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***Voluntary Action and Sport:  
an organizational history***

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# The sports voluntary system as a collective actor, as...

- In Europe the sports organization grounded in culture and practice of the voluntary action represent the **social backbone** of the sports system at large
- The European sports system, despite its strong inside differentiations, is rooted in the **non profit private sector** extensively belonging to the **Third Sector** domain and inspired to the philosophy of the so called **Social Economy**
- Its figuration and regulation depend on (i) different **legal statuses** assigned to sport; (ii) various typologies of **acknowledgement of the non profit system** at large; (iii) **organizational histories**, to be linked with specific experiences (regarding sports disciplines, network frames, influence of exogenous and endogenous factors); (iv) an emerging role exerted by **over-national bodies**

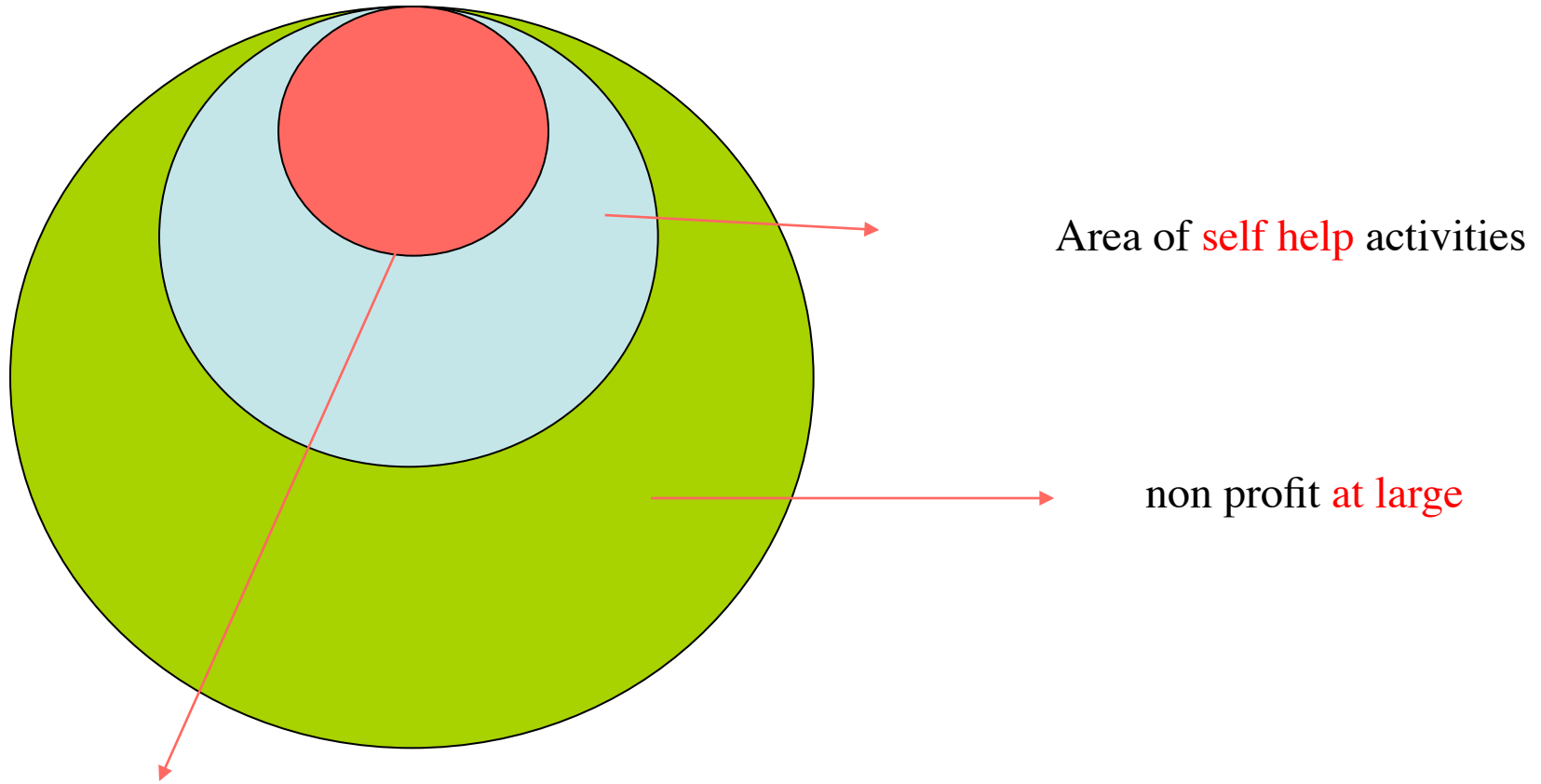
# ...a social construct, a political arena and...

The European sport domain can be correctly represented as a **social construct** and a **political arena**, involved in a number of unsolved controversial conflicts

- Examples: the role of local/national public powers vs over-national regulation; State dedicated policies vs homologation to market logics; grassroots movements vs traditional pyramid of official sports organizations
- According to Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam we can adopt the categories of **economic capital** (financial resources that the organization is able to mobilize), properly **sports capital** (organizational history, social effects, membership) and **symbolic capital** (reputation, identity, prestige). Faure and Suaud (1998) emphasize the system of beliefs and the organizational imaginary

## ...an organizational field

- Gasparini (2000) suggests to preliminary define the concept of **sports actor** (are they all the people involved in the life of a sport organization or just the ones actively participating as stakeholders in the organizational challenges, in order to better locate stakes, power games and logics of action (see Crozier e Friedberg)
- Putnam (2000) analyzes the voluntary action in a sport system as an example of the dialectics between **bonding** and **bridging** social policies. Some helpful contributions are provided by the Political Sciences too (**collective action movements, mobilization of resources**).
- Some representations of the **non profit system** as able to include sports topics can be suggested
- These representations have to be considered as **merely ideal-typical** and oriented to offer just a **morphology** of the system and its subsystems. According to our theoretical frame they need to be integrated by a long term historical overview

