences from both sides in terms of administrative, medical and match preparation needs
Referee Exchange Programme	e.g. delegation of referee instructors to Jordan to provide lectures and practical study courses to referees appointed by JFA.

Figure 1: Elements of the Memorandum of Understand between JFA and BFV (DFB, 2014; BFV, 2014; Lettenbauer, 2014).

JFA is the responsible national body and BFV the regional body for the administration, promotion and development of football in Jordan and Bavaria. In that responsibility, they have decided to intensify their partnership, focusing on the development of women's and girls' football. The prioritized areas are team exchanges, courses for coaches and referees, the development of administrative structures and support with preparations for international tournaments. Within this area, BFV supported JFA and the *Local Organizing Committee* (LOC), which was in charge of the organization of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2016 in Jordan. Since BFV officials have gained experience with several major tournaments held in the region (e. g. FIFA World Cup, 2006 or FIFA Women's World Cup, 2011), they can share it with their Jordanian colleagues. They can also exchange their knowledge and experiences in developing administrative structures as well as in teaching referees, coaches, and schoolteachers. Another central element is the exchange of female youth teams (DFB, 2014; BFV, 2014). As part of these team exchanges, the Jordanian U-17 played for instance against the Bavarian U-16

team, Bavarian regional teams and the Bayern Munich U-17 team (Facebook, 2015; Twitter, 2015b; Lettenbauer, 2014).

In addition to the frequent travels of the U-17 national team in preparation for the 2016 World Cup, the Jordanian women's national team also completed several overseas trips in preparation for the Asian Cup 2018 which led to Japan, Bosnia, Latvia, Croatia, Cyprus, Spain, USA, and Turkey (JFA, 2017b; see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Facebook posts about trips of the Jordanian Women's National Team (Jordan Women's Football Facebook page 10/10/2017 and 08/13/2017).

Due to the regional conditions (e.g. weather, conflicts in the Middle East), it is necessary for JFA to initiate collaborations and to organize trips abroad in order to practice in a safe and suitable environment for sports. For instance, almost all matches in international tournaments are on high quality grass pitches (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2010, p. 174). Therefore, it is necessary to get used to these conditions. However, because of the hot and dry weather, low water resources and expensive costs for irrigation, almost all football pitches in Jordan and the region are artificial turf instead of grass (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2010, p. 174). During their trip to Germany, the former coach of the Jordanian U-17 national team and UEFA A-license holder Manar Fraij highlights that her team has never played on grass before (Bayerischer Landes-Sportverband, 2016, p. 43). Through the cooperation with the BFV and their

trip to Munich, the Jordanian players can gain experience on pitches with grass (Bayerischer Landes-Sportverband, 2016, p. 43.). Figure 3 shows the Jordanian U-17 national team during their practice in the sports academy in Oberhaching.

Figure 3: Practice of the Jordanian U-17 national team in the sports academy Oberhaching (Photo: Author, 2016)

As the athletic performance level in the region is not at the international level, this also requires travels to regions, which offer challenging and suitable opponents (Maier, 2020, Interview 1). The main goal for the training camps in Europe was for instance to play as many international matches as possible: “[...] We need to play as many games as possible [...] from now we have played here two games in Germany. We have four in England and we have two in Jordan. So, we have eight matches in two months. I think that is useful” (Maier, 2020, Interview 1). Besides the necessity due to the regional conditions and athletic performance levels, there are also gains from knowledge transfers with successful federations and clubs. After JFA has signed a MoU with the French team *Olympique Marseille*, they commented on their website about the goals and the elements of that cooperation: “The Memorandum of Understanding aims to help and further develop the Women’s Football scene in Jordan, whether in terms of coaching, refereeing,

or in holding National Team training camps” (JFA, 2017a). Thus that cooperation in particular aims to exchange knowledge and to improve the structures in Jordan. Therefore, the football field is a place of inter-organizational knowledge transfer.

Besides important educational gains, which enhance structural elements within the federations, there are also benefits for the players involved. Outbound trips and visits by foreign teams expand the horizons of the players. Gieß-Stüber et al. formulate this as follows: “Through trips abroad to training camps and international tournaments, the girls get to see the world, experience new cultures and broaden their horizons” (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2010, p. 180). As a positive effect, the players learn to represent their Jordanian identity and to sharpen it (Gieß-Stüber et al., 2010, p. 180). The Jordanian team captain Stephanie Al-Naber expresses her experiences representing Jordan:

“It has always been my dream, and the team’s dream as well, to play and represent our country in the most prestigious international competitions. [...] Wearing the national team uniform with the flag on my chest has always been an honor, I’ve never felt such pride representing my country as captain” (AFC, 2018).

