

Article

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SPORT ORGANIZATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

Abstract: Capitalism plays a significant role in the process of commercialization of sport. The bureaucratization, professionalization, politics and policy change legitimate organizational activities (Oliver 1992). The external process of bureaucratization, which is ‘the organizational manifestation of the rationalization of social life’ (Slack & Hinings 1994: 806) transforms sport organizations. The new environment of sport organizations moves them from voluntary organization to formal organizations with professional staff. This work identifies impact of external processes such as bureaucratization, professionalization and commercialization on sport organization. The focus is on the environmental pressures which change practices (procedures) in sport organizations. The article shows the changes in the field of sport and the processes of excluding voluntary, non-profit sport organization from competitions in elite sport. The last section of the article presents an alternative point of view on volunteers in sport industry.

Keywords: sport, sociology of sport, sport organizations, environmental pressures, institutional analysis, neoinstitutionalism, voluntary.

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Introduction

Sociology of sport cannot only provide understanding of sport as a product or industry but also explains its relations to other social institutions and social processes. (Hardy 1987) One way to achieve this involves the use of institutional analysis as a method to approach, describe and understand sport organizations and their environment in terms of institutional theories. (Oliver 1992, DiMaggio & Powell 1983, Fligstein & McAdam 2015, Slack & Kikulis 1989, Slack & Hinings 1992, 1994)

In this article, sport organizations are viewed as bodies existing “to provide sport products and services in the sport industry.” (Yeh & Taylor 2008: 34, Chelladurai 2005) The sport industry is presented as a field of sport (Fligstein & McAdam 2015) and also as a conception of the environment of sport organizations, which includes the system of sport, public policy, media and economy. As discussed here, sport organizations are divided into two categories: for-profit organizations (business entities) and non-profit organizations (voluntary, grass-roots associations). In this paper I present cases from Poland. It must be underlined that the environment of sport organizations and the pressures of it are different in other countries. It is the same with processes of commercialization or bureaucratization. Moreover, the aim of this paper is to present the problems of mentioned processes taking place in Polish sports organizations. The main issue of this paper is to show the processes exerted by the sport organization’s environment. The point is to describe how they change the field of sport. The analysis will show the complexity the environment of sport organizations. I try to describe these processes and show their influence on the changes in the field of sport. I also join the discussion on the situation of volunteers in sports organizations and their positions, and the myths created with their social action.

The first of the four sections presents the environment of sport organizations discussing the case of the field of sport in Poland. Section two identifies environmental pressures on sport organizations and describes how they change under this impact. Social change can lead either to the development of organisations or their erosion. (Oliver 1992, Slack & Hinings 1992, Zucker 1988) Moreover, social change within the field of sport results in the processes of exclusion of non-profit organizations; environmental pressures are factors of this change. Non-profit sport organizations have developed to become professional sport organizations, which allows them to participate in high-level sport competitions. On the other hand, if non-profit sport organizations continue their established practices of sport activity without change, they will be excluded from elite (professional) sport. The process of exclusion is correlated with the non-profit or for-profit status of the organization and the environmental pressures. The third section addresses the problem of exclusion by showing its main indicators in the field of sport. The last section presents an alternative point of view on volunteers in the sport industry. The hypothesis is that volunteers are “cheap” workforce created by the capitalist system to reduce costs. The sport industry has created

the myth of voluntary participation as socially useful but in fact it serves to solve the problems with workforce and costs. The article concludes by showing how institutional analysis helps sociologists and researchers recognize problems that arise within the field of sport as a result of changes in sport organizations.

The environment of sport organizations

In order to understand the processes within the field of sport it is essential to have a closer look at the environment in which sport organizations and their activity are immersed. As mentioned above, this section presents the environment of sport organizations in Poland, including the interconnected and interrelated spheres of the social system of sport, public policy, economy and media.

