



СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ЛЕКТОРИЙ

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Sociology of sports and the space of sports practices: Social genesis and sociological theories*

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Abstract. In recent years, the importance of sports in Russia has increased dramatically, which is determined primarily by the country's hosting international sport events, in particular, the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup 2018. The influence of sports on social processes has increased, sports began to strengthen its position in public opinion as a prestigious sphere of employment and an important social category [24. P. 60]. Thus, there is an obvious need to identify the relationship of physical culture with society as a whole and with all elements of the social structure and specific social institutions. The article examines the origins and prerequisites for the formation of sociology of sport as a relatively independent scientific discipline; presents the issues of sports sociology in the historical perspective — in the context of both their social genesis and contemporary sociological theories; considers the social role and social functions of sport education and sports. The authors believe that the differentiated social distribution of sports practices is determined by the interconnections of the space of possible practices (supply) and the space of demand for certain practices. In the article, the well-known foreign scientists are presented in the new perspective — as sociologists who provided for both Russian and foreign authors the incentive and direction for theoretical studies of sports issues. The article also presents to Russian readers the original studies on sociology of sports conducted by famous scientists — Norbert Elias, Eric Dunning, Anna Ingram, Georges Hébert, etc.

Key words: sport; sociology of sports; space of sports practices; social genesis; contemporary sociological theories; institutionalization of sociology of sports

Sports was first considered an important sphere of sociological research in 1925 by the German scholar Heinz Risse in his book *Sociology of Sports*. “Historians and sociologists have never felt themselves competent enough to study the human physical activities within the old school of sports history. Then the modernization-theoretical approach raised the question: how is the development of specific social forms of sports

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combined with the development of modern western societies? What political, economic and social framework conditions contributed to the establishment of the organized competitions following the rules? This was the key research issue. Who were the actors? What motives led them to sports? What social effects generated sports passion?" [22]. In 1925, the theorist and practitioner, instructor of physical culture in the French army, Georges Hébert in the book *Sports Against Physical Education* described a system of physical education and training that combines the development of physical skills and training of moral-volitional qualities [12].

In the 1930—1940s, both Russian and foreign authors focused mainly on the development of physical culture and physical training [4; 5; 10; 17]. In these decades, there was a confrontation between the capitalist and socialist camps at various sports games and international competitions. Therefore, unambiguous political issues crept into the writings of foreign authors on the development of sports in the USSR. Seth Bernstein in his work *Communist Uprising under Stalin: The Political Socialization and Militarization of Soviet Youth, 1934—1941* focused on the *Komsomol* organization that by 1941 had managed to include more than a quarter of all Soviet youth. Thus, with the support of the *Komsomol*, the youth became an important state resource on the uncertain and dangerous path to the future communism [1].

During the World War II, many sportsmen in the countries participating in the war changed their sports equipment to weapons. The activities of all sports organizations of the Soviet Union aimed at solving the problems of the wartime, and the description of sports activities in the wartime under the German occupation provided by V. Ginda is of particular interest: he focused on the so-called 'death match' played on August 9, 1942 by the football players of the *Kiev Dynamo* and the German soldiers [9].

The interest in sports from the sociological perspective started to increase after the World War II: new sports professional leagues were created and developed quite actively, and the organized youth forms of sports became quite common for different settlements and educational institutions. In the postwar years, the Soviet athletes achieved great success in international and world sports competitions, for instance, they participated in the largest sports event of 1956 — the XVI Olympic Games that were held in Melbourne (Australia). The late-season dates of the Games (late November — early December), their climatic and geographical conditions required thorough training of the Soviet Olympic team. However, despite all difficulties, the Soviet team won 37 gold, 29 silver and 32 bronze medals and got 622.5 points in the unofficial standings, while the US team — only 497.5. 58 Soviet athletes became the Olympic champions, and among them Vladimir Kuts, who became a real hero of the Olympic Games for he won in the 5- and 10-thousand meters' races [20].

