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What is leisure? Elsewhere in these pages we have pointed out that 'science of leisure' is a problematic concept; the concept of leisure is, however, in itself complex, and the practice of leisure rather complicated to study and theorize. Leisure studies as well as the study of tourism have tended to concentrate their efforts on the study of leisure that involves designated time for designated activities, such as various forms of tourism. In reality, though, a different kind of leisure prevails, *viz.* that particular leisure that can be carved out in restricted doses between the demands of working life and family commitments, often devoted to bodily practices associated with sports. These are the kinds of leisure activities that are up for investigation and analysis in a new anthropological anthology, *The Discipline of Leisure: Embodying Cultures of 'Recreation'* (Berghahn Books), edited by Simon Coleman, Professor of anthropology at University of Sussex, and Tamara Kohn, Lecturer in anthropology at University of Melbourne. In his review, Halvdan Haugsbakken points out that the particular focus of the book on bodily practices and embodiment, viewing leisure and sports as arenas for meaning production and identity formation, makes it an important contribution to the body of knowledge concerning contemporary leisure behavior, as well as a productive input for the general development of anthropological theory.

The Anthropology of Modern Leisure

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SINTEF Technology and Society, Group for Schools and Education

Simon Coleman & Tamara Kohn (eds)

The Discipline of Leisure: Embodying Cultures of 'Recreation'

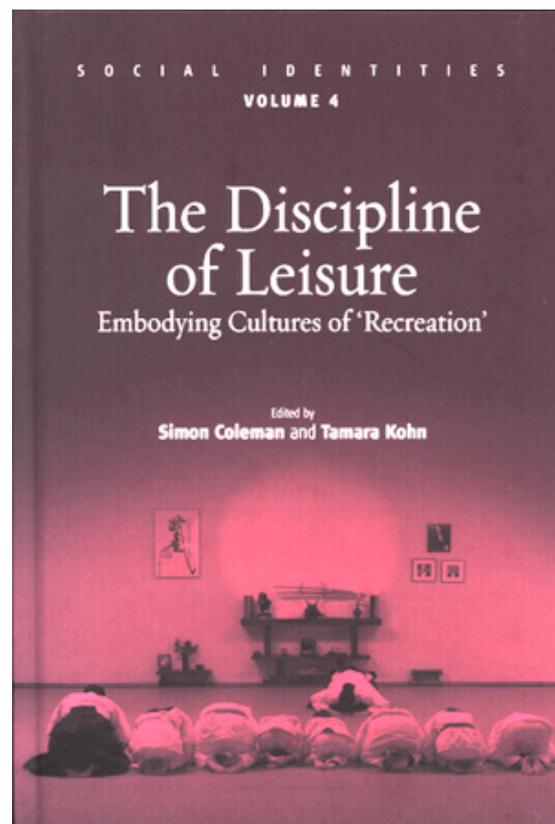
202 pages, hb.

New York, NY: Berghahn Books 2007

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The Discipline of Leisure: Embodying Cultures of 'Recreation', edited by Simon Coleman and Tamara Kohn and published by Berghahn Books, is an interesting anthropological attempt, or, rather, an impressive empirical contribution to exploring diverse contemporary themes in modern sports and leisure activities. In many ways, their book, which comprises of nine different and exciting empirical cases covering a rich ethnographic area, intends to expand and broaden the term "sport" as something more than just purely being an activity carried out for mental, physical or bodily restitution; it is a site of meaning production as well as consumption performed by individuals across the globe. First and foremost, the editors aspire to establish a comparative perspective, and explore, as Coleman and Kohn frame it, "the blurred boundaries and



ambiguities that merge when we bring leisure and work together in our ethnographic purview". By stating this, the editors argue that the social realities and distinctions between "work" and "leisure" are not always certain, but intimate and interconnected. How, and in what ways they are interconnected, remains for the social researcher to detect.

