

An outline of the action approach to leisure studies

CHRIS ROJEK

Theory, Culture and Society Centre, Faculty of Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

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ABSTRACT *This paper is a position paper. It seeks to set a new and distinctive approach to the study of leisure that combines theory, practice and ethics. It stands on the shoulders of 'action sociology', as represented in the Weberian tradition, and symbolic interactionism. But it offers a radical renewal of this perspective by relating action to 'embodiment', 'emplacement', 'location' and 'context', and repositioning leisure studies in relation to 'care for the self' and 'care for the other'. The paper is concerned to elucidate a renewed action approach and to demonstrate its value for the study of leisure. It does not aim to compare or contrast this approach systematically with other positions in the field. The action approach identifies 'testing' to be a duty of all theoretical propositions. It regards leisure to be intrinsically political. The paper distinguishes the differences between postmodernism and the action approach. The paper ends with a suggested research agenda.*

Action theory is a perspective in social and cultural analysis that aims to achieve the meaningful explanation of social reality as the outcome of purposive social action. By 'purposive social action' is meant the motivation and intentions of social actors to achieve selected goals. In sociology, action theory is most closely associated with the positions of Max Weber, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. It has been criticized for overstating the individual freedom and choice of actors. These criticisms have also been made within leisure studies (Rojek 1985, 1995; Blackshaw 2003). The danger in emphasizing a structural basis for individual choice and behaviour is that the *autonomy* of social actors is dissolved. For example, in the work of Louis Althusser (1971, 1977) individuals become the mere *bearers* of social influences. Their choice and freedom is erased. Within leisure studies the same error is evident, for example in class analysis (Clarke and Critcher, 1985) and the attempt to apply Weber's rationalization thesis to explain leisure forms and practice (Andrew, 1981).

Correspondence Address: Chris Rojek, Theory, Culture and Society Centre, Faculty of Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS, UK; Email: chris.rojek@ntu.ac.uk

The action approach in leisure studies is based in an attempt to renew action theory by seeking to consolidate the choice of the actor, the location of behaviour and the context of trajectories in an analysis of leisure forms and practice. This has absolutely nothing to do with the approach to social action developed by Talcott Parsons and his followers, the most prominent of which in leisure studies are Cheek and Burch (1976). The Parsonian position wrongly prioritizes the social system as the catalyst of individual behaviour and elides social diversity and variation in favour of a non evidence-based proposition of core social values. In contrast, the action approach focuses on the situated, cognitive and sensual aspects of leisure conduct. It recognizes variation in embodiment, emplacement, location and context. Situation is conceptualized in relational terms and relations are theorized as processes. The action approach envisages a collaborative relationship between researchers and leisure actors to improve access to leisure resources and the experience of leisure. Therefore, a political dimension to leisure studies and the activities of leisure professionals is recognized and encouraged.

The Situated Character of Leisure Forms and Practice

Most leisure researchers would accept that the individual's definition of leisure choice is pivotal in interpreting leisure behaviour (Iso-Ashola, 1980; Henderson *et al.*, 1996; Jackson and Scott, 1999). However, this is very different from maintaining that individual choice is freely selected. Approaches to leisure predicated in a model of pure voluntarism are unconvincing and unsatisfactory. Most critical thought in leisure studies developed by, for example, Marxists, feminists and post-structuralists since the 1980s, has been devoted to elucidating the profound misconceptions that follow from voluntarist perspectives that attribute freedom and self-determination to individuals in leisure practice (Clarke and Critcher, 1985; Rojek, 1985, 1995; Wearing, 1998).

The dimensions of location and context are presented here as indispensable elements in leisure theory because they correlate individual choice with situated dimensions that influence action. 'Location' refers to the concrete, sensual dynamics of leisure practice. It assumes that embodiment and emplacement are the primary conditions of situated action. 'Embodiment' refers to the obvious, but peculiarly neglected, fact that leisure actors are always and already embodied, and that the biological fate of the body is to grow old and die. The action view of embodiment is post-Cartesian, in rejecting the division between mind and body, and insisting on an approach to embodiment that recognizes the simultaneity of mental, emotional, physical and sensual dimensions. By insisting on the centrality of embodiment, the action approach seeks to highlight the vulnerability of the body and the sensuality of practice. This accent owes much to feminist contributions to the question of identity and power.

