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Bodies on the Border: Memories of Sporting Istrian and Dalmatian Exiles between Narratives and Social Reality

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Abstract

This contribution intends to investigate an issue that, from a sociological point of view, still appears incomplete. It is about the exile of Italians from Istria and Dalmatia (after the Second World War until the 1970s), their identity construction between history and memory, and their redemption through sport. The relationship between identity and memory is reinterpreted through the lens of sport, which has long been recognized as a "total social fact" (in terms of M. Mauss, 1950). It is a privileged point of view for interpreting, through sociological categories, the single and plural identities of Dalmatian and Istrian exiles, whose events still constitute a collective memory "enigma". The connection between sport, memory, and territory, with particular reference to Friuli Venezia Giulia region (Italy), becomes a "border identity narrative", where the ways of feeling and defending one's identity from exile also emerge through the positive value of sporty life. Therefore, with a careful look at the body and sports performance, we want to deepen the narrative of migrants and sporting border identity - the Istrian-Dalmatian exodus - to provide an additional level of observation and analysis of memory, beyond the story or words.

Keywords: Memory, Exile, Istrian-Dalmatian people, Sport.

1. The "Forgotten" Exodus: the strength of social memory

Collective memory is a fluid, polysemous, and all too abused concept in an era, such as the current one, in which all is too dedicated to hyper-memorialization as Gilles Lipovetsky argues (2004, p. 124) observing specifically the European context. The drift of an era dedicated to commemorating is rather a de-contextualization of events and often a flattening of the same, which risks being separated from historical reality or confused in the methodological reconstruction. But at the same time, memory is a powerful political tool: in the process of selecting memory/forgetting it can become useful for arbitrary purposes and therefore, as Pocecco (2011) points out, a sort of "transfigured" memory.

It is also true, however, that the social force of memory is not only an instrument of sociological imagination (in terms of Mills, 1959) and as such with a predictive capacity; but it is at the same time agency, i.e. action capable of bringing out the voice of social subjectivities on the global scene - vulnerable subjects - today especially migrants, exiles, refugees and asylum seekers to whose images we are now accustomed, almost 'anesthetized' by the construction of 'media memory'. The media activate processes of memory selection and construction, interpret facts and subjects in the public arena, and disseminate public and private stories... their contribution in this sense is even more relevant when referring to 'denied' or in a certain sense unexpressed, almost 'forgotten' memories.

We can consider that, in a certain sense, media play the role of 'amplifiers' of a community, where they bring to the surface the motivations for which a community decides to be able (or have to) recall traumatic facts of a past or present condition of suffering.

This means "knowing how to inscribe in the public discourse the traumas that have indelibly marked identity" (Tota, 2018, p. 15) by questioning the reciprocal interrelationships between past, present, and future of a "modern exodus" (Gibbs, 2015: 4) that has characterized the history of Europe and Italy in particular in the years after the Second World War.

Not only the Holocaust but other wartime and political crimes whose suffering has now been relegated to the past become a collective interest and trajectory for building the future. It is also a question of redrawing power relations, where marginal narratives (that of people exiled from their homeland as in this case) implement a reworking of the meanings of the past that becomes an essential ingredient of the collective memory of the present. Doing so, the sociological gaze is interested in the concept of exile not only in quantitative terms but also in its effects on the constitution of collective and individual identity processes. In particular, in the face of the many victims of wars and migrations from one country to another, it seems useful to try to understand the paths through which these subjects have the right to forget, while the community must remember (Tota, 2018). Indeed, the role of public memory, as the memory studies perspective has long argued, is also to focus on so-called memory work, i.e. "the set of processes to which civil society and public institutions are called upon to contribute when a traumatic and controversial past requires to be collectively re-elaborated" (Ibid., p. 17).