First of all, national federations of sport (hereafter NFs) responsible for every sport discipline have the central place in the system (e.g. Polish Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation, Polish Basketball Federation, Polish Ice-Hockey Federation, etc.). NFs are responsible for all aspects of each discipline, such as legal and political issues, management, development, etc.

Secondly, the field of sport includes also sports clubs, which play a key role in training and competitions. Most of them function as associations, a legal form that, as further discussed below, is increasingly excluded from professional sport competitions. Traditionally, clubs have had such specific goals as training athletes (in different age groups), taking part in sport competitions, education, and gathering people. Today, however, they are changing under the impact of environmental factors.

Other actors are the local government and the state. The local government fulfils its obligations in the field of sport and physical culture mainly by delegating tasks to sports clubs and providing them with financial support for the purpose, a strategy known as cooperation with non-profit organizations. In the case of the state, the situation is different. In matters of sport, the central government is represented by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, which used to cooperate only with national sports federations. As of 2016, it also provides financial assistance to individual sports clubs to the maximum of PLN 15,000 (£3,000) per year. The relations between the ministry and national sports federations involve two dimensions: finance and control (restricted to legal and financial matters). The problem is, that most NFs can only achieve their goals if they receive financial contributions from public budget. Only some of them have gone commercial and secured financial sponsorship agreements (for example: Polish Volleyball Federation has a sponsor – Polkomtel, owner of mobile phone network - “Plus”, Polish Athletics Federation has a sponsor oil company Orlen). This issue is important in view of the problem of commercialization of sports clubs and their professionalization induced by environmental pressures.

The environment of sport organizations includes media, public relations companies, medical organizations, institutions of higher education, companies (sponsors) and other individual and collective actors involved in sport in different ways.

The most important influence comes from global economy, and the capitalist system plays a significant role in all the changes in the field of sport. (Giulianotti & Robertson 2009, Jakubowska 2014, Antonowicz, Kossakowski and Szlendak 2015, Slack & Kikulis 1989, Slack & Hinings 1992, 1994) The process of commercialization is making constant progress and has an impact on sport organizations, as their resources come from the environment (Slack & Hinings 1992). In capitalist environment, what matters is productivity, efficiency, professionalism and rationalization. Although sport has become a new, specific market with its own rules and practices, the key issue is productivity and profit, which means that sport organizations have to change their goals and, consequently, their practices and procedures. On the one hand, “the institutionalized organizational behaviours have been defined as stable, repetitive.” (Oliver 1992: 563) On the other, however, the ongoing change questions the reproduction of taken-for-granted organizational actions.

Environmental pressures

Since the 1970s sport and sport organizations around the world have been changing under the impact of commercialization. (Slack & Kikulis 1989, Slack & Hinings 1992, Giulianotti & Robertson 2009, Antonowicz et al. 2015) In Poland, this has been the case since the late 1990s and first became apparent in such sports as football, basketball and volleyball. Nowadays, commercialization affects all disciplines and – depending on social, economic and functional factors (Oliver 1992) – can lead either to the development of a particular discipline or its erosion. This section presents environmental pressures which cause changes within sport organizations and exclude voluntary sport organizations from the field of professional sport.

As an external process, commercialization can stimulate the development of sport organizations. Institutional theories recognise development as an element of rationalization, manifested in the processes of professionalization, bureaucratization and modernization. “The process of rationalization has, in the latter part of the twentieth century, become increasingly effected by the state and by the professions. Sport, like other areas of social life, has not been immune to these forces.” (Slack & Hinings 1994: 806-807) Moreover, the change of an organization into a professional and bureaucratic body is correlated with productivity and efficiency. For example, the product of a sports club is an elite athlete ready to take part in high-level sport competitions, from national to world championships. Efficiency, in turn, is connected with trophies, medals, victories, etc.

