Chapter 6
Sport Clubs in Denmark

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6.1 Introduction

The kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy, consisting of Denmark and the two autonomous areas: the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic and Greenland. This analysis does not include the latter two parts of the kingdom. Denmark has 5.6 million inhabitants spread over approx. 43,000 km^2.

Voluntary sport clubs form an essential element of sport and exercise in Denmark. Four out of ten adults and eight out of ten school children perform sports or take other kinds of exercise in one or more of the estimated 16,000 sport clubs in Denmark, all based on the principles of the voluntary association. An association is normally regarded as a union of people with common aims or interests, organised and managed by commonly accepted democratic rules and procedures (Ibsen and Habermann 2005).

Generally associations and voluntary work play a relatively large role in Denmark compared to other European countries. A comparative analysis of the voluntary non-profit sector in selected European countries shows that the sector's share of the total economy in Denmark is greater than in most European countries, being at the same level as in the UK, Ireland and Belgium and only clearly lower than in Holland, where the non-profit sector plays the greatest economic role (Boje 2008). An EU survey in 2008 put the Nordic countries ahead of all their European partners in terms of the proportion of their populations participating in voluntary

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and charitable activities (McCloughan et al. 2011). Politically, there is a strong belief in Denmark in the social significance of associations and especially their impact on social inclusion and cohesion.

The aim of this chapter is therefore firstly to describe the features that characterise sport clubs in Denmark, secondly to explain the strong position of sport organised in voluntary associations and thirdly to explore the truth of the widespread assumption that participation in sport clubs contributes to social inclusion and the formation of social capital.

The analysis is based primarily on four studies. The description of specific characteristics of sport clubs is based on a comprehensive study of Danish sport clubs from 2010. The questionnaire was sent to more than 10,000 sport clubs, all members of the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark, of which 50.4 % responded (Laub 2012).

The analysis of the participation in sport clubs of both children and adults is based on a number of repeated surveys of sports habits in Denmark, the most recent conducted in 2011. A comprehensive questionnaire including questions about the organisational forms of the sports activities was completed by 3,957 adults, or 44 % of those who received the questionnaire, and 2,035 children representing 50 % of those surveyed (Laub 2013).

The third study, which we refer to later in this chapter, is a major study of all types of local associations. The study included a registration of local voluntary associations in 2004 and in 2010 in a region in Denmark (the islands of Fyn, Langeland and Ærø) along with a subsequent questionnaire survey of a representative selection of the registered associations (Ibsen et al. 2013).

The last part of the chapter is based on a survey conducted at the member level in 2011 with responses from 2,023 members, volunteers and paid employees from 30 sport clubs representing five sporting activities (Østerlund 2013).

6.2 History and Context

The introductory chapter of this book includes a description of different theoretical explanations for the existence of voluntary associations. One of the theories explains the size and characteristics of the voluntary sector as a result of the characteristics of the welfare state. Another theory has more focus on the historical roots of the voluntary movements and organisations. The size and composition of the voluntary, non-profit sector is assumed to be historically determined and affected by the type of the welfare state within which it has developed. Inspired by these two theoretical explanations we will in this part of the chapter describe the historical development of the voluntary sector with particular focus on sports organised into clubs, and in the next part examine the societal and political embedding of the sport clubs in Denmark.

In order to understand the development of the voluntary sector in Denmark, three factors have to be taken into account: (a) the adoption of a democratic constitution,

(b) the emergence of popular movements and (c) the formation of the welfare state. When the absolute monarch gave in to pressure from the people and the new constitution was adopted in 1849, the Danish Constitutional Act prepared the ground for an expansion in civil engagement across society. Now the citizens had the freedom to join any organisation, union or association. Being a member was not in itself anything new, but the association, based as it was on free membership and democratic rules, provided a new form of participation. After the adoption of the constitution, the civil right to form associations and organisations was ensured, and *the association* became a central feature of almost all spheres of society: political party associations, interest organisations (landlords' associations, artisans' associations, smallholders' association, etc.), trade unions, economic associations (savings banks, health insurance societies and cooperatives), philanthropic associations, religious associations, sports associations and so on.

This period towards the end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of substantial popular movements: *the agricultural cooperative movement*, the labour movement, the revivals between two religious movements (the Grundtvigian movement and Evangelical movement/Home Mission), the temperance movement and the movements promoting popular sport and outdoor activities (Klausen and Selle 1996). From these derive the values and traditions that still characterise many associations. For the development of the Danish welfare state, popular movements had an enormous political significance as democratic partners and opponents.

One of the first national voluntary organisations was the Danish Rifle Shooting Association founded in 1861. The aim of the organisation was to strengthen the defence of the nation, but because of the historical events that followed in the wake of 1864, when Denmark lost a war to Germany, gymnastics (mainly a result of Swedish influence) became the rallying ground for young people, particularly in rural parts of the country, from the 1880s onwards. Throughout the nineteenth century gymnastics was central to the development of a popular sports movement in Denmark that was constantly adapting and reshaping itself organisationally as it expanded, incorporating and merging new members. The overarching sports organisation for this branch of sport and exercise in Denmark today is Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (DGI) founded in 1991.[1]

Parallel to the development of the popular gymnastics movement in the country, sport clubs derived from the English model emerged in and around urban centres. Initially they were home to the bourgeoisie of the industrial age, but eventually blue-collar workers also joined or united to form their own sport clubs, underlining the broad appeal of voluntary sport clubs for the Danish public. Contrary to the gymnastics movement's focus on local community and civic engagement, clubs built on the English model placed emphasis on the core values of sport itself, on performance and competition, which were also characteristic of the spirit of the industrial age (Korsgaard 1997). In 1896 these clubs joined forces to form the Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF). Over time DIF became the central organisation

[1] The organisation was formed by an amalgamation of two organisations, both of which had roots in shooting and gymnastic movement from the 1800s.

for a wide range of sports federations and the body in charge of organising Danish championships. This led to natural ties with the Danish Olympic Committee, founded in 1905 and eventually merged into DIF in 1993.

In 1946 a third umbrella organisation entered the field in the shape of the Danish Association for Company Sports (DFIF), which organises sport clubs based around workplace communities. DFIF took the lead in developing a particularly Danish tradition of merging the personal and professional sphere by engaging in sporting activities with colleagues (Ibsen and Eichberg 2012).

According to the latest figures from 2013, DIF organises 9,287 sport clubs with 1.9 million members, DGI organises 6,331 clubs with total 1.5 million members and the Danish Association for Company Sports organises 244 sport clubs (each of which represents a number of workplaces) with 350,000 members (DGI 2013). Many clubs are, however, members of both the two largest organisations, but there are also associations that deal with sport and physical activity that are not members of a sports organisation. The total number of sport clubs in Denmark is estimated to be 16,000, which correspond to one association for every 350 inhabitants.

