

153 - THE FIELD OF SPORTS AS A SYMBOLIC PLACE: SOME CONSTRUCTIONS IN MEDIA

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SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTIONS

The contemporary man's needs for ownership are no longer true if considering a man born some centuries ago. While ownership of land and assets was just a quest in Middle Ages, today the contemporary man has in urbanization a limitation for land ownership. The exclusion of the great land owner figure is necessary, for he's an exception to this rule. Therefore, the urban man has other ownership needs that are connected to the mode of production and consumption.

What seems continuous and constant in the relationship of the so called contemporary man with the others is the relation of ownership through war. In ancient history, the Hellenic man went to war and turned the ones who were defeated into his slaves. Domination processes have changed, now we have the fight for land resources, it doesn't matter the people, but what those lands can offer to them. War among Arabian countries and the United States of America, is closely linked to oil, hinted by the pseudo-democracy preached by North Americans. Field battles among nations seem to be living on borrowed time when considering technologic development. From now on, we're interested on another kind of war, the symbolic one.

Thus, in Castoriadis (1982) view we find the first symbol in language, being what connects human beings to each other. The union of meanings established by the symbolic relationship starts cultures. "Without men certainly there would be no culture, but, in a similar and very significant way, without culture there would be no men (GEERTZ, 1989)". With this quote by Geertz, we can realize that decisively it's impossible not to mention culture when we talk about signification processes.

It's appropriate to point out the pondering Castoriadis has done regarding the supposed neutrality of a symbolism process:

"The symbolism can neither be neuter, nor totally suited, first because it can neither take its signs anywhere, nor can take any signs. That is evident for the individual that always finds an already constituted language before them and if they give a 'private' and special sense to a certain word, expression, they're not doing so within unlimited freedom but they must find support in something that is already there. But that's equally true for society, though in a different way. Society always constitutes its symbolic order in a different sense than the individual can do. But this constitution is not 'free'. It must take its matter from what already exists as well" (CASTORIADIS, 1982: 146).

In these factors, we point out that man doesn't live only in a physical world of concrete facts, but perceives himself in the environment through his imaginary emotions, illusions, fantasies and dreams. The human being in Cassirer's (1994) opinion, has become an animal symbolicum, who lives in a symbolic universe. A universe which in Castoriadis' proposition, is not unique or totally autonomous, but crossed by contradictions of all kinds, especially the ones that are emanated from class struggle. However, there's the universality of arrangement for the symbolic and for some of its structural configurations as, for instance, the hero myth, largely themed and mediatized in all the construction of Daiane dos Santos' performance.

In old days the battle, the war mentioned so far as a part of man's history had its symbolic connotation of domination of another culture. Contemporarily, war becomes symbolic in fact. The evidence for it is in the field of sports, which through competitions makes man a producer of victories, which symbolizes domination and power. The representation of the medal chart in Modern Olympic Games is a clear symbolic war started by the field of media, considering that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) does not legitimates this qualification practice.

The symbolic, in this proposal, aligns with the imaginary. In that way, Castoriadis (1982) defends the decisive influence of the imaginary on the symbolic, for symbolism presupposes the capacity of establishing a permanent link between two terms, in a way that one represents the other. Therefore, symbolic is connected to imaginary and representation, in which identity traits align to the community's way of thinking/acting. If we understand that the human being is the only animal capable of creating symbols, that is, arbitrary signs in relation with the object they represent, consequently, conventional (ARANHA & MARTINS, 2001), we catch a glimpse of our ability from concrete ambit into the abstract one. We are able to want to be something we are not, to represent something that is not in our experience domains.

Within that perspective, the field of sports provides more for these elements, because the athlete-hero figure is always evoked as a kind of representation. Besides, the field of sports offers itself almost integrally to coverage. Even the granting of locker room images, that is, the backstage of sports field, make the visibility of all its rituals possible. The field of sports as a source wouldn't be an appropriate study proposal on mediatic processes if there wasn't coverage of Athens' Olympic Games, and all the media weren't there in loco in order to make the sports coverage, characterizing, this way, the importance of the event.

Harry Pross (1989) believes that individual development of human organisms, or even the gradual transformation of species, ends up in establishing new signs and its respective principles of order, linguistically stated by terms as superior and inferior, above and below, in front of and behind, progress and regress. Semiotic processes are started by movements between poles.