This re-elaborative capacity of collective memory is well suited to describing an issue that is still significant in Italy, and even more so in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region (North East), regarding the 'denied' memory of Italian exiles from Istria, Dalmatia, and Fiume. The collective memory of this exodus is not a 'dormant' memory, covered by the oblivion of the past, but has to do - even today - with the present, in search of a future. The exodus has been recounted, and the exiles have spoken, but too often they have not been heard. An important research work edited by Gasparini, Del Zotto, and Pocecco (2008), had already highlighted the plural narration at the basis of this exodus, giving voice, through a comparative quantitative-qualitative survey between Italy, Canada, and Argentina, to the exiles - that is, those who lived in exile from Italy.

Within this framework, one can trace the ideas and hypotheses that guided our work, which adopts a sociological perspective on the theme of exodus and exile and reaffirms its extremely topical character, capable of revealing collective memory's symbolic and factual significance. Through the sociological gaze, it is possible to look at the phenomenon from afar, rethink categories and create models. In other words, it is possible to re-actualize the past, re-read the present and imagine the future. This work specifically aims to provide an interpretative analysis of the autobiographical narratives (memoirs) of Dalmatian and Istrian exiles (first and second generation) who found in the practice of sport a possibility of identity redemption. This type of narration illustrates a different symbolic dimension: «that of those who flee because they are pursued by human persecution or by fate» (Colombo, 2018: 28). The exile's status opens up a different gaze for observation and knowledge, less tied to stereotypes and more open to acceptance.

Starting from the historical events that characterized the so-called "Julian Dalmatian exodus" in Italy (par. 2, 3), we will present the results of a qualitative investigation (par. 4) conducted through the examination of secondary sources (written, iconic, and media), texts, and informal interviews with exiles sports (both Dalmatians and Istrians). The exploratory purpose was aimed at grasping and interpreting the changes that have influenced the identity of individuals and groups, through forms of sporting habitus typical of migrant communities. People, communities, and forms of sporting aggregation can redefine the idea of borders (internal/external, physical/mental) and the sense of community rooted in the memory of the lost homeland, modifying the ability to relocate new social networks and belonging. From the analysis of the collected material (work in progress), the traits of an almost "transfigured" collective memory emerge, yet significant towards the subjects under investigation, whose exodus is not at all a "dormant" representation but rather a request for redemption and future.

What is/was the value of sport for Istrian Dalmatian exiles? The comparison between first and second-generation subjects shows a double "identity baggage" - that of one's origins and that of arrival (Dal Lago, 2004) which, precisely in practicing sport, traces the common thread of the following aspects: the transmission of exodus memory; the identity of the sporting body; last, but not least, the resistance of a historical intergenerational sporting continuity.

2. Beyond the numbers: the Julian Dalmatian Exodus between History and Memory

The Julian Dalmatian exodus, also known as the Istrian exodus, is a historical event consisting of the forced emigration of the majority of Italian nationals and Italian-speaking citizens from Venezia Giulia (including Eastern Friuli, Istria and Kvarner) and Dalmatia, as well as a substantial number of Italian citizens (or who had been until shortly before) of mixed nationality, Slovenian and Croatian, which occurred starting from the end of the Second World War (1945) and in the following decade. It is estimated that the Italian Julians (particularly Istrians and Fiumans) and Dalmatians who emigrated from their homelands amount to between 250,000 and 350,000 people (Pupo, 2005). The other being ethnic Slovenes, Croats, and Istro-Romanians, who chose to maintain Italian citizenship) leaving the areas in the aftermath of the conflict. From sinkholes to exodus: an open wound for the history of Italy, for "Italians who chose to be so twice" and who reaffirmed their identity, in the name of an ethnic choice which was above all a cultural choice. From citizens who became refugees, they faced the odyssey of exile with no return that led them to leave Istria, Fiume, Zara, Pula for a homeland that too often proved to be a stepmother or for distant lands: Australia, Canada, Argentina, South Africa

The phenomenon, following the exterminations known as the "sinkhole massacres", generally involved all those who distrusted the new Yugoslav communist government of Josip Broz Tito and was particularly relevant in Istria and in the Kvarner area, where entire villages and towns were emptied of their inhabitants. All the territories ceded by Italy to Yugoslavia with the Treaty of Paris (1947) and Dalmatia, where the Italian Dalmatians lived, were involved in the exile. The massacres of the sinkholes and the Julian-Dalmatian exodus are remembered by the Day of Remembrance, an Italian national civil solemnity celebrated on February 10 each year.

