



Hedmark University College

Faculty of Health and Sports

BRAGE

Hedmark University College's Open Research Archive

<http://brage.bibsys.no/hhe/>

This is the author's version of the article published in

International Review for the Sociology of Sport

The article has been peer-reviewed, but does not include the publisher's layout, page numbers and proof-corrections

Citation for the published paper:

Skille, E.Å. (2008). Understanding sport clubs as sport policy implementers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 43(2), 181-200

DOI: 10.1080/17430430802196553

**Understanding sport clubs as sport policy implementers – a theoretical framework for the analysis
of the implementation of central sport policy through local and voluntary sport organizations**

Eivind Å. Skille

Hedmark University College

Lærerskolealleen 1

2418 Elverum

Norway

e-mail: eivind.skille@hihm.no

ph.: +47 62 43 00 54

fax: +47 62 43 00 01

Understanding sport clubs as sport policy implementers – a theoretical framework for the analysis of the implementation of central sport policy through local and voluntary sport organizations

Abstract This article aims at developing a theoretical framework for analysing the implementation of sport policy, as it is conducted by voluntary sport clubs at grass root level. First, three options are presented and discussed: (i) a classical top-down implementation model, (ii) the governance theory of policy tools, and (iii) the Advocacy Coalition Framework. Second, the theoretical perspectives are discussed, and criticized for failing to take sufficiently into account the implementing body of sport policy, namely the voluntary sport clubs. In that respect, an alternative theoretical framework is suggested as a possible solution for analysing the implementation of sport policy; which is the translation perspective of neo-institutionalism. It stresses that, if elements of central policy influence the implementation process at the local level, it does so by the active import, interpretation and implementation of it in the local context. The autonomy of the local sport club in relation to central policy is reinforced by the fact that the activity in sport clubs is mainly done on a voluntary basis.

Key words Policy implementation, Theoretical framework, Sport clubs, Norwegian case.

The way from policy making at the national level to the implementation of the policy at the local level is long and uneasy. In Norway, the policy is most often made by full-time employees and takes place in a state department or in the central staff of the umbrella organization of sports, while the implementation of policy is usually conducted by volunteers in local sport clubs (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007). (Whether it actually is central sport policy that is implemented is a question that, often implicitly but sometimes explicitly, will be discussed through out the article.) Every part of the process from top to bottom has its characteristics and has the potential for being studied

scientifically applying different theories. In general, however, it is probably fair to say that the theoretical development within the studies of the implementation of sport policy and in the field of sport organization, is rather low (Houlihan, 2005; Seippel, 2005a, 2006; Skille, 2005).

Another way of approaching the problem, rather than stating that there is a long way from top to bottom, is to take the grass root level as the point of departure. But research into such organizations is rather inadequate; a search of literature reveals studies of international [sport organizations](#) (e.g. Lee, 2004), most on national sports governing bodies (e.g. Amis & Slack, 2004; Chelladurai, Szyslo, & Haggerty, 1987; Kikulis, 2000; Kikulis et al., 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1992), and professional sports franchises (e.g. Cousens & Slack, 2005; O'Brian & Slack, 2004). The study of those organizations which promote and provide sport activity at grass-root level is notably missing. In addition, the transferability of the above cited studies into the Scandinavian context is limited.

As a consequence, the framework of a theory is underdeveloped. In this article, the objective is to shed light on the issue of the local sport club and its relation to central policy, and to discuss various theoretical frameworks which may aim at taking into account the grass root of sport organizations, namely the sport club, and its relation to central sport policy. In short: the aim of the article is to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of central sport policy, *as it is perceived from the perspective of the sport club*. That does not mean that other levels of analysis will be overlooked; from the perspective of the local sport club, one can also take into account the environment which is relevant for the provision of activity.

Before proceeding to the main parts, a note on general context is needed. (The structural-organizational elements of sport policy implementation are treated in more detail below.) In general, the Nordic countries are welfare states, historically with a social democratic ideology, and with a combination of both a strong state and a significant civic involvement. Based on a vision of sport for all, the Nordic model of sport and sport policy has the following characteristics. First, sport is primarily voluntary, in two interrelated respects. Participation is based on individual membership in a

sport club (and hence in the affiliated federation), and the activity is conducted on a voluntary basis. Second, sport policy relies on a mutual dependency (Norberg, 1998) between the public and the voluntary sector, with a division of responsibility between the state and the sport organization. While the former provides facilities and economic support for the sport organizations, the latter provides activity with a high degree of autonomy. Third, the implementation of sport policy relies on the monopolistic umbrella organization of sport, and on the voluntary implementers at the local level (Bergsgard et al., 2007).

The article is structured as follows. First, some theoretical possibilities for different levels of analysis of sport policy will be posed and discussed. During the presentation of the first of these theories, the context of Norwegian sport and Norwegian sport policy will be sketched as an integrated part (of the theoretical presentation). A critique of each theoretical perspective will be added. Second, an alternative theoretical perspective will be presented, which takes the local sport club as its point of departure and which builds on the sociological perspective of neo-institutionalism. The theory will be the object of reflection about its application, with regard to subsequent empirical analysis of the phenomenon (see Skille, 2006; Skille & Skirstad, 2007).

Three theoretical approaches to the study of sport policy

Houlihan (2005) notes that there is a lack of theory development, with regard to frameworks for analyzing sport policy (for theorising of sport policy-making in Norway, see Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007). As already stated, different theories are applied, and should be applied, at different levels of the analysis of sport policy. Further on, I will sketch three theoretical frameworks that have been applied in studies of sport policy-making and implementation, focusing on the latter. It is not my intention either to review all possible alternatives or to create a general theory applicable at all levels or in all contexts; it is rather to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of some of the existing theories, before going into the issue of finding a theory which is appropriate for the analysis of the (Norwegian) sport club's relationship to central policy.

