93 - THE "MALHA" GAME AS A LEISURE CHOICE TO THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN THE CITY OF MIGUEL PEREIRA.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the society history the search for pleasure has always been present. Although this search has been followed us, the relevant peculiarities from each age, region or culture, might make the formulation of distinct concepts, that today we relate to leisure, possible. However, until nowadays, the necessity for playing, relaxing, having fun, follows mankind in their various manifestations, even if they are cultural, religious or social. The hedonism, an outstanding characteristic from our society, specially the western society, does not demonstrate slowdown signs.

In such case, the growing of the search for leisure activities inside the modern society has been undeniable. Such fact has one of its pillars, the idea of the leisure, as Marcellino (1987) points out, where the bourgeois vision praises the antagonism between leisure and work, establishing a relation where the activities of leisure have the intention of refreshing the worker to his/her return to drudgery.

Ahead of this situation, those who oppose themselves to the reduction of his/her capacity of revenue, production of wealth, status and social prestige reduction, develop to an isolation and depression picture, in which one of the exits is the activities that allow a bigger social insertion, yonder a new tension regards to interpersonal relations diminished and/lost throughout the years.

The elderly, due the aging process, are fit in the above-mentioned characteristics and the leisure activities contribute for congregating small groups that keep themselves linked for objectives and necessities in common.

According to Theodore Mills (1970), small groups would be made of two or more people who get in contact with in order to reach certain objective and that consider such approach significant. A small group presents, in micro level, societal aspects that are amazed in various sectors of the amplest social system - for example, codes of ethics, ways of exchange, ranks of prestige, ideologies and myths. Understanding the mechanisms of internal functioning of small groups, and in determined cases its correlation with the spaces where they establish themselves, in our case it is in the cities, can help the understanding of the thought of the individual that they belong to, as the social pressures from the relation of the ones "from inside" can generate modifications in the general context of the group.

Therefore, to understand the mesh game as one of the options of leisure of the elderly inhabitants of the city of Miguel Pereira (R.J.), describing the scenario which makes this game work and its peculiarities, making the reveal of the social characteristics that has intimate relationship with traditional cheerful and sports activities possible, facilitating the perception of the influence of those traditional activities in construction of the identity of small groups, considering that the moralistic principles from the cheerful and sports activities are not only from these activities, but from values that pass by society as a hole.

The players of "malha" form small groups that have a common goal, e.g. the quarrel, the meetings and distraction, creating bonds in the participants that perpetuate the game as time goes.

In this sense, it is possible to think that the game of "malha" that happens in certain cities, as the one of our study, can be seen as a social practice one that favors the sociability bows and that gives meaning or to the proper urban space, using its devices of leisure.

According to Stigger and Silveira (2004) the cheerful and sports activities are part of the life of the city, and they gain visibility and participate actively of the urban spaces. They attract a diversified number of people from the region, of different races, creeds and socio-economic conditions who possess various reasons to be participating, putting into motion their bodies, having fun themselves, meeting after all.

Contributing with the importance of the studies on the ways of being and acting of men and women from the city, Velho (2003) detaches that the researchers of the city are more and more leaned over the studies that can explore these systems and nets of sociability.

(...) processos de construção de identidades em que o pertencimento a vários grupos, redes e círculos sociais é fenômeno básico a ser investigado e compreendido na sociedade moderno-contemporânea (ibid. p. 17-18).

In order to investigate the leisure practices of the city, it appears ethnography, as Magnani (2000) states, that is not to that one necessarily resident, from daily conviviality with the social actors, of total immersion, as Geertz (1978) used to indicate in the 70's. But, an ethnography that contemplates, observes, goes through the spaces, making an appreciated reading of its object of study. The methodological resource which he points out is the so called walk that stimulates the researcher to "caminhar, mais lento do que o do usuário e mais regular do que do passeante, deve permitir uma observação contínua e seguir o fluxo do andar e parar" (p.37). It is a systematic walk, but not a tiring one. The researcher focus on perceiving the sensorial impulses, not looking the different one, but whatever is repeated, that is "normal" for that community.

In order not to exhaust the looks in this walk, the author indicates a trajectory to be followed: to observe the scene, the social actors involved and the outside or not rules. We will make this journey going through the game of "malha".

The game of "malha" and the city of Miguel Pereira

As available bibliography, the "malha" game is from Portugal, where the people had the habit to play it in the yards of their residences and it is believed that it arrived in Brazil at the time the country was a colony. Initially it was practiced in the state of São Paulo where the inhabitants of March 25 street in São Paulo's capital after a whole day of work.