As Pupo (2005, p. 13) states, it was not a large-scale phenomenon - realistic figures indicate between 250 and 350 thousand individuals from 1947 to 1969 "compared to the total population of the time - and this made it go unnoticed among the thousand post-war misfortunes, but... what matters is that almost all of the Italian national component residing in the territories that passed to the former Yugoslavia has disappeared".

Moreover, Dal Lago (2004) argues that: "If you want to understand something about migrants (*exiles, refugees*) - why they migrate, how they migrate and above all how they live when they arrive in the destination society - don't rely too much on numbers, or at least not exclusively, because we are faced with human beings who not only stake their entire existence, thanks to the fact that they have left one country to move to another, but also carry on their shoulders, so to speak, two burdens: that of society they have abandoned, and that of the society in which they seek to catch up and stop".

In this sense, observing specific "border" territories means reflecting on "that singular Mediterranean Central Europe that Dalmatia had been" as Enzo Bettiza wrote in his book "Exils" (1999, p. 7), and on the culture of the exodus that characterized a time "before" and a time "after". An exodus that cannot be fully understood except as a plot of individual biographies, where the common rationality is given by the experience of exile. In particular, the experience of the exiles of Istria and Dalmatia, the construction of identity between history and memory, and their redemption through sport represent a kind (and innovative) social space in which memory (individual and collective) became the protagonist of a new story connected not only to emotion but rather to the will to act.

3. The Exodus and the Ransom: Successful Athletes from Dalmatia

The relationship between identity and memory is re-read here through a litmus test such as sport, long recognized as a "total social fact" (Mauss, 1950), and at the same time a privileged lens for interpreting single and plural identities through sociological categories of the Dalmatian and Istrian exiles, whose events still today constitute an "enigma" of the collective memory.

The relationship between sport, memory, and territory with particular reference to Friuli Venezia Giulia, takes on the dimension of a "narrative of border identity", where the ways of feeling and defending one's identity as exiles also pass through the affirmation of body and sporting success. Indeed, it is with the "eyes of the body" that we intend to investigate the narration of a migrant and borderline sporting identity, i.e. the

Istrian-Dalmatian exodus, to provide a further level of observation and analysis of memory, beyond the history of the word.

The biographies of some great successful athletes from international competitions (i.e. Olympics Games) confirm this research path. To this end, we would like to mention some famous athletes born in these territories who experienced the exodus while finding a chance to overcome the trauma they experienced in their sporting feats.

Nino Benvenuti (born Isola d'Istria April 26, 1938), boxing would have been his opportunity for redemption. Twice European champion as well as a gold medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics, he will be world Super Welter champion first and Middleweight champion later (1967-1970). *"They kicked me out of my country when I was thirteen. In the town where I was born, the only writings still in Italian are in the cemetery. A few old fishermen down at the port still speak my language. Now and then I go back there to bring flowers to the graves of my loved ones"*.

Ottavio Missoni (born in 1921, Ragusa-Zara until 1941). In 1935 he wore the blue shirt, in the 400m dash and 400m hurdles specialty. In his career, he won eight national titles. After the Second World War, he participated in the London Olympics, finishing in sixth place in the final of the 400m hurdles and running as second fractions in the batteries of the 4×400m relay.

Abdon Pamich escaped with his brother from Fiume in 1947, moved to Udine, and then to a refugee camp in Novara. After a year he was reunited with his father who in the meantime had found work in Genoa. Pamich has always been committed to preserving the historical memory of the Julian-Dalmatian community in Italy and in particular in Rome, also as a member of the Fiuman Studies Society. He participated in 50 km walk at the Olympic Games. He won the bronze medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics and the gold medal at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the role of Istrian sportswomen who were ahead of their time in asserting women's rights in sport. Daring women paved the way by practicing certain sea sports on par with their male colleagues, achieving many successes. This is the case, for example, of the 'Istrian women competing' immortalized at the 'Istrianen Frauen Regatta' in the German-language magazine *Illustrierte Zeitung* of 16 December 1971. Or of the Rijeka-born Elda Togici, who in 1920 also established herself in Italy, after the Great War, in swimming described in the national press as a 'model of stylistic perfection' (Ibid.).

