

## A HISTORY OF SPORT INSTRUMENTALITIES IN THE FIELD OF SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS IN PORTO ALEGRE, RS

*UMA HISTÓRIA DAS INSTRUMENTALIDADES DO ESPORTE NO CAMPO DO  
ASSOCIATIVISMO ESPORTIVO EM PORTO ALEGRE/RS*

*UNA HISTORIA DE LAS INSTRUMENTALIDADES DEL DEPORTE EN EL  
ÁMBITO DEL ASOCIATIVISMO DEPORTIVO EN PORTO ALEGRE/RS*

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**Keywords:**

History.  
Sports.  
Associations.  
Clubs.

**Abstract:** This article discusses how instrumentalities of sport have changed within Porto Alegre's sports associations from late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. The sources – newspapers and magazines – revealed that, more than spaces for sports development, sports associations were also used to achieve other aims, showing that they are mechanisms of social change. Since their foundation, sports associations became spaces for intrinsic and/or extrinsic instrumentalization of sport.

**Palavras chave:**

História.  
Esportes.  
Associações.  
Clubes.

**Resumo:** Este artigo trata de como as instrumentalidades do esporte se modificaram no espaço do associativismo esportivo porto-alegrense do final do século XIX até meados do século XX. As fontes consultadas para a realização deste estudo, jornais e revistas, revelaram que, mais do que espaço de desenvolvimento do esporte, as associações esportivas também foram instrumentalizadas para alcançar outros objetivos, demonstrando que são mecanismos de modificação social. Desde a fundação, as associações esportivas se constituíram em espaços de instrumentalização intrínseca e/ou extrínseca do esporte.

**Palabras clave:**

Historia.  
Deportes.  
Asociaciones.  
Clubes.

**Resumen:** Este artículo revisa cómo las instrumentalidades del deporte se modificaron en el espacio del asociativismo deportivo del Porto Alegre de fines del siglo XIX hasta mediados del siglo XX. Las fuentes consultadas para la realización de este estudio, diarios y revistas, revelaron que, más que el espacio de desarrollo del deporte, las asociaciones deportivas también fueron instrumentalizadas para alcanzar otros objetivos, demostrando que son mecanismos de modificación social. Desde su fundación, las asociaciones deportivas se constituyeron como espacios instrumentalización intrínseca y/o extrínseca del deporte.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, associations were the main spaces for sports to develop. However, for a sporting association to be established, it has to have goals, which can be external or internal to sports practice. From this perspective, sporting associations become a means to an end. Thus, since their foundation and throughout their history, associations had more than one goal, serving as a space for intrinsic and/or extrinsic instrumentalization of sport.

Since their first appearance in Porto Alegre in the second half of the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, sporting associations had several meanings, including that of originating other associations with different profiles, such as private and public ones (MAZO *et al.*, 2012). Pioneers' perception on the environment of associations allow different representations, which are modified with cultural and social changes in certain historical periods marked by continuities and ruptures. Over time, founders and members ascribed distinct meanings to sporting associations, which are related to the characters ascribed externally and internally to sport.

To Martínková and Parry (2012), there are external goals to sports and it is important to take them into account, since they considerably influence the practice. That happens when sport is used instrumentally, i. e., as a means to achieve goals external to it, such as fame, wealth, socialization, moral perfection, etc. A tension point with respect to external goals is often the view of sport as having a value apart from itself, and its practice justified by outside values. On the other hand, sport's internal targets, such as scoring points, are often thought to be intrinsic rather than instrumental.

However, Martínková and Parry (2012) argue that sport's internal goals also have some instrumentality since human movement in sports is supposed to lead to some sort of fulfillment. Sport's double instrumentality is related to some problems, mainly linked to the quality of the process, that is, performance itself. In the literature review conducted for this article, it became clear that most authors addressed sport's external goals and their importance. However, there are few works on internal goals and even fewer approaching how meanings have changed over time and space. From that perspective, this study seeks to understand the process of establishment and maintenance of sporting associations, based on the ways in which they represent external and internal instrumentalization of sport for and by social groups.

According to Martínková and Parry (2012), sport's instrumentality levels are connected to the values shared in a given society and to the values ascribed to sport that make it a valuable tool for individuals in that society. However, it is within sporting associations that instrumentalities manifest themselves; the club has become the fundamental structuring unit when sport is organized in representative bodies.

