

Ibsen, B., Elmoose-Østerlund, K., Feiler, S., Breuer, C., Seippel, Ø., Van der Roest, J.-W., Scheerder, J. (2019). Democratic Participation in Voluntary Associations: A Multilevel Analysis of Sports Clubs in Europe. *VOLUNTAS - International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30, 1148-1163.

---

Dette er siste tekst-versjon av artikkelen, og den kan inneholde små forskjeller fra forlagets pdf-versjon. Forlagets pdf-versjon finner du her:  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-00088-y>

---

This is the final text version of the article, and it may contain minor differences from the journal's pdf version. The original publication is available here:  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-00088-y>

---

## **Democratic participation in voluntary associations. A multilevel analysis of sports clubs in Europe**

### **Abstract**

Nonprofit associations usually are democratically organised, and it is this feature that to a large extent legitimises public support towards sports clubs. The aim of the present article is to analyse the characteristics of sports clubs that affect the extent to which members engage in democratic processes within their club. The statistical analyses are based on data collected by means of online questionnaires on sports clubs and their members, completed in 2015 and 2016, among 12,755 members and volunteers from 642 sports clubs in ten European countries. The findings show that the majority of the sports clubs' members participate in association democracy, but that level and form of the participation varies between countries. The differences, however, are primarily due to factors at club level and membership level, while the analyses identified a weak correlation with the democratic strength and quality of the countries. The results indicate that (i) the size of the sports club, (ii) the socioeconomic background of members (gender, age and education) and (iii) how the members are involved in and affiliated to the club (engaged in voluntary work, participate in social activities and attribute great importance to membership) are the main explanations for differences in the extent to which members are involved in association democracy. At the end of the article, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to the ideals of participatory democracy, and how the study provides inspiration for research into the democratic functions of associations.

### **Keywords**

Association democracy; sports clubs; multilevel analysis

## **Introduction**

“Good government comes from singing choirs and soccer clubs” (Dekker and Uslaner 2001:2). This insight from the social capital discourse is pivotal for the increased interest many people – practitioners, politicians and researchers – have for what goes on in voluntary associations. There is, accordingly, an extensive debate on how exactly participation in sports clubs matters for good government, and the main message is that participation in voluntary associations is conducive to social network and trust seeping out into the larger society and somehow lubricates social and political action all over (Putnam 1993, 2000; Warren 2001; Fung 2003; Rossteutscher 2005; Freise and Hallmann 2014).

Such large-scale effects of activities in small voluntary associations do of course depend on what actually happens inside voluntary associations. Whereas the output into the larger society has received lots of attention, a less studied but equally important question is what goes on in terms of democratic value within voluntary sports clubs and what can explain the difference of such actions.

Most studies dealing with the democratic dimension of voluntary associations focus on the representation of interests in democratic governance and the connection between membership of an association and participation in parliamentary elections and debate on political issues etc. More specifically, it is the significance associations and membership thereof have for ‘the representative democracy’ that is at stake in this line of research (see e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Warren 2001; Putnam 1993, 2000; Quintelier and Hooghe 2013; Freise and Hallmann 2014; Dekker 2014). This, however, constitutes only one side of democracy. The other ideal is labelled ‘participatory democracy’, meaning that people are collectively responsible for the pursuit of common interests and goals (i.e. active citizenship, communitarian democracy or associative democracy) (Pateman 1970, 2012; Barber 1984; Hirst 1994; Etzioni 1995; Streeck 1995; Kaspersen and Ottesen 2007). It is this aspect of democracy in sports clubs, which the present article analyses.

Participatory democracy is a model of democracy in which citizens have a more direct influence on political decisions than in representative democracy with the aim to increase the control of ordinary people over their own lives (Fung 2003). Either by direct influence on public authority decisions (e.g. referendums) or by leaving decisions in specific areas to the people to which it relates (e.g. neighbourhood governance, participatory budgeting or self-government in associations) (Cohen and Rogers 1995; Fung and Wright 2003). It is in the last mentioned understanding of ‘participatory democracy’ that there is a correspondence between this democratic ideal and ‘associative democracy’, where associations and their members are responsible for service provision and governance in specific areas and members exercise direct voice over an association’s decisions regarding its goals and actions (Hirst 1994) – as is the case in most sports clubs in Europe.

When people join a sports club, this is mostly for the purpose of doing some kind of sport or physical activity, and providing sport is also the primary goal of these clubs (Breuer et al 2017). Association democracy, however, is an acclaimed ideal for sports clubs that largely legitimise the public financial support for clubs in many European countries (Council of Europe 2004). However, studies from different countries have shown that a relatively small proportion of members of sports clubs are engaged in the association democracy (Østerlund 2013; Petersson et al. 2016). But studies also indicate that there are major differences between different types of sports clubs on how much members participate in the democracy of the association (van der Roest et al. 2016). However, we do not know to what extent this differs between countries and which associational characteristics that affect the extent to which members engage in the democratic processes of their club. The purpose of the present paper, therefore, is to answer the following research question:

*Which characteristics at the country level, organisational level and individual level can explain the variations between sports clubs on the members’ participation in association democracy in Europe?*

### **Definition, theory and hypothesis**

Horch (1992) has defined the ideal type of 'democratic voluntary association' as freely chosen union of persons who jointly pursue their specific goals within the framework of a formal structure where the members are the sovereign decision-making body. Underlying this ideal are democratic and participatory decision-making processes, in which the members negotiate and define their association's goals and social practice (Braun 2014). Formal structure means that there are rules (statutes) for members' duties and rights and for the democratic processes (including how the board is elected) (Gundelach 1988). In continuation of this we define 'association democracy' as the members' involvement in the discussions and decisions of the management of collective affairs of an association, i.e. policy-making and policy decisions regarding the association's governance, goals and activities. Association democracy can be divided in a) participation in the formal democracy, that is participation in the formal decision forums (general assembly and other formal meetings), and b) participation in the informal democratic decision-making which includes, for example, discussions with other members about issues in the association and talks with members of the association's board in the effort to influence conditions in the association.

The extent to which members participate in both the formal and the informal democracy in the association is assumed to depend on factors at the macro level (country), meso level (organisational conditions) and micro level (members' background and how members are affiliated to the association) (Nagel et al 2015). In the following, we argue for four overall hypotheses that will be tested in the statistical analysis. Since there are very few significant studies of internal democracy in associations as inspiration for this study, we include theory and empirical studies from other research areas that we consider relevant to this study. This applies to research into participation in political democracy, research in active citizenship and research in workplace democracy.

### *Country (macro) level*

Engaging in an association is an expression of active citizenship. Several studies have shown a correlation between political culture, active citizenship and the role of associations in society (e.g., Almond and Verba 1963; Wuthnow 1991; Putnam et al. 1993; Van Deth et al 2007). Hoskins and Mascherini (2009: 462) define active citizenship as *'participation in civil society, community and / or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy'*. An active citizen is someone who takes a role in the community. The concept – which is closely related to the ideals in participatory democracy - includes a broad variety of participatory activities in communities. Hoskins and Mascherini (2009) distinguishes between two forms of active citizenship: a) Action-oriented participation such as protest, demonstrations and boycotts and b) participation in community life where people collaborate based on at common interest, for example in associations.

An active citizenship is supposed to depend on the 'political opportunity structure' for peoples involvement in decision-making – i.e. determined by legislation, public aid that supports associations and volunteering and the culture and tradition for engaging in democracy, both in representative democracy and in participatory democracy. The basic assumption is that associations act in response to the opening of opportunities in the political structure and culture (Eisinger 1973; Micheletti 1994; Tarrow 1994; Kriesi 1995; Meyer 2004). Political and cultural factors enhance or inhibit the prospect of an association, inter alia, to mobilize people (recruiting members and involving them in actions and activities). Therefore – according to this theory – we have to look at the 'rules of the games' in which associations and their members' choices are made (Meyer 2004). It can in principle include many dimensions. Regarding democracy in sports clubs, the democratic decision-making structure within the clubs is usually a prerequisite in order to become a member of a national or regional sporting body. In some countries it's also a precondition for public funding and a value tied to sports clubs that legitimise their public funding.