However, drawing from phenomenology, the action approach also insists on prefiguring the material sensuousness of embodiment in the analysis of leisure practice. While it is valid to draw attention to the masculinist presumptions in Heidegger's (1962, 1977) philosophy of being, important questions for students of leisure are raised by his philosophical approach. Not least, in respect of his proposition that being-in-the-world is intrinsically a condition of discomfort since our

sensual desires are socially dependent and, as such, are subject to conflict, evasion and frustration. On this account, satisfaction and pleasure are strictly temporary. Leisure itself cannot be regarded as a self-sustaining object in life, since the pleasure or escape achieved through its practice will always end. Further, because leisure choice is situated in a context of scarcity, the decision to practice leisure requires the work of others to sustain the conditions that support effective leisure choice. The concept of being-in-the-world poses universal issues for theorists of leisure having to do with the need for care, mutual respect, the relation between leisure and work and the ultimate awareness of death.

Of course, differentials in power are acknowledged, particularly in respect of class, gender, race and status. Axiomatic to the action approach is that vulnerability and the various issues arising there from, are central in the human condition. As participants in leisure we inhabit bodies that are vehicles of sensual stimulation. But the fate of the body is to decline, and this fact ultimately conditions what we understand by sensuality and all of our experiences of leisure practice.

'Emplacement' refers to the direct and immediate cultural and physical environment in which action occurs. It treats the relational character of individual practice as a staple of leisure theory. The environment should not be understood as a stable, independent factor in leisure action. On the contrary, environments both condition leisure practice and are conditioned by individual behaviour. Sensitivity to the contingent nature of the environment compels action analysis to posit precariousness as the primary identifying characteristic of emplacement. Leisure practice reflects environmental context, but it also transforms this context through its effects.

The designation of vulnerability and precariousness is crucial. Upon this basis the action approach is committed to developing a theory of leisure that acknowledges universal rights and responsibilities of active citizenship. Because we all have bodies that are vulnerable and occupy environments that are precarious, we possess common interests in survival and personal and collective wellbeing that are the basis for acknowledging mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity in a newly refined version of civil society (Turner and Rojek, 2001). The institution of leisure is central in this refinement because through leisure forms and practice individuals are most free to explore the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship. While this freedom is compatible with pure hedonism, which is tantamount to discarding these rights and responsibilities, it also regards the ethical dimensions of choice as intrinsic to leisure practice.

The action approach is an attempt to overcome relativism in leisure studies whereby social and economic conditions are theorized as producing differentiated strata. Relativism seeks to construct unity around respect for difference (Hall 1993, 2000). However, it is far from clear that this strategy is politically viable. The recognition of difference may be the basis for the intensification of struggle, especially when individuals and groups are positioned in relation to scarce resources. While the action approach acknowledges the value of a politics of difference, notably in its advocacy of the ethical centrality of care for the other in leisure forms and practice, it also seeks to build active citizenship around the ethic of care for the self. The predicaments posed by the universal facts of embodiment and emplacement

are employed as resources in the elucidation of common interests in respect of bodily well being, environmental security and the husbandry of social capital.

Social Capital

Practically speaking, leisure is one of the principal institutions through which social capital is accumulated (Hemingway, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Social capital means the informal obligations, expectations and knowledge that constitute the shared, non-pecuniary components of society (Rojek, 2002, p. 21). It refers to the mutual, reciprocal sphere of relations that render meaningful popular perceptions of neighbourliness and community well-being. Social capital is fundamental in enhancing care for the self and care for the other. Included herein are the recognition of reciprocal obligations to protect the environment from risk, empower the marginalized, foster genuine social inclusion, provide direct care and support for children and the elderly, and create public spaces of life-enriching leisure and recreation. The action approach identifies the maintenance and enlargement of social capital through leisure forms and practice geared-up to the concept of active citizenship as a central political goal. Through leisure conduct individuals build up the stock of mutual, reciprocal, respect and care upon which the prosperity of society depends.