In Pross (1989) proposal, those processes have as origin the acquirement of vertical perception, classified as one of the first human experiences with which other qualities are linked. The field acquires central meaning to human self-assurance as a place for memories, battles, games. The species moves itself in the field's affirmation, of showing its presence in this limited space before the others. This symbology serves as much for Politics as for the sphere of wars and sports.

Henn (2004) takes possession of Pross proposal in the following manner: the vertical signaling of places and the field's affirmation makes reference to another primary experience translated into 'inside on the outside'. Once signs are produced, spaces are necessarily created. An interior space between subject and sign emerges, and an exterior space behind the sign. At the moment which the sign itself has stature, it configures itself as a vertical mark, the above and below appear in the relation with interior and exterior space created thus. The vertical delimitation as an object transforms the surrounding space. This space, delimited this way, is called field. According to Henn (2004), the occupation of a field marked with signs turns itself

into its symbolic acquisition: "the field thus incorporated is, at the same time, a sign for bigger spaces. It permits transferring to other social relations taken in the field of game or battle field" (HENN, 2004).

In this particular case, we'd like to remind that other fields don't offer themselves thoroughly to the mediatic one. As an example, we point out a commercial dispute in WTO (World Trade Organization) between Brazil and United States, of which no news coverage can be issued at the time of this institution's meeting. As for sports coverage, that's allowed and they even want it to be like that, so media are part of the sports field rituals.

THE FIELD OF SPORTS AS SYMBOLIC

Since the Ancient Olympic Games in Greece sport has a symbolic cultural representation for its participants, as well as for viewers. The Olympic champion won nothing but social status, which, in those days, represented much symbolically. Power, the social visibility is the greatest linking that can be done with victory, with the sports competition. Currently, Brazilian athletes who have visibility through victories, earn more money with publicity than with the practice of sports itself.

The Modern Olympic Games are the materialization of sports as a way of domination and symbolic war among nations. Thus, the purity of competitions preached by Baron Pierre de Coubertin is beyond a utopian thought. The symbolic sports war offers itself to the field of media. Having as one of its characteristics being permeated by various fields, the field of sports gives life to the symbolic war through the mediatic field.

In Castoriadis' (1982) opinion, society constructs its symbolism, but not within an absolute reality. Symbolism is stuck into natural and historic, making chains of signifiers and signified, connections and consequences, which weren't aimed nor predicted to arise. The same author proposes that the institution of society and social significations that are incorporated in it always develop in two undividable dimensions:

1) Identitary-cunjunctive (logic) Dimension: Society operates (acts and thinks) in it with and through "elements", classes, properties and relations of postulates as distinct and definite. The prevailing scheme is the one of domination and the requirement is that everything conceivable is subject to determination and to the implications or consequences that occur because of it. Existence is determinant.

2) Properly Imaginary Dimension: Existence in it is signification, which can be delimited, but not determined. Significations connect indefinitely to one another, under the fundamental mode of reference. Every signification refers to an indefinite number of other significations. They are not distinct, nor definite, and are not interconnected by necessary and sufficient conditions and reasons.

In this paper, we propose expressly that media act in the imaginary dimension proposed by Castoriadis, for they build sense from significations offered by other fields. Thus, the field of media interconnects significations from different fields in order to refer to particular symbols from diverse fields, such as the one of sports. The operation in this process is started by thematization about which we talked previously.

Colby apud Bird and Dardenne (1999) arguments that texts, such as rituals, art, games and other symbolic configurations, are cultural models that encode values and behavior guides. If we study these models, in which news narratives are included, we can learn about values and symbols which have meaning in a certain culture.

Journalists as elements of a particular culture, are subject to what Colby has called "culture grammar", which defines rules for narrative construction. Considering news as narrative representing culture, this way, we can study it as a model of symbolic cultural values (CORRIGAN apud BIRD and DARDENNE 1999, p. 271), in an attempt to reveal specific configurations which are typical of news from a certain culture.

In this sense, in Bird and Dardenne's (1999) opinion journalists, while integrants of a certain culture and subject to narrative grammars, are also specialists trained in specific narrative techniques which may sometimes collide with cultural conventions.

The symbolism of the field of sports is constructed at the confluence of the rules in the field itself and mediatic practice. The post-modern ephemerality adds new meaning to the definition of what is symbolic each small fraction of time⁵. We can point out the figure of soccer player Romário. Reckoned as a bad boy, Romário is now defender of the cause of children born with Down Syndrome, owing that to his daughter who was born with this special need. The symbolic, in that case, is directly aligned to the form of social representation. What is acknowledged as an integrant element of a particular culture, but has universal value, will be symbolic in a certain way.