More generally it is conceivable that the strength of a country's democracy has an effect on the extent and manner of members' engagement in association democracy in that country. Political scientists have ranked the democratic strength and quality of European countries based on an assessment of different dimensions of democracy in each country (especially freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, equal opportunities for political influence, and control of the political power) (Bühlmann et al. 2012). Among the countries included in this study, Denmark, Belgium, Norway and the Netherlands have the highest democratic quality while Spain, Hungary, the UK and Poland have the lowest. Inspired by this study, we assume that the stronger a democracy is - compared to other countries - the larger the proportion of members will be that participate in association democracy in sports clubs. Based on this assumption, the following hypothesis will be tested:

*(1) In countries with a high 'democratic strength and quality' the democratic participation of members in sports clubs will be higher than is the case for countries with a lower 'democratic strength and quality'.*

#### *Organisational (meso) level*

The degree and the quality of democratic participation are not only affected at the macro level. Organisational, meso factors, such as the managerial and organisational setting of an association, is also assumed to affect the extent and manner in which members participate in the respective clubs (Nagel et al 2015). Here we argue that the participation of members in formal and informal democracy in a sports club depends on a) the size of the club, b) the type of sports club, and c) how the club is managed.

Regarding *the size* of the club it is a widespread belief that this parameter is inversely correlated with democracy. '*When it comes to democracy, small is beautiful*' as Gerring and Zarecki (2011: 2) state. The reasoning behind this statement is that associative identity and consensus are easier to be generated in small communities (Dahl & Tufte 1973), that small communities are more transparent (Farrugia 1993), that

citizens are closer to decision-makers and decision-making processes in small communities, and that preferences seem to be more homogeneous within small communities allowing for a better fit between what citizens want and what they get in small units compared to large units (Larsen 2002; Lassen and Serritzlew 2011; Denters et al. 2014). Several sports club studies, indeed, indicate that the size of the association (i.e., the number of members) is important for the members' participation in association democracy (Enjolras and Seippel 2001; Seippel 2008; Thiel and Mayer 2009; Ibsen and Seippel 2010; Schlesinger et al. 2013; Østerlund 2013; Wicker et al. 2014; Ibsen et al. 2015; van der Roest et al. 2016; Ibsen and Levinsen 2016; Petersson et al. 2016).

Regarding the *type of sports club* we assume that the members' involvement in the association democracy depend on how 'wide' or 'limited' the goals and activities of the club are. We expect that the members are more engaged in the association democracy in clubs offering only one sports activity than in clubs offering more types of sports. The argument for this is that in clubs offering only one type of sport, there is a higher consistency between the club's goals and interests at the one hand and the single member's interest and involvement in the club at the other, than in a multi sports club where many members will only be engaged in one of the clubs' activities (Horch 1982; Ibsen 1992).

Regarding the *management* issue, many sports clubs may be challenged by a growing need for effective and professional management due to increased demands from public authorities and sponsors and increased commodification (van der Roest et al. 2016), which has resulted in a partial professionalisation of an increasing share of sports clubs (in the form of paid employees) (Cuskelly 2004; Sharpe 2006). Researchers in associations and civil society find that there is an increasing contradiction between demands for efficiency and demands for democracy, or between the professional part and the membership part (Gundelach & Torpe 1996: 1). This might have an impact on how much members take part in the democracy of an association. Here we argue, theoretically, that the culture as well as the structure of the



sports club influences the members' participation in the association democracy. There is a lot of research in the management of sports clubs but almost nothing about the importance of management for the members' participation in the democracy of the clubs. However, research in workplace democracy can inspire this part of the study. Workplace democracy or participatory management is defined as a system of workplace organisation based on a more equitable distribution of power and power relations (Feldberg and Glenn 1983). Theoretical organisational democracy depends firstly on the organisational culture, where team culture and a participatory (involving) culture is assumed to increase workplace democracy, and secondly on the structure of the organisation, where decentralisation, flat hierarchy and low level of formalisation is positive for the organisational democracy (Yazdani 2010). Empirical studies have confirmed that the culture as well as the structure of the organisation has an influence on organisational democracy (Safari et al. 2018).

Based on the presented theory at meso level, the following hypothesis will be tested:

*(2) Members participation in democracy of sports clubs depend on the organisational and managerial setting: The participation in club democracy is higher in small clubs, single sports clubs and in clubs that aim to involve members in decision-making than in large clubs, multi sports clubs and in clubs where no delegations of decisions take place.*

#### *Individual (micro) level*

Besides the national and organisational level, also the level of the individual is of relevance to democratic processes within associations. Studies show that both participation in politics (Kirbis 2013) and membership of and volunteering in associations (Grizzle 2015) depend on the social background of individuals. Other studies also show that the character of a member's involvement in an association has an impact on how much the member engages in member democracy and voluntary work (Gundelach and Torpe 1997). Inspired by this, the third overall assumption is that the members' background (gender, age, education and

ethnic characteristics) and how they are affiliated with the sports club have an influence on the members' participation in the association democracy.

Regarding the members' background we expect to find the same patterns in the correlation between participation in association democracy and gender, age, education and ethnic characteristics as the research has revealed on the general political interest and participation. This expectation is based on the assumption that the social and cultural conditions that may explain the unequal participation in politics also influence participation in association democracy:

- Research on a number of Western democracies finds a persistent gender gap in citizens' political participation, with women less politically engaged compared to men, but the difference is often small in regard of other cleavages such as education and age (Kirbis 2013). One study also shows that it depends on the political participation forms one looks at. *'Women are more likely than men to have voted and engaged in 'private' activism, while men are more likely to have engaged in direct contact, collective types of actions and be (more active) members of political parties'* (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010: 318). Therefore, we assume that men are more active in the association democracy in sports clubs than women.
- Higher interests in politics and higher voting participation among older people have been consistent findings across countries for many years of research (Kirbis 2013). One of the main explanations is that older people, compared to the young, have habituated the socially conformist behaviour of voting over their lifetime and feel a stronger urge to vote (Goerres 2017). Young people are however more engaged in non-conventional forms for political participation than older people (Kirbis 2013). Therefore, we assume that older members of sports clubs are more active in association democracy in sports clubs than young members.
- We also assume that education has an impact on how much members are engaged in association democracy, because education is a powerful determinant of political interest and voting. Across most

countries, the higher educated are much more likely to vote than the less educated (Blais 2004. Kirbis 2013).

- It is also a general pattern across countries that ethnic minorities and immigrants are less political active than the majority population (Martiniello 2005). This applies to both participation in elections and participation in the political part of civil society. Therefore, we also assume that ethnic minorities are less active in association democracy than the majority population is.

We also assume that the character of the member's affiliation with the sports club has an influence on the participation in the association democracy - both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Firstly, there seem to be large differences as regards the duration of membership and the time the members use in a club. Several studies of members' participation in association democracy find correlations between the duration of the membership and how often the members take part in activities in the association. The longer they have been member and the more they join the activities, the higher the likelihood is that they participate in both formal and informal democracy (Østerlund 2013; Ibsen and Levinsen 2016). Secondly, we also assume that the nature of the members' relation to the association is of importance to the participation in the association democracy. According to Gundelach and Torpe (1997) the members' relation to the association they are members of can be characterised as 'conventional solidarity' that grows out of common interests and concerns and *'refers to a sense of "we-ness" of groups involved in a common struggle or endeavour'* (Dean 1995: 115) unlike 'affective solidarity', characterised by intimate relationships, which we typically find in families, and 'reflexive solidarity', based on our communicatively engendered expectations of the other's responsibility, which we typically find in the public sphere (Dean 1995: 132-133). Conventional solidarity has much in common with socio-affective integration, which broadly deals with the integration of members into club life. Here, two concepts are at the centre of attention: interaction and identification. The concept of interaction seeks to capture the active participation of members in sports clubs during their life. Most members join a sports club to practice sports (and thereby take part in sporting competitions),

many also participate in social activities and a relatively smaller part of the members are also involved in various forms of voluntary work (Nagel et al 2015. Elmoose-Østerlund and van der Roest 2017) We expect that members who participate in these kinds of activities have greater interest in the club and therefore also participate more in the democracy of the club than other less active members do. The concept of identification focuses on the emotional commitment of members to their respective sports clubs and to other members within their respective clubs: the members' we-feeling and affective affiliation to the sports club.

Based on the presented theory at micro level two hypotheses will be tested.

*(3) Participation in sports club democracy depends on the social background of the members: Gender, age, educational level and migrant background.*

*(4) Participation in sports club democracy depends on the character of the member's affiliation with the sports club: How many years they have been affiliated with the club, activities they take part in (volunteering, kind of sport and social activities) and the affective affiliation to the sports club*

## **Methods**

Data to examine the presented hypotheses are based on two surveys conducted as part of the research project 'Social inclusion and volunteering in sports clubs in Europe', which included ten European countries: Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Switzerland. In each of these countries, comparative data has been collected on three different analytical levels, the macro, meso and micro level, which are all relevant for understanding how sports clubs function and why (Nagel 2007; Nagel et al. 2015). In context to the topic of this article, a combination of data collected among members and volunteers (micro level) and sport clubs (meso level) were applied in the statistical analyses.

