



**HAL**  
open science

## **East-West: the practise of sports as revealing aspects of french and hungarian societies**

Gyongyi S Földesi, Paul Irlinger, Catherine Louveau, Michèle Metoudi

► **To cite this version:**

Gyongyi S Földesi, Paul Irlinger, Catherine Louveau, Michèle Metoudi. East-West: the practise of sports as revealing aspects of french and hungarian societies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1994, 29 (2), pp.149-170. 10.1177/101269029402900203 . hal-01759808

**HAL Id: hal-01759808**

**<https://insep.hal.science//hal-01759808>**

Submitted on 5 Apr 2018

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## **East-West: the practise of sports as revealing aspects of french and hungarian societies**

**GYONGYI S. FÖLDESI**

Hungarian University of Physical Education, Alkotás u. 44, 1123 Budapest / Hungary

**PAUL IRLINGER, CATHERINE LOUVEAU**

Institut National du Sport et de l'Éducation Physique, 11, avenue du Tremblay, 75012 Paris/ France

**MICHÈLE METOUDI**

Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maitres, Paris / France

### ***Abstract***

The same sociological study was carried out in Hungary and in France (C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1987).

This concerned the practise of sports, in the large sense<sup>1</sup>, within the two populations and allowed us to measure the situations from the same theoretical point of view by using the same questionnaire and by analysing the data from the same hypotheses and statistical processes. This is the report of the first comparison of data; it shows some of the greatest similarities and differences noted and suggests some possible explanations. It presents the overall results in a rough outline form to shed light on the specific characteristics of the two sports cultures, playing on the contrast between them. This report is no more than a rough sketch leading to curiosities and questions, inviting other analyses of the same data. This lack of pretension is even more justified given the circumstances: the French survey was carried out first (in 1985) and the results had already been analysed and published (P. Irlinger/C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1987)) when we began to compare the sports habits of the two countries, and therefore when we had barely discovered the Hungarian data. The Hungarian survey was taken in 1988 and the first figure listings and initial analyses were released in 1989 (G. Földesi 1989). However, it was the French conclusions which, for the most part, shaped our questioning of the situation. There is nothing surprising in this: sociological work necessarily relies on given facts, and for this work the given facts were closely related and easily accessible; they inevitably guided our footsteps.<sup>2</sup> Also these guidelines can be modified in the future, when the careful analysis of the Hungarian data raises questions and suggest other lines of comparison.

### **More People Practise Sports in France than in Hungary**

Taken as a whole, Hungarians are less familiar with sports and physical activities than the French: 43% of the former<sup>3</sup> and 74 % of the latter actively played sports during the year preceding the survey.

In fact, this difference in sports practise is affected by times when physical activity has to be combined with other necessary daily occupations, especially paid work. During these times twice as many French as Hungarians "are active" outside their homes. The difference in commitment seems less marked if we examine sports and physical activities during the holidays. Furthermore, there is practically no difference if we consider activities at home (except during the holiday period outside the home when 56% of the French and 29% of Hungarians "are active". During holidays, 51% of the French 31% of Hungarians "are active". At home 23% of the French and 22% of Hungarians "are active"). These different kinds of physical activities are not mutually exclusive, rather they are often combined. Whether we are concerned with people who only practise one type of sport or physical activity or with those who play two or three types we are forced to notice that it is principally the "except the holiday period and outside the home" category, i.e. the activity which is in direct juxtaposition to work, which makes the difference in sports habits so great between the two

populations. This is the decisive element in the sports landscape, since those in both countries who combine an activity during the year outside the home and an activity during the holidays (26% of the French, 12% of Hungarians) outnumber those who choose other combinations (at home and during holidays, at home but not during holidays, outside or at home and during the holidays).

This realisation redefines the initial finding: if Hungarians are less familiar with sports and physical activities (SPA) this is because the duties and circumstances of daily life have more of an impact on their sports life than they have on the French. The first statement indicates that the term 'athletic' has different nuances here and there. The following hypothesis is backed up by other results:

- 24% of Hungarians and 13% of the French only exert themselves for "health or reasons of appearance"; we can deduct all those who do body building and swimming without doing any more active form of sport.<sup>4</sup>

This type of "activity" is without a doubt one of the main characteristics of Hungarian sports culture. It is quantitatively dominant since it concerns more than half of those who play sports. In France, however, this type of "activity" is less common since barely 1/6 of those who play sports chose it.

Should we consider this unilateral preference to be the result of historical-ideological differences?

In Hungary, during the last few years and at the time we took the survey, the ruling authorities urged the population to exercise, with the idea of keeping fit and improving one's health as an incentive.

In France, campaigns using this theme had long become obsolete. With this data we can see the different degrees of institutionalization of sports activities, and the differences in the importance of the State in the two systems. The consideration of a third marked tendency leads us to believe it:

- 41% of the French choose a sport that they could play within an association but choose to play independently. Only 7% of Hungarians do the same. In Hungary the alternative is to be active at home or to join a club.<sup>5</sup> In France there is a wide range of intermediary solutions. It is, however, the popularity of sports, which are not within a structured framework, that seems to be the main characteristic of the present sports culture; more than half of those who play a sport choose this alternative.

