

MOTIVES AND EXPERIENCE OF VOLUNTEERS AT THE EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WOMEN 2010

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Abstract

Aim

The aim of this paper is to add a contribution to the study of volunteerism in sport, more particularly to the knowledge base of volunteerism at sport events. This overall objective will be treated by investigating volunteers at the European handball championship for women 2010 (Euro 2010, in Norway and Denmark 2010). Skille and Hanstad (under review) have elsewhere scrutinized socio-demographic characteristics and motivation among volunteers at the Euro 2010. They found clear indications of a relationship between the background and the motives of sport event volunteers. They lack, however, the volunteer's own words on the motives for and experiences of being event volunteers. That gap will be filled in this paper.

Theoretical background

Bourdieu's notion of habitus, as structured and structuring structures, or systems of durable and transposable dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977) will be applied to analyze sport event volunteerism. Habitus is conceived as a set of dispositions for volunteerism in general or sport event volunteerism in particular, as a system of dispositions and the homology between the spaces of social positions and volunteerism. In sum, it is believed that different social attributes structure our place in social space, and as part of this, they also structure our place within the field of volunteerism.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

In Norway, two venues were used for Euro 2010, Larvik and Lillehammer. 20 interviews with volunteers, 10 in Larvik and 10 in Lillehammer, were conducted. The interviewees were selected in order to get diversity across age, gender, and function (as volunteer). All interviews were conducted at venue, and lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. The interviews were thematically coded, broadly

into four topics: volunteers' general background, voluntary involvement and voluntary experience, recruitment to Euro 2010, voluntary motivation, organization and leadership. It is citations coded as 'motivation' that will be presented here.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

Regarding motivation for event volunteering, three subthemes stand out. First, people volunteer because they see a societal value of it. Second, people volunteer because they see a value for their local community. For most of the event volunteers, this is related to their local handball club.

"It has two sides. It has of course an economic part; we get some kroner [Norwegian currency] for it. We can earn money [to the handball club]. ... At the same time, it gives inspiration to people in the club- players, parents, everybody – it is very integrating. We build a team ... In addition, we get refill of competence when it comes o the organization of an event" (Lillehammer interview 10).

Third, volunteering at events see a personal benefit of being event volunteers. It gives pleasure in the immediate experience, it strengthens established and creates new social relationships, and it builds educational competence. The latter includes skills related to events, and also the symbolic value of having 'sport event volunteerism' at the CV.

The quantitative part of the study (Skille & Hanstad, in review) revealed, first, that sport event volunteers are middle class people with higher education, second, that event volunteers are quite experienced as such, and third these three factors of motivation: (i) competence development, (ii) the event experience itself, and (iii) continuation of a social tradition. The qualitative data analyzed here, to some degree reinforces the quantitative results, but also add a nuance.

While the analysis of the quantitative date came out with a habitus related to a general interest in competence building related to sport event volunteers' middle class background, this analysis will suggest that the habitus is more closely related to the sport of handball and the handball club. While preferences in relation to social practices are to a high degree socially constructed, and involve a blending of conscious and unconscious aspects (Bourdieu, 1977); this seems to be valid both on a general class level and on a specific sport level of analysis.

References:

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skille, E. A. & Hanstad, D. V. (under review). Who are they and why do they do it? Paper submitted to *Sport in Society*.