

An Olympic Mosaic

Multidisciplinary Research and Dissemination of Olympic Studies
CEO-UAB: 20 Years

Editors

Emilio Fernández Peña
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Publishers

Ajuntament de Barcelona
and Centre d'Estudis Olímpics
de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Barcelona City Council Publications Board

Ignasi Cardelús, Enric Casas, Eduard Vicente, Jordi Martí, Màrius Rubert, Jordi Campillo, Glòria Figuerola, Víctor Gimeno, Joan A. Dalmau, Carme Gibert, José Pérez Freijo.

Translation and Language Correction

Steve Norris, UAB Servei d'Idiomes Moderns, Anna Baldirà

Design and Layout

Mireia Rocher, Ramon G. Sedó,

Publishing and Printing

Direcció d'Imatge i Serveis Editorials
www.bcn.cat/publicacions

© Of the publication: Ajuntament de Barcelona and Centre d'Estudis Olímpics de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
© Of the texts: The authors

ISBN Ajuntament de Barcelona: 978-84-9850-317-3
ISBN Centre d'Estudis Olímpics 978-84-938759-2-3

Legal Deposit: B: 23138-2011
April 2011

Printed on paper from sustainable sources

Acknowledgments

This book has been published within the framework of celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the Olympic Studies Centre at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (CEO-UAB), which was founded in June 1989.

We would like to express our thanks to all the people and institutions that, in one way or another, have helped to make this project a reality.

And, in particular, to CEO-UAB co-founder Barcelona City Council, which has made the printing of this publication possible.

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Ajuntament de Barcelona

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Post-Olympic Barcelona: Sport and multiculturalism³⁸

Chris Kennett

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1. Introduction

The increased rate of migratory movements between countries and also within national borders is changing the face of communities across the world, resulting in greater cultural diversity and multicultural exchange.

More and more people from different cultures are taking to the streets, squares, parks and beaches of Spanish cities, where they bring their own sports and sport practices that are part of different cultural systems with particular beliefs, rules, values and customs.

Observing these changes prompted an interest in carrying out research in greater depth into the subject, and CEO-UAB's participation in the European Commission's project *Sport and Multiculturalism* (PMP & Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy 2004) initiated a new line of research for CEO-UAB. The main aim of this line of research was to provide a new cultural perspective on, and an understanding and analysis of sport practices, which are often different and little known to us, in the immigrant groups that now form part of Catalan society. This research has focused on the people that do sport, the sports played, the reasons for playing those sports and where these sports are played.

Over a period of two years (2005-2007), a team of researchers from CEO-UAB, together with Kim Manresa, an internationally renowned photojournalist, documented and analysed sport – through photographs and multiple interviews – in a series of groups in Catalonia, mainly in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The sports included Gaelic sports, cricket in the Pakistani community, football and basketball in the Latin-American community, multicultural sports events, indigenous Catalan sports, baseball, *kabaddi* in the Indian community, and public races, among others.

The main results of the research were displayed in a touring photographic exhibition and published in the book *Deporte multicultural* (Manresa and Kennett 2008), as well as in academic publications and communications promoted by Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Provincial Council and the Government of Catalonia. A series of research projects were also initiated by different entities with the aim of analysing sport and multiculturalism³⁹ policy development.

38. This text is based on content previously published in the book by Kim Manresa and Chris Kennett (2008) *Esport multicultural / Deporte multicultural / Multicultural Sport*. Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics; Ajuntament de Barcelona. ISBN: 978-84-9850-085-1

39. *Deporte e inmigración en España: el papel del deporte en la integración de los ciudadanos* (Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006); *Indicadores de integración de la población inmigrante a través del deporte* (Consejo Superior de Deportes 2006); *El paper de l'esport en la integració de la població adulta estrangera immigrada a Catalunya* (Secretaria per a la Immigració y Direcció General de Recerca de la Generalitat de Catalunya, AMIC-2005); *El multiculturalisme en les polítiques esportives: anàlisi de l'adequació de les polítiques locals a Catalunya a les actuacions promogudes per la Unió Europea* (Patronat Català Pro-Europa, con el patrocinio de la Diputación de Girona 2007); *Estudi sobre la práctica deportiva de la dona immigrant a Catalunya* (Secretaria per a la Immigració y Direcció General de Recerca de la Generalitat de Catalunya ARAI-2006).

