
“Depression” after Tōkyō 2020?

Characteristics of Japan’s sport policy and the 2020 Tōkyō Olympics & Paralympics

KIKU Kōichi (University of Tsukuba) und Katrin Jumiko LEITNER (Rikkyō University)

1. The way to Tōkyō 2020 and tendencies in Japan’s sport policy

Following the Games in 1964, the Olympics and Paralympics in Tōkyō 2020 will be the second Summer Games to be held in Japan. Counting the total number of candidacies for Summer Games in Japan, 2020 actually represents the third attempt as there has also been a bid for the 1940 Games before the Second World War. However, Japan decided to forfeit the candidature for the 1940 Olympics, and eventually these Games were cancelled altogether because of the War.

The Olympics in 1964 were an ideal vehicle for promoting the high economic growth of Japan, and turned out to be an essential opportunity for the rapid development of social infrastructure, including the high-speed train Shinkansen and the construction of numerous freeways. In fact, it can be safely asserted that the hosting of the Olympic Games was indeed conceived with this kind of development in mind.

However, in 1958, when the hosting of the 1964 Games was decided upon, Japan had no official policies that offered a national plan for the promotion of sport. Therefore, the so-called *Sport Promotion Act* (*Supōtsu shinkōhō*) was established in a hurry in 1961, in preparation for the 1964 Games. This law effectively became the legislative fundament supporting Japan’s sport policy for more than fifty years until the *Basic Act on Sports* (*Supōtsu kihonhō*) was set up in 2011.

Japan again made a bid for hosting the Olympic Games 2016, but the Games were finally awarded to Rio de Janeiro/Brazil. This was a great shock for all people involved in Japan’s sports, as they had spent an enormous amount of time and effort on the invitation activities, but did not even make it to the runoff voting and therefore suffered what was felt to be a crushing defeat.

From the viewpoint of sport policy, the reason for failing in the bid can be regarded as a result of developing the candidacy based on the 1961 *Sport Promotion Act*, which was seriously out of date in several aspects.

In 2000, the *Sports Promotion Basic Plan* (*Supōtsu shinkō kihon keikaku*) was finally established on the basis of the 1961 *Sport Promotion Act* as the first plan of this kind in Japan, and through it, a concrete development

strategy for a time span of ten years in order to achieve a number of goals in the field of sports was established by the former Monbushō (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) in the form of administrative policies. However, to successfully contend for the hosting of the Olympic Games, a set of even more dedicated sports-related policies were obviously necessary.

2. From the *Sports Nation Strategy* to the *Basic Act on Sports*

In August of 2010, which was supposed to be the final year of the *Sports Promotion Basic Plan*, the Monbukagakushō (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; MEXT) presented a basic strategic plan for the promotion of sports called the *Sports Nation Strategy* (*Supōtsu rikkoku senryaku*). The fact that the 1961 *Sport Promotion Act* could not sufficiently reflect and react to changes in the national and international sports landscapes, as was evident also in the failed bid for the Olympic Games in 2016, can be considered as background of this new policy. Furthermore, it also made clear the necessity of re-thinking the social purpose sports can serve in the face of numerous changes in society.

Advanced nation states like Japan are facing numerous problems such as economic depression, political instability, and a rapidly ageing society. In order to mitigate or counteract these instabilities, the importance of sports culture as a way of positively affecting political and economic challenges even on a global scale, the promotion of sports for all life stages and the positive effects of sports on health are considered to be of high relevance. As something generally expected to benefit society as a whole, sport can thus be framed as part of an extremely important cultural strategy that influences the nation states’ development internally and externally. For all these reasons, the creation of a “Sports Nation” has attracted considerable attention in Japanese society, which has been suffering from the effects of a continuous low economic growth for a long time. As a result, the *Sports Nation Strategy* has focused on the establishment of a new sports culture with five priority strategies attending to the needs of different groups (people doing, watch-

ing, supporting or even developing sports):

1. The creation of sports occasions for all life stages.
2. The training and strengthening of elite athletes competing on an international level.
3. The creation of a “virtuous cycle” through cooperation in the sports world.
4. The furthering of transparency, equity and fairness in the sports world.
5. The maintenance of a base in the society to support sports. (Monbukagakushō 2010)

Following the previous priority strategies, several changes in the fields of legal and tax systems, organizational structure and revenue sources were required to realize this plan. In particular, the investigation into the establishment of a fundamental law on sports, into duty-free measures for sports business, into an overall sport administration structure, e.g. the installation of a Sports Ministry or Sports Agency, and into finances for sports promotion have been pointed out. There is no doubt that especially “the maintenance of a base in society to support sports” stated as the fifth strategy was the ultimate goal, which was clearly directed towards the bid for the Olympic Games in 2020.

