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Promoting Sport Practice in Urban Public Space

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Abstract

Participating in physical activities and sports in contemporary urban public spaces has increased and proven benefits for health and social well-being. The aim of this study was to overview and identify those aspects to promote sports practice in public spaces for everyone. This study finds that those aspects play an important role in increasing participation in sport for all in public spaces including integration of spatial sports facilities, organization, adaptation, and attractiveness. This study concludes by identifying existing evidence to increase participation in sport and practice and future policy that can help to ensure that demand for all sporting facilities in urban environments and redesign urban public spaces through inclusive design be able to adapt and organize different types of sports for all.

Keywords: Sport; Physical activity; Public space; Promoting participation in sport; Sport for all.

1. Introduction

Promoting physical activity and sport is an important part of increasing public health and achieving dimensions of urban sustainability (Eime et al., 2015, WHO, 2011, & Christiansen et al., 2014, Amen, 2022). particularly in developed countries, such activities become a priority in the planning and governments to achieve a healthy city for all by providing easily accessible facilities where sports can be practised (Shen et al., 2020, & Lee et al., 2016). In recent decades urban public spaces become a stage to organize and practice sports activities (Smith, 2016). However, public spaces and sports facilities in many countries are still needed to reconsider their planning and design by focusing on the spatial, organization, adaptation, and attractiveness of outdoor spaces in urban environments in order to increase the participation of all people in sporting events and to enhance city images.

Nowadays, sport is integrated with the modern lifestyle of our urban society. Participation in sports that take place in public spaces is increasing but organizing sports in clubs is decreasing (Van der Roest, 2015, & Borgers et al., 2016). The spatial quality of many sports facilities is often bad and ugly: no proper spatial planning, monofunctional, unattractive and anonymous architecture, badly embedded in the neighbourhood, hidden behind closed green areas, and little or no relationship to public space; sport (parks) are often isolated from its urban surroundings (Valle et al., 2013). Therefore, it brings a priority for urban planners to design urban public spaces that should be flexible, multi-uses and attractive in order to be a stage for different types of sports and influence how the sport is spatially integrated to increase sport participants (Valle et al., 2013). The major effects of promoting participation in sports and physical activity for all groups in society are increasing measured accessibility, safety, availability of sports facilities and to be properly distributed in different urban areas (WHO, 2011, Mota et al., 2005, Kaczynski et al., 2007, Ujma-Wasowicz, et al., 2008, Hallmann et al., 2012, O'Reilly et al., 2015, Wicker et al., 2009, Haerens et al., 2009, Yfantidou et al., 2011, Asefi et al., 2020, & Christiansen et al., 2014). Thus, planners should optimize the attractiveness of the public space for sports for different groups of participants (Deelen et al., 2016). Designing public spaces and sport facilities need to adapt and access all groups of people to participate in sport (Al-Taesh et al., 2021 & Ujma-Wasowicz, 2011).

Urban public space regeneration through leisure especially, with sports events, sports infrastructure and sports programmes has emerged in the post-modern city (Tallon, 2013 & Larissa, 2016). Many cities currently need to revitalize their public spaces of high physical and social degradation by placing sport and its power of social inclusion. Multifunctionality and inclusiveness are the main drivers of planning and design of an element at the core of urban regeneration strategies in terms of the quality of spaces with the possibility of hosting different sports activities or more inviting, convivial, and dynamic (Cognigni et al., 2020 & Smith et al., 2021), it becomes a place easier for organizing different sports and physical activities.

The important organizing and programming of multi-sports and physical activities are necessary to target all different groups in public spaces as well as participants from diverse backgrounds voluntarily take part and learn not only how to negotiate game rules but also complex interethnic and diasporic social relationships (DeLand et al., 2014, Teosk, 2015, & Wise et al., 2018). In addition, collaboration with informal groups and multiple agencies in organizing sports can promote participation people in sports (Jeanes et al., 2019, & Smith et al., 2020). However, the design of public open spaces frequently does not pay attention to management and maintenance issues (Santoso et al., 2015). Regarding those issues, the government can cooperate with private parties for the management and maintenance

of sport facilities and infrastructures positively influence the development of the sport to be advanced (Valle et al., 2013 & DHARMAWAN et al., 2018).

