

Management of new forms of sports habits in an immigrant population during the acculturation process

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Abstract:

The immigrant population in Europe is today a reality. It currently has up to two and a half million foreigners (third countries), with Germany and the United Kingdom having the most (Eurostat, 2015). The result of this is a community within the society that is unified by its lack of basic necessities in all areas of life. This includes sports, an area where more attention is required. Therefore, the aim of this investigation is to address the lack of knowledge on this subject and to lay some groundwork for future research. The main aspects studied in depth are: the nature of the sports played, the types of competition, amenities, sports-related cultural expressions, needs as a community and many more. The findings of this research were collected by means of surveys, extensive interviews, focus groups and expert panels. Furthermore, the inclusion of the immigrant community, sports policy makers and experts in the field has led to the creation of a dialog between the participants involved, through a series of strategically composed questions. All the information gathered throughout the research stage has been methodically collated and developed. It concludes in a series of recommendations and proposals on how to make progress in integrating this community in the coming years.

Key words: Management, Immigration, Inclusion, Sport.

Introduction

Migratory flows are the displacements of the population from one place to another over a long period of time. The causes of these migrations are rooted in different circumstances. However, these movements have existed for thousands of years and, thanks to them, new peoples and cultures have emerged. The types of flows have sometimes taken place naturally, as desired by the people involved, but in many other cases they have been forced. Currently, migration is mostly economic and, although no one is forced to migrate, it is the gradual impoverishment of a large part of humanity that causes current movements based on a global economic system that has large imbalances between some areas and others (Batié, 2012; Jonakin, 2012).

The foreign person who arrives in the country needs to be comprehensively attended to in all areas of need, work, health care and housing (Martinez, Wu, Sandfort, Dodge, Carballo-Dieguez, Pinto, Rhodes, Moya, & Chavez-Baray, 2015), being the ones most required at the beginning. In this field, in principle, sport does not matter, but it is clear that it takes on a meaning when opportunities for coexistence between foreigners and natives are created around it. This is very important at the beginning of the stay of these people. Sports spaces are then used as major meeting places where it is not only a question of sport, but also of valuable information being exchanged concerning practical aspects of daily life. In this way, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of physical activity and sport as a tool in social integration for the management of sports spaces.

Theoretical Framework

Use of Public Space

The causes of immigration are multiple and do not have a single origin, although we set out from the assumption that the motives are fundamentally economic, based on emigration for economic reasons. It is mainly from developing countries to more wealthy ones, the opposite being very uncommon.

The places most required by immigrants when they arrive in Europe are in general open-air public spaces, which offer them the chance to meet their compatriots, share their experiences and socialize in a relaxed way (Fernández-Gavira, Ries, Huete-García, & García-Fernández, 2013). The use of these places is often a source of conflicts between immigrants and natives whose use differs to a greater or lesser extent.

Public space is defined as that place where any person can move freely, being therefore the same domain, property and public use, or as proposed by Torres (2005: 243), "it is the social space that is socially shaped by being accessible to all, subject to diverse uses, and that implies a co-presence among strangers".

Often immigrants are accustomed to making use of public space in a different way than the natives. It is common to see that in the parks, gardens and squares of the large European cities hundreds of people gather on

weekends to meet and play sports socially (Fernández-Gavira, Huete-García, & Vélez-Colón, 2017). These concentrations are often uncomfortable for a large part of the native group who are afraid and indignant about how the areas they considered to be their property are filled with foreigners.

According to Llopis and Moncusí (2005), whether a space is public or not depends to a great extent on the legitimization of the type of use that people can make of it. But that legitimization is a double-edged sword, since in practice it means limiting what can or cannot be done in those spaces, thus eradicating the free practice of activities. It is also true that the group of immigrants who are disadvantaged by being a minority with respect to the natives may be interested in specifying the type of use that can be made in public spaces, especially when this is in line with their customs. But this conflict would not occur if the city were understood not only as a mere accumulation of buildings and people, but also as a place of participation, culture and exchange. As many urbanists underline, the city is not merely urbs but also civitas and polis, a place of participation and cohesion (Santos & Balibrea, 2004: 139).