The presentation of theories will follow this structure. First, a model of implementation with a classic top-down perspective will be presented, alongside the presentation of the context of Norwegian sport and sport policy; in that respect, the relationship between the public and the voluntary sector is crucial. Second, focusing on the relationship between the policy-making body of the state and the implementing body of the voluntary sport organization(s), a sociological governance theory will be presented, namely that of policy tools. Third, trying to combine (taking the best from each perspective) top-down and from bottom-up perspectives, the political science theory of advocacy coalition framework (ACF) will be presented.ⁱ

A top-down implementation model and the Norwegian context

Based on the empirical evidence of Norwegian sport policy, Skille (2005a) has applied the implementation model of van Meter and van Horn (1975) to point out that the central level of policy making and the local level of sports provision are 'two worlds of Norwegian sport'. In the implementation model the starting point is the decision makers' definition of objectives and the allocation of resources. Then three sets of filtering variables come into play: characteristics of the implementing bodies, organizational communication, as well as economic and political conditions. When the implementation model of van Meter and van Horn (1975) is presented in a simplified version, I find it appropriate to present the Norwegian context simultaneously.

--- Figure 1 about here ---

At the state level the decision makers can be divided in two. First, the Parliament treats and verifies the White Paper on sport, which makes up the general guidelines for state sport policy. Second, the Department of Sport Policy (DSP) administrates the White Paper's content on a day-to-day basis. The economic basis for so doing is the revenues of the state-controlled gambling agency (Norsk Tipping AS). The gambling revenues are not treated in the Parliament as part of the national budget, but are transferred directly from the gambling agency to the DSP (Goksøy, 1992; Goksøy et al., 1996; Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007).

In Norway, the implementing bodies of sport are all federated in the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NOC) (see Figure 1). The NOC system comprises a number of organizations, which are organized in two historically constituted lines (Goksøyr et al., 1996). One line takes care of the common sport policy at various levels, and includes: District Sport Associations (DSA, n = 19), one for each county; and Local Sport Councils (LSC, n = 380), one in every municipality with more than three sport clubs. The other, so-called special sport federation line, includes: Special Sport Federationsⁱⁱ (SSF, n = 56), in principle each SSF governs one sport, nationally and is the connection to the international SSF; and Special District Sport Associations (DSSA), which are regional organizations of SSF, governing the sport in every county with an appropriate number of sport clubs with that particular sport on its programme (NIF, 2004). On top, the lines merge into the central NOC, and at the bottom are the sport clubs (SC, n = 7.500). A major point for the subsequent development and discussion of an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of the implementation of sport policy is the fact that it is the sport clubs that provide sport activity.ⁱⁱⁱ

The communication between the body of policy making (the Department of Sport Policy, DSP) and the implementing body (the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, NOC), is characterized by annual transactions from the DSP to the NOC, followed by an assignment letter. The NOC has a monopoly on state subsidies, being the only organization to receive such funding (KKD, 2006). In addition, there are few routines for reporting back to the DSP, and there is no monitoring of how the subsidies are spent. In short, the communication between the DSP and the NOC builds on a mutual dependency and a historically-developed trust (Goksøyr et al., 1996; Enjolras, 2004, 2005; Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007).

The economic and political conditions have to be seen together. The political position of the government in office has little influence on sports matters, because the state's money to sport is distributed outside the Parliament negotiations (KKD, 1992). It is based on the revenues from the state's gambling agency, and is administrated solely by bureaucrats in the DSP. Although there is a

theoretical possibility for the DSP to allocate the money to other recipients, the NOC has, as mentioned above, developed a monopoly and autonomy with regard to public funding for sport (Goksøyr et al., 1996; Olstad, 1987; Tønnesson, 1986).

The implementation model ends with a bottle neck (literally if the figure is read from left to right, see Figure 2), where the process of implementation depends on the dispositions – that is the ability and willingness – of the grass-root implementers (van Meter & van Horn, 1975: 472-4). Thus ‘the goals of policy may be rejected for a variety of reasons’, such as offending the implementer’s values and self interest, or crossing other organisational loyalties or preferred/existing relationships (van Meter & van Horn, 1975: 473). With regard to Norwegian sport, the grass-root implementer who is in face-to-face interaction with the target groups of the sport policy is in most cases a volunteer in a local sport club, basically motivated for the reasons of having his/her own children as participants (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003).

--- Figure 2 about here ---

Figure 2, which is a modified (by Kjellberg & Reitan, 1995: 143) version of the implementation model of van Meter and van Horn (1975: 463), shows two main features. First, it is a ‘long, winding road’ with many possible constraints and many contingencies to take into consideration, between the time when objectives are defined and the outcome of a policy. Second, the outcome of a general policy or a specific programme always depends on the grass-root implementer. Hence, the professional bureaucrats of the DSP of the state cooperate with the employed and professional staff of the central level of the NOC, and do not have the possibility to communicate directly with each of the 7.500 local sport clubs. That problem of the implementation model has to be seen in relation with the following point of critique.

The model of implementation forwarded by van Meter and van Horn (1975) is designed for analyses of the public sector. In that respect, the grass-root implementer would be a medical doctor, a policeman or another street level bureaucrat employed by the state. That does not mean that

things would have been easy and straightforward if the street-level workers were public officials. First, the implementation process is up to those implementing it, and they do not necessarily share the objectives of their superiors (Lipsky, 1980). Second, when street-level bureaucrats make judgements on government policy (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), they are not only *implementing* but actually *making* policy. In sum, the line between policy making and implementation is at best blurred.

However, while the grass-root implementer represents the voluntary system of the NOC, he/she is not obliged to follow the guidelines from the top in the way that a civil servant would – theoretically at least – be. Therefore, a critique of this model of implementation, is that it does not discuss such variations as, for example, along the axis of professionals—volunteers (see Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003). That is a point that Seippel (2005a, 2006) aims to overcome, when he treats Norwegian sport policy in terms of public policy tools.

Public policy tools

As stated above, Seippel (2005a, 2006) takes as the point of departure for his analysis of Norwegian sport policy the tools of which the public sector has available to implement the public policy by using the voluntary sport organization. Seippel (2005a, 2006) presents a theoretical approach where he seeks to develop a link between the implementation process and the outcome of sport policy, or rather various sport policies, drawing on Salamon's (2002) concept of public policy tools. It is based on the tradition of governance, which allows the policy arena to have a less clear and hierarchical structure than what often characterizes public policy. The implementation process depends more on cooperation, negotiation and social networks than hierarchy, demand and supply. With specific regard to the voluntary sector, two aspects are often emphasized; first, it provides certain goods better than do other actors and, second, the role of voluntary organizations is important because they may operate more visionary or normative-oriented than market-forces or political actors (Seippel, 2006).

