

---

## Legitimation of the Finnish Sports Movement Reform

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-24/R1 - (508)

All authors:

Kati Lehtonen (corresp)

Date submitted: 2015-03-12

Date accepted: 2015-05-21

Type: Scientific

Keywords: sport movement, legitimation strategies, reform, system theory

Category: 3: Governance of Sport(s) and Sport Organisations

Synopsis:

The focus of this presentation is in the Finnish sport movement's reform, which has started 2009 and is still ongoing. The aim is to examine how the need for the reform have been legitimated inside the societal system constituted by the sports movement and state and how the state's administrative changes have affected to sport movements operational activities during last twenty years

Abstract:

### BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The role of the Finnish sport movement as a sport organizer have traditionally been strong. 60% of the children under 14 years take part to the sport club activities. Sport movement have over 1,1 million members which is over 20% of the whole population. Amount of sport club is over 10,000. Finnish sport movement also share many common features with other Nordic countries. According to Bergsgard & Norberg (2010) for example in Sweden, Norway and Denmark the basic element of sport movement is voluntary civil activity. Sport clubs, national sport federations and central organizations constitutes the organizational structures of sport movements in every country. The difference between Finland and other Nordic countries although is, that in organizational level Finnish sport movement have been more dispersed last twenty years. But during last five years, Finnish sport movement has undergone historically big structural changes. Three central organization have abolished and in 2012 new central organization, Finnish Sports Confederation (Valo) was established. Part of the reform have been the elite sport systems rebuilding which meant changes in the Finnish Olympic Committee. The whole reforms' aim is to reduce the governance of national sports organizations, particular in central organizations, and to focus the material and immaterial resources to the local level and grassroots sports. The reform is still going on. It is also obvious that there will come some new functional and structural changes in future for example on the district level.

The aim of this paper is to examine the beginning of the reform. Sport movement and state constitutes together here societal system (see Luhmann

1995), which reforming is viewed through economic and political subsystems. This presentation concentrates to find out, how the need of the reform have been legitimate inside the societal system constitutes by sport movement and state?

#### DATA AND METHODS

The data consists of the sport movements' and states' documents (n=6). Data is analysed by using systematic text analyse and Van Leuwens (2007) legitimation strategies (authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation and narratives). The focus in the data is in the arguments and aims which sport movement and state have express why the reform was needed.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Authorization rouse up from the need to have leader to the sport movement. The main thing was that there weren't any people or organization, who could take the role of leadership. The strategy of rationalization meant that there was dispersion and overlapping in the organizational structures, working and funding. Narratives linked to the sport movements and sports significance. Arguments were based example on the national identity and the "good story of the sport". Narratives also expresses the way of today's management where rhetoric speech including words like joy, passion and enthusiasm are common and presents often together with stories which aim is to affect people's emotions (Kantola 2010). Bureaucratization and ineffectiveness of organizations and arguments for financial savings as rational arguments are common also in other countries reforms (see for example Houlihan & Green 2009). Designated the leadership of the Finnish sport movements' reform to the singular organization allowed the implementation and centralizing. What comes to the societal system of sport movement and state, the main question in future is, will this new central organization (Valo) and Finnish Olympic Committee achieve legitimacy from their members and what kind of role state, as a distributor of funding, will take in the ongoing reform.

#### References:

- Bergsgard, N. A. & Norberg, J. R. 2010. Sports policy and politics – the Scandinavian way. *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 13:4, 567-582.
- Houlihan, B. & Green, M. 2009. Modernization and Sport: the reform of Sport England and UK Sport. *Public Administration*, Vol. 87, No. 3, 678-698.
- Kantola, A. 2010. *Matala Valta*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Luhmann, N. 1995. *Social Systems*. Translated by John Bednarz Jr., with Dirk Baecker, foreword by Eva M. Knodt. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Van Leuwen, T. 2007. Legitimation in discourse and communication. *Discourse and communication* (1) 91.