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**POLITICIANS, BUREAUCRATS AND A VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION –
THE POWER PLAY OF NORWEGIAN SPORT POLICY IN THE MATTER OF ANTI DOPING**

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to understand the tripartite relationship between politicians and bureaucrats in the public sector and the leadership in voluntary sport organizations. In so doing, we conducted a case study of a specific incident in the history of sport policy, based on written texts (newspaper articles and books) as well as interviews (personal information) from those involved. With Elias' game models as the theoretical framework, we analyse the case where the General Director of the Department of Sport policy (DSP) expressed his personal/political opinion about anti doping in public, and played the game in two figurations. First, the game was played in the sport figuration, where the General Director's competitors were the leaders of the voluntary sport organization (the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, NOC). Second, the game moved up a level and was played in a political figuration, where the General Director's competitors were the political leadership in the Department. While the Director General was used to playing one to one, the combination of a union sport figuration and the formal power in the political figuration led to an outcome that no one had intended, namely the resignation of the Director General

Introduction

The constitutions of Western countries are based on democracy and a parliamentary system where elected politicians are superior to bureaucrats in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, much of the power is often allocated inside specific departments [1]. Even in the Scandinavian countries, which are historically dominated by social democratic and egalitarian ideology, the political systems are elitist; the key roles in the decision making process are played by a limited number of agents [2]. According to Hill's [3] typologies of Governmental styles, the 'administrative politics' model describes a system in which full-time officials are dominant, and where politics are organizational rather than public, and where ministers find themselves involved primarily in expounding views and defending policies generated within their ministry and underlying departments.

Regarding policy making, it has to be taken into consideration that permanent officials are involved in the process [4]. Especially in sectors where expertise is important, issues are pulled out of the general political arena into the more private politics of 'policy communities' [5]. Since Weber [6], social scientists have been aware of the significance of the bureaucrats' expertise and stability. While the political leadership is not necessarily trained or educated within all the topics of their departments, the bureaucrats are the experts. And while the political leaders come and go, the departmental bureaucrats represent continuity. Taken together, these facts open the road for the bureaucrats to develop and execute power, on the basis of their knowledge of the field and knowledge of the game. In addition, '... interest organizations and bureaucracies may have great influence . . .' [7]. The general picture sketched above has its empirical counterpart in the history of Norwegian sport policy, of reasons which will be presented below. This is what Hill [8] refers to as an "incrementalistic model", where decision making is made followed by successive limited comparison. While issues such as social security and education vary across political parties' programs, and are subjects to heated debates at political arenas and in the media, sport politics generate little

temperature in the political field or in the media. That fact reinforces the opportunity for the bureaucrats to develop and to use power.

The overall aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of the tripartite relationship between political actors, bureaucratic actors, and voluntary sport organizations. We will investigate one specific case from the recent history of the Norwegian field of sport policy. It is the story of a state bureaucrat who made his personal political opinion on anti doping public through the media, and who had to resign because of that. While the case is about sport policy-making processes, and not about anti doping as such, it is believed that the findings are relevant in a more general sport policy context. But it is also believed that the rather dramatic outcome of the case can be explained – among other reasons presented in more depth below – by the fact that anti doping is a more heated topic than many other sport policy themes.

Case study research

This paper is based on a single case study. In line with the aim of the paper mentioned above, the rationale for a single case study and for selecting this particular case was that the approach and the case gave the opportunity to increase knowledge of how the relationship – including the power ratio – between politicians and bureaucrats works, and is influenced by from a voluntary sports organization as well as the media [9].

The case study and the analysis are based on several sources of information. These are first and foremost the newspapers articles covering the incident at the time [10], and other written material which has been published subsequently. In addition, all those involved (presented below) have been interviewed several times in the years after the case took place in connection with the publication of two books on Norwegian sport. The first author of this article was also the author of one of the books and a co-editor of the other [11] and has conducted the above-mentioned interviews.

Many points may be raised with regards to the content and quality of the data. Let us explore two of them. The fact that the incident took place several years ago may play in different directions. We will argue that the distance in time paralleled with the subsequently produced literature about the case will help us validate the data and the description as well as our interpretation of it. When one is unable to follow a process in real time, a viable strategy is to base one's approach on the written material and to member-check our interpretation with the involved parties.

The other element we will mention is what is usually referred to as *internal validity*, namely that the empirical story we tell as well as the analysis we make do not have internal discrepancies. It is therefore, especially in a political case where the participants of the game are still alive (which is good for member checking, though), important to bear in mind that the participants may have different experiences of what really happened, and may still have interests in the field of sport policy. In that respect, we have to realize that we may not get the full picture of all aspects of the case.