Designers and managers of urban spaces promote the desirability and attractiveness of these as places to spend time (Clare et al., 2018). As well as public space can influence the levels of the community's participation in doing sports for different groups of participants through its aesthetics such as convenient accessibility, design and pleasantness, safety, cleanliness and tidiness, facilities, service charges and functional solutions (Ettema, 2016, Deelen et al., 2016, Kostrzewska, 2017, Barnett, et al., 2017, Chacón-Borrego et al., 2018, Deelen et al., 2019, & Proklamlatu et al., 2021). Studies have found that the areas with more green space, blue space, and sports facilities in their residential neighbourhood as well as liveable environments were more stimulating and invite people to exercise or participate in sports (van Lenthe et al., 2005, Giles-Corti et al., 2005, Mohammed, 2016, Hussein, 2018, Ismael et al., 2019 & Deelen et al., 2019).

Previous studies have revealed evidence for the importance of urban public space as a stage for sport and physical activities. There has no study been conducted to investigate all aspects of creating an attractive urban environment for all in sport. The purpose of this study is to overview the literature on promoting participation in sporting events and physical activities in urban public spaces and identify those aspects including spatial, organization, adaptation, and attractiveness that increase the organizing and practice sport in public spaces as well as introducing new urban agenda can support planners to redesign public space based on it. Also, this can lead the local authorities and non-local organizers or informal participants to organize inclusive sporting events in public spaces.

2. The Aspects of Promoting Participation Sport in Urban Public Spaces

Based on overview literature regarding promoting participation in sport in public spaces, this study finds that there are four main aspects that influenced the public space as a staging for increasing and organizing various kinds of sports and physical activities for all, including 1) Spatial integration of sport facilities in city, 2) adaptation of public spaces, 3) organizing and programming sport, and 4) attractive public space environments.

The first aspect is the spatial integration of sport facilities in urban environments. In the past, sport was disconnected from urban planning, which is a missed opportunity to create space for sport and physical activities. Currently, sport is integrated with the modern lifestyle of our urban society. In the last decades, there is a constant growth in sport participation in many European countries. This influenced urban planning, through the construction of various sport facilities and open sports parks in many cities because participation in sport becomes more and more individual. As the market share of memberships of organized sports clubs is decreasing, participation in flexible forms of sports, often taking place in public space is increasing (Van der Roest, 2015 & Borgers et al., 2016). The importance of urban space for sport is increasing and places in public spaces became a stage for major sporting events. That influences how the sport is spatially integrated, with new sport facility typologies and new kinds of public spaces (Kural, 1999 & Valle et al., 2013).

The provision of a varied, safe and accessible sports infrastructure for all groups in society is a key policy focus in many Western countries in order to promote participation in sports and physical activity (WHO, 2011, Christiansen et al., 2014, & Ujma-Wąsowicz et al., 2021). Generally, it is well-established that the availability of facilities in neighbourhoods is one of the most viable strategies to increase levels of sport and physical activity participation (Mota et al., 2005 & Kaczynski et al., 2007). Active sports participants pay more attention to the availability and accessibility of facilities in their neighbourhood than their non-active counterparts (Mota et al., 2005). The availability of facilities combined with flexibility is particularly compatible with new participation styles in sport (i.e. sport light). Hence, the role of such facilities should not be overestimated and calls for critical reflection on the Sport for All policies (Tuyckom et al., 2010; Hajialiakbari et al., 2022; Rafoss et al., 2010; Skille, 2011).

The issue to what extent official and informal sports facilities stimulate participation in sports has been addressed from different angles. Most prominently, one strand of research has addressed the effects of objectively measured accessibility and availability of sports facilities on sports participation and sports frequency (Hallmann et al., 2012 & O'Reilly et al., 2015). Thus, sports facilities should be properly distributed in different urban areas to facilitate their accessibility (Asefi et al., 2020). And, urban public space is a potentially attractive sports facility for many, including both participants and nonparticipants. In addition, due to its flexibility in accessibility regarding time and costs, the public space is also popular among sports participants that combine multiple types of sports. Planners should therefore optimise the adaptation and attractiveness of the public space for sports for different groups of participants (Deelen et al., 2016).