Nowadays, this game appears in other regions of the country, and it is played a lot in the serrana region of the state of Rio De Janeiro (Miguel Pereira, Paty dos Alferes, Vassouras, Paulo de Fronten etc.). It comes out as a leisure practice of the elderly who live in this city, where the game emerges and feeds the sociability bows.

1- In Brazil, from the beginning of the 70's on, there has been a discussion about the city as one field of anthropology studies. The ethnology researches were the predominant ones to less complex societies (Velho, 2003). Gradually, the studies referring to the city had been having a focus on the sociability nets. Thus, the contemporary ethnography gives us challenges so as to study situations that occur in these cities. There is not a weirdness view any longer, but a familiar one (ibid, 2003)

2- The anthropological look at the cities are not only limited in perceiving and registering certain situations that might happen in urban relations, but also study the meaning of these to certain social groups.

3- The historical evolution of Miguel Pereira is linked to the Vassouras and Paty do Alferes cities, and also to the expansion of the culture in the "Vale Fluminense do Rio Paraíba do Sul". First known as Barreiro, and then ESTIVA, the occupation of the area of Miguel Pereira had its origins in the first explorations that wanted to go over the Serra do Mar. So, these cities are closely linked to the railroads that used to transport coffee in D. Pedro II period. And the game seems to have an approximation with the railroad nets, since several of their frontiers are next to rail stations or around the rails.

4- This games that had appeared in the Serrana region are not linked to any specific institution; they happen on the city streets. However, it is worth mentioning that there is a "malha" Paulista Federation in Brazil that organizes championships in the state of São Paulo. Eventually, some players from Rio de Janeiro take part in championships organized by this federation.

In Portugal, the game of “malha” is known as chinquilho, but there are possible known variations as “fito” or “patela”. The general objective of chinquilho is to knock down the wooden “mecos” or bolts that are somehow far from the player, with the launching of ironing patelas or “malhas” . It is constituted of teams (between two or four participants) that dispute the score of points that are obtained with the falling of these bolts and/or the stop of the “malha” closer to them (Cabral, 1986).

We have found men in Miguel Pereira between the ages of 30 and 80 years playing this game, and others of different ages observing it. There are also people from distinct ages that observe the game. It is a game played at the side of the road (or parallel to the railway), that uses simple material: one steel “malha”, two wooden bolts and a cement track.

When we found the game, we walked through our direct observation through the scenes of the game, talking with its actors: the players, or to whom indirectly also participated in the scene and we kept observing its rules.

While walking over the city of Miguel Pereira, we have found two tracks of “malha”. One, which was deactivated, is in the district of Governor Portela, and another one, still in functioning, that is in the district of Barão de Javary.

The deactivated track, about ten years old, is located near the train station and the railroad museum - in a higher street where one can see all the station and that is in sufficiently precarious conditions. The track, also known as “raia de malha”, is made of cement, and in its final wall there is a drawing painted with two players, and also, in one of the walls of lateral protection, there is one poster of 1991 propaganda, tying the “malha” game with a beer manufacturer. By the track's side, there is a bar, also deactivated. Nowadays, over the old game track, one house has been constructed and the track serves as a yard for this.

The track that supplies information to our article is the one parallel to the railroad line, in the quarter of Barão de Javary. According to the player Marino, the mayor of the city Antonio Abrantes had the track constructed for the inhabitants. Before this, they used to "beat the “malha” on the ground". In this track, we talk with old players of the game, and their reports show that most of the players are formed by ex-railroad workers, or their children, and that the game fields observed were next the old railroad stations.

Mr. Armando, declares that in some streets of the city, at the time there were no sidewalks, there was a spread of games of “malha” everywhere. This happened around the decades of 60/70. Moreover, other inhabitant interviewed, Mr. Pablo, accounts that the railroad retired worker's options for leisure were very restricted: it was the soccer, the fight of rooster and later, the game of “malha”.

These spaces had been acquired like this: there was rooster fight, then they got the game of “malha” started. The storehouse used to be closed at 4.30pm and after the work hour, they used to meet and play “malha” until 8:00pm, and drink some beer everyday..

We are going back to the 50's, when these railroad workers used “malhas” made of net disks. They used to get steel plates that fixed the tracks, heat them in the forge, and later, use them in the game. As time passed, tracks of “malha” had been constructed along or next to the railroads or even in public squares.

