

SOCIAL CAPITAL DIMENSIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY: "INCLUSIVE" VS. "EXCLUSIONARY" SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SPORT GOVERNANCE

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The growing body of research on social capital presents an ambiguity of definitions and a variety of interrelated meanings. On the one hand, social capital refers to associational life, the collective value of social networks, strategies and connections, broader identities, respect for ethnic, racial and gender diversity, the elimination of socioeconomic exclusions, civic engagement, etc. On the other hand, arguments suggest that social capital can reinforce 'exclusive' identities, homogeneous groups, social divides, gender classifications, 'capitalization', and egocentric bonding. Beginning with a critical exploration of the concept— theoretical origins and applications— the study examines the current usage, the neutral nature of social capital as a 'producer' of social cohesion, civic engagement, social action, and community service. Social capital, a core concept in sociology, political science, organizational behaviour and business, is relatively new in the context of European sport governance, sport management— and not only. This paper examines the social capital in sports, as a key component of understanding the relationship between European sport governing bodies (SGBs), and in particular the 'inclusive' vs. 'exclusionary' or rather 'dark' social capital in sport governance. Namely, the 'leaky pipeline' in competitive sports, the 'glass ceiling' in SGBs and the impact of commercialization. For example, women are still under-represented, and not only due to the socio-cultural causes associated with the chronological delay in eliminating barriers to inclusion. Today, women in the IOC still comprise a 'restricted minority': from a total of the 116 members only 12 are women (10,3%).

Keywords: associational life, civic engagement, social action, community service, service-learning activities, social cohesion, the 'leaky pipeline', the 'glass ceiling', gender exclusion, under-representation of women in SGBs.

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