### *Two surveys*

The first survey, on the meso level, was a sports club survey conducted in the fall 2015. In all ten countries, the samples of sports clubs were as representative for the population of sports clubs as practically possible. However, existing data bases and information on sports clubs across countries varied. In Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, databases from national sports organisations were applied, which means that clubs that were members of a sports organisation were included in the survey. In Belgium (Flanders), about 50 % of the municipalities provided contact information on sports clubs. The same applied to Spain for six of the seventeen autonomous regions. In the eastern European countries, Hungary and Poland, data from statistical offices on the population of sports clubs were used. However, due to a lack of valid email addresses, additional desk research was conducted to gather further contact details of clubs. In England, data could only be collected within a selection of sports, meaning that some sports are underrepresented or absent in the English sample (for further details see Breuer et al., 2017). A total number of 35,790 sports clubs replied to the survey.

This sample of sports clubs represent the population from which 642 sports clubs were selected for a member and volunteer survey (on the micro level). In the selection procedure, the researchers from each country were instructed to sample at least thirty sports clubs. No upper limit was set for the sampling of clubs in each country, which explains the large differences in the number of clubs, and, accordingly, members and volunteers, included between countries. Therefore, the sample is not proportionate to the distribution of clubs or members and volunteers between the countries. The goal of the sampling procedure was rather to produce as good samples of members and volunteers from each country as practically possible. Concretely, the clubs were selected in order to represent the variation found within sports clubs concerning a number of structural characteristics (club size, single-sport vs. multisport clubs and sports) and the context of sports clubs (community size). Three sports – football, tennis and swimming

– were oversampled to allow for comparisons within specific sports. Given this selection procedure, the sample cannot be expected to be representative for members and volunteers within European sports clubs. However, the clubs represent the diversity of sports clubs regarding the central structural and contextual characteristics described above, and should be useful for analyses of how organisational and individual factors might make a difference for democratic participation

The member and volunteer survey was conducted in 2016. An English questionnaire was developed in the research group and translated to the language of each of the ten participating countries. Within the clubs sampled, all adult members and volunteers (aged 16 or above) were contacted electronically in all clubs – if possible – and asked to participate in the study. The choice to focus on adults is considered well-suited in relation to the purpose of this article since it is mainly adults (e.g. due to age restrictions in terms of voting rights in the general assembly) that are involved in democratic decision-making processes in sports clubs. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent directly to members and volunteers or through club representatives. A total number of 13,082 members and volunteers replied to the survey, ranging from about 450 in Spain to about 3,200 in Denmark (see Table I). The questionnaire included questions about the participation in the formal and informal democracy in the sports clubs, but it also asked for central characteristics of the members and volunteers.

**Table I**

The number of clubs selected and the number of responses from members and volunteers obtained in the ten countries included in the data collection among members and volunteers.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of clubs</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Belgium (Flanders)	47	762
Denmark	36	3,163
England	40	717

Germany	141	2,455
Hungary	47	716
The Netherlands	144	1,965
Norway	30	1,330
Poland	61	570
Spain	55	445
Switzerland	41	959
Total	642	13,082

When merging the club data (meso level) with the member and volunteer data (micro level), 327 members and volunteers had to be excluded. The reason for this is that in the selection procedure for the member and volunteer survey, a small amount of clubs was sampled even though they did not complete the club survey. Nevertheless, the vast majority of replies from members and volunteers – a total of 12,755 – were included in the merged dataset, and, thereby, in the analyses for this article. The sample mainly contains answers from respondents that have completed the survey, but also respondents that have only partially completed the survey or skipped some questions underway. Because of this, the numbers of replies to the various questions differ between just below 10,000 and up to just below 13,000 with the most replies being given to the first questions in the survey and the fewest to the last questions in the survey, indicating a significant dropout by respondents. It is not possible to calculate response rates for the member and volunteer survey since sports club representatives were responsible for distributing the main part of the survey invitations to members and volunteers. It is, however, likely that the most engaged members and volunteers have been more inclined to complete the survey than the less engaged. If this is, indeed, the case, this group will be somewhat overrepresented in the final survey sample.

*Potentials and limitations in the data material*

The data material applied for the statistical analysis in this article has potential in the sense that it contains comparable knowledge about sports clubs, members and volunteers from ten European countries with different sports systems and different social structures and cultures. Hence, the results do not only refer to one particular national context. In context to the purpose of this article, the possibility to combine 'club variables' with 'individual level variables' also represents a significant potential. This combination allows for statistical multilevel analyses that examine the relative influence from the national level (macro level), variables at the club level (meso level) and the individual level (micro level) on participation in association democracy.

The members and volunteers included do not stem from a representative sample of sports clubs in each of the participating countries, and the most engaged members and volunteers are likely to have been more inclined to participate. These potential sources of bias are, however, more likely to affect the validity when making descriptive inference, while it is less influential with regard to analytical inference, which is the main aim of this article in which we examine what club and individual level characteristics that are positively or negatively associated with democratic participation.

Although the same experts that had designed the survey conducted the translation, this procedure could potentially have affected the understanding of central concepts and potentially make for differences between countries that do not reflect real differences, but rather linguistic differences in how questions are understood. This is likely to be more of an issue in connection to attitudinal questions rather than factual. In order to mitigate this, the most ambiguous words were elaborated with an explanation or an example. One example with relevance in this article is the question in which members and volunteers were asked: 'When did you last attempt to influence decision making in the club?' Here, examples of how a member can influence decisions in the club were added ('by speaking at the general assembly, through membership of the board or a committee, by speaking your mind to key persons in the club, or the like'). The purpose was



to reduce any potential bias caused by linguistic differences in the understanding of 'attempted to influence decisions in the club' across countries.

### *Data analysis*

The statistical analyses were conducted using the 'Generalised Mixed Models' option in 'IBM SPSS Statistics 24' (Heck, Thomas and Tabata 2012). The hierarchical structure of the dataset was taken into account by conducting multilevel analyses including three levels: macro (country), meso (club) and micro (member and volunteer). In this connection, the results revealed that intercept variances at the country level were non-significant in the statistical multilevel models concerning two out of the three dependent variables. The country level ICCs were relatively low (between 0.03 and 0.07), indicating that a limited percentage of the variation in the dependent variables is accounted for by clustering. However, rather low ICC-values were found in prior cross-sectional sports clubs studies (Swierzy et al. 2018). The number of units at the country level is smaller than recommended in most of the literature on multilevel modelling (Maas and Hox 2005; Snijders and Bosker 2011), but recent simulation studies (Stegmueller 2013) indicate that as long as the models are relatively simple (in our case: random intercept models only), the standard errors (and the estimation of confidence intervals) are within reasonable limits. As our results will show, the significance levels for the variables we chose to emphasise are also at a very high level.

### *Dependent and independent variables*

Five items from the member and volunteer survey were designed to measure participation in the democracy of sports clubs. Of the five items, two were measures for formal democracy, two were measures for informal democracy and the last item was a more general measure for the likelihood of members and volunteers to attempt to influence decision-making in the club. The five items are shown in Table II.

**Table II**

Descriptive statistics for the five items that measure the participation of members and volunteers in the democracy of sports clubs.

Items	Percentage (%)	Total number of replies (N)
<b>Formal democracy</b>		
Participated in last general assembly		11,125
0: No	62	
1: Yes	37	
Frequency of participation in member meetings and/or other club meetings		9,911
1: Never	32	
2: Once a year or less	28	
3: Once every half year	15	
4: Once every three months	10	
5: Once a month	8	
6: Several times a month	6	
<b>Informal democracy</b>		
Frequency of speaking mind to key persons in the club		9,249
1: Never	24	
2: Once a year or less	16	
3: Once every half year	13	
4: Once every three months	14	
5: Once a month	13	
6: Several times a month	19	
Frequency of sharing views with other members		9,370
1: Never	16	
2: Once a year or less	11	
3: Once every half year	10	

4: Once every three months	13
5: Once a month	18
6: Several times a month	31
<b>Both forms of democracy</b>	
Time since last attempt to influence decision making	10,864
1: I have never attempted to influence decision making	43
2: More than 1 year ago	13
3: 7-12 months ago	5
4: 4-6 months ago	6
5: 1-3 months ago	13
6: Within the last month	20

In order to simplify the statistical analyses, we sought out whether the five items could be reduced to three dependent variables. Reliability checks were conducted using the Cronbach's alpha test before constructing the indexes for the proposed dimensions of formal and informal democracy. In that connection, the Cronbach's alpha test showed values above 0.6 for both constructs, which means that the constructs can be considered as reliable (Eckstein 2008). Hence, we decided to conduct the statistical multilevel analyses using the three dependent variables described in Table III.