Context and case

The Norwegian political system is based on a democratically elected Parliament, and a parliamentary system where the Government stems from a majority in the Parliament. Each member of the Government is a minister for a ministry, and being the Minister of Culture includes responsibility for sport policy. The Ministry of Culture was divided into four special departments (there are five today), where the Department of Sport Policy (DSP) conducts the state's sport policy on a day-to-day basis, including the administration of the gambling revenues which makes up the economic basis for the state's sport policy. The voluntary organization the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NOC) [12], although it is formally independent and non-governmental, works closely with the public authorities. Thus, the government has a significant influence on its work, not least on financing the administration of the NOC. The fact that the state and public authorities provide many of the facilities for sports, and subsidise the

NOC's organizational work [13], makes the NOC dependent on the DSP. By contrast, having a monopolist position as the only umbrella organization in the field of sport, the NOC has a direct and significant influence on the state's sport policy.

The relationship between the state and the voluntary sport organization has a long history. Since 1863, two years after the establishment of the first nationwide sport federation, the sport organization has received subsidies from the state [14]. With the establishment of the State's Sport Office (the predecessor of the DSP) in 1946, the state's sport policy was formally institutionalized. The first leader of the office, Rolf Hofmo, was also the vice-president of the confederation of sports, and a tradition of combining roles was established. There are several examples of people who have had central positions on several sides of the table in the field of sport; the two best known are the above-mentioned Hofmo, and the key figure of the case described in this article, Hans B. Skaset. The mixing of roles and changing sides across the table between public and voluntary sectors has hitherto been (perceived as) unproblematic. It has been described as a family relation, while the sport policy debate takes place inside the family. 'The sport segment has to a high degree delivered the premises for the (public) sport policy. It seems like it is an integrated and organic system, where there is no sharp distinction between sport and the state' [15].

Against this background of institutional arrangements, strong leaders of sport policy at any side of the table have been able to have an influence on their special interests. In that respect, the history of Norwegian anti-doping policy and the name of Hans B. Skaset are closely connected.

Norwegian anti-doping policy and Hans B. Skaset

One specific topic of sport politics where there has been a close cooperation between the voluntary sport organisation and the government, and where people have changed sides across the table but continued their work, is that of anti-doping [16]. Since Skaset was first elected to the NOC's board in 1969 [17], anti-doping has been his field. The former track-and-field athlete had become aware of doping when he saw what the throwers achieved – and what they looked like – during the summer Olympics in Mexico (1968). He felt that something was wrong [18].

In 1971, the NOC decided to fight doping [19], and two years later Skaset became the head of an internal anti-doping committee. His experience from the organization of track and field - he was the president of the Norwegian Athletics Federation 1976-1983 - gave Skaset the international platform for his later work on anti-doping. During the European Athletics Association (EAA) congress in 1977, Skaset raised the question of anti-doping, and became the first Norwegian to do so internationally. He pointed out the lack of a European policy for anti doping, and received sufficient support for a resolution about the development of national controls [20]. Later, at the 1983 congress, Skaset proposed that European records should not be registered if the winner had not tested negative. After some debate, his proposal received support from the majority of the congress delegates.

There was a marked change in the Norwegian state's involvement in anti-doping work during the early 1990s, which was directly connected to the fact that one person changed his side of the table (from the voluntary to the public sector of sport policy). Skaset had been the president of the NOC 1984-1990 [21], prior to becoming the Director General of the DSP in 1991. The government supported the long-term goals and strategies of the NOC, based on the key words: increased level of controls, continual control campaigns, networking both nationally and internationally, and research. In a few years, the government's subsidies for anti-doping were greatly increased. And, unlike most state subsidies which are given as general grants, the subsidies for anti-doping work were targeted for that purpose only.

During the 1990s, both the government and the NOC were active in international anti-doping work, sometimes on their own fronts, sometimes together. On the one hand, the Government raised the question of doping in the European Council. According to Verroken and Mottram [22], Norway was the first country to launch out-of-competition testing (in 1977), and Norway was among the first to fight for unannounced tests and supplying urine samples with blood samples. On the other hand, NOC raised the doping question with other National Olympic Committees, international specific sport

federations and National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs). In addition, the NOC and the Government worked together in establishing bilateral agreements [23].

In 1994 the government and the NOC agreed to establish a working group on anti-doping, which was formalized in 1997. The mandate was to make a plan for practical anti-doping work, which was launched in 1999 [24]. During this period, Skaset held several key positions. He was the chair of the European Council's Doping Convention 1990-1994: he was a member of the co-ordinating group for anti-doping in 'The Memorandum of Understanding' between Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Norway 1992–2000; and he chaired the Memorandum 1995–1996. The group, named the International Anti-Doping Arrangement (IADA), was an alliance between governments and sport organizations in countries working for standardizing the demands for doping controls in sport [25].