Among the second-generation sportswomen, it is also worth mentioning Margherita Granbassi (born 1 September 1979 in Trieste, her family is of Istrian Pisan exile origin), a former Italian fencer, a specialist in foil. She won two Olympic bronze medals at the 2008 Games in both the individual and team events.

4. What relationship between sport, memory, and territory? An "exploratory" study

The relationship between sport, memory, and territory, with particular reference to the Friuli Venezia Giulia region (in the North of Italy), has been investigated starting from the question: *What is/was the value of sports practices for Istrian Dalmatian exiles belonging to different generations?*

Through the examination of secondary sources (written, iconic, media), texts, and informal interviews with Istrian, Fiuman, and Dalmatian sporting exiles, this exploratory study has attempted to grasp and interpret the changes that influenced the identity of individuals and groups as well as some forms of sporting *habitus* characteristic of migrant communities. Can individuals, communities, and approaches of sporting aggregation redefine the idea of borders (internal/external, physical/mental, static/mobile)? Are these subjects able to modify the sense of community rooted in the memory of the lost homeland, adapting one's ability to relocate to new social networks and sense of belonging?

This ability implies denotative and connotative aspects of the terms¹. If, on one hand, the term *sporting exile* is meant in an objective, denotative sense, referring to someone who has left one's homeland and

¹ In linguistics, the term *denotative* indicates objectivity while *connotative* indicates subjectivity and in-depth knowledge. *Denotative* is the meaning of a word (in this case e.g. *Istrian exile*, which comes from...), while *connotative* is the figurative translated meaning that gives words nuances of meaning. The semantic field characterizes them in a particular way (e.g. *sporting exiles* to compete in a foreign team, for economic reasons, political ideology, fleeing bombing, etc.) attributing a subjective emotional value to the words. On the other hand, in the field of social research,

practices sport, on the other hand, in a connotative sense the lexeme, i.e. the image evoked by sporting exiles from Istria Dalmatia and Kvarner, identifies an individual who could be defined as in the time of the Latins *citius, altius, fortius*², a person endowed with physical prowess, civic sense, and community. In this sense, the characteristics of the Istrian, Dalmatian, and Fiuman exiles can be summarized as follows: openness to relationships between people, marked sociability, willingness to collaborate and to "look ahead", predisposition to innovation, and initiative capacity. Furthermore, a profound "Italianess" emerges expressed in the determination and willingness to go into exile while retaining one's language and culture, and by the "cruel paradox" of being politically labeled and repudiated in their identity, an identity for which they had finally decided to leave their homeland (Pupo, 2005).

The collection of biographical narratives is therefore useful for the emergence of a specific narrative understood both as knowledge and as communication, and thus as a tool for social change (Czarniawska, 2004). It is a narrative useful for the construction of collective memory as indicated by Halbwachs (1950) and Assmann (2006) who consider collective memory as a social construct that emerges from a group with a limited function in time and space, and which is unable to become autonomous from individual memories and their limits. In this sense it is a concrete memory concerning identity, i.e. it constructs group membership based on the common memory of a founding past (Bartoletti, 2007).

The study carried out shows that the identity element considered fundamental by all the interviewees is the history of the exiles, the commonality of memories, and the life lived transfigured into epos.

4.1 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The operative concept of collective memory does not coincide with the history of the exodus but is the result of constant re-elaborations by individuals and the community. In specific, the connection between memory, identity, and territory is most evident in the bond, in the relationship between generations. For this reason, we tried to bring out the identity and memory of the Istrian and Dalmatian exodus by interviewing two generations of exiles:

- 1) first-generation exiles, for whom the exodus experienced as an event-breakthrough in the first person. Following Pocco (2008, p. 22) "remains present in everyday experiences in terms of customs, habits and linguistic constructs, capable of re-emerging in forms of explanation-fulfillment of their existence in the most diverse contexts", imbued with emotions in memory;
- 2) second-generation exiles, mindful of a past experienced by their fathers or relatives, without having direct experience of it, whose knowledge depends on whether or not their fathers are willing to narrate or remove it (*ibid.*).