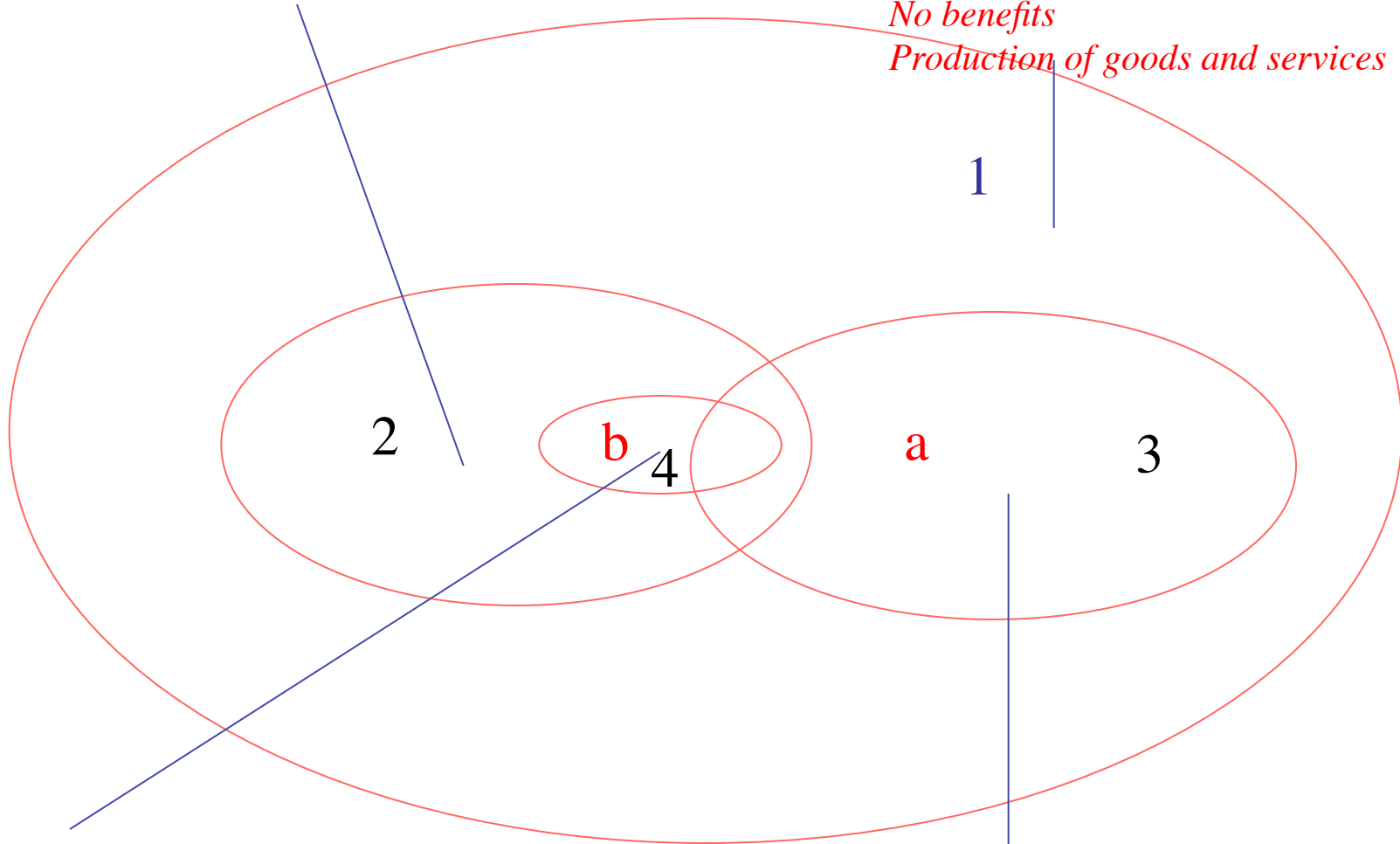


Third sector **solidarity oriented**

**The non profit area according to Lunaria (1997)**

**Social Economy**  
*D: Inner Democracy rules*

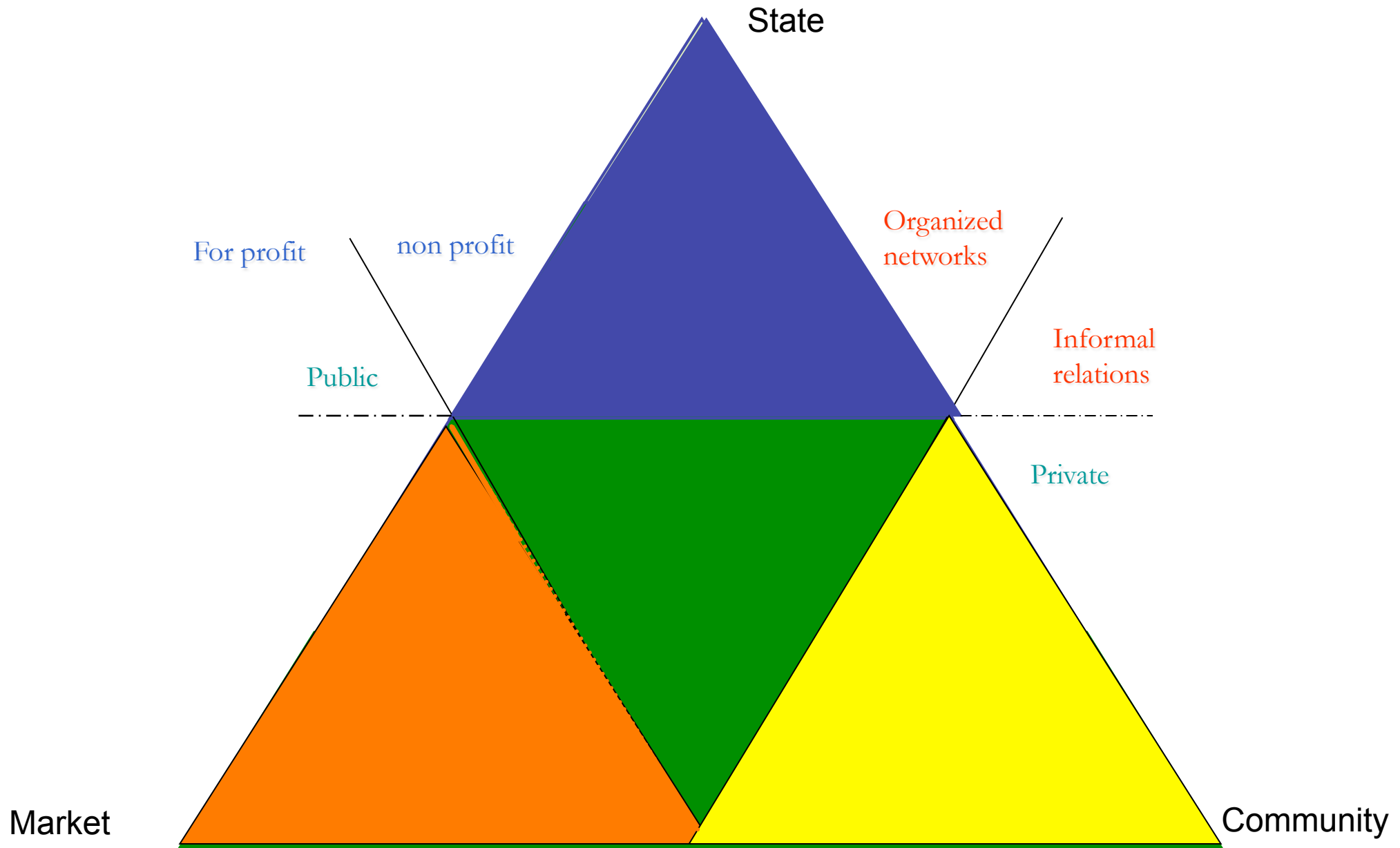
**Third Sector**  
*D: Private status*  
*Self Government*  
*No benefits*  
*Production of goods and services*