Institutional analysis considers the factors which transform organizations. It is generally assumed that they can be captured analysing the social skills of the actors involved. (Fligstein & McAdam 2015) Firstly, social skills are connected with strategic action defined “as the attempt by social actors to create and sustain social worlds by securing the cooperation of others” (Fligstein & McAdam

2015: 17, Fligstein 2001). Secondly, they provide individual or collective actors with a “cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people” (Fligstein & McAdam 2015:17). Social skills have an important impact on sport organizations undergoing transformations. Actors who have had social skills become leaders and set new paths. The skill of “reading the environment” is the most desirable, as it helps to make right moves within an organization and push it forward. For example, a national team’s victory in high-level championships can stimulate the development of a discipline. The actors who read the victory as an opportunity to promote, develop and find sponsors for the organization are the winners.

In Poland, for example, the victories of the national volleyball male and female team (between 2003-2009) made the national federation a professional organization, changing its entire policy in the process. The organization employed public relation and media specialists, managing team, people responsible for applications for championship tournaments, professional coaches, physiotherapists, and others. The NF’s policy changed and the principal goal was to make volleyball as popular as possible. The main result was an influx of new athletes to the clubs. Secondly, the federation decided that the national team would join the commercial World League tournament. Although initially the team was not very successful, its participation involved different benefits both to the team and the organization. International environment meant exchanging managerial experience. Moreover, the Polish Volleyball Federation appointed a company responsible for managing a professional volleyball league. It is also worth noting that the federation had a large sponsor for the national team and did not have to worry about financial issues. In this case, the actors who were on the board of the NF played the key role, and their social skills enabled them to make changes within the organization. However, this was only possible because of the role they played in the organization (Fligstein & McAdam 2015): had they not been members of the executive board, they would not have been able to do anything.

As mentioned above, the NF has set up a professional (men’s and women’s) volleyball league, which is a significant element of pressure on sports clubs, since the league’s requirements induce their structural changes. In other professional leagues (e.g. football, handball, ice-hockey) the situation is largely similar. Implemented in the name of development, the new rules of participation in professional leagues require sports clubs to transform their organizational structure in different spheres, including legal, managerial and employment issues, as well as sports infrastructure. Clubs that want to compete in a professional league must comply with several requirements.

The first point is the legal form of the clubs: they have to operate as companies (set up in accordance with the Polish Code of Commercial Companies) and not as associations. This development can be identified as a normative isomorphic organizational change, which “stems from professionalization” and requires employing professionals: managers, coaches, athletes. (DiMaggio & Powell 1983)

As a result, there is no place for amateurs, not even amateur athletes. Apart from volleyball, a similar rule of employing professional athletes operates also in basketball and football leagues.

Another point is the required sports facilities. In the Lotto Ekstraklasa football league the requirements are rather demanding: an all-seated and at least partly roofed stadium with a heated pitch and a lighting system. Although all-seated stadiums were introduced on the grounds of safety, they have become a sign of consumption, which means that a fan has become a consumer and a match has become a product. (Antonowicz et al. 2015) The modernization of facilities is a manifestation of commercialization and evolution of sport. For example, some time ago the rules of professional basketball league required clubs to play their games in sports halls with the capacity of about 3,000 people. At some point, the Polpharma Starogard Gdański basketball club received a warning that they would not be allowed to play in the league unless their hall complied with this regulation. However, when the city of Starogard Gdański, the hall manager, refused to modernize it (Butkowski 2012), the league dropped the rule, arguing that it would be better for the sport. Such pressures on sport organizations indicate that they have to cooperate with local governments, which in most cases manage sports facilities.

