

Sports and Public Space: Volleyball Practice in Copacabana and Carcavelos/Cascais Beaches

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to analyze volleyball practice in the beaches of Copacabana (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Carcavelos and Cascais Bay (Cascais, Portugal) and to review the forms of appropriation of public space based on public policies and rules of the sport in question. Our methodology rests on bibliographic review and ethnographic research to map and distinguish the results in two spatial and cultural contexts that are considerably diverse. Results show that even with greater extension of Copacabana beach in comparison with Cascais, volleyball has a relevant impact in both areas. The installation of the necessary equipment for volleyball practice is also a form of impact in the landscape and establishment of territoriality, which is mainly activated when the game happens.

Key words: Contemporaneity, urban history, public space, beach, volleyball.

1. Introduction

The contemporary city, especially in the 2000s, has been an object of many actions and also of studies. Elias and Dunning [1] stated that sport has been forgotten by most sociologists due to the difficulty in having a critical distance from western societies' dominant values, which impedes the comprehension of "the social significance of sport, the problems it poses or the scope it offers for exploring areas of social structure and behavior that are largely ignored in social theories".

Thus, this field of study has been arousing interest of great social impact, whether it be in the sports field or in small daily life events. In coastal cities, therefore, beaches have become important places which offer a diversity of sport- and leisure-related activities which improve social and cultural life.

A brief bibliographic review attests that, in English, there are papers dedicated to understand physical exercise and sport as cultural practices with multiple

significances today: the specific commerce that spawns on beaches [2], aspects related to contemporary culture such as lifestyle sport, sport for development and peace, the governance of international sport organizations and sports fandom [3] and the impact of globalization on sports and the possibilities of its applications in reducing social problems [4]. In French, there is a rather solid range of papers on sport in the cities and its articulations with urban morphology [5] and on the formation of new territorialities based on sports practice [6, 7]. That is, sport is analyzed as field of expression of contemporary society [8-10] and center of research on sport history [11].

In Portuguese, relevant papers are those of Melo et. al. [12] on sport history, sport in the city of Rio de Janeiro and volleyball [13]; besides those of Mascarenhas [14] on the sports events that take place in cities as a field of sports geography. In the Portuguese context, a recent paper analyzes extensively the sports activities in urban spaces [15], and there is also a variety of studies on the importance of sport to quality of life [16] and on volleyball practice in Portugal [17].

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The literature review for this field includes the articulation of sport with society and culture in a striking manner, which encourages research in different areas to address this issue. In this paper, we consider volleyball as sportive premise to understand the uses of the coastal public space in two different contexts: Rio de Janeiro (Copacabana beach) and Carcavelos and Cascais Bay (Cascais). Therefore, it is important to review some of this subject's deeper concepts.

1.1 Space and Territory

When we mention territory, the notions of country or space limited by borders come to mind. Roughly speaking, that is because the term territory relates directly to space. Raffestin [18] defines space and territory as non-equivalent terms: "In order to build a territory, the actor projects a work into space, that is, energy and information, while adapting the given conditions to the needs of a community or society." According to Souza [19], the fundamental concept of territory involves power relations, unlike the concept of place, for example, which lies in another, cultural-symbolical, sphere. That, however, does not imply recognizing that the concept of territory "can and should be applied to different scales and situations—including those of everyday life".

Thus, territory is a "new paradigm that fulfills a certain number of geographical, social and political roles which are inscribed in the universe of memory, representations and values" [20].

Contemporaneity, therefore, reveals conditions for coexistence of multiple identities that are associated with multiple territories, where borders are fluid and interchangeable. The beach, for that matter, as a distinct example of public space, becomes a particular universe of territory and identity development.

1.2 Territory and Territoriality

It should be noted then that, if territory is a concept associated with space, the term territoriality takes on a more specific meaning and refers to the notion of a

territory in which exchange relations are established, with patterns of inclusion and exclusion, based on power. According to Sack [21], "territoriality is a primary geographical expression of social power. It is the means through which space and society are interrelated". Territoriality is the main spatial form of power seizure. Thus, in view of so many trends that may characterize territorialities, we identified that sport plays an important role in the formation of specific territorialities, whether effective or temporary, since sports activities organize specific uses in space and aggregate audiences of diverse interests.