Looking back at the Norwegian work on anti-doping, it is clear that Skaset played an important role. Rune Andersen, who is now the director for standards and harmonization in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), worked closely with Skaset when both were in the NOC (Andersen was head of the department for ethics, sports medicine, and anti-doping). He describes Skaset like this:

Even now, a long time after we finished our work, I see the value of much of his scepticism with regard to sport leaders' willingness to do something – or rather – avoid doing something. Skaset felt that too many leaders protected their sports against doping scandals instead of challenging doping. This could be hard to detect, while they simultaneously spoke warmly about the importance of facing the challenge and cleaning up. Now, years later, much of Skaset's scepticism has been proved right [26].

Skaset's involvement contributed to an intentional anti-doping policy in Norway. He pointed out that elite sport was in an ethical twilight zone, and he had the impression that the NOC considered everything as acceptable as long as it was not legally forbidden [27]. For example, Skaset did not like NOC's acceptance of the use of altitude chambers and nutrition supplements. In the end, he challenged the twilight-zone culture, in what could be called the "Skaset case".

The "Skaset case"

In the October 2000 issue of the journal 'Sport Facilities', Skaset published, in his regular column as General director of the DSP, an article on his reflections after the summer Olympics in Sydney. The article was titled 'Elite sport – a dilemma' [28], and comprised a massive critique of the leadership of the NOC and their handling of the two Norwegian doping cases during the Olympics. Skaset rhetorically asked whether Norway came out of the Olympics with strengthened identity and self esteem, or whether the position alongside Bulgaria and Romania in the 'The Hall of Shame' was an ambivalent contribution to the Norwegians' understanding of themselves as ethically upright people.

When eagerness and incompetence places the country [Norway] in a company which we for 25 years have tried to stay far out of, the time is ready for stating some clear demands: the difference between what is said and what is done cannot be tolerated at this point! If the [sport leaders] do not understand what this means, the state should at least stop its involvement [into sport] [29].

The national newspaper Aftenposten interviewed Skaset and published his views on Friday October 28th 2000 [30]. Skaset's journal article had by then been publicly available for about two weeks. Skaset repeated – in the newspaper – that he could not see any other solution than holding back state subsidies to elite sport if the leadership of the NOC did not take an explicit stand against doping – including its own cases. According to Skaset, this was the only way for the Norwegian state to not be associated with

sport's ethical twilight zones. As long as the NOC leaders protected their own athletes who tested positive in Sydney, Skaset saw it as an indirect acceptance of experiments in the ethical twilight zone. He saw it as analogous to the debate on the case of nutrition supplements during the Atlanta Olympics (1996), and the (Norwegian) debate about the use of altitude chambers. As long as Norway accepted such artificial achievement-enhancing means, it contributed, according to Skaset, to a negative reputation about Norway as doping fighters. He emphasised, however, that this was his personal opinion.

The same day (Friday, October 28th 2000), Aftenposten also published the response from the NOC president Kjell O. Kran: 'If it is the official view of the Ministry that Norwegian elite sport exists in a twilight zone between honesty and cheating, I cannot be the highest leader of Norwegian sport' [31]. The NOC president indicated that he would step down if the relationship to the state did not improve after Skaset's statements. 'I do not run away from the responsibility which I have taken, but I cannot live with the kind of co-operation which Skaset sketches' [32]. When the Minister of Culture, Ellen Horn, woke up that morning (Friday October 28th 2000), she was – via the media – informed of Skaset's threat about stopping state subsidies to elite sport, as well as Kran's threat about stepping down from his NOC presidency. Later that Friday, Ellen Horn responded in a press note [33], where she took the party of Kran and the NOC, and criticized Skaset. Skaset saw no other options than to leave his position as the Director General; and on Monday morning (October 31st 2000), he handed in his resignation [34].

The Skaset case can be considered as a game played by the bureaucrat (and former NOC president) Hans B. Skaset, the leadership in the voluntary organization NOC, and the political leadership of the Ministry of Culture. In that respect, we will treat the case as a game, and conduct a sociological analysis of it by the application of Elias' figurational sociology and game models [35].

Figurations and game models

Elias developed figurational sociology with the intention of solving the difficulties associated with traditional sociological theories [36]. He was especially critical of what he regarded as a misleading dichotomy such as, for example, individual–society, and the tendency towards what he called

“process-reductionism”. That is when phenomena which are experienced and observed as being dynamic and mutually dependent, are presented in static categories [37]. With regard to the Skaset case, Elias’ theory is apt because we will analyze a process of a power game between identifiable persons, as well as including in the analysis ‘invisible’ power sources such as the media.

Elias considered that social life should be interpreted on the basis of changing relations. Consequently, he held that power should not be conceptualised as something which certain individuals, groups or institutions possess as an aspect of all, but ‘...simply to use the word “power” is likely to mislead’ [38]. Rather, power is constantly fluctuating along the relationships between individuals and social units.

We say that a person possesses great power, as if power were a thing he carried about in his pocket. This use of the word is a relic of magi-mythical ideas. Power is not an amulet possessed by one person and not by another; it is a structural characteristic of human relationship – of all human relationships [39].

