**Integration and sport: a comparison of urban strategies in Holland and Italy**

This article compares the inclusion strategies of Holland and Italy considering both an historical point of view and the effects of these policies at urban level, paying particular regard to the importance of sport activities in the integration of migrants in urban communities.
The article is a direct result of interviews and a research recently carried out in The Hague, Amsterdam and Rome and it shows the different approaches taken at National and local level to deal with problems related to integration. In particular, the experience of Dutch cities like The Hague shows how local policies have changed over time as the politcal framework itself has changed. Although in the 1970’s, when the first immigrant policies emerged, migrants from Morocco and former Dutch Colonies were expected to be temporarly residents, in fact a more stable settlment developed forcing the local authorities to adapt both their reception and integration policies. By the 1990’s a plurality of services were being offerd to migrants, such as social housing and language and integration cuorses. These activities have been threatened in recent years by the deteriorating economic situation but, more than this, by a change in the political situation, with the result that these policies are perceived as a waste of money of no social value for the urban community.
 Despite this, sport activities aimed at integration have been growing in popularity in recent years, thanks to the activities of foundations formed by former sport champions, and by the major football clubs, that often sponsor them with positive results in deprived areas of cities where they are based.
By contrast, in Italy the migrant situation has always been dealt with in a different way, following a less structered framework, often responding to emergency situations. Starting in the early 1990s, Rome faced a massive arrival of migrants from the Horn of Africa, Albania and Afghanistan setting up the first reception centers with the help of NGOs and Catholic associations. Over the years, only some Italian regions have adeptod structured policies and integration systems at urban level to meet the needs of these newscomers but in Rome, as well as in other big cities, the local authorities have build an effective system just to react to emergencies but not to provide a stable integration framework.
Sport has also played a part in integration processes in Italy, although inserted in a less structured strategy of integration. In particular refugees, asylum seekers and people coming from specific communities were most involved in these projects. An example is the Cricket association formed by Indians and Pakistanis in Rome, in cooperation with the residents of the multicultural area around Piazza Vittorio. Furthermore, the creation of multiethnic football teams gave impetus to the creation of informal tournaments (like the Mundialido) involving thousands of amateurs, producing positive effects on integration in their urban communities.

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