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SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT IN EUROPE HISTORICAL AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE*

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Abstract

At the beginning of its institutional existence sociology of sport had a Europocentric and even Polonocentric character. The impulse to create the International Association for the Sociology of Sport was given in 1965 by a Polish sport sociologist, Prof., Habilitated Dr. Andrzej Wohl, who was its first president until 1978. In 1966 he also founded the "International Review of Sport Sociology" and he was its editor-in-chief until 1984. At the beginning the journal was a yearbook, then a half-yearbook and it was relatively quickly transformed into a quarterly. Prof. Wohl was accompanied in those undertakings by Prof., Habilitated Dr. Zbigniew Krawczyk. Both worked at the Department of Philosophy and Sociology of University of Physical Education in Warsaw. Between 1971 and 1982, Prof. Krawczyk was the secretary of the editorial board and then – from 1983 to 1992 – the deputy editor-in-chief of that Journal. In 1984 it was transferred to München and its first chief editor became Prof. Kurt Weiss from Germany, and the second one, until 1992, was Prof. Klaus Heinemann. Moreover, chairmen of the IASS were – except for two Americans; Prof. Dr. Alan Ingham, Prof. Dr. Marii Allison – Europeans. In addition to Prof. Dr. Andrzej Wohl, the names include Prof. Dr. Kurt Weiss and Prof. Dr. Günter Lüschen (both from Germany) as well as Prof. Dr. Joseph Maguire from England and Prof. Dr. Gertrud Pfister from Denmark. In August 2007, at the Conference held in Copenhagen, the new President of ISSA became Steven W. Jackson from the University of Otago in New Zealand. At the time ISSA was already operating, new scientific identities emerged. They were – limited territorially, but dynamic and creative – the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport and the Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios Socioculturales del Deporte (ALESDE). An expression of that phenomenon is also the European Association for the Sociology of Sport, which came into being in Vienna in 2001.

Key words: *sociology of sport, international level of the sociology of sport, European heritage of the sociology of sport*

Historical interpretation

At the beginning of its institutional existence, the sociology of sport had a Europocentric and even Polonocentric character. The impulse to create the International Association for the Sociology of Sport was given life in 1965 by Prof. Dr. Andrzej Wohl, a Polish sociologist. Prof. Wohl was the association's first president, and he served until 1978. He founded the *International Review of Sport Sociology* in 1966 and served as editor-in-chief until 1984. At

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the beginning the journal was a yearbook and it relatively quickly transformed into a quarterly.

Assisting Prof. Wohl in these ambitious tasks was Prof. Dr. Z. Krawczyk; both were established scholars in the Department of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw. From 1971 to 1982 Prof. Krawczyk was the secretary of the journal editorial board and served from 1983 to 1992 as deputy editor-in-chief. In 1984 the journal was transferred to Munich when Prof. Dr. Kurt Weiss became the editor, and remained there through 1992 and the term of Prof. Dr. Klaus Heinemann as editor.

With the exception of Prof. Dr. Alan Ingham and Prof. Dr. Maria Allison, both from universities in the United States, all the chairs of the International Association for the Sociology of Sport have been Europeans. These include Prof. Dr. Andrzej Wohl (Poland), Prof. Dr. Günter Lüschen (Germany), Prof. Dr. Kari Fasting (Norway) Prof. Dr. Joseph Maguire (England), and Prof. Dr. Gertrud Pfister (Denmark). The most recent and current president is Prof. Dr. Steven W. Jackson from University of Otago in New Zealand. There were also other European sociologists in high positions in the international society. Among others Prof. Dr. Gyöngyi Szabó Földesi (Hungary) served as a vice president for eight years.

As the international association helped to legitimize the sociology of sport as a discipline, other organizations were founded, including the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS; 1980). Most recently, scholars attending the Iberoamerican Sociology Association Congress in Guadalajara initiated procedures to found a Latin American Association of Sociocultural Studies of Sport. I suggested the foundation of that association during my presentation in the course of proceeding of the Section of Sociology of Sport. The first conference of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios Socioculturales del Deporte (ALESDE) was held in Curitiba, Brazil in late-2008 (30 October – 1 November). During this Conference authorities of this Association were established. *Nb.* I was invited there as a keynote speaker.