For this reason, this study has tried to highlight the following aspects:

- a) the sense of individual sporting and collective history; "before and after" in an exile's identity path;
- b) the perception of the rupture event – The Exodus - which determines a trauma and the power of collective memory supported by sporting feats, i.e. redemption through sport.

From a methodological point of view, we followed Marradi (2004, p. 24) when he writes "dealing with methodology means keeping oneself in the continuous dialectical tension between two poles of a "continuum". In this sense, in our case, it is not a question of detecting quantitative aspects of the phenomenon, but rather of exploring the field (also semantic) of the context. Therefore, it conceptually opted to start an exploratory phase hoping for a subsequent development of studies on the subject.

Overcoming the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy, already acquired in the methodological debate, we started from the search for secondary sources on the themes of the exodus and the memory of sports exiles. The attempt was to detect the aspects of daily life related to sport, to then favor an approach consistent with the purpose of the study, in the relationship between reality, the sphere of thought, and language. In this sense, the investigation was conducted by placing oneself 'on the side of the subject', noting the experience

Marradi (2004) has highlighted the essence of a concept by defining it as a "non-indivisible unity" for which the set of aspects of a concept constitutes the *intention* and its *extension* is given by the set of referents.

² The expression derives from the motion adopted by the International Olympic Committee in 1894, first used at the 1924 Paris Olympics, proposed by Pierre de Coubertin and devised by French clergyman Henri Didon.

of 'transit or suspension' in paths of exile, as categories of meaning and unprecedented representations of a path with an uncertain outcome (Mangone, Russo 2020).

Following the work edited by Gasparini, Del Zotto, Pocecco (2008) "Exiles in Italy" where the Istrian Dalmatian exodus was analyzed, we noticed that among the many elements considered (music, art, literature, fairy tales, and legends, cuisine), sport had not been taken into consideration.

In order to obtain information as useful as possible for the purposes of the research, we also submitted a questionnaire, considering it part of the interview in order to make "the typology of investigative tools more organic" (Bichi, 2002, p. 18). Using the form of a semi-structured interview of a qualitative nature, leaving the answers open, we tried to obtain partially standardized information useful in the context of discovery and justification. This modality facilitated the interview with the interviewees, who were able to express their status as exiles and bring back their memories in a natural conversation open to the free narration of memory.

In short, secondary sources were analyzed, then the standard questionnaire form and the semi-structured interview were used for all the interviewees, plus a biographical interview form. In doing so, the three characteristics of the interview (standardization, directivity, structuring) were modulated for the study taking into account the instrumental complexity of the interview (Ibidem) and the topics investigated. At an operational level, we adopted a methodology typical of the initial stages of an innovative field of research, in order to provide «a greater understanding of problems from within... [and] favor the discovery of connections between phenomena» (Delli Zotti, 1997, p. 42).

Therefore, the content of the 16 interviews carried out in spring 2022 was gathered and analyzed. It should be noted that this number is considered as "substantive" representativeness of the phenomenon observed, with the aim of "covering" the variety of interlocutors, capturing what is of significant interest to the research topic (Corbetta, 2003).

The interviews were conducted with qualified witnesses (first and second-generation exiles), both male and female, all of whom were sports exiles. The interviewees originated from the territories of Istria, Dalmatia, and Rijeka, with the following distribution: Krk (Krk), Zadar (Zadar), Rovinj (Rovinj), Pazin (Pazin), Svetvinčenat (Svetvinčenat), Izola (Izola), Cres (Cres), Pula (Pula). The age of the first generation belongs to 1929-1949; the second one is 1957-1966.