1.3 Sport and Volleyball Territoriality

The sports phenomenon, however, lacks interdisciplinary research to understand the spatial dynamics in which sport is integrated, since it represents "a complex and multifaceted domain of society" [14]. Part of the problem has been originally pinpointed by Augustin [22, 23], who used sports which happen casually in space (like surf and adventure sports) to discuss the concept of territoriality and its salient growth, because there is a territorial expansion of leisure.

It noted, hence, that each place that has sport as a relevant practice in space is susceptible to different forms of belonging. Cities as the places of contemporary life bear endless possibilities of typically urban manifestations and the public space of the beach reconfirms that these manifestations are democratic insofar as it embraces people with different interests and from different social conditions who seek the coast as a leisure place.

Volleyball that is played in public spaces, on beaches, is a democratic event that resonates with the idea of sport as a performance, held in a public, free-access space: "that is one of the advantages of the sports performance. As for beach volleyball, the public take part in the event out of free will. Except for the Olympic Games, no admission fee is charged in order to enter the arena and take part in the performance" [24]. Thus, it is possible to note that in

each city and place in a city, multiple sociabilities are formed, from multiple territorialities.

Not only is there the formation of a volleyball territoriality (by the presence of boundary markers in the sand for the sport practice and setup of poles for the net, etc.), but there is also the formation of specific territorialities for specific groups that exist in different places in the coast, in determined “networks.” Hence, the formation of groups arises based on particular specificities and relationships such as nets where there are only women, seniors, LGBTQ+ community members, volleyball schools, etc. That is certainly a generalization, since no group is uniform altogether, but a certain prevalence is noted, which can be distinguished by groups of interest and general timetable. Volleyball, as a sports practice in the public place, is the affirmation of a salient territoriality, even when there are only the poles for the net, a stuck territoriality.

2. Method and Materials

This paper uses the research bases of a doctoral thesis that is under development at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and we already have some published results [25]. Based on exchanges with the University of Lisbon, we expand the literature review and field research on the beaches of the Lisbon metropolitan region as a way of understanding the dynamics for volleyball in another spatial and cultural context. Also in accordance with input from urban ethnography [26-28], volleyball practice is observed on beaches, besides the review of bibliography and of documents.

Experience in the studied places allows for an advance in the methodology to understand the social practice—or, in this case, sportive practice of volleyball through three fundamental aspects: urban history, legislation that organizes this activity’s uses and spatial characteristics of the studies places.

Historically, volleyball practice is distinguished in the two countries studies. Bourdieu [29] notes that

sport is driven by the laws of market and, therefore, in order to understand a given sport, it is necessary to “recognise the position it holds in the place of other sports” to then reveal its social aspects. In Brazil, volleyball is the second most popular sport, only besides soccer. In Portugal, soccer is also the most popular sport, however, volleyball does not have the same popularity. Yet, even regarding a sport discipline, it can still be practiced in a recreational manner, according to Gomes [30], “leisure is a complex social practice that encompasses a multiplicity of contextualized and historically situated recreational cultural experiences.” Hence, sport joins leisure as a highly characteristic human social activity.

Sport and leisure are logically supported from a legal point of view. When they become subjects of public policies, they have to go through a bureaucratic trajectory “submitting to different instances, and may undergo modifications until they reach the operability of the action for which they are intended” [31]. Legal perspectives for volleyball practice in Copacabana are restrictive and demand the request for authorization from the city hall. However, the poles are installed on the beach permanently and, in practice, anyone can set up their net and play, unless the concession holder arrives, in which case they have the preference. In Portugal, the use of the ball is forbidden along the coastline and only with previous authorization can one practice sports such as volleyball, since all poles are managed by Port Authority.

Regarding spatial characteristics, it is noted that the amount of volleyball nets in each beach varies. If the Copacabana shore, 4.5 km long [32], has 109 installed nets, Carcavelos, 1.5 km long, only about 100 m are useful for volleyball on Cascais (although the coastline is 31 km long). There are 5 nets (1 on Cascais and 4 on Carcavelos). Weather conditions are certainly an important factor: Brazil being a tropical country, warmer weather allows for practice all year round, whilst in Portugal, colder weather (from September to March), reduces the frequency to

beaches. Besides that there are the surroundings of the shore: while Copacabana has a population of 155,000 in a 6.5 million inhabitants city (metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro), Cascais-Carcavelos have a population of 212,000 in a 2.8 million inhabitant metropolitan region of Lisbon (Table 1) [33].

