Sport and Urbanism

Talking generically about "Sport and Urbanism" encompasses concepts that are so broad, they prove complex to summarize in these notes. But, within the proposed context, it is interesting to establish certain circumstances that affect both contexts, so that questions and reflections can be raised to which we should be able to give the most appropriate answers for each of the fields, according to its physical, socio-cultural, climatic, ethnic, economic, sporting and geographical environments, so that ideas and experiences can be contributed and shared to help resolve certain public interventions in the City.

To what extent do sports (in the broadest sense of the term) and urban design relate to each other in cities?

If we take "sport in the city" to imply the development of physical, recreational and sporting cultures among people and groups, and that the development of urban planning in sustainable cities, among other aspects, "should favor social and economic cohesion in the city, in a way that promotes the quality of life of citizens, within sustainable ecosystems", we can consider whether the aforementioned "CULTURES" are necessary for the balanced and healthy development of citizens. Urbanism, in its aim to promote "quality of life and social cohesion", is a basic instrument that helps or hinders the development of sport, in its programs, cycles and infrastructures, especially in the city.

Sport and the city constantly interact and generate mutual impacts, and in both directions, at different levels, depending on the qualitative, specific and quantitative type of "sporting and recreational" activity. In any urban context, we can detect the need and demand for NECESSARY VENUES for the potential development of "sports and recreational" activities for people and groups, according to certain basic requirements:

1.- To PLAY and SOCIALIZE in the area closest to the residential nucleus.
2.- To maintain health and well-being with the habitual practice of PHYSICAL, RECREATIONAL AND SPORTING ACTIVITY.
3.- To be the setting for SPORT EVENTS, of a circumstantial nature and short duration.
4.- For fitness, maintenance and habitual practice of COMPETENCE in SKILLS, in the field of sports and recreation, on a regular basis.
5.- For the hosting of SPORTS SHOWS (cyclical, habitual or circumstantial of medium duration)
6.- For the hosting of RECREATIONAL EVENTS AND SHOWS (circumstantial, of medium duration)
7.- For (circumstantial) MULTI-PURPOSE and MULTI-FUNCTIONAL uses, related to sport and recreation.

Each of these activities has specific use and management requisites, to which the different agents involved in their implementation should competently respond, thinking transversally, from the moment of the creation of the urban land reserve (urban planning) to the materialization of the activity (sports service). Only then, will the foundations be laid for working efficiently and effectively. "Sport" is a further area that Urbanism must consider from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Despite the goodwill of the different Agents and the existing literature on the subject, I understand that there are still many EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL and PROFESSIONAL gaps, which today impede the ability to
make the most EFFECTIVE and EFFICIENT proposals TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES sustainably, and in each area.

Generalizing in this context always generates injustice through comparative grievances, since the "civic" environments in which we could develop this theme are so diverse that these general comments can hardly address all potential scenarios.

In my opinion, there are two very powerful types of realities in consolidated urban environments, those of "first world cities" with centuries of history and evolution behind them, which are generally highly developed in their urban and social aspects, and "third world cities", which are more recent, with vastly fewer years of history, less consolidated, still in evolutionary processes, and therefore not as developed as the former. However, in both, while the objectives are similar, the approaches to solve each situation do not have correlate, nor to be necessarily transferable from one reality to another.

As an urban planner and athlete, who had the opportunity to "play in the streets and fields" and enjoy medium and large "sports facilities", I have always been concerned to see how, in the development of the modern city, "motorization" approaches by cities excessively conditioned vehicle and pedestrian roads, and together with other values, of a "speculative" nature, obviated certain needs of the people, especially in their "social spaces or meeting points", next to residential areas, where we "PLAYED and SOCIALIZED" (young and old) without the risks of today. I find it uncomfortable to suggest that "we have lost the street", without any debate on the importance it had / has for people, the community and the associated urban fabric.

