

Good governance and good sport: Balancing co-production, co-management, and co-governance between sport federations and participants

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Abstract 343**

"Sport is the largest voluntary non-governmental organisational activity throughout Europe with more volunteers than any other activity." (Council of Europe Council of Europe, 2006: 7)

Current theoretical debates on the relationship between government, Third Sector organisations, and the citizens they engage with are focussed on the managerial concepts of co-production, co-management, and co-governance in the delivery of services (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Brandsen, van de Donk, & Putters, 2005; Osborne & McLaughlin, 2004; Pestoff, 2006; Pestoff, Osborne, & Brandsen, 2006). Considering sport federations within the Third Sector, the sheer scale of managing service delivery invites a closer look at their co-involvement with citizens along these three theoretical dimensions. Co-production, in the case of sport, can be defined as citizens taking an active role together with federations in the development and implementation of service provision, for example, volunteers actively involved with organising local level initiatives and activities. Co-management exists when the federations work together with the State and/or citizens in the daily management of their sport governance role. Finally, co-governance actively involves government, federations and/or citizens in the creation of public policy development. These elements can co-exist; what matters for sport management is that they involve a deep level of co-involvement and sharing of responsibility between federations and the citizens they represent.

This paper draws upon current research being undertaken as part of a large ongoing European-funded project on the role of social capital in sport governance in Denmark, Italy, France and the Czech Republic, specifically considering the governance of handball, amateur football, and Olympic sailing classes. The Declaration on Sport (1997 Amsterdam Treaty) asked the EU to listen to sport federations when important questions affecting sport are raised, however, there is a lack of understanding in the public management scholarship about the role of federations in managing sport as a Third Sector public service. This research uses multisited ethnographies to explore the organisational structures and the nature of relationships between federations and their membership at local, regional and national levels; assesses the impact of social capital on sport governance at the local, regional and national levels; and investigates the ways in which public policy can most effectively support federations and the citizens they represent. This research broadly aims at illuminating synergies and opportunities for intra- and inter-organisational, as well as international and interdisciplinary dialogues on sport governance and social capital.

This paper, however, will focus specifically on the federations considered in this study and their managerial approaches to co-production, co-management, and co-governance of sport as a social service. In addition to addressing itself to these discussions from public management theory, it situates itself within current discussions in cross-disciplinary sport scholarship on the nature of social capital and volunteers, the public governance of sport, and the managerial roles of federations together with their need to be actively understood within the Third Sector (Babiak, 2007; Bergsgard & Rommetvedt, 2006; Burnett, 2006; Field, 2006; Harvey, L., vesque, & Donnelly, 2007; Houlihan, 2005; Jarvie, 2003; Sam & Jackson, 2006).

In summary, this paper investigates wider issues of how federations and citizens together consider and enable sport delivery. At each level of the sport system, regardless of nation or federation, our ongoing research has discovered that, despite different levels of agenda setting maturity, and different styles of federation/citizen relationships, at the end of the day the management of sport appears to require co-involvement and shared commitment. The public management theory of co-production, co-management and co-governance allows for greater insight into the nature of this managerial structure.

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