The second aspect is the adaptation of public space. Urban regeneration through leisure and sport has emerged as a critical feature of the post-modern city of consumption, with sports events, sports infrastructure and sports programmes becoming increasingly important in facilitating this (Tallon, 2013 & Larissa, 2016). As well as the process of appropriation of unbuilt or structured spaces in the city by sports activities practised in their spontaneous forms

has been extended, by involving urban areas and areas in a widespread and pervasive manner. Public spaces, which are today open and flexible places, together with a leisure culture (Cognigni et al., 2020).

The availability of open space for sports has become the most important component of a society with a sports culture. Facilities for public or open spaces are required for the formation of a community in order to develop a sports culture. It is hoped that the availability of open space for the community should be designed as well as possible so that the culture of exercising is re-energized, and people can be free to do it whenever they want without any obstacles in doing sports or refreshing in public open spaces (Santoso et al., 2015). In order to avoid dropping out of sports in the longer term, it is important to intervene in infrastructural improvements or modifications of the public space in case inhabitants face accessibility or sports facility constraints (Deelen et al., 2016).

Many urban designers now focus on programming and activity as much as the design of physical space. This means reconsidering the role of the designer as someone who provides the platform on which social activities occur (Southworth, 2014). The new emphasis on designing programmable spaces originates from the pioneering work of Jacobs, Gehl, Whyte and Kent who saw the need to make urban spaces lively and populated (Ivers, 2018). It is reasonable to suggest that urban public spaces should be designed and managed to build sociability, tolerance of others, civic engagement and common purpose. Staging events in parks, streets and squares can help with this mission, by making public spaces more inviting, convivial and dynamic (Smith, et al., 2021). In order to reach vital cities, cities need to be equipped with new innovative tools to be used in urban design and planning (to redesign public spaces linked to sport activities, urban sports, games, and physical exercises) to adequately provide for recreation and sport services and exploit potential social, health and economic benefits (VITAL CITIES BP13 Integrated Action Plan, 2018).

Physical activity is practised outdoors and becomes a way of experiencing the city and its spaces. This trend leads to the creation of structures that integrate with the context, redevelop degraded areas, promote new ways of usage, enhancing existing spaces. One of the most significant European examples, which stems from the need to revitalise an area of high physical and social degradation by placing sport and its power of social inclusion as a subject of regeneration, is the Nelson Mandela Park in Amsterdam, which highlights the role of sport in enhancing the potential (not only physical) of people, and as a mechanism of social cohesion, capable of shaping the public space as a community hub that focuses on the relationship between people and communities (VITAL CITIES BP13 Integrated Action Plan, 2018 & Cognigni et al., 2020). In the conception of sports infrastructure: multifunctionality and inclusiveness are the main drivers of planning and design of an element at the core of urban regeneration strategies in terms of the quality of spaces and people's health. In this vein, the spaces for the practice of sport, both competitive and amateur, are increasingly characterized as an open urban place, both in architectural form and management, multipurpose and multifunctional with the possibility of hosting sports activities of different types and levels (Cognigni et al., 2020).

The third aspect is organizing and programming sports in public spaces. In Sociópolis Valencia the public space is programmed that different sports are possible, such as basketball, skateboarding, circuit training, football and running. This combination of organized and non-organized sports of individual and group activities allows for the exchange between the different groups. In addition, the municipal approach in Valencia shows that a wide range of sports leads to higher sports participation by all residents of the city (Valle et al., 2013). Besides, meeting the users' needs and an interesting design of public spaces is not sufficient to physically activate the urban population. Examples from Great Britain show the significance of social programmes and actions for activating the residents. The English governmental organization Sport England has implemented the "Use Our School" programme, which is considered as a tool to open school sports fields and sports facilities to the local communities. Including them in the public system of sports facilities is much cheaper than building the new ones. They can become a part of the public space and a place for community members to integrate (Kostrzewska, 2017).

