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**THE DANISH MODEL**

**Report**

**by**

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In comparison to other European countries Denmark represents quite a unique way of organising and managing sports activities.

In most European countries sports are primarily organised through one national sports federation which is more or less affiliated with the state, and which is a member of the different international and European Olympic Federations.

In Denmark we have 3 national sports organisations: *The Danish Company Sport Federation* with approximately 800,000 members, *The Danish Sports Association*, representing Denmark in the International Olympic Federations with approximately 1.6 million members and finally the organisation that I represent - *Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations* with approximately 1.6 million members. The three different organisations are all NGOs and receive all their money from the Danish national lottery.

The organisations offer different kinds of sports representing different values and traditions. The Danish Sports Association primarily focuses on our best athletes even though this association deals with a wide range of "sport for all", whereas the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations only focuses on popular sport.

The objective of the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations is to strengthen the work of local voluntary associations through sport and other cultural activities in an endeavour to promote youth and adult education ("folkelig oplysning").

What differences are there between "sport for all" and popular ("folkelig") sport, and what does this difference mean to the way we, in Denmark, consider what the role and responsibility of the local authorities should be?

In intercultural communication there is a serious and deep rooted problem which we face when trying to translate certain key notions of cultural self-understanding. The Danish concepts of "folk" (people) "folkelig" (popular) and "folkelighed" (popularity) are essential for understanding the central phenomena and notions of cultural life in Denmark like popular enlightenment, popular academies, popular movements and popular sport.

Let us - as an example of the translation of the nearly untranslatable - look for the German equivalent. Since the late 18th century the word "volklich" has covered a wide range of meanings similar to the Danish "folkelig", but it has never become current usage. It remained in the shadow of the word "volkisch" which has spread from the end of the last century and which emphasised the nationalist element of the popular, but overshadowed democratic element and had racist and especially anti-semitic connotations.

The Danish "folkelig" could also be translated to German by "volkstümlich", but this sounds rather outdated nowadays, and as Bertold Brecht ironically commented. "Das Volk is niemals tümlich" ("The people is never popular").

The word "Volkloristisch" makes one think of museums, evoking images of artificially reconstructed culture, of folklore as an organised academic arrangement of a bygone age.

"Popular" - from the Latin "populus", people, folk - designates the flat popular aspects of mass culture. In a more recent form as "pop" it refers to trivial products of the entertainment industry. This has been turned into "pop art" as a sophisticated play with the trivial. Yet more derogatory is what is called "pöbelhaft" and "vulgär", the low and vulgar, the dangerous mob.

"Populistisch" is used for political and social movements which appeal to nationalist emotions or primitive, populist interests. "Publik" and "offentlich" refer to the folk as a passive rather than an active public factor. In contrast both the "national" and the "democratic" movements include active elements of the "folkelig", but in a more narrow, political sense, without the human depth of folk culture. Even "demagogisch", demagogical, is derived from the greek "demos", folk. (All these connotations are too political, ie far from the physical practice of dance, play and music).

The common feature of the German "Volk" and Danish "Folk" is, however, that it is not the same as "Bevölkerung", population, ie not only a passive category of registration and administration. But "folk" is an actor in history, and "folkelighed" is the relationship of this activity to collective identity. All in all, the problem of communication in German about the Danish "folkelig" culture makes the specific horizon of German history (in relation to Danish history) and of Danish experience (in relation to German experience) visible.

It seems that what comes closest to the Danish "folkelig", are slavic words like "narodnyi", derived from the Russian "narod", folk, people. This corresponds to the Hungarian "népi", derived from "nép", folk.

### **History, The Popular Movements**

If we want to get deeper into understanding the particularities and contradictions of popular culture, we can try three different approaches: first an historical, then a structural and finally a philosophical approach to the specific activity itself.

What is called popular movements in Denmark started in the early nineteenth century with a religious revival among farmers, rising in protest against the state church and its alliance with the repressive regime of absolutism and aristocracy. In pietistic forms, the "awakened" farmers tried to find their own religious experience. This strife found its most impressive expression in the psalms and political-philosophical writings of N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). It was this poet who launched the idea of popular enlightenment - (folkelig oplysning) hereby combining in an original way traditions of European enlightenment with the romantic notion of folk.