**Table III**

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for the three dependent variables.

<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Average (Std. deviation)</b>	<b>Total number of valid cases (N)</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
Formal democracy (scale 1-6) (2 items)	2.67 (1.82)	11,155	0.681
Informal democracy (scale 1-6) (2 items)	3.67 (1.75)	9,836	0.864
Time since last attempt to influence decision making (scale 1-6) (1 item)	2.94 (2.05)	10,864	Not relevant.

Note. In the formal democracy index, the general assembly variable was previously to the construction of the index recoded to 1=No and 6=Yes to match the scale of the member and club meeting variable.

The overall assumption for this analysis is that association democracy depends on factors and conditions at both macro level, meso level and micro level. Regarding the macro level, we have included the country level indicator to take into account that the country context could potentially influence the actions and structure of sports clubs as well as the actions and characteristics of members and volunteers (hypothesis 1).

On the meso level we expect that association democracy depends on the organisational and managerial setting of the club (the size of the club, the type of the club and how the club is managed with the purpose to involve the members) (hypotheses 2). Here we use information from the sports club survey. The four questions that identify the organisational and managerial setting are shown in Table IV.

On the micro level, we expect that members' participation in association democracy depends on the background of members and volunteers (age, gender, education and ethnic background) (hypotheses 3) and the character of the member's affiliation (the duration of membership, time spent in the club, how the

members are involved in the club, and the emotional and affective affiliation to the club) (hypotheses 4). Here we use information from the member survey. The questions that identify the variables on the individual-level are shown in Table IV.

**Table IV**

Descriptive statistics for the independent variables included in the analyses.

Independent variables	Percentage (%)	Total number of replies (N)
Club size		12,755
1: 0-199 members (ref.)	29	
2: 200-399 members	22	
3: 400-999 members	23	
4: 1000+ members	26	
Single or multisport club		12,706
1: Single sport club	59	
2: Multisport club	41	
The club aims to involve members when making important decisions		12,727
1: Don't agree at all	2	
2: Don't agree	6	
3: Undecided	18	
4: Agree	53	
5: Totally agree	22	
The club delegates decision making from the board to committees		12,655
1: Don't agree at all	9	
2: Don't agree	19	
3: Undecided	15	
4: Agree	38	

5: Totally agree	18	
Gender		10,525
1: Woman	41	
2: Man	59	
Age (categorised)		10,201
1: 16-39 years (ref.)	33	
2: 40-59 years	44	
3: 60 years or more	23	
Educational level		10,134
1: Low (no formal education or primary school only) (ref.)	9	
2: Medium (secondary education or tertiary education (<3 years))	40	
3: High (tertiary education (3+ years), bachelor's or master's degree)	51	
Born in the country in which the club is located (no)	4	10,396
Participation in competitive sport in the club		12,042
0: No	58	
1: Yes	42	
Connection to the club (0-1 items)		
- Member of the club (yes)	88	11,814
- Regular volunteer (yes)	40	11,913
- Occasional volunteer (yes)	54	12,049
Number of years connected to the club		12,401
1: Less than 1 year	8	
2: 1 to 2 years	12	
3: 3 to 4 years	16	
4: 5 to 10 years	23	
5: 11 to 20 years	19	
6: More than 20 years	22	

Frequency of sports participation in the club		12,123
1: Never / not sports active	24	
2: Less than once a week (ref.)	12	
3: 1 time a week	21	
4: 2 times a week or more	43	
Frequency of participation in the club's social gatherings		9,824
1: Never	17	
2: Once a year or less	25	
3: Once every half year	27	
4: Once every three months	17	
5: Once a month	8	
6: Once every two weeks	3	
7: At least once a week	4	
The club is one of the most important social groups I belong to		10,117
1: Strongly disagree	11	
2: Partially disagree	14	
3: Neutral	22	
4: Partially agree	27	
5: Strongly agree	25	

## Results

This section provides an overview of the multilevel analyses. Table V displays the results of the three multilevel regression models, with model 1 representing the dependent index variable for formal democracy, model 2 assessing informal democracy also constructed as an index and model 3 having a single item dependent variable reflecting the members' time since the last attempt to influence decision making in the club. Overall, the effects of the independent variables are relatively similar across models, particularly on the meso level.

**Table V**

Results from the statistical multilevel analyses.

	<b>Model 1: Formal democracy  (n=7,768)</b>		<b>Model 2: Informal democracy  (n=7,172)</b>		<b>Model 3: Time since last attempt  (n=7,734)</b>	
<i>Independent variables</i>	Empty model non-stand. $\beta$	Full model non-stand. $\beta$	Empty model non-stand. $\beta$	Full model non-stand. $\beta$	Empty model non-stand. $\beta$	Full model non-stand. $\beta$
<b>Club level variables – size, type and management</b>						
Club size						
0-199 members (ref.)						
200-399 members		-0.287***		-0.196*		-0.216**
400-999 members		-0.518***		-0.238***		-0.231***
1000+ members		-0.536***		-0.268**		-0.262*
The club aims to involve members when making important decisions (1-5)		0.071**		0.053		0.078***
The club delegates decision making from the board to committees (1-5)		0.029		-0.007		-0.021
Single or multisport club (multisport)		0.000		-0.020		-0.005
<b>Individual level variables – socio-economic background</b>						
Gender (man)		0.168***		0.293***		0.255***
Age						
16-39 years (ref.)						
40-59 years		0.196***		0.108**		0.300***
60 years or more		0.399***		0.126		0.293**
Educational level						
Low (ref.)						
Medium		0.168**		0.122		0.426***
High		0.238***		0.265**		0.832***
Born in the country in which the club is located (no)		-0.067		-0.033		-0.077
<b>Individual level variables – attachment and participation</b>						
Connection to the club (0-1 items)						
Member of the club (yes)		0.431***		0.159**		0.232***
Regular volunteer (yes)		1.340***		1.111***		1.582***
Occasional volunteer (yes)		0.248***		0.333***		0.320***
Number of years connected to the club (1-6)		0.086***		0.037***		0.093***
Frequency of sports participation in the club						
Never / not sports active Less than once a week (ref.)		0.090		0.252*		0.176***



1 time a week		-0.075		0.100		-0.013
2 times a week or more		0.021		0.247*		0.079
Participation in competitive sport in the club (yes)		-0.036		0.088		0.067
Frequency of participation in the club's social gatherings (1-7)		0.286***		0.300***		0.278***
The club is one of the most important social groups I belong to (1-5)		0.146***		0.158***		0.112***
<b>Model characteristics</b>						
Intercept	3.193***	-0.487*	4.050***	0.557***	3.292***	-0.742**
Intercept variance (country)	0.210	0.053	0.229*	0.102	0.170	0.096
Intercept variance (club: country)	0.589***	0.162***	0.289***	0.061***	0.358***	0.118***
Intercept variance (residual)	2.693***	1.735***	2.635***	1.623***	3.817***	2.625***
ICC (country)	0.0601	0.0272	0.0726	0.0571	0.0391	0.0338
ICC (club: country)	0.1687	0.0831	0.0917	0.0342	0.0824	0.0416
-2 Log Likelihood	43,457.32	26,777.38	37,938.42	24,115.30	45,854.87	29,725.37
Akaike Inf. Crit.	43,463.32	26,783.38	37,944.42	24,121.31	45,860.87	29,731.38
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	43,485.28	26,804.24	37,966.00	24,141.93	45,882.75	29,752.22