The relation between sport organizations and local governments concern different issues. One of them is sports facilities (halls, stadiums, swimming-pools, etc.), which, in general, are rented by clubs from local governments acting as managers. Only a few clubs are operators of their sports facilities. (Legia Warsaw operates the Army Stadium in Warsaw, Lech Poznań – Inea Stadium, GKS Stocznowiec Gdańsk – Hala Olivia) On the one hand, sport organizations do not incur the costs of facility management; on the other, they cannot earn renting them out. The main problem, however, is that they cannot make decisions about modernizing facilities. If the local government has no financial resources for modernization, clubs are not able to compete in professional leagues, which means that they do not develop. Moreover, if the local government has no policy for sport and cooperation with sport organizations, it means stagnation for the local community, sports clubs and sport in general, as there are no reasons to make the clubs professional, or even to develop sports associations as such.

The second dimension of relations between local governments and sport organizations concerns financial issues. In Poland, sport and physical activity of the local community is the responsibility of the local governments, which allocate their budget for sport through open competitions of offers from sport organizations implementing sports projects. This financial contribution is usually the main part of the budget of voluntary sport organizations (associations). It needs to be stressed that eligibility for such competitions is restricted to voluntary sport organizations (operating as associations). Professional sports clubs receive financial assistance from local governments in return for the promotion of the local town, city or region. It is the most popular form of financial support from local governments to professional clubs; it can be seen as a circumven-

tion of the law of competitions of offers, for which such clubs are not eligible. What environmental pressure does this involve? Competition of offers induces bureaucratization of sport organizations: there are applications to be filled out, forms to be prepared and financial statements to be delivered. The reality of the world of documents, forms and applications has changed sport organizations. If the voluntary, spontaneous form of their activity is to continue, they must accept the world of bureaucracy. Although the dependence on papers and documents comes with the benefit of financial contribution from the local government, sport organizations have to employ specialists in order to correctly prepare their applications.

The next dimension is more complex and concerns the policy of local governments. Some of them select particular sports disciplines which they want to support; sometimes this stems from traditions in the local community. For example, the city of Elbląg has a long tradition in women's handball, hence the local government's policy is focused on the Start Elbląg club, which has a women's handball team and is responsible for developing the discipline. Another example is Włocławek and its Anwil basketball club, the focus of the entire sport life in the city. In other cities the local governments adjust their policy to the current situation of sport organizations. In the worst-case scenario, individual decisions of local politicians can decide the fate of a particular discipline.

Consequently, the policy of the local government has a particular impact on sport organizations. On the one hand, it can stimulate the development of the field of sport in the local community: right decisions, the proper amount of financial support and rational management of sports facilities can contribute to the development of sport organizations and sports activity. On the other hand, it can lead to the erosion of the field of sport whereby the process of deinstitutionalization affects some local sport organizations. For example, the decisions of the local government in the city of Gdańsk have resulted in the process of deinstitutionalization of some disciplines (men's and women's basketball, women's handball, wrestling, boxing). An exclusive focus on football, speedway, men's handball and volleyball has had a large impact on other disciplines. One can identify here some examples of environmental pressures on the organization, such as: changing external dependencies (political pressure), changing competition for resources (functional pressure), changing institutional rules and values (social pressure). (Oliver 1992)

The process of commercialization has introduced companies and their sponsor contributions to the field of sport. In Poland, marketing and CSR issues have shaped a specific relation between sport organizations and private or state-owned companies. The impact of sponsorship in Polish sport first became apparent in the late 1990s, and the system of sponsorship has evolved. While at an early stage sports clubs were bought by private individuals, today only a minority are owned by individual people or companies. Rather, their relations are based on agreements whereby sport organizations promote companies or their products in return for financial contributions. Interestingly, a considerable

number of sponsorship agreements are ones concluded between sport organizations and state-owned companies, for example: the Lechia Gdańsk football club is sponsored by Energa Company (an energy producer and distributor), and the Lotos Trefl Gdańsk volleyball club – by Lotos (an oil company). If one has a closer look at the budgets of some clubs, one can notice that most contributions they receive come from local governments and state-owned rather than private companies, which means that most clubs could not exist without public sponsorship. Moreover, this also indicates that the Polish case of commercialization is specific and different than in the West. Research on financial contributions to sport in the post-Soviet countries could indicate differences in the processes of commercialization. The hypothesis is that post-Soviet private sector is not ready to sponsor sport organizations. What does it mean for environmental pressures? Arguably, political decisions play a significant role in allocating financial contributions from local governments and state-owned companies to sport organizations. They are critically dependent on political decisions, as their development or erosion depend on this very factor. Indeed, political decisions can exclude sport organizations from participation in the league system, or jeopardize their activity in the field of sport altogether.