In addition, the rising popularity of street-based sport events like cycling and motorsport races meant that citizens were able to engage with a wide range of events staged in public spaces (Smith, 2016). Also, Open Streets as car-free days are community-based programs that promote the use of public space for sports, physical activity, recreation, and socialization by closing streets temporarily to motorized vehicles allowing access to pedestrians (Santoso et al., 2015 & Torres et al., 2016). Similarly, the meanings associated with city parks are attractive to organizers of music festivals, who want to recreate the image and feel of rural sites. City squares also attract event organizers for their symbolic qualities, especially when centrally located and near landmarks (Smith et al., 2020). However, the study has also highlighted potential problems with designing events, particularly the idea that providing events infrastructure effectively determines that space will be used for events. There is a danger that events will become too dominant, overwhelming more mundane uses. This will affect the accessibility of the space for everyday users, dilute its symbolic meanings, and ultimately make the space less attractive to event organizers (Smith, et al., 2021).

Using public spaces as event venues is a complex and contested practice and designers, event organisers, place managers and citizens should engage with it openly and critically. More collaboration with local people about event programming is important, and ideally, more events should be co-produced by local community groups (Jeanes et al., 2019, & Smith et al., 2020). The researcher notes, that event organizers are often regarded as ‘invaders’, leading to adversarial relations and contested events. To help address these problems, there needs to be more participatory programming and more emphasis on inclusive events. Work is also required to reduce the exclusionary impacts of events. This might include ensuring some free to access events are staged in the facilities installed or allowing community groups to programme some of these events (Wangro, 2018 & Smith et al., 2020). Public open space is critical for the environment, and spatial and architectural design frequently emphasizes urban planning as part of improving the quality of public open space (Ling et al., 2019). One example is the change in function of city parks; the design of public open spaces frequently does not refer to the design, so that the aspirations or desires of the user community; and the design of public open spaces frequently does not pay attention to management and maintenance issues (Santoso et al., 2015). While the management of sports facilities held by private parties can always be kept that can help the government in managing sports open space areas. Also, sport facilities and infrastructures will be better and well maintained. If the management of sport facilities and infrastructures is better, it will positively influence the development of sport to be better and more advanced (DHARMAWAN et al., 2018). Further, existing research into informal social team sport posits that this form of recreation is better at facilitating democratic civic participation than organized sports (Vermeulen, 2011, Wheaton, 2015, & Jeanes et al., 2019). Participants from diverse backgrounds voluntarily take part and learn not only how to negotiate game rules but also complex interethnic and diasporic social relationships (DeLand et al., 2014 & Wise et al., 2018). Urban spaces designed and managed to achieve more socially equitable outcomes thus creating atmospheres that can “prime bodies’ to be receptive to ‘newness” (Wise, 2016). Beyond bringing people with shared backgrounds together, they may also generate pleasurable feelings towards engaging with and negotiating differences (Wise, 2016).

The fourth aspect is the attractive public space environment. People need public spaces to carry out physical activities and sports. The availability of sport public spaces accessible can encourage people to be fond of conducting the physical exercise. Designers and managers of urban spaces promote the desirability and attractiveness of these as places to spend time (Clare et al., 2018). Promotion of public spaces for sports activities in each neighbourhood there should be at least one suitable and accessible place where people can do sport and recreational activities easily and safely (Chacón-Borrego et al., 2018). Public space is a potentially attractive sports facility for many, including both participants and nonparticipants. In addition, due to its flexibility in accessibility regarding time and costs, the public space is also popular among sports participants that combine multiple types of sports. Planners should therefore optimize the attractiveness of the public space for sports for different groups of participants (Deelen et al., 2016). Even a properly designed space, therefore, is not everything. Sport is present in the cities thanks to active people, not sports facilities. Places of importance for the residents are being created by acting, not only by preparing design plans. It has to be remembered that through its aesthetic and functional solutions (such as convenient accessibility, design and pleasantness, safety, cleanliness and tidiness, facilities, and service charges), design can and should play a great role in motivating and encouraging people to undertake physical activities in public spaces (Kostrzewska, 2017 & Proklamlatu et al., 2021).

