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State sport policy and the voluntary sport clubs:

The case of the Norwegian Sports City Program as social policy

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Abstract

This article scrutinizes the relationship between state policy and voluntary sport clubs. While the latter development is to consider sport as social policy, the case of the Norwegian Sports City Program (SCP) was initiated by the state and implemented by voluntary and competitive oriented sport organizations. The research question is about whether the logic of integration in social policy is compatible with the logic of competition in sport. With new institutionalism as the theoretical framework, and based on a case study of multiple methods, the analysis reveals how processes of isomorphism and translation take place in sport clubs. While the general picture shows that sport clubs resemble the competitive script which seems perceived as immanent in sport, the representatives of the SCP clubs respond to requirements in their local communities and – at the same time – translate the incentives of the state. In so doing, the state policy fits the philosophy of SCP clubs' social work and these clubs get subsidies for implementing sporting activities with a social profile, but the motive for the work of sport clubs representatives is anchored in the local community and is only to a limited degree influenced by state policy.

Introduction

This article scrutinizes the relationship between state policy and voluntary sport clubs. The relevance for the topic departs from the observation of a potential tension between state policy making and voluntary sport organizations' implementation of sport. Regarding the former, the value of sport as social policy is increasingly emphasized in the Norwegian state's official documents, thus the Government apparently sees benefit in 'using sport in the community schemes' (Smith & Waddington, 2004). Although the need for sport as social policy may be legitimate, propelled by urbanization and changes in the ethnic composition of the population which are especially evident in the cities (Esping-Andersen, 1990), the rationale for using sport for socio-political reasons is not clearly outlined in government White Papers on sport (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991-1992; 1999-2000). In that respect, this article identifies whether the goals of the state's sport policy is of any interest for or have any influence on, those who organize sport at the grass root level, and who are in face to face interaction with the people of which the policy is targeted. More precisely, this article analyzes the case of the Sports City Program (SCP).

The SCP was initiated by the delivery of the former White Paper on sport (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991-1992, p. 135-6) and followed up in the latter (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1999-2000, p. 57-8). Based on a belief in the realization of social objectives through sport, the SCP was intended to provide alternative sport supplies – that is, alternatives to conventional sports – with the aim of preventing youth from engaging in undesirable behaviour (crime, drug abuse etc.) and of working for social integration. Apart from these vague formulations included in the White Papers, there are no overall guidance documents for the specific ends or means of the program. Thus, the program has developed in various forms in various cities. This article is based primarily on data from Oslo, the capital of Norway, where the density of immigrants is high, and where it is believed that the socio-political objectives of the program have highest relevance (Skille, 2004a, b).

Previous research into the SCP has scrutinized the relationship between the state and the voluntary sport organization (Carlsson & Haaland, 2004; Eidheim, 1998; Skille, 2004a), and evaluated the extent to which there are possibilities to provide alternatives when the program is implemented by a traditional organization like the NOC (Carlsson & Haaland, 2004; Eidheim, 1998; Skille, 2004b). It has also revealed similarities and differences in comparison with conventional sport, with regard to adolescents' objective sociological characteristics (Skille, 2005a) and subjective preferences for participation (Skille, 2005b), and qualitative experiences of the participants are reported (Skille & Waddingtion, 2006). There is, however, a lack of research into the level of sport clubs and especially with regard to sport club representatives, who are the persons actually implementing the program at the grass root level.

All in all, the Sports City Program was established to achieve social integration while sport is conventionally about competition (see more on context below); in addition, previous research on the SCP has focused on other parts of the SCP rather than the sport clubs implementing the programme. Thus the research question of this article is as follows; Is the logic of integration in social policy compatible with the logic of competition in sport, as seen from the perspective of sport club representatives? Thus, this article makes a sociological analysis of state policy and of the sport clubs' relationship to state policy, taking into account both top down and bottom up perspectives. An institutional approach is applied concerning both established structures and local agency, and a case study is conducted on the focal organizations, the sport clubs in a specific programme. But before moving on to theory and methodology, more context description is provided.