"Zoning" urbanism that came with the Charter of Athens (1931/33), helped to order cities, under "rationalist and hygienist" approaches, but... it is not always possible to make proposals as aseptic as those that were made, in response to "disorderly and unhealthy growth of the first industrial cities and suburbs", where in response to that critical moment, priority was given to the order, planning, habitability, healthiness and hygiene over other social aspects that shape the management of "free time in people's daily lives, and that determine their evolution and development in certain aspects. In 1998/2003, some criteria of the former ATHENS CHARTER were placed under "critical consideration", which resulted in a reform of the Charter intended to "provide a new vision of the future, illustrating and inspiring all agents to become involved in the planning of the city and each of its spaces, for which not only the Urbanists are the necessary Agents ... " . **Urbanism is a multidisciplinary science.**

In the here and now, and looking towards the near future, there are already factors that condition both sport and cities, which are in full evolution, and can further condition our roles, personal development and society. These new circumstances are expected to generate new and different demands, lifestyles, relationships and production, spawning a new hot topic: "Free time and its management". In this context, concerning Public Space, different types of impacts could be considered, whose most relevant driving factors, could be as follows:

- **New technologies**, which are evolving exponentially and are within reach of a very important sector of the world population, largely consolidated in cities.

- **Information** (true / toxic), which has become universally popular and available to more developed populations, with the proliferation of the widespread use of new technologies.

- **Communication**, has changed and broken with tech, its relationship with the "Space-Time" dichotomy. Each day, virtual presence gains greater importance than physical/real interaction.

- **Free time**, technologies will impact the productive and organizational processes and this circumstance will generate "new expectations and demands" among the population, regardless of their age and circumstances, which need to be addressed with new resources applied to safe, active, positive and healthy environments.
Lifestyles, adjusted to the new circumstances that facilitate other ways of living, behaving and interacting.

Urbanism carries a maxim that "private interest will be subordinate to collective interest", but unfortunately it is not always perceived to be so and the victims are almost always inevitably those who are poorly represented or non-existent at decision-making time, during the development of the corresponding urban planning.

Policies and politicians in the areas involved, and which in this case affect Sports and Recreation, should have "something / much to agree upon" when planning the city and assessing the land reserves of soils that "urban parceling and allocation of uses will determine that they are for, facilities of all types "or with respect to the compatibilities and limitations of use of the remaining situations that affect the urban design and configure PUBLIC SPACE AND NATURAL SPACE", appropriate for multiple sports and recreational activities. In this context, we consider SPORTING INFRASTRUCTURES to encompass all CONVENTIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES, built specifically for sport, and AREAS OF ACTIVITY, to include public spaces compatible with preferential use for physical, recreational and sports activities. Sports planning should consider both areas, since around 50% of the population (in safe and consolidated cities) exercises in Public Spaces.

Urban planning conditions the forms of land use for many years, so it is crucial that previous stances are taken by the "ECONOMIC SPORTS AND RECREATION SECTOR" that allow "strategic planning" to guide the various "Planning Agents" regarding their interest and the OBLIGATION to cover DEMANDS AND NEEDS, expressed through POLICIES and Sports and Recreation technicians, as social transmitters, so that the necessary Land Reserves exist and are allocated in locations appropriate to the objective and final purpose. At the same time, the different aspects and particularities to be taken into account for the materialization and consolidation of the possible infrastructures in these "Land Reserves for ..." should be considered, and the assessment of their adequacy must respond to a series of parameters and circumstances such as the surface and morphology of the plot, the topography, geography, soil quality, ease of use and passage, accessibility, climate, location of the target population, plot services, mobility, environment, security, etc.

The policies and their sustainability must be the principles that guide the different proposals when proposing answers that provide solutions to the needs (according to Maslow) and citizen demands regarding the use and enjoyment of the public space, be it open or closed.

There are multiple urban model scenarios and for each, the solutions proposed have different nuances. There are Centralizing city models, of services and activities, and others that are more Centrifugal and that cast out to the suburbs, which are generally well communicated. In terms of "service planning" there are also Polycentric models, where, depending on the type and urban scale of "Neighborhood, District, etc. ..." (between 10 and 15,000 inhabitants), decentralized service packages are assigned to best serve the citizens / target population.

The size of the city, climate, topography, mobility, culture, security, economy, population density, urban, administrative, economic and social structure, etc., can condition many of the models cited and their response generates a very broad and differentiated casuistry.

On this occasion, I would like to highlight three highly consolidated models that can serve as references, in some sense, for other cities that are developing these topics.

First of all, I would like to provide an example of a POLYCENTRIC MODEL, which has been developed since 1979 and is now fully consolidated in the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz (Basque Country, Spain).