MEDIA AND SPORTS: SYMBOLIC RELATIONS

The relations between Media and Physical Education go through sport first, which is necessarily present in society represented in the most different forms. Schools, professional clubs, social clubs, children school resources and, mainly in media, are the chief spaces where this activities are presented to the most diverse social classes in Brazil. With such a range, sport integrates millions of people in a direct and indirect way, reaching big and small urban centers and even rural areas.

The intersections between Media and Sport are configured by the social signification of sport, as well as by its diffusion in the media. Therefore, this social meaning starts to be as guidance for the mediatic coverage that adds new meaning to its productive routines which are permeated by various processes. In the light of that rule, I consider it's impossible to study the sport's world phenomena without taking into account its interdisciplinary nature.

This situation mentioned above, isn't referring just to a linearity of significations and new meanings. The media constitute sport, as sport constitutes the media. Contemporarily, each field is signified by means of other ones. Thus, the mediatic becomes accessible to its public by the similarity that the first gives to its form and its content. In addition, sports have each time more adapted their form and content to media.

The signification of mediatic content is in society, which is always its guidance. Media are part of society, as society is constituted by media. Paraphrasing Morin (1997) "the whole is in the parts, as the parts are in the whole". Therefore, we go from a sphere of what constitutes what, into complementarity. And more than that, depending on the actions unchained by the parts, significative transformations occur on the whole.

Millions and sometimes billions of people in the whole world watch the Olympic Games via media. The sports field works on their production with the logic of the mediatic field. The latter is responsible for the dissemination of one of the greatest cultural products consumed in the world: sport. The media, interested in widening its social and commercial diffusion, use sport as a means to do so, having, thus, a two-way street in their interests and longings. The sports field, being the media's favorite one, specially when it's time for great sports events like the Olympic Games, is more seen and exposed to the general public through sports coverage, and so, its dissemination possibilities are boosted (SANFELICE, 2002).

⁵ It would be imprecise to determine a fraction of time for this affirmation.

The development of technologic-scientific and economic knowledge has made possible for society to transform itself and one of the phenomena that has arisen and/or got strengthened in this context, is what we call "Sports Globalization"⁶ started by the Modern Olympic Games. The term globalization may seem strong at a first moment, to analyze and contextualize the Olympic Games worldwide and in diverse cultures engaged in the Olympic proposal, but, its effects reveal similarities with this cultural and economic phenomenon. (SANFELICE, 2007).

One of the heralds of sports globalization, which is not restricted only to a word and neither to an economic scope, but also to a cultural one, were the Olympic Games, which institutionalized sports postures, widespread in world level. The variety of sports in their most diverse origins, in different cultures, is "globalized" by the Olympic Games which offer propositions regarding its ideals and conducts as for world sports competitions. The diverse sports that have emerged in the world have in the Olympic Games the regularization and globalization of their practices through media (SANFELICE, 2007).

About the relations between fields, Rodrigues (1997) points out that the mediatic speech also plays an important part in the reinforcement of the legitimacy of other institutions, helping to keep them present in the social imaginary. In this particularity, Castoriadis (1982) affirms that each society elaborates an image of the world making a group of signifiers, where they find what matters to the community life, the community in itself and a certain "world order".

This image uses the "rational nervures of data", but subjects them to significations that don't depend on rational, but on imaginary scope. In that sense, the institution is inserted in a symbolic network, socially sanctioned, in which are combined in variable proportions and relations, a functional component without which society wouldn't survive, and an imaginary component that, in social-historic level, is the creation, is to induce to be, is a position in and for the institution of forms and social significations.

All that is presented to us in the social and historical world is inseparable interlaced with the symbolic, reaffirms Castoriadis (1982, p. 139). "I don't mean that all is exhausted in it. Real acts, individual or collective – work, consumption war, love, naturalness – and innumerable material products without which no society could live for even a single moment, are not (not always directly) symbols. But some and others are impossible to be outside a symbolic network" (CASTORIADIS, 1982, p. 142).

The reinforcement of the symbolic network defended by Castoriadis is exerted by media, which give social significations of symbolic perception to certain groups, considering that this process is the first step to mediatization. The media establish reading contracts with its consumers, trying to establish the relations of the coverage object with the consumer/reader's context.