Although the differences between these umbrella organisations have to some extent disappeared, and although most clubs today choose sides for practical rather than ideological reasons, the two major national sports organisations, DIF and DGI, continue to exist side by side, supplemented by the more specialised DFIF. The sporting landscape in Denmark is in this way quite different from neighbouring countries, as there is not one single national organisation for voluntary sport clubs but, so to speak, two and a half. Over the years, this structural heterogeneity in the field of sports has been the topic of much debate, subject to criticism for being administratively irrational and praised for being dynamic and inclusive (Ibsen and Eichberg 2012).

Voluntary sport clubs are, however, not the only way to be physically active in an organised setting in Denmark. Many women go to various forms of training—typically non-competitive gymnastics, yoga, meditation and the like—at *evening leisure classes*, non-profit institutions that offer non-formal adult education and leisure activities with the aim of allowing the individual to develop their skills or understanding.

6.3 Role of Sport Clubs in Policy and Society

In this part of the chapter, we firstly look at the participation of the population in sport clubs, and secondly we focus on the societal and political embedding of the sport clubs in Denmark.

Denmark is a country with relatively high levels of general participation in sport. Among adult Danes (16 years and above), general participation in sports has been steadily on the rise for the past 50 years or so. From 1964 to 2011, participation rates rose from 15 to 64 %. Children (7–15 years) have only been monitored in 2007 and 2011, but figures indicate a stable and high level of general participation with between eight and nine out of ten children participating in sport.

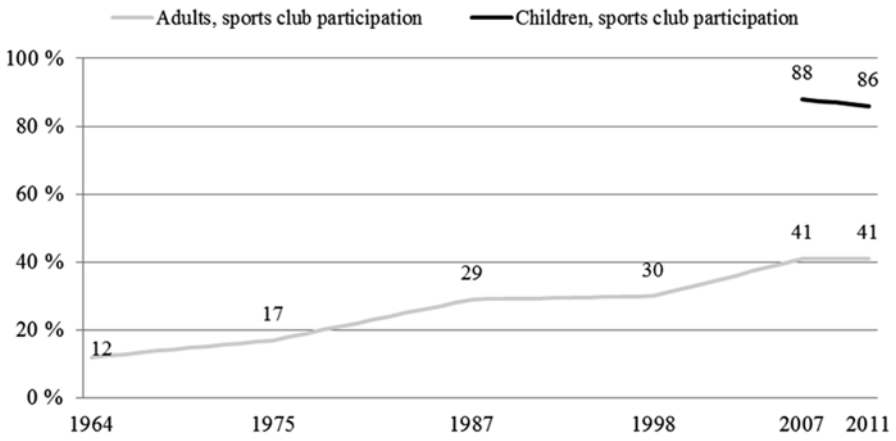

Fig. 6.1 Historical development in participation in sport clubs among Danish children and adults

Sport club participation in Denmark is high in comparison with other European countries (European Commission 2010; Scheerder et al. 2011). In the sports participation survey of 2011, 86 % of children (aged 7–15) and 41 % of adults (16 and above) had participated in one or more sports activities in a voluntary club setting regularly during the previous year (Fig. 6.1).

As the numbers suggest, voluntary clubs are an integral part of Danish children's sports participation. Between the ages of 7 and 15, almost all children do sport in one form or another, and almost all of these in a club setting. However, sport clubs fall somewhat out of favour, and other settings grow in popularity when comparing how different age groups organise their sporting activities (Fig. 6.2).

Where children (or their parents) choose to participate in sports is linked to what they choose to do. Seven out of ten of the most popular sports among children are predominantly organised in a club, meaning that the majority of the children engaging in the specific sport do so in a sport club (Fig. 6.3).

These seven major club sports are football, swimming, gymnastics,[2] handball, badminton, dancing and horse riding. Three out of four Danish children aged 7–15 do at least one of these sports regularly in a sport club.

During adolescence, however, a significant drop in the popularity of sport clubs occurs. Club participation rates fall from 82 % among the age group 13–15 to 58 % among late teenagers aged 16–19 and fall further to 44 % among Danes in their 20s. Dropping out of sport clubs does not necessarily end sports participation in general. Large numbers of Danes between 15 and 30 years of age opt for other organisational settings, often accompanied by a change in sporting activities. The two most popular activities in the age groups 16–19 and 20–29 are running and strength training. The former is most often done alone or in self-organised groups (with friends or family).

[2] Sport clubs offering gymnastics often include a number of keep-fit activities, such as spinning, aerobics and Zumba.

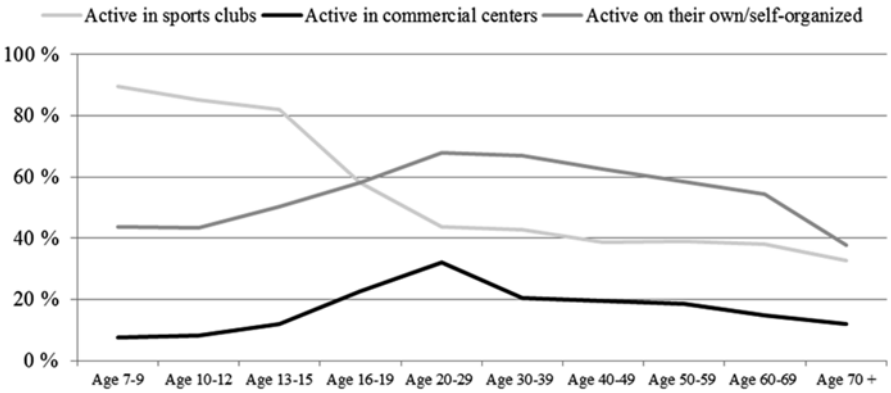

Fig. 6.2 Proportion of population who do sports or physical activity in different organisational contexts, by age groups (percent)

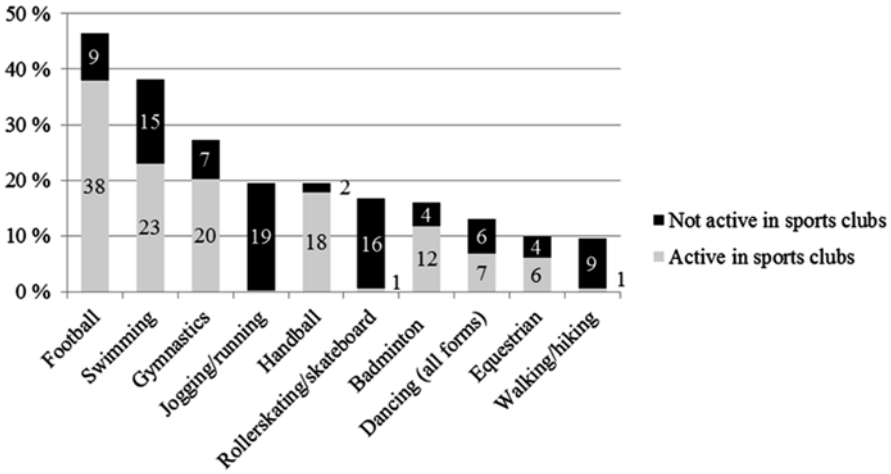

Fig. 6.3 Proportion of children who participate in sport in a sport club, divided into the ten most popular sports (percent)

In clear contrast to Danish children's top ten, only three of the most popular activities among Danish adults take place predominantly in club settings. These are gymnastics (particularly popular among seniors), football (particularly popular among the young adults) and badminton, coming in at fifth, eighth and tenth on adults' top ten sporting activities (Fig. 6.4).