Society is based in *socius* (companionship) and fellowship is sustained through sharing resources such as bread (*panis*) (Turner and Rojek, 2001, pp. 6–7). At the level of citizenship, *socius* is now typically realized through the acceptance of fiscal obligations, but also through various non-economic services that citizens voluntarily dispense to each other. This form of sharing is now more likely to take the form of allocations of time rather than material resources such as bread. Examples might include looking after a neighbour's children, participating in a neighbourhood watch programme, visiting elderly or infirm relatives or community gardening projects. Social capital increases the wealth of the community by building mutual, reciprocal, obligations that enhance the quality of life. Because leisure is one of the principal institutions through which this time allocation is realized it follows that leisure is essential in enhancing social capital. Play is a mechanism for discharging cognitive and motor energies. It also possesses the strong capacity to generate and enhance reciprocity, because playing together involves mutual recognition and support. Of course, play and leisure sometimes involve mutual aggression and social conflict. The action approach is committed to collaboration with actors that elucidates how factors of location and context position individuals in relation to power and scarcity so that aggression and conflict ensue. Ultimately its politics seek to foster empowerment, social inclusion and distributive justice.

Choice and location do not exist in a vacuum. The action approach is quite different to Parsonian systems theory in refusing to regard individuals as situated in relation to a set of core values. The context of action refers to the spatial–temporal dimensions of leisure forms and practice. Context is conceptualized as situating actors in diverse relations of access to economic resources, honorific hierarchies and other relations of power. Elucidation of context is approached via a comparative–historical approach to analysis. The historical conditions behind choice and

location, and comparison of these conditions with forms and practice in different spatial–temporal situations, reveals what is unique or ubiquitous in leisure action.

It should not be inferred that context determines choice and location. The action of individuals may be shaped and patterned by context but it is seldom programmatic. On the contrary, the factors of interplay between choice, location and context allow for many permutations of practice. Moreover, action must always be regarded as possessing the capacity to overcome boundaries of location and context. To paraphrase Marx's (1968) famous *dictum*, actors act upon leisure choices, but they do not select the conditions either of choice or action.

How do we gain knowledge of choice, location and context in relation to leisure forms and practice? Action analysis is founded upon narrative data pertaining to measurable trajectories of leisure. A trajectory of leisure is a flow of behaviour that can be plotted by researchers over time and mapped onto contours of location and context. Narrative data are supplied by leisure actors and accumulated through interviews, questionnaires, group-work and observation. The action approach also utilizes historical and comparative data that condition choice and action, and is a matter for comparative and historical analysis. In this sense, actors' locations and contexts can be said to have narratives. The task of the researcher committed to exploiting and developing an action approach to the study of leisure is to systematically connect these dimensions together in a general explanatory model of leisure forms and practice, and further to identify political leisure and life options. Essential to this practice is the caveat that knowledge is always provisional and subject to testing, through open, principled, debate or empirical examination.

Political Aspects of the Action Approach

The action approach is a collaborative venture with leisure actors that is committed to the political improvement of leisure forms and practice. This presupposes a stance on intervention into culture, economy and society, expressly through the redefinition of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, especially in relation to the defence and accumulation of social capital. At the heart of this redefinition is a trio of concerns with issues relevant to the enhancement of leisure forms and practice: empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion. What do these terms mean?

- Empowerment refers to increasing the knowledge of actors with respect to motivation, location and context in leisure forms and practice. The analysis of narrative data elucidates trajectories of leisure and options for enhancing practice and experience. It relates embodiment, emplacement, leisure forms and practice to the seminal power relations of class, gender, race and status.
- Distributive justice refers to allocating economic, cultural and political resources to widen access to the public provision of leisure forms and practice, and also to the transfer of private capital to less advantaged strata through fiscal means. Distributive justice does not necessarily mean high taxation, high public spending strategies for leisure policy. The action approach accepts that high personal taxation disincentivizes actors and therefore recognizes limits on progressive taxation strategy. Moreover, it holds that expenditure on civil society is best

achieved by a partnership between the civil service and stakeholders. The latter may be variously defined as clients, loose co-operatives of end-users or voluntary associations. The end of distributive justice is therefore predicated upon a revision of the means of resource allocation. The crux of this is defining a new partnership between the state and stakeholders.