Regarding the sports played by the interviewees or their relatives were several: sailing, swimming, decathlon, multiple events, international sailing judge, rowing, basketball, tennis, and mountaineering. The main dimensions investigated were: the Image, the Exodus, the Identity, and the associations, to obtain the required information to place the narratives in the everyday life context of the people interviewed. In addition, sports value and memory were investigated in the narratives of some Istrian, Julian, and Dalmatian exiles in FVG as a tool of social redemption. The main purpose was in fact to detect attitudes, thoughts, opinions, and memories of the compared generations in relation to the exodus and their historical memory as sportsmen or in remembering the values that sport has and represents in the redemption of the condition of migrants. The structure of the interview was based on the following dimensions about which the interviewees were asked the questions in the same order, in each case letting them free to express themselves in their narrative:

- Biographical data
- The image
- The Exodus
- The identity of sportspeople in the family and community
- Sporting and non-sporting organizations
- Memory

With specific regard to sports dimensions, several questions were related to the following aspects: the practice of exercise and/or sports activities (of the respondents and/or their parents); the memory and knowledge of famous sports personalities or exiled sportsmen and women; the type of sport or physical activity practiced; physical appearance and motor skills; membership in sporting associations; places of sport and physical activity; characteristics of the natural environment and its influence on sporting practice; the importance of sport and exercise in daily life.

4.2 The Exiles' Voice: comparing generations

The first dimension that emerged relates to the role of family, community, and origin area. The first-generation exiles, who experienced the exodus firsthand, were asked to rewind their memories and describe life in their home countries. In particular, they were asked to focus on nature and motor activities practiced in their environment (walking, swimming, hiking, etc.) which characterized their own family and community life. The second-generation exiles born in exile were asked about the importance they attach to remembering the places of origin of family members. Finally, they were asked to make a judgment on the continuity of memory and recall in subsequent generations.

The content analysis shows the main categories that emerged in the interview confirm the relationship between sports and everyday life. In families where the sport is practiced by parents, it is also practiced among the children (even when they are grown up). Education before the exodus was based on a form of personal hygiene that provided for a healthy life in the open air, walks, baths, and daily excursions even in harsh and variable climatic conditions such as those typical of marine or Karst environments. The second-generation exiles in turn received and passed on to their children a sports education characterized by rigor and love for nature (camping, outdoor games, ..), physical activities in a natural environment (walks in the mountains, swimming,..), and the practice of sports, including competitive ones, mainly related to the sea (swimming, sailing, fishing, rowing).

About the community and the organizations they belong to, it was observed that almost all of the interviewees were not members of associations of exiles, nor were their parents. Instead, they are members of sports associations and attend sports environments. Their friends play sports as if to underline the transversality and particularity of being a sportsman compared to other interests and identities.

The fundamental role of community, associations, or sports groups to which they belong is clear, which the first-generation exiles, in particular, helped to found and continue to attend assiduously. This is the case of the Oscar Cosulich Sailing Club and the historic sports club the historic club most often mentioned by interviewees: the 'C.R.D.A- Cantieri Riuniti Dell'Adriatico', which contributed in the last century to create a community in Monfalcone with access to a variety of services (social housing, housing for executives in the Panzano district of Monfalcone (Gorizia); a theater frescoed by Vito Timmel; the gymnasium where "*males could do gymnastics with poles and ropes, and females could do rhythmic gymnastics*" (Int. n. 39. As for hygiene, it is reported that "*the shower was done by going to a special establishment once a week with a token of 50 cents*" (Int. n. 5).

Over time the team of CRDA players was formed, whose names of athletes to remember are Cergoli, Gratton, and Morin. Some of the interviewees on this issue also mention the Pietas Julia club, which today is based in Sistiana (Ts) and, by its 132 years of life, can boast of being the only club founded in Istria whose activity has continued uninterruptedly, despite the bitter vicissitudes of the second post-war period and the abandonment of Pula.

The role of women also appears to be decisive, free to practice sport in times when it was not taken for granted. One subject declares that "*in addition to uncle Carletto, who was the sportiest of the family, his daughter Livia also took part in sailing competitions with 4.20 boats, together with her cousin Fulvia*" (Int. n. 4). He also recounts that one day the daring cousins got lost in the strong bora wind in the Gulf of Muggia and had to be rescued by rescue workers.