Having said that, the following research problem emerges: how have sport instrumentalities changed in the space of Porto Alegre sporting associations from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

Within the field of socio-cultural studies, we tried to cover the objective proposed by collecting information in books, articles, dissertations and theses. The information was analyzed taking associations as social spaces in which sport is experienced in its extrinsic and intrinsic way. In this vein, sport is treated as a cultural practice that produces cultural representations of identity and distinction for social groups.

The focus on sporting associations as a phenomenon is expected to contribute to studies in Public Sociology, since, by seeking an approximation to society, it presents communication and understanding as important elements of a committed sociology (ALMEIDA, 2014). Ruy Braga and Michael Burawoy (2009) suggest yet another role for Sociology: it would be seen not only as a science, but also as moral and a political force, being characterized by a mutual educational process between scientists and their audience.

However, Sociology must combine the rigor of professional Sociology with intervention in public space and thus defend the interests of mankind. Therefore, when analyzing the instrumentality of mechanisms that structure the field of sporting associations, new perspectives emerge for thinking the very History of Sports in Brazil. The concepts become the dynamic instrument of the historical and socio-cultural change and may contribute to approximate this field with the public sphere, since, according to Almeida (2014), Sociology of sport and leisure can bring new perspectives to sociology.

## 2 WEAVING CONCEPTS: SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS

The term *sporting association* is made up of two words that, together, gain a new meaning. Even those words that provide definition are loaded with representations and meaning. *Association* comes from Latin *associare*, meaning to join, to group. *Sporting* comes from English *sport*, which, in turn, added old French *desport*, meaning “pastime, recreation, pleasure”, from the verb *desporter* (to have fun, to relax, to play), which literally means “to take away, to remove”, in the sense of diverting the thoughts from serious matters.

Even though the term *sport* has an ancient origin, its meaning is still not absolute. According to sociologist Wilbert Marcellus Leonard (1998), the concept of sport means something different to each of us. In search of an answer to the question “What is sport?”, Leonard (1998, p. 6) says: “[...] the meaning of Sport, like love, marital success, time, life, satisfaction, or religiosity, is self-evident until we attempt to define it unambiguously”. However, Leonard (1998) is emphatic when he says that, academically, a mental operation is necessary to enable scientists to determine precise meanings of concepts, to conceptualize. He points out, however, that sport is an imprecisely defined concept.

We do not have a precise concept coming from a scientific work, but we need notions of what can be considered sport nowadays, so that we are able, from a point of differentiation, to build definitions on past sports practices. Several academic studies (GUTTMANN, 1978; ELIAS; DUNNING, 1992; GARCIA, 2004; VIGARELLO, 2008) showed defining and distinguishing elements of sports over other practices. In the studies conducted by Corbin, Courtine and Vigarello (2008a, 2008b, 2008c) we found indications of bodily practices that were “sportivized” at different times and in different social spaces.

In the late nineteenth century, sports started to be seen as distinct practices regarding ancient and primitive sports. For Elias and Dunning (1992), there are more differences than similarities between modern sports and traditional or ancient sports. For the authors (1992), sport has its own time and space to be practiced, besides being “an organized group activity focused on the confrontation of at least two parts. It requires certain specific type of physical effort and it takes place according to its known rules, which define the limits of violence that are authorized” (ELIAS; DUNNING, 1992, p. 230).

Allen Guttmann (1978) developed the concept of modern sport by devising seven distinguishing characteristics in relation to ancient and primitive sports: secularization, specialization, equality, rationalization, bureaucratization, quantification, and search for records. These characteristics represent the attributes of modern society and ascribe the name of modern to the term *sport*. Guttmann's (1978) approach to modern sport was criticized "[...] for its assumptions and its general functionalist trend", according to Booth (2011, p. 5). In addition, "[...] it also incorporates homogenization of different societies, including their sports, which according to him follow a Western model", i. e. his approach gave little consideration to dimensions of space, time and culture.

To Martínková and Parry (2012), sports are competitions governed by rules, in which physical skills are challenged. Their character is more formal, serious, competitive, organized and institutionalized than the games from which they have often emerged. The aim of sport is to achieve something, to fulfill a task that is defined by agreed rules. And it is precisely the tension caused by the search for the best performance in a particular task, in group and against an opponent, which forms the basis of sport.

The meanings of sport are also modified by the technology applied in this field. An example is the case of rowing in Rio Grande do Sul. There were competitions in river areas with boats that needed rowing paddles to move. Thus, especially in the mid-nineteenth century, the practice of rowing was defined at the time when there was a rowing movement together with a dispute between two or more vessels under predefined rules. In the late nineteenth century, in turn, rowing competitions had to have suitable boats for that sport, which were imported and called gigs<sup>1</sup> (AMARO JÚNIOR, 1942, p. 43). However, in Rio Grande do Sul there were already commemorative regattas with boats called longboats, i. e. rowing and sailing boats, or fishing boats, rather than gigs (REGATAS, 1894).