The religious revivals were soon followed by political movements of self-determination from below, leading to the revolution of 1848 and to the birth of a liberal associative culture. Alongside this, free schools and academies - the folkehøjskoler - arose from the 1840s. Among the voluntary associations - folkelige foreninger - which were struggling for a renewal of culture, sports (rifle, gymnastics) associations played a prominent role. The popular sports association (forening) as part of the rural community corresponded to but also contrasted with the bourgeois sports club (klub) in the towns. And as far as physical exercise was concerned, popular sport soon became dominated by the folkelig

gymnastics practised by left-wing democratic farmers in the late nineteenth century as an alternative against militaristic discipline in sport and exercises. This alternative culture was linked both to the constructing of assembly halls in the villages and to the co-operatives of agricultural production, spreading at the same time over the whole country.

Since that time, the folkelig tradition has become enriched by experiences from the socialist workers' movement after 1900, from the intellectual cultural radicalism of the 1920s - though this was a rather elitist and non-popular tendency in itself - and from the grassroots movements of 1968.

*The Danish Gymnastics & Sports Associations* (DGI) - in contrast to *The Danish Sport Confederation* (DIF) - try to express this "alternative" approach of folkelig sport and culture. In popular sports - ideally - it is the people themselves who are organising their meetings and dialogues through physical activity. Sport is a celebration. Sport is association. The physical experience of popular sport is an experience of social togetherness and identity, of self-consciousness and solidarity: "We do it ourselves".

Sport and festivity - this does not mean that popular culture was a luxurious superstructure which could be compared to the demonstrative consumption of the aristocratic or bourgeois leisure class. On the contrary: popular culture became an important factor in the development of the Danish model of agrarian modernisation. Whilst the capitalist transformation of the agrarian economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in nearly all other countries led to the marginalisation of farmers to the benefit of the urban bourgeoisie, Danish farmers were able to enter into capitalist competition through their co-operative organisation and survive, raise their productivity and contribute to the national identity of their country.

From the beginning of the 1880s, dairy co-operatives started and spread all over the country, which was soon followed by butcher co-operatives, local electric works, (many of them based on wind power), co-operative shops, export co-operatives, foodstuff associations, co-operative banks, co-operative cement factories, fertilizer and seed purchasing associations and other forms of self-help. With the help of this new network of associations, the farmers managed to master the market crisis during the depressions between 1876/1877 and 1900, and to maintain their decentralised ownership structure in spite of the pressure from the big capitalist enterprises.

Historians have often asked themselves how this exceptional survival came about. How was solidarity implemented in the day-to-day life of the farmers (when this had failed to occur in many other countries)? What was the social mechanism linking the farmer's ideas and interests together with their practical economic co-operation? To answer this we need to look a little more closely at popular culture, especially the folkelig gymnastics which spread throughout Denmark in parallel to the co-operative movement, thus constituting a physical link between work and social identity in the individual's life. When the - mostly young - farmers exercised their gymnastics accompanied by sentimental national romantic songs and refrained from individual competition (as was demanded by competitive sports), this developed into a distinctive form of social conduct. It contributed to the community and enabled them to compete in the capitalist market.

The Danish case shows thus, that gymnastics and production are not two separate spheres. Folklore and economy are not as far apart as might be supposed from a narrow, production-orientated point of view. But how can this historical experience be understood in a larger social context? Here we must turn to the structural analysis of popular culture.

### **Structure: State, Market, Civil Society**

Recent social studies have called our attention to the fact that society and economy cannot be described sufficiently by the two sectors which have hitherto been in the focus of social theory: state and market.

(1) The state or public sphere follows political decisions. The public economy is determined by political decisions. The public sphere has a monopolistic structure: There is only one state on a territory. This monopoly is also the source of state authority, of power and its hierarchic devolution.

The social discourse on this level is about the relationship of the state and the individual - authority vs liberty. This was expressed by authors like Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes, Hegel and Carl Schmitt in the étatist tradition, and by Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant and Habermas in the liberal individualistic tradition.

(2) The market, in contrast, consists of a multiplicity of competing actors. As producers and suppliers, they are competing with one another. Their survival as market participants depends on their success on the market. Their actions are not determined by political decisions but by profit expectations and by the strive to optimise the profit and loss ratio.