Norwegian sport policy and organization

For more than 150 years the Norwegian Government has been involved in sport with public funding, first because physical training was a part of the preparation for a fit military force, and later for reasons first and foremost related to health. During the 1970s sport was (and still is) assigned to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, indicating that the intrinsic values of sport should be emphasized. The

latter development of sport policy indicates a shift in the state's interest in sport, back to a more instrumental focus. Nevertheless, the institutional environment for contemporary sport relies on three interdependent incidents which occurred in 1946 (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2007; Goksøyr *et al.*, 1996; Tønneson, 1986). First, a Sport Office was established, which is the predecessor of today's Department of Sport Policy (DSP). Second, a gambling agency was established, of which the revenues are the basis of public funding to sport. The gambling revenues go directly from the gambling agency to the DSP, and are not an objective for political discussion in the Parliament as would be the case for the rest of the national budget. Consequently, the White Paper and the DSP bureaucrats' interpretation and administration of it, makes up a strong power base related to the state's sport policy making. And third, the Norwegian Confederation of Sports was established after the fusion of two former sport organizations. In 1996 the confederation fused with the Olympic committee, into the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NOC).

The Norwegian model for sport draws on three inter-dependent ideas: sport for all is the goal of public sport policy; it is a governmental responsibility to attain this goal; and it is believed that the goal is best achieved by a division of labor between public and voluntary bodies. On the one hand, public organizations at different levels (state, county and municipality) provide facilities and subsidies for sport organizations, while, on the other hand, the NOC with its structure of special sport federations, district sport associations, and sport clubs implement sporting activities (Goksøyr *et al*., 1996; Olstad, 1987; Tønnesson, 1986). The principle of independence and autonomy of the NOC, in relation to the state and the DSP, balances the powerbase within sport policy. Moreover, Norwegian sport conventionally takes place during leisure time, it is voluntarily conducted, it is competitively oriented at every level (when you start playing organized sport, you start competing or preparing for competitions), and participation in sport is based on membership in a sport club. Organizationally, the sport club links to the central policy through the NOC system (all are federated under the umbrella of the NOC). With only one national umbrella organization for sport, and with a mutual

dependency and the division of labor indicated above, the NOC has a monopoly of public funding for sport and has historically fulfilled the role of 'Norwegian sport' on an autonomous basis.

Thus it is against this background, that we remind the reader of the research question. Can it be expected that the autonomous and voluntary sport organization with a focus on competitive sport will contribute to achieving social policy goals aiming at integration?

The Theoretical Context

In previous research into the phenomenon of the SCP – including a discussion of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sport organization - several theoretical approaches have been applied.[1] For example, Skille (2004a) has applied new institutionalism as a theoretical framework, and in particular the key concept of a rationalized myth (Meyer & Rowan, 1991) which refers to a symbolic regulation of organizational behaviour which may spread through the processes of coersive, normative and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). *Coersive isomorphism* refers to processes of organizations acting in specific ways, under pressure. *Normative isomorphism* refers to the process of adapting the organization and its work to the norms and values which are dominant within the field of (sport) organizations, while *mimetic isomorphism* refers to the process of trying to emulate successful organizations in the field.

However, while sport clubs may – as with other organizations – resemble each other and reproduce and homogenize the organizational field, change and variations must also be taken into account. Based on the empirical evidence of Norwegian sport clubs as heterogeneous (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003), and the fact that this article focuses on the perceptions of representatives of sport clubs, a newer perspective of new institutionalism will be applied as well. When variations between (similar) organizations may develop through institutional change, Campbell

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[1] New institutionalism (the classic version which is presented first here), Bourdieu's field and habitus theory, as well as Elias on absence of adult control and the development of adolescent power groups, are all applied in different studies of the SCP (Skille, 2004a, b, 2005a, b; Skille & Waddington, 2006). At the policy-organizational level I adhere mostly to new institutionalism, which will be applied and developed here (see Skille, 2008).

(2004, p. 28) identifies two underlying mechanisms for institutional change, namely *bricolage* and *translation*.

Bricolage refers to the recombination of existing institutional elements within a field or an organization: '… actors often craft new institutional solutions by recombining elements in their repertoire through an innovative process of *bricolage* whereby new institutions differ from but resemble old ones' (Campbell, 2004, p. 69). On the contrary, translation refers to the importing of new institutional elements from outside the investigated field or organization.