In Denmark, differences between male and female sports participation in general are insignificant. Boys and girls are often equally active in sport clubs, but they often choose different clubs to be active in. Significantly more boys than girls play football and badminton in clubs, while it is the other way around for dancing,

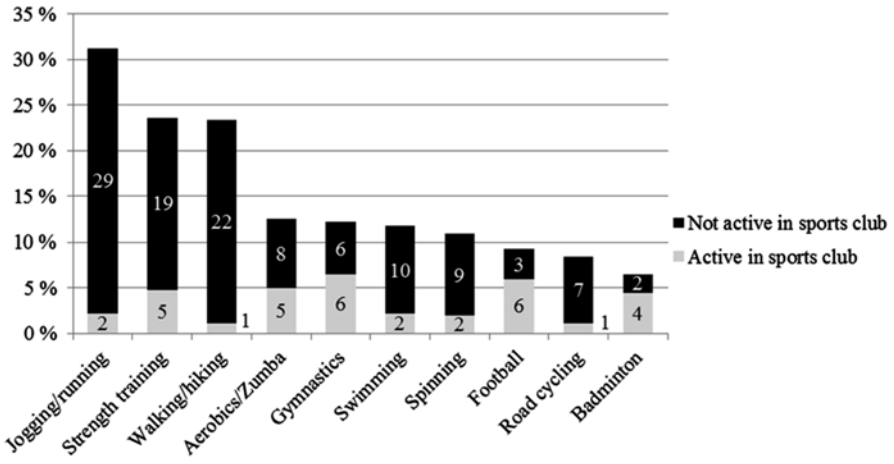

Fig. 6.4 Proportion of adults who participate in sports in a sport club, divided into the ten most popular sports (percent)

equestrian sports and gymnastics. In only two of the seven traditional club sports for children is the boy/girl ratio roughly even: handball and swimming.

While adult men and women often participate in sport in general,[3] men are more often found in sport clubs than women. This is primarily because of men's tendency to end their club participation (most often in football clubs) later in life, than girls/women.

Young women in particular replace sport club participation with membership of commercial centres, most often doing team exercises (aerobics, spinning, yoga) or weight training. As a result, at the age of 20–29, the share of women in active commercial centres equals the share of women active in sport clubs at 35 %. But while commercial centres fall somewhat out of favour with Danes (both men and women) over 30 years of age, sport clubs participation decreases only slightly with age as shown in Fig. 6.2.

Although sports participation in general and participation in clubs specifically are relatively widespread among the Danish population, both coincide significantly with socio-economic background variables, educational level being the most significant factor.

Approximately only one in four adult Danes with primary school education as their highest level of education participates in club-organised sports. Among adults with upper secondary or equivalent vocational training, the share active in sport clubs is 42 %. When considering these numbers, it is important to bear in mind that age has an underlying influence on statistics, because low levels of education are more common in older age groups.

[3] Statistically significant differences in general participation (women > men) are found, however, when taking into account a middle response option ("I do sport, but not for the time being"), which is otherwise included as a negative answer. Significantly more women give this answer than men.

In summary, the analysis of sports participation in Denmark shows that, compared with most other European countries, a relatively large proportion of those active in sport, both children and adults, make use of a voluntary club but that the proportion decreases with age. Furthermore, the analysis shows that, although sport clubs over the past three decades have faced competition from new organisational forms, the percentage of adults who practise sport in a sport club has increased.

6.3.1 Societal, Political Embedding

Now we turn to question how the voluntary-organised sport is embedded in society with a particular focus on the institutional framework and conditions for the clubs.

In comparative social analyses, the Danish social model is called "the institutionalised welfare model" (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 27), which is characterised by a large public sector and universal, egalitarian and redistributive welfare schemes. Compared with other countries, the Danish model has relatively small differences in real wages and in the position of men and women in society. Culturally, Denmark is a very homogeneous society, ethnically as well as religiously, but also a very secularised society. Sometimes Denmark and the other Nordic countries are described as *consensual democracies*. These are systems that prefer to solve problems and conflicts through talk, debate, compromise and controlled conflict, and where all types of organisations have easy access to the political decision-making process. At the same time, important social areas and sectors are characterised by considerable autonomy and self-regulation. The labour force is mainly regulated by agreements between employers and trade unions; the private commercial sector has been subject to relatively little state intervention; and in the educational field there is a strong tradition for private, non-profit, schools, for specialised boarding schools for children aged 15–16, and for so-called *folk high schools*, where people of all ages can develop particular interests. Most of them are based on Grundtvigian *learning for life* and all are funded by the state.

A large public sector combined with a relatively homogeneous society should, according to economic theory, result in a small voluntary sector (Weisbrod 1977). However, this is not the case in Denmark, and this may have something to do with the political framework and with the conditions under which associations and voluntary organisations operate. The overall assumption is that certain conditions are crucial for the actions of organisations and associations. Notably, four conditions have a decisive significance for the voluntary sector:

1. *The right to form associations:* The Danish Constitution states that *citizens have the right without preceding authorisation to form associations for any lawful purpose*, and *that citizens have the right without preceding authorisation to gather unarmed.* In other words, citizens have the right to form associations and gather for common purposes and activities that are legal. Moreover, it is easy to establish an association without having to surmount difficult, bureaucratic obstacles. In Denmark an association does not need to be approved by the government, and the government cannot ban associations unless the matter is taken to court.

2. *The responsibility of the civil society for collective tasks:* In Denmark there are several areas in which civil society is responsible for collective tasks or has the right to organise common interests. Examples of this are:

   - Citizens have (under certain conditions) the right to form free, democratic (non-profit) schools built on other values and educational principles than state schools but nevertheless funded by the state.
   - Municipalities have handed over several responsibilities in housing areas to local housing associations (e.g. maintenance of roads, observance of building regulations).
   - The Leisure Recreation Act, which governs the distribution of public funding for culture, youth and sport activities for children and youngsters, states that aid can only be given to voluntary democratic associations.

3. *Bias in favour of voluntary organisations and associations:* It is highly significant that in certain social areas the government *favours* democratic associations over commercial companies. This includes governmental aid and tax benefits. For example:

   - Cultural, youth and sports associations in Denmark do not pay to use public premises for activities for children and youngsters.
   - People who do voluntary work can receive around €650 per year to cover expenses without being taxed.
   - Cultural, youth and sports associations receive financial support from central and local government.