Those reading contracts are established through the two-way street between the recipient's cultural universe, as well as the rituals presented by media when producing events. The frames are elected by media as the recipient's previous knowledge in the dynamic construction of meanings, based on social structures recognized by them. The set of frames that the diverse mediatic devices choose on each coverage, form a map of meaning for the event broadcast. The definitions of frame and maps of meaning are confluent at the construction of Castoriadis' symbolic network, making explicit the functional component of signification.

As a central point, the concern with this indicative is established by the mediation of the vehicle through the interpretation of what has happened. Therefore, events are organized, for example, on the newspaper by means of a hierarchy of senses. From now on, this event in Mouillaud's (2002) opinion, provides a trade in speeches in which innumerable voices talk about what's occurred, through official sources, specialists, the team of journalists who is covering the event. These innumerable speeches pointed out by Mouillaud, most of times, are the ones that provide for a theme for the reading contracts between transmitters and recipients. The mediatic speech is co-participant on the sports field agenda.

Starting from the symbiotic logic between the field of media and the field of sports, we understand that, contemporarily, each time more sports offer themselves through the mediatic field, as a way to signify themselves socially. In that sense, various sports have changed their routines because of media. We can mention volleyball as the most mediatized of all sports. The score system was changed in order to make it's transmission via television possible, and it has also offered variations of time during sets for the so called "TV time". Sports which are not fitted in this logic remain in second or third place on news coverage. Other innovations occur in the field of sports in order to define its production, we call attention to the fact that sport is a mediatic phenomenon, particularly by means of its production – consumption relation. One may reach the conclusion that sport is instituted while a signification field in media and beyond it, turning this relation into a two-way street of social senses and meanings.

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⁶The Sports Globalization pointed out in this paper, regards the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups which converge at the Olympic Games, making the dissemination of sports practices possible.

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THE FIELD OF SPORTS AS A SYMBOLIC PLACE: SOME CONSTRUCTIONS IN MEDIA

ABSTRACT

This essay describes the symbolic relationship that the field of sports has with social signification processes, permeated by the component of collective imaginary which transcends the limits of the field of sports. In addition, we dissertate about the relationship between the media and sports with signification processes constructed from the logic of media production, but with their particular senses and meanings, in a way to represent a continuous and procedure interdependency relationship.

KEY WORDS: Field of sports. Symbolic constructions. Media.

LE DOMAINE DU SPORT COMME LIEU SYMBOLIQUE: QUELQUES CONSTRUCTIONS DANS LES MEDIAS

RÉSUMÉ

Cet essai décrit la relation symbolique que le domaine du sport a des processus de signification sociale, imprégnée par la composante de l'imaginaire collectif qui transcende les limites du domaine du sport. En outre, nous dissertons sur la relation entre les médias et le sport avec la signification des processus construits à partir de la logique de la production médiatique, mais avec leurs sens et de significations particulières, de manière à représenter une relation continue et processuelle interdépendance.

MOTS CLÉS: Terrain de sports. Constructions symboliques. Médias.

EL CAMPO DEPORTIVO COMO UN LUGAR SIMBÓLICO: ALGUNAS CONSTRUCCIONES EN LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN

RESUMEN

Este ensayo describe la relación simbólica que el campo de deportes tiene con los procesos de significación social, atravesada por el componente del imaginario colectivo que trasciende los límites del campo de deportes. Además, disertamos sobre la relación entre los medios de comunicación y los deportes de significación los procesos de construcción de la lógica de los medios de producción, pero con sus sentidos y significados particulares, en una forma de representar una relación de interdependencia continua y procesual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Campo de deportes. Construcciones simbólicas. Medios de comunicación.

O CAMPO ESPORTIVO COMO UM LUGAR SIMBÓLICO: ALGUMAS CONSTRUÇÕES NA MÍDIA

RESUMO

Este ensaio retrata da relação simbólica que o campo esportivo tem com os processos de significação sociais, permeado pelo componente do imaginário coletivo que extravasa os limites do campo esportivo. Ainda, dissertamos sobre a relação entre mídia e esporte com processos de significações construídos a partir da lógica de produção das mídias, mas com sentidos e significados próprios, de forma a representar uma relação de interdependência contínua e processual.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: campo esportivo. construções simbólicas. mídia.

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