More specifically, new ideas are combined with already existing institutional practices and, therefore, are *translated* into local practice in varying degrees and in ways that involve a process very similar to bricolage. The difference is that translation involves the combination of *new* externally given elements received through diffusion as well as old locally given ones inherited from the past (Campbell, 2004, p. 80).

Together, the two sides of new institutionalism take into account both processes of conformity, reproduction and homogenization as well as variation, change and heterogenization. With classic new institutionalism, the SCP clubs may be considered as operating under similar relational constraints and as experiencing similar consequences of power differentials, and it may be considered that the sport clubs respond to such environmental elements in similar ways. At the same time, the translation perspective concedes agency of the representatives of sport clubs, and the point is that, if for example the social elements of the state policy influence the practice of sport clubs, they do so through the sport clubs' representatives' interpretation of social policy. In sum, the classic new institutionalism and the perspective of translation together offer an analytical framework for analyzing the sport club; its relationship to external elements as such, as well as its internal processes of combining internal institutional elements and the import, interpretation and implementation of external institutional elements.

Methods

This is a case study, thus methods are multifaceted (Yin, 2003), and all are qualitative. First, to investigate what the state officially promotes as sport policy, White Papers were analyzed. These comprised White Papers explicitly on sport from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, to which the Department of Sport Policy is assigned, as well as White Papers from other ministries where sport is mentioned. One objection against the concern of the White Papers as the state's view (which implies that the state has a unitary, homogenous view) is of course that there are many political parties with different points of views. However, Parliamentary negotiations about sport are characterised by a striking consensus (Skille, 2004a), and White Papers by definition are the official policy of the state (even when inter-Party consensus does not exist).

Second, the main data generation comprised interviews with eight leaders and coaches representing four local sport clubs in the SCP. The sampling was based on strategic considerations; while these clubs participated in a state initiated sport program, they had to respond to state policy. The sport clubs included in the study were all located in inner parts of the city of Oslo, where the density of immigrants was high and where integration was considered most relevant. Starting out with open questions about the sport club and the relationship to the Sports City Program, the aim of the interviews was to understand the sport club representatives' perception of their role as a "socio-political instrument" (which respondents were asked about– in most cases – directly during the interviews). In addition, information was gathered through material produced by the sport clubs, such as brochures and internet sites. Previous research into Norwegian sport clubs (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003; Säfvenbom, 2003a, b) added general information to these SCP specific findings.

Third, a supportive method for understanding the sport clubs was interviews with ten adolescent participants (all aged eighteen, and representing three different sport clubs). These interviews focused on personal background, the specific activity undertaken, the family's sport

participation, friends' sport participation and other leisure activity, and experiences of sports participation. Together with the interviews of leaders and coaches, this was undertaken to provide insight into the local situation, where adult leaders are in face-to-face interaction with adolescent participants.

Data are multifaceted, thus the sources were treated differently, but in the same chronological order as they were presented above; and for each step in the process, the latter analysis built on the former. The White Papers were read and social policy paragraphs were noted. With regard to White Papers on sport, they were analyzed to find a historical development in the government's focus on sport. On the basis on the findings in the document analysis, the interviews with sport club representatives were listened to, and relevant parts were transcribed. Further, the transcripts were reviewed for general information and for specific citations. The participant interviews were transcribed and analyzed in relation to the findings of the interviews of leaders and coaches. In sum, this process and the rationale for a case study draws on a belief in multiple sources of information as a procedure of validation (Yin, 2003).

It should be remembered that the available data only allows a discussion about whether the representatives of the sport clubs see themselves as socio-political instruments. The data provide little information about the impact of the program at a societal level, though the participant interviews did allow a preliminary discussion of such issues. Moreover, the case study does not allow for generalization to the population of Norwegian sport clubs but through the theoretically guided analysis below. Nevertheless, the study does make a contribution to the understanding of how these particular voluntary sport clubs relate to state policy and other elements in a struggle between policy conformity, field conformity and local needs, as defined by the individual agents of the sport clubs.

Results

Results and discussion will be presented in two main sections. First, there will be an analysis of the content of the White Papers related to sport. Second, there will be an analysis of the sport clubs

based on the interviews of the sport clubs' representatives, supported by interviews with some adolescent participants.