Likewise, the social situations of immigrants are multiple: sometimes they are families; at times they are quite masculinized or feminized groups; at other times, it is a question of groups of young people, and so forth. All these situations materialize in highly differentiated uses of public spaces that hardly lend themselves to a homogenous tackling of immigration (Aramburu, 2005: 36).

In this way, it would be necessary to consider how the use of public space is understood by the Ecuadorian, Moroccan, Turkish, Chinese, Senegalese, and so on, or autochthonous groups. Do they coincide? The answer is obvious, not in most cases, since the way of using a place is no more than a cultural expression of the traditional use that people have made of it throughout history.

Sport Values

Sport, with its associated values, is considered as a physical activity, fun, a competition and a source of well-being. It is therefore a valid work tool with which to approach the context of the foreign person and work with for real inclusion. This is in the line of the European Sport Charter of 1992: "Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels".

Social theorists who have reflected about sports emphasize, among other matters, their social function (Kennett, Sagarzazu, & Cerezueta, 2007, Llopis, 2009, Maza, 2004, Dominguez, 2009, Durán, 2002). In addition to the authors who have gone deeply into this subject, the institutions that set the current sports policy in Europe have recently underlined the socially positive attributes of sport.

By promoting tolerance, acceptance and respect for diversity in relation to other young athletes, sport can contribute significantly to intercultural understanding and to fighting against racism, xenophobia, sexism and other forms of discrimination (Treaty of Nice. 2003).

These discourses on the positive attributes of physical activity have added to the emergence of a wide variety of initiatives that use sport as a means of the social integration of immigrants. The effects that programmed physical activity may have on the population have been studied for some time.

In this regard, according to Santos and Balibrea (2004), some problems have been observed from the analysis of experiences. These include: the lack of specificity of the objectives in the interventions through sport, their being at times superficial and excessively close to the clichés concerning social benefits and the values of sport. This analysis also notes the scant variety of sports used, football predominating in most initiatives, the lack of a true political will and even inconsistencies that hinder and do not support the actions with which to achieve a continuity over time. The latter is a key element to achieve the objectives of social integration.

The Conflict in Sports Fields

Europe is a heterogeneous territory made up of people from different cultures and backgrounds that should generate policies in which instead of limiting the uses of common spaces in order to please the majority of society, the knowledge of others would be fostered. This is because this type of problem can also occur between people of different generations, such as when, for example, children play ball in squares bothering pedestrians or neighbors of the nearby houses. Would it not then be more useful, in order to solve the conflict, to encourage dialogue between the different people who use these spaces? "Intending to have a public space without conflict is a contradiction, since its democratic nature makes it a place of rivalry in which we must constantly negotiate the meanings and uses that are at stake" (Aramburu, 2005: 37).

Another key to resolving the conflict between immigrants and locals is based on understanding how to regulate the use of spaces. On the one hand, the groups of foreigners who make use of them in a massive way usually have a cultural experience of their self-regulation, the citizens themselves knowing how to establish limits and generally also being more tolerant than the natives in allowing the temporary occupation of these areas. On the other hand, the natives expect their neighbors to be respectful of others from their own cultural perspective, and instead of resolving conflicts directly with their neighbors they usually request the intervention of the police force to put an end to an activity that bothers them (Aramburu, 2005).

Finally, the public space being open does not mean that it does not have norms. The social conventions that regulate public spaces establish the ways in which interaction should develop and set out the norms of uses and behaviors (Torres, 2005). While it is true that these conventions are determined by the person's culture of origin, it is also true that these must constantly change and transform, adapting to the circumstances of the diverse and changing reality that immigration currently represents within the European territory.

Methodology

The methodology used opts for Explanatory-Qualitative models. The research method chosen is related to Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which is a way of researching that enables building theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions, starting directly from the data and not from the previous assumptions.

The research instruments used with this population were: participant observations, in-depth interviews, discussion groups and expert panels, which shed new light on the concerns raised. The data was analyzed with Atlas Ti. This has been the program used for the analysis of the data because it complements Grounded Theory very well, since it facilitates in a very visual and intuitive manner the integration of the information that has been generated during the investigation.

