

Speaking with One Voice: Who is SPORT-DEUTSCHLAND and Who Does it Represent?

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Aim and Research Question

Who defines sports-specific rules? The German Sports Confederation (DOSB) as the major national sport organisation in Germany has to follow the rules of the IOC to build an Olympic team. They cannot decide independently about sport regulation. The regulation for each individual sport discipline are set by the particular international sport federations such as the FIFA. Therefore, in the discussion about sport managers and the labour market (Trosien et al., 2017), the question arose: Who is the speaker of the German sports branch? This question becomes even more complex considering that the sport branch includes not only athletes, clubs and associations, but also sport facilities, sporting goods, equipment and other. Keeping this heterogeneity in mind, the question is: Who is “Sport-Germany” (SPORT-DEUTSCHLAND)?, It is the slogan of the DOSB and it seems to be an approach for representing sport as one specific community. But would this community represent only competition sports based on memberships, or truly all sports that’s taken place (including informal sport groups, fitness members, individuals, sports in schools)?

Theoretical Background

Certain industries have more or less a nucleus of common goods. Even if the members of a branch are competitors in the first place, they often have federations for special interests and a confederation as a speaker of the branch in general. A “speaker“ can be a person or an organisation and is someone named, elected or accepted to speak on behalf of others (Mintzberg, 1973). In politics, the presiding officer of the chamber is the spokesperson of the House, elected by the representatives. The concept of representation builds on theoretical foundation for this research (Pitkin, 1967). In economical areas, there are also speakers of branches (often trade associations for example). In the social sciences as well as in economical sciences there are studies about these speaker models (Maguire, 2012).

Methodology

The sports branch is very heterogeneous, therefore, data from various players of the overall sports branch are necessary to answer the questions. Therefore, various smaller target groups are defined within the sample: sport managers from different sport disciplines, from sport equipment and sport manufacturing companies as well as from sport facilities. Within the long-term study on sport managers and the labour market for sport managers by the authors, this data is collected mainly in interviews with sport managers and some data is derived from the various surveys conducted within this overall research project. Major focus of this abstract is to start a discussion with other scholars about the translation of the speaker model and interest group concepts of other branches to sports.

Results and Discussion

Some data has been already collected and analysed, further distribution is prepared until June 2018. So far the answers indicated that all rules for sports competitions, facilities or equipment have been set by the international or national sport federations. That’s not a surprise, because it has to be this way to ensure that the basic conditions of all competition

sports are the similar all over the world and hence, allowing comparisons. If sport federations of the single sport disciplines as well as international federations are responsible for the rule setting, the DOSB has to accept those and the dominance of others in that particular question. This has implications for its self-image: the organisation states in its constitution that it is representing the German sports in all its facets within the society, towards state institutions and other institutions national and abroad (DOSB, 2015). In this generalised interpretation this includes school sports, sports science, fitness and health developments, as the DOSB is responsible for observing and monitoring state and market development next to its own duty to control all regulation for Olympic participation. In reality, the DOSB needs to put more effort in networking and collaboration, to fulfil this role as the speaker of the branch.

Conclusion

Although there are own and independent sports organisations for sport equipment, goods and facilities, every company within competition sports (corporations and federations) have to follow the given rules and regulations by the sports rights holders – otherwise they cannot be integrated into the official local, national or global sports competitions. From these points of view, the DOSB still is the national representative for the competition sports. The organisation has partnered with member-based sport organisations across the country to develop a national interest in sport (DOSB, 2015). But, the sports branch is much more complex, for example it is not clear from the viewpoint mentioned above, whether the DOSB is also the speaker of other organisations of the sports branch such as private-owned gyms. Obviously not, given some major discussions going on between them. Hence, further discussion and studies are necessary to prepare the ground for a sports summit in the near future to speak with one voice.

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