Since the early stages of organised sport in Denmark, the government has supported voluntary sports organisations and clubs, though support has varied substantially (Ibsen and Eichberg 2012; Ibsen and Habermann 2005). From 1849 to 1945 public sector involvement was limited, although rifle clubs and later their associated gymnastics divisions did receive financial support from the government (Nordby 2009). More importantly, local municipal involvement increased from the turn of the twentieth century, resulting in the construction of numerous sports facilities, owned entirely or in part by local authorities. From 1945 to 1970 there was a drastic increase in government support for sport, combined with relatively little political involvement in the field. The creation of a monopoly on national football pools in 1948 (including the lottery in 1989) generated substantial profit with a statutory dividend awarded to sports organisations. This system has, with minor adjustments, remained in place since its creation, and it is vital to the economic and political autonomy of sports organisations (Eichberg and Loland 2010).

In 1968 a leisure act was passed that instructed local municipalities to grant voluntary associations, the vast majority of which were sport clubs, free use of public facilities. This legislation was naturally accompanied by a massive expansion in the construction of local public sports facilities. This meant that the latter half of the twentieth century saw the creation of a Danish sports system with two parallel economic circuits. One funded national sports organisations through pools and lottery profits, and the other supported voluntary clubs, particularly through building and securing access to public sports facilities at a local level through municipal budgets.

In 2013 the pools and lottery profits funding sports organisations and bodies amounted to about €122 million (the lion's share going to DIF and DGI). This is exceeded, however, by the investments made by municipalities in the field of sports, which altogether amount to about €425 million, most of which goes to public facilities.[4]

Recent years have seen a growing municipal involvement in sport. As sport has increasingly been recognised for social and health effects, local political interest has intensified and broadened perspectives on what sport is and how it should be supported from the public sector. Having being viewed almost exclusively as an activity for young people in voluntary clubs, sport is today understood as being relevant to all sectors of the population in a wide variety of ways. These even include negative ways, as indicated by the current focus on *dark sides* of sport (social exclusion, fitness doping and so on).

4. *High degree of autonomy despite public support*: Lastly, and crucially, the public sector respects the self-determination of associations, even though they receive public funding. This means that every association determines:

   - Its ideology, goal and activities
   - How it is organised (given that it is democratic)
   - Its method of working and educational principles as determined by its members
   - How the activities are financed and funds are used (given that profit is not distributed to its members)

In summary, the analysis of the relationships between the voluntary and the public sector shows (a) that voluntary-organised sports have significant direct and indirect financial support from the public sector, (b) that despite this only minor demands are made by the public sector on associations (c) and that these principles for public support for sport clubs have existed almost unchanged for almost 50 years.

6.4 Characteristics of Sport Clubs

In this section we move from the perspective of individual participation in sport clubs to the perspective of the club. The focus is on central characteristics of sport clubs and their role in society. The central topics are their size and forms of participation, the structure and membership democracy, volunteering and professionalisation, finances and sports facilities, collaborations and, finally, problems and challenges.

[4] Data obtained from Statistics Denmark's publicly available data file on government cultural appropriations (BEVIL01).

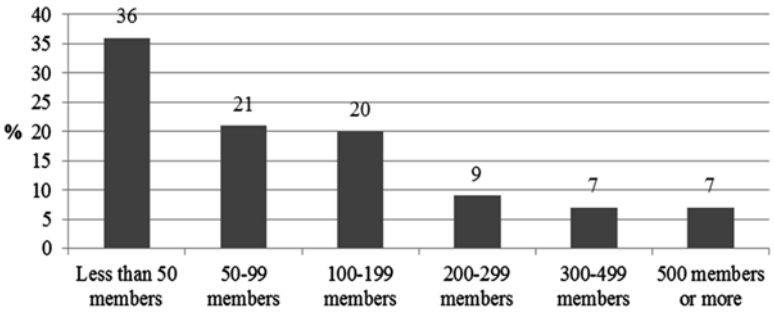

Fig. 6.5 Size of sport clubs

On average, Danish sport clubs have 160 members, but this average figure conceals a large diversity in the membership of sport clubs. The majority are relatively small. Almost six out of ten (57 %) have fewer than 100 members, whereas less than one-tenth (7 %) have more than 500 members. In spite of this, sport clubs with more than 500 members contain more than one-third (36 %) of the total membership. Hence, large sport clubs make up a small proportion of clubs but contain a relatively large proportion of the total membership (Laub 2012) (Fig. 6.5).

Almost seven out of ten sport clubs (69 %) characterise themselves as single-sport clubs in the sense that they provide only one sports activity for their membership. Conversely, a little more than three out of ten (31 %) characterise themselves as units or sections of multi-sports clubs[5] (Laub 2012).

Regardless of sports activity, most clubs offer training for their members. Only 1 in 20 sport clubs report that none of their members participate in training, but for a little less than half of all clubs' (47 %) training involves less than half of all members (Laub 2012). This reflects the fact that even though the vast majority of sport clubs offer training, a large group of members do not take advantage of the offer, whether by choice or because training is restricted to particular groups of members depending on, for instance, age and competitive level.

Nine out of ten clubs (91 %) offer opportunities for members to participate in competitions. Sixty-one percent of sport clubs participate in competitions at the national level, 74 % participate at a regional level, while 63 % participate locally. These figures reflect the fact that many clubs compete on a number of different levels. As with training, a large group of members do not participate in competitions. In almost six out of ten clubs (59 %), less than half of the members participate in competitions (Laub 2012). Again, in some instances this reflects a deliberate

[5] In relation to the figures presented here, it is worth noting that subsidiaries of multi-sport clubs are counted as individual clubs. This is due to the manner in which they are categorised by DIF, one of the main umbrella organisations for organised sport in Denmark. This means that the proportion of multi-sport clubs is less than 31 %, but we do not have data from recent surveys telling us how much less. A study from 1997 estimated that multi-sport clubs make up around a quarter of the population of sport clubs, but since then there is evidence that the population of single-sport clubs has grown somewhat faster than the population of multi-sport clubs (Ibsen 2006).

choice from members not to participate, while in others it reflects the fact that competitions are restricted to particular groups of members.

Even though most sport clubs are single-sport clubs with a strong focus on the main sports activity, many offer a broader range of activities. An example of this is the relatively high proportion of clubs that, within the past year, have offered activities or teams targeted at specific groups, such as families (42 %), the elderly (36 %), the physically inactive (13 %), people with disabilities (13 %) and ethnic minorities (11 %). Furthermore, more than a third (35 %) have offered activities related to exercise or events that are open to groups other than members (Laub 2012).

Non-sports activities are also commonly found in sport clubs. Social activities were organised by 86 % of sport clubs for their members within the past year, and half of the clubs arranged cultural and leisure activities. Within the same time period, 44 % arranged or participated in local events with a focus other than sport (Laub 2012). Jointly, these figures indicate that most sport clubs give priority to other target areas than those closely linked to the sports activity.

Sport clubs are membership democracies. A board is elected by members at the annual general meeting, which is the highest democratic authority. Besides the annual general meeting, a little more than six out of ten sport clubs (61 %) report that they involve members in decisions that concern their team or group, and almost half (49 %) host meetings for members, where important matters are discussed (Ibsen et al. 2013).