3. The Formation of the *Sports Basic Act* and its characteristics – a comparison with the *Declaration on Sport*

As noted above, Japan’s sport policy had been based on the *Sport Promotion Act* for more than half a century, but finally the *Sports Basic Act* was proclaimed in June 2011 and became effective in August of the same year. Summarizing the most important characteristics of the *Sports Basic Act* as Japan’s new sports policy for the 21st century, the following seven points stand out:

1. The preamble states that sport is assumed to be a worldwide common culture for humankind and that it is the right of all people to lead a happy, wealthy life through sports.
2. Likewise, in the preamble it is indicated that sport is considered to fulfill an extremely important role in the improvement of Japan’s international status.
3. The duties of national and local public organizations should be prescribed, but the independent governance of sports organizations is required.
4. The term of “sports promotion” is considered to be no longer described by the original term of *supōtsu shinkō* = “encouragement to do sports in the sense of physical education”, but to be unified with the term of *supōtsu suishin* = “recommendation to do sports on a voluntary basis”, which is illustrated e.g. in the change of denominations, such as “Physical education committee” into “Sports promotion committee”¹.

5. Effort for mutual cooperation between concerned parties and persons is demanded in a wider sense, including even private businesses besides national institutions, independent administrative agencies, local governments, schools and sports organizations.

6. The nation state is expected to offer new measures necessary for excellent athletes and coaches to apply their wide knowledge and abilities over the course of their lives, including measures such as the maintenance of environmental conditions to make their future occupational practice possible.

7. In the supplementary provisions it is stated that the question of an ideal administrative organization for the overall promotion of sports-related issues has been investigated. For the first time, the establishment of a “Sports Agency” was mentioned, while considering the consistency of basic policies from the government’s administrative reform. Finally, the Sports Agency was inaugurated on 1st October 2015 (Kiku 2005: 28).

These characteristics suggest that the content of the *Sports Basic Act* was determined in relation to the *Sports Nation Strategy*, and that the government directed its sports policy development along the main keywords “culture, rights, status, promotion, cooperation (governance), practice and Sports Agency”.

However, clear contradictions in the understanding of the term “sports” can be identified when further investigating the content. If we take the preamble as an example, sports are first assumed to be a worldwide culture, and it is stated that all citizens have the right to do sports “on a voluntary basis”, but on the other hand, it continues to explain that sports are physical activities carried out by individuals or groups for the development of a healthy body and mind, or for the maintenance and increase of health and physical strength. Thus, the term “sports” in this law is first described as “culture”, but sports activities are then also explained as a means for attaining educational goals or health. Therefore, not all sports activities which are in principle supposed to be carried out on a voluntary basis as enjoyment in daily life are framed as culture. In other words, sports policies in Japan are still developed based on the thinking that sport is only accepted if it is physical education, since sport according to the law has to have an educational meaning, or it has to have the goal of attaining health or physical strength. Thus, the terminology still does not distinguish between physical education and sports (Kiku 2006: 96-112).