The photographs and text included in the book *Deporte multicultural* highlighted the social and human dimension of sport. Our research found that, for many people, sport is central to their identity and provides them with an opportunity to interact with others and develop social networks inside and outside their own communities.

For many immigrants, playing sports from their countries of origin is a way of preserving their identity and, at the same time, enriching the variety of sports on offer in the host community.

Observing different communities practising sport highlighted the participants' physical effort, competitiveness and passion for the sport they play. Sport was also seen as a time for fun, happiness, freedom, camaraderie and friendship.

Gradually, some of these new ethnic sports have opened up to other cultural groups. There are also a number of immigrants becoming involved in local sports and are beginning to become integrated into the Catalan sports system.

The aim of this chapter is to explain the context of the social changes that have taken place and make connections with the impacts of the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, a decisive moment in the history of the city. Barcelona's new multicultural reality needs to be analysed within the context of globalising processes, notably the migration of people and their impact on the social fabric and sport.

2. Olympic Games and globalising processes

The Olympic Games, an example of a modern-day mega-event, reflect the acceleration of globalising processes that characterised the end of the 20th century. Funded by multinational sponsors and the media, hundreds of millions of viewers across the globe follow Olympic competitions over a 16-day period. Technological advances have made it possible for the eyes of the world to focus on the host city and the thousands of athletes from different cultures and ethnic origins that congregate, not only to compete, but also to foster understanding and peace.

In fact, the Olympic Games are an example of the phenomenon that Giddens (1998) refers to as time-space compression, which results in an experience that is simultaneously local and global for participants, spectators and viewers.

The significance of the Olympic Games as part of globalising processes has been well documented by various academics (Bale and Maguire 1994; Maguire 1999; Roche 2000). However, little attention has been paid to the long-term impact of the Games on host cities in an increasingly global era. The Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games are an exception to the rule because they have been the subject of more research than any other Games in the post-war period (Kennett and Moragas 2006; Moragas and Botella 1995; Moragas and Botella 2002).

This longitudinal analysis identified multidimensional, tangible and intangible long-term legacies of Barcelona's experience as an Olympic host city. The city's infrastructure was brought up to date as part of a large-scale urban regeneration project. Thousands of millions of Euros were invested, contributing to the transformation of the local service-based economy. As Olympic hosts, Barcelona and its residents achieved international visibility.

The impact was such that the organisers described the experience by saying that it felt as though 50 years worth of development had been condensed into the six years of preparation for the Olympics. It defined a turning point in the history of Barcelona: with Barcelona'92, there was a before and an after. The importance of the event and its long-term effects indicate that the Olympic Games were a catalyst for sociocultural change in the city.

The reality of post-Olympic Barcelona is one of continued investment in a mixed-economy model, as employed in the Games. Barcelona, metaphorically and literally, has been built on the catalytic effect of the Olympics, which established a

process of ongoing improvement of infrastructures together with a robust promotion of Barcelona as a destination for tourism and business.

In terms of tourism, the figures speak for themselves. Tourists arriving in Barcelona have increased from 1.7 million in 1990, to 5 million in 2005, and tourism-related activity accounted for 15% of the city's GDP in 2002 (Turisme de Barcelona 2005).

The combination of better job prospects in the service, agriculture and construction sectors; the perception of a better quality of life, family regrouping and changes in legislation have contributed to a drastic increase in the number of immigrants coming to Barcelona.