Who can be surprised by these characteristics, when they reflect aspects which are well known about the two societies in question? They remind us that in Hungary (in 1988) it is the State which subsidizes and controls the SPA through associations. Although sports opportunities for adults are not as well developed, as it does in numerous possibilities to stay fit (other domains by other channels). In France, on the other hand, they agree with the climate of individualism, deinstitutionalization and privatization marking the 80s (G. Lipovetsky 1983; G. Vigarello February 1984 and July 1984) — physical activities played their part in establishing this climate (P. Irlinger / C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1987; M. Metoudi 1987). These characteristics also bring to light a system dominated by a fairly centralized offering of "orthodox" sports activities, as well as, a market where the law of supply and demand intervenes in a dynamic way through multiple public, quasi-public and private structures providing a much wider range of more or less unorthodox activities.

Who would be surprised that licensed non-competitive activity, which in both countries is similar and subject to the same restraints has a comparable level of success? Only 8% of the French and 9% of Hungarians have a license.

What is surprising, however, that licensed competitive activity (a paradigmatic form of organized sports) has more followers in the West than in the East (11% of the French, 3% of Hungarians). But this would be to minimize the importance of the fact that in France this activity is related to a "competitive spirit" which goes beyond the arena of sports. Athletic activity is seen as a necessary quality for the "young executive" and a virtue of education, so that taking part in this activity is seen as proof of being a member of the "entrepreneurial meritocracy" (A. Ehrenberg 1987, 1988). The practise of this activity in the East is seen only as proof of being a member of the sports meritocracy. Also, we should not forget that all those who play sports and who have been initiated

into a "discipline which is really or nearly orthodox" (N. Midol and A. Midol 1988)<sup>6</sup> form a population liable to take part (at least sporadically) in competitions, (only cardholding athletes) and that this recruitment base is much wider in France than in Hungary'

Hungarian sports activities, which are more linked to the institutional sports system, do not resemble, point for point, Western sports activities; this can be assumed from the previous figures. A more qualitative approach does not refute this impression; even a superficial analysis, such as the initial processing of the data which preceded and conditioned the computerized processing of the sports people play, confirms this quite easily. It was necessary to begin by establishing the list of disciplines cited by those interviewed in order to create the coding plan (P. Irlinger / C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1989). This list contains 23 items in Hungary and 80 in France. There are 23 types of sports in Hungary, and at least 80 in France — four times as many! We can immediately draw another contrast. The existence of association control and the use of an institutionalised model make sports rigid, forbidding any deviation. This control also limits the conditions under which these sports can be carried out (e.g. time or place), and the types of excellence (gestures allowed, accessories and materials authorized). Obviously variations exist despite this restrictive noose (G. Vigarello 1989) but they are few and are developed within the limitations controlling the idea that "all things must be equal" necessary for the homologization of performances. In Hungary this opinion dominates. In France, however, where these restraints and limits imposed by international rules are less frequent, the variations multiply either as off-shoots of established sports<sup>8</sup> or there are flourishing new disciplines which benefit from technological advances (C. Pociello 1981).<sup>9</sup>

The lists of disciplines we drew up take into account the relative immobility linked to an exclusive respect for the norm, as well as the great diversification of sports possible without this framework. However, these lists do not provide any information on the success of each of these activities. Therefore, we cannot be sure what part these "new" ways play in social reality. They do not provide us with any information on the impact of sports which have been reshaped or invented.

Furthermore, they do not reveal much information about the concrete activities of individuals. Only the information on the number of people choosing each "new" or "traditional" sports discipline can (bridge this gap) show what "marginal" activities (chosen by very small minorities) are important for their new direction they indicate. However, other sports disciplines, which are very widespread, are objectively more important.

Such quantitative analyses reveal Hungarian and French sports cultures which, although having some common factors, are as different as the first remarks led us to believe.

- By looking at the list ranking the activities, we learn that the preferences of the two populations are almost similar: swimming, cycling, jogging, walking, and tennis are more often done during the holidays by both groups. Similarly, during the rest of the year, both French and Hungarians cycle, jog, swim, play football, soccer or play tennis.

- Among these activities, we find that two disciplines (well specified in both contexts) are worthy of our attention: football (soccer) and tennis. According to the data, 20% of Hungarian men and 12% of French men play football during the year. Moreover, 2% of Hungarian women and 5% of Hungarian men, and 7% of French women and 12 % of French men frequent the courts at the same time and place (except during the holidays and outside their home). The results lead us to believe that universal sports system exists outside the political and social systems.<sup>10</sup>

### **But the similarities stop there**

– Some disciplines are not the same for both populations: for example, only the Hungarians play table tennis or handball with any significant frequency during their holidays, while for the same period of time the French choose to ski or go wind surfing. During the rest of the year, however, many Hungarians are to be found on basketball or handball courts, playing table tennis or taking part in combat sports, while body building and dance are particular to French behaviour.

– The range of the most popular sports and the proportions in which they are chosen vary considerably from one country to another. In France, those who play leisure sports in the holidays (51% of 12 to 74 year olds) play a wider range of sports compared to Hungary. Especially during the holidays is this phenomenon even more noticeable: the majority of Hungarians who play sport are concentrated in two disciplines - football and swimming, (1 out of 2 Hungarian men who play sports, plays football, 1 out of 4 Hungarian women who play sports, swims) whereas the French are active in over a dozen or so activities. 11

– While fitness activities or those which have some "usefulness" rate highly in the two countries, team sports dominate in Hungary and individual sports in France.

– Hungarian leisure sports are largely those which are taught at school: in France, on the other hand, the worlds physical education in schools and leisure sports coexist, yet are relatively separate from one another.