**Civic Economy**  
*D: Multistakeholdership*

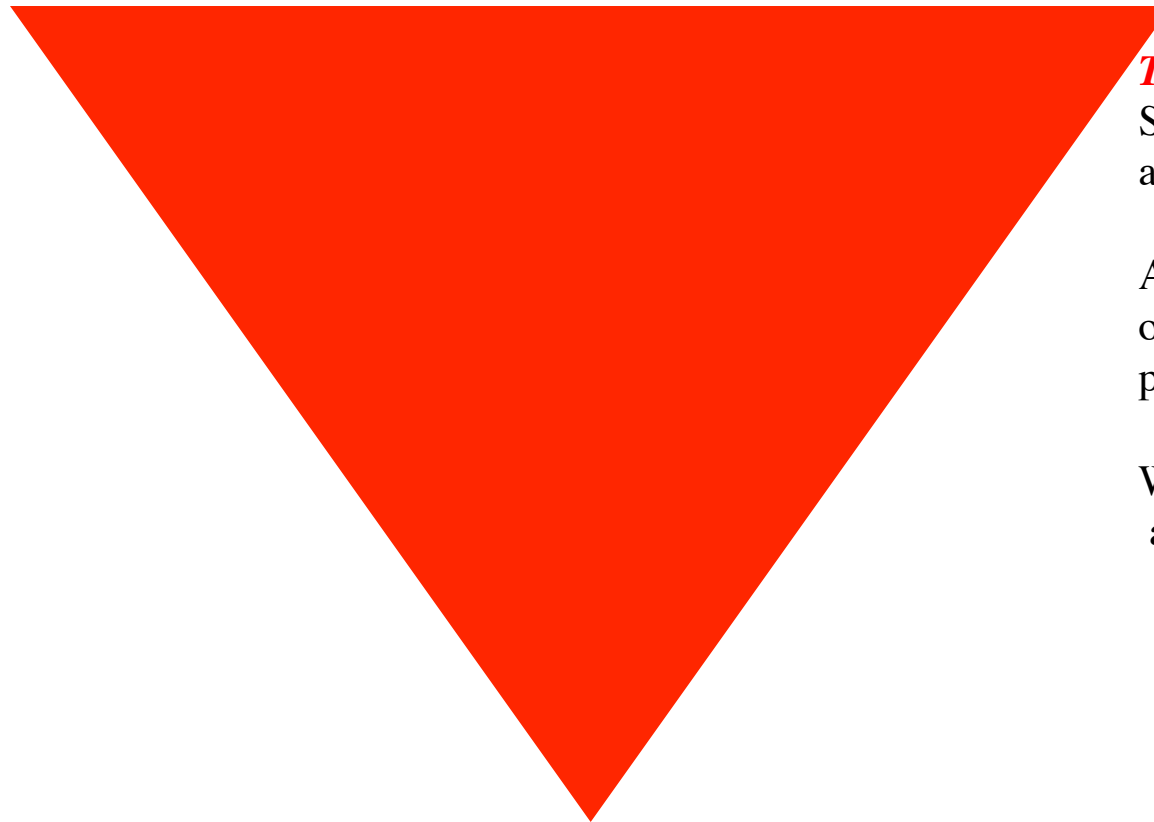
**Cnel 2005**

**Voluntary System**  
*D: Unpaid work*



Location of the social space of sport according to the representation of the *Welfare triangle* by Evers e Wintersberger (1990), as adapted by Ibsen e Ottesen (2000).