The level of state policy

Overall, the White Papers from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, to which the DSP is assigned, hold both cultural/intrinsic and societal/external values of sport to be of matter for state involvement (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991-1992, p. 11-4; 1999-2000, p. 36-7). On the one hand, sport participation is considered to be valuable in itself, and three attributes which align sport with culture are identified (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1999-2000, p. 13): first, sport's intrinsic value, which ascribes qualities such as the experience of joy, mastery and achievement; second, sport activities creation of engagement, enthusiasm and belonging, thus sport is considered an expression of values, references and symbols which unite people; and third, the concept of culture may be related to its form of organization which dominates local communities, where it is believed that sport clubs contribute to the creation of meaningful leisure experiences for its members.

On the other hand, sport participation is considered to generate external, or societal, benefits. The societal focus on sport can be sketched roughly as three phases of development. First, around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the official objective was connected to military preparations for a physically fit citizenry of young men (Olstad, 1987). Second, during the inter war period and especially after World War II, public sport policy was dominated by a focus on health and hygiene (Goksøyr *et al.*, 1996; Tønnesson, 1986). Third, there is a trend of increasing belief in the social benefits of sport.

Moreover, White Papers from different ministries regard sport as a possible means to their ends.[2] The Ministry of Health Affairs points at the health value of sports and physical activity, especially related to the physiological benefits and prevention of somatic diseases (Ministry of Health

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[2] In addition to those mentioned in the main text, the Ministry of the Environment is interested in sport because walking and skiing are considered popular activities in the population, and overlap between the concept of sport and with that of outdoor recreation (Ministry of the Environment, 2001-2002).

Affairs, 2002-2003). The Ministry of Child and Family Affairs emphasizes sport's potential for being meaningful leisure and for development of social belonging and identity (Ministry of Child and Family Affairs, 2001-2002). And the Ministry for Local and Regional Development sees sport as an arena for social integration, through community development and self realization. Assuming that the urban areas are the most challenging ones with regard to immigration and social integration, the Sports City Program is mentioned in particular (Ministry for Local and Regional Development, 1996-1997).

The multiple state interests in sport generate some critical questions to be posed. Will one objective, i.e. the promotion of the population's health by the Ministry of Health Affairs be undermined by another, i.e. the promotion of competitive sport by the Department of Sport Policy (which may include a risk of injuries and threat to health)? Or, as is the core of the research question, will the competitive element of sport, which is promoted by the NOC system with the political and economic blessing of the Department of Sport Policy, exclude people from participation rather than include people in sport (see for example the number of drop outs at a certain age)?

In sum, the analysis of White Papers reveals that "everything" all gains are to be made via the same approach, namely through the NOC system of local and voluntary sport clubs. The two White Papers on sport, published in 1991 (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991-1992) and 1999 (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1999-2000), respectively, show that the concepts of culture and leisure are related to a communitarian ideology where strong and tight local communities with sport clubs as the core are assumed to be positive contexts. Sport's creation of possibilities for the healthy development of human beings, are major arguments for state subsidies to sport. For example, this passage is found in the first White Paper on sport:

> Leisure time is an important arena for social learning and experimenting of roles. Sport is one of several arenas for such learning, while growing up. The individual experiences which are built up over time, will influence the individual young person, psychologically and socially, positively and negatively (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1991-1992, p. 13, my translation).

Another example is this passage from the second and last White Paper on sport:

> Another main argument [in addition to intrinsic values] is that participation in sport is the
> same as belonging to a community. This is valuable both for the individual and for society
> through the establishment of networks and organizations. Sport for children and adolescents
> is valuable for those who participate because there are established social bonds in the local
> communities, which is a precondition for positive contexts in which to grow up (Ministry of
> Cultural Affairs, 1999-2000, p. 36, my translation).