Judging from the structure of sport clubs and from the different ways in which clubs report involving members in decision-making, therefore, it seems that members can easily influence decision-making. This is confirmed by a study showing that nine out of ten members who find it important to be able to influence decision-making report that they find ample opportunity to influence their respective sport clubs (Torpe 2003).

Another way for members to influence decision-making in their respective sport clubs and to contribute to its daily operation is to become volunteers. Seven out of ten sport clubs are run exclusively on a voluntary basis, and a little more than nine out of ten (92 %) of those who contribute to the daily operation of sport clubs are unpaid in the sense that they do not receive taxable pay for their efforts[6] (Laub 2012). It therefore seems justified to characterise volunteers as the primary resource securing the survival of sport clubs.

Volunteers can be divided into two main groups based on the nature of their contribution. First we have a group of volunteer managers, who are either enrolled in the board or on committees. Next we have coaches and instructors, who conduct the training of one or more teams or groups.[7] As an illustration of the degree of volunteer involvement in sport clubs, the volunteer-to-member ratio can be applied.

[6] This means that, within the group of volunteers, some receive remuneration that is not taxable. In most cases this remuneration is relatively modest, but in some cases it can be substantial, and in these instances it is debatable whether they can be categorised as volunteers. Due to the lack of data here, they will, however, be treated as volunteers.

[7] There is also a third, more indeterminable group of volunteers working with *other tasks* such as maintenance, administration and a number of ad hoc tasks. Due to large variations in the way clubs interpret this third group, it will not be included in the analyses below because the figures are subject to considerable uncertainty.

Table 6.1 The volunteer-to-member ratio in different sports activities

Sports activity	Volunteer-to-member ratio
Handball	6
Football	7
Badminton	17
Gymnastics	23
Tennis	23
Golf	34
Swimming	41
All sports	10

The lower the ratio, the higher the level of volunteer involvement. On average, there are 19 members per volunteer manager and 13 members per volunteer coach and instructor. Including volunteer managers along with coaches and instructors, the average volunteer-to-member ratio is 10.

These average figures mask significant variations across the membership of sport clubs. The volunteer-to-member ratio increases with the size of sport clubs, meaning that they have fewer volunteers per member. There are also considerable variations as regards the nature of sports activities. Some sports demand more volunteers than others. Team ballgames, like football and handball, have a relatively high demand for volunteers, whereas recreational sports activities, such as tennis, golf and swimming, have a significantly lower demand (Laub 2012). This is illustrated in Table 6.1, where the volunteer-to-member ratios in some of the largest sports are shown.

Even though the vast majority of the workforce in sport clubs is made up of volunteers, it seems relevant to briefly describe the degree of professionalisation in sport clubs. Of their managers, coaches and instructors 7 % receive taxable pay for their efforts. Almost no managers (2 %) are paid, while it is more common for coaches and instructors (13 %) to receive taxable pay (Laub 2012). We do not have exact figures for the amounts of money paid employees in sport clubs receive, but they are in most instances relatively modest. Only a small segment of the largest and wealthiest clubs have full-time employees working as, for instance, sports managers or coaches.

Again there are significant differences between different sports activities in degrees of professionalisation. Swimming has by far the highest percentage of paid employees relative to volunteers, followed by gymnastics and tennis, while team ballgames such as football and handball are among the sports with the lowest degree of professionalisation (Table 6.2).

Another aspect of professionalisation is the degree to which volunteers receive training targeted at improving their efforts within sport clubs. In that respect, training courses have traditionally had the highest level of awareness from both sport clubs and sports organisations. A little more than half of all sport clubs (54 %) report that they give volunteers the opportunity to participate in training courses (Laub 2012). In that respect it is quite common for sport clubs to provide opportunities for volunteers to improve their knowledge and skills.

Table 6.2 The degree of professionalisation in different sports activities

Sports activity	Degree of professionalisation
Swimming	38
Gymnastics	24
Tennis	19
Badminton	13
Golf	11
Handball	6
Football	6
All sports	7

Furthermore, data at the individual level show that among regular volunteers,[8] almost three out of four (74 %) have participated in at least one course related to the work they do in the sport club. The majority of the courses are short, lasting a day or two. Only a little more than one in ten regular volunteers (12 %) have participated in longer courses lasting for weeks or even months. At the same time, more than half of the regular volunteers (55 %) report that they have professional training relating to the work they do in their respective sport clubs. The three most prominent forms of training are in management (21 %), in PE (18 %) and in pedagogy (16 %) (Østerlund 2013).

Generally speaking, sport clubs have healthy finances. This is certainly the case if we consider financial data from 2009. That year, almost four out of ten clubs (38 %) reported surpluses, a little more than four out of ten (42 %) had broken even, while only one in five sport clubs reported losses (Laub 2012). It is important to stress here that a surplus in a sport club can only benefit the club. This is due to the structure of sport clubs as associations, which means that surpluses cannot be withdrawn from clubs.

In 2009, the average revenue of sport clubs was €55,000, and on average the clubs had a small surplus of €2,300. These figures are, however, average figures from a very diverse range of sport clubs. This range includes a large number of small clubs with correspondingly small revenues alongside a small number of large clubs with revenues in excess of one million euros.[9] More specifically, almost four out of ten sport clubs (39 %) have relatively small revenues of less than €10,000, whereas only 15 % have revenues in excess of €100,000 (Laub 2012).

The pie chart below clearly shows that the largest proportion of the income of sport clubs is self-generated. It derives primarily from membership fees, which on average make up 60 % of the total revenues, and through supporters, events and activities, which make up 10 %. Jointly, these self-generated income sources make up 70 % of total revenues (Fig. 6.6).

Apart from self-generated income sources, sport clubs also generate income through sponsorships, which make up 10 % of the total revenues. Surprisingly

[8] Regular volunteers are defined as volunteers who provide a continuous effort for the sport club at least once every second week.

[9] A large proportion of these clubs are golf clubs.

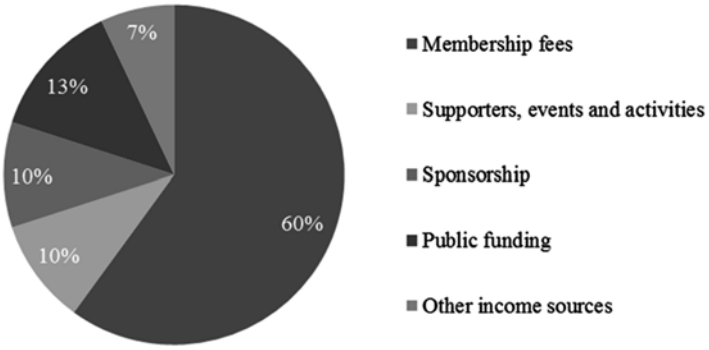

Fig. 6.6 The distribution of revenues in sport clubs

perhaps, public funding only makes up 13 % of the total revenues (Laub 2012). The largest part of this funding comes from municipalities and is based on the number of members under the age of 25. Hence, clubs with activities for children and adolescents are those that receive the largest amounts of public funding.