3. Copacabana Beach, Brazil

Since the opening of Atlantic Avenue, when bathing on the beach was not such a frequent mass activity, the Copacabana beach already presented a different style for interaction with the city: “It is worth remembering that mayor Pereira Passos, by designing the avenue, determined that the pavement be built with Portuguese stones, to be seated by pavers coming directly from Lisbon. In 1906, one of Copacabana’s greatest icons was born [34].” The public space of the beach was beginning to attract people due to its natural attributes and that of “Copacabana, a place that denoted the status and lifestyle of a ruling class in the 1930s and 1940s in Rio de Janeiro, then capital of the republic, was also defined as a space of popular leisure, which included sports” [35]. Regarding volleyball practice, there is history of games held on north-American beaches in the 1920s.

Presumably, also in Rio de Janeiro there were players, in this decade [13]. The most traditional nets were in kiosks Five and Six and many were baptized with the names of their owners, as was the case of the famous Bebê Barreto net, who won the 1st Beach Volleyball Championship, sponsored by Jornal dos Sports, in December 1946 [36]. During this period, there were countless nets set up in the morning, from Leme to Ponto Seis.

From the legislative point of view, Rio de Janeiro has the Secretariat of Sport, Leisure and Youth

(SEELJE), which operates at the state level and has the purpose and competence to formulate, coordinate, execute and promote sports activities in the state, in addition to the Superintendency of Rio de Janeiro State Sports (SUDERJ), whose mission is to ensure development of amateur sports. At the municipal level, however, there is no sports and leisure department to meet the demands of this portfolio. The administrative organization of the current City Hall (2017-2020) has created sixteen Regional Superintendencies respecting the city planning areas provided for in the Municipal Master Plan. In the understanding of the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, these Superintendencies are instruments that aim to bring closer the public power and the citizen, acting in a more effective, directed and agile way.

Despite the mismatch between the state and municipal sphere when it comes to Sport and Leisure, there is a decree of September 18, 2008 (No. 29,881), whose article II-Book II, concerns the Postures Concerning the Maintenance of Order and Urban Coexistence, in which Regulation No. 16 discusses: Sports Practice on Beaches. In this respect, the owners of poles and those responsible for volleyball schools who engage in their activities with certain autonomy must have an authorization granted by SEELJE which must be renewed every six months in order to receive a “no objection” seal, in addition to the payment of a Public Area Usage Fee (TUAP), of which they are not exempt. The mere compliance with these determinations grants the applicants the use of urban land in the public beach space, where besides enjoying themselves, they also profit from the registration and tuition fees to provide the population with the understanding and possibility of practicing beach volleyball.

Table 1 Comparison of beaches.

	Coastline extension (km)	Number of poles	Number of courts	Concession for poles?	Scheduling needed?	Volleyball schools?	Games with ball w/o authorization?
Copacabana	4.5	218	109	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Carcavelos/Cascais	1.5/0.1	8/2	4/1	No	Yes	No	No

Regarding spatial characteristics, Copacabana is a dense neighborhood, easily accessible with cars, bus and subways on a continuous waterfront that connects to the oceanic neighborhoods of Ipanema and Leblon. The entire border of the neighborhood is made up of high-grade apartment buildings (15 floors on average) for the upper middle class, which are relatively far from the sea line. The strip of sand that extends for 4.5 km is quite continuous and you can see the ends (the forts) from one point to another. However, the width of the sand strip is broader in the middle of this course, which facilitates the practice of multiple sports, vendors in fixed tents far from each other, as well as the kiosks along the boardwalk and the bars and restaurants on the ground floor of buildings. The boardwalk along the shore, made with Portuguese stones, is a big pavement for pedestrians. The Copacabana beach is the coast of the most dynamic and multicultural cur, be it for its extension, neighborhood density or international fame (Fig. 1).