According to Salamon, a tool, or instrument, of public action is an 'identifiable method through which collective action is structured to address a public problem' (Salamon, 2002: 19). The following dimensions are characteristics of various policy tools (Salamon, 2002: 20): type of good which is provided, type of vehicle of provision, type of delivery system and the set of rules of the method which is applied. Based on these dimensions, Seippel (2005a) identifies three tools with relevance for, and which can be identified as being in use in Norwegian sport policy.

First, 'public information' (Weiss, 2002) aims to influence the thoughts and knowledge of people. 'Policymakers inform an audience of target actors about a policy issue or pattern of behaviour to influence what people think, know, or believe when they engage in target behaviour' (Weiss, 2002: 218). Public information is manifested in written documents, such as a White Paper on sport. Thus, the written documents from the Parliament and the Government are supposed to please the whole population, and are rather ambiguous. On the one hand, visions, such as 'sport for all', are vague and at best hard – if at all possible – to measure. On the other hand, this tool is based on a rational actor thinking; with regard to the receivers of the public policy, it is believed that knowledge and information leads to the 'right' kind of practice among the general public. For example, a knowledge of the health benefits of physical activity should, with to a rational actor response to that information, lead to a recommended level of physical activity for the entire population. That is, however, not the case.

Second, acknowledging that information is not a sufficient tool, 'grants' (Beam & Conlan, 2002) may be used. Grants are 'payments from a donor government to a recipient organization (typically public or non-profit) or an individual. More specifically, they are a gift that has the aim of either "stimulating" or "supporting" some sort of service or activity by the recipient' (Beam & Conlan, 2002: 341). In the Norwegian context the grantor is the DSP, while the recipient is the NOC.^{iv} While general grants, as in the case of Norwegian sport, mainly go to different parts of a federation of organizations, general grants may 'cloud the chain of accountability' (Beam & Conlan, 2002: 372). An

empirical example of an evaluation of the Norwegian system reveals that it is hard to measure what the government gets out of the economic subsidies to sport (Enjolras, 2004, 2005). First, it is hard to identify the goals of the policy. Second, the transparency of the stream of money is low. And third, and related to the two former, it is difficult to create primary measurements for such evaluations.^v In sum, in relation to the two most used tools, the government does not have a system of sanctions, which is often considered important for achieving compliance with the policy (Hood, 1983).

Third, and as a consequence of the lack of possibilities for monitoring the effects of general grants and the related lack of possibilities for the Government to control the use of grants, the development goes in the direction of increased use of contracts (Kelman, 2002). 'Contracting, as a tool of government, is a business arrangement between a government agency and a private entity in which the private entity promises, in exchange for money, to deliver certain products or services to the government ...' (Kelman, 2002: 282). Throughout the history of Norwegian sport policy, the use of targeted economic subsidies has varied (Goksøyr et al., 1996). In that respect, contemporary sport policy is ambiguous. On the one hand, there are less-targeted subsidies from the DSP to the NOC, compared to earlier periods. On the other hand, the state requires more monitoring and reporting about how the subsidies are spent in accordance to governmental goals than before (Enjolras, 2004, 2005).

Contracting adds some new elements to the tool concept, compared to the two former (information and grants). First the recipient is a more active agent. In that respect, the relationship, between policy maker and grantor on the one side, and the implementer and recipient on the other side, become dialectic. Thus, in the concept of contract there is an implicit possibility for negotiations, which paves the way for the implementing recipients to set their own goals before going into a reciprocal relationship with (for example) the state which defines the sport policy. Second, contracts are more restrictive than the two other tools (Kelman, 2002).

Salamon (2002: 22-24) suggests five evaluation criteria for policy tools. The three basic criteria are: effectiveness (e.g., do information, grants and contracts from the government make people become physically active?), efficiency (e.g., how much physical activity does the government get out of each euro?), equity (e.g., does the sport policy work for all inhabitants?). In addition, two governing criteria are: manageability, which 'refers to the ease or difficulty involved in operating programs' (Salamon, 2002: 24), and legitimacy: 'no matter what the prospects for effectiveness, a program that cannot win the political support cannot make headway' (Salamon, 2002: 24). As stated above, research into Norwegian sport show that it is difficult to measure efficiency. Moreover, research indicates that the latter (legitimacy) is prioritized on behalf of the four former: political legitimacy goes before effectiveness, efficiency, equity and the opportunities of implementing sport policy (Skille, 2004a, b, 2005b).

Further, Salamon (2002: 24-37) discusses some 'key tool dimensions', which, based on the above-mentioned criteria make it possible to do a more precise identification of policy tools. In that respect, the above-cited research (Skille, 2004a, b, 2005b) also revealed that – expressed with the vocabulary and concepts of Salamon's public policy tools – the key tool dimension 'automaticity' (Salamon, 2002: 32-35) works more heavily than other key dimensions of policy tools, such as degree of coerciveness, directedness and visibility. For example, when the state is to implement a 'new' sport policy, choosing an established organization within the Norwegian context, namely the NOC, happens automatically.