From the family stories of the interviewees arises a rigorous education, based on rules, honesty, and respect, for which the physical characteristics of exiled people, in addition to having always been used to facing a harsh nature (the bora wind, the rocky coast, the sea) tempered their tenacity and desire for redemption, and success and sport were a direct consequence. However, it was very important to be active, and everything related to sports was always promoted both in their origin families and with their children. Everyone in the family was a sportsman and the community they frequented was a sports community.

Another important dimension discussed is related to venues. "*As we boarded the steamer in 1947, we thought we would never return, saying goodbye to our dear friends on the quay...*" (Int. n. 7). The places of origin, Istria, Croatia, and Dalmatia are currently frequented by second-generation exiles generally for tourism and family habit, while for parents or the first generation, there is/was a strong need to come back to those lands to maintain contact, sometimes emotionally painful, with their roots. One interviewee

remembers that her father had many photos of his homeland (Istria Island) posted on the walls of the house and in the office.

The role of the natural environment in the everyday life of both generations emerges strongly. For the elderly, the memory of grandparents or relatives who traveled by sea or fished and the habit of living in the open air *"we went for walks with grandma every day"* (Int. n. 11); for the younger generation, memories of family members' places of origin include holidays and 'the beautiful garden in the house where we climbed trees without adults paying attention'; or Sundays in spring when, as boyfriends or with the whole family, we went to the heights behind the village. One interviewee recalls that there was a tradition on Easter Monday: *"Andemo in Siana"* (Int. n. 13), which was a typical phrase in the local dialect. The Bosco Siana Park is a forest located a few kilometers from Pula, a favorite spot even today for many hikers and tourists. In the past it was called the 'Imperial Forest' (Kaiserwald) because under the Habsburg Empire, it served as a rest and recreation ground for Austro-Hungarian soldiers and lords. For the first generation of exiles, the memory of the places they left behind is always poignant and words that praise the beauty of their homeland such as *"beautiful landscape, beaches with crystal-clear water, coastline protected by pine forests, breathtaking views' frequently"* (Int. n. 8) recur. For the children of exiles, healthy living is therefore something naturally introjected, almost a family style for which free time is spent in close contact with nature without forgetting the love of culture, music art, and cuisine.

On the other hand, while the importance of the natural environment is emphasized by everybody (*"We were always outdoors, in a natural environment"* Int. n. 2) there are generally no memories of sports facilities or codified sports before the exodus. There were no arranged facilities, only wonderful nature as *"the primary need at that time was subsistence"* (Int. n. 5) as a first-generation exile, born in 1929, puts it. He recounts how in his youth, given the difficult economic conditions of the population, *"you didn't have shoes but wooden clogs, you didn't really play 'sport' but took part in free games, such as football with a 'ball made of rags. We swam and played in nature and when he went on holiday to Rovinj climbed up the trees"* (Int. n. 9). A second-generation interviewee, conversely, speaks of the family's habit of returning to their places of origin on the coast for the summer holidays and that *"there were water polo courts in the sea whereas there still were not any here"* (Int. n. 15).

Concerning the concept of identity, the first generation affirms, that the characteristics that enabled the Istrian-Julian-Dalmatian people to cope with the exodus were their physical ones, their tenacity, but also the culture of the people of the littoral, which has its historical roots in the Venetian republic with its arts, language and music cultivation. Generally, second-generation interviewees do not identify and have no specific memories of the identity of the Istrian sports communities. However, they all recognize certain salient features of the exile population and a probable Istrian identity that characterizes Istrian sporting exiles: tenacity, physical appearance, *'they are tall and sturdy, averagely built'* (int. n. 12), with a strong 'fiery' character, endowed with optimism and sociability.

Although one interviewee does not believe that people's physical characteristics were a discriminating factor in coping with the exodus, there remains in the background a transversality in the dimension of sportsmen and sportswomen, even competitive ones, focused more on resilience, affirmation, and inclusion in new life situations typical of people originating from Istria, Dalmatia, and Kvarner than on the identity of exiles.