# The Welfare triangle: focusing on the area of private, non profit and organizationally structured activities



*Third Sector sport*

Sport for all  
associations

Amateurism  
oriented  
performance clubs

Workers' free time  
activities



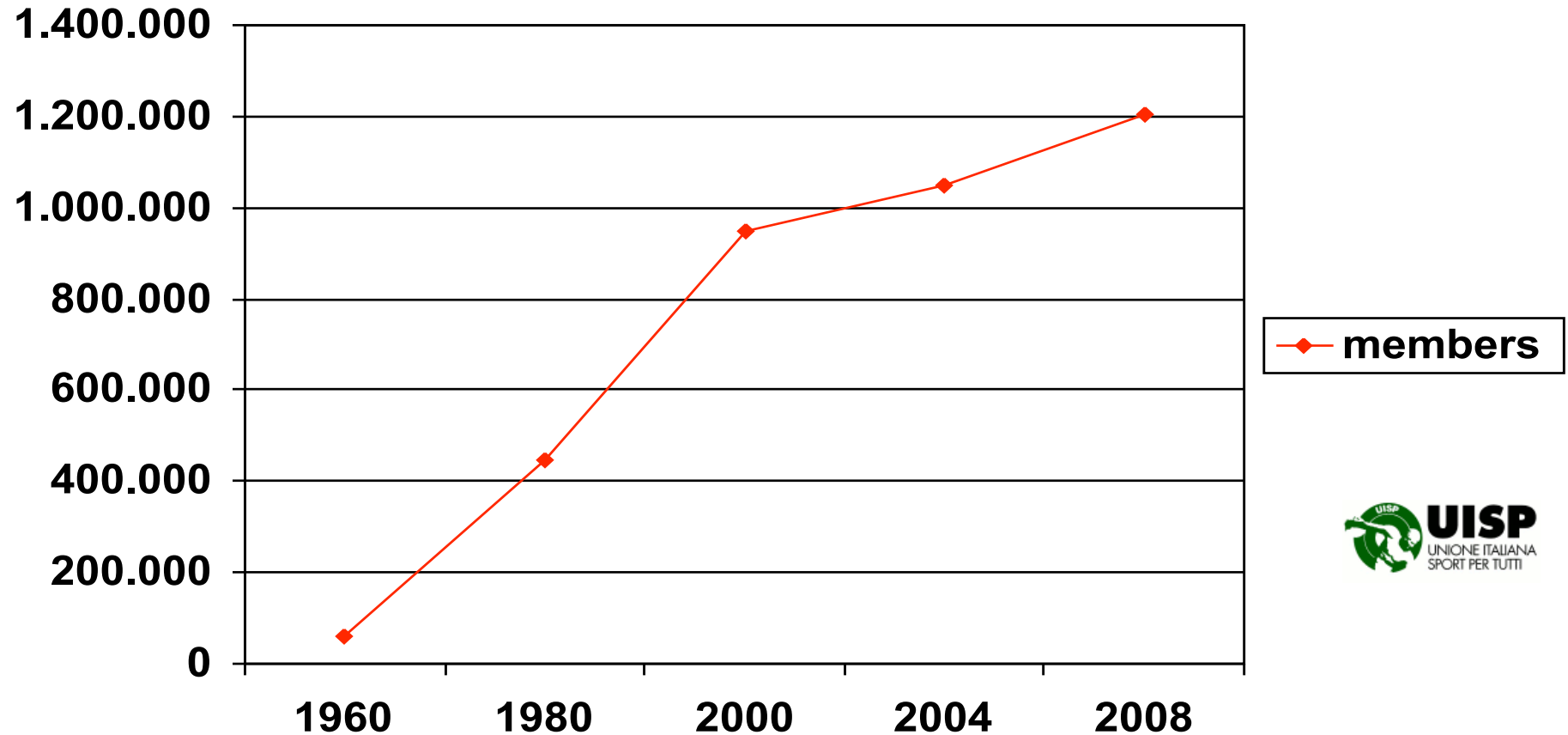
# Investigating the Uisp case: theoretical frame and applied methodology (see Ferrante and Zan, 1994)

- According to a *traditional approach* an organization is **instrument for pursuing goals**
  - Its collective behaviour is oriented to **rational principles**
  - **It depends on its environment** and can be classified as a **simple phenomenon**
  - One must prevalingly observe the **structural map** of the investigated organization
  - A privileged analysis has to be devoted to the **present history** and to the **future oriented programmes** of the organization
  - The research is inspired to **standardized and quantitative methods**
- According to the *emerging point of view*, each organization is a **social construct** and a **political arena** privileging the **imaginary domain** (symbols, identities, rhetoric) and the **conflicts** in which the organization is involved
  - Its behaviour is oriented to **different and variable logics of action**
  - An organization **produces its own environment** and must be considered as a **complex phenomenon**
  - It is crucial to understand its **processes**
  - First of all, the researchers must reconstruct its **past** (and in a subordinate way its **present**).
  - The preferred methods are **non standardized and qualitative**