To summarise, it is believed that by subsidizing the NOC system, the benefits of sport will be realized. However, the state policy is not followed by any strategy or steering document, apart from some general guidelines about the distribution of gambling revenues.[3] Concerning the state policy of sport with a top down perspective, there is policy making at the top, but there is no plan for how the implementation phase should be conducted. The potential coercive pressure from the state, which theoretically could be grounded on for example, law and/or other juridical regulations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), is blurred due to vague goal formulations and lack of instruments and incentives between the state and voluntary sport organizations. When neither means nor ends are clear, there emerges a possibility – and a necessity – for grass root implementers to make their own interpretations of the policy of the program. Thus the sport club representatives must make 'translations' (Campbell, 2004); regarding both top-down policy and bottom-up expectations, before and during the implementation phase.

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[3] First, the revenues should be spent at facilities; second, the NOC should be economically supported; and third, other things (which by the DSP are identified as supportable) should get subsidies.

The level of sport clubs

From previous research (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003),[4] one can read that *the* Norwegian sport club does not exist, because there are so many variations, with regard to sports (disciplines), and organizational as well as economic aspects (for example regarding size, structure, professionalism versus volunteerism, etc.). However, when it comes to what the sport clubs actually focus upon, previous research (Säfvenbom, 2003a, b)[5] has revealed a striking consensus across sport clubs. Thus, both studies of sport clubs' values (Säfvenbom, 2003a, b) and studies of individual preferences for sport participation (Seippel, 2006; Skille, 2005b) have shown that competition and achievement are central features in the 'constitutive essence of sport' (Seippel, 2006, p. 54). In sum, it seems that sport clubs are in line with only one part of the state's policy on sport, namely that of intrinsic values connected to the competition and achievement ideology.

As indicated above, the relationship between the state and the sport clubs could be considered an example of coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). However, the generalized sport club (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Enjolras, 2003) does probably not experience high degrees of coercive pressure, due to the sport clubs management being primarily voluntary. Thus the concepts of normative and mimetic isomorphism may better capture the generalized sport club. Regarding the former (normative isomorphism), this refers to professional groups (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and although the average sport club representative is 90 % voluntary (Seippel, 2003), it seems that the 'professional attitude' of sport clubs and 'professional behaviour' of sport club representatives are based on the logic of competition (Säfvenbom, 2003a, b; Seippel, 2006). Regarding the latter (mimetic isomorphism), it refers to the process of trying to act like the successful

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[4] Enjolras and Seippel's (2001: 10-12; Seippel, 2003: 7-8) study is based on a survey among a random sample (n = 294 and n = 534, respectively) of Norwegian sport clubs, in which the leader of the sport club was required to fill in a questionnaire.

[5] Säfvenbom's study is based on a random sample of annual reports from 138 sport clubs in Norway. Although this number may seem low compared to a total population of almost 7500 ordinary sport clubs (in addition there are 4800 sport clubs related to working places), the possibility for generalization is considered relatively high, because there were few contradictions across the reports. The rhetoric of the annual reports is dominated by expressions like: 'good quality' versus 'less good quality'; 'a good year' or 'a good season' versus 'not satisfactory'; as well as the expression 'good practice'; and they were all related to competition; that is results in single competitions, placing in tournaments or ranking in leagues.

organizations in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and when success is measured by results in sport competitions, sport clubs mime those of other sport clubs which do well in competitions. In sum, the two latter forms of isomorphism seem to dominate rather than the potential coercive pressure from state policy.

On the contrary, the SCP clubs focused more on social elements, and less on the competitive aspects which are usually associated with sport. While one consequence of the logic of competition is the phenomenon referred to as drop-out, all the sport club representatives interviewed emphasized that 'low threshold' for participation was a criterion of success for the SCP. 'Low threshold' was a twofold concept, which, on the one hand, was related to 'objective' economic advantages for the participants. By program funding, the sport clubs could keep the membership subscriptions low, despite the absence of parent volunteers. As pointed out by Archetti (2003), sport participation in Norway builds on the structure of the Norwegian core family and the voluntary work conducted by parents. To put it the other way around, people from certain backgrounds are less likely to participate in sport, less likely to volunteer in sport clubs and conduct little civic engagement in general (Archetti, 2003).