- In Hungary, the disciplines requiring team equipment have the greatest number of followers, while in France, the most popular disciplines are those which require the individual to provide his own equipment.

– In Hungary the playing grounds are clearly defined and precise. In France, however, the players need wide open spaces which suit the purpose of the activity; the natural elements, the landscape, and weather conditions replace stadiums and other standardized playing fields (G. Lacroix 1990). The dynamics of conquering this space often characterises these activities. There are some remarkable similarities, which could be the result of the globalization of and the media coverage given to, sports.<sup>12</sup> However, the more important differences are clearly evident. There is no doubt that these differences can be explained by the various roles played by the associations and the State in both countries. Furthermore, such differences may also be attributed to the standard of living and the amount of free time in the two societies. Whatever the reasons, activities seem less integrated into the Hungarian lifestyle than into the French lifestyle. This is what we want to check by comparing the data provided by the two surveys more carefully. For this we must first look at the figures from the results established by the analysis of the French survey: the less integrated an activity is in the life of the population, the more spectacular the differences in sports behaviour within the population. This is why the activities of male workers are closer related to the activities of high ranking male professionals and those of female workers are closer related to those of high ranking female professionals; for a long time sports have been more popular among men than among women. This is why, for example, sports chosen by young men and women are more similar to each other than those chosen by older men and women; these activities are more integrated into the lives of the youth than the older citizen. We can assume that, if sports activity is less "usual"<sup>13</sup> in Hungary, the Hungarians will be more differentiated than the French in the sports they play.

We will look at the figures based on another statement established by analysing the French results: the desire to play a sport (if not already involved) or to become more active (if already involved in some SPA) increases within a given social group parallel to the amount of sports activity which occurs. Therefore, the need to play sports, which is especially felt by those groups who are most committed to playing a sport, can be seen as an indication of the integration of SPA in their lives.

## **Sports in which there are more Differences in Hungary than in France**

### *Difference between the Sexes*

The difference in percentage between men and women who generally do sports is greater for the Hungarians than for the French. In Hungary, 38% of women and 49% of men are somewhat active in sports, while in France these figures are 71% for the women and 77% for the men. This difference between men and women is even greater when we look at activity throughout the year, which is juxtaposed to professional and/or daily occupations, within a limited period of time. This

large difference in Hungary between the sports habits of the two sexes is confirmed, no matter to what degree the activity is institutionalised, when the number of male participants is greater than the number of female participants, as for licensed activity, or inversely when there are more women, as for keep fit and health activities.

There is, however, a notable exception to this generic statement. In both countries among those who play most often (i.e. those who play sport during the holidays and during the rest of the year, outside and inside the home) the numbers of men and women are equal. We no longer see the behavioural difference between the sexes in this population. Therefore the hypothesis shown to be true in France seems equally relevant for interpreting the Hungarian results. This exception occurring among those who are most sports "oriented" does not contradict the general proposition according to which a greater immersion in sports corresponds to less differentiation in activity.

A second exception, as remarkable as the first, has no light thrown on it by the guiding hypothesis. It has to do with competitors in licensed sports: in Hungary there are twice as many male competitors as female, and in France, three times as many. In view of our theory these figures are surprising for two reasons: on the one hand it is in Hungary that the difference between the sexes is the smallest<sup>14</sup>, but on the other hand there is a marked difference in France where the individuals concerned spend a large part of their time and energy playing sports, having seemingly integrated it into their lives.<sup>15</sup> This is not the place for a detailed interpretation of this data. Let us just remind ourselves that competitive sports, especially at a high level, are that which most closely follows tradition and that for nearly 50 years the objection to women in this field has tended to eliminate them from this type of activity (C. Louveau 1986, 1991). We must remember, however, that the competitive sport is a major ideological form in an institutionalized system (i.e. the Hungarian system) while it is only one possibility among many in the French system. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that women have actively taken part in developing sports which have tended to dissociate themselves from women.

A qualitative look gives depth to the differences between the sexes that the figures have brought to light; they allow us to understand better the particular importance these differences have in Hungary: for Hungarian males sports and physical activity are characterized by the love of football (more than 1 out of 2 people who do sport play it), while the women do not really seem to have a favourite sport. To be both more general and more precise we notice that in Hungary the leisure sports played by women and those played by men belong to two very different categories even during the holidays. In France, the two areas of activity are closer throughout the year and especially during the holidays.

### **Differences According to Age**

In both countries, the rate of sports activity decreases from category to category proportionately from the youngest to the oldest participants. This tendency is more clearly marked in the East: in Hungary 69% of 12 to 17 year olds and 10% of 65 to 74 year olds take part in at least one physical activity, while the rates for those in these age brackets in France are respectively, 90% and 53%.

This decrease of activity linked to age<sup>16</sup>, is witnessed in both countries and at all times of the year, although the results are again more marked in Hungary. The elderly are relatively marginalized and their standard of living seems especially precarious. Moreover, the role which they accept is the upkeep of traditions, and therefore their taking part in physical activity would seem "debasement"; 56% of Hungarians under 30 think that "it is not right to take part in sports once you are over 60" (F. Földesi 1987). Also the Hungarian elderly do not have the advantage of the "range of services offered to this age group in France" (G. Földesi/C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1990).

The differences in relation to age can be seen to the same extent in all institutionalized forms of activity and in the traditional sports played outside the association framework.

