

Structural Approach To Finnish Sports Elite Network

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Background and aim of the study

Networks are nowadays more often the way to understand societal phenomenon. It means, that networks are able to reach different societal sectors and through that also boundaries between sectors are crossed. Focus in this article is on Finnish sports elite networks which constitutes by sport movements central organizations boards and states sport policy working groups. As systemic level boards and working groups are together and separately arenas to disclose social policy issues around sport and they are also places to make decisions that effects broadly to sport systems operations (Lehtonen, 2017).

Approach to elite networks in this study is institutional (see f.ex. Mills, 1973) and is based on interlocking directorates. An interlocking directorate occurs when an actor affiliated with one organization sits on the board of directors of another organization. Through that actor is able to get information which can see as power-equipment. An actor who has many interlock ties between organizations is more informed and better able to use information as power-equipment (see f.ex. Borgatti & Foster, 2003).

The research questions in study are *what kind of the sports elite networks are structurally and how the networks structurally differ from each other?*

Data and methods

The data consists of central organizations boards and states sport policy working groups (n =1 21) from the time period 1993–2014. The data have collected from the working group's memos and central organizations annual reports. During that period there have been five central organization and 16 different working group.

The data was analyse in Ucinet-network program (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman, 2002) as two mode affiliation network. In social network analysis, the term "affiliations" usually refers to membership or participation data, such as which actors have participated in which events. From the viewpoint of interlocking directorates, the interest methodologically concentrates to find out the central actors and the relations between actors, which together formulates network structures.

Results and discussion

The results show, that the power elite in these networks is narrow. In working groups network 14% of actors had almost 40% of the links. In central organizations network the power elite wasn't so narrow, but still 16% of actors possessed 28% of the all links. These differences were also observable in the networks structures. Central organizations boards' network reminds circle — also named "cavemen-network" — where distances to the opposite node are long and the links are only between the contiguous nodes. On the contrary, in the working groups' elite network the big-linkers are in the middle of the network having significantly more links than other actors. Structurally network is hierarchic and the distances between core and periphery are long.

As a summary, when combining these two networks, it seems that Finnish sports elite networks consist of cavemen and big-linkers either being long-periods in same position and role or changing them often. Both these remarks indicates that elite network as total is very cohesive and the turnover is slight. In systemic level this might lead to consistency and customary policies which in long term dilutes sport systems capability to react societal changes.

References

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