Events have been identified by urban designers and urban planners as tools to make public spaces more convivial, interesting, and safe. In addition, events affect host spaces physically and symbolically, but events are themselves affected by the physical qualities and symbolic meanings of host places (Smith et al., 2017). Animating public spaces via events can also diversify the uses and users of public spaces (Smith, 2017). Policymakers increasingly recognize that the built environment can function as an important condition for active living environments. Municipalities aspire to design cities that encourage people to be more physically active (New York City, 2010, Sallis et al., 2016, & Gadais et al., 2017). In addition, perceptions of the physical environment, including perceived safety and attractiveness, are related to sports participation (Kamphuis et al., 2008 & Beenackers et al., 2011). For example, running has become one of the most popular and practised sports and it is a well-known phenomenon in the urban streetscape, public parks and natural areas. Both scholars and policymakers increasingly have become aware that an attractively designed public space may stimulate sports participation including running. Studies have found that perceived environmental characteristics, particularly green and lively running routes and a comfortable running surface, enhanced runners’ evaluation of the attractiveness and restorative capacity of the running environment (Ettema, 2016 & Deelen et al., 2019).

In addition, the areas with more green space, blue space or sports facilities in their residential neighbourhood were more likely to participate in sports. Neighbourhood blue space in particular was associated equally strongly with sports participation at public spaces, sports clubs, and other sports facilities (Deelen et al., 2017). Those natural environmental characteristics (i.e., green and blue space) are related to sports participation is in line with previous research that showed that attractive and liveable environments stimulate and invite people to exercise or participate

in sports (Giles-Corti et al., 2005, Mohammed, 2016, & Hussein, 2018). These four aspects are very important and work together to promote participation in physical activities and sports in urban public spaces as well as applying to a new public space in order to create an attractive environment for all and can invite various sporting events.

3. New Agenda to Promote Sport for All in Urban Public Space

Previous studies have revealed evidence for the importance of urban public space as a stage for sport and physical activities. Further study needs to look at all the following aspects more deeply as a package that contribute to creating an attractive urban environment to increase participation in sport for all in urban environments that can address the barriers and needs to organize and practise sports and recreation in urban spaces.

Spatial integration of sport facilities in urban environments: new design and policies required for the integration of physical aspects of sports facilities by customization sports as an urban meeting place, to decrease or obviate inequity in access to outdoor sports facilities and increase sports inclusivity that should be acknowledged the concept of sport for all that be able to address the barriers and needs in sports and recreation spaces.

Adaptation of public spaces: further studies on sports open spaces should be conducted to examine the people's changes, adaptation, and flexibility toward open sports spaces because some public spaces cannot be maximally utilized for the reason that the design is not adjusted to possible changes. As well as various forms of programs and attractions should be developed to revitalize "sport for all" through inclusive design to encourage all to participate in various sport activities. Public space may need to be adapted through inclusive interventions to accommodate different activities.

Organizing and programming sport: increasing the organizing and programming of multi-sports and physical activities to target all different groups in public spaces and allows participants from diverse backgrounds voluntarily take part in how negotiating game rules. In addition, collaboration with informal groups and multiple agencies in organizing sports can promote participation people in sports. It requires a deep examination of how and under what circumstances various dimensions of safe space might be applied to cultivate those situations as well as contribute to stakeholders' perceptions of rising opportunity to provide a safe space for tourism and marketing purposes through organizing sports and events. And indicates a growing need for flexibility in the spatiotemporal organization of sports activities and the increased importance of the public space for sports participation.

Attractive public space environments: Increasing attention to making public spaces more attractive and suitable for sports participation by redesigning public spaces with a focus on enhancing the diversity, usability, and functionality of contact with natural areas including green open spaces, and blue spaces which is a key to attractive destinations for a range of recreational users and increasing participation in organized sports. Policymakers should investigate the motivations that different groups of (potential) public space participants have for sports participation and for the use of specific locations. In addition, an event organizer to create a strategy to increase the number of visitors to the local regular event through event image.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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