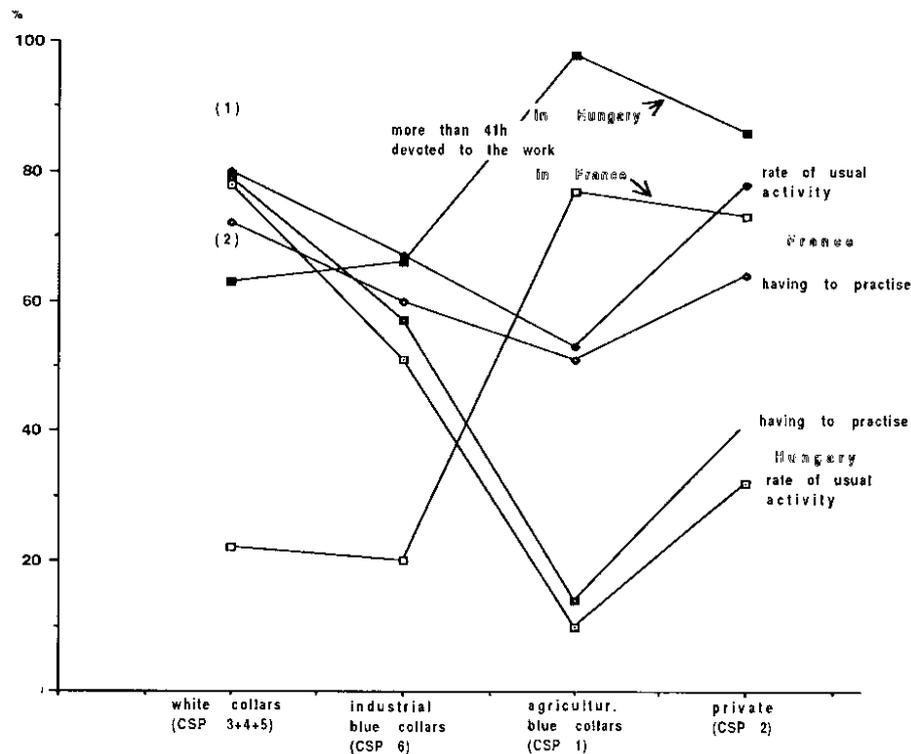
Fitness activity is the one exception: in France fewer Young people than older people choose this

type of activity (5% of the former versus 27% of the latter). In order to understand the low participation of 12 to 17 year olds in fitness activities we must consider the high rate of participation in sports activities in general, which characterizes this age group. We must also consider the relatively high rate of redundancy (P. Duret/P. Irlinger/C. Louveau and A. Vulbeau 1992). In France, 85% is the youngest group play a sport in the traditional meaning of the term. There is nothing surprising about this data if we consider contemporary French mentality: the social competition, the consumerism, the importance of physical appearance and the individualism which have entered into the area of education are also seen in one's choice of sports. In Hungary, however, and as already mentioned, keeping fit is a major option: among 12 to 17 year olds, (31% are involved), 18-34 year olds (33%), and others (11% of those in the oldest age group take part in it). As the alternative of licensed sport, fitness activities coincide closely with the possible world of sports for the (youth) as well as for the rest of the population. The sports behaviour of Hungarian and French teenagers is different because of the sports involved in spite of the popularity of "sports" in both populations.<sup>17</sup> The sports behaviour of older people is different from a quantitative point of view, For them two key propositions can be made to show the difference in their attitude toward sports.

### **Differences Due to Occupation**

In both countries similar proportions of white collar workers<sup>18</sup> and students play sports; this overall similarity becomes even more marked if we consider those with the highest qualifications. For these categories the French are overall somewhat more active than the Hungarians (except for fitness activities, and sports for health, as we would imagine) but the rates stay within the same scale. However, a large discrepancy appears when we consider the habits of workers in the East and in the West, especially those of agricultural workers, retired people, and to a lesser extent, those unemployed. A look at the level of education confirms these differences: those who have no qualifications, not even a basic school certificate, are less likely to take part in an activity in Hungary than in France. Even more noticeable is the disparity between the white collar workers and the most educated and the others in Hungary - this is twice as great as in France. Let us note the relevance of the main hypothesis to describe the situation among the Hungarian population and the great social discrepancies which characterize it, in regard to leisure sports; does the state of affairs seen in one particular aspect of life (physical activities) extend into the overall social situation? Do the differences in sports activity reflect social differences at the heart of Hungarian society? It is probably rash to state this.<sup>19</sup> The analysis of sports habits at least allows us to form a hypothesis about this without being too reticent, since it has already been shown that the study of sports in France is a good starting point for the understanding of the social dynamic and the development of attitudes.