The divisions appearing in international associations are natural phenomena. They are not expressions of opposition, but evidences of uniting and unifying what is global with what is local and related to particular milieus. On the one hand, as the institutionalisation of science expands with increasing globalisation, there is an emergence of non-governmental, international organizations that rise above ideological divisions and facilitate the integration of formally recognized academic milieus – including sociological ones – as well as stimulate research on new topics. On the other, the bounded and limited milieus of scholars lead to the creation of regional associations with particular aims and assumptions. These latter professional associations are useful because they can be more immediately responsive to regional and local needs and they can react in both institutional and scientific terms more quickly than international associations can react to the changes that take place in a particular social and cultural milieu. Rather than being an expression of separatism, these associations are evidences of supplementation and of the complementarity in the larger and more global organization of scholars.

An example of this is the European Association for the Sociology of Sport, which came into being in Vienna in 2001. Its originators and founders were Prof. Dr. Otmar Weiss from Vienna and Prof. Dr. J. Kosiewicz from Warsaw. Until mid-2008, these two scholars served as President and Vice-President, respectively, members of the founding committee included Prof. Dr. Z. Krawczyk and Dr. Michał Lenartowicz (both from Poland), Prof. Dr. Gyöngyi Szabó Földesi from Hungary, Prof. Dr. M. Arvisto from Estonia, Prof. Dr. Georg Anders and Dr. Joachim Mrazek (from Germany), and Prof. Dr. Irina Bykhovskaya from Russia. A well-prospering journal, the *European Journal for Sport and Society* headquartered in Münster with Prof. Dr. Dieter Jütting serving as the editor-in-chief was also founded; its first issue was

published in 2004 and it is a semi-annual publication. Its editorial board includes Prof. Krawczyk and Prof. Kosiewicz, thereby, in a certain sense, preserving a Polonophilic tradition in the functioning of sociology of sport institutions in Europe. It is also worth noting that in 1993 Prof. Wohl became the Honorary President of ISSA and the Honorary Founder of International Review for the Sociology of Sport and Prof. Krawczyk was awarded an honorary membership in both ISSA (2001) and EASS (2004).

The foundation of the EASS was aided to a considerable degree by de-Europeanization of ISSA. As this occurred there were important reasons to found the European Association for the Sociology of Sport and the associated journal, although in the *European Journal for Sport and Society* it was not intended to publish papers by authors coming exclusively from Europe.

Research perspective

In the sixties, when the sociology of sport was developing and consolidating its institutional profile, the literature in the field was emerging and developed in Europe. This literature was organized around the following major themes:

A. *Sociological/historical studies and theoretical analyses*. This research constituted the most developed and far-reaching body of literature, and it included:

1/ Studies analyzing sport in the light of the assumptions of the sociology of political relations, and as an effect of class/political influences. These studies focused mainly on the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

2/ Studies on social thought focusing on diverse variants of activity as they existed in various groups, institutions and organizations as well as studies of the manifestations of rationalization that accompanied those activities.

3/ Theoretical studies of analytical character – important from a methodological viewpoint – focusing on categories such as physical culture, sport, game, play, sports success, social roles in sport, sports hero, or sociology of sport.

4/ Analyses of relationships between sport and the currently prevailing cultural and civilisational processes, many of which took into account urban living conditions, free time, labour division, and the appearance and development of mass culture.

This body of research became the foundation for subsequent empirical studies and the further development of various theories based on empirically-based knowledge.

B. *Empirical research*. When compared with the literature related to the first theme, this literature is relatively modest and studies vary widely in their methodological and analytical rigor. In addition to studies that had a clear sociological focus, there were a number of studies that focused on pedagogy, social psychological issues, and other topics that were difficult to classify in terms of discipline.