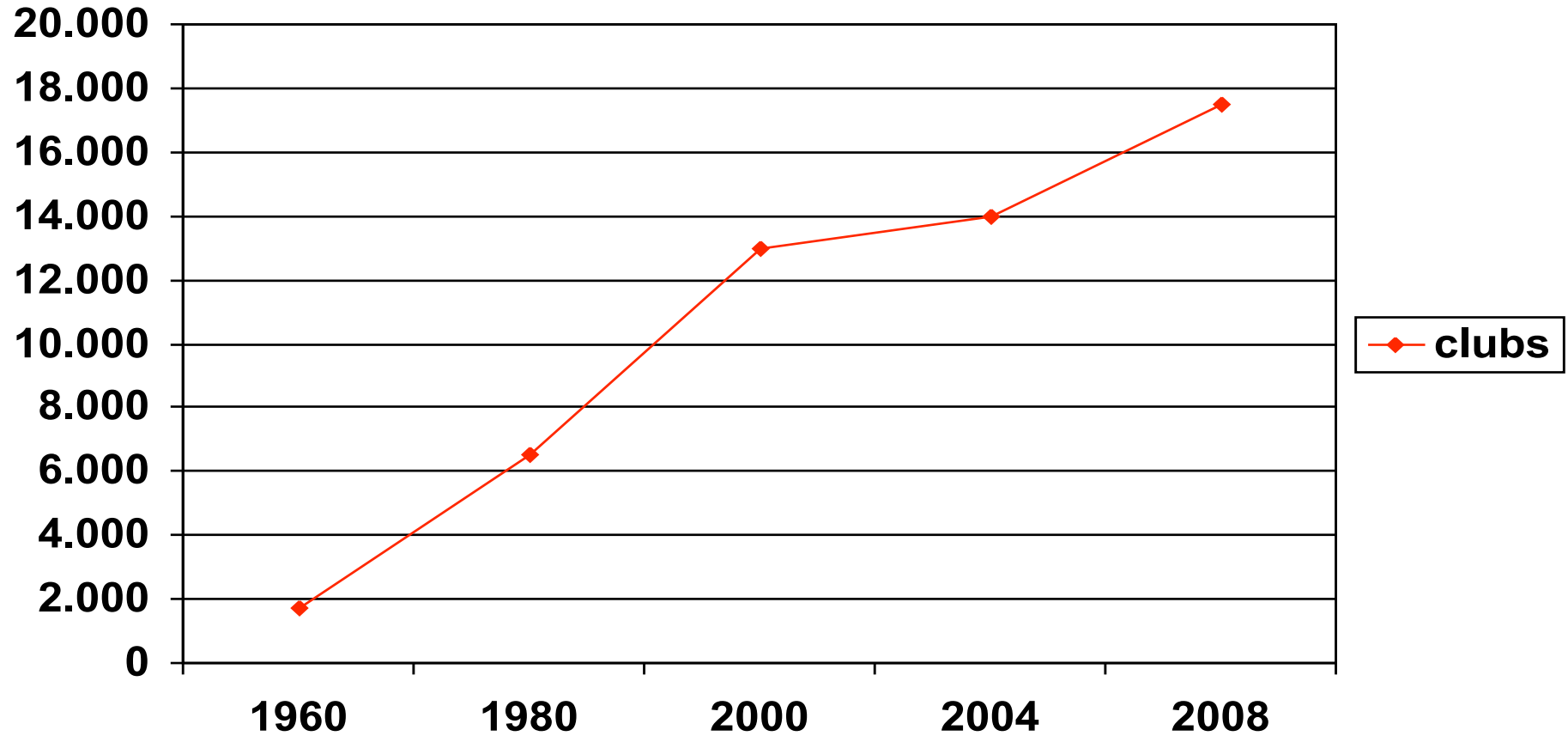
# Origins and developments

- Uisp (Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti) was born in 1948. Its roots and its symbolic legitimacy rest on the **partisan movement** during the last two years of the II World War. The armed movement for Liberation in the Northern areas of Italy strongly supported the development of physical activities and technical competences oriented to the *Nation Armée* paradigm. The association was officially founded after the war as **Unione Italiana Sport Popolare**, according to a philosophy of social mobilization and political flanking (**collateralismo**)
- The organizational history of Uisp was long time influenced by the **compromise** between official sports institutions and voluntary movements (**enti di promozione sportiva**). At the end of the 70es Uisp is included among the **recognized bodies** by Coni (Italian Olympic Committee). Early in the 90es Uisp leads a claim for the **autonomy of sport for all** challenging the Coni hegemony. The Congress of Perugia (1990) re-baptizes the organization as **Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti** and locates the movement in the field of non profit