With the application of Salamon's (2002) concept of policy tools, Seippel's (2005a, 2006) approach may be considered a perspective which aims to explain how the state implements its policy by the application of a voluntary system. But, it has its limitations, because, as Seippel (2005a) emphasizes, Norwegian sport is not only primarily voluntary, but the degree of volunteerism increases with lower level of organisation, and clearly dominates the work of the local sport clubs compared to the full time employes dominating the state bureaucracy of the DSP and the central

administration of the NOC (cf. Figure 1). As long as the grass-root implementer and the central-level decision maker live in such different worlds (as may also be the case in the public sector, Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), and as long as the grass-root implementer has no obligations for the decision maker in the public policy system (nor has the latter effective sanctions, Hood, 1983), the perspective seems inappropriate. Having said that; it is time to move on to the next theoretical perspective, namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The presentation of Houlihan's (2005) approach which follows sums up much of the above-mentioned perspectives, because Houlihan starts out by presenting different theories for policy analysis. His outset is that 'the increase in governmental interest in sport has not been matched by an equivalent increase in the analysis of public policy for sport' (Houlihan, 2005: 164). Houlihan sketches four different theoretical solutions for analyzing sport policy,^{vi} and he advocates the 'Advocacy Coalition Framework' (ACF) which 'has a broader focus than many of its rivals and has the potential to illuminate aspects of the policy process beyond a preoccupation with agenda setting' (Houlihan, 2005: 174). With reference to three British studies,^{vii} Houlihan (2005: 174) holds that 'the ACF was a valuable starting point for the development of analytical frameworks capable of illuminating the sport policy area'.

The ACF was initiated as an alternative to former models and to take into account the best from top-down and bottom-up perspectives, and to give technical information a more prominent role in policy process theory (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). 'A key feature of the ACF, therefore, is its focus on the policy process as a whole' (Green & Houlihan, 2005: 14), where the aim is to analyze policy change on the basis of three sets of processes. The main process is that of the policy subsystem, where competing coalitions try to influence the decisions to be made by government authorities. A subsystem refers to a set of actors from the public and the private sector who are concerned with the same policy problem, '... and who regularly seek to influence public

policy in that domain' (Sabatier, 1998: 99; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 119). It is an innovative feature of the ACF to challenge the assumption 'that an actor's organizational affiliation is primordial' (Sabatier, 1998: 107; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 127). A coalition may comprise elected, employed and voluntary officials from the public and the private/voluntary sector, as well as journalists, researchers and others.

The other processes involved in the ACF are external to, or rather surrounding (parts of) the society of/for, the subsystem. These are, first, constraining (for the subsystem's actors) and stable parameters such as social structure and constitutive rules. Second, and more variable are the events comprised by socio-economic conditions and technology, changes in governing coalitions for example after elections, public opinion, and decisions made in other subsystems that might influence the subsystem under investigation. Important in the ACF is the dialectic interplay between the external factors, between the external factors and the subsystem, and between the coalitions within the subsystem (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

However, a critique against the ACF is based on the fact that 'the ACF clearly assumes that actors are instrumentally rational – i.e. they seek to use the information and other resources to achieve their goals' (Sabatier, 1998: 108; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 130).^{viii} Although the ACF implies collective action, based on coordinated individuals with a shared belief system, it does not take into account the influences of institutions, for example that 'the institutional context within which coalitions decide their strategies ... affects their action', or that 'institutional coalitions may move among different levels of action in pursuit of policy change' (Schlager, 1999: 250). Within the theory of institutions, the concept of power is central (see below), and it is striking that Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) have not identified a dominant coalition.^{ix}

Another critique is that, although the ACF is an effort to view the policy process as a whole, and despite the fact that it was created on the basis of 'a desire to synthesize the best features of the "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches' (Sabatier, 1998: 98; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 117;

see also Green & Houlihan, 2005: 14), it does not consider the process of implementation accurately. As Houlihan notes: 'in conclusion, it is acknowledged that this framework is not without its problems – for example, the identification of discrete levels of analysis, the articulation of the pattern of influence between levels, and the relative autonomy that each level enjoys' (Houlihan, 2005: 182). The fact that each level of the processes of policy making and implementation has its relative autonomy, highlights the need for a theory focusing on the implementing body (see the one presented in the last part of this article).

There is a third point, which cannot be considered as critique of the theory as such, but which is important as long as this discussion aims at finding a theory which is applicable to the Norwegian context. The theory's presumption that there exists a coalition which comprises agents from various sectors (public representatives, voluntary organizations, journalists and researchers etc.) fits well with the Norwegian empirical situation. However, while the ACF assumes that there are two or more coalitions, the history of Norwegian sport policy, by contrast, shows signs of corporatism between the DSP and the NOC (Goksøyr et al., 1996; Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007). On the contrary, perhaps a theory such as the ACF would open the eyes of (especially Norwegian) researchers and practitioners, and add some nuances to the picture which is usually painted of the Norwegian situation.

Evaluation of the three theoretical frameworks

Each of the above mentioned approaches has its advantages and disadvantages. The top-down perspective of van Meter and van Horn (1975) makes an important point about going from the policy-making process to the implementation process. The policy-tools perspective developed by Salamon (2002), as it is applied by Seippel (2005a), does have an empirical basis in the Norwegian context, and would probably work as an analytical tool for analyzing sport policy implementation in other countries, with similar arrangements between the state and the voluntary sport system (such as Denmark, Sweden, Germany). Further, the modified ACF presented by Houlihan (2005), which is

based on Sabatier (1998) and Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), does offer a framework for analyzing sport politics at the state level. And it is probably the theoretical framework of those presented that has been most often and most successfully applied in analyses of national level sport policy (e.g. Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan & White, 2002; Parrish, 2003). However, all the theories mentioned above fail to take into account the executing body of sport policy implementation, namely the sport club. That is the body of organization where the political or organizational representatives meet the target groups of the policy in face-to-face interaction.

With regard to the frameworks already applied to the Norwegian case (Skille, 2005a; Seippel, 2005a, 2006), they both fail in trying to understand the receivers of the sport policy. Skille (2005a) identifies how the filtering variables (organizational arrangements and external constraints) and the dispositions of grass root implementers, between the decision makers defined objectives of a policy and the outcome of it, makes the way from top to bottom long and uneasy. However, the dispositions – that is ability and willingness – of the local implementers are only considered a constraint for the policy as it is made at the central level (van Meter & van Horn, 1975; Lipsky, 1980, Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Therefore the model does not contribute to the understanding of the implementation of sport policy at the local level. To put it in a nutshell, and to apply an everlasting sociological concept, the [sport clubs](#)' representatives are not – but must be if they are to be understood properly – conceived as active agents.

