The Drive for Change

Putting the means and ends of sport at stake in the organizing of Swedish voluntary sport

Cecilia Stenling

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i 1031, Norra Beteendevetarhuset, fredagen den 5 juni, kl. 10:00. Avhandlingen kommer att förvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Eivind Å. Skille, Högskolan i Hedmark, Norge.
The Drive for Change. Putting the means and ends of sport at stake in the organizing of Swedish voluntary sport.

The aim of this thesis is to create knowledge on processes of change in the contemporary organizing of Swedish voluntary sport and the systems of meaning at work in these processes. The thesis proceeds from the assumption that the contemporary public sport policy climate is characterized by a pressure on organized sport to change in order for sport to better serve as an implementer of non-sport goals. In attempting to capture the possible ramifications of this pressure on the organizing of voluntary sport, the thesis work relies on the argument that processes of change are best captured in instances where new and established ideas are confronted with one another. Following this argument and drawing upon the concept of theorization, the first research question treated in the thesis concerns how legitimacy is established for a new practice (reported in Article 1). The second research question addressed is how, why, and with what consequences new ideas on organizing are implemented in sport organizations (reported in Article 2 & 3). In relation to this question, the concepts of translation and organizational identity are mobilized in the analysis. Empirically, these two questions are addressed using data from 29 interviews covering the emergence and organizing of organized spontaneous sport, so-called Drive in sport, in four Swedish municipalities. The analysis relating to these two questions shows that the same systems of meaning invoked to legitimate and specify Drive-in sport as a practice that has the potential to remedy problems being faced by both the Swedish society and the Swedish sports movement, also made Drive-in sport an unlikely developmental direction for the majority of implementing sport clubs. This process is understood with reference to a mismatch between the organizational identity of the clubs and the cultural material of the idea of Drive-in sport. This insight is brought into the formulation of the third research question treated in the thesis, which is concerned with sport clubs’ readiness, willingness, and ability to respond to policy changes (reported in Article 4). Building on data from short, qualitative interviews with representatives from 218 randomly selected sport clubs, 10 organizational identity categories are constructed. Between these categories, there is a variety of clubs’ core purposes, practices, and logics of action. The implications of this heterogeneity, in terms of sport clubs’ role as policy implementers, are discussed with reference to what clubs in each category might “imagine doing.” The analysis provided in the thesis as a whole suggests that at stake in processes of change in the contemporary organizing of Swedish voluntary sport, is the very definition and meaning of sport.

Keywords
Organizational institutionalism, institutional logics, community sport clubs, voluntary organizations, civil society, governance, organizational change, public policy, sport policy, policy implementation, popular movements

Language: English
ISBN: 978-91-7601-258-1
ISSN: 0281-6768
Number of pages: 101 + 4 papers