**Figure 1. Professional activity and sport practice**



- (1) rate of usual activity for French students
- (2) rate of usual activity for Hungarian students

### The Desire to Play Sports

The desire to play a sport or to become more active if already a participant is felt by 79% of white collar Hungarian workers and by 85% of Hungarians who have a high-level education. No other group in Hungary is as unanimous about this; only a third (or less) of those who have Little education, people over 50, or those who are retired and of agricultural workers feel like this. In France too, no group is as uniform about this, even if a lot of white collar workers (72%), highly qualified people (71%), and 18-34 year olds expressed this idea. However, these figures that we have just given suggest one notable similarity - in thinking if not in behaviour between the most affluent or even the intelligensia in Hungary and their peers in France; we must even stress this. Those with the highest education, those who by their cultural and economic situation and because of their business trips have opportunities to go abroad sometimes, are more similar than all the others in the two countries (cf. Fig. 1). The data show that students are also following this path. The marked desire to do or to do more sport shown by this type of Hungarian seems to us to be an indication of a close link between the two countries. Does the great similarity in the most privileged groups' approach to sports indicate a real likeness in behaviour beyond and in spite of the contexts? Does this distance the Hungarian elite from the rest of the population? We must remind ourselves, by way of a partial conclusion, that this analysis, variable by variable, dulls the real situation rather than creating a categorised image of it. Nothing is more artificial than regarding age, level of education, sex, and socio-professional categories as separate independent factors, especially since we know that in Hungary, as in France, young people are more highly educated than their predecessors, that men are more highly qualified and have more important jobs

than their companions, and that this inequality determines their respective incomes. The combination of these factors multiplies their effect.

Even although no presentation of the figures (statistically reliable to deal with sufficient numbers) can take into account the cumulative effect of these factors, we can suggest with a certain amount of surety, that the real differences go beyond those we have described in the previous paragraphs and that the difference between rural female agricultural workers over age 50 and city dwelling, high ranking, male professionals between the ages of 35 to 49 is of another order altogether; this distance is undoubtably greater in Hungary than in France.

### **Sports Which Match the Societies They Come From**

We would not know how to interpret these social differences in sports, (more symptomatic in Hungarian society than in the French) 20, without asking some questions about the conditions which produced them. How could we not see a paradox regarding the ideological and political contexts? How could we not bring up the lessening of the social differences in sports which has occurred over the part 20 years in France, as well as the factors which favoured this when we are now seeing the results?

The main tendencies characterizing sports habits have sound structural reasons for existing: their genesis and appearance reflect the societies in which they bloom.

The "uses of free time" which we now find in France and Hungary are a convincing illustration of this. According to what we have shown, the quantity of free time (time not spent working) has less effect on the leisure activities (sports or other activities) that individuals choose than certain characteristics which belong to the world of work itself: levels of skill and responsibility, degree of initiative, the possibility or the ability to organize their time, the interest in one's work and salary. Thus we see that workers who have the most free time dedicate less of it to leisure activities and that fewer people in this category take part in sports or physical activities than in other working groups. They seem to feel more the restraints of work. In short, they do not organize their time as well as high ranking professionals who dedicate more time to their professional activity (P. Irlinger / C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1987). This sociological mechanism, where the quality of life at work determines the quantity of free time by influencing what activities are done, and which takes into account the social dynamics of leisure activities in France, is of nearly no use in explaining the situation in Hungary.

Living standards, the distribution and the meaning of work are radically different in Hungary. When the survey was carried out, unemployment was practically non-existent<sup>21</sup> and everyone worked long hours. Nearly 3/4 of working Hungarians - from white collar workers to manual workers - worked more than 41 hours per week and 71% of workers more than 48 hours. In fact a working week of 60 hours was not really exceptional! We must specify that having two jobs is more than widespread in Hungary, it is almost an institution; people need two salaries to live and when their first job is finished they do not turn to leisure activities but rather to a second paid activity which allows their family to live in minimum comfort. The cost of living forces most people to do this. In fact, only a small percent of the population, — the intellectual elite is not subject to this restraint. However, this minority are more involved in their work than the rest of the population. This group has more job satisfaction than the others, even if this is not as great as the satisfaction expressed by their French counterpart. In many ways, the groups who have the most advantages culturally and/or financially are those which are related in spite of the boundaries, while the leisure pursuits of the other social groups have the distinctive marks of their economic systems.

One must have what is necessary in order to have free time and to take part in leisure activities, whether these be sports or other unrelated activities. What is seen as necessary cannot be compared between France and Hungary, whether it be for example, the education of the population, or more generally the standard of living. At least from this point of view we can understand the differences

between sports habits in Hungary and France from both the quantitative and qualitative levels. The wide range of sports and physical activities in France and especially the development of activities like wind surfing, implies among other things, technical superiority, more land for leisure activities, a mobile population with a definite amount of holiday time, adequate financial means, and the possibility not only to take one's time but to "waste" it, too. Body building, running and the recent "fitness" activities are ways of relating to the body which are free from being functional or useful. In short, such activities are simply not "necessary" (L. Boltanski 1971).

In France social equality is absent in sports activities. But the fact remains that the social distances have decreased in France over the last few decades. Free time is now relatively common, even if it is not the same for everyone. Schooling is more widespread and lasts longer for all the social groups. Furthermore, the means of communication have become a part of everyday life. These elements have helped to bridge gaps among the social groups, and, moreover, they relate to sports culture, as well; we can also add the models found in advertising. People constantly see the model of a fit and "sporty" body and this remains in their mind (P. Irlinger / C. Louveau and M. Metoudi 1990).

These differences between the two societies (differences which are both socioeconomic and cultural), are linked with different ways of organizing SPA in each population. The prevalent institutionalization of sports in Hungary contrasts with the deinstitutionalized activities in France. We see this contrast in the great variety of conditions in which people carry out an activity: federations, community centers, halls, private clubs, various associations, family groups, in pairs, alone, and inside or outside the home.

