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Culture, Sports and Leisure Sectors and the Social and Solidarity Economy

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Abstract

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a central pillar of the culture, sports and leisure sector. It represents the historical heart of the sports movement and popular education. It develops collective practises in which the user plays a central role in the framework of democratic organisations based on solidarity and emancipation. Therefore, it brings together local initiatives from civil society and citizen involvement. The entry explains the values at the origin of cultural and sports practises, then underlines the critical role of partnerships and commitment in developing the culture, sports and leisure sectors. Finally, the entry presents practices that address challenges associated with professionalisation, employment quality, organisational transformations and local dynamics, and the fragility of SSEOs in these sectors during Covid-19.

Keywords

culture; sport; leisure; emancipation; democratisation; accessibility

Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a central pillar of the population's sports, recreational and cultural life. It represents the historical heart of the sports movement and popular education. It develops collective practises in which the user plays a central role in the framework of democratic organisations based on solidarity. Therefore it brings together local initiatives from the civil society and citizen involvement. It is a driver of “living together” in harmony. In the culture, sports and leisure sectors, commitment, local anchorage, and the link to the user are central. Values such as solidarity, altruism and tolerance are also highly regarded. Equal opportunities and access, the rejection of all forms of discrimination, and social ties are all principles that strengthen these sectors, which are in line with values pursued by the SSE. These values constitute the basis of ethics common to the sports and cultural communities, which differ from sports businesses and specific cultural industries marked by competition and the reign of money. These communities have in common the criticism of an elitist vision of sports and culture, and the will to anchor practises in daily life.

1. SSE contributing to democratising culture, sports and leisure

SSE initiatives in the field of culture, sport and leisure originated in the 19th century, promoting greater equity in the economy and alternatives to capitalism. For a long time, sport, leisure, and culture were part of the elitist practises of an enlightened aristocracy and a rising bourgeoisie. This original elitism has been recently replaced by a more vigorous, business-oriented development on the one hand, and by the development of cultural and creative industries, leading to new divisions in the development of these sectors on the other. Between these two dynamics, the democratisation of sport and leisure, and subsequently of culture, began progressively in the early 20th century, amplifying in the late 20th century with the massification of sport, leisure and culture. The SSE contributes to the development of amateur practises. Considering public school as one of the first driving forces in the development of sports practises such as gymnastics, citizens' collectives could be considered the second driving force, mobilising an essential resource: the voluntary sector. Activities were developed within the framework of amateur practices, for which the local area was the container.

2. The role of the state and local authorities

Since the 1920s, in developed countries, the development of the culture, sports and leisure sectors was accelerated by the emergence of leisure societies (Dumazedier 1962). In these societies, particularly from the 1960s, consensus that citizens should freely choose the use of free time became widespread, which was a part of a process of democratisation of sport, leisure and culture.

Although support from the public authorities is essential to the democratisation of sport, leisure and culture, it varies significantly across the countries. For instance, in many countries, laws stipulate that sports practises are mandatory in school curricula, thus gradually favouring the institutionalisation of the sports sector. Meanwhile, such countries also recognise sports practices as a matter of public goods. However, in other countries, it is mainly through funding, particularly subsidies from local authorities to organisations supporting activities (sports clubs, holiday camps, cultural associations,

etc.), that public authorities contribute to the development of sports, leisure and cultural activities.

The European Union is also investing more and more in the field of culture, although there is no cultural policy (Calligaro and Vlassis 2017). This commitment is often linked to support for the tourism sector in order to promote employment and creativity (see the entry “Tourism sector and SSE”).

3. The importance of volunteering

Voluntary work is central to the organisations - in particular, SSEOs - within the culture, sports and leisure sectors. In particular, voluntary work contributes to the functioning of sports associations, where parents often take on the collective training of their children. The number of volunteers is often higher than the number of permanent staff in such cases.

Box 40.1: The case of France

The sports movement encapsulating the French sports federations, has 17 million members (out of a population of 60 million individuals) and more than 300,000 associations, mobilising 3.3% of the SSE workforce and 16% of establishments. Three-quarters of sports establishments belong to the SSE sector, and 99% of them are associations. However, there is a small share of cooperatives in leisure activities that are 100% associative, unlike the case of sports activities. 95% of establishments employ less than ten employees, compared to 89% for the rest of the economy.

In sports and leisure activities, the SSE represents 55% of total employment and 74% of establishments. Within the sports sector alone, the SSE accounts for 64% of the workforce and 84% of establishments. SSE is deployed in many associative clubs present throughout the country, allowing the dissemination of diversified practices to all.