The social discourse on this level revolves around the question of production and productivity, productive work vs unproductive activities, producers vs consumers. This was discussed from the time of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Friderich List and Marx up to the neo-classical theory.

However, the rationalities of power and of productivism are not only contradictory. They are also - as Michael Foucault has demonstrated - related to each other, linked by the strive for a panoptical view both by the state and by the market.

The dualism of state and market is, moreover, far from sufficient to describe the totality of economic activity and of social action. Large parts of the real economic flows are neither subjected to monopolistic political decisions nor determined by the principle of profit. They indicate the existence of a third sector, the civil society.

(3) The civil society consists of self-organised and voluntary networks and associations. Typically these are societies, clubs and free associations, all types of co-operatives and formal, as well as, informal communities. The foreninger, the free associations and the folkehøjskoler, the people's academies, which constitute the basis of DGI and of popular culture in Denmark, are characteristic pillars of civil society.

The collective units of civil society follow the principle of nearness and of - temporal - community. Thus, they can be compared to the social pattern of the family; and indeed, the family and its - immense but non-monetarised - inner economy can be seen as an important part of civil society, too, though it lacks some traits of a voluntary union.

Under the aspect of plurality versus monopoly, the civil society with its variety of actors can be compared to the market; in contrast however, the activities of the civil society are essentially non-profit orientated. Morality and pleasure, ie, complex motivations from social behaviour are decisive and contrast with the narrow utilitarian bias of the market. Affective and normative considerations play an important role in civil society - in contrast with the so-called rationality of the market subjects. And community - orientated feelings and interests work in civil society in contrast to the (alleged) individualism of the market subject. On the other hand, by being based on political and value-orientated decisions, the actions of civil society can also be compared to those of the state; they are, however, not part of a monopolistic structure but voluntary and competing.

Civil society is, thus, not only a "residual category", nor is it the "second best solution" to imperfect market conditions, as some economists have characterised it. Civil society encompasses a vast part of the existing social and economic activity.

The social discourse on this level has not been as divided as in the other two traditions, though Tönnies had once proposed the sociological dichotomy of community vs society. More significant, however, have been the pluralistic approaches towards folk identities, as expressed by Herder and Grundtvig. Intermediary corporations and associationalism were discovered by Tocqueville, Max Weber and Gramsci, and, in the tradition of Proudhon, one can also mention federalist, syndicalist and co-operationalist thinking. Etzioni described altruistic moral values as economic factors.

#### .... and the Three Cultures

**Elite culture** or what in Danish is called *finkulturen*, "refined culture" includes both the traditional cultural life of the well-educated bourgeoisie and the more provocative avantgarde culture. Both are strongly linked with verbal competence and with discourses of "spirit" (in Danish called *ånd*, and in German *Geist*). The cultural activities of this sector consist mainly of individual experiences, productions and reproductions, which are commented, reviewed and argued about; culture means to process intellectually one's own experiences and those of others. Academic culture has a strong position in this pattern.

**Commercial culture**, in contrast, is mainly based on visual experience, but also on hearing. With technological development, this is melded together in the audio visual products of the media industry. The recipient selects, watches and listens, but otherwise remains mostly passive and receptive in relation to the cultural product. Commercial culture offers entertainment based on the question: What is on sale?

**Popular culture**, *folkekultur*, is strongly marked by physical activities and movements like sport, dance and music. Joint experience and personal feelings have high priority. Physical competence is based on practical knowledge and direct action on a here-and-now basis. The cultural actor is active - together with others. Popular culture in Denmark comprises two

streams with different historical origins, **the traditional folk culture** from the nineteenth century - sport, folk dance, choir singing, amateur theatre, assembly house festivals - and the new popular culture developed since the 1970s. This **grass root culture** includes rock culture and new types of activities, like island camps and alternative tourism, ecological initiatives, street and quarter festivals, the urban Whitsuntide carnival, self-organising youth subcultures, new games, mass marathons and other alternative cultural movements.

When comparing the trialectics of state, market and civil society with the inner contradictions of elite culture, commercial culture and popular culture, some structural parallels become obvious, as do some direct links between the two approaches. On the one hand, the social and intellectual elites, traditionally supported by the state, have developed the educated, the academic and the avantgarde cultures with their hierarchic traits. On the other hand, the market produces commercial culture whilst popular culture belongs to civil society.