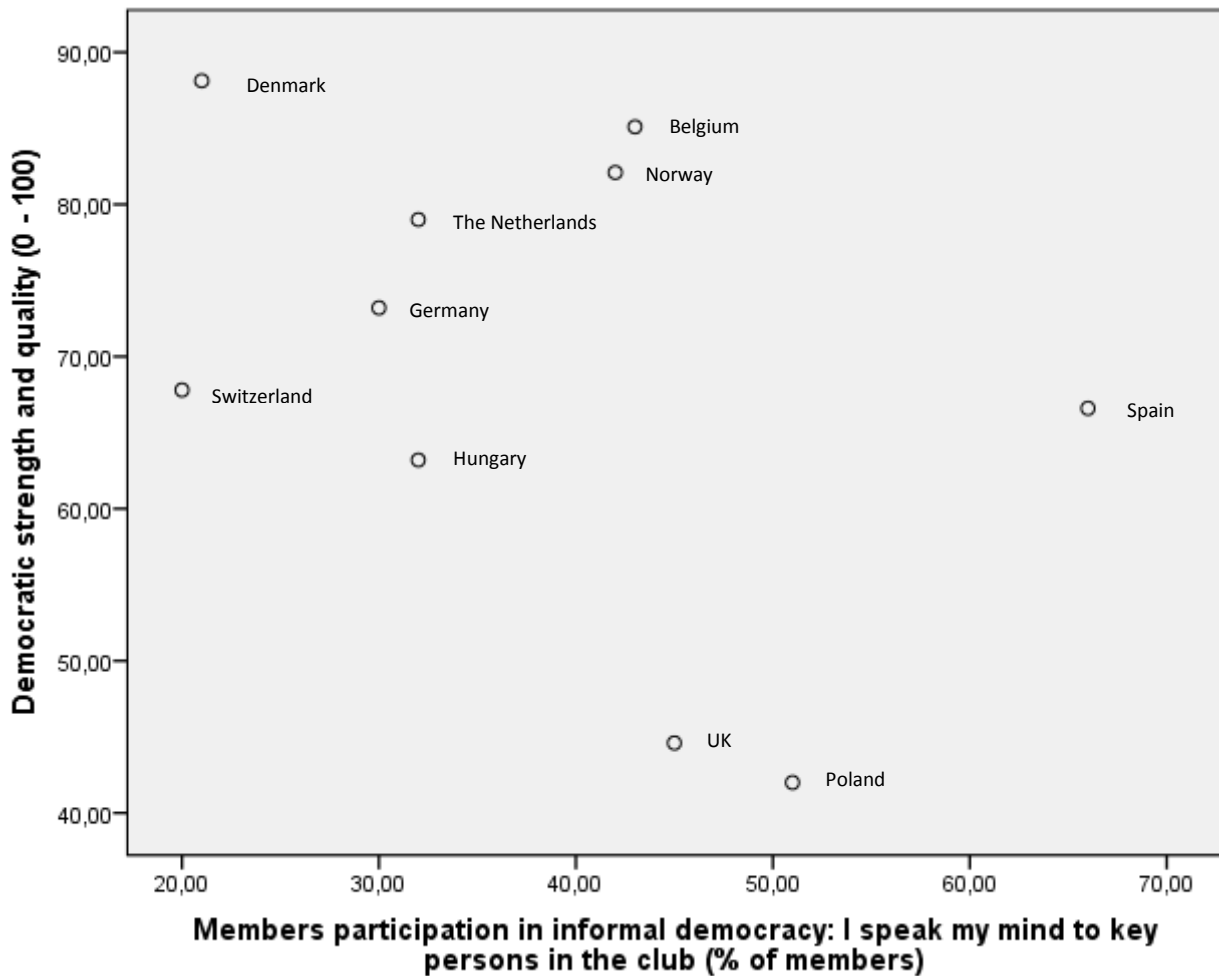
Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

On the macro level we assumed in the first hypothesis that the democratic culture and strength of the country has an impact on the association democracy in sports clubs. However, the multilevel analysis can only confirm a slight statistically significant correlation between 'country' and 'participation in informal democracy' (see 'Model characteristics, intercept variance (country)) and the between-cluster variance, i.e. the correlation between clubs in the same country, is rather low (see ICC (country)). A ranking of the ten countries on members' participation in association democracy in sports clubs - based on descriptive results to the question as to whether members speak their mind to key persons in the club - compared with a ranking of the 'democratic strength and quality' in the same countries, described in the theoretical part of the article - does not show the expected match (figure I). Denmark is no. 1 in the rankings of the democratic strength and quality but last or second to last on association democracy in sports clubs. Conversely, the participation in the association democracy in sports clubs in Spain is highest among the 10 countries, but on the rankings of the assessment of democratic strength and quality Spain is number 7. Similarly, there is no match between 'democratic strength and quality' and the other measures for the

members participation in either formal democracy or informal democracy in sports clubs. Summing up, the analysis cannot confirm the first hypothesis

**Figure 1:**

A scatterplot of the association between 'democratic strength and quality' and 'participation in informal democracy in sports clubs' in ten European countries.



On the meso level, the results show that with increasing numbers of members, participation in association democracy decreases significantly. What can also be seen is that the effects are somewhat bigger in model 1, i.e. the model measuring formal democracy, than in the other two models. Overall, hypothesis 2 can be confirmed for all three models. However, the remaining independent variables from the meso level, i.e. the type of sport club (single vs. multi-sport club), as well as management-related issues, being operationalised

by the likelihood of clubs to involve members and the delegation of decision making to committees, show only very modest effects on member participation in democratic decision making. An exception is that clubs that aim to involve members when making important decisions have more active members in the club democracy. Although statistically significant, except for participation in the informal democracy, it should be noted, that the effect sizes are relatively small (beta coefficients between 0.071 and 0.078). Summing up, the results with regard to the meso level mainly show that club size is a key driver for participation in association democracy, while management and club type seem to be less important.

On the micro level, clear and stable results across all three models are found for the socio-economic background variables (hypothesis 3). First of all, men are significantly more involved in association democracy in sports clubs than women. The effects are slightly bigger in model 2 than in model 1. Second, age also shows significant and positive effects in all three models, meaning that with increasing age, participation both in formal and informal democracy increases. The effects are slightly larger in model 1 than in model 2 in which there is also no difference between the participation of younger adults (aged 16-39) and elderly (aged 60 or above) (see Table V). With regard to educational background, the results show that people with a high educational level show higher levels of participation in association democracy in sports clubs than people with a low educational background. The effects for people with a migration background are negative, but they are relatively small and not statistically significant. Overall, the effects of the socio-economic variables on participation in association democracy are mainly as hypothesised.

With regard to individual level variables reflecting attachment to the club and participation in general in the club, the results are more diverse across models (hypothesis 4). The connection to the club, being measured by being a member of the club and being a regular or occasional volunteer, shows positive and significant effects in all three models. The effects of being a member and a regular volunteer are somewhat bigger in model 1 than in model 2. Moreover, the effects are biggest with regard to being a regular

volunteer, meaning that regular volunteers participate more in the association democracy than both occasional volunteers and ordinary members.

The number of years being connected to the club is found to have a positive effect in all three models, although the effect sizes are relatively small, especially with regard to participation in the informal democracy. The frequency of active sports participation only shows significant effects in models 2 and 3: People being never physically active in the club are more involved in informal democracy than people being active less than once a week. However, also people being active frequently, i.e. two or more times a week, are more involved in informal democracy than people being active less than once a week. With regard to the participation in competitive sport, no significant effects can be identified in Table 6.

Regarding the social aspects, i.e. the members' socio-affective integration in the club, positive, significant and relatively strong effects are detected in all three models, i.e. both for participation in formal and informal democracy. It should, however, be noted that the effect sizes from the frequency of social participation is somewhat stronger than the effect sizes from the affective affiliation. Thus, hypothesis 4 can generally be confirmed, but it is primarily the social participation and volunteering and secondly the socio-affective integration in the club that have positive effects on participation in formal and informal democracy of the sports clubs.

## **Discussion**

Unlike most studies of associations and democracy which focus on the external democratic roles and functions of associations this article focuses on the internal democracy of associations. A review of the last twenty years of articles in *Voluntas* and other journals as well as the latest books regarding associations and democracy (Rossteutscher 2005. Freise & Hallmann 2014) shows few articles about the internal democracy of associations. In the following, we first discuss what the study has contributed with in relation

to research in participatory democracy. Secondly we discuss how the results of this study can inspire future research in the democratic role and function of associations.

