Strävan efter samhällsförbättring

Idrottspolitiska problematiseringar och lösningsstrategier för formandet av den nyttiga idrotten och den idrottande individen

Malin Österlind

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i Hörsal B, Samhällsvetarhuset, fredagen den 27 oktober, kl. 10:00.
Avhandlingen kommer att förvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Håkan Larsson,
Gymnastik- och idrottshögskolan, Stockholm, Sverige.
Striving for social improvement – sport policy problematisations and solutions for the governing of sport and the sport participant

Abstract
Sport and sport participation is generally believed to positively contribute to society and individuals and have become important to welfare policy in the westernised world. Simultaneously, there has been an increased political and academic interest in turning sport policy, sport and sport participation into a relevant object of study and evaluation. The overall aim of this dissertation is to develop knowledge on contemporary sport policy and evaluation in relation to ideas about the social significance of sport and sport participation. The purpose is to critically examine how sport policy evaluations, their problematisations and solution proposals help to shape particular images of the good society, good sports and the ideal sport participant. Three research questions are posed: (1) Through what ways of thinking, speaking and knowing are societal and sport policy problems, goals and ideals defined? (2) Through what techniques, methods and strategies are solutions proposed to solve the problems and achieve desired goals and ideals? (3) How are different types of individual and collective (non-)sought-after subjectivities anticipated and shaped? Drawing on the concept of governmentality, the study focuses on the governing of sport’s and the sport participant’s conduct, the political problematisations and rationalities regarding this conduct, and the strategies proposed to enhance this conduct. The governmental role of evaluation, knowledge production and scientific expertise is given specific attention. The gradual shifts in governmental rationalities and technologies, from a social form of governing to an advanced liberal form of governing, in the Swedish welfare state provide an overall framework of the study. Two kinds of empirical materials are analysed. First, final reports of sport political government Commissions of inquiries, published in the Swedish Government Official Reports (SOU) from 1922-2008, are analysed. Second, reports of sport political evaluations, published by the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science (CIF) from 2011-2015, are analysed. The analysis reported on in article 1 shows that citizens’ ‘good’ and ‘healthy’ behaviour and bodies are a focus of problematisation throughout the studied period. In relation to this, sport is seen as an important tool and solution. Parallel to the increased critique of sport in contemporary times, a neo-liberal governmentality is embraced which in turn affects how ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ are thought of in individualistic and rational ways. The analysis reported on in article 2 shows that the 2008 government Commission adopted two main ‘problematics’. The democratic problematic concerned a commitment to issues of democracy and equality of opportunities and specified a particular problem of sport; sport excludes rather than includes. The health problematic concerned a commitment to issues of public health and physical activity and focused on a particular problem of the population: people are physically inactive and unhealthy. The argument being proposed in article 2 is that these two problematics construct the ‘problem’ of sport and the sport (non)participant in specific ways, drawing on particular forms of knowledge and discourse, with certain implications for the judgements made and the solutions proposed by the Commission. The analysis reported on in article 3 demonstrates three strategies of evaluation and governing: strategies of representation; deliberation; and reflexivity. The argument being proposed in article 3 is that these three strategies draw on different yet overlapping forms and methods of knowledge about sport participation and thereby also produce different (non-)sport participant subject positions. The analysis reported on in article 4 offers an alternative theoretical conceptualisation, based on governmentality, of the Swedish sports model and shows how sport policy, governing and power can be seen in the light of shifting forms of governmental rationality (i.e. governing from a social point of view to an advanced liberal way of governing). In conclusion, the analyses provided in the thesis as a whole suggest that processes of societal and political improvement in contemporary political governing of sport and sport participation, involves particular images of the good society, good sports and the ideal sport participant.

Keywords
Sport; Policy; Politics; Evaluation; Participation; Governmentality; Foucault, Sweden