Seippel (2005a) identifies tools for the top level to apply in the process of implementing its policy. However, it may be understood as if the target groups are passive receivers of sport policy made at the top. Houlihan's (2005) perspective seems suitable for analysis of sport policy processes at the central (national) level, where it is not too far from the policy makers and the implementers. (See for example Green and Houlihan's (2005) study of elite sport development, where the theory is applied elegantly.) But as long as I aim at finding a suitable theory for the analysis of the local and voluntary sport club, the ACF stops before going from central level of state sport policy to the

implementation of it. With regard to the study of the Norwegian sport club and its relationship to central sport politics and policy, it therefore seems inappropriate.

In sum, there is a need for alternatives if the analysis of the local sport club and its relationship to central sport policy is to be analyzed properly. One alternative is of course to adopt from political science the opposite of the top-down perspective (i. e. van Meter & van Horn, 1975), namely a typical bottom-up perspective (Kjellberg & Reitan, 1995). Thus, the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) seeks to integrate the top-down and the bottom-up approaches, as well as considering both internal (coalitions') and external factors as influencing the political subsystems. Therefore, a pure bottom-up alternative, would not add much new to the analysis, in comparison with the theories presented above. I will, instead, build on a sociological perspective on the analysis of organization, and draw some lines from classic neo-institutionalism to later neo-institutionalism.^x

Neo-institutionalism – translation theory

Neo-institutionalism focuses on organizations' (external) dependency as well as (internal) strategy, and merges rather contradicting but not mutually exclusive perspectives. However, there has been a major critique of the theory that reproduction is prioritized instead of change. Moreover, later developments in neo-institutionalism offer a new perspective, based on critique of the classic new institutionalism's focus on how organizations within a field resemble each other and how external pressure is prioritised instead of internal agency. The latter suggests that the organization takes into account change in its environment by adopting institutional mechanisms from other fields or successful parts of its own field. But, as a contradiction to diffusion, which used to be the concept for describing such processes of adopting institutional mechanisms, the concept of translation was introduced. In the further discussion, first, 'classic neo-institutionalism' will be sketched, and, second, 'the new neo- institutionalism', translation, will be outlined. The theory will be discussed with specific regard to its application in the analysis of the local sport club and its relation to central sport policy.

Neo-institutionalism

Based on the classic works of Meyer and Rowan (1991 [1977]) and DiMaggio and Powell (1991 [19783]), Skille (2004a, 2005b) has applied neo-institutionalism in the study of Norwegian sport policy, to analyze: (i) how the position of the NOC as the monopolized and autonomous sport organization in the Norwegian society may be considered a rationalized myth (Meyer & Rowan, 1991); and (ii) how new inventions, for example so-called alternative sport offers which were supposed to have other characteristics (such as flexibility and a low threshold for participation) compared to conventional sport (which is competitive and exclusive), undergo isomorphic processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) and resemble the conventional sport.

Neo-institutionalism has received a good deal of criticism. I will discuss two of them, and pose some possible solutions. First, it is claimed that neo-institutionalism only explains homogeneity within an organizational field, while for example empirical studies from Norway reveal that the field of voluntary organizations in general (Sivesind et al., 2002; Wollebæk & Selle, 2002) and sport clubs in particular (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003) are first and foremost reckoned by their heterogeneity. Second, as mentioned above, neo-institutionalism is criticized for focusing on external pressure when explaining institutional change, and not sufficiently taking into account the internal and strategic elements of an organization's work.

As a result, researchers have integrated various theoretical perspectives, with different positions on the structure-agency axis (Kikulis et al., 1995; Stevens & Slack, 1998). Thus, fundamental elements of agency are implicit in the institutional perspective, as long as it is human action that establishes, maintains and erodes institutions (Kikulis, 2000; cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1991 [1966]). Against this background (1. there have been successful applications of neo-institutionalism in former studies of Norwegian sport policy; 2. there are criticisms that cannot be overlooked; 3. there are examples of theoretical development), I will outline an 'updated' version of neo-institutionalism. The new perspective takes into account two major sociological debates. These are, first the discussion of

structure and agency; and second, the relationship between the global and the local. Consequently, the perspective is deemed fruitful for the study of variations between local sport clubs and their relationships to central sport policy.

Translation

The theory of translation aims to offer a framework for analyzing institutional change within organizations. In the case of the study of local sport clubs, change depends – among other things – on central sport policy, but the point of applying translation theory is that the central sport policy is treated within the local sport club before any outcome or impact of the policy is observable. Campbell (2004) criticizes former paradigms of institutionalism for not clarifying the criteria which is the base line when analysing institutional change and they do not clarify the underlying mechanisms for institutional change. Thus, he identifies two such mechanisms, namely *bricolage* and *translation* (Campbell, 2004: 28).

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: 69); while translation refers to the import 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: 80).

But the concept of translation implies much more than purely import, or “diffusion”, as it used to be called (see Berry & Berry, 1999). The (chemical/biological) metaphor of diffusion is something completely different from (social) translation. While diffusion is a process of movement of a substance from one side of a membrane to the other, based purely on the pressure difference on the two sides of a membrane, it is a passive process. By contrast, translation implies that the new element is actively imported and, when imported, actively treated to fit into the receiving context (institution). It involves an important translation step, which has serious implications for applicators of neo-institutionalism who claim that diffusion leads to homogenous outcomes after processes of isomorphism (Campbell, 2004).

Translation is recombination of internal *and* external elements of institution. 'It [translation] comprises what exists and what is created; the relationship between humans and ideas, ideas and objects, and humans and objects – all needed in order to understand what in shorthand we call “organizational change”’ (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996: 24). Translation implies local agency in people’s everyday behaviour, which includes the regulation by culture, for example in local sport clubs where sports activity takes place.

... in order to bring an idea into a local cosmos from any part of the outside world, one has to use a cultural code ... each culture has several mutually contradicting codes which are made available to individual people like alternative repertoires for thought. ... [I]t is ... accurate to imagine this process as a kind of ball game. Only if the actors catch the ball and pass it on, i.e. they collaborate, can the game continue... in this way, we move from the *trans-mission* ... to the *trans-formation* of a thing (Rottenburg, 1996: 214-215, original italics).