3. Migration, sport and intercultural dialogue

Migration constitutes the human element of globalisation. According to the United Nations (2006), in 2005, the number of people living outside their country of birth was 191 million, that is, 3% of the world population. In recent years, Spain has seen an increase in immigration and now has the 10th highest migration rate in the world but, in terms of the European Union, it is still behind Germany, France and the United Kingdom. In 1998, foreigners accounted for less than 2% of the population in Spain, whereas by 2007, one out of every ten residents in Spain was a foreigner. The increase in the number of immigrants has not been uniform across Spain: of the 4.5 million foreigners living in Spain, almost one million of them live in Catalonia, which amounts to 13% of the population. Therefore, of all the autonomous communities in Spain, Catalonia has the highest number of immigrants.

Catalonia's new multicultural reality is characterised by its cultural diversity. In 2008, according to the National Statistics Institute (INE) the largest immigrant community was from Morocco (20%), followed by Ecuador (8%), Romania (7%), Bolivia (5%) and Colombia (4%). These groups are not evenly spread across Catalonia, as the majority live in the province of Barcelona. In the city of Barcelona, Ecuadorians are the largest group, followed by Italians (some of Argentinean origin), Bolivians, Pakistanis and the Chinese. These last two communities are growing rapidly. The dynamic nature of immigration in Barcelona is worthy of note. Between 2005 and 2007, the Ecuadorian population fell by 20%, whereas the Bolivian population rose by 97% (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2008).

While the main priority for these immigrant groups is economic integration, there is also a clear need for their sociocultural integration, since immigrant groups change quickly and constantly (Kennett et al. 2006).

Many countries across the globe have set up integration programmes for immigrants and, rather than any potential threat, the economic, social and cultural benefits associated with immigration are increasingly taken into account (United Nations 2006).

Migration is subject to the policies and legislation of each state, but the international nature of the phenomenon has led to intervention by governmental organisations and international NGOs.

The *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* was adopted on 2 November 2001 and later ratified by the European Community on 18 December 2006. Given that societies all over the world are becoming more and more multicultural, the Declaration aims to preserve cultural diversity through adaptive processes that offer creative and innovative solutions. According to UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura, every individual should recognise not only alterity in all its forms, but also the plural nature of his/her own identity within plural societies (UNESCO 2001).

According to Article 6 of the Declaration, maintaining cultural diversity requires access to means of expression and of cultural dissemination. Sport is a primordial cultural activity in many societies and constitutes an important means of expression that can contribute to adaptive processes and cultural exchange.

The European Commission's *White Paper on Sport* (Commission of the European Communities 2007) outlines the fundamental role of sport in society and its importance for forming active citizens through values such as team spirit, solidarity, tolerance and fair play. It also highlights the potential of sport as a vehicle to include and integrate immigrants by providing a shared sense of belonging. The Commission promotes the creation of spaces and activities to facilitate interaction between host societies and immigrant groups through sport, as a means of reinforcing intercultural dialogue.

Spain is one of many countries that have policies in place for integrating immigrant communities, and the Government of Catalonia has recognised the importance of sport as part of this process. Key institutions such as Barcelona Provincial Council have taken their first steps towards formulating policies in this area, and in municipal areas such as Barcelona, various initiatives to foster social cohesion and inclusion have been organised and supported (Kennett et al. 2008).

4. Sport in post-1992 Barcelona

According to Batlle and Niubó, who analysed the impact of the 1992 Olympic Games on sport in the city, the increase in sport and physical activity has been, without doubt, one of the most significant changes for the people of Barcelona over the last decade (Batlle and Niubó 2002, 197).

In 2002, approximately 300,000 people belonged to a public or private sports facility, which represented almost 20% of the population. According to the five-yearly surveys on sport, in 1989, 47.1% of the population regularly did sport, which increased to 51% in 1994, and 58% in 1999. The Olympic Games can be considered as the catalyst for this change, as the number of sports facilities available grew and sports activities were promoted, which coincided with a fitness boom in Catalonia and across Spain.