On the other hand, in 2011 – the same year the *Sports Basic Act* became effective – the National Sports Association JASA and the Japanese Olympic Committee JOC, which are both independent, non-governmental organizations, presented the *Declaration on Sport in Japan: Sport Mission in the 21st Century (Supōtsu sengen nippon)* in commemoration of the 100th year since the founding of these two organizations. In this Declaration the following

definition of sport can be found:

“Sport is a universally shared culture based on the enjoyment of free physical activity. When this cultural aspect is sufficiently respected, sport can be profoundly appreciated for its meaningful values, both individually and socially.” (Nihon taiiku kyōkai/Nihon orinpikku iinkai 2012: 582)

In this document, the contradiction in the understanding of sport as described in the *Sports Basic Act* seems to be resolved, as the *Declaration on Sport in Japan* expresses the special characteristic of sport as a culture in a very clear and precise way: It is the intrinsic value of pleasure and of enjoyment which constitute the essence of sport, and which motivate individuals to continuously enjoy it. Sport as a means for educational goals or the attainment of health as described in the *Sports Basic Act* thus comprises only one small part of sports. Therefore, policies or measures for the “promotion of sport” – with their supposed goal of delivering sports to all people by creating spaces where they can enjoy sports on a free base to enrichen their daily lives – should essentially focus on these cultural characteristics of sport instead of making it a tool for attaining various other goals.

4. Post-Tōkyō 2020 and its effects on Japanese sports and society

The *Sport Basic Plan* was based on the *Sports Basic Act* put in effect in August 2011, and was implemented the following year, in March 2012. This means that in a remarkably short amount of time a significant national strategy was decided upon. Considering that it took about 40 years from the first sports-related policy in Japan (the *Sport Promotion Act* of 1961) until the *Sports Promotion Basic Plan* was finally put in effect in 2000, the difference in the amount of time it took until the nation state’s basic strategy on sports was decided upon is surprising; the decision for the *Sports Promotion Basic Plan* fell about 80 times more quickly.

If we take a closer look at the different time frames, it seems obvious that the legal framework for further development of sports policies and the official announcement and publication of the plan were sped up to be ready in time for the bid for the Olympic Games in 2020, which were awarded to Tōkyō in September 2013. As a result, a rather bold objective was set in the plan. Alongside measures for the education of human resources and the maintenance of a sporting environment for the improvement of international competitiveness (which were proposed to be developed comprehensively during the next five years), the following goal was set up:

“The aim is to surpass the existing records for medals won at Summer Olympics and Winter Olympics, as well as to better the records for athletes placing eighth or higher in past Olympic Games and World Championships. The goal is that this leads to raise Japan to the fifth place in the gold medal rankings at the Summer Olympics and to 10th place in that

category at the Winter Olympics. For the Paralympic Games, the aim is to improve upon Japan’s gold medal rankings at the most recent Games’ 17th place at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, and 8th place at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.” (Monbukagakushō 2012)

Gold medal ranking as an objective target of the nation’s promotion policy shows that sports results have already become inseparable from national prestige, and therefore also from national policy. While evaluations of and opinions on the right or wrong of this strategy may certainly diverge, the fact that nation states actively set medal ranking as a policy objective imply that top-down sports policies become increasingly more commonplace. At the very least, it can be asserted that the importance of sport as a vehicle for nationalism seems to develop towards focusing on the evaluation of results, namely of winning or losing only (Kiku 2015: 239-267).

This tendency is not just limited to Japan. Even in the Olympics and Paralympics in London 2012, Great Britain – which had never won so many medals, and had never focused so much on the medal ranking before – notably strived to earn as many medals as possible. The reason for this can likely be found in the attention directed at the political and economic meaning of large sports events, and their ripple effects. In the research field of elite sports in Europe, the term “global sporting arms race” has often been used in the sense of nations states competing for medals, not unlike a proxy war (Boscher et al. 2012: 7-25).

Even so, a recent study of people involved with sports in England² has demonstrated that the current situation and further progression of “Post London 2012” cannot be evaluated reliably, and that only guesses can be made about the long-term success of the English policies. There has still been a budget for supporting the athletes and for the promotion of sports in general until the Olympic Games of Rio 2016, but budget measures for the time after these Games have apparently not been set yet.

When it comes to hosting the Olympic Games in a given country, sports societies, associations and related infrastructure in the host country are obviously given a boost or “ladder” in form of a great budget, but regardless of whether they are successful at the Games, this metaphorical ladder will be taken away from them sooner or later, leading them to fall into a state of “depression”, insecurity and fear.