In Hungary and France, the compulsory sports and physical education young people receive at school allows them to get acquainted with physical and sports activities. Once out of school, i.e. away from this institutional influence, the models seen through other channels (e.g. the family or the media) as well as, the sports structure come into play. It is this, it seems, that distinguishes the two countries so clearly. In France the models and activities outside the school are numerous and varied. Because of influences outside the school, many people have become aware of these activities since childhood. Through this ideological example of diversity and openness, the French sports activities, with their multiple and various forms in a generally unorganised framework, must be acknowledged. In Hungary, as we have seen, the activities carried out by adults are spread over a relatively limited number of disciplines, which for many of them, are similar to those taught at school. This reflects the traditional way of organizing and giving training for sports activities which makes up a system where the offering is limited, if not closed. This system is more favourable to the sports activities of young people than to the leisure and fitness activities of the adult population. Once out of the school, the guidelines, models and structures are no longer available.

This is why it is interesting to spend some time looking at the favourite sports of both populations, as measured by their interest in televised sports. For some disciplines their tastes are the same: football, soccer, skating, gymnastics, even tennis and skiing belong to this common culture. We might even be tempted to describe this culture as quasi-universal, for most of these activities have become high-profiled by the media, and some of them are popular internationally. However, when the French watch cycling, rugby or even sailing, the Hungarians watch handball, water polo, wrestling and weight lifting, which are relatively marginalized sports in France and are hardly ever shown on television. In Hungary handball is the number one team sport at school and Hungary boasts an international weight lifting and wrestling champion. These two sports, which let us note in passing, cannot really be done informally, do not really find favour in France.

The sports most people dream of doing playing in France and Hungary also illustrate this point: the sports the French dream of playing are further from what they actually do than the Hungarians. In France men dream of driving or piloting motorized vehicles, in Hungary of playing football. French women dream of horse riding, Hungarian women, of swimming, walking or skiing. In order to formulate a desire for a sport, as in any other domain, it is not enough just to be aware of the possibility, one must also have socially enviable models and images, to which one may aspire. But

from a strictly sociological point of view, one must also have the ability to make these dreams come true.

There can be no doubt that the sports habits of populations reflect the societies in which the people live. Between France and Hungary the differences brought to light are perhaps less the result of the different stages of development, but rather the result of ideological and political differences. Sports in Hungary resemble the lasting State control over economic activity, employment and the majority's social activities; the sports activities of Hungarians, whether or not they require teams or group structures, are quite similar to the collective institutions and organizations such as schools or sports groups. In turn, the sports habits of the French reflect the social organization of the country: an open diverse offering (probably even more diverse now because of the policy of decentralization), the individualism of the French life-style, and the tertiarization of jobs correspond with these autonomous and individual activities.

But history is not unchanging, and quite recently the classic East/West dicotomy has become, at least theoretically, obsolete. Consequently, this analysis draws analogies and, above all shows the differences produced by the history of each country by comparing one country to another and one socio-political system to another. Therefore, it is as dated as it is original and thus may have to be amended in the near future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In order to understand today's sports habits, those who take part, what they do, what they attempt to achieve and to grasp the present changes we wanted data on the sports activities which are common and also on those which are less common; we wanted to collect data on sports done in institutions or not and on the ways (orthodox or not) of doing them. We wanted to increase our understanding of the sports phenomenon in grasping the meaning of a sentence like "I ski" or "I play football" and in finding out what type of skiing or football they meant, at what level, under what institutional conditions, with whom, under what trainer, how many hours a week and weeks per year. This led us to form a statement as a starting-point "sport is what people do when they think and say "do sport"". The questionnaire was very general to begin with and ended with a lot of very specific questions in order to get information which would be precise enough to have a sociological meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Reasons stemming from the history of the sociology of sport in the two countries could also be cited. They are to be found in the article cited in ref. 1.

<sup>3</sup> It is remarkable that the rate of those taking part in sports in Hungary has not changed since 1977, while in France the increase in the number of participants is the first thing we noticed.

<sup>4</sup> The list of activities categorized here under "keeping fit or for health reasons" include the following: water sports, bathing, therapeutic swimming, pedal-boats, canoeing, walking (undefined), walking for a purpose, strolling, other forms of walking, muscle building by electronic methods, gymnastics for medical reasons, relaxation activities, dancing in a disco or a ballroom, bowling, French Boule, billiards, other forms of bowling, pony trekking, cycling for a purpose, fresh water fishing, hunting, gardening, woodcutting, darts, model making and other uncategorized activities.

<sup>5</sup> We mean sports clubs where one can play one or several sports, and whose members are affiliated to an officially recognized sports federation.

<sup>6</sup> This example refers to skiers, who, although enjoying themselves in a ski federation, are nonetheless likely to register for a high level competition organized by a federation, if this takes their fancy.

<sup>7</sup> The number of participants for the spartakiades and other mass competitions known as "mass demonstration movements" have decreased by 50% since the beginning of the 80s in Hungary. This

recent decrease in participation in the Hungarian system accentuates the quantitative difference in licensed competitive activities between the East and the West.

<sup>8</sup> We can cite here as examples the variety of combat sports or martial arts linked to aikido or even races which, once outside the stadiums are lengthened, changed, or linked with other trials.

<sup>9</sup> The genealogical tree for wind surfing or delta planning provides a convincing example.

<sup>10</sup> It is useful, in view of this data, to look at the amount of time spent playing these two sports in sports programs. In 1989, among these six sports, (tennis had 38% of the time, football 17.3%. Far behind was cycling with 6.3%. All the other sports were less than 6.3%.. Comité Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> If we read the figures diagonally for Hungary, we see that we have to go below 7% of participants before sports other than football and swimming appear. This hit parade also shows that a lot of sports are only practised in any significant way by the French which is the case for only one sport in Hungary: table tennis.