During the sunset, the players meet to play “malha” in this track. It is rectangular, made of cement, around 30 meters long and 5 of width, covered with asbestos roofing tiles, surrounded by few trees parallel to the railway. There is no bar, chair or bench to the spectators around it. It is in good condition though; the city hall is always having it conserved.

When the players start the "training" (a term they use and it means “play”), first, they prepare the all the place destined for the game (“tabuleiro”): sweeping it, taking off the impurities that can be accumulated. After that, they spread a granulated plastic over the track, called "plastic granite" by the players so as to facilitate the slip of the “malha”. They light the only one point of existing light, whose payment is done by the players. They use the oval “malhas” (we did not see another format in this place), pass “esterina” on it (a substance that makes the best slip possible). Talking with the players, we have noticed a difficulty with the access to the “malhas”, either for its cost, or because they are made in other neighboring cities. The “malhas” they play had been donated by a former-player and they keep it themselves.

The game is of sixty points. If a bolt is knocked down it takes 10 points, if this bolt falls into the red circle, more 20 points. If the bolt is not knocked down, but the “malha” falls into the red circle, 10 points; in case they do not fall, more 5 points. The rules are agreed by the group, but it can vary anytime; it does not have necessarily championships, nor trophies or any concern with other prizes.

The actors of this game vary between the age of 30 and 80, men, workers and retired. They play it in the afternoon, when there is not too much work, and/or in weekends. The people, who generally are around the track, are the ones who are waiting to play, or only watching it. These, make comments on the moves and stimulate the ones who are playing.

The sociability net is also established in an intense way; however, the conversations are about the game that is happening at the time. They comment a friend's move, give them tips so that they play better, root for the others. They are neither worried about participating in championships in other regions nor about making trophies or ranking. Most of the times the match is in pairs and the rules are agreed by them. Pleasantry is also part this environment, moreover, there are jokes that happen with good mood and that are linked to the idea of “non-serious” (characteristic of game pointed by Huizinga (1980)). In this meaning, Mr. Eliseu comments that "It is a way of distraction, we can recreate, it is something, a sport that gives people too much fun, and we get calm. Besides, it also takes many people out of the bar's door.”

They do not possess pre-established pairs; they go forming the pairs and enrolling themselves. It is a highly informal moment where we notice the constant exchange of the participants.

A great concern of them is not to tie the game with drinking. One of the players wanted to construct a bar along the track, in order to even help with the expenses that they might have in this track. However, the majority was against. In some testimonies they highlight the enchantment they have for the game.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the individuals' lives that see like going over the years seems to be an interesting exercise. They also see their physical capacity and practices like soccer which is a cultural spread sport in our country exult, because it starts to be something difficult to achieve. Therefore, possibly that is why the “malha” game still remains in this group of activities, having its bigger incidence in regions far from the big towns, where entertainment options are in a reduced number.

Although many of the participants are less than 60 years, the game of “malha” is traditionally an activity that has its bigger acceptance among the elderly. It is important to mention that over the years the concept of oldness has been modifying significantly. In the first quarter of the 20th century a 40-years-old man was considered an old person already, as Américo Netto (1938) points out in his article "Um novo conceito de Longevidade":

(...) Na minha infância e adolescência, passadas no meio ainda patriarcal do nordeste brasileiro, constituía verdadeiro dogma da vida prática a afirmação de que uma mulher era velha aos 30 anos, como um homem também o era aos 40 (...) (ibid, p. 12).

Another interesting point is the absence of women in the practice of “malha”. This fact can be related to the existing patriarchy rooted in the society for centuries. Netto (1938) also evidences and ratifies the proposal pointed here about the responsibilities and attitudes from the age:

5- A slim metallic artifact similar to a disk.

6- Until the moment, this work had not been finished and there had been 4 visits to the track and two semi-structured interviews so far.

7- The “malha” track has an inauguration board that indicates the Major that has built it and the date: May, 1993.

8- Tabuleiro: a board where the game takes place

(...) Passar dos 30 anos era para as mulheres o dever iniludível de iniciar uma série de renúncias, de adotar um padrão de vida reduzida materialmente evidente pelo imperioso costume de usar trajes e modos severos (ibid. p 12).