Throughout the research development stage of this work, 207 immigrant and pro-immigrant associations and organizations located in Andalusia (Spain), were surveyed in order to analyze, amongst other variables, the measures undertaken to promote sports in immigrant communities. The results showed that 31% of these associations receive immigrants practicing sports on a regular basis. 34 interviews were conducted, 32 with representatives of associations, organizations and relevant sources, and two with government representatives in charge of the funding of sports promotion projects.

As to the nature of the interviewees, 10 were women and 22 men, and they were from Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Argentina, Ecuador, Venezuela, Romania, Russia, Spain, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Morocco. According to the profile, up to 40% of those interviewed were in charge of the associations related to the sports field; 26% and 21%, respectively, of the interviewees were sports users and immigration professionals (social workers and others); around 9% were sports coaches and, lastly, 4% were interviewed for reasons of a special nature.

Furthermore, four focus groups consisting of men, women and young immigrants of different nationalities were formed. Finally, the study was concluded with a meeting attended by experts with the participation of government representatives in charge of sports policies, and professors specialized in sports and immigration.

Results

Having looked into the sporting habits of the immigrant population, according to the results of those who took part in the surveys and interviews, it has been demonstrated that the most practiced and promoted sport, above all others, is football. Mainly men participate in this sport, although there is an increasingly noticeable trend in women's teams in football championships. Latin Americans prefer to play at weekends, Africans Monday to Thursday nights and Eastern Europeans at any normal time. The games usually take place in public fields, in sports centers and in facilities assigned by the government after approval of a project to justify their use.

In this respect, we can see a great sense of localism in some sports grounds where immigrants play and feel as if these spaces are their own at certain times of day, year after year. This puts at risk any chance of social change and likewise causes self-marginalization and communication problems with those in charge of the venues where they play.

Most provincial immigrant leagues are organized by Ecuadorians and are open to all nationalities. Nonetheless, the majority of registered teams are Latin American and it has been noted that these leagues move money in food and gambling. This could be understood as the consequence of this new concept of sport being intrinsically related to culture.

There is a growing desire in immigrant football teams to become more professional, to be trained and to train young people from all over that demonstrates their potential on the pitch. In spite of this, limitations such as a lack of resources, time and facilities hinder their efforts. Yet the organization of football clubs and leagues, especially from Latin America, is becoming more and more common, although most of those interviewed claim to have trouble with maintaining and keeping their equipment due to high costs.

As for the formation of teams in sports competitions, although these are predominantly made up of people of the same nationality or geographic region, mixed teams composed of various nationalities are becoming more frequent. Furthermore, the associations promoting this sport clearly intend to encourage this mix when they organize championships and sporting events. In fact, all the immigrant associations interviewed strive to strengthen intercultural relations on the pitch where, according to their own experiences, an overcoming of prejudices, stereotypes and cultural and language barriers has been witnessed. However, it must also be noted that cases of racism and discrimination by the referees, players and fans still exist on and around the pitch, thus we must continue working toward eradicating it.

Women's use of sports facilities, specifically Latin American women, is currently very limited, since booking sports courts for a given period for events such as championships must be arranged well in advance. The issue here being their precarious situation and often not knowing their work schedule over the next months. This means that they do not apply because of the risk of not being able to use the courts or in the case of their being unable to participate due to personal obligations.

Sport and physical activity in general, especially team sports, represent an escape from everyday life for many immigrants, as well as an opportunity to interact with others, to reaffirm their identity and to spend free time with their family. The "Third half", as it is named by some associations, adds value to the sport in most of the cases studied. This is the time when players and other participants celebrate after a championship or competition with friends and family, drinking, eating, dancing and generally interacting. Therefore, it has been found that sport can be directly linked with different cultural practices (especially from the Latin American perspective), often clashing with the way Spaniards use the same facilities. Latin Americans tend to associate sport with the fans and celebration, participating in championships with people of all ages and levels of ability, meaning that you may find athletic adolescents and older people in a worse physical condition but eager to play, all together in the same team.