<sup>12</sup> See the work done on the globalization of sport by Borhande Errais.

<sup>13</sup> "Usual" here means in accordant with the values recognized by a majority who conform to them.

<sup>14</sup> This statement remains a bit risky because it only refers to a small minority (3% of the Hungarian population compete).

<sup>15</sup> We have used a relatively restricted definition of competition: we categorized as competitors participants who had a license and who had taken part in at least one official competition: holiday, local, or friendly competitions were not considered official.

<sup>16</sup> We know that in analysing variations in activity in relation to age we are faced with two important factors: the biological aging of the people and the social change which has taken place. Those who belong to the oldest age group in our sample were educated and lived most of their adult life at a time when SPA had a different status from what it has today.

<sup>17</sup> In Hungary young people have little chance of playing sports outside of the competitive system. This no doubt explains why so many of them do activities at home.

<sup>18</sup> The "white collar" category in Hungary corresponds to the three categories in France used by the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE) "3 : high ranking professionals and high ranking academic professions + 4: midrange professions + 5: employees".

<sup>19</sup> This statement, which may seem to have been drawn too hastily (if we use only the Hungarian rate of sports activity) is backed up if we consider it in light of other data, e.g. the rate of schooling, which is still practically non-existent in small villages or the unequal distribution of televisions.

<sup>20</sup> It would be a great mistake if the social differences in Hungary, because they are greater, made us forget the inequalities in French society.

<sup>21</sup> Only 3% of the population, pupils, students and retired people not included, do not work in Hungary.

## References

- BOLTANSKI, L., 1971: Les usages sociaux du corps. *Les Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1, pp. 205-333.
- ERHENBERG, A., 1987: Le show méritocratique: Platini, Stéphanie, Tapie et quelques autres. *Esprit*, no. 4, special edition: le nouvel âge du sport, April, pp. 266-284.
- ERHENBERG, A., 1988: L'âge de l'héroïsme. Sport, entreprise et esprit de conquête dans la France contemporaine. *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie*, vol LXXXV, pp. 197-224.
- FÖLDESI, G., 1987: L'entraînement physique pour le 3<sup>e</sup> âge du point de vue sociologique. Budapest, *Annales de l'Ecole Supérieure d'EPS*, supplement no. 2, p. 23 (article published

in Hungary).

FOLDESI, G., 1989: Leisure time physical activities in Hungary in socio-economic aspect. Wingate, Acts of Maccabiach International Congress on Sports Science and Coaching.

FÖLDESI, G. / LOUVEAU, C. / METOUDI, M., 1991: A sportolasra fordított idő Franciaországban és Magyarországon. In: A Magyar Testnevelési Egyetem Közleményei, Melléklet, 1, Budapest, pp. 1- 111.

IRLINGER, P. / LOUVEAU, C. and METOUDI, M., 1987: Les pratiques sportives des Français. Paris, Institut National des Sports et de l'Education Physique, 700 pages.

IRLINGER, P. / LOUVEAU, C. and METOUDI, M., 1989: Méthodologie de l'enquête. Tours et détours d'une recherche sur les pratiques sportives. Paris, Institut National des Sports et de l'Education Physique, Research collection.

IRLINGER, P. / LOUVEAU, C. and METOUDI, M., 1990: L'activité physique, une manière de soigner l'apparence?. INSEE, Données Sociales, pp. 269-272.

IRLINGER, P./ LOUVEAU, C. and METOUDI, M., 1992: Les pratiques sportives des Français, op. cit. and P. Duret/P. Irlinger/ C. Louveau / A. Vulbeau: Le sport, moi et les autres, pratiques et représentations du sport chez les jeunes. Paris, Institut National des Sport et de l'Education Physique, Institut de l'Enfance et de la Famille.

LACROIX, G., 1990: Le look fun et ses enjeux. In: Actes du colloque Géopolitique du sport. Besançon, Franche Comté University.

LIPOVETSKY, G., 1983: L'ère du vide. Paris, Gallimard.

LOUVEAU, C., 1986: Talons aiguilles et crampons alun. Paris, SFSS.

LOUVEAU, C., and METOUDI, M., 1987: Est/ouest: peut-on comparer les pratiques sportives? *Esprit*, no. 4, pp. 148-158.

LOUVEAU, C./DAVISSE, A., 1991: Sports, école, société, la part des femmes. Joinville-le-pont, Actio.

METOUDI, M., 1987: De nouveaux usages pour les sports d'hier. *Esprit*, no. 4, special édition: le nouvel âge du sport, pp. 42-52.

MIDOL, N., and MIDOL, A., 1988: Sportivité et culture fun. In: Actes des premières journées d'études: sport et changement social, 3-4 April Bordeaux. Bordeaux, SFSS et Maison des Sciences de l'homme d'Aquitaine, pp. 201-214.

VIGARELLO, G., 1984: Le deuxième âge de l'individualisme. *Esprit*, no. 7.

VIGARELLO, G., 1989: Histoire culturelle du sport. Techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. Paris, EPS, Laffont.