Elias’s approach recognises that human action is intentional and directed towards achieving certain goals, and that, in an individualized society such as contemporary Norway, all have their own pattern of intentions and preferences. At the same time, Elias emphasises that the outcomes of social processes cannot be explained simply in terms of the intentions of individuals. Outcomes which no-one had intended, by Elias denominated ‘blind social processes’, should rather be recognised as a *normal* result of complex processes involving the interweaving of a large number of actors.

To better understand the complex interweaving of the actions of large numbers of people, and of planned and unplanned processes, Elias developed the concept of game models. As Dopson and Waddington noted:

... the game models are useful precisely because they demonstrate that the outcomes of the complex interweaving of the actions of different players in the game, even where these actions are more or less consciously directed towards the attainment of certain goals, may include – in the case of complex games almost certainly *will* include – outcomes which no single player or group of players intended [40].

The simplest model comprises two players, and applies in virtually all aspects of social life. Regarding power in such games, a point is that, even though one player is assumed to be weak, s/he always has some power that the stronger player must pay consideration to. In other words, with regards to power in game models, it is more about a dynamic power ratio than an absolute condition. Normally, there are several players in the game. This can occur as a single-level game where one player plays against several others either individually or as a group, or a group plays against other groups, or as a two- or multi-level game. This last implies that several of the players do not play directly against each other, and the game is, in fact, quite difficult to follow [41]. However, like Elias, we regard the game models as simplified didactic models, which will help us follow the complex process described above more analytically. In what follows, we will first identify the figurations in which Skaset participated; second, we will analyze the game of each figuration; and last, we will look into how the different figurations influenced each other, and how this relationship was significant in contributing to the outcome of the case, namely that Skaset resigned.

Skaset's figurations

As mentioned above, there has been – as long as there have existed sport organizations in Norway – a close relationship between voluntary sport and the state. In that respect, there are different opinions about whether Skaset's time as Director General of the DSP led to stronger or weaker ties between the DSP and the NOC. Roger Ingebrigtsen, the State Secretary (a political position, the second in command

after the minister) in the Ministry of Culture at the time, holds that Skaset was first and foremost the sport organization's man within bureaucracy. According to Ingebrigtsen, the formula for creating a unique, autonomous and arbitrary Director General of a department is as follows: find a leading figure from the field (of sport), with broad experience and knowledge; put him in a department where the economic resources are not part of the national budget negotiations of Parliament (in other words, it is out of conventional political control); and surround him with people who will allow themselves to be manipulated.

He has been the boss for just about everyone on the other side of the table. And he serves ministers of culture who without exceptions have been excellent ministers for culture, but who have had little or no experience from the field of sport. If you want to make a Sir Humphrey of bureaucracy, this is the recipe [42].

Before moving on to the identification of Skaset's figurations, let us recall and underscore the many roles of Skaset. He was a former president of the Norwegian Athletics Federation and of the NOC when he entered the chair as Director General in 1991 [43]. However, Skaset maintains that his loyalty was always towards the state [44], though the state loyalty did not weaken his ties to (at least some) people within the NOC. Against this background we have identified two figurations of the game of the Skaset case. First, there was a "sport figuration", and second, there was a "political figuration" each of which will be presented in an ideal typical manner.

The sport figuration comprised, in addition to Skaset, the NOC president (Kjell O. Kran), the head of the elite sport department of the NOC (Bjørge Stensbøl), the secretary general of the NOC (Ivar Egeberg).

The president, Kjell O. Kran, was a newcomer to the field of sport. He came to the NOC in 1999 after a long career in business, with positions as administrative director and board chairman of major Norwegian enterprises on his CV. He was used to powerful positions and to making decisions; but he soon

realized that being the NOC president did not equal being the most powerful position in Norwegian sport. Kran was frustrated by the system whereby the revenues from The Norwegian Betting Association (Norsk Tipping A/S) were administrated by the DSP, which he felt had too detailed control of the NOC. This led to many confrontations with the Director General of the DSP, namely Skaset.

The head of elite sport department of the NOC, Bjørge Stensbøl, was – if anyone could be – Skaset's wonder-boy in the sport organization. Therefore, it was striking that Skaset held Stensbøl responsible for the way the Norwegian delegation to Sydney handled the situation when two Norwegian athletes tested positive for doping.

The secretary general of the NOC, Ivar Egeberg, had, like Skaset, swapped roles between the public sector and the voluntary sport organization. After having been the secretary general of the Norwegian Football Association 1988-1996, Egeberg was head-hunted for the job as the State Secretary by the (then) Minister of Culture (Anne Enger Lahnstein) in 1997. The relationship to Skaset became more strained during Egeberg's time as the State Secretary, and did not improve when Egeberg became the secretary general of the NOC in 1998.

The second figuration refers to Skaset's relationship to the political leadership in the Ministry of Culture, and was made up by the Minister Ellen Horn and the State Secretary Roger Ingebrigtsen, as well as Skaset.