This representation of how to practice sport meets Burke's (2009) assertion that all cultural forms are inventions. However, freedom, creativity and invention have limits and are shaped by cultural as well as social and material constraints. Thus, Burke (2009) recommends that we speak of reconstruction of traditions "rather than invention, since what happens is not creation out of nothing but an attempt at bricolage, at putting old material to new uses or making new statements from old words" (BURKE, 2009, p. 157-158). German-Brazilian sporting associations in several towns in Rio Grande do Sul are an example of the reconstruction of traditions by German immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century.

For Chartier (2002), mental representations and social practices are always governed by mechanisms and dependencies unknown to subjects themselves. Hence the need to interpret them and analyze them in order to understand the world created by those social agents and for the fact that representations are able to change the reality they seem to reflect (BURKE, 2005). Thus, representations built around sporting associations provide meanings that are sometimes unknown by subjects themselves. To Pesavento (2008, p. 39), "individuals and groups ascribed meaning to the world through representations they build on reality".

Representations are matrices generating conducts and social practices in an integrating, cohesive and explanatory way towards a reality; they carry the symbolic and say more than what they show or hide. Therefore, their strength lies in their ability for mobilization and social legitimacy. Pesavento (2008, p. 41) states that "[...] the group, which has symbolic power to say

<sup>1</sup> Name given specially to rowing boats.

and convince about the world, has control of social life”, so that identity representations can be used for power games.

### 3 THE MEANINGS OS SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS

According to sociologist Raymond Boudon (1990), *association* has a broad and a restricted meaning. Broadly, it refers to any and every group, irrespective of its legal status and its purpose. Its restricted meaning designates a grouping of two or more people who permanently pool their knowledge and their activities in a purpose other than sharing profits. The broad sense of the word covers a wide range of groupings, including those who have no official records or structure for location and storage of materials. It also does not distinguish the meanings ascribed by men in certain places and periods.

Sporting associations have the practice of sport(s) as their common goal (LÜSCHEN; SAGE, 1981). But around that goal there is the opportunity for construction and negotiation of representations that identify and differentiate social groups. *Turnen*, developed in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by Friedrich Jahn, worked to consolidate a collective sense for the constitution of the German State.<sup>2,3</sup>

Therefore, in Brazil, particularly in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the *Turnen* adopted in schools and gymnastics societies expressed a set of cultural practices and representations that contributed to preserve identities of German immigrants and their descendants (KILPP, 2012; MAZO, 2003; TESCHE, 1996). Other studies (SILVA; MAZO, 2009; SILVA, 2011; MAZO; FROSI, 2012; SILVA, PEREIRA, MAZO, 2012; SILVA; MAZO, 2014) analyzed the establishment of sporting associations in different historical periods as building strategies for cultural identities linked to European immigrants and their descendants. These studies recognize the use of sporting associations as instruments to establish identity boundaries between cultures as well as sports practices adopted and distinguished by certain groups.

Until the early twentieth century, sporting associations demarcated their sociocultural space in Rio Grande do Sul. Over a long period, they played a central role in the expression of cultural identities of immigrants and their descendants in the cities marked by the presence of groups coming from different countries of Europe, seeking to perpetuate their original habits, practices and customs. Therefore, sporting associations remained strong until approximately the end of the 1910s, when some of them adopted Brazilian identity representations in a nationalization process initiated during the First World War and stressed in the Second World War (MAZO, 2007; SILVA, 2011). Those changes were absorbed by the associations as did the rowing clubs founded by German immigrants who adopted Portuguese names (FRISCH-AUF, 1917), among other changes.

Thus, when differentiation between immigrants started to dilute, sporting associations sought another meaning. According to historian Peter Burke (2009), clubs, which are versions of associations, gave an important contribution to the modernization process and were particularly important in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, they sought strategies to integrate among immigrant groups, as happened in London between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries

2 According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1984, p. 311) “[...] the alignment of gymnastics associations to the idea of a victorious German nation manifested itself symbolically when most associations assume the new colors of the German nation – black, red, white”.

3 For Norbert Elias (1997, p. 140), the strength of the belief in the national community is “[...] one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful of the social beliefs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”.

(BURKE, 2009) and in Porto Alegre from the mid-nineteenth century on (MAZO, 2003). During that period, in some countries, clubs were used as social distinction instruments, while in Rio Grande do Sul that form of sports organization brought mainly by German immigrants, besides promoting socialization, was also a strategy to maintain ethno-cultural identity.