The methodologies used in many of these studies often focused on descriptions of statistical patterns rather than explanation and analysis guided by theory. This led to fragmented and inconsistent findings that had limited practical or theoretical utility.

C. *Research on the role of sport in the urbanized environment*. This literature focused on identifying the functions of sports institutions in various contexts and relative to city inhabitants', young people, workers, and other collectivities. These studies usually had a

fragmentary character, although they were loosely connected within the analytical framework provided by structural-functionalism.

D. Research on issues connected with rural sport. This literature was developed primarily in Poland and it contained sociological studies of the countryside that built on Florian Znaniecki's research carried out in the early 20th century. Empirical studies of rural sport were connected with sociological research on rural culture, rural cultural needs, the hierarchy of needs related to entertainment and relaxation, and the community-related functions of countryside sports clubs.

E. Research on elite sport. This literature focused on selection and recruitment for sport, reasons for terminating a sports career, and socio-cultural factors that influenced sport participation choices (the socio-pedagogical orientation). Attention was also given to sports motivation and the factors that shaped it, opinions about sport and social attitudes to sports in the lives of individuals as well as in groups, communities and society, the social consequences of sports results, the social backgrounds of athletes in particular sports, and the subcultures created in connection with sports.

Research during the 1960s seldom met the professional standard we use today. Those doing the studies had various educational backgrounds, institutional connections, and personal interests. Research methodologies and the topics that were studied varied widely. Monographs and case studies were common, and there were a few books published, but this did not constitute a major expansion of the literature.

The *International Review of Sport Sociology* (IRSS) did not appear until 1966 and did not become a quarterly until 1973 at which time it provided a greater possibilities for publishing and for making visible the studies being done by an increasing number of scholars. This pattern was very similar to what was occurring in other subfields of sociology and other major disciplines at that point in time.

During the 1970s and 1980s, but especially during the 1990s, there was an increase in the number of Ph.D. dissertations in the sociology of sport across a number of countries where postgraduate degree programs existed, and there appeared many habilitation dissertations. At the same time, the sociology of sport became widespread as a subject at universities that had programs related to sport, physical culture, or physical education.

The growth of the field also gave rise to new ways of organizing sociological studies of sport. Research teams consisting solely of sociologists or of sociologists and scholars in related fields were formed and their international character facilitated a number of comparative projects. These projects focused on many topics, including the following.

1. Techniques of social engineering in sport, whereby sport is considered as a technological process with the goal of achieving maximal, measurable, and comparable results for individual athletes as well as particular teams.
2. Socialization and the sociology of education with an emphasis on examining the consequences of sport participation, the process of becoming involved in sport, and the internalisation of values connected to sport; there were studies of socialisation associated with particular social roles in sport, the types of social bonds formed in sport, the socialization goals in particular sports, the existence of anomie and deviance in sport, and the fetishisation or commercialisation of sport.
3. The sociology of sports organizations.
4. Elite sport—professional, spectacular and Olympic.

5. The role of sport in the production, reproduction, and transformation of culture with an emphasis on studies of links between sports and other cultural practices, the lifestyles associated with sports in various social contexts, the merging of sport values and patterns as a feature of globalisation, the influence of "sports lifestyles" on social health, and the connections between sport and art. Studies also considered sport in connection with the sacralisation and the secularisation of culture, the growth of sport as facilitated by the mass media, the influence of sport on the content and techniques of disseminating "iconic" elements of culture by the press, through television, and, currently, through various forms of electronic, digital communication.
6. Mutual concerns and relationships created in connection with globalisation processes, as well as issues related to the role of sport in socially diversified local environments.
7. Problems of violence and hooliganism related to sport spectacles.
8. Sexual harassment and sport-related gender studies.