The Minister of Culture, Ellen Horn, was the fifth minister in a row, with major interest in culture and less competence in sport. In that respect, she had to trust the bureaucrats of the DSP, when it came to issues of sport policy. This situation was apparently un-problematical for Horn, as it had been for her predecessors [45]. Moreover, for Horn the challenge was reinforced by the fact that she did not have any political experience. Because of that - the lack of political competence combined with economic independence of the DSP - the road was open for the top bureaucrat to exercise political power.

The State Secretary, Roger Ingebrigtsen, arrived at the Ministry early 2000. He had previously been a political adviser (a political position in a ministry, third in command, after the minister and the state secretary) in the Ministry of Regional Development and Labour (1992-1996). That Ministry is known for officiating in accordance with the principle of a division of labour between politicians and bureaucrats; the politicians make decisions, and the bureaucrats administrate and implement the policy. Ingebrigtsen must have been shocked by the conditions in the Ministry of Culture, and especially with regard to the political freedom of the Director General of the DSP. For the first time in Norwegian history, the Director General of the DSP, a superior (a politician) put up resistance against the proposals of the bureaucrats of the DSP.

Skaset and Ingebrigtsen had several confrontations during the preceding months of Skaset's journal article on the Sydney Olympics and the following Skaset case. Let us give two examples, one general and one more sport specific. The first stems from a reform in the public sector, aiming at simplifying the routines for making plans at the municipal level of public administration. During the work with the reform, the State Secretary involved cooperation from the DSP, but Ingebrigtsen felt that Skaset sabotaged the whole project. Without going into details, the point is underscored by two citations from the participants themselves. The situation peaked when Skaset in his regular column in the journal 'Sport Facilities' posed the question: 'Are simplifications the same as improvements?' [46]. Ingebrigtsen has later commented on that episode: 'I did not like this. In a meeting with Skaset I said that he had to accept the Government as a superior organ for his work' [47].

The second example illustrates the power game between the State Secretary and the Director General with regard to the above mentioned economy of the DSP. While Skaset was on vacation, Ingebrigtsen had a meeting with the NOC leadership about an application for extra subsidies. Ingebrigtsen, together with Skaset, had decided to give the NOC three million (NOK). But a few days later, while Ingebrigtsen was on vacation, a new meeting took place between Skaset and the NOC leadership. In the second meeting, Skaset proposed giving the NOC six millions (NOK). The State Secretary reacted strongly when he heard this, and according to Ingebrigtsen he had never experienced a civil servant act with such

'unchecked power'. Ingebrigtsen perceived this as an infringement, and as a misuse of position which was only too visible [48].

The power game

The Skaset case has been the subject of many reporters' and scientists' work, and their approaches have varied. One angle of attack has been to treat the case as a debate about the sport's twilight zone with regards to doping. Another approach has been to consider the NOC's autonomy and its relationship to the state. Yet another way of treating the case has been to discuss the division of roles between politicians and bureaucrats, or, more specifically, the autonomy of departments within a ministry [49]. Common for all approaches is – of course – the eagerness to explain the mechanisms that lead to the outcome (that Skaset resigned). According to Bergsgard and Rommetvedt, Skaset's journal article was perceived as too strong, because the sport policy field had gone through a process of normalization compared to other political areas [50]. To use a sport metaphor, the goalposts had moved, therefore some of the players missed it. Like Bergsgaard and Rommetvedt, we argue that Skaset "missed" because the situation had changed, compared to the game of sport policy that Skaset had been used to playing for decades. However, we do not suggest that the changes referred to the sport policy system as such, but rather that players, who usually played alone, worked as a team this time.

Elias' [51] game models are, as mentioned, models of competitions, which may vary with regard to the number of players and the number of levels. To analyse the Skaset case, we will first consider the game as a multi-person game on one level, and then as a multi-person game on two levels. The latter equals the two figurations in which Skaset was involved.

Hans B. Skaset had gained a unique position as Director General, with a twofold power basis. On the one hand he had the sport-specific knowledge which the minister needed, and therefore he took part in sport-related policy making. On the other hand, he was responsible for implementing the sport policy and for administrating the economic resources to sport. Skaset's use of power is seen in

the increased use of goal-targeted subsidies during his time in the DSP. As Goksøy and his colleagues note:

The Department of Sport Policy want goal-targeting and to some extent pre-targeting as a possible sanction if the NOC considers spending the subsidies in an inappropriate way. Just as Hofmo in his time was vacillating on the subject of the gambling revenues, also Skaset's pet subjects are visible in the budget. The anti-doping work, for example, received NOK 7,1 million in the 1995 budget and in addition the doping laboratory at Aker Hospital received NOK 2 million [52].