Recreational and leisure activities represent at least 38% of jobs and 35% of establishments. They take the form of activity and leisure centres, youth and cultural centres, popular education associations offering sports and leisure activities for children during the extra-curricular time, as well as recreational associations (dance clubs, card games and outdoor sports (hiking, kayaking, etc.)).

Sports and leisure activities are not highly recruited for. They rely heavily on volunteers (Tchernonog and Prouteau 2019), representing more than 120,000 full-time employment positions (more than the number of employees).

In the culture sector, the SSE has just over 22,000 employees, representing 26% of employment in the sector and three-quarters of establishments, thus signalling a large number of small establishments. As for sport and leisure, 99% of SSE establishments in the culture sector are associations, and 97% of them have less than 10 employees. Here again, the development of cultural cooperatives can be observed. The SSE is particularly prominent in the field of performing arts, while public actors are dominant in the management of heritage or public cultural facilities. As for the for-profit sector, it mainly concerns the music industry.

(Source: Atlas de l'ESS 2020)

4. Community education, emancipation and empowerment

Culture, sports and leisure activities are often historically part of community education (also see the entries “Community-based organizations” and “Education sector and SSE”). The activities are thus an opportunity for collective dynamics based on the principles of self-management, linking practises, reflection and management. Activities surrounding community education aim to give everyone the means to understand the world in order to be able to transform it. Sport, leisure and culture are thus spaces of emancipation and empowerment that allow everyone to leave the places to which they have been assigned. This is the case of the Senscot network in Scotland, which uses the arts (theatre, films, music, etc.) to help people throughout their lives, for example by helping young people to enter employment or by helping older people to combat social isolation (SENScot 2022).

Through their democratic and deliberative practices, SSEOEs have been the cradle of these initiatives. They have promoted inclusive access to sports and leisure activities, recognising a central role for the user, and promoting experimentation and access, particularly for those who, because of their income, disability, age, or location, have previously been excluded.

Sports clubs are most often formed on a small scale. They promote sociability, the transmission of social values and a sports ethos that appreciates the effort and fair play. Meanwhile, organisations in the field of culture facilitate inclusive access for the public to cultural goods and services within a territory.

5. The specificity of culture: from cultural democracy to cultural democratisation

As actors of territorial public policies, cultural groups - in particular SSEOEs in the culture sector - can access public funding which, in some countries such as France, represents a significant part of the government’s budget. However, the transformation of the financing methods of local authorities makes their development more fragile. Subsidies that used to finance the functioning of organisations are giving way to more project-oriented calls for tender. However, cultural initiatives still play a central role in local development, contributing to the animation of territories through access to culture for all. Therefore, they often exist at the heart of the co-construction of territorial public policies. At the European level, particular emphasis is placed on the role of culture in territorial attractiveness, in connection with cultural tourism and social inclusion. Here, the SSE plays a central role (Lhermitte 2021).

Fostering collective artistic creation is a key dimension of SSEOEs’ cultural projects. Beyond that, the SSE plays a driving role in the transition into the third age of cultural policies. This new dynamic is based on the conversion from cultural democracy to cultural democratisation (Benhamou 2004), leading individuals to contribute to the cultural fabric and to leave their passivity as spectators. This is clearly initiated by the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, alongside the ability to promote the cultural rights identified by civil society in the context of the Fribourg Declaration (Meyer-Bisch 2008). In particular, these initiatives point to the right of everyone to participate in cultural life and contribute to making cultural rights a driver of societal transformation in favour of the emancipation of individuals. The SSE is also playing an increasingly significant role in the development of the cultural and creative

industry, in order to contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable society, especially in disadvantaged cities and territories.

6. Challenges and opportunities for innovation

The challenges of the SSEOs in the culture, sports and leisure sectors are mainly in three areas.

Firstly, professionalisation in these sectors has been supported by the emergence of specific diplomas and an increase in the number of jobs. Yet, the employment conditions in the sports, recreational and cultural activities of the SSEOs are characterised by a fragmentation of professional activity, due to the discontinuous characteristic of some activities, their seasonality, or the lack of resources of a significant proportion of the organisations. As a result, job insecurity is prevalent within the SSEOs of these sectors. The professionalisation of the sport and leisure sector within the framework of small structures has made it necessary to share jobs between organisations. In France, this has been accompanied by the emergence of organisations such as employers' grouping, which constitute inspiring forms of social innovation. The employers' grouping, generally an association or a co-op, allows companies to join together to recruit full-time employees who could not be recruited by an individual company. By reconciling flexibility and job stability, the employers' grouping responds both to the economic realities of small and medium-sized enterprises, and to employees' legitimate need for security. In the cultural sector, the specific status of French intermittent entertainment workers makes it possible to adapt to the temporary nature of tours or shows with different employers while guaranteeing continuity of remuneration.