The ethnography appears in this study as efficient tool in the attempt to elucidate the questions that involve the game in the city of Miguel Pereira. Herewith, answers had appeared during the article and indicate the importance of this activity in the quotidian of a its practitioners, making possible an increase on the sociability, on the leisure and also an occupation for many retired people who use the "malha" as a powerful instrument of distraction, and this is so important in this phase of life, in which the removal from society due to the segregation proceeding from the reduction of the production power, takes many elderly to accent its diseases and/or possibly to develop others.

The historical evolution of Miguel Pereira, as it has already been said, is linked to the expansion of the coffee culture in the state of Rio de Janeiro valley of the Paraíba do Sul River. Therefore, it is suspected that the "malha" game has a relation with the railroad and the reasons are not clear enough. The people interviewed show evidenced indication that the retired railroaders used to play "malha" by the side of the railroad, ratifying the relation here stated.

The evolution and the solicitude of the elderly, possibly collaborate with social transformations in favor of them. Laws as nº 8842/94 that refers to the elderly national politics, mentioning governmental directions in the field of health, acting to prevention, promoting, protecting and recovering the health of the elderly, because of the programs of leisure and physical activities, contribute for the improvement of the quality of life of the third age and they stimulate its participation in the community (Brazil /National Congress /law nº 8842/94).

Due to these concerns, the physical education, the sport and the leisure have been pointed as important vehicles for the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly. It guides the governmental entities; through its public politics develop activities that focus on reaching these objectives. Perhaps, that is because the city hall of Miguel Pereira gives attention to the conservation of the track of "malha" in the quarter of Barão de Javary, linking the game to the current necessities of the elderly.

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THE "MALHA" GAME AS A LEISURE CHOICE TO THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN THE CITY OF MIGUEL PEREIRA.

ABSTRACT

The current study wishes to comprehend the "malha" game as one of the leisure choices to the elderly residents in the city of Miguel Pereira (RJ), describing the scenario which makes this game work and its peculiarities, making the reveal of the social characteristics that has intimate relationship with traditional cheerful and sports activities possible, facilitating the perception of the influence of those traditional activities in construction of the identity of small groups, considering that the moralistic principles from the cheerful and sports activities are not only from these activities, but from values that pass by society as a hole. The players of "malha" form small groups that have a common goal, e.g. the quarrel, the meetings and distraction, creating bonds in the participants that perpetuate the game as time goes. The ethnography appears in this study as an effective tool in the attempt to elucidate the questions that involves the game in the cited region. Herewith, during this article, answers shall arise and give clues of the importance of this activity in its players' quotidian, making a sociability and leisure rising possible, and an occupation to the retired people who use the "malha" game as a powerful instrument for distraction. This seems to be an important period of life when there is a social removal due the segregation deriving from decrease of production power. It makes several elderly stress their diseases and/or develop others. Due to these worries, the physical education, the sport and leisure are now seen as important means to the upgrading of the quality of elderly lives. This may take government entities to develop activities to reach those aims through their public policies.

Key words: "Malha" game elderly city

LE JEU DU PALET COMME OPTION DE LOISIR DES PERSONNES AGEES HABITANTS DE LA VILLE DE MIGUEL PEREIRA (RIO DE JANEIRO)

Résumé

La présente étude essaie de comprendre le jeu du palet comme une des options de loisir des personnes âgées de la ville de Miguel Pereira (Rio de Janeiro), en y décrivant le scénario qui donne vie au jeu ainsi que ses particularités, et permettant de révéler des caractéristiques sociales qui ont un rapport intime avec les activités traditionnelles ludiques et sportives, en facilitant la perception de leur influence dans la construction d'identité de petits groupes, compte tenu que la morale des activités ludiques et sportives n'est pas spécifique de ces activités, mais s'applique aux valeurs qui passent dans cette société comme un tout. Les joueurs de palet forment des petits groupes ayant des buts en commun, tels que, par exemple, la dispute, les rencontres et les distractions, créeant chez les participants des liens qui perpétuent le jeu au cours du temps. L'ethnographie apparaît dans cette étude comme un outil efficace pour essayer d'élucider les questions qui concernent le jeu de palet dans cette région. Ainsi, dans cet article, des réponses sont apparues et donnent des indications quant à l'importance de cette activité dans le quotidien de ses praticants, en leur permettant une augmentation de la sociabilité, du loisir et une occupation pour des nombreux retraités qui se servent du palet comme un puissant outil de distraction, si important dans cette étape de la vie, où l'éloignement social dû à la ségrégation provenant de la diminution du pouvoir de production, mène plusieurs personnes âgées à accentuer leurs blessures e/ou, possiblement, à en développer d'autres. En raison de ces soucis, on a commencé à considérer l'activité physique, le sport et le loisir comme des véhicules

importants pour l'accomplissement de la qualité de vie des personnes âgées, ce qui a mené les entités gouvernamentales, à travers leurs politiques publiques, à développer des activités, visant à atteindre ces objectifs.
Mots-Clef : Jeu du Palet Personnes Âgées- Ville.