In particular, Al-Naber mentions the affiliation to a team, which allows women to redefine themselves and existing gender relations. The identification with one’s own country and the related pride are thus important components for a new construction of the national and personal identity of the players (Schneider, 2018).

5 Results

The case of Jordan proves that due to the MoU with BFV and other associations and club teams, there are developments on the individual, social-cultural, and structural levels. For these developments, especially associated travels play a central role. They include benefits for players and officials, which are primarily based on the transfer of knowledge and international as well as cross-cultural experiences. There are also structural developments within Jordanian women’s football, which are based on the gained experiences and the support by the co-operation partner. On the socio-cultural level sports-related travels strengthen the cultural sensibility of the players, coaches and the officials. Therefore, they are a crucial basis for social change and female empowerment in sports.

However, in addition to the short-term boost initiated by highlight events, international cooperation and associated travels, it is important to constantly expand the new structures for women’s football and to establish sustainable

developments. Monika Staab, a former German soccer player and current coach for international soccer development projects, points out in an interview, that Jordan for example needs to work on decent football fields and stadiums, equipment, an organizing committee, a national league, a talent-recruiting program, programs in schools, advertisements and to educated locals (Maier, 2020, Interview 10).

Currently the JFA-department for women's football keeps investing in further structures with different partners. As part of the *Asian Football Development Project* (AFDP), as well as with funds from FIFA and JFA, so-called *Prince Ali Grassroots Centers* were founded and will be further expanded (Dzuilka & Castelier, 2018; Maier, 2020, Interview 4). Dzuilka & Castelier point out that "15 grassroots centers spread across the country, with an average of 400 girls taking part in football activities all year round" (Dzuilka & Castelier, 2018; Arab News, 2016). In addition to these recreational football centers, which provide access to sports grounds for female athletes across the nation, the establishment of an organized league system in women's football is a decisive factor. In interviews in 2015, the association's official Rana Hussein and the JFA vice-president Salaheddin Abdallah Sabra reported about a national league with eight teams (Maier, 2020, Interview 4 & Interview 7). In the meantime, JFA inaugurates the first Jordanian *Women's Pro League* in 2019 (FIFA, 2019). In addition to enhancements of the national league, JFA created talent recruiting structures and national teams in all age groups (Culpepper, 2014). Stephanie Al-Naber, the JFA women's national team captain and JFA board member, points out that hosting the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup was a decisive factor for further developments and important for spreading the game in the country:

"Since we won the bid to host the 2016 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, we've made every effort to build on the legacy of that tournament. [...] More and more girls want to play football now and the local community is encouraging women to play. It's not unusual to see girls on football pitches anymore" (FIFA, 2019).

This increasing popularity of women and girls' football is the result of an intensive advertisement in both tournaments. Schneider highlights a broad distribution via social media and billboards in central locations in Amman: "Massive billboards showing each of the Jordanian players were installed at the city's busiest intersections" (Schneider, 2018). A few years ago, this intensive marketing of a women's football tournament and the female players would have been unthinkable in public space. This advertisement via all channels creates role models for younger generations and both events are places of remembrance in the collective and personal memory of everyone involved (Maier, 2020, Interview 1).

Overall, internationally the kingdom has still a long way to go to catch up with the best teams, but Jordan made important steps in her female program and the country is a pioneer in the Arab world and the Middle East (Deutsche Welle, 2013). These developments in Jordan would have been unthinkable without the support of HRH Prince Ali bin al-Hussein and the courageous efforts of the first national team players and steady demands of current players and officials, who lead the way to considerable social and structural changes. Stuart Gelling, former Liverpool player and technical director of JFA, points out that this ongoing social and structural change needs more time to evolve:

“The commitment and the effort is very good; what’s lacking is quite simple: time, time to evolve. If you go back in the UK or Germany or France, maybe 15, 20 years ago, it was not as developed. So, it’s just time” (Culpepper, 2016).

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