The point is, for the study of sport clubs and central sport policy, that, if e.g. the health element of the central sport policy influences the practice of sport clubs, it does so through the sport

clubs' representatives' interpretation of the phenomenon of health. Thus, '... it is important to retain the view of the individual as a human agent routinely engaged in the reproduction of social institutions, but with the capacity to translate them in the course of day-to-day activities' (Spyberg, 1996: 189). If the health argument of central sport policy influences the local sport clubs, it relies on the sport club representatives' interpretation of it; health (or any element of the sport policy) will only be empirically observable as an interpreted and implemented version of that health-as-part-of-sport policy. Thus: 'Translation aims at the appropriation of the external thing, which is then given another function, an altered meaning and often a new shape in the new context' (Rottenburg, 1996: 214).

In sum, the theory of translation offers an analytical framework for analyzing the sport club, its processes of (re-) combinations of internal institutional elements, *and* processes of import, interpretation and implementation of external institutional elements. A critique of the translation theory is that the central policy is conceived as something 'out there', which may be or may not be imported, translated and implemented. The perspective does not take into account, as does the advocacy coalition framework, the wholeness of the sport policy field including how representatives of a sport organization may take part in a coalition and influence the decision making of sport policy. However, that may at the same time be seen as an advantage of the translation perspective, because the focal organization for the analysis is the implementing body of the policy process.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to develop an appropriate theoretical framework for analysing implementation of central sport policy by acknowledging and focusing on the fact that the [sport club](#) is the primary provider of sport, and that any sport policy to be implemented must be interpreted and implemented by the representatives of the [sport club](#). In so doing, I have paved the way by discussing different theories for policy analysis and their application on (to some extent, Norwegian) empirical studies of sport policy.

--- Figures 3, 4, 5 around here ---

The implementation model of van Meter and van Horn (1975), which is applied on the Norwegian sport policy context by Skille (2005), is a typical top-down approach which is first and foremost appropriate for analysis of the public sector (Figure 3, left down warded arrow). It has some value for analyzing the relationship between the public and the voluntary sector at the national level (Figure 3, left to right arrow), and limited value for analyzing the voluntary sport system (Figure 3, right sided and down warded arrow) because the number of volunteers – who have no obligations to the state – increases at the lower levels of the NOC system. On the contrary, the policy tools approach of Salamon (2002), as it is applied on the Norwegian context by Seippel (2005a, 2006), takes into consideration the fact that Norwegian sport is based on a division of labour. On the one hand the public sector (DSP) provides the framework for sport implementation, by economic subsidies for both sports facilities and for the administration of the organization (NOC). On the other hand, the NOC system provides sports activity. In that vein, the division of policy tools into information, grants and contracts appear as fruitful.

The ACF of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999; Sabatier, 1998), and applied by Green and Houlihan (2005; Houlihan, 2005), combines the best from top-down with the best from bottom-up, and in that respect goes beyond the problem of both the implementation model and the policy tools approach. Hence, the presented perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, what the ACF refers to as 'guidance instruments' (information, budgets, rules and personnel) are similar to policy tools (Salamon, 2002), as well as similar to the allocation of resources and the communication between implementing bodies of van Meter and van Horn's (1975) implementation model. Thus, the two first presented theories are all circling around the top of the figures (see Figures 3 and 4), and/or have arrows headed mostly downwards.

Moreover, it is probably relevant to apply the policy tools approach in the analysis of political subsystems at regional and local levels, too. For example, the municipality can supply public

information, grants and contracts in relation to the sport clubs in its area. Also with regard to the ACF, whose primary unit of analysis is the political subsystem which assumingly is at the national level, it is 'possible to play with the units of analysis' as well as with the level of analysis (Schlager, 1999: 237). For example, sport clubs, the local sports council and the municipality could be considered as a coalition aiming at making and implementing local sport policy.

However, empirical evidence indicates the need for a theory such as that of translation. The local context, specific characteristics of the local organization, and the life worlds of the representatives of the focal organization, are all crucial when new institutional elements are imported. New elements may stem from the public sector, the market, or from other parts of the voluntary sector in which the focal sport club operates. Regarding the former, in a study aiming at identifying Finnish sport clubs suitable for health promotion,^{xi} Kokko and colleagues (2006: 226) hold: 'It is not self-evident that youth sport clubs will adopt health promotion as part of their activity. Initially, in particular, health promotion can be experienced as one more demand placed on the activities of the sport clubs'. For ordinary sport clubs to succeed with health promotion, Kokko et al. (2006: 226) have this reservation: 'one must take into account the particular setting and its special characteristics' which include the 'unique attributes of sports systems and clubs in various contexts' (Kokko et al., 2006: 226). Regarding influence from the market sector, several reports from a Danish study of how voluntary sport clubs adopt to the growing fitness industry or training centre culture, underscore how change in local sport clubs always depends on the people and conditions that are already inside the modernizing sport clubs (Ibsen & Møller, 2007; Madsen, Jensen & Møller, 2007).

From the Norwegian context, there is an example of the application of the translation perspective, namely a study of a sport programme initiated by the state and aiming at social policy objectives (such as inclusion, integration and getting youths off the street). What at first glance seemed to be sport clubs responding to state goals of sport policy was, on the contrary, self-initiated activity anchored in the needs of the local environment as defined by the volunteers of the sport

clubs (Skille, unpublished). The work was based on a chain of mechanisms where, first, some people had an idea of providing activities for young people in the neighbourhood; second, these people saw the opportunity of using a sport club for that purpose; and third, when programme funding became available the idea could be realized. In sum, the sport club representatives' translation (Campbell, 2004) of both state policy and adolescent lifestyle can be conceived as a meeting point of top-down initiatives and bottom-up demands. Sport club representatives do what is familiar to them, and people respond to the social environment, which is first and foremost the local environment (Skille, unpublished).