Why then should a country host the Olympic Games, and how does it affect the overall promotion of sports for all people and citizens, which is supposed to be the ultimate goal of sports policy? It is predictable that “Post Tōkyō 2020” will have to face this old, but also new conundrum. Politically, the Games will show how much influence Japan can exert on the peaceful coexistence of the Asian countries through the promotion of sports. Economically, it will also remain to be seen whether Tōkyō 2020 will just have transient economic effects in

the sense of short time profit seeking in a consumerist society. Finally, the Games will show if Japan can present a globally viable economic model facilitating people's happiness and quality of life (QOL) through sports in a society that is looking for sustainable development.

These questions concerning the role of sports and sports policies directed towards solutions for political and economic tasks should be the very things Japan needs to be conscious of. In a mature society like Japan, the development of "Post Tōkyō 2020" policies should focus on helping neighboring Asian countries that have never won (gold) medals, win medals rather than focusing on the own medal table. This would be a far more important policy task in order to avoid the "depression" in sports after the Games.

In this context, the *Declaration on Sport in Japan* developed by the Japan Sports Association and the Japanese Olympic Committee has set three tasks for Japanese sports in the global society of the 21st century:

1. Sport allows people to share the joy of physical activity, to experience excitement together, and to deepen their relationships with each other. This capability of sport to cultivate bonds between various peoples augments the happiness and benefit of living together in the community, and makes communal life more enriched and meaningful. Sport in the 21st century will contribute to the creation of equitable and just communities without prejudice and enhance the public welfare, by availing its benefits to all persons, with a diverse variety of ethnicities, beliefs and faiths.
2. Rooted in the joy of physical activity, sport spreads the enjoyment of the utilization of one's physical abilities. It is a natural physical experience that develops our innate abilities to recognize and understand ourselves and the environment we live in. In the advanced informational society of the 21st century, sport will contribute to the reconciliation of nature and civilization through the refinement of our physical abilities, and lead to a new lifestyle in harmony with the environment.
3. The fundamental values of sport come from the spirit of fair play, in which personal dignity is based on respect for one's opponent. With its basis of mutual respect, sport promotes genuine goodwill and friendship, in which people open themselves up honestly to others, and accept others as they are. In this complex world of diverse values, sport in the 21st century will contribute to building a peaceful world of friendship, through the spirit of fair play and proactive pacifism. (Nihon taiiku kyōkai/Nihon orinpikku iinkai 2012)

The *Declaration on Sport in Japan* further states that it is not merely up to the persons involved with sports policies to solve these global tasks, but as "[we] face many global problems of great complexity today, those of us involved in sport should feel pride as successors to these inherently noble values and sport's enormous potential. We are conveyers of the values of sport in the 21st century" (Nihon Taiiku Kyōkai/Nihon Orinpikku Iinkai 2012).

5. Sport policy tasks for Japan directed at "Post Tōkyō 2020"

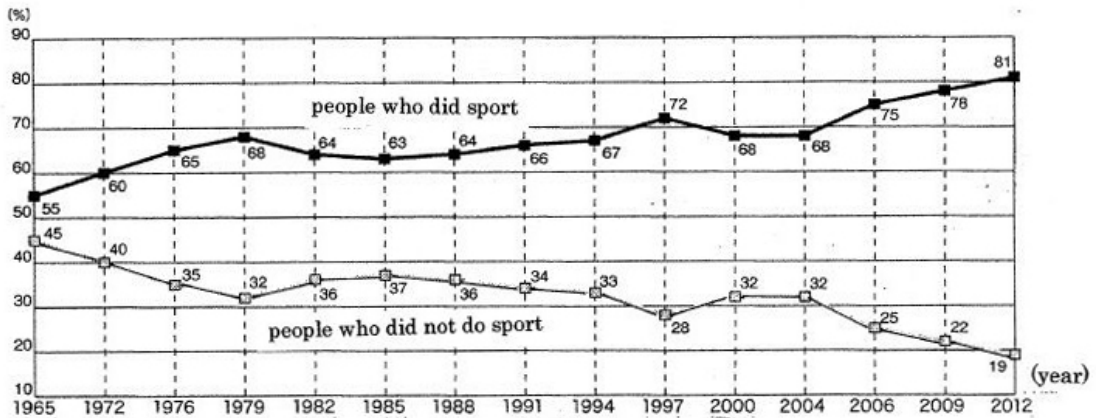
In the following chapter, we shall investigate the fundamental problems of Japanese sports policies with regards to "Post Tōkyō 2020". The central question that needs to be addressed in this context is to what extent sport has been a daily life activity, i.e. a "reality" in the life of Japanese people over time. The period of "social physical education" (*shakai taiiku*)³ followed by a time focusing on the so-called "sports for all" (*supōtsu fō ōru*) and finally leading to the era of "lifelong sports" (*shōgai supōtsu*) continuing until today illustrates the historical development of sports in Japan after the Second World War.

