

Movement in the wake of social change – about individualism and social relations in leisure time sport and exercise participation

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Aim of abstract/paper - research question

The aim of this paper is to investigate Danish sport and exercise participants' opinions about the organisation of their sporting practice according to two parameters of social vs. individual settings and routine based vs. flexible organisation of the activities. In Denmark, participation in sport and exercise has steadily increased between 1964 and 2007 (Pilgaard, 2009). But not all organizational settings increase equally. Self-organized activities grow more rapid than and have exceeded club-organized sport, and also commercial settings seem to gain market share. Sport clubs are often associated with positive values like social inclusion, cultural integration, community, democracy and joy, whereas commercial and self-organized activities are seen as individual and less dependent on social relations (Lorentzen, 2001). The development is thus causing a concern that sport and exercise is losing its role as an important contributor of social capital (Lorentzen, 2001).

Theoretical background

Anders Fogh Jensen sees individuals in today's project-oriented society as subject to social changes leading to a more individualized everyday life with values such as non-permanent placement, instability and short-term planning (Jensen, 2009). Some critical sociologists approach the development of flexibility and changeability with scepticism; the fragmented way of everyday life is said to reflect a general societal transformation that permeates every corner of everyday life where it becomes difficult to maintain social relations and to make stable social commitments (Bauman, 2002; Sennett, 1999). In this paper I ask to what extent

participation in sport and exercise in the domain of leisure time has become an individual affair.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

A survey sample ($n = 3.957$) representative of the Danish adult population (aged 16 and older) collected in 2011 investigates participation in sport and exercise according to organizational settings (club-organized, self-organized or commercially organized). What are the opinions about individual vs. social settings and routine based vs. flexible participation in sport and exercise? And does it differ according to organizational setting? Many people today attend sport and exercise in more than one setting and in the analysis this will be taken into account. Four questions look into the respondent's opinions about individual vs. social participation in sport and exercise: 1. Friendship/social contact means a lot to me when I participate in sport/exercise; 2. I prefer to participate in sport/exercise alone; 3. It does not matter to me whether I know the people I participate in sport/exercise with; 4. I have chosen my sport/exercise activity because of the social relations I get from it]. Further, the following questions will investigate preferences of routine vs. flexibility:

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

The data is not yet analysed (but will be ready for the presentation at the EASM conference) but a hypothesis based on the theoretical framework is expecting club-organized individuals to be more socially- and stability oriented in their sporting practice whereas self-organized and commercially-organized individuals are more individual- and flexibility oriented in their participation in sport and exercise. The results of participants in more than one setting will be interesting to explore.

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