It is clear that institutional sports programs go through different channels than the sports programs used by immigrants. Institutions respect and even support them although they tend not to interfere with them. The fact that immigrants do not participate in such programs is mainly due to their structure as it is not taken into account that these immigrants lead a different life both culturally and professionally. The solution to this would be to reach an agreement on sports policies based on two-way communication between the government and user, bearing in mind that these users are both native and immigrant.

The use of sports facilities by the immigrant community is noticeably different. This is generally due to their own experience of how the system works in their home countries. It is likely that they are used to public open spaces available for use at any time, unsupervised, maintained by the local government and free of charge. The use of these courts is regulated by the users themselves on a rotational basis which could be based on the "King of the court" system, where the winning team of each match stays on the court. Considering this, immigrants are well aware of the higher quality of these facilities (in comparison to those of their country), mainly tariff based or subsidized, but which at the same time have too many regulations in place and therefore reduce the opportunities for these people not only to use them, but also to share them with others and integrate.

A great number of sports facilities, such as those with paddle tennis courts, are targeted toward a high-income population. According to the political representatives interviewed, the objective of renting parts of their facilities is to provide economic autonomy to centers that rely scantily on city council funding. Food and drinks stands within sports complexes would achieve the same aims.

It has been made clear that city councils in charge of immigrant services and economic funds for the immigrant community are displeased with the government as funds are insufficient and they are having to apply for local funding in order to relieve financial strain in more urgent matters.

In regards to training, there is a great need to work toward certifying qualifications acquired in their home countries. This requires the local Department of Education to speed up the process and be more lenient. In this respect, vocational education and training courses largely depend on having certified secondary school qualifications, making it extremely difficult for them when they receive no recognition of their previous studies on arrival in Spain. It is encouraging, however, that progress has been seen in some counties where this is no longer an essential requirement.

Paying closer attention to the way in which information on financial subsidies is distributed to sporting bodies and organizations, we can see that it travels through channels directed at the largest population group (the natives). As this in itself is excluding the immigrant population, it would be recommendable to adapt programs in order to be able to transmit the same information to the immigrant community. An ideal example would be in the health and education sectors, where posters and their contents are adapted to suit their needs. However, improving the subsidizing process has been perceived as a risk because economic dependence on the government is another form of exclusion, although less obvious, in the sense that this dependence prevents individuals from acting freely and reduces creativity and responsibility. Nevertheless, in this way it is obligatory to work closely with state institutions which would not be the case otherwise.

Delving into sporting concepts in terms of origin, it is clear to see that the Sub-Saharanans tend to have a great desire to become professional football players and state that in Spain there is a great deal of favoritism toward Spanish people when choosing players for professional teams. Latin Americans place more importance on the enjoyment of the match and spending time with family and friends, making sports centers and facilities be for them a space for sharing. Also, given that Latin Americans have less barriers to break down (seeing as cultural and language barriers are minimized for Spanish speakers), it is much easier for them to have access to sports facilities in comparison to other groups such as the Sub-Saharanans. Additionally, a large proportion of Latin Americans have the right to vote in local elections, making them an electoral asset to politicians.

Regarding age in relation to practicing sport, it is apparent that not many immigrants over the age of 40 use sports facilities. It is believed that the reasons for this are that the majority of these immigrants arrived in the

immigration wave in the 1990s and the beginning of the year 2000 when they were quite young and of a working age. Logically, no representative group of immigrants of this age (40+) exists in sports centers or in the rest of the country. A further explanation found for this is that culturally speaking, foreign people change the types of activities that they take part in or simply abandon them altogether when they reach a certain age. According to the interviews carried out, it appears that the answer is more likely to be the latter. Having observed migration groups separately, for example how Latin Americans associate physical activity with enjoyment and social interaction, it has also been discovered that, at a certain age, the potential problems that stem from practicing sports, such as injuries or also a low level of fitness, result in a loss of interest. The consequence of this being that the facilities are left to the young, apart from the occasional visit to the courts to join in the fun and cheer players on.

Then, the Sub-Saharanans associate sport with the satisfaction of playing and being in a space where they may be spotted by a scout and make their way into professional leagues, where they would have the opportunity to make a career out of the sport. If they do not succeed in becoming professional players by a certain age, they stop playing.