The concept of "sports for all" which was introduced from Europe can be regarded as a political catch phrase, which means that it may have been a social task of importance, but more than that it had a value on its own as a political issue. This was succeeded by the next catch phrase of "lifelong sports", which ended up to be another hollow phrase. These terms and their backgrounds will be discussed in the following chapters. After considering this topic carefully, the nature of the "depressed" mood concerning Japanese sports for the time after the Olympic Games in 2020 should finally become clear.

5.1. Japanese lifelong sports – a "lost 30 years"?

The term "lifelong sports" was first used in the eponymous book published in 1977 (edited by Hirano Kaoru and Kumeno Yutaka), and as an academic term it has only been in use for about 35 years. The annual conference *Lifelong Sport Convention* (first held in 1990 by the former Monbushō), which brought together self-governing bodies and other sports or physical education organizations from all over Japan, is assumed to be the reason why this term has become so well-known today, and even a widely used official administrative expression. That is to say that this term came into fashion as a part of policy terminology of the administrative sector even before its meaning had been sufficiently examined (Kiku 2013: 91-95), although it can be argued that the expectation of a rise in demand for lifelong and better sports was already present in society around that time, as is evident from academic papers from around 1980.

The following graph illustrates the course of physical activity and sports practice, in other words, the tendency to take part in any physical activity, exercise or sport. Although the frequency of participating in some sports activity at least once a year is quite low, the graph indicates that the Japanese population which has been actively engaged in some physical activity has entered a new stage of about 80% in 2012 as compared to the constant 60% to 70% since 1979. However, it should be



Graph: Transition of Physical Activity and Sport Implementation (1965~2012)

(“Public Opinion Poll on Physical Strength and Sport”, Cabinet Office Naikakufu 1965~2009 and MEXT Monbukagakusho 2012)

questioned whether these results can be interpreted positively as an improvement of life quality, thus justifying to call Japan a lifelong sports society.

In fact, Japan has been facing a number of social problems, such as more than 30,000 suicides a year for the last ten years, lonely deaths of the elderly, collapsing families or bullying at school. This does not sit well with the idea of lifelong sport, which is supposed to have beneficial effects on all areas of life. Furthermore, people involved in sports (even researchers) have investigated the idea of lifelong sport simply in contrast to elite sports, but have shown little effort to construct a sports activities model for Japanese society by searching for continuity and common characteristics, in order to empower sport as a broad culture with respect to different life stages (i.e. not just for people doing sports, but also watching or supporting, thus including a wide range of sports participation).

For the last 30 years, the reasons for not doing sports have always been summed up as “lacking money, free time and space”. These 30 years can be also regarded as the “lost 30 years” of lifelong sports policies. This also means 30 years during which the assessment of sport as a politically troublesome matter could not be overcome.

5.2. A Japan-specific misunderstanding of “lifelong sports”

The main problem of the “lost 30 years” of lifelong sports in Japan can be found in the fact that the term itself has only been a political catch phrase, while the real meaning and the idea behind the term were not accurately comprehended because of political speculation (Saeki 2006: 2-3). At the beginning of the 1970s, the book *Lifelong learning theory* by Paul Lengrand, an UNESCO adult education official, was introduced to Japan where it caused quite a stir. Lengrand argued that people needed to continue

their education their whole life, because human resource development – necessary for an innovating society – was not completed with school education only (cf. Lengrand 1971). This logic of education emphasizes the continuous adaptation to a steadily changing society. In terms of sports, this concept of education relates to the theory of physical education, in which sport is understood as a “means” for helping with social issues, e.g. by promoting health and physical strength. Seen in this light, we can understand why the Japanese lifelong sports theory should actually have been discussed as a lifelong physical education theory.