#### 4 SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS: SPACES FOR INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF SPORT

In the study conducted by ethnologist Allen Guttman (1978), sport is a cultural phenomenon present in different historical periods and in several civilizations. He qualifies modern sport as a unique form of non-utilitarian physical competition that emerged in England and spread to the United States and Western Europe. Later, sport spread across the rest of the world.

Sports practices institutionalized at clubs in almost all over the world followed the English model. At first, sport was restricted to the English aristocracy, which ensured its perpetuation in schools (THOMAS; HAUMONT; LEVET, 1988; ELIAS; DUNNING, 1992; WALVIN 1994). The first sports clubs organized in England in the eighteenth century aimed at establishing the rules of the games played and controlling social origin of the players.

The development of sport beyond the school environment was carried out by former students of English schools who founded clubs and sports leagues. Sport was characterized as an educational, playful and socially distinctive practice (MARIVOET, 1998, p. 16). For Bourdieu (1979), sport is one of the practices that can socially distinguish agents according to their participation.

The distinction was initiated in the English club model and restored in clubs scattered around the world that followed that model. The process of institutionalization and expansion of the English sporting model comprises the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Sports practices spread through multiplication of football clubs along with the gradual unification of rules. English football clubs evolved in the period between 1840 and 1913, representing the organization model of contemporary sport. The organizational model of football was adopted by the English bourgeoisie and urban middle class to organize athletics, swimming and tennis. The practice and the ideology of sports organization aimed basically at breaking up the aristocratic culture.

Modern sport institutionalized in clubs and associations after 1870 was a “tradition invented” (HOBSBAWN; RANGER, 1984, p. 9) by the state and specific social groups in response to turbulent social changes. According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1984, p. 9), an invented tradition is:

[...] a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.

The English club-based sports model expanded to the world and was appropriated according to social and cultural characteristics. Thomas, Haumont and Level (1988) relate it to the case of gymnastics and football in Russia, first organized in clubs, later grouped as federations, and then clubs integrated into trade unions. In Finland, the national and popular reaction to the adoption of the English club model by the bourgeoisie of Swedish background led to the organization of multi-sports associations and federations in the late nineteenth century. In France, after the 1870 defeat, a large number of associations focused on physical

and military training were also created. The English sports model only acquired a hegemonic position in France after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War (1914-1918) and remained so until about the 1970s. The penetration of sport in that country is explained by nationalism and State intervention in the French sports system (THOMAS; HAUMONT; LEVEL, 1988).

Santos and Montalvo (1995) noted the limited participation of Spaniards in any type of association, including sporting ones. The negative image of sporting associations in Spain is justified by the existence of other forms of association, such as demonstrations and festivals, which also develop feelings of community and identity affirmation (PÉREZ DIAZ, 1996).

The comparative study of Klaus Heinemann *et al* (1997) shows that Germany's club structure is rich compared to Spain. In Germany, the evolution of the English sports model has been modified by the national tradition of the *Turnen*. Even though it was known as gymnastics, the *Turnen* movement incorporated several physical exercises and sports activities with social and political purposes. According to Tesche (1996, p. 35), Jahn's gymnastics "[...] is closely linked to the idea of enlisting the people in the struggle against Napoleon. The gymnastics exercises are subordinated to the purpose of military training and to raising people's awareness as a German people". From this perspective, gymnastics with strict principles of discipline, obedience and dedication was an instrument for moral and political action on youth education.

In addition to the construction of ethno-cultural identities and the search for social distinction, the process of establishing sports in the state of Rio Grande do Sul took place in conjunction with the pursuit of modernization in some sectors of the state's life. The quest for modernity demands a break with the past and its traditions, as explained by Giddens (2000, p. 73): "[...] modernity is vastly more dynamic than any existing social order. It is a society – more technically, a complex of institutions – which, unlike all preceding cultures, lives in the future rather than in the past".

The modernization of the state capital was remarkable from the 1920s on (MONTEIRO, 1995). According to the author (1995), in Porto Alegre, modernity flowed dizzying and glorious, demolished houses, habits and customs of the past, besides imprinting a way of being modern. That movement reached sporting associations, which also sought ways to be part of the modernization process, such as the adoption of new sports. As pointed out by Pereira (2012), turf has its representations linked to a predominantly rural patriarchal society where strength and capacity are concentrated in the animal, while equestrianism also incorporates representations closer to the performance of the human being, in line with a context of modernization.