In that respect, the SCP clubs based their practice upon – among other things – the sport club representatives' interpretation of how the local community would perceive the immigrant sport participants. As one of the leaders put it: 'You could place a 'colored' [person] down on the corner, to sell cake lotteries, and see how many lottery tickets you sold … So we are more or less dependent on SCP funding' (Interview with sport club leader). Program funding made it possible to provide sport offers which probably not would have been provided otherwise. However, it was not important that it was called SCP: 'Whether it is SCP or wherever the money comes from, that does not matter for me… We spend the money as we believe is best for children and youth' (Interview with sport club leader). Another sport club representative listed a number of potential income sources both at the

municipal level and the state level, such as immigrant departments and funding for voluntary organizations, but he ended up by defining the SCP as the main source.

> We apply for funding from many places… I have the feeling that SCP is the most important source for us… that we feel that we are right to receive a rather large amount of money, because we work with the kind of youth that we do (Interview with sport club leader).

The low threshold concept was, on the other hand, related to the 'subjective' attitude and behaviour that sport club representatives showed towards the participants. The sport club representatives perceived themselves more as social workers than as sport coaches.[6] It was believed that their work had an impact on the participants, and, consequently, on the local community. According to the informants, the participating youth became better citizens, and the specific parts of the city where the sport clubs operated, became safer places to grow up, because of the work of the sport clubs. I will elaborate with an example, namely a basketball coach in an inner city sport club. For him, being a volunteer in the sport club was about being a role model for the immigrant youth, especially for the boys. The basketball coach was of Pakistani origin himself, but he was born and raised in Norway, as were most of the boys in his team. He studied medicine and he had a Norwegian girlfriend, two points that he underscored during the interview, as part of being a role model for the boys in his team. He felt that these points showed that it is possible to 'be something' although you are an immigrant youth in the city.

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[6] The only exception was the youngest coach, coaching two female teams; one for 15 year olds, and one for adults (from 20 years old). He was just around the same age himself. Firstly, the girls were not perceived, by the leaders, as so problematic as the boys. Secondly, being at the same age and from the same area, he had many girls from the team as his regular friends. He did not need to be, and he did not perceive himself as, a social worker.

I have looked upon myself, during my engagement in the sport club, as … not as a basketball

coach… I did not spend so much time on the basketball related [issues]. It was all the time

something about personality development, get them to believe in their abilities… I see that

they will quit basketball… So I would rather work with those things which will make a

difference the rest of their lives… I am perhaps not primarily a basketball coach, but maybe a

"believe in your own abilities coach" (Interview with basketball coach).

The basketball coach's story fits with the policy of the sport club, as it was expressed by the

leader of the sport club: 'The unorganized [youth] are important. Some sport clubs focus on the elite,

but we focus upon getting the youth off the street' (Interview with sport club leader). Concerning the

case of the SCP, much of the essence in the interviews may be summarized in the following citation

from a web site of a similar club to those cited above:

[The Sport club (SC)] is an organization in which the primary goal is to provide goal oriented

activities, anti violence and integration work among children, youth and adults in the city. …

SC works, through the (sport) activities of the club, to get the youth involved in more

responsible activities … this makes the youth more self confident and contributes to

reflections about their own value and resources. … SC wants everybody to get the feeling of

[belonging to] a community, independent of cultural background (Oslo Sportsklubb, 2006).

The empirical presentation has showed that the focus of SCP clubs differs in comparison with

the generalized sport club (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel 2003) which is dominated by the logic of

competition. The question is *Why?*, and the answer is probably multifaceted. At first glance, it may

seem like the economic incentive from the state works coercively (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and

that the representatives of the SCP clubs adopt the state's goals for sport as social policy. However, the informants did not conceive of the state initiative and incentives as reasons for their work, but they anchored their work in the needs of the local environment. The mechanisms of the SCP clubs worked as follows: first, some people had an idea of providing some kind of leisure activities for youth in the parts of the city in which the immigrant population was most dense, where the demand for integration was perceived as high; second, these people saw the opportunity of using a sport club for that purpose; and third, with the emergence of the SCP, state funding became available and increased the possibility to realize the idea.