- Social inclusion refers to the extension of citizenship rights to strata that are marginalized by virtue of prejudicial considerations relating to structural influences of class, gender, ethnicity, physique and status. It is based on the recognition of belonging, expressed through the territorial and political recognition of solidarity. Central to the notion of solidarity is the acknowledgement of shared economic, cultural and social capital. Social inclusion is an investment in solidarity since it is designed to maximize the benefits of shared capital for all.
- The commitment to empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion identifies the nature of the political role for action analysis. However, the type of politics envisaged is somewhat different from the orthodoxy in leisure studies. Traditionally, political issues in leisure studies have been discussed in terms of the long established divide between left and right, with Centrism existing as a weaker, middle ground option (Coalter, 1989; Henry, 1993). Opinions from the left have usually involved a commitment to some form of socialism, with the identification of the state as the key lever of social and economic engineering. By contrast, right-wing contributions have generally endorsed a version of neoliberalism, based in a defence of individual freedom and market principles of organization. Centrist positions have involved a blend between the two traditions, generally represented in some version of the mixed market (Henry, 1993).

The action approach envisages a more elemental politics based around the universal predicaments posed by embodiment and emplacement. It is not an attempt to impose theory upon leisure forms and practice but, rather, it is a practical response to changed social and economic conditions. These conditions have been debated *ad nauseum* in current social theory. Simply put, from the late 1960s a combination of four processes, namely the rise of information technology, the economic restructuring of capitalism, the disintegration of the socialist alternative and the emergence of new social movements, notably environmentalism, human rights, libertarianism and feminism, transformed social conditions. These changes produced a new type of society organized around networks, mobility and global flow (rather than class and tradition); a new type of economy (information-based and global) and a new form of culture (centred around technology, mass media and hybridity (Beck, 1992, 1999, 2000; Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Giddens, 1998, 2000).

Postmodernism and the Action Approach

In leisure studies these issues have generally been considered in relation to the question of postmodernism and leisure (Rojek, 1995). There has been a reaction to the proposition that leisure has moved into a postmodern condition, both by advocates and critics of postmodernism (Aitchison *et al.*, 2000; Rojek, 2000; Blackshaw, 2003). Postmodernism is a tendency in thought and practice to

recognize fragmentation, flow and the collapse of authoritative power hierarchies based in class, masculinity and race. It has led leisure researchers and professionals to consider how individuals are situated in relation to power and scarcity in the context of globalization and detraditionalization. This, in turn, has heightened awareness of factors of location and context in leisure forms and practice.

But this is very different from claiming that the condition of postmodernity has fully arrived. The action approach recognizes the persistence of many modernist forms of authority and power that influence the individual's access to economic resources, honorific hierarchies and other forms of power. It is aligned with the postmodernist proposition that class, patriarchy, race and status hierarchies have been massively restructured globally and in relation to the construction of identity. It recognizes the elucidation of this restructuring as a major task for theory and politics. An issue-centred, ethically informed orientation to life strategy and leisure choice is envisaged over an approach to theory and politics rooted in traditional solidarities of class, gender, race and status.

The action approach borrows from postmodernism the following analytical characteristics.

- **Globalization:** the recognition that trans-national economic, cultural and political networks are transforming traditional notions of nation, civil rights and leisure practice. In respect of leisure, mass communications offers new combinations of practice and identity that utilize acceleration and immediacy in leisure forms. A binary function is attributed to globalization whereby national, economic, social and political boundaries are erased; and new local demands and possibilities arise in reaction to the decentring and detraditionalization of regional and national power.
- **Scientization:** the acknowledgement that science and technology have destabilized custom and nature in the organization and regulation of identity. For example, bioengineering offers new possibilities for understanding and influencing the life-cycle and constitutes a radical challenge to traditional notions of the individual and society. With respect to leisure forms and practice this is reflected in the intensification of interest around the monitoring of embodiment. Choice and practice in leisure is more subject to ethical considerations of care for the self and care for the other. Of course, hedonism is still pursued. But it is practised in a context in which science and technology have made citizens more aware of the dangers to personal health, social cohesion and environmental security caused by specific leisure forms such as smoking, drinking alcohol, making recreational use of nature and forms of travel that contribute to global warming. The effect of this is to politicize leisure forms and practice and to strengthen active citizenship.
- **Ethical responsibility:** the commitment to the notion that culture and politics today increasingly focus on personal issue-based life decisions centred on personal choice, identity, reciprocity and their consequences. Old notions of programmatic class, gender or ethnic unity are mistrusted because they are incapable of developing a flexible, nuanced approach to economic, cultural and social problems. The use of resources in leisure practice involves ethical judgements about the origin of resources and how they are accumulated and presented