In other words, and, as I interpret them, the purpose of their research is to learn more about how various pastime practices, in both post-industrial and post-colonial societies, have overtly become sites for recreation of the self or the individual. This means approaching the social meaning of sport from a different perspective than perhaps commonly found in sport studies. Analyses of the construction of "the self" in post-industrial societies, for example, is often done in terms of type of work or level of education. What type of job a person has, and the education required to obtain it, having for example the work label "Executive Manager", or having a MBA-degree, are not merely formal titles, but have also distinct consumer lifestyles practices connected to them. Being a CEO is something more than just some letters on a inbusiness card; being and becoming a CEO is part of an identity, a part of the self, which is not only played out business contexts, but perhaps on the golf course as well – it can be remade and played out in various social contexts. And this is the point which Coleman and Kohn remind us about. Increasingly, a pastime activity can also be seen as a site for identity formation, and the social identities constructed there can be transferred to other spheres of life. In this way, they question if the self in work life is equal to the self articulated in the leisure spheres.

Given this approach, the production of leisure activities is contextualised and set in relation to modes of socialities; conducting a leisure exploit is not part of an isolated and separate sphere cut off from society, an imperative argument the authors contend for. Through such an ambitious approach, understanding sport provides an access point to comprehend the various forces of modernity. Approaching modernity is a challenging task, but anthropologists never stop relating "big matters" to "small issues", in the sense that anthropologists generalise and address complex questions about society at large from a relatively small material or a diminutive social practice – and, here, Coleman and Kohn are no exceptions; connecting such forces involves showing how sport is an arena that manifests and transcends phenomena such as de-colonisation, nationalism, globalisation, etc. The assertion of such points is carried out in various ways; the chapters are predominately historical, while others share informants' voices and communal experience of practice. Noel Dyck's text or paper is one of the volume's contributions that demonstrate this point. Dyck relates sport and immigrant identities in Canada and its connected ambiguities. Dyck shows, on the one hand, the positive view that sport can have, in the sense of being an effective vehicle for fostering the social and cultural integration of immigrants and their children in community athletic activities; while on the other hand, he discloses the more problematic view of the ideological nexus between immigration, ideas of integration and sport. This is especially contextualised when there is an expectation that immigrants should join in the sporting activities preferred by other Canadians, a factor that can result in the clear transgression between hospitality and the demand for assimilation.

The volume's analytical perspective, which Dyck and the other contributors – Nigel Rapport, Maurice J. Kane, Hazel Tucker, Jacqueline Waldren, Garry Marvin, Thomas F. Carter, and Petra Kuppinger – employ, is that of embodiment. In addition to these authors, the two editors have also contributed with their own chapters. In the embodiment approach, the body acts as a theoretical agent that ties together sport with social forces. This is demonstrated in Nigel Rapport's chapter, which focuses on bodybuilding. Through our acquaintance with "Bob", a bodybuilder and porter at a Scottish hospital and Rapport's informant, the author shows the complexities of self-realisation through the disciplining of the body. As Rapport's informant speaks about his body and reflects upon his time in and outside the hospital, the reader is encouraged to explore the blurred boundaries between the hospital and the outside world or that of the gym. For Bob, working out at the gym is also a life project to develop himself, a manifestation of him being and becoming. In a way, although working as a porter, he is still a bodybuilder that brings with him aspects of the sporting arena into professional work, and thereby Bob's differences between work environment and the time and space of recreation and "leisure" beyond it, is contested.

Since the volume is framed with the intention of understanding the meanings and experiences of an embodiment approach, the reader is also introduced to topics that not only concern sport activities. Thus, one can read about anthropological approaches to tourist experiences and socialisation activities. Overall, the contributions fall into two categories, where one set of chapters are leisure orientated, while the other half explore sports such as English foxhunting and martial arts. By employing an embodiment approach, however, the editors take a somewhat different stand towards understanding sports. While some theorists approach sport as a social field that invokes phrases such as "escape from reality" or "disciplining of the mind", for instance, implying clear distinction between the notions, Coleman and Kohn, in contrast, argue that different leisure deeds may relate to each other in patterns of distinctions or complementarity. Sport is defined as a genre of leisure, a point paving the way for claiming that leisure deeds underscore matters of disciplining the body in powerful ways.

Coleman and Kohn are concerned with examining “the objectification of the body in communities of practice that often transcend particular localities and temporalities, resulting in negotiations over correct etiquette and meanings of tradition”. In this way, the book represents an important contribution to the study of leisure.

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