The fact that public funding only makes up a small portion of total revenues is an expression of the ability of sport clubs to generate their own income, but it also reflects the funding system, whereby the greater part of public funding from municipalities to sport clubs is distributed through the provision of facilities. Municipalities are obliged by law to provide facilities free of charge for the activities of sport clubs, apart from any service fees that municipalities are permitted by law to charge within certain regulatory limits.

The facilities must be suited for the activities of the respective sport clubs, but the requirements are not specifically addressed in the law. In those cases where municipalities are not able to provide appropriate facilities, they are obliged to give subsidies to privately owned facilities run by sport clubs. Most sport clubs use facilities owned by municipalities, and it is less common for sport clubs to own their own facilities (Laub 2012). This portion of public funding, which makes up the largest portion, is not visible in the pie chart above.

As mentioned earlier, most sport clubs tend to be inward looking in the sense that their main focus is on providing activities for their members. Nevertheless, it is by no means uncommon for clubs to collaborate with stakeholders. The chart below indicates the proportion of sport clubs that have some form of binding collaboration with regard to activities, events or projects and shows a selection of the most relevant stakeholders (Fig. 6.7).

The most common collaboration is between sport clubs and sports organisations. Almost seven out of ten sport clubs (69 %) report having a binding collaboration with one or more sports organisations. Furthermore, just over half of the clubs (51 %) collaborate with other sport clubs.

Perhaps the most interesting feature is that four out of ten clubs (41 %) collaborate with the municipal administration (Laub 2012). In most cases this reflects the fact that agreements on funding and facilities are considered forms of collaboration.

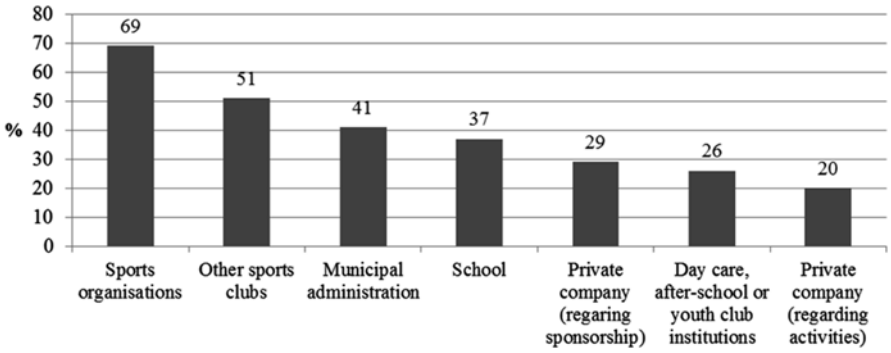

Fig. 6.7 Proportion of sport clubs that collaborate with various stakeholders

Apart from that, however, a smaller number of clubs report having agreements with municipalities to arrange activities for specific target groups, such as the elderly, the physically inactive and ethnic minorities (Ibsen et al. 2013).

Municipalities have high hopes that such collaboration with sport clubs on the inclusion of specific target groups in voluntary-organised sport, which are often launched as projects or partnerships, will be further developed. This is a political expectation that also applies to various municipal institutions, particularly schools, where sport clubs are expected to play an even more active role in the future than they do today. There is also preliminary evidence showing that over a 6-year period from 2004 to 2010, these forms of collaboration have increased (Ibsen et al. 2013).

Generally speaking, sport clubs do not seem to experience many significant problems or challenges. This is one of the main conclusions gleaned from the questions answered by sport clubs about the relevance of a number of potential problems or challenges to their respective clubs. Some of the most relevant problems and challenges are presented in the chart below (Ibsen et al. 2013) (Fig. 6.8).

The chart illustrates how sport clubs face three main challenges: (1) ensuring members' commitment and participation, (2) recruiting volunteers and (3) raising sufficient funds. More specifically, one-third of sport clubs consider it a significant problem that few members attend the annual general meeting and other meetings. This perception is substantiated later in the paragraph on social capital, which indicates that only a minority of members take part in the membership democracy within their respective sport clubs.

The relatively low level of member commitment and participation may probably also explain why the recruitment of volunteers is one of the main challenges confronting sport clubs. Members active in the democratic decision-making and social life of sport clubs are far more likely to become volunteers than less active members (Østerlund 2013). Furthermore, we have already seen that volunteers are the main resource that underpins the survival of sport clubs. The challenges reported in recruiting volunteers may also reflect the pressing need of sport clubs to retain this important resource.

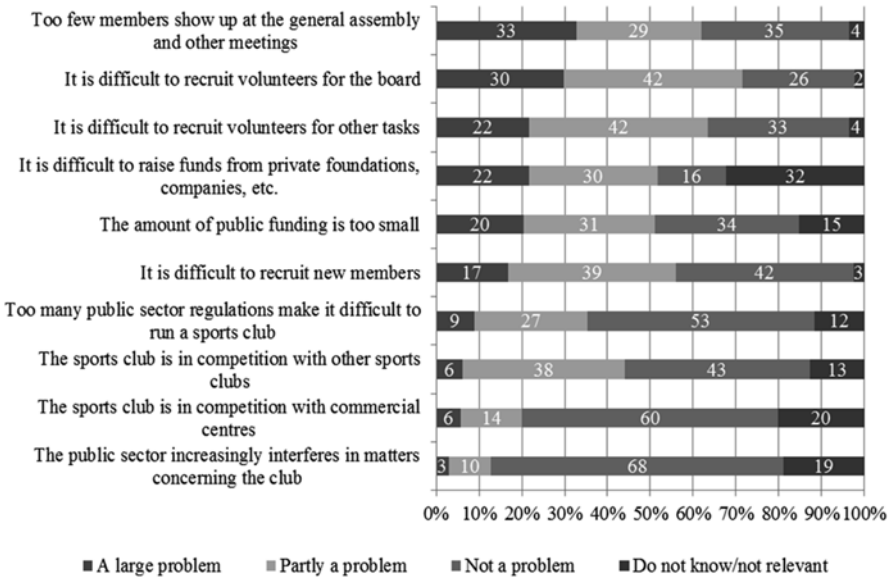

Fig. 6.8 Problems and challenges for sport clubs (percentage of sport clubs)

It is worth noting that sport clubs find it more challenging to recruit volunteers for the board than for other tasks. A closer look at the volunteer tasks that present the greatest challenges indicates that chairperson and treasurer are by far the most difficult positions to fill. Easier to fill are coaching positions, though are also difficult, while ad hoc positions are in relative terms the easiest to fill[10] (Laub 2012).

Regarding the third main challenge, around one-fifth of sport clubs find it difficult to raise sufficient funds. For 22 %, raising funds from private foundations, companies and the like present significant difficulties, while 20 % consider it a problem that public funding is too low. This may appear somewhat paradoxical given the healthy finances of sport clubs and the high level of public funding but, as it is the case for volunteer recruitment, it probably reflects the fact that financial support is one of the principal prerequisites for the survival of sport clubs.