## Sampling and Data Collection

The French survey, entitled "The leisure activities of the French" was done by questionnaire. There were nearly 100 questions, 40 of which were directly linked to sports activities. This survey was carried out in November and December 1985. The sample of the 3000 people who answered was representative of the French population between the ages of 12 and 74. The sample was chosen by the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED) using quotas of age, sex/activity, socio-professional category and size of city and region inhabites (Irlinger / Louveau and Metoudi 1987). The Hungarian survey was done with the same questionnaire, which was adapted for the situation. The survey took place in 1988 and 2050 people, representative of the Hungarian population between the ages of 12 and 74 years old were involved. The sample was chosen by the National Office for Statistics in Hungary using the same criteria for selection (Földesi / Louveau / Metoudi 1991).

**Table 1.** Activities Hit Parade

Rate	Activity	Hungary				France			
		Men		Women		Men		Women	
		year	holid- day	year	holid- day	year	holid- day	year	holid- day
20 et +	swimming football	20*					22*		27*
15 et +	football swimming walking		17 15		15				15
10 et +	cycling walking gymnastics tennis football downhill skiing racing					13 12 12 10	10 12 11 10	11 12 12	
7 et +	racing cycling downhill skiing tennis swimming					9 7		7 7	9 8
5 et +	racing tennis swimming treking football wind surfing cycling table tennis	5 5 6	5 6	6	5		6 5 5		6 5
3 et +	table tennis walking cycling basket ball gymnastics badminton skiing boulung dancing racing horse riding hunting fishing wind surfing hand-ball	4	4	3 3 3	3 4 3	4 3		3 3 4 4	3 3 4 3 3

\*\*\* Read that 20% of Hungarian men play football during the year and that 22% of French men and 27% of French women swim during their holidays.

**Table 2.** Activity in Relation to Sex

		Hungary %	France %
<i>Play/time of activity</i>			
Only on holiday	Men	5	10
	Women	5	10
	Both	5	10
On holiday + outside the home	Men	18	31
	Women	5	21
	Both	12	26
On holiday + within the home	Men	3	3
	Women	5	5
	Both	4	4
On holiday + outside the home + within the home	Men	10	11
	Women	10	12
	Both	10	11
Only outside the home	Men	5	17
	Women	4	13
	Both	5	15
Only within the home	Men	5	2
	Women	6	6
	Both	5	4
Within and out with the home	Men	2	4
	Women	3	4
	Both	3	4
<i>Rate of usual activity</i>			
	Men	49	77
	Women	38	71
	Both	43	74

The X2 shows that activity according to sex in France is significantly different from that observed in Hungary.

For the men, for a DDL = 6, the X2 = 83,96

For the women, for a DDL = 6, the X2 = 84,64

**Table 3. Activity in Relation to Age**

		12-17 years	18-34 years	35-49 years	50-64 years	65-74 years
<i>Play/time of activity</i>						
Only on holiday	France	11	9	12	11	7
	Hungary	7	7	5	3	0
On holiday and outside the home during the rest of the year	France	45	28	26	16	10
	Hungary	22	14	13	3	0
On holiday and within the home	France	3	4	3	5	3
	Hungary	7	5	4	1	0
On holiday + outside the home + within the home during the rest of the year	France	15	14	10	7	5
	Hungary	20	17	6	2	0
Only outside the home	France	9	16	15	15	19
	Hungary	3	6	8	1	2
Only within the home	France	3	4	3	6	9
	Hungary	5	4	5	7	8
Within + outside the home	France	3	5	2	4	2
	Hungary	4	4	3	0	0
<i>Rate of usual activity</i>						
	France	90	80	73	64	53
	Hungary	69	58	45	16	10

Activity in relation to age in France is significantly different from that in Hungary, whatever age group we take.

For a **DDL** = 6, the  $X_2$  is always > 12,60.

**Table 4. Sports People Dream of Doing**

Hungary				France			
Men		Women		Men		Women	
	%		%		%		%
Football	13	Swimming	7	Car Rallying	6,85	Horse riding	11,72
Tennis	6	Walking	6	Car racing	4,28	Glisse:	8,95
Motor sports	5,4	Skiing	6	Motorcycling,	4,52	- downhill skiing	5,60
Wind surfing	5	Gym. (keep fit)	5	Cross country		- cross country	1,63
Walking	4	Tennis	5	Piloting	2,40	skiing	
Swimming	3,9	Horse riding	3	Power boat	0,30	- new ski disciplines	
Car racing	3,6	Wind surfing	2,3	piloting		- water skiing	
Skiing	3,4	Jogging	2	Football	7,43	- wind surfing	
Combat Sports	2,6	Hand ball	1,5	Sailing	6,63	Tennis	8,04
Horse riding	2,4	Table tennis	1,1	Tennis	6,46	Ice skating	5,92
Table tennis	1,6	Delta planing	1	Glisse:	5,20	Swimming	5,76
Fishing	1,6	Ice skating	1	- downhill skiing	3,04	Dance(s)	5,11
Motor cycling	0,6	Gymnastics	2,5	- new ski disciplines		Deltaplanning	3,21
Flying	0,6			- cross country skiing		Gliding,	4,58
Power boat	0,6			- water skiing		parachuting	
piloting				- wind surfing		Ballooning	
				Horse riding	4,51	Car. motorbike	3,34
				Delta planing	2,19	Gymnastics	3,22
				Gliding,		Sailing	2,99
				parachuting		Walking,	1,94
				Ballooning	4,23	hiking	
				Cycling	4,01	Golf	1,92
				hiking		cycling	1,46
				Golf	2,79		
				Swimming	2,23		
				Walking	1,11		
				hiking			