The number of public sports facilities increased from 1,422 in 1994 to 3,400 in 2001, but according to Batlle and Niubó (2002), it is possibly more important to highlight the urban redevelopment that Barcelona underwent, which created or regenerated public spaces that have become key places for taking part in sport. In fact, 41% of Barcelona's residents that do sport or some kind of physical activity are not regular users of sports facilities, preferring instead to make use of these 'new' urban spaces, such as the artificial beaches and the seafront.

Although levels of participation have generally increased, certain groups, particularly the elderly, young people, women and the disabled, continued to be under represented proportionally and became the focus of sports policies in the city.

Even though greater cultural diversity has transformed the structure of the population, surveys on participation in sport, have not distinguished between groups of immigrants, thus making it impossible to monitor the participation of the aforementioned groups in the city. Our project, based on a qualitative approach, investigated sports habits within the context of the new reality of a society that is becoming culturally more diverse.

5. Sport in post-1992 Barcelona: a new cultural reality

Although sport has always been affected by migratory flows, the sporting experiences of immigrants at the beginning of the 21st century, as included in this study, provide us with a new cultural insight into sport in Catalonia. The wave of international immigration which started at the end of the 1990s has resulted in the emergence of new sport practices in Catalonia.

When interviewed, those who practised sport all mentioned how important sport was in their lives. Sport was a fundamental part of their identities, of who they were, and how they defined themselves in relation to others. The opportunity to play sport

gave their lives meaning and provided an escape from their day-to-day existence, which was characterised by long working days, job insecurity, low pay and, overall, poor living conditions. The fact that they were far away, not only from their country, but also from their families, friends and homes, meant that being able to spend time with others in a similar situation engendered a sense of belonging.

By reproducing and adapting sport practices from 'home', individuals and communities can reinforce their cultural identities and, in many cases, their national identities too. Sports events organised to encourage cultural exchange between groups, such as the Mini World Cup (a football tournament organised by an NGO in the Latin-American community) or *Tot Colors* (an indoor 5-a-side football tournament organised by FC Barcelona) are usually matches between immigrant communities playing on national teams, following the same format as world championships. Although these competitions bring a lot of people together from different nationalities, the usual format is for one nation to compete against another, rather than teams of mixed nationalities.

The aim of the *Tot Colors* tournament was to avoid having separate nations in the final stage of the championship and to organise teams of the best players in the tournament to represent their city. The result was a competition with multicultural teams that generated feelings of pride and identification with their cities.

In the Gaelic sports club (Barcelona Gaels), the situation is similar, since taking part in Spanish and European competitions has instilled pride in representing the city of Barcelona and wearing the red and yellow shirt inspired by the *Senyera* (the Catalan flag).

Sport is also an opening for developing social networks. The physical and mental benefits of sport are evident, but the social benefits are certainly of equal importance. Sport offers an opportunity to meet people on a regular basis and spend time with friends and family. These social networks also have a more practical application, such as for the players of *kabaddi* in the Indian community, who use these social networks to socialise, find work and a place to live. Sport is a mechanism for gaining respect and reinforcing pride and self esteem, which provides some people with a sense of empowerment and autonomy that may be missing from other aspects of their lives.

The process for creating social networks varies from one culture to another. For Latin-Americans, for example, football is a community activity in which the whole family is involved, and it becomes a social event where people eat, drink, chat, play and enjoy themselves. In the Barcelona International Football League, social networks are formed in a different way, as relationships are built between players rather than between families. These relationships are formed between players on a team, but also between players from different teams, since the players tend to socialise before and after the matches.

Consequently, doing sport increases social capital and allows for groups to be included in collective cultural practices. However, even though cultural diversity in principle exists in the context of sport because sport is played 'within' the immigrant communities, there are actually very few signs of any intercultural integration and exchange 'between' the communities.

