

The Co-Production Of The Welfare Mix — The Social Responsibility Of Scandinavian Football Organisations Revisited

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The Scandinavian countries are no longer to be compared to the archetypal social democratic welfare state/ regime, or a Scandinavian or Nordic welfare model, as once described by Esping-Andersen. Marked by their own individual histories, Norway, Denmark and Sweden having entered into a state of welfare mix and co-production, it is ever more apparent that sport as one of the larger actors in civil society is expected to take on a role beyond its core activities. The first AIM of this paper is to critically look at the Scandinavian football organisations as co-producers of a welfare mix, comparing their responses to external expectations and incentives, and finding similarities and differences. Based on the first aim, the papers second aim is to develop a mutual Scandinavian framework covering and responding to the social part of the triple bottom line of CSR.

The methodological approach for this paper takes its starting point in three conceptual discussions. The first conceptual discussion is that of the welfare mix and co-production (Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012). In the context of this paper, the welfare mix is to be understood as the mix of actors — private, voluntary and public — contributing to the provision of public services, while the co-production is to be understood as the ‘voluntary’ efforts by for example sport organisations to enhance quality and/or quantity of services within or related to the public sector. The second conceptual discussion is that of sport and civil society (Carlsson & Lindfelt, 2010), which places the Nordic or Scandinavian sport’s model(s) — with a long tradition of being organised as membership associations — under market pressure, in a struggle between voluntarism and business professionalism. The third conceptual discussion is the relationship between the concepts of social business, social entrepreneurship and CSR (Beckman, Zeyen, & Krzeminska, 2014), as an on-going debate about their similarities and differences and to what extent they are complementing each other or expressing different aspects of the same phenomena. As such, this paper will open up a dialogue with, respond to, and build on earlier research on the Scandinavian sport organisations’ CSR agendas and how these have been and are communicated (for examples, see: Persson, 2014), but also with the discussion of what they perform and what sport organisations are or becoming when they are performing a social responsibility that goes beyond their core activities.

As METHOD, in seeking similarities and differences between the three countries, the paper will be based on a web-document and webpage review to find out to what extent and how the Scandinavian FAs and clubs respond to their new role as co-producers of a welfare mix. The web-communication will be viewed in line with Berthon, Lane, Pitt and Watson’s (1998, p. 693) view of the webpage as a ‘trade show’ visited by existing and potential customers (stakeholders), and where the organisation is trying to convert the latter to the former. To avoid misunderstandings followed by misrepresentation, each organisation will be contacted and granted the opportunity to explain their CSR agenda and work, as well as their take on the idea of being co-producers in the welfare mix.

In the paper a common official framework for social responsibility amongst Scandinavian sport organisations is being developed, something the sport arena is in need of. If accepted by the SGBs, the IMPLICATIONS of such framework would allow for fair comparisons and future collaborations between Scandinavian sport organisations, as well as a stronger common position from which they would be able to negotiate and lobby for a common CSR agenda on a local, regional, national and cross-Scandinavian level. The paper is intended as a manuscript for the call for papers for the special issue on social responsibility in the ESMQ and the author guarantees that paper will be finished for the conference.

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