Skaset was relatively powerful within the sport figuration, and he had rarely met coordinated resistance. In Elias' terminology, Skaset usually played one-to-one, against competitors who were not strong enough to beat him alone. Skaset was known for a strategy of building alliances with some of those involved, while being critical to others [53]. Skaset kept his superior position in relation to the NOC leadership when Kran took over the NOC presidency in 1999. But at the same time, Kran built a strong power base by giving the secretary general (Ivar Egeberg) and the head of the elite sport department (Bjørge Stensbøl) enormous trust. Their response was their strong loyalty, and the three became a powerful group who received major support inside the NOC system, and who in the media was christened 'the three musketeers' [54]. In that respect the game had changed, because when Skaset threatened the NOC with cutting the state's subsidies to elite sport, the NOC played the game with one voice.

However, a voluntary organization does not have the formal power to remove a state bureaucrat. (And the NOC representatives probably never intended to, either. See below.) The NOC representatives made a strategic decision after Skaset's article and the interview with him in the newspaper. Instead of attacking Skaset, they confronted the political leadership of the Ministry, Skaset's superiors. The Minister had to make a choice between the Director General of the DSP and the

NOC leadership (that is all the three musketeers: the president, Kran, the head of the elite sport department, Stensbøl, and the secretary general, Egeberg), who would all leave if the Minister did not take their side. In addition, the NOC president was supported by his own board, of which two members, it should be remembered, were political party fellows of Minister Ellen Horn (the Labour party). In sum, the Director General was on the defensive.

Skaset could probably have continued in his position if the game had terminated after the criticism from NOC president Kran. It had happened before that a minister had supported Skaset after he had been critical towards the NOC. For example, during a national sports conference arranged by the DSP in 1997, Skaset criticized the NOC president at the time (Arne Myhrvold), who had a reputation of travelling more than being available for Norwegian sport, with these words: 'Do not leave all values behind alongside the roads on the way to an airport and take-off' [55]. This had not been cleared with the Minister (Turid Birkeland), but she has commented – many years later – that Skaset's words would have been problematic if she had not agreed with him [56].

Minister Ellen Horn did not stand up for Skaset, nor did she support his threat against elite sport. At this point, the game moved up to a new level, with Skaset and the political leadership in the ministry as the players. The players on the level below (the sport figuration) were not longer directly involved in the game, though they had given the premises for the continuation of it. The same day as the newspaper published the interview with Skaset (Friday October 28th 2000), he was confronted by Minister Ellen Horn with reference to the case which she only knew from the media. The minister was flustered, and told Skaset that he should have come to her with his criticism of the NOC, instead of going to the media [57].

Skaset could have avoided further problems through an apology, but he did not regret any of the contents of his article or anything he had said in the newspaper interview. He told the Minister that everything had been done with intention. What happened the rest of that day is unclear due to different explanations in subsequent interviews with the participating players. The Minister (Ellen Horn) and the

State Secretary (Roger Ingebrigtsen) assert that they tried to find formulations which were acceptable, also for Skaset. Skaset, on the contrary, claims that there was never any attempt at reconciliation. He felt that the Minister wanted him out of office. (The Minister has denied that in subsequent interviews.) The episodes presented above indicate that the other political leader in this figuration, the State Secretary, wanted to see Skaset leave. Ingebrigtsen may have foreseen that Skaset could not continue when these lines were included in the Ministry's press note: 'The Minister of Culture, Ellen Horn, has complete trust in the way the NOC president Kjell O. Kran and the NOC leadership have handled the doping cases. The press statements by the Director General of the DSP, Hans B. Skaset are very unhelpful' [58]. On Monday morning, the first working day after the newspaper article, Skaset resigned.

Concluding discussion

The Skaset case is characterized by several unintended outcomes, which are often results of the development of long-term human figurations. Although individuals are intentional in their actions, the outcome of human behaviour is often unforeseen. Elias called it 'blind social processes' because the players of a game never fully control other players' intentions and actions [59]. In the Skaset case there were several examples of such processes. The NOC leadership never intended to remove Skaset from his position, but they wanted to put him in line with regard to how far a state bureaucrat could go when commenting on and intervening in internal issues of the NOC. Subsequently gathered information indicates that if the head of the elite sport department of the NOC (Stensbøl) had realized that Skaset's resignation was a possible outcome, he would probably have advised the president of the NOC (Kran) not to express himself in the strong way that he did [60].

With Skaset out of the office, the NOC leadership expected that the DSP would delegate more responsibility regarding the governing of the gambling revenues of the NOC. That did not happen. On the one hand the new Director General of the DSP has kept a lower profile with regard to media and public debate than did Skaset. On the other hand, the NOC leadership experienced the new Director General as at least as hard to cooperate with as was Skaset. While Skaset could, after negotiations, meet the demands of

the sport organization, it was perceived as more difficult to negotiate with the new leadership of the DSP. Even the NOC president (Kran) has later recalled the Skaset period as a good one for the NOC (personal correspondence).

