



# **SPORTS, BODIES, IDENTITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

**CONCEPTIONS AND PROBLEMS**





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679

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### **Chapter 3.3.**

## **SPORT, WORK AND LEISURE TIME. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ITALIAN COMPANY RECREATION CIRCLES**

### **The sport of *leisure*, a right of all citizens**

Even though they cannot be considered among the first theories related to discipline, in the last few years sociological thoughts on sport have registered a constant and rather beneficial increase in studies and research. If, at the beginning of the Seventies, the sociology of sport found it difficult to launch, at the end of the Eighties onwards a net inversion in trends was registered. Sports, and at the same time leisure time, became fertile land for ideas and reflection on various topics [Blackshaw 2002]. Historically going through the phases of social history of sports leisure, the birth of leisure time coincides more or less with what Aris Accomero [2006] defined as the forth phase of the “parabola of time” that scans the modern industrial society: this means of *use*, in which the increased level of general wellness has created the possibility for workers to use larger periods of time for leisure and fun. Consequently it is with the advent of the industrial society that sports activities are diffused as *mass leisure*: from simple sports activities carried out on an individual basis, a real economic-organisational system is created within the newly board industry of mass leisure [Lo Verde 2009]. But everything that is modern has resulted in the rebalance and redefinition of the concept and activities of sports.

This present contribution is placed alongside the recent theories that see sports activities as a direct expression of the social requirements elaborated by the late modern era and therefore as a “potential new right of citizenship that the social state has tried to listen to” [Porro 2001, p.163]. Even today the acquisition of these rights is progressing very slowly, despite the fact that leisure time activities represent mass consumption and sports, tourism, cultural and recreational activities, have a very important effect on the national GDP, therefore also requiring public support policies. Already during the first trade union fights

on the reduction in working hours, an optimal time distribution of everyday life of the workers was requested, to include free time, the famous slogan at that time being "1/3 for work, 1/3 for rest, 1/3 for fun". Even considering the due difficulties this division of time has been substantially achieved even if the topic of quality of work, of rest, of fun and of training still find it difficult to achieve full social citizenship. New challenges have opened up in the new Italian economic system that can be summarized in the following points:

Considering the reduction in working hours as an instrument to harmonize life cycles, even in a flexible management system of work, and to create space for a fourth portion of time to be dedicated to studies and constant training;

Facing the topic of quality of work, rest and fun and training.

Therefore, it is important to understand how far the circle of leisure time for workers represents a vital portion of their personality, full of motivations, values and so important as to stimulate a strong revenge of new rights of citizens and a strong social inclusion in the world of employment. From figures related to the amount of time spent at work in Europe, we can see that, moving from a society where the majority of the life of adults was dedicated to work, we are moving towards a society in which the majority of time will be and is already dedicated to something else.

In 1900, according to calculations by Alain Corbin, the annual duration of time dedicated to work was 3,200 hours and the average life was short. Throughout his entire existence a worker had 292,000 hours available and worked 121,600 of them (therefore 42%). In 1980 the annual duration of time dedicated to work fell to 1,650 hours and the average life duration almost doubled compared with one hundred years before. At the moment the total amount of hours lived is 420,480 and only 18% (therefore 75,500 hours) is dedicated to work. Currently, in Italy, as calculated by the sociologist Domenico De Masi [1999] if a twenty-year-old found a stable job and was allowed to work until the age of sixty, on a daily basis and more than expected, he would accumulate 2,000 working hours in a year and in total his work experience would not exceed 80,000 hours. Once all calculations have been made, this youngster has a total amount of 226,000 hours of leisure time all for himself. Therefore, work would represent approximately 15% of his life and leisure time approximately 43%. Everybody (the family, school, government, mass media) worries about preparing him and launching him towards his profession but not towards his leisure time.

But what will this twenty-year-old do in his free time? Who will decide what he does? The large television networks? Publicity? The Church? Politics? Will he do useful or useless things? Which choices will he make? These questions are vital to understand how consumption tends to increase during leisure time, much more compared with working time and relaxation time, in this way allowing for an increase in demand and consequently jobs. Nobody seems to have realized that free time has now exceeding working time, even factories full

of blue collar workers have now been transformed into *loisir* spaces such as theatres, auditoriums, museums and research areas, especially if we think of the Fiat-Lingotto of Turin or Pirelli-Bicocca of Milan. A modern welfare State that is attentive to the requirements of its citizens cannot therefore afford to ignore this reality of events and sports activities represent an outpost of active citizenship that tends to redesign the geography of collective rights, including rights related to the quality of life" [Porro 2006, p. 107].