However, Japan has not been capable of making a clear distinction between the terms of “sport” and “physical education” historically, and therefore it has continued to be a “physical education and sport society”. In the 1980s, when Japan was already moving towards a post-industrial society, “education” and “physical education” were apparently difficult to accept as administrative terms considering the social climate at that time. Thus, the two terms were just replaced by “learning” and “sports” without discussing the matter more seriously. It can be argued that these administrative terms, which were a long way off from the actual meaning and implications of “lifelong learning theory” and “lifelong sports”, led to a big misunderstanding of lifelong sports and its practice in Japan.

The following chapter will examine how the lifelong sports theory based on the lifelong learning theory should have actually been argued.

5.3. The “lifelong sport theory” based on the “lifelong learning theory”

According to Robert Hutchins (1970) who is well-known for the “Great Books” compilation, the life of a human

beings can be regarded as a development process of human potential, and maturity of this potential is demanded from individuals. Furthermore, society is expected to make learning available to everyone, and to empower people to develop their potential. So, essentially, the “lifelong learning theory” is a lifestyle theory, which makes the desire of individuals to gain maturity its starting point. Ultimately, this theory can also be regarded as an ideology, since it calls for the construction of a society that makes the challenges of and opportunities for voluntary activities available to everyone at every life stage.

Until now, amateurism has enabled the exclusive possession of sport as a culture to only a small number of sport elites or a wealthy “leisure class”, but the lifelong sports theory requires a new ideological basis, which even heightens mass sport to an ideal of civil independence. However, professionalism – considered as one such model – is still immature, and the present situation in Japan is still one of commercialism being dominant, so that sport is object of economic reasoning, whereas the value of sport as a pleasant, enjoyable play culture for the people is disparaged as just consumer culture (Kiku 2010: 92-100).

Moreover, the support system for lifelong sports in Japan is still insufficient, and from the fact that the funds and resources for supporting youth sports are concentrated in schools and companies, lifelong sport inevitably has a minor status in contrast to elite sport, which these institutions mainly support. This relation of being highly dependent on the sport policies of schools, companies or self-governing bodies with their facilities, coaches and programs has become the status quo in Japan. Therefore, one of the policy-related tasks of the 21st century for the promotion of lifelong sports in Japan could be the creation of self-sustaining systems, offering various sport lifestyles centered on cities, nature and communities as lifestyle environments: One vision of lifelong sports policies could be investigating the promotion of technological sports in cities, of ecological sports in nature or of community sports in local areas to realize such lifestyle sporting environments.

However, the Japanese lifelong sports theory is based and dependent on a model of growth and development of adolescents from the viewpoint of physical education, focusing only on specific effects expected from sporting activities, such as overall health and physical strength. Therefore, it has been focusing on praising the anti-ageing effects of sports, but the fundamental question of the importance of sport as a free and free-to-do culture for society remains unasked. However, it can be argued that the idea of sport as education, which supports the model of industrial societies aiming at broad pursuit of sports in youth, has its limits. Hence, a theory of sport-as-culture, which supports the mature society model of post-industrial societies, should be at least examined.

5.4. 21st century sports policy vision for the realization of a lifelong sports society

Sixteen years of the 21st century have already passed. However, policies for the realization of a lifelong sports society have been obstructed for the last 30 years, and they are still based on the logic that sport is a vehicle for education, economy and politics. The reason for this may also be seen in the fact that mass sport has been regarded mainly as a means to support the modernization of the nation. Therefore, lifelong sport is not yet rooted as a culture, although this is considered to be of great importance for the Japanese society in the 21st century.

On the other hand, the global society of the 21st century can also be regarded as a society that has started to part with an industrial-type lifestyle, with people changing to a quasi-nomadic type of lifestyle with a focus on the “free exchange” of and access to culture, personal experience and nature.

In this context, it is time for Japan to look for ideas how to integrate the voluntary play culture of sports, in order to facilitate physical interaction as cultural enjoyment and to increase overall the happiness of its citizens (Saeki 2006: 14-15).