# A structural profile: Uisp card-holders 1960:2008

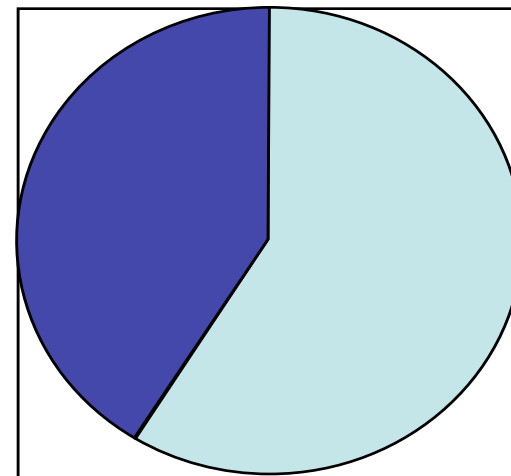


# Uisp associated clubs 1960:2008



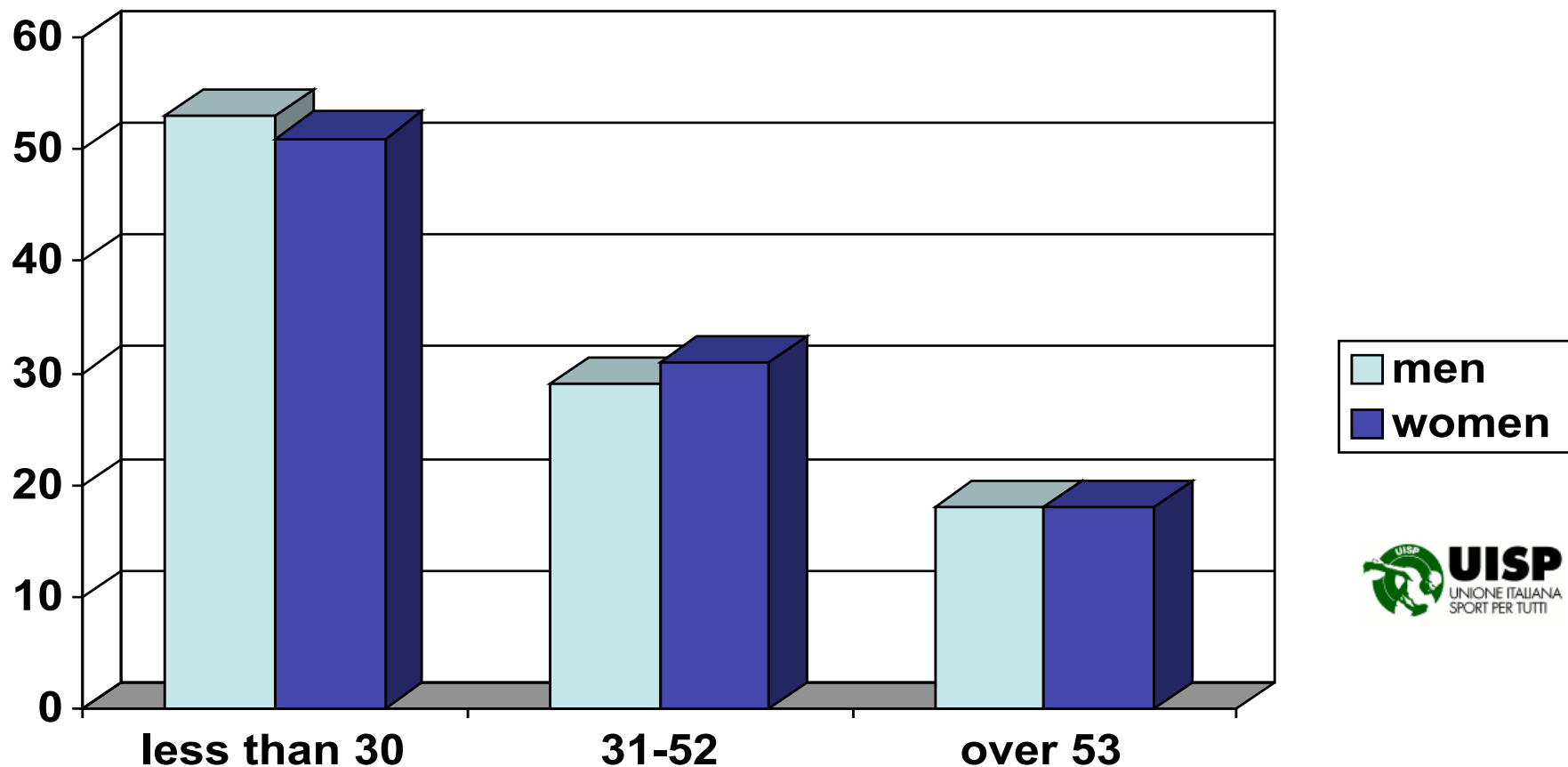
# When Uisp reached one million members (2003)

- In 2003 Uisp reaches one million card-holders showing a **gender composition** (m 59%, w 41%) a little better balanced than the national average of sports practicers
- It must be remarked (i) the increasing rate of the **elderly** and (ii) the growth of **women in the central age classes**



Uisp in 2009: 1.203.401 card-holders, 17.460 clubs, 166 local committees, 28 leagues for activities

## Card-holders' composition / gender and age (2009)



# How analyzing the organizational case

- In analyzing Uisp as an exemplary case of a big sports organization able to change its mission and organizational profile facing different exogenous and endogenous challenges, we mainly refer to two paradigms of research: the neo-institutionalistic approach as adapted to sports organizations by **Slack and other investigators** early in the 90es and the **HEC** (Hautes Etudes Commerciales, Lausanne) empirical approach, as summarized in **Gasparini** (2000). The empirical grid includes:
  - 1. **strategy**
  - 2. **structure**
  - 3. **decision making**
  - 4. **identity**
- The preliminary analysis has been focused on the **social impact** of the Uisp movement (see above: card-holders and affiliated clubs from 1960 to 2009) and a reconstruction of its **organizational history** as a collective actor and as a subsystem acting in the context of a sports system exposed to crucial environmental challenges. The non standardized approach included **focused interviews** to the organizational leaders, a **Delphi inquiry** involving outside observers, the analysis of **official documents** and available **grey literature**, a comment to the findings led through three **focus groups**

# A synoptic grid for analyzing the case study (see HEC model)

Crucial components	Organizational periods			
	Popular sport (1948-1978)	Sports promotion (1978-1990)	Welfare sport (1990-2002)	<i>Sportpertutti</i> (after 2002)
Strategy				
Structure				
Decision making				
Identity				



# A diachronic representation of the organizational history

- According to the research, we can locate four main organizational seasons
- 1. **Popular sport**. Since organizational foundation (1948) till the recognition as *ente di promozione* (1978)
- 2. **Promozione sportiva (sports promotion)**. Between 1978 and 1990 (Congress of Perugia), change of paradigm (sport for all, from *ente* to association). Since the late 80es infra-organizational conflict
- 3. **Welfare sport**. 1990-2002 From the Congress of Perugia until 2002, when Uisp is recognized as *ente di promozione sociale* (body for social promotion), meaningful part of the Third Sector system. Decreasing involvement in political flanking and increasing role in the non profit system. Hard inter-organizational conflict with Coni
- 4. **Sportpertutti**. The organization aims at modifying its mission and re-designing its subsystems. Fiscal crisis of the official sports system. Relevant transformations in the wider sports domain. Development of an over-national network of activities