When asked whether the Istrian, Fiuman, and Dalmatian community maintains an identity over time across generations, all interviewees replied that in the new generations (the children of second-generation exiles) it is fading, sometimes being lost. There is a lack of capacity to endure fatigue, commitment, and effort. However, all interviewees need to keep their memories alive, including through sports events and competitions. They feel very much Istrian, Giuliano-Dalmatian, but also European and Italian, and think that memory should be continuously nurtured.

For a second-generation interviewee, a place associated with the image is the monument to Augustus in Via Roma in Gorizia. The statue, as Kuzmin writes in the local newspaper *Il Piccolo*, came from Pula and was brought to the city of Gorizia in 1947. Parents taught their children and grandchildren to greet Augustus whenever they passed by to remember their hometown.

One interviewee believes that in the new generations, there is less sense of belonging to the Julian-Dalmatian people, and less contact between the children of the exiles as there was with their parents who participated in dedicated events and initiatives. He believes that there is less sense of exile, but it is important to keep the memory alive and to fund local Italian culture for this purpose, without necessarily creating new specific associations. What is important is to publicize the history and culture of the exiles' homelands in Italy and around the world.

As Dante di Ragogna (2010) stated: "The Istrian, Fiuman, and Dalmatian lands were an authentic generating force of champions, from whose contribution Trieste, above all, also benefited... Trieste's sport owes much to the Istrian, Fiuman, and Dalmatian athletes, who defended its colors over many years, without flaunting their origins, consciously happy to offer their athletic talents in their new homeland, which for them was identified above all with the city of Trieste".

Confirming this, when asked which famous exiled sportsmen they knew, the names most frequently mentioned were those of boxer Nino Benvenuti, Ottavio Missoni, and Abdon Pamich (athletics), as well as those from the world of sailing (Agostino Straulino, Annibale Pelaschier) or motor racing (Mario Andretti). Also remembered are tennis champion Orlando Sirola and fencing champion Margherita Granbassi, daughter of the exile.

5. Conclusions

As is evident from the analysis of the material collected, the relationship between memory, identity, and belonging is as close as it is problematic, since the latter is substantiated as an active element of affirmation and recognition of an identity. The narrative that emerges from the voices of the sporting exiles interviewed highlights the active role of the narrator. They are both producers and spectators of the narration of the Istrian-Dalmatian-Julian memory, where those who construct history, those who live it, and those who tell it are the same subject. Memory is not only the narration of the lived experience but represents the very 'life' of the individual, constituting his action, because it is "the continuity of the past in the present that lasts. It is precisely in this continuity that the images of the past are constantly rethought, reshaped and selected **based on...** adaptation to the needs of everyday life today" (Ferrarotti, 1997, p. 14). Memory also becomes **a priority concerning** the need to reconnect the thread of the life of individuals and the community, to search for a project that can bring the entire community out of a traumatic situation (exile).

The analysis of the collected testimonies confirms the idea behind memory studies: memory and its recovery are a construction of the actualized reality that needs the different actors involved in the re-composition process (Mangone, Russo 2020). The individual narratives produced in the course of this investigation thus become a common heritage and produce new solidarity between different generations, not only of sportsmen but of world citizens. In this way, it is possible to nurture the values of sports culture while contributing to the construction and transformation of the individual dimension into a collective one and of the experience of individuals into the object and communication of the present culture.

From the comparison between the subjects investigated, a double identity heritage emerges (that of origin and that of arrival, Dal Lago, 2004) which, precisely in the practice of sport, traces the thread of the transmission of the memory of the exodus, of the identity of the sporting body and of the persistent intergenerational sporting historical continuity. One interview affirms that: *"Driven from their lands, a cart, and some bundles and the need to start again, even if Italy did not want to remember. Sports can tell beautiful stories, full of pathos and humanity. The exiled champions or their descendants remained to keep their exploits alive and in the minds of the new generations and to never let the terrible events experienced by a people driven from their land and forced to abandon their roots be forgotten. The Julian-Dalmatian athletes, in addition to their memories, emphasized in the various sporting disciplines their determination and boldness, their ability not to give up, claiming the right to be free."* (Int. n. 13).

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