With the Eastern Europeans, we can see that their concept of exercise and sport is more similar to that of the Spanish, meaning that they have no impact on the native population in this way (they go unnoticed). Also, it is quite common for them to join private sports facilities, such as gyms and sports centers, so it is believed that when this population begins to age, in some years' time, they will follow the same patterns as the Spanish population.

The Moroccans do not use sports facilities regularly, although they do participate intermittently in competitions made up of immigrant teams and even events organized by the government.

Discussion

The leisure and sports programs organized by the Administration and pro-immigrant entities, although possibly being an ideal space for the social integration of immigrants who have recently arrived in the country (Forde, Lee, Mills, & Frisby, 2015), are often decontextualized from the lives of these people who have first set their sights on meeting the most pressing needs (Martinez, Wu, Sandfort, Dodge, Carballo-Diequez, Pinto, Rhodes, Moya, & Chavez-Baray, 2015), *"I remember that once we wanted to offer a reading workshop with the immigrants and the words were: a reading workshop when I have two children, my wife is pregnant and I do not have a job? What are you thinking about? That put my feet on the ground. We move on other levels, we think about the importance of a reading workshop, a championship, and yes they do, but when they move to a survival level, these things are relativized ..."* (Interviewee 1). This group that moves to such basic levels of survival first need employment and food and ultimately sports programs, although these entail social integration (Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, & Sánchez, 2013; Ito, Nogawa, Kitamura, & Walker, 2011). However, there are circumstances in which they cry out for the practice of physical activity, assigning different meanings to those who feel proud (Edwards, 2015). Thus, for example, the sub-Saharanans look for a possible professional opportunity and the Latin Americans a place to meet their compatriots, so that practicing for the sake of practicing ceases to make sense if it is not associated with other values. In these first moments, any initiative that the entities want to have in this regard should be able to adapt to this group's changing circumstances.

The life circumstances of the immigrants will be more or less stressful depending on the moment of the acculturation process in which they find themselves (Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). *"There are several processes that the immigrant goes through from when they arrive until when they are regularized. In this process, you go to an area, find a place to live, share the rent with more people and these areas are the cheapest. Then comes the process in which you are regularized; but when this happens, you realize you have documents, but this does not mean that you have rights, because nor does the native worker have rights"* (Interviewee 2). This in turn coincides with the sport itself given that the more adapted the people are to the territory, the more similar their situation is to that of the native group. This is probably due to acculturation strategies related to copying the majority society as suggested by Yoo and Lee (2005). The people have a lesser need to carry out activity in large groups, such as those which currently constitute the Latin American sports leagues, as these arise in response to a necessity to practice physical activity among peers, using the leagues themselves as places to exchange information required to facilitate their adaptation processes in the new territory. This coincides with Cherng, Turney and Kao (2014). *"The use that certain people make of sports facilities when they have been in the country for a short time is not the same as that of someone who has been around for more than 10 years, who has satisfied their basic needs and goes to other areas of the city or towns (more integrated with the natives) and makes use of the facilities there that are not so overcrowded; while those who have just arrived use the facilities as a meeting place, where they can find useful information, such as employment, housing, caring for people..."* (Focus Group 1). This reinforces the thesis that integration or sports normalization is a direct consequence of integration in other primary areas, such as employment, housing, health and the education of children as Carter-Thuillier, López and Gallardo (2017) suggest.

Traditionally, it was thought that the sports practices organized by immigrants and in which they themselves are represented almost exclusively can be exclusionary and a bad instrument of integration, so the

political strategy has frequently been to try to break this sports group dynamic by granting only sports venues where natives and immigrants are mixed. Yet not everyone agrees with this trend (Hatzigeorgiadis et al, 2013). There are authors who primarily place their attention on the idea that for social integration to occur, the first thing that needs to exist is respect for different cultures and traditions (Li, Sotiriadou, & Auld, 2015). Focus Group 1 observed the benefits of this type of practice, especially at the beginning of the group stay. *"It is a tool that helps you at the beginning, it allows you to enter the community and satisfy the primary needs, such as speaking your own language. This type of leagues should be stimulated and it does not matter if this does not end in an official league; even so, it must be encouraged as long as it does not become a ghetto"*.