# Popular sport 1948-1978

- Historical context:
- (a) **Reconstruction**: conservative governments, integrative social policies. The State supports the hegemonic role of Coni on the sports subsystem, birth of *enti di promozione* (political flanking).
- (b) **Parties led political system** until the crisis of the early 70es. Centre-left governments (60es), cycle of protest, Welfare policies, new State regime in health and local powers (*Regioni*). Terrorism and deficit spending (70es-80es). In 1978 *enti di promozione* are legally recognized and partly financed by the Coni system
- The **strategic action** is oriented to the **popularization** of sports practices and to the social **enlargement of recruitment**. **Low level of differentiation** of the offer, philosophy of **negative integration** in the new born democratic institutions and in the official sports system itself. **Self financing**, support by the reference political or religious organizations, scarce public encouragement. Since the Olympics in Rome (1960) increasing **cooperation with Coni**

# The Popular sport time: strategies and structures

- The organizational structure is **vertical** and **pyramidal** showing a **double isomorphism** (political system and Olympic federations), a **low rate of specialization** but a **high inside coherence among subsystems** (till the 60es). Since 1957 the leading roles are located in the **territorial organizations**. In 1962 are constituted the **leagues of specialties** according to the federal paradigm. In the 70es increasing development of the **single-sport clubs** and enforcement of the offer of activities. The decision making is originally **outside led** but it tends to a **progressive autonomy** of organizational subsystems.
- The **inside coherence decreases** in the late 70es while the **demand of specialization grows**. The leaderships are usually produced or legitimated by **outside coalitions**. The organizational learning is traditional and prevailingly **goal-view oriented**. From **negative integration** in the sports system to **weak integration**. From **political militantism** to the claim for the **social function** of sport in a democratic perspective. Sport is focused as a **relational good** and a virtual **instrument for education and social cohesion**. Champions worship, commercialization and exasperate competitiveness are criticized by a still ideological point of view

# The season of *promozione sportiva* (1978-1990)

- The period includes the season of the **First Republic**, the **end of the Cold War** and the **collapse of the party system** early in the 90es.
- Sports practice experiences a **remarkable growth** and sport begins to be inserted in the **public policies agenda**. Uisp supports sport for all as a **new right of citizenship** and revises its own mission. Three exemplary events detaching from the traditional 'double bind' relations. In 1986 the unification with Arci network **ends**. Between the 80es and the 90es the original paradigm of *promozione sportiva* is **refused**. The change of paradigm is formally expressed by the new name **Unione Italiana Sport *Per tutti***
- Strategy based on (i) claim for rights **of sport and into** the sports system, (ii) instrumental insertion in the **Coni system** (dynamics on turn of cooperation and conflict). Increasing **differentiation** of the organizational offer. Late in the 80es emerging philosophy of ***prestazione relativa*** as the Italian way to sport for all/ for everybody. **Self financing** but increasing public **support** and emerging **sponsorship relations**. The structure is **less hierarchical, more specialized, less inside coherent** and the subsystems are more **functional to the re-organization of the State (*Regioni*)**. Diversification of technical offer and services to card-holders

# Social movement and/or institutional actor?

- The decision making is characterized by an **increasing voice of both technical (*leghe di specialità*) and territorial (*comitati*) insider actors**. The decline of the in-group coherences makes **more complicated the decision networks**. The national leadership is however still influenced by **exogenous pressures** and the organizational learning is prevalently **goal-view**. The secession of Uisp from the Arci system marks the **exit from the political flanking original imprinting**
- The traditional subcultural loyalties are downgraded in favour of a collective identification in the field of **social sport**. Uisp is the national organizational network more influenced by the North European model of ***sport for all / for everybody*** (“*a misura di ciascuno*”). A role of **social advocacy** is overlapped to the culture of **civic action**. At the end of the period the **latent conflict between pro-movement and pro-institutions leaders** is paid off thanks to increasing **organizational successes**

# A turning point: the Welfare Sport (1990-2002)

- **Second Republic. Electoral reforms and new coalitional design.** Increasing regulatory **role of EU** (Maastricht policies and euro). **Strong immigrants' flows.** In sport see **Bosman sentence** in 1995. **The partial changes in Constitution** deal with governmental rules and sports governance itself. **Strategic changes in the sports system:** in 1996 stock options in professional clubs, in 1999 'Melandri's decree', in 2002 Coni's privatization due to the bets system collapse. Emerging **conflict between sports institutions and local powers.** Increasing pressure by the **sports market** (fitness and wellness commercial offer). In 2002 Uisp is recognized as a **body for social promotion**
- Enlargement and diversification of **partnerships** (environmentalism, consumers' organizations, movements for civil rights). Uisp roots itself in the **Third Sector**, which is facing a controversial process of institutionalization. Coni's fiscal crisis quickens the **differentiation of financial resources.** Organizational **network paradigm**, specializing bonds and ties of the subsystems, supporting **ad hoc** and **for project** experiences and a **loosely coupled** organization characterized by a **low inside coherence.** Since 1998 the National President is **directly elected** by the Congress, giving birth to dynamics of **political arena**