By the 1960s, in the Soviet Union, not only the press but also the television paid much attention to sports. A number of works on sociology of sports and physical education was published in this decade — by V.I. Zholdak [28], I.V. Vishnevsky, N.A. Ponomarev, L.N. Nifontova, M.Kh. Titma, K.V. Adamson, M.A. Arvisto, A.S. Chesnokov [8]. These works present the results of sociological studies in the field of physical education and sports. Due to the fact that the harmoniously developing personality was proclaimed

the main goal of sports, “one of the research objects of sociology of physical culture and sports was the human body as an element of personal bodily existence. Within the framework of this science (as well as within other sciences that study physical culture and sports) the human body is not considered by itself but rather in the process of its socialization and cultural development — when under the influence of various social factors, primarily conscious and purposeful, it becomes social by nature and significance and is included in the world of culture. In this respect, it acts as a somatic culture” [26].

In the 1970s, the representatives of sociology of physical culture and sports conducted studies aimed at identifying their similarities and differences as specific forms or areas of culture in relation to its other forms and areas. These research questions are especially important for the studies of sports, because its functioning is inextricably linked to various organizations, each of which has its own specific social conditions, sports ideology and worldview, certain normative regulations and expected roles, etc. [13]. Among the Russian authors V.B. Kuchevsky [16], N.I. Ponomarev [21], M.A. Yacobson [27], O.A. Milshtein [18], B.M. Gzovsky, N.A. Nelga, V.N. Kryazh [11] and others should be mentioned. In the United States, Gregory Stone, David Riesman, Erving Goffman, James Coleman, Charles Page, etc. described social processes related to sports, especially for scientific communities involved in the study of physical education and sports.

Sociological study of sports practices

Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most influential sociologists of the 20th century, in his speech to a group of students in November of 1980 and at the opening of the VIII ICSS Symposium “Sport, Social Classes and Subculture”, identified the conditions that make the very sociology of sports possible. First of all, one should not analyze a separate sport as isolated from all other sports practices, but rather the space of all sports as a system, each element of which has its own meaning, i.e. to understand any sport, one need to identify its position within the space of all sports. Sports practices represented in the statistical questionnaire can be described as the resulting relationship between supply and demand, or, more precisely, between the space of currently available products and the space of inclinations (associated with one’s position in the social space and capable of being reflected in other consumption practices in connection with another space of supply) [2].

Thus, according to Bourdieu, the differentiated distribution of sports practices is the result of the relationship between two homologous spaces: the space of possible practices (supply) and the space of inclinations to a specific sport practice (demand). On the supply side, there is a space of sports perceived as sports-practices programs characterized primarily by their technical features (in particular, capabilities and, primarily, limitations of these practices for expressing various bodily inclinations.) On the demand side, there is a space of sports inclinations that, as one of the dimensions of the disposition system (*habitus*), are characterized both structurally and relationally in the same way as their corresponding positions and whose features are determined

by the current supply (taken into account in the production of needs as providing effective opportunities for their satisfaction) and by the previous supply-demand ratio.

Bourdieu believes that there is a number of necessary indicators for the sociological study of sports issues. Such a research space can be constructed on the basis of a set of indicators such as, on the one hand, the distribution of those involved in a particular sport according to their position in the social space, distribution of different federations by the number of their members, wealth, social characteristics of leaders, etc.; and, on the other hand, the distribution by the type of attitude to the body necessary for different sports or contributing to the success in them, for instance, depending on the direct contact in classical wrestling or rugby, or, on the contrary, excluding such a contact in golf and allowing it only through the ball as in tennis or by a tool as in fencing.