All in all, the sport club representatives' translation of both state policy and adolescent lifestyle, is the point where the top down initiative of the state meets the bottom up demands of the local community. When the sport club representatives have to balance the expectations from above with the demands from below, the expectations from above can be considered, both as a coercive pressure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) but also as an institutional element which may be imported into the focal organization (Campbell, 2004). Giving priority to the latter, and conceding the informants' agency, the sport club representatives imported those parts of the SCP from above which were compatible with the work of the sport clubs, namely the economic support. Thus, the sport clubs' representatives' relationship to social policy and the state was ambiguous: in one way, the SCP club representatives were underpinned by the logic of integration and considered themselves as instruments of social policy. On the contrary, the SCP club representatives did not considerer themselves as the state instruments at all. In sum, the state policy and the SCP club practice seem underpinned by a similar myth (Meyer & Rowan, 1991), namely that of the logic of integration; but there is not necessarily a causal and coercive link.

All sport club representatives do what they conceive as right and what is familiar to them, and people respond to their social environment, i.e. both structures and processes. In that respect, all sport clubs are underpinned by different processes of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991;

Meyer & Rowan, 1991), but the various kinds of isomorphism work in various directions and with various strengths across sport clubs. For most sport club representatives, the main norm seems to be the competitive script (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003; Säfvenbom, 2003a, b), while for others – as the empirical evidence of this study has shown – the point of departure is the multicultural context and social challenges in the neighbourhoods. The informants' emphasis on local community may be considered as part of a general discourse about sport in Norway, which is to a high degree a welfare discourse. Whereas welfare is normally associated with the principles of universalism, which in the Scandinavian countries is anchored in a social democracy (Baldwin, 1990; Esping-Andersen, 1990, Hill, 1997), equity may need differentiated services. Thus, a characteristic of social policy is that, while some services involve broad responses to popular needs, others are specific measures to assist small and disadvantaged groups in society (Hill, 1997).

In that respect, the target group of the SCP must be taken into account. Moreover, it is probably of major importance for achieving success for a sport program with social objectives, that, while the adult leaders of the SCP clubs saw themselves as social workers, the participants – as will be shown below – did not conceive themselves as 'social clients'.

> To keep them off the street, we have to give them some offers… The idea is to get them into a system, in which they do not see themselves as [part of] a system, but [which is] a place where they feel comfortable, so that they have a place to be. That is what is important (Interview with sport club leader).

For the participants, the explanation of the program's success was based on the perception of *accessibility* and *freedom*. Regarding access, it was crucial for the adolescents that the sport hall was near other places where they usually spent their time: their home, the internet-café and the

underground station. It was most important that the sport offer was part of the neighbourhood, and that it took only a few minuets to walk between any of these locations. When it comes to freedom, the point is that the activity fitted the rest of the adolescents' lives. In one of the sport halls visited during the study, it was quite common to bring other friends along to training, who did not participate. The non-participating friends sat alongside the pitch and waited till the sport participants were finished. The routine of training once a week, and playing one game a week during the season, seemed acceptable for most of the adolescents. This point was made by one of the informants who used to play soccer, and who – according to himself – used to be considered as a talented player with opportunities for a future career at a higher level. When turning 16 the demands of sport increased, including more frequent training and a more serious attitude. Combined with the fact that the football club was some distance from his home, the increased demands led him to make the decision to quit football. He did not want to spend all his time after school on sport, but he wanted to share his time between work, sports, and being with friends.

The analysis of SCP clubs has revealed that the sport club representatives have to take into account different approaches. Top-down come the (vague) goals and economic subsidies from the state, and, at the same time, bottom-up come the requirements of adaptation to the lifestyle of adolescents (the target group of the social policy). In that respect, the sport clubs' representatives import and put together elements from contexts rather different from each other and utilize them for the purpose of their work (Campbell, 2004). Further, during the process of translation (Campbell, 12004), the sport club representatives may conceive the target group of the policy as out of the possible scope of a voluntary sport club.

Thus, the story of the SCP as social policy is not a one sided positive story, and this results section will close with some reflections about a striking experience which took place during the data collection. From one of the sport clubs from which two representatives (one leader and one coach) and two adolescent participants were interviewed, the intention was to continue interviewing after

the schools' summer holiday. However, when the sport club was contacted again after the summer holiday, the message was that the team of eighteen year old males was no longer in existence, because – according to the leader of the sport hall – the adolescents at this age were too hard to handle. This little story makes some major points about sport as social policy and about the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary sector more generally. The local SCP clubs have to relate to various elements of environment, including the state policy, the organizational field and the local community; state incentives alone will not result in voluntary clubs providing a service.