First of all, the analysis contributes to the discussion of participatory democracy as a democratic ideal. As explained in the introduction of this article, participatory democracy is a model of democracy in which citizens have a more direct influence on political decisions than in representative democracy. Either by direct influence on public authority decisions (e.g. referendums) or by leaving decisions in specific areas to the people to which it relates - which typically takes place in associations. Participatory democracy as a democratic ideal presupposes, however, that people have an access to associations within the area they have an interest (in this study sports clubs) and that they participate in the democratic decision-making process if they are a member. This study shows that a relatively big share of the members of sports clubs participate in the democratic processes of the clubs by joining the general assembly or other club meetings or by discussing matters of relevance for the club with keypersons and other members of the club. However, it is surprising that the analysis shows that the country level has relatively little significance for how much members of sports clubs in European countries participate in association democracy. A study of active citizenship in Europe found big differences between the countries included in this study on the citizens' participation in 'community life' where people collaborate based on a common interest. The Scandinavian countries score the highest, followed by Central European countries and Anglo-Saxon countries and the lowest score have Southern European and Eastern European countries (Hoskins & Mascherini 2008). This immediate contradiction between the results from the referenced study and our study is probably due to the fact that there are very large differences between countries on the relative number of associations and similar communities where groups of citizens themselves decide on their own interests. Comparative analyses of sports clubs show very large differences in the relative number of clubs in relation to population and the proportion of citizens who are members thereof (Breuer et al 2015: 421). New comparative analyses of voluntary work also indicate that there is a correlation between the relative

number of associations in a country and the proportion of the population who do voluntary work (Henriksen et al. 2018). From a participatory democracy perspective, it is therefore crucial to what extent citizens' interests are taken care of in democratic organizations. Studies of sports participation show that an increasing share of sports active people do sport in commercial or informally organized settings (fitness centers, running groups and the like) (Van der Roest et al. 2015; Borgers et al. 2018). Studies in other areas of society also show that the democratic organizational model is under pressure. In a study of Norwegian voluntary environmental organizations Selle and Strømnes (1998) found that new organizations are definitely breaking with the democratic organizational model and that members of democratically built organizations especially value internal but also to some extent external democracy more than members of nondemocratically built organizations.

While participation in internal democracy in the sports club does not depend so much on the democratic culture and tradition of the individual country, the study shows that participation in internal democracy largely depends on organizational conditions, first and foremost the club size that has a significant impact on the association democracy. The bigger the club is, the lower the members' participation is in the democracy of the club. And this applies participation in formal as well as informal democracy, although the effect is greatest on participation in formal democracy. This confirms what other studies of sports clubs have shown that the size of the club is of importance to members' involvement in the club - in the form of voluntary work as well as participation in internal democracy (Schlesinger et al. 2013; Østerlund 2013; Wicker et al. 2014; van der Roest et al. 2016). This is a challenge for sports clubs. On the one hand, the sports organizations and many clubs want more members and it is also a political wish that the clubs attract more citizens (Ministry of Culture in Denmark 2016; Harris et al. 2009). On the other hand, this analysis and other analyses of data from the same research project show that the members' relationship with the club is different in big clubs than in small clubs - less integrating, less participation in voluntary work and less participation in club democracy (Elmose-Østerlund et al. 2017). It seems that members in small clubs find it

easier to identify with the club and other members, and they are more inclined to master dominant values and norms.

One of the ideals of participatory democracy is that the citizens are more committed to democracy when it comes to the close, concrete tasks that the individual citizen is involved in than in the representative democracy where the developments in many countries are characterised by a decline in political participation, a widespread alienation from politics, dissatisfaction with politicians and great inequality in the participation (Hirst 2002). The study shows that a relatively big share of the members take part in the decision-making process in the sports club, but the study also find the same inequality as in the representative democracy (elections to parliament etc.): Men are more involved in association democracy than women, with increasing age participation increases (however, primarily for participation in formal democracy) and people with a high educational level are more involved in association democracy – both formal and informal democracy - than people with a low educational background.

However, the participation in the internal democracy of the club does not only depend on the structural characteristics of the clubs and the background of the members. The study shows that the character of the attachment of the members to the specific club is important for the participation in association democracy. Participation in voluntary work – and especially regular volunteering - and participation in the social activities of the association is conducive for the members' engagement in the democracy of the club. In recent years, in several of the countries included in this study, e.g. England (Harris et al. 2009), there has been a strong focus on increasing the participation in sports clubs in order to increase the physical activity level in the population. This raises questions about the roles society desires from sports clubs: either as communities or as promoters of healthy lifestyles. Although these roles do not necessarily exclude each other, some articles suggest that members of sports clubs that participate in more flexible and exercise oriented activities were found to be less active in democracy, social life and voluntary work than members

who participate in other forms of sports activities (Østerlund 2013; van der Roest 2016). The question is whether sports clubs – and other voluntary associations - have become more ‘customer- and management-oriented’ at the expense of the classic values in associations: volunteering, social relations and democracy. A study of Dutch sports clubs does however find limited evidence for a shift towards increased consumer orientation on the organizational level (van der Roest et al. 2016). The next step in this research would be to investigate the causal mechanisms behind the correlation between members’ affiliation to the association and participation in association democracy.

In summary, this study suggests that the organizational level, meso level, has a decisive impact on citizens' active participation in community life, ie. the (relative) number of associations, the size they have and how the associations are able to integrate the members so that they have a strong affiliation to the association.

As mentioned the research in associations and democracy has first of all focused on the democratic functions and effects of associations. This study does not contribute with new insights into this part of the research, but we are convinced that the results can be an inspiration for future research in the democratic role of associations. The literature distinguishes predominantly between three democratic functions of associations (Verba et al. 1995; Warren 2001, 2003; Freise and Hallmann 2014). The first function is that people acquire democratic skills and civic competences and virtues as an – mostly – unintended - result of their participation in an association (Cohen and Rogers 1992; Verba et al. 1995; Billiet and Cambré 1999; Coffé and Geys 2007; Dekker 2014). These claims of the democratic significance of associations have been investigated in a number of studies, many of which have shown a correlation between participation in associations and political interest, political self-confidence and knowledge of society (see e.g. Verba et al. 1995; Putnam 1993, 2000; Warren 2001). Other studies have questioned this alleged connection - or have nuanced the assumption considerably - because they question the causality (Van der Meer and Van Ingen 2009; Freise and Hallmann 2014), and studies have questioned Almond and Verba’s claim (1963) that any



form of membership in both politically oriented and non-political (leisure) oriented associations lead to more competent, democratic citizens (Dekker 2014). Studies of sport and leisure organizations show that membership in general only contribute modestly to levels of political engagement (Van der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). However, these studies have only examined the relationship between being a member and participation in elections, etc., and have not distinguished between different types of members. A question that has remained unanswered is whether the form of participation in association makes a difference in relation to the socialization effect. A Danish study from the early 1990s showed a correlation between members participation in the internal democracy of the association ('having been to a meeting during the last year') and political participation, but no correlation between membership in an association in general and political participation (Gundelach and Torpe 1997). A hypothesis for future research could be that participation in associations leads to greater political interest and participation in elections if members engage in the internal democratic processes of the associations, participate in voluntary work, etc.

The second assumed democratic function of associations is that they are intermediates between the individuals and the state through the articulation and aggregation of interests and influencing political decision-making and the development of democracy in general (Elstub 2006; Lundåsen 2014; Grønbjerg and Prakash 2017; Phillips and Goodwin 2014; Kassis 2017; de Waardt and Ypeij 2017). It is generally assumed that the influence of associations on policy decisions depends on the legitimacy of the association, and it largely depends on the number of members and their support for the association, although this has become contested (Lundåsen 2014). This study therefore raises the question whether the influence of associations on policy decisions depends on how much members engage in the decision making of the association.

The third assumed democratic function of associations is that they collaborate with public authorities and institutions with the intention to increase the democratic legitimacy of public institutions (Pestoff and

Hulgaard 2016; Rantamäki 2017; Vooerberg et al. 2015; Brandsen and Honingh 2018). However, the democratic legitimacy of the involvement of associations in the solution of public tasks can be assumed to depend on the extent to which the associations represent the interests of the members. This study therefore raises the question of whether associations' cooperation with municipal institutions is influenced by the extent to which members engage in and support this cooperation.

## **Conclusion**

The present study shows that all three analytical levels (macro, meso and micro) are relevant for the participation of members and volunteers in the association democracy in sports clubs, but it is primarily the micro level that matters and then the meso level while the macro level has relatively little significance.

Firstly, the majority of the members of sports clubs in the ten European countries included in the study participate in some form of the association democracy. But it is only a minority of the members that participate in the formal association democracy. Between the countries, there are big differences in how much members engage in association democracy. But it is primarily due to differences between the countries in characteristics of the sports clubs, the members' socioeconomic background and their affiliation with the sports club.

Secondly, the size of the club has a significant impact on how much members engage in the association democracy. Other structural features and management characteristics of the clubs have no or little importance.

Thirdly, the members' socioeconomic background is essential for the participation in association democracy. Involvement in the association democracy is higher among men than women, and the participation generally inclines with age and educational level. Migration background has no statistical significant influence.

Fourthly, the way the members participate in the clubs has great importance for their participation in the association democracy. Members engaged in voluntary work, especially regular volunteering, members who participate in social activities and members that attach the membership of the club great importance are more engaged in the association democracy than other members are. However, it is surprising that the duration of membership and how often the member participates in sport activities in the club is of relatively little importance to the participation in association democracy.

**Funding.** This study has been co-funded with 500.000 Euro by the Erasmus+ Programme of European Commission

**Conflict of Interest.** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest and have not received funding that would influence their conclusions or data presentation for this research.