Thus, we can identify three main research foci of the sociological analysis of sports: individual — the degree and nature of the involvement of individuals and social groups in sports, and also factors affecting this involvement; social — either social functions of sports or interconnections of sports and social institutions (sport—family, sport—education, sport—state); and intercultural — sports in the system of international relations. At the higher level of generalization, sociology of sport studies mainly the relationship between sports and such social institutions as family, education, politics, culture and economy. Sociological studies focus on social relations and group behavior in various sports (for example, elite and mass sports, amateur and professional sports, class, gender or racial relations in sports, etc.), and also on various social processes in sports organizations, communities and around them. Special sociological studies allow to analyze social needs and motives in the field of physical culture and sports, to evaluate the real attitudes, interests and value orientations to physical culture and sports. Unfortunately, under the market economy, it is almost impossible to find a practical interest in such studies; that is why public authorities and municipal governments should ask sociologists to conduct the studies of physical culture and sports.

Therefore, we can identify the following goals of sports sociology: to study the role, functions and significance of sports in the life of people and society; to describe and explain the factors of the development of sports in various communities and at different stages of social development; to identify the level of influence of sports on the socialization processes in the contemporary society; to study the values and norms of sports life considered as social-cultural activities and their impact on the sphere of culture in general; to examine the differentiating function of sports including the creation of additional opportunities and restrictions for the mobility of sportsmen and sports communities; to analyze the impact of social changes on the development of sports; and to promote the development of theoretical and applied sociology including the implementation of policies to ensure that the world sport has less and less negative impact on people's lives.

Institutionalization of sports sociology

We believe that the sociological attention to such a significant area of public life as sports is still insufficient, and some scholars insist that sociology of sport stays at the periphery of sociology. Nevertheless, by the second half of the 20th century, socio-

logy of sports was already recognized as one of the branches of the sociological discipline. At first the studies of the developing special sociological science aimed primarily at its ‘legitimization’ as a new branch of the sociological knowledge. At the same time, its representatives tried to distinguish its key concepts such as ‘game’, ‘physical education’ and ‘sports’. Eventually sports were recognized as a social construct, the definition of which depends on such contextual factors as time and space (venue).

Most of the very first works on sports sociology reflected a close relationship between sociology of sports, psychology, social psychology, and the research of consumer behavior, which was manifested in the studies of group dynamics, group cohesion, leadership, social facilitation and what is now called the ‘social idleness’ [16; 19]. The relationship was also evident in some early studies of socialization that focused on roles and motivation; and some studies of the group dynamics in sports teams subsequently led to the studies of sports subcultures. Special studies conducted at the University of Wisconsin reflected the functionalist and instrumental positivist aspects of the American sociology in the 1960s — early 1970s, and this analytical approach contributed to the development of complex statistical modeling of how and why people decide to go in for sports.

According to Eric Dunning, in the 1990s, sociology of sports became one of the liveliest areas of sports research due to the fact that sociology of sports became so much associated with all main sociological paradigms that William James called this degree of the sociological conceptual debates ‘a blooming and buzzing confusion’. Although the very attempt to conduct theoretical studies of sports sociology issues through the prism of all sociological paradigms is interesting and important, this situation was dangerous, especially because the representatives of different paradigms began to misinterpret the positions of their opponents, which certainly did not contribute to fruitful discussions and sometimes even led to devastating conflicts. Eric Dunning called this situation a ‘destructive inter-paradigm rivalry’ [6]. However, the very destructive attempt to consider the processes in the field of sports through the theories of functionalism, symbolic interactionism, feminism, poststructuralism and postmodernism contributed to the institutionalization of sports sociology and to the social development in the field of physical culture and sports.

Norbert Elias modified some elements of the theories of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim and expressed concerns about the interpretation of the very term ‘social development’ and, accordingly, about the interpretation of the terms ‘development of knowledge’ and ‘development of sports’, which constitute the basis of figurative sociology [7]. Elias referred to Comte’s studies of social development (Comte called it ‘social dynamics’), thus, essentially, used Comte’s concept of social dynamics to consider the issues of social development in sports. Thus, the sociological research of sports should not only assess the current and real situation in sports, but also search for the best ways to motivate teams and authorities to strengthen the links between teams and fans, and to prevent any discrimination in amateur and professional sports. Such studies should be conducted in relation with such fields as sports medicine, sports psychology and sports social psychology. Perhaps, a good example of such a sociological study is the distributional analysis described in the article *The emergence and development of sociology of sports as an academic specialty* [17].