The tendency for immigrant communities to organise themselves in group sports has a practical explanation. For new immigrants, their main points of reference for playing sport, meeting people and building social networks are usually their compatriots. They normally function outside the structure of the national sports federations because of the need to present legal documents, the expense and time required, and also the added difficulty of joining a local team as opposed to the ease of joining a team organised by compatriots. The Mini World Cup, organised by the Fundación Juan Pablo II is linked to a league tournament that has more than 1,000 players, mainly from Latin America. The Latin-American women's league, with almost 300 players, was also included in this study. The Barcelona International Football League consists of 24 teams and almost 300 players, most of whom are foreign. Approximately ten teams participate every year in a cricket tournament organised by the Pakistani community, which involves more than 100 players. These are just a few examples to demonstrate the extent of well-organised non-federated sport that is taking place in the immigrant communities.

Given that the majority of sport played by immigrants takes place outside the official circles of the sports federations, it can be said that immigrant communities are involved in a separate, parallel and informal sports system. In this respect, action has been taken to create opportunities for sport and to encourage intercultural exchange so that people from different cultures play sport together rather than compete against each other or in parallel, one culture against another. Some ethnic sports are now open to other communities, as is the case in the cricket schools that are organised in the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona. The Barcelona Gaels have also organised workshops for physical education teachers and students in order to promote the introduction of Gaelic football into schools in Catalonia.

There is a general consensus for integration, and this implies a two-way process of change through cultural exchange in the context of sport.

In order for the integration process to move forward, barriers existed that needed to be overcome. Some of these barriers are institutional and require collaboration with the federations, clubs and associations to include more people from different cultures. Facilities and activities should also be adapted to satisfy the increasingly diverse requirements of certain communities. This process is already underway thanks to the fact that representatives from public authorities have started to respond to changes in social and cultural structures; however, the challenge of encouraging dialogue with immigrant minorities so that their voices are heard remains.

6. Conclusions

While this research was being carried out, we realised that the arrival of people from different cultures was a great opportunity for Catalan sport. New sports are being introduced into Catalonia, resulting in a greater diversity of sport on offer and enabling us to better understand our neighbours. Existing sports are also undergoing change as people from different cultures became involved in them. Several of the interviewees who played sport had been professional sportspeople in their countries of origin, but emigrating had meant abandoning their sporting careers in search of a new life. The fact that we have former professional sportspeople working in bars, restaurants and in domestic service, rather than competing in sports, represents a great loss in social capital for Catalonia.

In reality, the process of enriching Catalonia's sport capital has already begun, but it should be developed further in order to capitalise on its full potential. The challenge for policymakers consists in finding a balance between the following three factors: the necessary support for ethnic sports in order to preserve cultural diversity; the need to integrate people into existing sports; and the promotion of opportunities for intercultural exchanges and social integration (PMP & Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy 2004).

There is a risk that sport could be used to reinforce ethnic differences, which could result in cultures developing separately within society and creating a 'ghetto effect', a situation when there is hardly any interaction and communities become isolated. Sport could also be a vehicle for assimilating people of different ethnic origin into the local society. In this way, immigrants would get involved in local sports and would begin to form part of the local culture.

Neither of these two positions leads to intercultural exchange and, adversely, could provoke resentment, resistance and conflict in sport and in society in general. It would seem that many of the interviewees who played sport were in the process of redefining their identities. Although they expressed the need to reinforce and transmit their cultural identity, they also wanted to be a part of their new communities.

The development of an intercultural sports model to attain the objectives of preserving cultural diversity and of integration must be underpinned by a more basic concept relating to the essence of sport: values. Sport provides an opportunity for cultures to interact, but if the values of team spirit, solidarity, tolerance and fair play are not in place, there is no guarantee that

the results of such encounters will be positive. The key to avoiding conflicts, violence, racism and xenophobia in sport lies in an education based on values.

After the Olympic Games, Barcelona changed physically, its economy was restructured and it was redefined on the world stage, but it also underwent and continues to undergo social and cultural changes that have created a new set of opportunities and challenges for coexistence in a multicultural context. Sport is part of the essence of the social and cultural fabric of Barcelona, and it plays a key role in constructing an intercultural dialogue between and among its citizens.

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