At the very bottom of the list we find the sport clubs' relation to the public sector. Only 3 % of sport clubs consider interference from the public sector in matters that concern sport clubs to be a major problem. This is true in spite of attempts by municipalities, described above, to use projects and partnerships to raise awareness

[10] A study on how to manage sport clubs to facilitate the recruitment of volunteers establishes some guidelines for sport clubs aiming to improve their volunteer appeal. Among other things, the study recommends sport clubs to aim at involving members in decision-making and to delegate tasks and decisions to multiple committees or to volunteers (Østerlund 2012). These recommendations are in line with the arguments presented above that active and committed members are more likely to become volunteers than less active members, and that ad hoc positions in relative terms are the easiest to fill.

among sport clubs about integrating target groups such as physically inactive people and ethnic minorities in their activities.

On the same note, only 6 % of sport clubs find competition with commercial centres a major problem, even though this might on the surface appear to present problems considering the previously presented figures for sports participation, particularly among adults. The fact that these issues are not perceived as problems or challenges may indicate that most sport clubs are narrowly focused on their own sports activity and not on developments in the general patterns of sports participation.

In summary, the analysis of the characteristics of sport clubs in Denmark shows that

- The vast majority of clubs are relatively small with less than 100 members and seven out of ten clubs are single-sport clubs.
- Nine out of ten clubs enable members to participate in competitions at various levels, but most of the clubs also run activities whose aim does not involve sports competitions and arrange social and cultural activities.
- One out of three clubs collaborate with a public school, and in general an increasing proportion of sport clubs cooperate with other clubs and their municipal institution.
- The majority of their income is self-generated, but the indirect public support in the form of sports facilities that the clubs can use for free is also very important.
- Seven out of ten clubs are run exclusively on a voluntary basis and fewer than one out of ten leaders and coaches receive taxable pay for their efforts.
- The clubs attach considerable importance to involving members in key decisions, but in most clubs it is a minority of the members who are thus engaged. Alongside the difficulty of recruiting new volunteers, this is also the clubs' main problem—according to the clubs themselves.

6.5 Specific Topic: Social Capital

Sport clubs are generally seen as arenas for social participation that foster bonds in communities and promote social integration. These qualities are seen as beneficial both for members of sport clubs and for society in a broader sense. This is expressed in the theory of social capital, which ascribes such qualities to voluntary associations. A thorough analysis of social capital in sport clubs is, nevertheless, long overdue and relevant, because the rhetoric surrounding sport clubs tends to take the alleged social benefits for granted. The approach to the study of social capital in sport clubs presented here originates from a PhD study on the subject (Østerlund 2013).

An important claim with regard to social capital stems from Robert D. Putnam's study on social capital in America in his famous book, *Bowling Alone*. Putnam claims that: "What really matters from the point of view of social capital and civic

Table 6.3 Distribution of answers (%) to the question: "How often do you attempt to influence decision-making in your club in the following ways?"

	By joining member meetings regarding the entire sport club	By joining members' meetings regarding my team/ group	By sharing my views with key member of the club	By sharing my views with other members
Always/often	12	30	24	34
Sometimes	10	13	29	34
Rarely/never	78	57	46	31
Total	100	100	99	99

engagement is not merely nominal membership, but active and involved membership" (Putnam 2000, p. 58). In this spirit, he applies different measures of social participation as indicators for the social capital in American society. Inspired by this approach, the participation of adult members (16+ years) in democratic processes, in social life and in voluntary work was examined as an indicator of social capital in sport clubs.

The overarching conclusion from the study on social capital is that a minority of members participate in democratic processes and in voluntary work, while it is more common for members to participate in the social life of their respective sport clubs.

Regarding the clubs' democratic processes, only one in five members attends the annual general meeting, and, as the table below shows, there is also a limited interest in members' meetings, especially when they concern the entire sport club. It is a bit more common informally to discuss matters regarding the sport club with key members of the club or with other members, but nevertheless the majority of members do not participate in such discussion, or at least not very frequently (Table 6.3).

When it comes to the social life of sport clubs, participation is somewhat greater. Almost four out of ten members always or often participate in social arrangements within the club, and the same percentage stays and chats with other members after training. Furthermore, data from the study show that almost eight out of ten members (79 %) have made new friends through participation in sport club activities. This shows that sport clubs, true to their reputation, are more than arenas for maintaining friendships (Table 6.4).

Finally, the participation of members in voluntary work was also examined in the study. The results showed that one in five members performs voluntary work on a regular basis (at least every second week) within the club, and that this group spend, on average, 18 h per month during the season of their sports activity. For the remaining four out of five members, the table below shows how the majority contribute by offering voluntary work either very rarely or not at all. One-third never does voluntary work, and one-third helps with ad hoc tasks only once a year at most. This is the case even though the tasks proposed were relatively modest, such as driving or helping at parties (Table 6.5).

Table 6.4 Distribution of answers (%) to the question: "How often do you participate in your club's social life in the following ways?"

	I participate in social arrangements	I stay and chat with other members after training
Always/often	39	39
Sometimes	27	28
Rarely/never	35	32
Total	101	99

Table 6.5 Distribution of answers (%) to the question: "How often do you help with ad hoc voluntary tasks in the club?"

At least once a week	3
Approximately every second week	3
Approximately once a month	7
Approximately once every 3 months	10
Approximately twice a year	11
Approximately once a year	18
Less than once a year	15
Never	33
Total	100

Besides examining participation patterns among adult members of sport clubs, the study also focused on the effect exerted on social capital by certain characteristics of both member and club. More specifically, the participation patterns of members within the three main areas presented above were combined into an index of social capital. The influence of various independent variables at the member and club level is displayed in the table below[11] (Table 6.6).

At the member level there is a tendency towards selective integration. Gender, age and educational level influence the propensity of members to be actively engaged in sport clubs. In addition, the analyses show how characteristics linked to the relations between members and their respective sport clubs influence their tendency to be actively engaged in the club. This applies to the duration of membership and to the impact of existing social networks within sport clubs.

At the organisational level, the nature of the sporting activity was found to have a considerable impact on the level and nature of member participation. In the analyses, team sports such as football and handball were found to be far more conducive to member participation than individual sporting activities such as tennis and gymnastics. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, however, cycling was found to be almost as productive for social capital as handball.

Taken together, the study both underpins and refines assumptions underlying the rhetoric regarding the social benefits generated by sport clubs. In support of that rhetoric, the study shows that, for their members, sport clubs are arenas for social

[11] The figures reported in the table derive from a multilevel regression analysis conducted in SPSS. The dependent variable is an index ranging from 0 to 100, with 0 referring to the lowest level of participation, and 100 referring to the highest.

