
Update No. 3 – August 25, 2000

Sport and Social Cohesion

Résumés

Robert D. Putnam, 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Although some may not see it as a sport, bowling is certainly a game involving a certain level of physical exercise. Building on his previous research on social capital, Robert Putnam argues in his new book that Americans have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbours, and democratic structures - and suggest ways that they can reconnect. Putnam shows how, in the last quarter century, changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women's roles, and other factors have contributed to the decline of social capital in the United States.

Council of Europe, 2000. *Towards a Comprehensive Policy on Sport and Social Cohesion*. Bratislava, May 30-31.

This is the document describing the policy that European Ministers responsible for Sport urged governments to incorporate into their sports policies to facilitate the participation of all people in sport. The Council of Europe has been focusing on sport at least since 1997, when heads of European states and governments adopted a declaration recognizing "the role of sport in promoting social integration" and subsequently adopted recommendation 99/9 on the Role of Sport in Furthering Social Cohesion. The policy adopted last May in Bratislava acknowledges that all sport has social consequences it that it can provide favourable conditions for people to meet and make contact. European governments, businesses and NGOs are invited to use sport as a way to combat social exclusion. Sport improves health, is a source of entertainment, a meeting ground, a contact point between cultures, and it can also provide employment. For more information, see: <http://culture.coe.fr/infocentre/txt/eng/esprec99.9.htm>

John Sugden and Alan Bairner (eds). 1999. Sport in Divided Societies. Aachen (Germany).

This collection of essays on the sociology of sports looks at the role of sport in the construction of both political integration and division. The book contains 10 essays and one introductory chapter by the coeditors. All the chapters discuss the theme of sport in societies such as Ireland, Canada and Belgium. The concept of looking at sport in divided societies is derived in part from the coeditors' book on sport in Ireland, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland* (1993). The book as a whole provides an insightful overview of the literature on sport and national identity. The authors remind us that sport has often been used to promote different kind of political projects. Two broad aspects have received academic analysis: sport and nation-building, and sport and the promotion of ethnic or national claims. Sport is seen as an opportunity for affirming national unity, promoting supra-ethnic civic nationalism, and social integration.

What's New?

In mid-July, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that his government was ready to introduce its new Football Disorder Bill as a way to stamp out hooliganism. The government wants its football hooliganism legislation adopt this autumn in order to avoid problems when England is due to plays games in France and Finland. To find out more see: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk>

On September 14, 2000, the Social Cohesion Network of the federal government will hold a workshop in Ottawa on the transformation in the family and its implications for social cohesion. This is the third in the Social Cohesion Network's Workshop Series on "What Will Hold Us Together?" For more information visit the website of the Social Cohesion Network at: <http://policyresearch.schoolnet.ca/networks/cohsoc/sc-wksp-e.htm>

On January 25-26, 2001, the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), in collaboration with the Free University of Brussels, will hold a conference in Montreal on "Social Cohesion and Social Protection: New Convergences or Nostalgic Hopes?" To learn more about the conference, contact Caroline Meilleur at: meilleur.caroline@uqam.ca