to the individual. Global leisure multi-nationals, such as Nike, Reebok and Adidas, are culturally repositioned, not simply as providers of leisure resources but as agents of resource distribution, especially in relation to third world labour that is employed to produce their commodities.

Globalization, scientization and ethical responsibility may be inflected through traditional relations of class, gender, race and status, but they also cross-cut these boundaries and reveal the limitations of traditional approaches in leisure based around these concepts to satisfactorily explain current leisure forms and practice.

Ethical Imperatives: Care for the Self and Care for the Other

The action approach is committed to dealing with issues in a consistent, ethical fashion via the relational imperatives of care for the self and care for the other. At the level of theory, these ideas have been set out and to some extent popularized in the writings of Michel Foucault (1975, 1980) and Zygmunt Bauman (1993). Care for the self refers to diagnostic issues pertinent to achieving self-actualization in physical, mental and emotional relations. Care for the other refers to practising a politics of empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion.

This ethical duality has influenced leisure forms and practice along many fronts. Care for the self is evident in enhanced cultural awareness of the harmful physical and social consequences of types of leisure behaviour such as smoking, drinking (alcohol) and poor diet. It is also apparent in the greater understanding of the role of leisure in contributing to various environmental hazards, particularly those relating to questions of pollution. This has led to new ways of thinking about and discussing the vulnerability of embodiment, the precariousness of emplacement and the position of leisure in promoting individual health and social capital.

Care for the other is evident in the more prominent role assigned to human and animal rights issues, empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion in civil society. These have reinforced a politicized reading of leisure that recognizes that some forms of leisure practice are ethically objectionable to others. Ethical objections may be the articulation of different values on the question of leisure forms and practice, or they may be expressed in the more general concern of the relationship between leisure, social well-being and environmental protection. The action approach argues that contemporary leisure needs to be examined in relation to the revival and extension of active citizenship.

The active citizen may be defined as an individual committed to enhancing empowerment, social inclusion and distributive justice in life strategies, choice and trajectories of leisure action. The voluntary allocation of labour to the defence and accumulation of social capital is one aspect of active citizenship.

It might be objected that this is not new. *Socius* has a long history reaching back at least to ancient Greece and Rome. It recognized that philanthropy and neighbourliness have involved the voluntary sharing of labour and other resources. Traditional left/right politics institutionalized the notion of the active citizen, but they did so in a largely nominal form. Under this arrangement, active citizens contributed to the common good by confirming electorally determined national strategies and policies. Arguably, there was a large element of tokenism in this

arrangement since the decisive actors in terms of determining and deploying strategies and policies were the elected state legislature (Parliament, Congress or the Senate) and the standing body of the state executive (civil servants). For most of the electorate, action assumed a passive form since it was confined to the electoral process rather than to continuous life politics.

The action approach envisages a new partnership between active citizens, who operate at the micro-level as stakeholders, and the legislature and executive. A more engrained notion of action is envisaged, in which the twin ethical imperatives of care for the self and care for the other influence motivation and choice by virtue of the fact that they are integral to location and context. For example, the decision to utilize the resource of nature by driving automobiles for pleasure or commodifying space is no longer conceptualized as a matter of individual choice or corporate logic. Instead, it is reconceptualized as a social and economic force that alters the relationship of all individuals to questions of embodiment and emplacement. Active citizenship implies a revived version of self-help, revitalized community solidarity and politicized leisure, in which individuals engage in partnership with the state and the corporation to participate in the various monitoring processes and voluntary activities that enhance care for the self and care for the other.