Concluding remarks

The research question (whether the logic of integration in social policy is compatible with the logic of competition in sport) is certainly not solely a Norwegian phenomenon. As pointed out by Waddington (2000a), it seems to be taken for granted among decision makers of public policy that sport is good for everything, despite the lack of empirical evidence:

> Sport, perhaps more than most areas of social life, is deeply embedded in a whole variety of ideologies. Amongst the more obvious and commonplace ideologies associated with sport are the following: sport is good for one's health, both physical and mental; sport teaches the value of fair play; sport teaches people to work co-operatively; sport teaches us how to be magnanimous in victory and how to accept defeat gracefully; sport helps us break down barriers of race/ethnicity, class and gender; sport helps to build international friendship and understanding. However, the reality – as opposed to the ideology – is that while sport may, under certain circumstances, have these consequences, it may also, under different circumstances, have consequences which are the exact opposite of those so often claimed for sport (Waddington, 2000a, p. 5).

Waddington's (2000a) concern is with health, and how the implementation of health policy is constrained by the logic of sport (see also Murphy & Waddington, 1998), while the concern of this paper is with social policy and sport club representatives. The British context – from which Waddington speaks – is compatible with the Norwegian in the sense that the public sport policy is based on the 'double track approach' (Dept. of Media, Culture and Sports, 2002); it is believed that mass participation which may increase the population's health and social welfare on the one hand, *and* the production of international achievement and entertainment on the other hand, can be implemented by the same organizational body. In Norway this belief is institutionalized in the monopoly of the NOC. Again the question emerges, of whether it is possible to gain values of health and social policy, when the implementing and monopolistic body's primary concern is competition.

In that respect, two other Norwegian studies make some points about the NOC system's constraints for gaining other than the sole 'sport (competitive) values'. First, sport may be considered an instrument for the development of 'social capital', which refers to cultural norms, shared values, co-operative networks and devotion to the commonwealth, which is presumed to be a necessity for effective democracies (Putnam, 1995). The claimed decline of social capital in the Western world is explained by the decrease in participation in civic organization, thus one possible solution could be to participate in sport. Empirical research based on a sample of Norwegian adolescents, however, did not find any causal link between organizational participation and democratic engagement. The conclusion was that activity-based leisure – such as sport – did not necessarily develop democracy (Sivesind & Ødegård, 2003; see also Dyreson, 2001). Second, a study of the social impact of a sport program aiming at promoting local development, revealed no evidence of the social impact of the sport program. The most striking finding, however, was that the representatives of the sport organization (at various levels) were not willing to change their organizational behaviour, but continued to provide competitive sport although the aim of the program was social development (Hanssen & Sandvin, 1996; see also Hartmann, 2003).

All in all, social policy and competition seem to build on so different logics that they are hard to combine. The empirical evidence of this article suggests that the logic of competition has to be toned down, and that the logic of integration has to be consciously prioritized. Further, a voluntary organization may have limits which they do not share with social workers from the public sector. They may have legitimate reasons (because they are volunteers), to stop providing social policy when the target group is perceived as out of range for their work. However, it is not suggested that the sport organization – here represented by the leaders and coaches of downtown sport clubs – lack the willingness to provide sport activities for youth in the neighborhood. These adults were genuinely interested in providing an offer to the adolescents in some of the 'worst' parts of the city. But at some point the sport club representatives perceived the challenge of 'socialisation' of the guys from the streets as too demanding.

To conclude with a 'bounded optimism', Waddington (2000b) and others (e.g. Coakley, 2002) point out that sport participation may under certain circumstances have a positive outcome beyond the value of participation itself. For example, Hartmann holds that sport can be used as a hook to grab the youth. But it should be reminded, that using sport as an instrument for gaining social impacts, the success '. . . is largely determined by the strength of its non-sport components, what it does with young people once they are brought into the program through sport' (Hartmann, 2003, p. 134). In a social policy perspective, sport in itself may not be enough, but it may be a start or a part. And in an implementation perspective, the top-down incentives can not force through a policy made at the top, but it can support and 'trigger' the initiative coming from bottom-up.

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