However, the Monbukagakushōs understanding of sport (i.e. the official administrative understanding of sport in Japan) in the *Sports Basic Act*, and the Japan Sports Association’s and Japanese Olympic Committee’s (both are NGOs) understanding of the term in the *Declaration on Sport in Japan*, both put forward in 2011, seem to be the quite converse. Both first indicate that “sport is a common worldwide culture for humanity”, but then the *Sports Basic Act* goes on to state that sport is a “means for” diverse goals other than sport itself, whereas the *Declaration on Sport in Japan* precisely proclaims that “sport is based on the enjoyment of free physical activity”.

The sports policy vision of the 21st century for the realization of a lifelong sports society in Japan should be motivated by the demand for lifelong sports as an established culture not influenced by waxing and waning of the economy, and it should be based on the voluntary character of sport as a global culture. Therefore, activities of non-governmental sports organizations as well as the public role of the media will likely become more important in solving social tasks of the 21st century Japanese society: While the former are supposed to constantly manage sports to become an ever more beneficial activity, the latter are capable of delivering the message to society.

Epilogue: Common tasks for Asian sport promotion and the “depression”

Examining the “depressed” feeling about the circumstances of sport leading to “Post Tōkyō 2020”, it becomes

clear that necessary steps to be taken are not only limited to Japan, but rather related to Asian sports policies in general. First, it should be kept in mind that today's sports culture is a historical and social product, and it can also be regarded as a historically unique culture that functioned as a catalyst for modernization in Western Europe, especially England. After the Second World War, European countries immediately started to utilize sport as a communications tool for dealing with social problems, such as immigrant problems, or as a support of the social fundament in general. Modern sport actually started as regional sports rooted in daily life, and developed as a folk game in the European advanced nation states, with England leading. That is the reason why from a legal perspective, the right to do sports can be asserted without question.

On the other hand, Asian countries historically were comparatively less developed in a modernist sense. Needless to say, Asian countries including Japan also have native physical exercise cultures rooted in daily life, but those are obviously different from the English style culture of physical exercise. Many Asian countries are united by their common history of focusing on catching up in modernization with the Western countries. Therefore, sports policies had a tendency to focus utilizing sport as an educational means for modernization via schools, thus reducing sport to physical education (Kiku 2015: 239-267).

However, this very modernization lag could also have been a chance to realize that sport as traditional physical exercise culture rooted in daily life has existed in Japan and other Asian countries for a long time, albeit in a different style: Just as in European countries, common people enjoyed exercising as part of their daily life.

The 21st century has seen increasing urbanization in Japan and other Asian countries, and the emergence of recycling societies built on symbiosis with nature can be foreseen. In such societies, sport should be viewed as a physical exercise culture in a broader sense, and the pursuit of happiness for a lifetime as well as the enjoyment of sport will certainly become the most important tasks for sport policy.

To cope with these challenges, a new sport ideal adapted to the lifestyle of Japan and other Asian countries, and an organizational structure to realize this new form of sport will become necessary. Unfortunately, at this time, the 2020 Tōkyō Olympics do not seem to be seized as a chance to initiate such changes. Therefore, the 2nd Summer Olympic Games held in Japan will probably have only limited effects on the whole region, even if this pessimistic assessment does little to alleviate the feeling of “depression” in the face of a chance wasted.

Notes

1. The term *supōtsu shinkō* (encouragement to do sports in the sense of physical education) in Japan expresses that solely the government or the “authorities” are involved with the political task of directing people to sport, half by forcing them because of political reasons. On the other hand, the term *supōtsu suishin* (recommendation to do sport on a voluntary basis) is used in the meaning of getting people involved in sports voluntarily by the immanent desire to engage in sports as part of their daily life. However, the present sport environment in Japan does not differentiate clearly between these two terms.
2. Based on interviews with persons involved with UK Sport carried out by the authors on 16th September 2014.
3. “Social physical education” (*shakai taiiku*) is a special Japanese term. In Japan where sport was mainly carried out as physical education (i.e. physical education classes solely focusing on different sport disciplines), sport that was carried out by the general mass of people who already graduated from school was called “social physical education”. Actually it indicates “sports in the community” or “sports in the society” as voluntary activities in daily life.

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