### **The company recreational circle of workers in Italy**

The Italian reality of after-work events and, in general, of spontaneous as-sociationism, has deep and strong roots in the social and cultural network of our territory. It is not easy, we could even say impossible, to analyse such a varied kind of reality, as in the case of each single Italian territorial unit. The after-work history follows that of the workers movement step-by-step and in general the development of work within the society. The history of work in the Italian industrial society has not had a linear and simple course. In the century and a half that has just ended since 1861, the date of unity, up until now work has undergone radical changes, parallel to the ones that have involved all Italians from a material, social and cultural point of view.

There have been two turning points and transformation points that have characterized the transformations of the market of Italian work: the first refers to a reduction in activity rates; the growth of education, the birth of the pension system and an increase in the number of housewives has resulted in the last few years in a gradual fall in active population in society; the movement of the latter among the production fields is the second change that has involved our country in the last few years.

From the end of the nineteenth century to the Giolitti era, the period of the first industrialization, the birth and growth of the first blue collar workers movement was encountered. The "Società Operaie di Mutuo Soccorso" associations were born, whose initial objective was to resolve the growing problem of uncertainty due to the absence of a social security policy. In these societies workers regularly paid association fees that were used to create a sum with which support to partners in a difficult economic situation was granted. The workers companies were also social areas for the organisation of free time, cultural activities and learning activities for a working population widely excluded or marginally touched by the education system [Musso 2002, pp. 114–115]. In many cases they represented the incubators of the first trade union organizations that were born in 1906 in Milan with the name of The General Working Confederation (CGDL). In 1925 during the fascist era, the National After-Work Society was born, with the objective of dealing with the leisure time of workers.

By corporate definition of the Institution was: «moral and physical improvement of the population through sports, excursions, tourism, artistic education, popular culture, social assistance, sanitary hygiene and professional improvement». The National After work Society was a part of a maximisation plan of the habits and customs aimed at modelling the new man launched by the regime during the twenty year period: the objective was to create generalized lifestyles that could help in “national polarization” works: the organization of after work activities was therefore aimed at strictly propagandistic objectives, through sports activities the regime educated towards control and discipline [Elias 1988].

In a modern era all public as well as private structures were equipped with different forms of after work activities or in general support, help and organization of leisure time for their workers. They were backed by numerous non-profit associations that formed the galaxy of the third Italian sector, and in this way the recreational Circle of after-work activities was created. The CRAL (Italian company recreation circles) is therefore a very much deep-rooted reality in the Italian social network even though it is not very well-known by the public. Article 11 of the Workers Charter (law 300/70) states the following: “The cultural, recreational and assistance activities promoted in the company are handled by organizations formed mainly by worker representatives”, sanctioning the specific characteristics of company circles compared with other associations but, at the same time, providing them with greater responsibility compared with the role that they may play in the reform process of the social state, in light of the recent legislation on associationism of social promotion, tourism and sport.

The birth of the CRAL in Italy coincided with that of the workers organizations during the nineteenth century, a period that characterized the important economic and industrial transformations that occurred after the unity of Italy. With the fall of fascism and the crisis of the Taylor-Fordist production model, the modern organisation of after work was achieved. The CRAL therefore represents the incarnation of the previous company after work, an authority capable of favouring socialisation processes among workers in the working environment through the organisation of cultural, sports and recreational events. The various services offered by these structures include, without a doubt, the importance that sports activities have undertaken in time, playing an important role as the workers themselves requested and participated much more in sports activities.

From recent research carried out on a national level by CRAL, aimed at investigating into the services, participation and structures present on the territory, it emerged that these activities fill the free time of workers registered in the circles or the company associations [Anselmi, Meglio 2009]. In some cases the companies themselves have their own structures such as gyms, swimming pools or football pitches, for exclusive use of their employees, or alternatively specific conventions are created with external sports structures requested by employees. The most common sports activity in the recreational Circles is football and 5-

aside football together with swimming and gym, especially among the youngsters and in general young males. The organisation of amateur tournaments is also very popular among the various circles and the various territorial realities.

Even though it represented a reality, the sports activities of CRAL appeared to be more and more consolidated and deep rooted into the working reality of our country. Born with a communist inclination by the workers for the generalisation and qualification of their free time, the recreational circle now play an extremely important role in the field of social networks in the territory, due to the fact that they represent the negotiation and observatory requirements of workers. Needs that are more and more complicated and varied due to the substantial changes in the internal organization of work that has become extremely varied; due to the deep transformation in the employment market, therefore different contracts and levels of protection exist in the same working area, as defined by the law 30/2003. CRAL can truly become an instrument of cohesion and a place for opportunities for even the weakest, starting with the huge value of voluntary activities provided by the workers; furthermore, it can be seen as an instrument for company and territorial negotiation, it can play an active role in the execution of social networks provided for by the Area Plans (Law 328/2000 based on assistance).

In order to provide an efficient solution to the new and complex requirements of citizens rights, among which we have seen the request for sports activities, the road to be followed is the one of horizontal subsidies, capable of backing the universal system of social performance with the objective of expanding and enhancing it through the contribution of forms of associations that work in the field of welfare and public utility.

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