The Smart project, created in Belgium in 1998, now spread across eight European countries, is a cooperative that offers support to self-employed workers in the culture sector. This enables the development of their activities by offering them a self-employed status. Smart is also a cooperative platform, based on the pooling of financial and production resources and encouraging participation and solidarity among its members. Doc Servizi, a workers' cooperative with over 4000 members, is another innovative organisational form in Italy. This cooperative model becomes the artist's employer, managing contracts, invoicing, payment of tax and social and security contributions, and collection of payment from the customer. In other words, it deals with the need for professional artists (Doc Servizi 2022). Thus, the SSE seems to offer relevant solutions to promote better conditions for the exercise of cultural and sports activities.

The second challenge concerns organisational transformations in these sectors. These sectors are characterised by a more entrepreneurial dimension, particularly in relation to the development of a market sector (also see the entry “SSE and co-optation, isomorphism and instrumentalization”). Thus, in the sports sector, the development of a more diversified and personalised commercial offer, linked to the search for well-being and relaxation, carried out by profit-making companies is observed. The same is true for the growth of the commercial sector and the increase in cultural offers. The resulting increase in competition should lead to an evolution of these sectors characterised by the development of inter-firm cooperation and cooperatives involving a diversity of stakeholders. Indeed, a strengthened entrepreneurial dimension of cultural organisations within the SSE would give rise to new organisational forms, cooperatives and multi-stakeholders, or within territorial clusters or third places, associating a diversity of actors (public and private), but also citizens and the civil society as a whole. It would also contribute to the development of hybrid and complex organisations. For example, Gängeviertel, located in

Hamburg, Germany, is a multi-purpose third sector organisation, founded by social activists with a background in arts and culture. The goal is to preserve a traditional housing compound in the heart of the city which was earmarked for demolition. Gängeviertel now combines a holding for a membership-based club and a co-operative in charge of managing the housing compound, alongside organising cultural activities and events. Another example from Germany, TSG Bergerdorf Sports Club, has changed its organisational form from a traditional gymnastics club to a skills development space for young people. It also offers a diverse range of sports as part of the commercial activities provided which are linked to wellness expectations. They have been able to adapt their governance to these transformations by developing a more complex structuring in connection with the diversification of activities and the strengthening of their commercial dynamics (Zimmer et al. 2018).

These organisational transformations can also be illustrated by the strengthening of the link to the territory, with this being particularly significant in the culture sector. For example, in the city of Chuncheon, within northern South Korea, the cultural sector has been particularly active in deploying programs to support the development of social enterprises, with the aim of revitalising the territory according to two objectives: creating employment; and developing the attractiveness of the territory (Lee and Defalvard 2019). We can also observe the development of clusters at the local level which, by encouraging cooperation, allow the development of creativity and innovation, and contribute to local development (UNIDO Report 2015). In Marseille, France, La Friche la Belle de Mai is now a place of creativity and innovation, converted from the Seita tobacco factory into a cultural complex. La Friche la Belle de Mai, a multi-stakeholder cooperative, is both a workplace for the 70 organisations (400 artists and creatives working here every day) and a place for cultural dissemination and events (600 public art events per year, from youth workshops to large-scale festivals). With over 450,000 visitors a year, la Friche la Belle de Mai is a multi-faceted public space comprising a sports area, restaurant, five-concert and theatre venues, shared gardens, a bookshop, a crèche, 2,400 square metres of exhibition space dedicated to contemporary art, an 8000 square metre roof terrace, a training centre, and soon a public primary school (Friche la Belle de Mai 2022). Creative hubs (Bilbao, Barcelona, Berlin etc) - sometimes supported by museums, as in the case of the “Guggenheim effect” - have been used to boost local development. The multiplier effect of culture-based investment presents an opportunity to reap local benefits in cultural, social and economic terms. It is this dynamic that can be found in the framework of the European Capital of Culture projects which, since 1985, have been a strategic tool for the development of the host city, bringing coherence to initially disparate activities.

Finally, it should be noted that the Covid pandemic has weakened the whole sector. Although this sector seemed resilient throughout the 2000s in Europe, with 7.5% of total employment and more than 5% of European added value (Eurostat 2022), it seems to have been strongly affected by the pandemic. In Europe, the cultural and creative industries lost 31% of their turnover in 2020, greater than the losses of other sectors of the economy (Lhermitte 2021), due to the closure of establishments and their inability to be open to the public due to restrictions.

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