In the case of private companies, which depend on the market, the decision on making contribution to sport is more complicated. In the absence of research on this issue, one point to be mentioned is the complexity of the decision to become involved in, or withdraw from, the field of sport. In Poland, it can be noticed that as long as a sports club has a large sponsor (private or public), it can participate in professional-level competitions and develop. However, if such a sponsor withdraws, the future of the club is in danger. Sports clubs depend on their sponsors. Although it seems obvious, it needs to be repeated that the financial condition of sports clubs plays the key role in their development or erosion.

In Poland, there is a stable political consensus regarding the field of sport, even if it does not secure its proper development. This may explain why politicians attempted to find solutions after the failures in such sport mega-events as the Olympic Games or world championships. As mentioned above, political decisions at the level of local government can lead in two different directions: development or, conversely, stagnation and erosion. The situation is similar at the state level, where politicians argue that change is necessary for development. In one of such examples, in 2013 the Ministry of Sport and Tourism divided sports disciplines into different groups according to their medal achievement. A new method of financing was to follow a new division of disciplines. Some of them were to have priority over others. The problem was that the changes had not been discussed with the representatives of national sports federations. Their first reaction was protest. The external pressure on changing the rules and relative value of sports disciplines made by the central government was not accepted. Even if the rationalization of distribution of financial resources and prioritisation of the modernization of sport facilities was to depend on the performance in the world championship tournaments or Olympic Games, the

social actors of the field of sport did not want to implement it. In fact, we were never to find out if the proposal of the new division of sport disciplines would work in practice. The project failed even before its implementation. What is worth noting is the fact that external political pressure was rejected by the actors in the field. They found it more important to keep the accepted rules and to reproduce them than to make changes and examine them over a certain period of time. In my view, this reaction has hampered the development of sport in Poland. Professionalization and commercialization are not related to winning medals but to increasing the financial and commercial position of sports disciplines in the field of sport.

This section has discussed some environmental pressures on sport organizations which can result in the processes of stagnation and erosion or, conversely, development of sports disciplines. Moreover, they also stimulate the change of the structure of sport organizations from voluntary to professional. The next section focuses on the exclusion of voluntary sport organizations (associations) from the field of professional sport.

Indicators of exclusion

This section highlights the indicators of exclusion discussed above. We have seen how environmental pressures work in the field of sport and how they contribute to changing sport organizations. If an organization does not change, it is subject to exclusion, the main reasons being: (1) creating professional leagues, (2) commercialization, (3) mediatization, (4) bureaucratization.

As mentioned above, setting up professional leagues means that sport organizations have to meet a number of requirements. They need to change their legal status, as there is no place for non-profit organizations (voluntary associations) in the professional league system. Sports clubs are also required to have special facilities and need to employ professional staff, including coaches, athletes, team and management staff. (Slack & Kikulis 1989) Another important issue is work contracts controlled by the league. (Hanssen et al. 2016) Since voluntary organizations are not able to meet all the requirements, they cannot compete in professional leagues. Moreover, professional staff and athletes' contracts require large financial resources. Owing to the lack of financial capital, most grassroots, non-profit organizations have no paid staff. (Sharpe 2006) Of course, professional sport organizations also support their activity by using volunteers but they do it for different reasons (see the next section of this paper). Another obstacle is sports infrastructure. If a sports club has facilities which do not meet the requirements, it cannot participate in the league or must use infrastructure in another location (city or town). As we can see, clubs which are non-profit, grassroots associations encounter many obstacles preventing them from participating in professional leagues.