## References

Almond, G.A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Barber, B. J. (1984). *Strong democracy. Participatory democracy for a new age*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Billiet, J. & Cambré, B. (1999). Social capital, active membership in voluntary associations and some aspects of political participation. In J. W. van Deth, M. Maraffi, K. Newton and P. Whiteley (eds.). *Social Capital and European Democracy*, London: Routledge.

Blais, A., Gidengel, E., & Nevitte, N. (2004). Where does turnout decline come from? *European Journal of Political Research*, Volume 43, Issue 2.

Borgers, J., Pilgaard, M., Vanreusel, B & Scheerder, J. (2018). Can we consider changes in sports participation as institutional change? A conceptual framework. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 53(1) 84 –100.

Brandsen, T. & Honigh, M (2018). Definitions of Co-production and Co-creation. In T. Brandsen, Te. Steen and B. Verschuere (Eds.). *Co-production and Co-creation. Engaging Citizens in Public Services*, pp 9-17. New York: Routledge.

Braun, S. (2014). Voluntary Associations and Social Capital. Inclusive and Exclusive Dimensions. In Matthias Freise and Thorsten Hallmann (ed.). *Modernizing Democracy. Associations and Associating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Springer.

Breuer, C., Feiler, S., Llopis-Goig, R., Elmoose-Østerlund, K., Bürgi, R., Claes, E., et al. (2017). *Characteristics of European sports clubs. A comparison of the structure, management, voluntary work and social integration among sports clubs across ten European countries*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark.

Bühlmann, M & Merkel, W. (2011). *Medienkonferenz: Neues Demokratiebarometer zeigt die besten Demokratien* [Media Conference: New Democracy Barometer shows the best democracies]. Power Point presentation. Universität Zürich.

Bühlmann, M., Merkel, W., Müller, L., Giebler, H., & Wessels, B. (2012). Demokratiebarometer – ein neues Instrument zur Messung von Demokratiequalität [Democracy Barometer - a new tool for measuring democracy quality]. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*.

*Cohen, J. and Rogers, J. (1995). Associations and Democracy. London: Verso.*

Council of Europe (2004). *European Crossroads: Sport - Front Door to Democracy*. Conference on 13-14 May, 2004: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/sports/news/european-countries-debate-benefits-of-sport-for-democracy/>

- Coffé, H. C., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same Game, Different Rules? Gender Differences in Political Participation. *Sex Roles. A Journal of Research*, March 2010, Volume 62, Issue 5–6, 318–333.
- Coffé, H. & Geys, B. (2007). Participation in Bridging and Bonding Associations and Civic Attitudes: Evidence from Flanders. *Voluntas*, 2007, 18(4)
- Cuskelly, G. (2004). Volunteer retention in community sport organisations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Volume 4, 2004 – Issue 2.
- Dahl, R.A. & Tufte, E.R. (1973). *Size and Democracy*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press.
- de Waardt, M. & Ypeij, A. (201). Peruvian Grassroots Organizations in Times of Violence and Peace. Between Economic Solidarity, Participatory Democracy, and Feminism. *Voluntas*, volume 28, Issue 3, pp 1249–1269.
- Dean, J. (1995). *Reflexive Solidarity. Constellation*. Volume II. No. 1.
- Dekker, P. (2014). Tocqueville did not write about soccer clubs: Participation in voluntary associations and political involvement. In: Freise, M. & Hallmann, T. (ed.), *Modernizing democracy? Associations and associating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. New York: Springer, 2014, 45-58.
- Dekker, P., & Uslaner, E. (2001). *Social capital and participation in everyday life*. London: Routledge.
- Dekker, P. (2014). "Tocqueville did not write about soccer clubs: Participation in voluntary associations and political involvement" in: Matthias Freise & Thorsten Hallmann (red.), *Modernizing democracy? Associations and associating in the 21st century*. New York: Springer, 2014: 45-58.
- Denters, B., Goldsmith, M., Ladner, A., Mouritzen, P.E., & Rose, L. (2014). *Size and Local Democracy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Eckstein, P. P. (2008). *Angewandte Statistik mit SPSS. Praktische Einführung für Wirtschaftswissenschaftler* [Applied statistics with SPSS. Practical introduction for economists]. Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Eisinger, P. K. (1973). The Conditions of Protest Behaviour in American Cities. *The American Political Science Review*, 67(1), 11-28.
- Elmose-Østerlund, K., & van der Roest, J.W. (2017). Understanding social capital in sports clubs: participation, duration and social trust. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, Volume 14 (4), 366-386
- Elmose-Østerlund, K., Ibsen, B., Nagel, S. & Scherder, J. (2017). *Explaining similarities and differences between European sports clubs*. Centre for Sports, Health and Civil Society, University of Southern Denmark
- Elstub, S. (2006). Towards an Inclusive Social Policy for the UK: The Need for Democratic Deliberation in Voluntary and Community Associations. *Voluntas*, Volume 17, Issue 1, pp 17–39
- Enjolras, B., & Seippel, Ø. (2001). *Norske idrettslag 2000. Struktur, økonomi og frivillige innsats* [Norwegian sports clubs 2000. Structure, economy and voluntary action]. Oslo: Institute for Social Research, report 4, 2001.
- Etzioni, A. (ed.) (1995). *New Communitarian Thinking: Persons, Virtues, Institutions, and Communities*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Feldberg, R.L. & Glenn, E.N. (1983). Incipient workplace democracy among United States clerical workers. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 4.1 (1983), 47-67.
- Freise, M., & Hallmann, T. (eds.) (2014). *Modernizing Democracy? Associations and Associating in the 21st Century*. New York: Springer.
- Farrugia, C. (1993). The special working environment of senior administrators in small states. *World Development* 21 (2), 221-226.

- Fung, A. (2003). Associations and Democracy: Between Theories, Hopes, and Realities. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 29 (2003), pp.515-539.
- Fung, A. & Wright E.O. (2001). Deepening democracy: Innovations in empowered participatory governance. *Polit. Soc.* 29:5-42.
- Gerring, J., & Zarecki, D. (2011). *Size and Democracy, Revisited*. Paper, Boston University.
- Goerres, A. (2007). Why are older people more likely to vote? The impact of ageing on electoral turnout in Europe. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Volume 9, Issue 1, 90 – 121.
- Grizzle, C. (2015). The Determinants of Volunteering in Nordic countries: Evidence from the European Values Survey. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38:5, 364-370.
- Grønbjerg, K. & Prakash 2017 Advances in Research on Nonprofit Advocacy and Civic Engagement. *Voluntas*, volume 28, Issue 3, pp 877–887
- Gundelach, P. (1988). Sociale bevægelser og samfundsændringer [Social movements and social change]. Aarhus: *Politica*.
- Gundelach, P., & Torpe, L. (1997). Social reflexivity, democracy, and new types of citizen involvement in Denmark. In J. W. van Deth (ed.), *Private Groups and Public Life. Social Participation, Voluntary Associations, and Political Involvement in Representative Democracies*, Routledge, London. Google Scholar
- Harris, S., Mori, K., & Collins, M. (2009). Great expectations: Voluntary sports clubs and their role in delivering national policy for English sport. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 20(4), 405-423.
- Heck, R. H., Thomas, S. L., & Tabata, L. N. (2012). *Multilevel Modeling of Categorical Outcomes Using IBM SPSS*. New York: Routledge.

- Henriksen L.S., Strømsnes K. & Svedberg L. (2018). Comparative and Theoretical Lessons from the Scandinavian Case. In Henriksen, L.S.; Strømsnes K. & Svedberg, L. *Civic Engagement in Scandinavia. Volunteering, Informal Help and Givin in Denmark, Norway and Sweden*. Springer. Forthcoming.
- Hirst, P. (1994). *Associative Democracy. New Forms of Economic and Social Governance*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Hirst, P. (2002). Renewing Democracy through Associations. *The Political Quarterly* 2002.
- Horch, H.D. (1982). *Strukturbesonderheiten freiwilliger Vereinigungen. Analyse und Untersuchung einer alternativen Form menschlichen Zusammenarbeitens* [Structural features of voluntary associations. Analysis and study of an alternative form of human cooperation]. Campus Verlag. Frankfurt / Main; New York.
- Horch, H.D. (1992). *Geld, Macht und Engagement in freiwilligen Vereinigungen. Grundlagen einer Wirtschaftssoziologie von Non-Profit-Organisationen* [Money, power and commitment in voluntary associations. Foundations of an economic sociology of non-profit organizations]. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Hoskins, B.L. & Mascherini, M. (2009). Measuring Active Citizenship through the Development of a Composite Indicator. *Soc. Indic. Res.*, 90: 459-488.
- Ibsen, B. (1992). *Frivilligt arbejde i idrætsforeninger* [Voluntary work in sports clubs]. Copenhagen: DHL / systime.
- Ibsen, B., & Seippel, Ø. (2010). Voluntary organized sport in Denmark and Norway. *Sport in Society*, Volume 13, No. 4, 2010: 593-608.
- Ibsen, B., Elmoose-Østerlund, K., & Qvist, P. (2015). *Folkeoplysning og frivilligt arbejdes betydning for demokratisk deltagelse* [Non-formal adult learning and volunteerings importance for democratic



participation]. *Movements*, 2015: 06. Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics. University of Southern Denmark.

