“Oh, those horsemen!”
Regulatory change and cultural peculiarity in Finland

Abstract

Finland’s three gambling monopoly operators merged into one state-owned entity in 2017. A particular challenge to the process came from its smallest constituent, the tote company Fintoto, its owner, the national Trotting and Horse Breeding Association, and the equine industry’s cultural peculiarity.

The process is examined from the perspective of the equine industry, which had to choose between joining or not joining the merger. The exchanges between 'horse people' and state regulators, the equine industry’s resistance and decision to participate in the merger, and concerns about impact are traced from Finland’s leading equine newspaper, in 2015–2017. The articles are triangulated with documents produced by state and equine organizations, material from other media sources, and ethnography.

The qualitative assessment shows how cultural peculiarity challenges national regulatory processes and causes internal divisions among affected groups. The discussion shows why communication is a critical success factor in regulatory transitions and impact management, and how general trends in society may intervene. The findings stress the importance of understanding culture, history, and geographical scale in the study and management of regulatory change. The investigation demonstrates the value of systematic documentation and long-term qualitative view in assessing impact.

So What?

The presentation shows why “one size does not fit all” and why this matters in regulatory and industry change. Ignorance of cultural peculiarity can complicate regulatory processes and generate unnecessary economic, political, and socio-cultural costs.

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Bio

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