
PUBLIC ISSUE OR PRIVATE TROUBLE? THE CASE OF SWEDISH MUNICIPALITIES' RESPONSES TOWARDS COMPETITIVE SPORTS' STADIUM REQUIREMENTS

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-27 - (511)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-12

Date accepted: 2015-03-23

Type: Scientific

Keywords: institutional logics, private trouble, public issue, municipalities, stadium requirements

Category: 12: Sport Policy

Synopsis:

Abstract:

Aim

In recent years, sports facilities have become a controversial topic in the relationship between citizens, public authorities and sport representatives. Only since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions estimates that Swedish municipalities have invested approximately a billion Swedish crowns in order to comply with the stadium requirements from the national sport governing bodies. Between the years 2010-2014 the organisation has published five written statements as a response to the stadium requirements. The aim of the study is to explain why Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions through their statements respond as they do and further to examine if municipalities define the institutional logics of municipalities and competitive sport as competing or as a mutual interest.

Theoretical background

A central theme in the discussion between municipalities and competitive sport is the boundaries for respective actor responsibility. What is a task for the municipalities within the sport area and what is not? To analyse the statements I have used Wright Mills (1985) dichotomy of private trouble and public issue. To supplement Wright Mills (1985) I have used Oliver's (1991) model over strategic responses to institutional processes. Oliver (1991) outlines in her model five types of strategic responses: acquiescence; compromise; avoidance; defiance; and manipulation. Another important theoretical concept to answer the study's aim is institutional logics that is used to understand changes within the organisational field of municipalities and competitive sport.

According to Reay and Hinings (2005) all organisational fields consist to some degree of competing institutional logics. A change could, according to Eriksson-Zetterquist (2009) be initiated when a key actor has grown tired of former logics and started to support a new one. However, the development of a new dominant logic has according to Reay and Hinings (2005) to be developed among all actors within the organisational field. Thus, actors within an organisational field do not without any resistance accept a new dominant logic.

Methodology

A content analysis has been used to analyse the five written statements from Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. All statements have been published on the organisation's website in the period 2010-2014. The period of the publications correspond well with the time when the stadium requirements from several sport governing bodies are issued and/or shall take effect. First, the statements were organised chronologically and subjected to recurrent analysis. Thereafter, I disassembled the material and encoded parts of the statements into four categories which repeatedly occurred in the material: public value of sport; critique towards the requirements; inclusion; and the financial responsibility for constructing facilities on the basis of the stadium requirements. Finally, I assembled the categories and operationalised them into theoretical concepts on the basis of Oliver (1991), thereby offering not only a way to conceptualise the material, but do also a way to interpret the material and conduct an analysis.

Result and discussion

As a result of new institutional logics within municipalities and competitive sport, the institutional logics are nowadays competing instead of existing in harmony side by side as they historically have done. Although the competing institutional logics and further that the municipalities have responded and criticised the requirements, the municipalities have an ambiguous approach towards the requirements. On the one hand they wish to continue the mutual exchange, finance and support competitive sport and avoid competing institutional logics. On the other hand, the municipalities express that they define the stadium requirements as private issue and a task for competitive sport if they do not receive an increased influence over the development of the stadium requirements. Overall, the undertaking of financing the stadium requirements and the definition of them as a public issue is in under negotiating and the new institutional logics of both municipalities and competitive sport have resulted in a more unpredictable local facility policy area.

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