If we return to the Skaset case, it is questionable whether Skaset himself could imagine that his statements about the twilight zones in Norwegian elite sport would turn out to be the beginning-of-the-end of his career in the DSP. Some people have claimed that his actions were not only intentional but also strategic, and that Skaset wanted to write himself into the history books. Among these was the former Minister of Culture (Anne Enger Lahnstein), who was Skaset's superior 1997—1999. She contended: 'Here he placed himself on the map in a powerful case before he left' [61]. Skaset has denied this interpretation in several subsequent interviews. In 2002, less than two years after he left the DSP, he said:

I did not think that way when I wrote the article in 'Sport Facilities' although I was aware of the importance of the subject. I did not want to leave the position as the Director General of the DSP, but felt it urgent to stand up for what I thought was right. I have probably always worked that way [62].

After another three years, in his own *festschrift* to his 70th anniversary, Skaset says in an interview that it is unfortunate that his career ended the way it did. He would have enjoyed working till he was 70, and he would have used the last years of his career to develop future sport policy [63]. In his application to resign, addressed to Minister Ellen Horn, Skaset maintained that he had to leave 'because the Minister did not approve his assessment of the NOC leadership's relationship to the phenomenon of nutrition supplement and the scientific activity related to the central elite sport program, and he therefore asked to leave office immediately' [64].

All in all, the Skaset case does not reveal a planned retreat. Skaset had never foreseen the consequences of his article. Skaset knew the players of the game well, and had played them out, one by one, for many years. So, the question is: what went wrong this time? In that respect it is important to

emphasize the role of the media. Without the newspaper as a (as the term points to) 'mediating' player between the other players in the different figurations, Skaset's opinions would not have become an "item". Paradoxically, the original article of Skaset had been publicly available for several weeks when the newspaper (Aftenposten) published the content of Skaset's article and the interviews with Skaset and the NOC leaders. As outlined above, the leadership of the NOC appeared unified, and without allies in the Ministry Skaset was alone. In a game with one player against two cooperating coalitions, not even the 'grand old man' of Norwegian sport policy was strong enough.

The power game is analyzed with the game models of Elias [65]. It is tempting to draw some alternative scenarios if the perspective of Elias had been applied by the players of the game described above. It is mentioned above that an approach from Stensboel to Kran whom he probably would be able to influence, would have resulted in a different outcome. Another scenario which may have led to another outcome is that Minister Ellen Horn, the only one with the formal power to actually do something about Skaset, might make another decision. In that respect, one major characteristic of the Skaset case was the speed of it. Minister Ellen Horn has later said about that Friday of October 28th 2000 that: 'Afterwards it is possible to say that we should have taken more time. If we had let the weekend go, the case might probably have had another outcome. But we felt that there had to come a reaction that Friday' [66].

Horn – and Skaset – could have gone clear of the situation if they had known about the principles of the sociology of Elias. If they had gained some distance to the object of study, or in this case to the heated debate about twilight zones and power in Norwegian sport, the decisions might have been more considered. But, as for that, we will never know.

Notes

- [1] Hill, 'The policy process in the modern state'.
- [2] Esping-Andersen, 'The three worlds of welfare capitalism'.
- [3] Hill, 'The policy process in the modern state'. The other styles are: 'ideological politics' which relates to the model of representative Government, where politicians instruct the

bureaucrats; and 'bargaining politics' where political outcomes are seen to depend upon inputs of resources and external power forces.

- [4] Hill, 'Understanding social policy'.
- [5] Hill, 'Understanding social policy', pp. 119-20.
- [6] Weber, 'Economy and society'.
- [7] Esping-Andersen, 'The three worlds of welfare capitalism', p. 111.
- [8] Hill, 'The policy process in the modern state'. Incrementalism is based on critics of the rational model, with listing of alternatives, analysis of consequences (of each alternative), and decisions according to the elected politicians (and thereby the voters') values.
- [9] Stake, 'Case Studies'.
- [10] Hanstad, 'Skaset, vil ha idretten bort fra gråsoner: Truer med å trekke offentlig støtte'; Hanstad, 'Sjokkert Kran vurderer stillingen'.
- [11] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?'; Hanstad & Goksøy, 'Fred er ei det beste'. Hanstad was also the author of the newspaper articles in Aftenposten, Friday October 28th 2000. See notes 30 and 31.
- [12] Before 1996, there were two organizations, with separate boards. In 1996, the Norwegian Confederation of Sports and the Norwegian Olympic Committee fused into the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Confederation of Sports, abbreviated NOC. In this article, we treat the predecessors of the NOC and the NOC as one, although some formulations in the text may be imprecise. See notes 17, 21 and 43.
- [13] KKD, 'Hovedfordeling 2006'.
- [14] Goksøy et al., 'Kropp, kultur og tippekamp'.
- [15] Selle, 'Idretten og det offentlege: ein familie?'.
- [16] Gilberg et al., 'Anti-doping in Sport: The Norwegian Perspective'.
- [17] To be precise, Skaset was elected for the board of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports. See note 12.
- [18] Hanstad, 'Mannen med de dramatiske avgangene. Intervju'.
- [19] Tjørnholm, 'Dopingkontroll i Norge'.
- [20] Hanstad, 'Mannen med de dramatiske avgangene. Intervju'.
- [21] Strictly speaking, Skaset was president of the Norwegian Confederation of Sports (which included being the head of the Olympic Committee during the Olympics). See note 12.