Nowadays, the process of commercialization in sport is a global phenomenon observed to a greater or lesser extent in all disciplines. The capitalist system plays

a significant role in this process: if the most important issues are productivity, efficiency and achieving goals, there is no place for non-profit organizations in professional sport. It is apparent that professional clubs in professional leagues care more about their financial profit than sports goals. (Hanssen 2016, Giullianotti & Robertson 2009, Grabowski 2013) They thrive on market particularism (Giullianotti & Robertson 2009) to reach the best position in the field. Arguably, insufficient financial budget is a barrier to achieving sports success. The position in the field is connected with power and financial profit. For example, the position of Bayern Munich in Germany is correlated with its financial benefits from the media rights. (Grabowski 2013) It is observed that “in commercialized football, the size of the budget gives an input into sports successes” (Antonowicz et al. 2015:53). This is also the case of other disciplines.

There is no doubt that the media play a significant role in modern sport. (Rowe 2003, Jakubowska 2014, Kopecka-Piech 2017) The marriage of sport and the media becomes increasingly more complicated and institutionalized, subject to the rules developed by both sport and media actors. The mediatization of sport manifests itself in the primacy of the media over sport, apparent in the impact of media rules on sport and in creating league and world championships for the benefit of the media. On the other hand, professional sport needs to be part of the media world. If a sports discipline is not present in the media, it does not seem to exist at all. According to a rule set by the International Olympic Committee, an Olympic sport must be shown in the media, particularly on television and the Internet. (Jakubowska 2014) As a result, sport and the media are interrelated. Importantly, a sport organization is excluded from the field if it does not sell its media rights and the discipline is not shown in the media. For example, in 2010 the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation had to sell all its media rights to Infront Company to survive as an Olympic discipline and close the gap in the budget. If it had not done this, the whole discipline would have eroded. There are a number of examples confirming that sports clubs have a problem finding sponsorship if they are outside the media sphere. The worst problem is that the media have power to decide which sport will develop or become excluded.

The last indicator of exclusion pointed out here is bureaucratization. Slack and Kikulis (1989) observe that “in large part, this process of bureaucratization has been linked to the increased availability of government resources to sport organizations and increased levels of interdependence between sport organizations, government, and quasigovernment agencies” (1989: 181). Bureaucratization has emerged as a result of the need to report the achieved goals. Local governments and central government agencies responsible for sport set the rules of inclusion in the field. If sport organizations do not report what they have done, they are not eligible for public funding (financial or sports facilities). Bureaucratization requires professional staff that needs to be paid. This leads to professionalization of sport organizations, excluding voluntary, grassroots associations in the process. If they want to survive and receive funding from local governments

or state agencies, they have to change. Failure to adapt means exclusion from the field of sport.

The next section presents an alternative point of view on voluntary participation and volunteers in the field of modern sport.

The myth of volunteer participation

The literature on the subject includes hypotheses that sport cannot exist without the voluntary sector and volunteer participation. (Ringuet-Riota, Cuskelly, Aulda and Zakusa 2014, Cuskelly 2004) Moreover, the decreasing participation of volunteers in sport is seen as a threat to sport and sports community as such (Cuskelly 2004). I would like to present an alternative hypothesis, according to which volunteers are in fact cheap workforce and their participation in sport organizations can be attributed to the cost factor. The environment of sport with its way of thinking dominated by economic considerations perpetuates the myth of voluntary involvement as something good for individuals and communities and for social life in general. Nevertheless, volunteers are just part of the capitalist system as cheap or unpaid workforce.