Table 6.6 The impact of member and club characteristics on social capital

	Index for social capital ($n = 1{,}752$)	
Member characteristics	Non-standardised coefficient	
Intercept	29.70	***
Gender (man)	4.15	***
Age, 16–30 years (reference)		
Age, 31–45 years	−8.86	***
Age, 46–60 years	−12.80	***
Age, 61+ years	−14.64	***
Educational level (1–5)	−1.85	***
Duration of membership (0–6)	3.35	***
Child or children active in sport club (yes)	13.25	***
Club characteristics		
Gymnastics (reference)		
Football	21.38	***
Handball	13.87	**
Cycling	12.23	*
Tennis	0.40	
Club size, 0–200 members (reference)		
Club size, 201–400 members	3.84	
Club size, 401+ members	3.30	
Model characteristics		
ICC: Intra-class correlation	0.22	
R^2 member level	0.13	
R^2 club level	0.92	

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

participation and community building. At the same time it is evident that members do not automatically become volunteers, engage socially with other members or participate in the various aspects of club life that have been examined. The population of sport clubs and the membership within them are simply too diverse to make broad generalisations about social capital in sport clubs.

6.6 Conclusion

How do sport clubs in Denmark differ from sport clubs in most European countries? Firstly both the share of children and adults who participate in sport in a club and the number of sport clubs in relation to population are very high. The latest survey from 2012 showed that 86 % of school children and 41 % of adults participated in sport in a sport club. Secondly, more than in most countries sport clubs are oriented towards "sport for all". Most members do not participate in sports competitions, and many clubs have activities for specific groups (the elderly, the disabled and so on).

Thirdly the clubs are almost entirely based on voluntary, unpaid labour. Nine out of ten of those who work in a sport club do so unpaid.

We are convinced that the explanations for these differences between club sports in Denmark and club sports in other countries must be found in the history of the voluntary sector and the embedding of club sports in the welfare state. Since the mid-1800s, it has been deemed an ideal to organise many tasks in associations based on member democracy—including rifle shooting, gymnastics and later also sports. All over the country associations for different ideologies, goals and interests were formed. In the early stages of the development of civil society in Denmark, rifle shooting and gymnastic associations formed part of a cultural and political movement, in which self-determination and spiritual freedom were key values. From these developed a "sport for all" movement—long before it was regarded as desirable in most European countries—with ideals and targets that were different from Olympic sports ideals. Although this ideological background plays only a minor role today, it has left its mark on the public's perception of sport clubs and of activities in the clubs. Many sport clubs emphasise that both the skilled and less skilled athletes can enjoy sports at their club, and throughout the country clubs are found that primarily or exclusively are engaged in *sport for all*.

The development of a sports movement based on values other than those of Olympic sport is also one of the reasons why, in contrast to nearly all other European countries, Denmark has two almost equal and mutually independent sports organisations (DGI and DIF), which represent two different approaches to sport. In addition, there is a somewhat smaller organisation, DFIF, which organises sports for employees in workplaces. This multiplicity of organisations is due, firstly, to the historical development of a strong rifle shooting and gymnastics movement with cultural and formative goals that developed into a *sport for all* organisation. Secondly, it may also be due to the fact that the Danish state, unlike for example Norway and Sweden, has not interfered in the organisational pattern in an effort to assemble the sports movement in one organisation (Ibsen 2002). The presence of several organisations means, firstly, that there are two organisations (DGI and DFIF) whose explicit aim is to promote participation in sports and to question elite sport values and the economic resources devoted to it. Second, it means that there is competition between organisations to attract both membership of the sport clubs and the attention of the politicians.

The legislation and public aid that supports associations is undoubtedly also a contributory factor in explaining the strong position of club sport in Denmark. Firstly, the goal of public support is influenced by educational and democratic ideals, and the legislation is aimed at all kinds of leisure and cultural associations for children and adolescents; that is, public support for sport clubs is not determined by sporting goals. Secondly, access to sports facilities and municipal funding is determined by how many members an association has; that is, the club is *rewarded* if it gets more members. Thirdly, there is considerable freedom to *be an association* in the manner that is meaningful to its members and voluntary workers; that is, it is easy to form an association and there are few demands made of them, even though they are publicly funded.

If most sport clubs are entirely based on voluntary, unpaid labour the explanation is undoubtedly to be found in a strong tradition of volunteering in Denmark, which is one of the countries in Europe where the proportion of those who volunteer is greatest. This is probably enhanced by the fact that public aid is not earmarked for the salaries of managers and coaches. Finally, it can also be explained by the fact that very few sport clubs are in charge of the sports facilities that they use. Most work on sports facilities is carried out by paid staff, but the facilities are either owned by the municipality or by so-called independent non-profit institutions.

Even though voluntary-organised sport in Denmark holds a strong position, sport clubs face at least three challenges. The first challenge is the change in the pattern of sports participation. The fastest growing sports activities within the two last decades are primarily activities such as running/jogging, weight training, aerobics (and the like), spinning and road cycling, which are primarily performed as self-organised activities or in commercial centres. These are activities in which the athletes typically do not participate in sports competitions and for which no trainer or special sports facilities are required. Furthermore, the activities can be practised as and when it suits the individual.

But, although most of the athletes in the large new sports and exercise activities are active in contexts other than a sport club, many Danish clubs have adapted to this development: The modern team exercise activities (such as aerobics and Zumba) are found in most gymnastics and exercise clubs in Denmark; it is estimated that there are as many sport clubs as commercial gyms that allow for strength training, spinning and so on (club fitness centres are however typically much smaller than the commercial fitness centres); and in recent years the number of biking and jogging clubs has grown rapidly. The number of Danish adults participating in the new exercise and sports activities in a sport club is about as great as the number attending traditional sports in a club (such as football and handball) where the members take part in competitions.

The second major challenge for sport clubs is, as the clubs themselves admit, the (lack of) involvement among members in the social activities, voluntary work and democratic decision-making of the club. This is confirmed by the study of members' participation in the democratic processes in sport clubs, as reported earlier in this chapter, showing that only a minority of the members participate in meetings within the club or otherwise are engaged in the club's goals, plans and so on, and the majority of members are rarely or never involved in voluntary work in the club. Considerable differences are, however, to be found between various sports (and types of sport clubs) in the level of members' involvement in the club's social and democratic activities. The involvement is much greater in traditional team ball-games (like football and handball) than in some of the more individual sports and exercise activities that have achieved substantial growth in recent decades. This indicates that the growth in participation in new sports and exercise activities in sport club has brought with it an increase in the proportion of members with a more customer-like relationship to the club.

The third major challenge for the sport clubs is its changing relationship to the public sector. The analysis of the Danish sport clubs shows that clubs are

increasingly collaborating with various local municipal institutions (state school, day care, etc.). This is probably due to the fact that over the last decade the public sector has endeavoured to involve local associations in solving a number of tasks that the state and municipalities have primary responsibility for. A change in the law for state schools thus obliges them to look for collaborations with local associations with the aim of ensuring that children get a more physically active school day. Similarly for some years municipalities have established partnerships with many sport clubs to enable physical activity for inactive children and adults, as well as sports activities for children and young people in deprived local areas. This generates on the one hand greater political focus and legitimacy for voluntary-organised sport, but it also raises the question whether this closer cooperation is at the expense of the traditional autonomy and voluntary ideal which until now has characterised sport clubs in Denmark.

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