- [22] Verroken & Mottram, 'Doping control in sport'.
- [23] Andersen, 'Antidopingarbeidet nasjonalt og internasjonalt'.
- [24] KKD, 'St. meld. nr. 14, (1999-2000): Idrettslivet i endring'; KKD, 'Anti-dopingarbeid i Norge'.
- [25] Hanstad, 'Mannen med de dramatiske avgangene. Intervju'. The Norwegian anti-doping work today is carried out in an independent foundation established in 2003. In this way it ensures that control and prosecution processes for doping cases are organized independent of the NOC or the state.
- [26] Andersen, 'Antidopingarbeidet nasjonalt og internasjonalt', p. 149.
- [27] Skaset, 'Eliteidrett – ett dilemma'.
- [28] Skaset, 'Eliteidrett – ett dilemma'.
- [29] Skaset, 'Eliteidrett – ett dilemma', p. 24, our translation.
- [30] Hanstad, 'Skaset, vil ha idretten bort fra gråsoner'.
- [31] Hanstad, 'Sjokkert Kran vurderer stillingen'.
- [32] Hanstad, 'Sjokkert Kran vurderer stillingen'.
- [33] KKD, 'Horn har tillit til idrettspresidenten'.
- [34] Hanstad, 'Skaset føler seg dolket av Horn: Sa opp i dag'.
- [35] Elias, 'What is sociology?'.
- [36] Goudblom, 'Sociology in the balance'.
- [37] Dopson, 'The Diffusion of Medical Innovations: Can Figurational sociology Contribute?'.
- [38] Elias, 'What is sociology?', p. 74.
- [39] Elias, 'What is sociology?', p. 74.
- [40] Dopson & Waddington, 'Managing social change: a process-sociological approach to understanding organisational change within the National Health Service' p. 537.
- [41] Elias, 'What is sociology?', pp. 71-103.
- [42] Ingebrigtsen, 'Statsforvaltningens Sir Humphrey', p. 93.
- [43] See note 21.
- [44] Hanstad, 'Mannen med de dramatiske avgangene. Intervju'.

- [45] Hanstad & Goksøyr, 'Fred er ei det beste'. Åse Kleveland, Turid Birkeland, Anne Enger Lahnstein and Åslaug Haga all point out, subsequently, that Skaset was clear in his analyses and suggestions.
- [46] Skaset, 'Er forenkling det samme som forbedring?', p. 24.
- [47] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?', p. 43.
- [48] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?'.
- [49] Gilberg et al., 'Anti-doping in Sport: The Norwegian Perspective'; Hoberman & Møller, 'Doping and public policy'; Hoberman, 'Testosterone dreams: rejuvenation, aphrodisia, doping'; Mangset & Rommetvedt, 'Idrett og politikk: kampsport eller lagspill?'; Bergsgard & Rommetvedt, 'Når idrett og politikk kolliderer: Feilskjær eller systemendring?'.
- [50] Bergsgard & Rommetvedt, 'Når idrett og politikk kolliderer: Feilskjær eller systemendring?'
- [51] Elias, 'What is sociology?', pp. 71-103.
- [52] Goksøyr et al., 'Kropp, kultur og tippekamp', p. 273, our translation.
- [53] Halkjelsvik, 'Tapte maktkampen fordi ledertrioen Kran, Egeberg og Stensbøl truet med å gå av'.
- [54] Hanstad, 'Skasets selvskudd'.
- [55] Hanstad, 'Skaset ut av kontoret'.
- [56] Hanstad, "'Ja vel, fru statsråd'", Intervju'.
- [57] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?'.
- [58] KKD, 'Horn har tillit til idrettspresidenten'.
- [59] Elias, 'What is sociology?', pp. 71-103. It is debatable whether this was a real blind process, as long as one of the State Secretaries intended to achieve the outcome. To be theoretically pedantic, a blind social process should be blind to everyone.
- [60] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?'; Hanstad & Goksøyr, 'Fred er ei det beste'.
- [61] Hanstad, "'Ja vel, fru statsråd'", Intervju', p. 17, our translation.
- [62] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?', p. 166, our translation.
- [63] Hanstad, 'Mannen med de dramatiske avgangene. Intervju'.
- [64] Skaset, 'Avskjed'.
- [65] Elias, 'What is sociology?', pp. 71-103.
- [66] Hanstad, 'Seier'n er vår, men hvem har æren?', p. 166, our translation.

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