In recent decades, the topics of sociological studies of sports and the very space of sports practices have expanded significantly. The general physical culture, which was traditionally considered only in the natural-science sections of sports science (sports medicine, biomechanics, sports training techniques), is now examined in the context of preparing the body for sports events. In sports science, we find new approaches to the study of man from the anthropological perspective, for instance, some sociological studies show how and by what mechanisms the contemporary controlled and totally organized sports competitions affect other areas of public life and what are this impact's consequences. In particular, there are attempts to purposefully study the relationship between the consumption of doping and the consumption of drugs, between the bodies of athletes and the labor market in the contemporary postindustrial society, between certain common forms of communication in sports and in other areas of communication (for instance, political communication), etc.

Most sociological studies of sports are far from the true ideologization of sports processes. However, when studying the empirical reality, some researchers (voluntarily or not) tend to mythologize the processes in the sports field by overestimating the elements of its attractiveness and by borrowing the most spectacular and most consumed by the mass audience elements from specific areas of mass culture, art communications, leisure and tourism. However, there is a completely different situation in the field of sports science as it is represented by the studies of professional sports conducted at the universities of Australia, Italy, Germany, Russia, the UK and the USA within the special research programs. In China, Russia and the UK, there are special sports research institutes that are independent in their activities (both thematically and financially) from the studies of sports at universities. In all countries, there are non-university research areas in the field of sports (on both public and private initiative), and in some countries the state supports the most mainstream research areas. The advantage of this approach is that the applied studies supported on the centralized basis can form a scientific discipline or a circle of disciplines, which would facilitate the fulfillment of scientific tasks and would ensure the continuous interaction in sports practices. Today, in many regions of the world, there are stable creative communications between physical education students, teachers and graduate students of physical education faculties and sociologists, because sociology of sports considers social processes in sports through the prism of their social genesis and contemporary sociological theories.

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Социология спорта и пространство спортивных практик: социальный генезис и современные теории*

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В последние годы значение спорта в России резко возросло, что связано, прежде всего, с проведением в стране международных спортивных мероприятий, в частности, Олимпиады и Чемпионата мира по футболу. Влияние спорта на общественные процессы увеличилось, он стал укреплять свои позиции в сознании людей в качестве престижной сферы занятости и привлекательной социальной категории [24. Р. 60]. В связи с этим еще более актуализируется необходимость выявления взаимосвязей физической культуры с обществом в целом, а также со всеми элементами социальной структуры и конкретными социальными институтами. В статье исследуются истоки и предпосылки формирования социологии спорта как относительно самостоятельной научной дисциплины. В исторической перспективе представлены проблемы социологии спорта — в контексте их социального генезиса, а также современных социологических теорий; обозначена социальная роль и социальные функции физической культуры и спорта. Дифференцированное социальное распределение спортивных практик рассматривается авторами как результат установления связи между пространством возможных практик (предложением) и пространством востребованности определенных практик. В статье известные отечественному читателю зарубежные ученые раскрываются с новой стороны — как социологи, давшие отечественным и зарубежным авторам стимул и направления теоретических исследований спортивной проблематики. Статья открывает для отечественных читателей оригинальные исследования по социологии спорта известных ученых — Норберта Элиаса, Эрика Даннинга, Анны Ингрэм, Жоржа Эбера, Хайнца Рисса и др.

Ключевые слова: спорт; социология спорта; пространство спортивных практик; социальный генезис; современные социологические теории; институционализация социологии спорта

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