It was not easy to implement, but over time, the various challenges in the process of materialization, political, administrative and management have been overcome and ultimately, the model has been exemplary in terms of providing sustainable and quality public services effectively and efficiently to all citizens, with great acceptance and social penetration. In a city of 250,000 inhabitants (census 2017), 38% of the population attended these centers, with 5,600,000 uses per year and 17,000 uses / day. It is the venue in the municipality where citizens spend most free time each day, which implies crucial value for the citizens and the city itself.
"The Civic Centers of Vitoria-Gasteiz are public spaces that offer a balanced mix of social, cultural and sports facilities with the aim of fostering people’s full development, strengthening coexistence and enhancing citizen participation in neighborhood and city life. They are distributed throughout the different neighborhoods, forming a singular and pioneering network, which with its multiple and varied services, reaches the entire population. The main quality of these venues is their proximity to the citizen (Proximity Areas), which allows anyone, without exceptions and without distinction, to participate in a host of, cultural, social, creative, recreational, sports and bureaucratic activities (within the municipal sphere).

(Extract from the municipal Civic Centers promotional leaflet in 1980)

Secondly, I believe in the importance of the approach by various Latin American cities to "CYCLE LANES/ CYCLE ROUTES", where the city gives a large part of the urban road network back to the citizens, for a few hours a week (7 hours, "ALL" Sundays and holidays mornings from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.), (120 km of streets in the city of Bogotá, in addition to connecting all the parks and other public spaces, and filling them with scheduled and spontaneous activities, attracting 1,500,000 users).

From 2003 until today, it has received various accolades, among which are those awarded by the Administrative Department of Civil Service; WHO (World Health Organization), The Physical Activity Network of the Americas (RAFA/PANA), has awarded its highest honor to Ciclovía, as the program that has most contributed to the Bogota becoming the most active and healthiest city in Latin America.

CYCLE LANES/ CYCLE ROUTES IN BOGOTA, COLOMBIA. 
Source: https://www.idrd.gov.co/ciclovia-bogotana#overlay-context=

Thirdly, Barcelona represents what has worked in many Spanish cities, which is the "decentralization of sports infrastructures by neighborhood / districts and a willingness to focus on the generation of sports activity, leadership and associative social fabric through sports (schools of sports initiation / Sports Association ... later UBAE) and their management, with a consistently “indirect” management model (never privatization) for each decentralized area of the city.

In addition to its important commitment to municipal sport, its infrastructures and its management, Barcelona is also a great reference for "CITY sport", historically iconic and exemplary for the hosting of supranational events, "sport shows" with great international projection, that are both "sporting and non-sporting", since 1987, when it won the nomination for the Olympic Games in 1992. "Sporting spectacle" served as a trigger and motivator to launch a multitude of "city projects and actions", which without underestimating the sporting and organizational success of the '92 Barcelona Olympics, have left Barcelona with a broad and impending legacy so that 26 years later, it continues to be an exemplary reference in sports, social, urban, economic, tourism, environmental, communications and technologies, etc... a generator of local self-esteem, which still provokes admiration and pride for the CITY, in Barcelonans. and to the astonishment for those who visit it.
To round up from a city and citizens’ point of view, in such a changing present and uncertain future, I consider that the basis of the programs and designs to apply lie both in the city format, with its particularities, and in matters of political transcendence such as "Education in values, where equality of opportunities prevails, universal inclusion, healthy well-being, management of free time and respect for and among all the agents involved", which affect everything from urban planning to the generation and development of sports and recreational cultures.

Without "adequate" (?) education in schools and universities, it is challenging to make some of the paradigms understood or true, such as "sport is health" or that "an image is worth a thousand words" or that "the important thing is to participate...", which for "sport" are not always "valid nor healthy" in some of their interpretations.

Advancing with certainty and social conscience demands the implication, commitment and participation of all parties in urban planning. Sport and recreation must be preceded by Strategic and Sectorial planning, endorsed by the generation of supportive policies, and with the consensus and the involvement of politicians to achieve their objectives (over time).

All of this has been spoken and written about for a long time, and the people who meet and debate "the subject" on the various forums have it sussed out, but it is not superfluous to renew our commitment to society with firm convictions that unite all the agents involved, from politicians to users, and to make our contribution to it by being "exemplars and exemplary", in the knowledge that "words convince, but examples lead".

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