Ibsen, B., & Levinsen, K. (2016). *Unge, foreninger og demokrati* [Youth, associations and democracy]. *Movements*, 2016: 03. Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics. University of Southern Denmark.

Kaspersen, L.B., & Ottesen, L. (2007). Associationalism for 150 years and still alive and kicking: Some reflections on Danish civil society. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 4:1. 105-130. DPO: 10.1080/13698230108403340

Kassis, M. (2017). Civil organizations and Transition to Democracy in Palestine. *Voluntas*, volume 12, Issue 1, pp 35-48

Kirbis, A. (2013). Determinants of political participation in Western Europe, East-Central Europe and the post-Yugoslav countries. In Flere, S., Lavric, M., Klanjsek, R., Krajne, M. Musel, B. & Kirbis, A. *Problems and prospects of countries of former Yugoslavia*. Publisher: Center for the Study of Post-Yugoslav Societies.

Kriesi, H. (1995). The political opportunity structure of new social movements: its impact on their mobilization. In Jenkins, J.G. & Klandermans, B. (eds.), *The Politics of Social Protest. Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*. London, UCL Press.

Larsen, C. A. (2002). Municipal Size and Democracy: A Critical Analysis of the Argument of Proximity Based on the Case of Denmark. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Volume 25, Issue 4

Lassen, D. D., & Serritzlew, S. (2011). Jurisdiction Size and Local Democracy: Evidence on Internal Political Efficacy from large-scale Municipal Reform. *American Political Science Review*, 105:2 (May), 238-58.

Lundåsen, S.W. (2014). Voluntary Associations Within the Local Political Context: How Characteristics of the Organizations and the Local Governments Influence Perceptions of Success. *Voluntas*, volume 25, Issue 4, pp 1041–1061

Maas, C. J., & Hox, J. J. (2005). Sufficient Sample Sizes for Multilevel Modeling. *Methodology*, 1(3), 86-92.

Martiniello, M. (2005). *Political Participation, Mobilization and Representation of Immigrants and their Offspring in Europe*. Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations 1/05. School of International Migration and Ethnic Relations. Malmö University. Sweden.

Meyer, D.S. (2004). Protest and Political Opportunities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30: 125-145

Micheletti, M. (1994). *Det civila samhället och staten. Medborgarsammanslutningarnas roll i svensk politik* [Civil society and the state. The role of civil society associations in Swedish politics]. Stockholm: Publica/-Fritzes.

Nagel, S. (2007). Akteurtheoretische Analyse der Sportvereinsentwicklung – Ein theoretisch-methodischer Bezugsrahmen [Actor-theoretical analysis of sports club development - A theoretical-methodical frame of reference]. *Sportwissenschaft*, 37(2), 186-201.

Nagel, S., Schlesinger, T., Wicker, P., Lucassen, J., Hoeckman, R., van der Werff, H., & Breuer, C. (2015). 'Theoretical Framework'. In C. Breuer, R. Hoeckman, S. Nagel, & H. van der Werff (Eds.), *Sport clubs in Europe. A cross-national comparative perspective* (pp. 7-27). Cham: Springer.

Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and Democratic Theory*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pateman, C. (2012). Participatory Democracy Revisited. *American Political Science Association*. Volume 10, Issue 1, pp. 7-19.
- Peterson, S., Catásus, H., & Danielsson, E. (2016). *Vem håller i klubban? Om demokrati och delaktighet i idrottsföreningar* [Democracy and participation in sports associations]. Centrum för idrottsforskning. Sweden.
- Pestoff, V. & Hulgaard, L. (2016). Participatory Governance in Social Enterprise. *Voluntas*, volume 27, Issue 4, pp 1742–1759.
- Phillips, R. & Goodwin, S. (2014). Third Sector Social Policy Research in Australia: New Actors, New Politics. *Voluntas*, Volume 25, Issue 3, pp 565–584.
- Putnam, R.D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R.Y. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Putman, R.D. (2000): *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Quintelier E., & Hooghe M. (2013). The Impact of Socio-economic Status on Political Participation. In: Demetriou K. (eds) *Democracy in Transition*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg
- Rantamäki, N.J. (2017). *Voluntas*. February 2017, Volume 28, Issue 1, pp 248–264
- Rossteutscher, S. (ed.) (2005). *Democracy and the Role of Associations*. Routledge.
- Safari, A., Salehzadeh, R., & Ghaziasgar, E. (2018). 'Exploring the antecedents and consequences of organizational democracy.' *The TQM Journal*, volume 30, No. 1, 2018, 74-96.
- Schlesinger, T, and Nagel, S. (2013). Who will volunteer? Analysing individual and structural factors of volunteering in Swiss sports clubs. *European Journal of Sports Science*. Volume 13(6):707-15.

Seippel, Ø. (2008). *Norske idrettslag: 1999-2007* [Norwegian sports clubs: 1999-2007]. Oslo: Akilles.

Selle, P. & Strømsnes (1998). Organized Environmentalists: Democracy as a Key Value? *Voluntas*, Volume 9, Issue 4, pp 319–343

Sharpe, E.K. (2006). Resources at the Grassroots of Recreation: Organizational Capacity and Quality of Experience in a Community Sport Organization. *Leisure Sciences*, 28:4, 385-401, DOI: 10.1080/01490400600745894

Snijders, T., & Bosker, R. (2011). *Multilevel analysis: An Introduction to Basic and Advanced Multilevel Modeling*. London: Sage.

Stegmueller, D. (2013). How many countries for multilevel modeling? A comparison of Frequentist and Bayesian Approaches. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(3), 748-761.

Streek, W. (1995). Inclusion and Secession: Questions on the Boundaries of Associative Democracy. In: E.O. Wright (ed.), *Associations and Democracy*. London: Verso.

Swierzy, P., Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2018). 'Usefulness of multilevel modeling in sport management research: The case of voluntary roles in nonprofit sports clubs'. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science*, 1-12. doi: 10.1080/1091367x.2018.1438289

Tarrow, C. (1994). *Power in Movement, Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.9

Thiel, A., & Mayer, J. (2009). Characteristics of Voluntary Sports Clubs Management: a Sociological Perspective. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. Volume 9, Number 1, March 2009, 81-98(18)

Van der Roest, J. (2016). Consumerism in sport organizations: conceptualizing and constructing a research scale. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 13(4), 362-384.

Van der Roest, J-W., Van Kalmthout, J., & Meijs, L. (2016). A consumerist turn in Dutch voluntary sport associations? *European Journal for Sport and Society*, volume 13(1), 1-18.

Van der Roest, J-W., Vermeulen, J., & Van Bottenburg, M. (2015). Creating sport consumers in Dutch sport policy. *Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 7(1), 105-121.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L. & Brady, H.E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Vooerberg, W.H., Bekkers, V.J.J.M & Tummers, L.G. (2015). A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, Volume 17, 2015 - Issue 9, Pages 1333-1357

Warren, M.E. (2001). *Democracy and Association*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Warren, M.E. (2003). The political role of nonprofits in a democracy. *Society*, 40(4):46-51

Wicker, P., Breuer, C., Lamprecht, M., & Fischer, A. (2014). Does club size matter? An examination of economies of scale, economies of scope, and organizational problems. *Journal of Sport Management*. Volume 28, No. 3, 2014, 266-280.

Wuthnow, R. (1991). *Act of Compassion*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Yazdani, N. (2010). Organizational democracy and organization structure link: role of strategic leadership and environmental uncertainty. *Journal of the Institute of Business Administration*, Karachi, Volume 5, No. 2, pp.51 – 73.

Østerlund, K. (2013). *Foreningsidrættens sociale kvaliteter. En social kapital inspireret undersøgelse af danske idrætsforeninger og deres medlemmer* [Social qualities of sports clubs. A social capital inspired study of Danish sports clubs and their members]. PhD dissertation. University of Southern Denmark.