Researchers observe that decreasing voluntary involvement in sport stems from the process of its professionalization (Ringuet-Riota et. al 2014, Cuskelly 2004) and has a negative impact on the sport system. On the one hand, one can agree with this hypothesis, but on looking closer one can notice that it is false. The process of professionalization of sport not only results in decreasing voluntary participation but also turns volunteers into unpaid professional workforce. There is a conflict between paid and unpaid workforce. It needs to be added that the issue of workforce and labour in sport has not been subject to more extensive research. (Ge & Lopez 2016) The world economy, whether neoliberal, conservative or socialist, seems to put this problem aside. The myth of inclusion (of athletes, volunteers, communities and even entire countries) through sport is perpetuated in order to generate profit for club owners, sponsors and other actors. I try to show an alternative approach to voluntary involvement and the processes of commercialization. In Poland there is a problem with treating volunteers as cheap workforce. The professionalization of sport can be an answer to the problem. The volunteers can be paid workforce if sport organizations become professional organization with full-paid workforce and stable budget.

As mentioned above, the processes of commercialization, professionalization and bureaucratization have changed the field of sport. Environmental pressures on different social actors reshape organizational practices and exclude the voluntary system of sport. As it is today, core sport is professional. Amateurs and voluntary organizations have found themselves in the sphere of recreation and leisure. If voluntary sport organizations want to survive, they need to follow the process of bureaucratization in order to be able to implement projects funded by local governments.

Moreover, sport organizations (national federations, sports clubs) are part of a global industry and global economy. In terms of institutional analysis, the field of sport is part of the field of world economy. After the economic crisis of 2007–2009, economists claimed that the answer to the crisis is to cut costs and save money, so that world economy would benefit from the lowest possible costs of labour, investment and development. The same is the case in the sport industry: from sports clubs to sport mega-events, the cost of employees should be as low as possible. Sport mega-events should be organised in the core countries (Wallernstein 2004, 2007), which have all sports facilities. Following the financial crisis of 2007–2009, we have to pay particular attention to the problem of costs in modern economy. Acting on the advice of economists, companies have cut their costs and tried to save money (for example, in Poland the main cost that was cut was the workforce). As sport is part of global economy, it has also been affected by the crisis. What is the reaction of the actors in the field of sport?

Considering that economy is a social activity, their reaction to the crisis can be approached at different levels: social, functional and political. The myth of voluntary participation combines all of them. The social level concerns the issue of cooperation, education and socialization. The myth has it that volunteers play a special role in achieving social goals (Ringuet-Riota et. al. 2014). As regards the functional level, “sport practice suggests that volunteering is a central factor in the operation of all aspects of the national sport systems of westernized democracies” (Ringuet-Riota et. al. 2014: 116), which means that volunteers are a human resource. The political level is rather apparent. In Western democracies, the policy focus is on voluntary participation and volunteers. “Recent government policies aimed at increasing participation in organised sport have brought renewed focus to the community sport system and the management of its volunteer labour force”. (Cuskelly 2004: 60) Such policies try to increase the participation of volunteers in the name of the good of communities. If all policies and legal regulations depend on business politics (Calavita, Tillman and Pontell 1997), the policies of increasing volunteer participation also stem from business considerations. I argue that voluntary participation has been introduced in the socio-economic system as a remedy for workforce and labour problems. Voluntary involvement combines helping others with developing oneself. It is also presented as a good way to participate in social life. It “does not seem to be work”, even if it is described as such by researchers (e.g. Cuskelly 2004).

“Business relationship to sport is particularly instructive. In the interest of high productivity, employers wanted a healthy work force and sport came to be seen as a way of ensuring physically fit workers.” (Wheeler 1978: 194) On the one hand, sport and physical activity is to “produce” fit workers; on the other, in the interest of high productivity at a low cost volunteers are used as workforce. This means that they play a significant role in the field of sport not because of their social or functional impact, but because of the business focus on cutting the costs of sport events. For example, between 2004 and 2016 the UEFA significantly cut the costs of voluntary workforce. During the European Football