This version of citizenship can only be prosecuted in a context in which mass higher education and mass communication apply. For example, in the last thirty years the UK has moved from a system of higher education in which 1.5 out of every 10 school-leavers entered university to four out of every 10, with the Labour government committed to achieving a goal of five out of 10. Over the same period, the UK has moved from a system of communications based in a handful of terrestrial news, information and entertainment broadcasting companies to multiple terrestrial-satellite broadcasting offering unprecedented flows of news, information and entertainment around the clock.

More education and more news/information create the conditions for allowing active citizens to engage more meaningfully with civil society. They change the character of leisure. For example, the neoliberal notion that leisure is a matter of choice for the individual so long as it respects the confines of the law, and the socialist principle that the state must directly regulate leisure behaviour, are both discarded. Instead the onus for self-regulation comes from the form of information society and the civic recognition that leisure practice is interdependent and carries ethical and physical implications for the self and the other.

A good example is the anti-smoking movement in the West. Forty years ago smoking was regarded as a matter of individual conscience and choice. Following the Surgeon General's Report in the USA in 1964, which established a clear link between smoking, cancer and cardiovascular disease, smoking is no longer recognized as a matter limited to the conscience and choice of the individual. Bureaucracy and the law is still used to condition behaviour. For example, in 1971 United Airlines introduced smoking and non-smoking sections on aeroplanes. Other airlines followed suit and eventually all major carriers banned smoking. In 1972 the USA introduced legislation to restrict cigarette commercials on television and ban smoking in Federal buildings. In 1987 smoking was banned in restaurants in California. In 1993 the City of Los Angeles and the state of Vermont introduced indoor clean air laws in public places. However, the central lever of change has

been the creation of a field of discourse by campaigning groups such as ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) and medical opinion which positions the individual in a field of knowledge relating to the harmful effects of smoking for both the self and the other. In 2004, Ireland banned smoking in public places. The incentive to quit smoking is founded primarily in ethical considerations having to do with respect for personal bodily maintenance, the wellbeing of others and the defence of the environment. It reflects the recognition that leisure choice has ethical implications both for the individual and for the other, and it arises from greater awareness of scientific knowledge about smoking as a recreational form.

The Research Agenda

The action approach is committed to contributing to a perspective on leisure that recognizes the political dimensions of leisure form and practice. This can be studied along a variety of fronts. For example, political and economic questions are obviously raised by examining the practice of Western leisure multi-nationals such as Nike, Toys 'R' Us and Walmart sourcing leisure products from low-cost developing countries such as the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia. Similarly, the place of diet in leisure, or the recreational use of drugs, raises issues concerning the relation of the individual to economic scarcity and relations of group solidarity. By examining how individuals are positioned in respect of scarcity and solidarity the action approach contributes to the restructuring of leisure choices and the enhancement of leisure experience.

This overhauls the Hobbesian principle of scarcity and its relation to solidarity (Hobbes, 1981). Hobbes held that the condition of scarcity naturally tended towards a war of all against all as different individuals and groups sought to maximize their resources. He argued that the cultural solution to this dilemma is for men and women to develop contracts which recognize legal limits to the pursuit of their personal interests. The mutual recognition of limits to acceptable behaviour is presented as the basis for solidarity and the solution to the war of all against all.

Drawing on utilitarian philosophy, the liberal social theorist J. S. Mill (1859) refined this position by arguing that the pursuit of individual pleasure is legitimate in as much as it increases the sum of human happiness. Once the individual's pursuit of pleasure becomes a threat to the pleasure of others, it is subject to group censure.

The action approach proposes that the chains of interdependence are now more complex. It is as if Hobbes worked on a pre-industrial level with the notion of fixed identity and community; Mill on an urban-industrial level circumscribed by the boundaries of the nation-state with the notion of the rational citizen; and action analysis on the global level with a concept of identity that is dependent upon embodiment and emplacement, but which recognizes the contingent and flexible character of both dimensions.

Action analysis reiterates Hobbes's proposition that the natural condition of society is scarcity and the central political questions pertain to the allocation of surplus wealth after the condition of subsistence has been fulfilled. It seeks to build solidarity around the recognition of empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion but on a global, rather than merely national, level. Leisure forms and

practice are central to this process, because in leisure individuals possess most latitude to consider their positions in relation to the ratio between scarcity and surplus, and the concomitant issues of empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion. Action analysis is committed to examining leisure forms and practice along four dimensions in relating matters of scarcity to solidarity: representation, identity, control and resistance.