The three sectors do not coexist in a peaceful manner. They represent fundamentally different values which confront each other in public. Culture means contest and struggle between - at least - these three sectors.

This cultural struggle does not mean, however, that one of these sectors should or can eliminate the others. The attempt to create a purely state monopolistic culture - and society - in Eastern Europe during the past decades had to collapse. The hegemony of the market, proposed as an alternative by neo liberal strategists, shows clearly its limitations too, and has already provoked violent reactions.

On the other hand, there is no harmony between the three cultures, but a permanent imbalance and tension, just as in the relationship between state, market and civil society. The three cultures often compete for scarce resources, especially for financial means provided by the departments of culture, and for time, especially for transmission time in the public media. Last but not least they compete for the participation and commitment of those at whom they are addressed.

Sport and gymnastics are a characteristic field of these struggles. In Denmark and in most other Western countries these activities originated from civil society and its associations as part of popular culture. During the last two or three decades there were strong tendencies to divert these activities into the two other directions. This tendency has been supported by the increased state funding of sport organisations, which was followed by a growing state interference on the level of sport policies. Sport has become an instrument of public social policies. "Sport for all" is provided for the improvement of the health of the population, for the integration of "marginal groups" etc. Development in the other direction was facilitated by the attraction of media sports, which has transformed sports into a highly profitable entertainment. Moreover, commercial sport offers have grown parallel with traditional sports associations, creating a new market of fitness culture - with some remarkable success. State sports and market sports are, thus, today competing with sport as popular culture.

All this explanation makes up the fundamentals of the "Danish model".

Depicting sports on the level of the state, market and civil society is not only important for understanding Danish popular culture - it is also important for global understanding.

**In Denmark we have a tradition not to define popular sport and popular culture as part of leisure politics.**

Their role is more important than simple recreation. Popular culture and "*folkelig*" sport contribute to identity, democracy, togetherness and enlightenment and are therefore placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and regulated by a special law called "the law in support of public enlightenment" ("*folkeoplysning*").

The main idea of the law is, that local authorities provide the physical framework free of charge or give a subsidy to associations that have to rent facilities from private owners. The associations are free to decide upon the actual utilisation of the buildings. The associations are independent and self-governing - the local authorities have to depend on the knowledge local associations represent.

Altogether grants for sports facilities amount to approximately 460 million Danish Kroner each year. We have a sports centre for every 2 852 inhabitants, a swimming pool for 14 072 inhabitants, a football field for every 1 013 inhabitants and a tennis court for every 2 878 inhabitants in Denmark.

The only other thing that the law prescribes is, that the local authority has to support activities for children and adolescents under the age of 25, by allocating a certain sum for this purpose every year. Many local authorities have also decided to support physical education, salaries for trainers, sport equipment, travel expenses, etc.

Altogether the local financial support to concrete sports activities is approximately 210 million Danish Kroner which is nearly 75% of the total amount available in local budgets for supporting children and adolescents. The rest is spent on political youth organisations, scouts etc.

The law also requires that 5 % of the total amount spent on sport and cultural activities by the local authority should be pooled, in order to create a specific grants scheme to support new initiatives within the area.

Finally, the law necessitates that each local authority set up a committee called "*folkeoplysnings - udvalget*", the committee of public enlightenment. Half of this committee should be composed of local politicians and the other half of local associations' representatives. The committee has to make proposals to the municipality on supporting local cultural and sports activities.

In Denmark we are quite satisfied with this law - both the associations and the public authorities. As you may have realised, the public authorities on both national and local level co-operate with the associations and have confidence in them. Of course, the associations



compete with each other. This ensures, that sports activities will also be offered to the least privileged members of the community. Very few municipalities find it necessary to offer sport activities in a direct way. They would meet with the resistance of the sports associations.

It is also important to say, that most of the leaders and instructors in Denmark are voluntary workers, which means that it would be almost impossible for the public authorities to manage this sector themselves.

Because of a strong civil sector in Denmark the main role of our public authorities is to provide the physical framework and the sports facilities - the rest is done by NGOs and voluntary workers.