Championship in Portugal (UEFA Euro 2004), a UEFA volunteer received 25 euros per day (e.g. a regular working day for volunteers in media zones was 8 hours, extended to 12 hours on matchdays with no difference in pay), which amounted to 525 euros for the entire tournament; the cost of food, wear, accommodation and transport (both local and international) was covered by the UEFA. There were about 70 volunteers from abroad and about 2,000 local volunteers. The total cost of voluntary workforce amounted to about a million euros. After Euro 2004 the UEFA cut costs. First, it allocated volunteer issues to the local organizing committee. Second, it changed the rules of volunteer participation and created the myth of “the greatest adventure” and “a once-in-a-lifetime experience”. In 2012 volunteers had to cover the cost of accommodation and transport. Although the UEFA has changed its policy about the voluntary workforce, it continues to use volunteers as a low-cost labour force. Such treatment of volunteers is similar in the case of some other sport mega-events.

It can be assumed that the participation of volunteers will continue to decrease due to the conflict between paid and unpaid workforce (Cuskelly 2004). Nowadays, it is more difficult to attract volunteers to the field of sport because of the profits made by professional sport organizations. The myth of volunteer participation seems to have been exposed. The paradox is that while professional sport excludes the voluntary sport system, at the same time it needs volunteers as a cheap workforce in order to cut the costs. The rules of the market require sport organizations to perpetuate the myth of volunteering. The worst thing about this myth is that it masks the true intentions of professional sport organizations.

Professional sport organizations do not need voluntary sport unless it gives them profits. They will not perpetuate the myth of volunteer participation if it stops bringing real profits (higher income or lower costs). The literature on the subject discusses the problem of the relation between Major League Baseball and minor leagues (Hanssen et al. 2016), where the profit from selling a player plays a significant role. This example can be generalised to the entire system of sport. The system of profits and costs is interrelated with the voluntary and professional system of sport and exerts a pressure on sport organizations. I have to admit that there is a need to make comparative research between fields of sport in different countries to look closer of the problem of volunteers situation in the labour market and the field of sport.

Conclusion

This analysis of environmental pressures on sport organizations offers several insights. First, it shows the network of interrelations between social institutions in the field of sport. The sport industry on the one hand requires collective action, but on the other it is the field of competitors. These two faces of sport are the fundamental products of the industry, in which there are both sport competitions and collective actions to practice sport activities. The change of the sport industry also involves the change of sport organizations. The point is that if sport organizations want to compete in elite sport, they have to be professional, bureaucratic and earn the profits (especially financial). This gives them a chance to achieve sports goals. The network of connections builds the position of a sport organization. Good relations with the media, local governments, sponsors form the basis of the position of power and provide more opportunities to achieve sports success.

Second, the article describes the social processes in the field of sport. Professionalization, bureaucratization and commercialization of sport have a fundamental impact on change within sport organizations. These processes are external to organizations and are caused by developments in the capitalist system, with its stress on productivity and earning profits. As the rules of the market come to be applied to other social spheres, such environmental pressures lead to changes in the social world. Giving an example from the field of sport, we find commercialization of the social world to be the main problem of modern society. Commercialization, professionalization and bureaucratization are found to be the factors of exclusion of voluntary/non-profit sport organizations from elite sport. There is no chance for non-profit organizations to compete with professional organizations. The power in the field of sport belongs to professional sport organizations. In this way the environment and powerful organizations dictate the rules in the field.

Third, the article provides an alternative point of view on voluntary participation and volunteers in the field of sport. The hypothesis proposed here may provide the basis for further sociological and economic research. I argue that volunteers are an unpaid and cost-free workforce in capitalism. I also identify the myth of voluntary participation in the social world, created in order to reduce labour costs and to solve the problem of the shortage of employees.

I hope that this paper sheds a new light on the problems which occur in sport industry. Sociology of sport and its institutional theories can give a new picture of the changes in sport organizations and the problems of exclusion in the field of sport.

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