Research into sport clubs has shown that its representatives consider only what is directly related to their work as providers of sport activity (Enjolras & Seippel, 2001; Seippel, 2003). Therefore, the sport club relates to its regional special sport associations, due to organizing of regional sport competitions (leagues, tournaments etc.), and to the local sports council because it is voluntary sport's mouthpiece in relation to municipal politics about the provisions of facilities (see Figure 5). For the same reason, sport clubs sometimes interact directly with the municipality. Out of the theories discussed in this article, the translation perspective of neo-institutionalism is the only one which starts at the local level. Taking the sport club as the point of departure for analyzing sport policy, both theoretically and empirically, it is of course possible to include other organizations in the model, for example local authorities (municipality).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Civil Society Group of the European Group of Organization Studies for comments on a former version of this paper. I am also in debt to Bernard Enjolras for his insightful feedback, to the two anonymous reviewers for constructive suggestions, as well as to Ian Watering.

References

- Amis, J., Slak, T. & Hinings, C.R. (2004). Strategic Change and the Role of Interests, Power, and Organizational Capacity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18, 158-98.
- Beam, D. R. & Conlan, T. J. (2002). Grants. In L. Salamon (ed.): *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 340-380.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1991 [1966]). *The social construction of reality*. London: Penguin books.
- Bergsgard, N. A., Houlihan, B., Mangset, P., Nødland, S. I. & Rommetvedt, H. (2007): *Sport Policy – A Comparative Analysis of Stability and Change*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Berry, F. S. & Berry, W. D. (1999). Innovation and Diffusion Models in Policy Research. In: P. A. Sabatier (ed.): *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press. Pp. 169-200.
- Campbell, J. L. (2004): *Institutional Change and Globalization*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chelladurai, P. Szyslo, M., & Haggerty, T.R. (1987). Systems based dimensions of effectiveness: The case of national sport organizations. *Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences*, 12: 111-119.
- Cousens, L. & Slack, T. (2005). Field-Level Change: The Case of North American Major League Professional Sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, (1), 13-42

- Czarniawska, B. & Joerges, B. (1996). Travels of Ideas. In: B. Czarniawska & G. Sevón (eds.): *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W. W. (1991). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality. In: W. W. Powell & P. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago press.
- Enjolras, B. (2004). *Idrett mellom statlig styring og selvbestemmelse* [Sport between state steering and autonomy]. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.
- Enjolras, B. (2005). *Idrettens økonomi og effektivitet* [The sport's economy and efficiency]. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.
- Enjolras, B. & Seippel, Ø. (2001). *Norske idrettslag 2000* [Norwegian sports clubs 2000]. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.
- Green, M. & Houlihan, B. (2005). *Elite sport development. Policy learning and political priorities*. London: Routledge.
- Greenwood, R. & Hinings, C. R. (1996). Understanding Radical Organizational Change: Bringing Together the Old and New institutionalism, *Academy of Management Review*, 21: 1022-1054.
- Goksøyr, M. (ed.), Andersen, E. & Asdal, K. (1996). *Kropp, kultur og tippekamp* [The history of the DSP]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Hood, C. (1983): *The Tools of Government*. London, Macmillan.
- Houlihan, B. (2005). Public Sector Sports Policy: Developing a Framework for Analysis.

International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 40 (2): 163-185.

Houlihan, B. & White, A. (2002). *The Politics of Sport Development: Development of Sport or Development through Sport?* London: Routledge.

Ibsen, B. & Møller, P. M. (2007): *Foreninger i forandring*. [Associations a change]. Odense: Syddansk Universitet.

Kelman, S. J. (2002). Contracting. In: L. Salamon (ed.): *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 282-319.

Kikulis, L. (2000). Continuity and Change in Governance and Decision Making in National Sport Organizations: Institutional Explanations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14: 293-320.

Kikulis, L., Slack, T. & Hinings, B. (1995). Does Decision Making Make a Difference? Patterns of Change Within Canadian National Sport Organizations'. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9: 273-299.

Kjellberg & Reitan (1995): *Studiet av offentlig politikk* [The study of public policy]. Oslo: Tano.

KKD (1992): *Lov om pengespill* [Law about gambling]. Oslo: Kultur- og kirke departementet.

KKD (2006): *Hovedfordelingen 2006* [The main distribution of gambling revenues 2006]. Oslo: Kultur- og kirke departementet.

Kokko, S., Kannas. & Villberg, J. (2006): The health promoting sports club in Finland – a

- challenge for the setting-based approach. *Health Promotion International*, 21 (3): 219-229).
- Lee, S. (2004). Moving the goalposts: The governance and political economy of world football. In R. Levermore & A. Budd (eds): *Sport and International relations. An Emerging Relationship*. London: Routledge.
- Lipsky, M. (1980): *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*.
New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Madsen, P. M., Jensen, J.-O. & Møller, J. (2007): *Tradition, fusion, mission. Gymnastikkens bevæggrunde*. [Tradition, fusion, mission. Motives of gymnastics]. Odense: Syddansk Universitet.
- Maynard-Moody, S. & Musheno, M. (2003): *Cops, teachers, counsellors: Stories from the front line of public services*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Meyer, J. W. & Rowan, B. (1991): Institutionalized Organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. In: W. W. Powell & P. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- NIF (2004): *Lovhefte*. [NOC's law]. Oslo: Norges idrettsforbund og olympiske komité.
- NIF (2006): *Årsrapport 2005* [Annual report 2005]. Oslo: Norges idrettsforbund.
- Norberg, J. R. (1998): 'A Mutual Dependency - The Nordic Sport and the State'. In H. Meinander & J. A. Mangan (Eds.): *The Nordic World. Sport in Society*. London: Frank Cass.
- O'Brien, D. & Slack, T. (2004). The emergence of a professional Logic in English Rugby

- Union: The role of Isomorphic and Diffusion Processes. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18 (1), 13-39.
- Olstad, F. (1987). *Norsk idretts historie (I)* [Norwegian sport history volume I]. Oslo: Aschehoug.
- Parrish, R. (2003). The Politics of Sport Regulation in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10 (2): 246-262.
- Rottenburg, R. (1996). When Organization Travels: On Intercultural Translation. In: B. Czarniawska & G. Sevón (eds.): *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Sabatier, P. A. (1998). The advocacy coalition framework: revisions and relevance for Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5 (1): 98-130.
- Sabatier, P. A. & Jenkins-Smith, H. C. (1999). The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Assessment. In P. A. Sabatier (ed.): *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press. Pp. 117-166.
- Salamon, L. (2002). The New Governance and the tools of Public Action: An Introduction. In L. Salamon (ed.): *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 1-47.
- Schlager, E. (1999). A Comparison of Frameworks, Theories and Models of Policy Processes. In: P. A. Sabatier (ed.): *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press. Pp. 233-260.
- Seippel, Ø. (2003). *Norske idrettslag 2002* [Norwegian sports clubs 2002]. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

