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## LEGITIMATION OF THE FINNISH SPORT MOVEMENTS REFORM

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

### BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The role of the Finnish sport movement as a sport organizer have traditionally been strong. Sixty percent 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. The Finnish sports movement shares many common features with those in other Nordic countries. According to Bergsgard and Norberg (2010), for example, the basic element of the sports movements in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark is voluntary civil activity. Sport clubs, national sports federations, and central organizations constitute the organizational structures of sports movements in every country.

The difference between Finland and other Nordic countries, nonetheless, is that, at the organizational level, the Finnish sports movement has been more dispersed over the last twenty years. However, Finnish sport movement has undergone historically big structural changes during the last five years. 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 aim of these reforms is to reduce governance of national sports organizations, particularly in central organizations, and to focus material and immaterial resources at the local and grassroots sports levels. This reform is still in progress, and it is evident that further functional and structural changes will take place, for example, at 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 Leeuwens (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 in the sport movement, 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). Rational arguments such as the bureaucratization and ineffectiveness of organizations and arguments for financial savings are also common in the reforms of other countries (see, for example, Houlihan & Green 2009). Granting leadership of the reform to a single organization allowed implementation and centralizing. In regard to the reform and its continuity the main questions for the future are, will this new central organization (Valo) and the Finnish Olympic Committee acquire legitimacy from their members, and what role will the state, as a distributor of funding, play in the ongoing reform?

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