I am unable to go into these dimensions at length in this short article, but see Rojek (2005) for a fuller account. However, in order to demonstrate the research agenda set by the action approach, it is necessary to say something about these four dimensions.

- Representation relates to issues of coding and theming in the media, and civic expression of the ratio between scarcity and surplus. The articulation of these codes and themes in leisure forms and practice constitutes a basis for the recognition of solidarity. For example, by exposing the negative employment practices of leisure multinationals in the developing world, a more informed ethics of leisure choice can be generated.
- Identity refers to the use of leisure forms and practices to construct solidarity around the recognition of ties of belonging and inclusion. For example, racism in sport has precipitated anti-racist movements, committed to eradicating racism not merely from sport and leisure, but from all areas of social life.
- Control pertains to the allocation of leisure resources by powerful groups to code and theme the ratio between scarcity and surplus in ways that enhance their power regime. Leisure studies has strong traditions of examining how class and the state shape leisure choice (Bailey, 1978; Henry, 1993). A major task for the action approach is to examine how leisure practice is influenced by multinational branding and marketing operations in consumer culture.
- Resistance refers to the reaction against control in leisure forms and practice and the use of leisure resources to challenge power regimes. A major theme in critical leisure studies is the standardization and regimentation of leisure practice through relations of class, gender, race, status and the rationalization process. The action approach is committed to examining these processes, but with a view to revealing how resistance to them is engineered and practised.

The Action Approach and the Active Citizen

We have covered a good deal of ground. The form of exegesis required by the article format has necessarily left many questions unanswered (but see Rojek, 2005, for a detailed account). Yet perhaps enough has been stated to set out the action approach as a distinctive perspective in the analysis of leisure forms and practice. To summarize the main points:

- Action analysis aims to condense choice, location and context in the analysis of leisure forms and practice.
- The approach is based in the recognition of vulnerability in embodiment and precariousness in emplacement.
- Action analysis is indebted to Marxism and feminism for exposing the

implausibility of psychologistic, functionalist and systems approaches to leisure. In particular, these approaches have contributed to sensitivity to the historical and comparative dimensions of compliance in leisure forms and practice and an awareness of the general importance of power in leisure forms and practice.

- Action analysis is political, but it breaks with old style politics based around constructing solidarities between left or right.
- The political ends of action analysis are empowerment, social inclusion and distributive justice, and its ethical means are founded in respect for the principles of care for the self and care for the other.
- Action analysis recognizes an ecumenical commitment to build dialogic relationships with cultures of difference, analyse leisure forms and practice in a global context and defend the virtue of nomadism, in the sense of never being fully at home in cultural categories or geo-political boundaries.
- Action analysis posits four political functions of leisure, namely representation, identity, control and resistance.
- Action analysis seeks to insulate itself from dogmatism by treating propositions relating to motivation, location and context in leisure practice as always subject to testing though open, principled debate and empirical investigation.

The most significant political expression of these ideas is the concept of the active citizen and the role of leisure forms and practice in enhancing social capital. All societies face the twin problems of producing a legitimate allocation of economic surplus and a valid distribution of social honour. In addition all societies have to manage aggression and sexuality in order to achieve civic order. An important challenge in societies based around democracy is to achieve a form of economic resource allocation, distribution of social honour and civic regulation that is consistent with sustainable personal freedom. Upon this basis democratic societies seek to build solidarity from the condition of scarcity.

The action approach maintains that leisure plays a significant and increasing role in achieving this end. Hedonism and relaxation are core identifying characteristics of contemporary leisure as a social and cultural form, but leisure is also the time and space in which individuals are most freely exposed to information and opportunities pertaining to civic participation and the investment of social capital. Leisure is therefore pivotal in the development of the notion of active citizenship, by providing opportunities for, and information relevant to, enhancing empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion. The common-sense notion that leisure is primarily about play and relaxation, or that it can be compartmentalized or segregated from the rest of life, is therefore replaced with the more radical proposition that leisure is always and already, political.

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