Other sport that emerged in a period of modernization of the city and was used for social distinction was golf. The first golf club was the *Porto Alegre Country Club* (PACC) in the early 1930s, founded by local doctors and businessmen. In that sporting association, the presence of names recognizable in the political and economic scene reinforced the image of the club as a space for social distinction in Porto Alegre (PEREIRA; FERNÁNDEZ; MAZO, 2010). The examples indicate that sporting associations, besides being structures of sociability among individuals who are interested in sport, are an environment where meaning is ascribed to the world through representations constructed and expressed there, whether of ethno-cultural identity, social distinction or even of inclusion into a representation of modernity.

The change in the city's profile through urban interventions such as the allocation of public spaces for leisure activities for the population is also a result of modernity. Urban

planning, sanitation works, street widening, city improvement, construction of public buildings and squares and parks became a concern of the municipal government. Squares are built and appropriated for leisure purposes, promoting physical and sports activities organized along the lines of those developed in sports clubs (OLIVEIRA; MAZO; STIGGER, 2010).

According to Oliveira, Mazo and Stigger (2010), the first public parks in Porto Alegre emerged in the late nineteenth century, but only in the early twentieth century did the occupation of those areas by the population for sociability and pleasure gradually begin. As a result of changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, there was the spread of the practice of leisure under a Western framework, in which the distinct social classes began to use increasingly more their free time in cultural practices. That appropriation provided an opportunity for the emergence of other forms of recreation for the population, such as physical and sports activities, in public squares that were initially intended only for locals to promenade.

In this way, directing actions in the areas of squares appears inherent to the City. Therefore, the “Public Recreation Service” was established by the City of Porto Alegre in 1926. The agency was designed by Prof. Frederick William Gaelzer, the first Inspector of Physical Education of the General Directorate of Public Instruction of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, who had studied at YMCA in the United States. He is considered the pioneer in the institutionalization of public recreation in the city of Porto Alegre (FEIX, 2003; MACEDO, 1973), for he implemented the Recreational Gardens, also called Recreation Squares. Later he organized the Sports Squares, also called Physical Education Squares, due to the growth of sports activities in the sports courts built in those sites.

A specific article on Sports/Physical Education Squares in *Revista do Globo* on September 11, 1937 (MAZO, 2004) emphasized the importance of free public recreation as an integral part of the lives of civilized people. In addition, the text says that Physical Education Squares, located next to schools, which were considered indispensable, served, at times when they were not being used, as a public recreation center for youth and a social meeting point for adults of the neighborhood. So the squares have become spaces for the general population to spend free time, but especially those who had no access to sporting associations, established for the portion of the population that could afford to pay the monthly fee. Candidates to club members had to be approved by the board, which analyzed their proposal and the representation of the individual in Porto Alegre’s society.

According to Oliveira and Mazo (2010), Porto Alegre’s sporting associations were restricted to a social elite and did not accept poorer classes. Thus, for some social groups, the square became the only possible space to practice sports. In Sports/Physical Education Squares, sports teams started to be formed, which represented the squares in city competitions (OLIVEIRA; MAZO, 2010). So the clubs from the squares arose out of the social and cultural standard of sporting associations and then ascribed a new meaning to the concept because they formed associations where the intrinsic instrumentality of sport was highlighted.

## 5 FINAL REMARKS

Sports were present within sporting associations not only as their ultimate goal – that of the practice itself – but as a tool for reaching external goals, as representations of modernity, of ethno-cultural identity and distinction. We found that sporting associations were instrumental,



since they generated their own representations and new practices at a time when its properties were manipulated. In that scenario, they acquired new meanings with changes in names; spaces shared by different groups; creation of new clubs by public spheres; headquarters in new locations; among others.

Sporting associations were constituted not only as means for the development of sport, but also as part of the construction of the concept of sport and a tool for its instrumentalization to reach purposes external to its practice and to cause social change. Since this study has its own space and timeframe, it opens up the possibility for future studies in different periods beyond the first half of the twentieth century, seeking to compare results, similarities and differences, and thus to enable the construction of broadly applicable concepts.

New perspectives can also be used to study the object – sporting associations – in order to bring it closer to the public sphere, such as how sports clubs were established and spread over several Brazilian states and, in these contexts, to identify how they contribute to the construction of specific cultures and address the differences in each process, correlating them. Then it will be possible to approximate the History of Sport in Brazil to Braga and Burawoy's (2009) ideas, communicate it to Public Sociology, thus allowing Brazilians to know more about their past, as well as to construct the present, and take pathways that, after they are analyzed, can be repeated or not.

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