- Seippel, Ø. (2005a). Public policy tools and voluntary sport organizations – theoretical perspectives, Norwegian cases. Paper at conference *3rd world congress International Sociology of Sport Association*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 30-December 3, 2005.
- Seippel, Ø. (2005b). Sport, Civil Society and Social Integration. *Journal of Civil Society*, 1 (3): 247-265.
- Seippel, Ø. (2006). Public policies and voluntary organization for sport facilities. Paper at conference: *Social Capital and sport Governance in Europe*. Milan, Italy, December 4-5, 2006.
- Sivesind, K. H., Lorentzen, H., Selle, P. & Wollebæk, D. (2002): *The Voluntary Sector in Norway*. Oslo: Institute for social research.
- Skille, E. Å. (2004a). Revisiting Myths of Norwegian Sport – Case of the Sports City Program, *International Journal of Applied Sport Science*, 16 (1): 29-40.
- Skille, E. Å. (2004b). Sport for All? The 'Sports City Programme' in Norway, *Sport in Society*, 7 (2): 192-210.
- Skille, E. Å. (2005a). Two worlds of Norwegian sport. Poster at conference, *3rd world congress International Sociology of Sport Association*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 30-December 3, 2005.
- Skille, E. Å. (2005b). *Sport policy and adolescent sport. The Sports City Program (Storbyprosjektet)*. Oslo: Norwegian School of sport Sciences.
- Skille, E. Å. (2006). *Idrettslaget som helseprodusent* [The sports club as health producer]. Elverum: Høgskolen i Hedmark.

- Skille, E. Å. (unpublished): State sport policy and the voluntary sport clubs: The case of the Norwegian Sports City Program as social policy. Submitted manuscript.
- Skille, E. Å. & Skirstad, B. (2007). Understanding sport participation – A cross level analysis from the perspectives of neo institutionalism and Bourdieu. In T. Slack & M. Parent (eds.): *International Perspectives on the Management of Sport*. Berlington: Elsevier.
- Skirstad, B. & Chelladurai, P. (forthcoming). Bridging the Volunteer and Business Sectors in Sport: A Norwegian Solution. *Journal of Sport Management*.
- Slack, T. & Hinings, B. (1992). Understanding Change in National Sport Organizations: An Integration of Theoretical Perspectives. *Journal of Sport Management*, 6: 114-132
- Spyberg, T. (1996). Global Transformations. In: B. Czarniawska & G. Sevón (eds.): *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Stevens, J. & Slack, T. (1998): Integrating Social Action and Structural Constraints, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 33, 2: 143-154.
- Tønnesson, S. (1986). *Norsk idretts historie* (II) [Norwegian sport history volume II]. Oslo: Ascehoug.
- van Meter & van Horn (1975): The policy implementation process. *Administration & Society* 6 ,4: 445-488.
- Weiss, J. (2002). Public information. In L. Salamon (ed.): *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 217-254.

Wollebæk, D. & Selle, P. (2002). *Det nye organisasjonssamfunnet* [The new organization society]. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Notes

ⁱ It could be held that the ACF is a theory of policy making, and not a theory of implementation. But I will include it, because (i) it offers an attempt to see the policy process as a whole, and because (ii) it has been successfully applied in sport studies. See below.

ⁱⁱ In international literature, these are usually referred to as national sport federations. I translate the Norwegian denomination of the federations, which is based on the Norwegian word for “special”, to make the point that the special sport federation line contradicts the other line, which comprises the common sport issues.

ⁱⁱⁱ There are a very few exceptions, namely those of national teams and regional teams at the level of special sport associations federations and regional special sport associations, respectively.

^{iv} There are relationships between the public and the voluntary sector at other levels than that of the state (DSP-NOC), but these are too various across counties and municipalities to be treated here.

^v It is, however, possible to create secondary measurements. For example, Skille (2005b) measured sport participation as a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for social integration through sport. Further, Seippel (2005b: 255) measured social integration in/through sport by empirically measuring social and material reciprocity.

^{vi} The first three are: *The stages model*, ‘which is based on a division of the policy process into a series of discrete stages following the rational actor model’ (Houlihan, 2005: 168); *Institutional analysis*, where institutions are considered as something that ‘constrain choice through their capacity to shape actors’ perceptions of both problems and acceptable solutions’ (Houlihan, 2005: 170); *The multiple streams framework*, which ‘is primarily concerned with the process of agenda setting’ (Houlihan, 2005: 171) and which offers ‘a powerful critique of rational models ... and ... institutional interests’ (Houlihan, 2005: 172).

^{vii} These are: Green and Houlihan (2005) on elite sports development in three different countries; Parrish’s (2003) study of sport policy in the European Union; and Houlihan and White (2002) on sport development policy in the UK.

^{viii} Cf. information as a policy tool.

^{ix} However, the ACF admits a variety of constraints (which may, if analyzed with that aim, lead to the identification of dominance within the coalitions or subsystems), such as: time and computational constraints, that actors weigh loss more heavily than gains, and that actors’ perceptions, interpretations and actions are filtered and steered by pre-existing beliefs (Sabatier, 1998: 109; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 131).

^x The terms ‘classic neo-institutionalism’ and ‘new neo-institutionalism’ are not established or commonly used in the literature. But they are applied here to distinguish between epochs and to point out the development that has taken place within neo-institutional theory the last years.

^{xi} The study’s outset was the World Health Organization’s Ottawa Charter for Health promotion, and its emphasis on ‘the importance of finding new settings in which to carry out health promotion’ (Kokko et al., 2006: 219).