Among the problems of accessing sports facilities, the economic issue is pointed out as one of the major factors. In this respect, much was discussed in the Discussion Group, since the local Administrations want to make the user of the facilities aware that their maintenance costs the State money and therefore themselves, so that what they pay is something symbolic, but enough for them to realize this fact (Epstein & Gang, 2010). On the other hand, the immigrant user has other preconceived concepts about how these facilities should be used and how they should be financed. In this line a Senegalese intercultural mediator participating in the Discussion Group said the following: *"Sometimes it is the concept of origin itself, in my country I do not have to pay anything for the court"*. Both being acceptable opinions, a dialog must be generated between the two sectors, since it would not be congruent from the perspective of the Spanish natives to exempt the immigrant community from the payment of the facilities when they do so. This was expressed by one of the people gathered during the Expert Panel regarding the type of dynamics that in this sense were generated in the sport facilities: *"in the ecuavoley (volleyball for Ecuadorians) they bet 300 euros in front of us, and of course when we are going to ask for the 4.8 euros for renting the court they still complain"*. This is a clear example of different visions regarding the same reality, only understandable in cultural ways.

At this point, it is interesting to mention a reflection raised by one of the interviewees according to Smedley and Smedley (2005), *"Normally the conflicts are not racial, they are social, and the marginal zones are a conflict, not because there is presence of immigrants, but because there is a condition that generates conflict. Marginality is conflictive"* (interviewed 8). In fact, this problem does not arise with the wealthy people who come to the country from other countries and who have different skin colors and cultures, such as the Saudis or the Japanese, since they are seen as source of income for the country and not as economic competitors.

On the other hand, it seems logical to think that the socially disadvantaged immigrants forced to live in marginal zones do not generate this conflict by themselves, since they are precisely those who have more to lose if this arises. They are the weakest link since, for example, to obtain their residence cards and therefore be able to work it is indispensable to have a clean criminal police file during the period of residence in the country prior to obtaining it. In the same way, an immigrant who is not regularized can be arrested and expelled at any time. So the natural tendency of these people will be to flee conflict and not provoke it, as Bierbrauer and Klinger (2005) defend. However, often a part of this society is committed to finding guilty people among the marginalized. *"In case of conflict, when the police arrive it is the immigrants who are the first to look for, and if there is none of them then they go to the gypsies..."* (Interviewee 9).

Researchers understand that immigration is a round-trip process. The Spaniards emigrated until a few decades ago to Germany or Switzerland and for centuries they settled in Latin America. In the past, however, it was wars or, rather, the situations of post-war deprivation that forced people to migrate. What makes people emigrate in modern times are the crises generated by the new capitalist system, which handles in the shadows a relatively anonymous virtual economy that is based on the free market to which citizens matter little or not at all. These citizens are also sacrificed for the interests of large companies that often impose more restrictions on the social rights of migrants than on the policies of market economies (Ruhs, 2017).

In order to put an end to some of the negative consequences of the phenomenon of immigration, the key would be to change the basis of the system, beginning with assessing the personal responsibility that each one has in it, with sport being an effective educational tool to boost social processes (Makarova & Herzog, 2014).

Conclusions

Attempts made by the government to promote coexistence between immigrants and natives by way of championships or events have proven to be unsuccessful. The same associations participate time after time as they are invited by the institutions according to their contact networks and funding bodies where a folkloric scene is created, which they have called the "couscous and potato omelette" parties.

Nevertheless, it is an opportunity for people to get to know each other and live peacefully side by side and a way to support local neighborhood initiatives and long term programs with the objective of forming bonds between these groups.

In order to achieve total integration, it is fundamental for both natives and immigrants to make an effort to work toward attaining a mutual understanding and to value the cultural richness contributed by each and every community. Only in this way will we experience the creation of a multicultural society.

One of the main conclusions obtained from this study and other related experiences is that this challenge can only be overcome through the recognition of this diverse society and its potential. This means

involving the immigrant population both in sport and other areas of life, and working together in creating intervention policies that include and meet the needs of today's diverse and changing society. Failure to do so is to deny part of its essence, which can only result in social exclusion.

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