# The rising of Welfare sport

- Uisp is more and more involved in **outside sport programmes**. The mix of emerging organizational complexity, new priorities, enforcement of the pressure groups makes **more difficult the decision making**. Organizational stress and increasing inside conflicts do not compromise the card-holders' recruitment and the leading role conquered by Uisp both in the voluntary sports system at large and in the non profit domain. The organizational learning is more and more experienced as a *process-view* one
- In 2002 (Congress of Montesilvano) Uisp officially defines its own mission as (i) **association for rights, environment and solidarity** through sport (ii) promoting **active citizenship** and (iii) a solidarity oriented philosophy of **globalization**. Sport practice is claimed as a new right of citizenship and as an instrument for the **inclusion** of new sports citizens such as elderly, disabled people and immigrants. This implies an **organizational re-design**. The **single issues areas** constitute the third pillar of Uisp network, in addition to leagues of specialities and local committees

# After 2002. The making of a *sportpertutti* culture

- During the second Berlusconi's government (2001-2006) Coni - supported by the conservative coalition in power - tries to impose again its hegemony on the whole national sports system
- Harsh conflict among the three main subsystems of sport (performance amateurism oriented network, professional clubs, grassroots movement). The sport for all area is still under-represented in the sports institutions despite its role in the Third sector and its placement in Cnel
- In **2003** Uisp is the first national organization for sport for all to reach one million card-holders, linking in its network **13.456** affiliated clubs
- The formula *sportpertutti* seeks at marking an alternative representation of sport as **right of citizenship** and **public goods**, socially engaged and clearly differentiated from the mere expansion of sport and physical activities consumption



# The season of *sportpertutti*.

## The crucial *issues*

- The organizational policies aim at **emancipating from the Coni system**, at **enforcing the autonomy of the subsystem** from the political domain, at **achieving visibility** in media and public opinion, at **confirming Uisp leading role** in the *non profit* territory as well. The organizational innovations are oriented to favour the transition **from a spontaneous network to a system network**, enforcing the cooperation of the bonds and contrasting their *organizational selfishness*. It implies a twofold critical tendency (encouraging **more autonomy** of ties and at the same time a **stronger leadership**)
- The subsystems (leagues, local committees, social area) are solicited to experience **new organizational practices innovation oriented** (single issue projects, European cooperation etc.)
- The organization asks for a strong investment in **human resources** and a **new cultural profile of the leadership** acting different criteria of selection, self-learning and **process-view formation**, more professional approach to communication and a wider use of new technologies

# The change in Uisp: *exogenous* and *endogenous* factors

- ***Exogenous***

- **Public support** (national / local), influenced by political cycles
- **Competition for resources** (see the inter-organizational conflict about services on demand)
- Capacity of **providing for new universalistic answers** (sports medicine, welfare services, insurance, technical expertise)
- Interaction /integration in the **formation system**
- Rules for **paid / unpaid work**

- ***Endogenous***

- Changes in the **values of reference** as referred to sports culture
- Uprising of new **legitimacy principles** (sport for all vs performance culture)
- **In-group relations** and changing **leading coalitions**
- Need for new **organizational roles and competences**
- Formation of **specialized networks** inside the organization

# The triple identity of a sport for all mass organization

- A *Grassroots Movement* inside the traditional sports system oriented (i) to support a new kind of *bonding* performance practices *opposing the pyramidal model*; (ii) to experience *adapted technical activities*
- A *Sport for citizenship Association* as a *bridging* mass organization, whose mission supports a flexible strategy for *socialization, education, inclusion and solidarity oriented policies post-materialistic needs*
- A *Sport for everybody Offer System* trying to answer the quest for both non competitive *expressive* activities and *instrumental* physical practices oriented to fitness, wellness and health care according to a post-materialistic philosophy

# The research: theoretical sources and underlined aspects

<b><i>The three organizational identities</i></b>	<b><i>Main theoretical sources for the research</i></b>	<b><i>Roots and characters</i></b>
<i>Grassroots Movement</i>	<i>Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories on social capital, De Knop's and al. Sportization of society / de-sportization of sport</i>	Arnold's pedagogy Catholic and socialist non competitive or semi-competitive physical practices (early 20th century)
<i>Sport for citizenship Association</i>	<i>Th. Marshall's Citizenship theory, Myrdal's Welfare Society, Putnam's civic culture</i>	Proletarian hygienism Social movements Organizations for civic action, inclusion and social cohesion
<i>Sport for everybody Offer System</i>	<i>Lasch's culture of narcissism, Inglehart's post-materialistic needs, Eichberg's Bodily Democracy</i>	Fitness, well-ness and health care oriented experiences, 'immediate gratification', <i>Bewegungkultur</i>

# The changing profile of allies and opponents, 'declared goals' and challenges : a grassroots movement, an association for citizenship and...

## (1) The Grassroots *Movement*

- **Main mobilized subsystem:** leagues of specialties
- **Allies:** *enti di promozione*, Faculties of Sports Sciences, European partners
- **Opponents:** the institutional sports system, governmental policy makers
- **Declared goals:** democratization of the top down sports system, autonomy of grassroots organizations, claim for public support
- **Challenges:** technical innovation, governance of the system, process view organizational learning and spread of best practices

## (2) The Sport for citizenship *Association*

- **Main mobilized subsystem:** territorial committees
- **Allies:** the non profit network dealing with policies oriented to social inclusion, environmentalism and civic rights
- **Opponents:** the traditional sports agencies, conservative parties
- **Declared Goals:** public policies solidarity oriented, environmental compatibility, consumers' defence
- **Challenges:** institutional acknowledgement, insertion of sport in Welfare Agenda, *circular subsidiarity*

# ...an offer system in a market arena

## (3) The Sport for everybody *Offer System*

- **Main mobilized subsystem:** *single issues areas*
- **Allies:** the medical expertise, the informal experiences of 'do it yourself' activities
- **Opponents:** the business oriented fitness activities, the official sports fund raisers
- **Declared goals:** supporting an enlarged cultural representation and political representativeness of the subsystem
- **Challenges:** cultural innovation, inside resistances, regulation of the stakeholders' network





Have a pleasant journey, sport for all!