4. Carcavelos/Cascais Beaches, Portugal

The village of Cascais belongs to the district of Lisbon and it is one of the destinations in Portugal with more visits from tourists from all over the world. With a population of about 230 thousand inhabitants, it encompasses a land area of 94.7 km² and a maritime area of 119 km², which makes it one of the 5 most populous villages in Portugal. The privileged location, about 30 minutes from the capital Lisbon is favored with quick and good quality access, such as a road for cars, buses and trains [33]. The Cascais shore has about 15 beaches, but volleyball is only practiced on the beaches of Carcavelos, which has 8 poles set up, making up 4 court and in the Cascais Bay, a small area in the center of the city, where there are 2 poles set up, making up one court where the net is regularly up. Sport, therefore, interacts with the environment through many dimensions, according to the analysis of Ferreira [16]: “a territorial dimension related to the temporary or permanent occupation of the territory; a

material dimension associated with the use of resources, a behavioral dimension, function of the procedures taken by the various actors”, as well as infrastructure-related dimensions, characteristic of each event.

At the legislative level, the town of Cascais has a maritime system in which the Port Authority is responsible for the coast and all the manifestations that occur there. In the decree law No. 442002/2 March, in Article 13, we can see that “the master of the port is the local maritime authority to exercise the authority of the State, namely in matters of supervision, policing and safety of navigation, of persons and assets, in the respective area of jurisdiction, pursuant to the following paragraphs” [37]. Therefore, it falls to the Captain, in the exercise of the functions of maritime authority, as described in paragraph n, “to concede special authorization for the holding of events of sportive or cultural nature to occur in bathing areas or areas of maritime jurisdiction” [37]. Therefore, the use of poles for volleyball practice on Cascais and Carcavelos beaches depends on previous scheduling, on a licence from the Captain and on an authorization from Cascais Board. Hence, without authorization from both bodies, volleyball can not be practiced on these beaches. We also investigated volleyball schools and found that, in the case that a Physical Education professional wants to teach beach volleyball, likewise, they must request authorization from Port Authority. In addition to these requirements, there is a nucleus called the Alcobaça-Cabo Espichel Coastal Program,



Fig. 1 Beach-volleyball in Copacabana.

Source: Marcelo Tavares, January, 2019.



Fig. 2 Beach-volleyball in Cascais Bay.

Source: Marcelo Tavares, December, 2019.

which operationalizes the Regulation of Management of the Maritime Beaches and the Portuguese Water Domain, which indicates that “the Administration’s actions, namely in the area of planning and planning, regarding the use and occupation of the Margin must”, regarding sports, “privilege the development of recreational, leisure and sports activities compatible with the functions of the ecosystems in question” [38].

Concerning spatial characteristics, it is noteworthy that the Carcavelos beach edge, due to its continuity and extension, is the most used option for sea bathing, with an environment formed by residences of high commercial value (two-floor houses). Cascais Bay, which is a very small stretch where the only volleyball net is, is close to the center, where the administrative headquarters and the commercial core of the city are. Both beaches are easily accessible through cars, buses and train. It is a coastline that changes from the mouth of the Tagus River and reaches the Atlantic Ocean, where the beaches with the volleyball nets are. The strip of sand goes from regular, where the 4 Carcavelos nets are, to the singularity of the one net on Cascais, with a narrower strip. Commerce is regulated and there is only the presence of bars and restaurants that are part of the boardwalk, where there is the possibility of walking a non-linear extension, with curves, recesses and surprises along the route. The long coastline that extends in this region favors the access to the beaches and gathers many bathers in summer and less passers-by during colder times (Fig. 2).

5. Conclusions

The contemporary public space is increasingly rich in possibilities of uses and appropriations. The beach as a place of nature, leisure and eminently a public place is mostly a pleasant place where people enjoy to stay and rest and share the space with sports practiced in the sea or on the sand.

In the researched contexts, it is observed that in Copacabana there is an intense practice of leisure activities, where volleyball is an integral part of the history of the neighborhood and the beach, with great prominence in the international scenario. In Carcavelos-Cascais, the small scale compared to the Brazilian scenario does not make volleyball practice any less visible and important on the beaches.

Proportionally, they take up a large space on the sand. On Cascais Bay, the presence of the only net is striking in the landscape, and the layout of the floor in the landscape, and the layout of the floor in Portuguese stones is the same as in Copacabana, reminiscences that connect these two beaches even more strongly.

Volleyball as a sport activity outgrew the courts to occupy public spaces, especially, the beaches, which establishes the formation of specific territorialities that promote urban dynamics in a megalopolis such as Rio de Janeiro or the homespun Cascais region. In this regard, research on sports use in cities is an important path to go along, be it from the sportive, sociological, juridical or landscaping perspective. Cities and beaches are topics of diverse interest, which only pinpoints the richness of the universe in which sports and specifically volleyball are included.

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