EL JUEGO DE BARRA COMO OPCIÓN DE ENTRETENIMIENTO PARA ANCIANOS QUE VIVEN EN LA CIUDAD DE MIGUEL PEREIRA (RJ, Brasil)

RESUMEN

El presente estudio busca comprender el juego de barra como una de las opciones de diversión para ancianos de la ciudad de Miguel Pereira (RJ, Brasil). Se describe el escenario que le da vida al juego, bien como sus peculiaridades, lo que posibilita la revelación de rasgos sociales que mantienen relación íntima con tradicionales actividades lúdico-deportivas. Además, facilita la percepción de la influencia de estas actividades en la construcción de la identidad de pequeños grupos, pues se considera que los valores morales de las actividades mencionadas no sólo les especifican, como también le atraviesan a la sociedad como un todo. Los jugadores de barra se constituyen en pequeños grupos que tienen como objetivos comunes, por ejemplo, la disputa, los encuentros y el pasatiempo, elementos que generan en los participantes anhelos que eternizan el juego al largo del tiempo. En esta investigación, la etnografía aparece como herramienta eficaz para el intento de aclarar las cuestiones abarcadas por el juego de barra en esta región. Así, durante la elaboración de este ensayo, surgieron respuestas que enseñan indicios de la importancia de esta práctica en la vida cotidiana de sus participantes, pues les posibilita un crecimiento en la sociabilidad y en el entretenimiento, así como representa una ocupación para muchos jubilados, que se utilizan del juego como un poderoso instrumento de distracción, muy importante en esta fase de sus vidas, en la que el aislamiento social - a causa de la segregación consecuente de la reducción de su productividad económica - lleva muchos a poner en relieve sus dificultades o, posiblemente, a provocar otras. En virtud de estas preocupaciones, la Educación Física, el deporte y el entretenimiento se señalan como vehículos para la mejora de la cualidad de vida de los mayores. De este modo, esto conduce varias entidades gubernamentales, por medio de políticas públicas, a desarrollar actividades que vengan a lograr tales objetivos.
Palabras claves: juego de barra - ancianos ciudad

O JOGO DE MALHA COMO OPÇÃO DE LAZER DE IDOSOS MORADORES DA CIDADE DE MIGUEL PEREIRA (R.J.)

Resumo

O presente estudo busca compreender o jogo de malha como uma das opções de lazer de idosos da cidade de Miguel Pereira (R.J.), descrevendo o cenário que dá vida ao jogo e suas peculiaridades, possibilitando o desvelar de características sociais que mantém intima relação com atividades tradicionais lúdico-esportivas, facilitando a percepção da influência destas na construção de identidade de pequenos grupos, considerando que a moral das atividades lúdico-esportivas não é específica destas atividades, e sim de valores que perpassam a sociedade como um todo. Os jogadores de malha formam pequenos grupos que têm objetivos em comum como, por exemplo, a disputa, os encontros e a distração, gerando nos participantes elos que perpetuam o jogo ao longo do tempo. A etnografia aparece nesse estudo como ferramenta eficaz na tentativa de elucidar as questões que envolvem o jogo de malha nesta região. Com isso, durante o artigo, respostas surgiram e dão indícios da importância desta atividade no cotidiano dos seus praticantes, possibilitando um aumento da sociabilidade, do lazer e uma ocupação para muitos aposentados que se utilizam da malha como um poderoso instrumento de distração, tão importante nessa fase da vida, onde o afastamento social devido a segregação proveniente da diminuição do poder de produção, leva muitos idosos a acentuar suas mazelas e/ou possivelmente desenvolver outras. Em virtude dessas preocupações, a educação física, o desporto e o lazer passaram a ser apontados como importantes veículos para o aprimoramento da qualidade de vida do idoso, levando com isso a entidades governamentais, através de suas políticas públicas, a desenvolverem atividades que venham a atingir tais objetivos
Palavras Chave : Jogo de malha Idosos- Cidade