Since 2001, when the European Association for the Sociology of Sport came into being, there has been an emphasis on research by international teams of scholars, primarily those who are members of the Association. The aforementioned research projects focused mainly on:

1. *Values and cultural patterns in sport.* This research focused on axiological issues concerning sport values in the context of European culture, different forms and patterns of sport, the educational values of sport, sport in the media and literature, ethical and praxeological dimensions of sport; the social values of leisure, recreation and tourism. As their result, many research papers and the following collection books were published: (a) "*Sport in the Mirror of Values*" (Kosiewicz J., Obodyski K. /eds./, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2003), (b) "*Axiological Dimensions of Sport. Practical Aspects*" (Kosiewicz J., Obodyski K. /eds./, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2004), and (c) "*Sport and Values. Theoretical Foundations*" (Kosiewicz J. /ed./, University of Physical Education, Warsaw 2006).

2. *Social and cultural values of sport.* This research focused on globalisation and sport involvement in a changing Europe; the body, sport and ethics from the viewpoint of social control; martial arts in the context of European social values; the changing roles of public, civic and private sectors in sport culture; cultural and personal values of physical activity; and organizational and economic issues of sport. The products of this research include the following books: (a) "*Sport and Society*" (Kosiewicz J., Obodyski K. /eds./, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2005); (b) "*Sports Involvement in Changing Europe*" (Kosiewicz J., Obodyski K. /eds./, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów 2004), (c) "*Sport, Culture and Society*" (Kosiewicz J. /ed./, University of Physical Education, Warsaw 2005), (d) "*The Changing Role of Public, Civic and Private Sectors in Sport Culture*" (Itkonen H., Salmikangos A.-K., McEvol E., University of Jyvaskyla, Jyvaskyla 2007), (e) "*European Integration and Sport*" (Anders G., Mrazek J., Norden G., Weiss O., Münster 2004), (f) "*Physical Activity in Integrating Europe*" (Kosiewicz J., Jaczynowski L. /eds./, University of Physical Education, Warsaw 2004).

3. *Socio-pedagogical aspects of sport for all.* This research focused on physical culture and sport for all on various levels of education, and comparative studies of sport for all in European countries. The publications that emerged from this work included three anthologies: (a) "*Education through Sport: Towards an International Academy of Sport for All*" (Eichberg H., Kosiewicz J. et. al. /eds./, Copenhagen 2004), (b) "*Sport for All as a Form of Education*" (Eichberg H., Kosiewicz J., Obodyski K. /eds./, University of Rzeszów,

Rzeszów 2007), (c) "Social Dimensions of Sport and Recreation Development in Central European Countries" (Leska D. /ed./, Comenius University in Bratislava, Bratislava 2007), (d) "Movement Recreation for All" (Kosiewicz J.(ed) Warszawa 2007), and (e) "Environmental Differentiations of Tourism" (Kosiewicz J. (ed). Warszawa 2007).

In addition to all the studies mentioned above, there have been studies of various other topics for the period which was discussed before. European sociologists of sport have also published their works in many other monographs and journals. Many of these scholars are not members of EASS, but are active in ISSA. Today, it is impossible to encompass and categorize all publications by European sport sociologists. Therefore, while there has been an expansion of research during the first years of the 21st century, I have focused my attention on work that is connected with the activities of EASS.

In summarizing my paper, it is worth noting that during the 40-year history of European sociology of sport, two significant research schools have been developed and each has considerable achievements. The first may be called the Polish school of sociology of sport, which was created by Prof. Zbigniew Krawczyk. He promoted about 30 students who received doctorates in the field, advised them in completing high level dissertations, and mentored them as they continued their academic careers. The second research school was created and is creatively developed by Prof. Gyöngyi Földesi from Hungary. She promoted more than 25 students who were awarded doctoral degrees. The Hungarian school of the sociology of sport has spread across Southern Europe and it encompasses her doctoral students from Hungary, Europe, and worldwide. Her commitment to and work with the PhD students in the International Doctoral School program in sports social sciences at the Semmelweis University in Budapest has fostered consolidation that may lead to further unification of research on the sociology of sport.

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