Comparing sport policies in economically developed countries

Barrie Houlihan
Loughborough University, UK
B.M.J.Houlihan@lboro.ac.uk

Hilmar Rommetvedt
International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS), Norway
Hilmar.Rommetvedt@irisresearch.no

For presentation at
ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops
Workshop 16, Sport, Politics and Public Policy
Nicosia, Cyprus, April 25 – 30, 2006
Background

This paper is a draft version of a book chapter which presents the theoretical framework for a comparative analysis of sport policies in Canada, England, Germany and Norway.

The study is carried out by researchers at the International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS), Loughborough University, Telemark Research Institute and Telemark University College. We would like to thank our collaborators Nils Asle Bergsgard, Per Mangset and Svein Ingve Nødland for their contributions.

The study is funded by the Research Council of Norway as part of the programme “Sport, society and the voluntary sector”.

We would be pleased if the perspectives and analytical dimensions could be applied in comparative analyses of sport policies in other countries as well.
1 Introduction

Among the reasons given for undertaking a comparative study is the suggestion that it will generate policy-related benefits. One possible benefit derives from the opportunity that comparison offers for policy learning and policy transfer. As countries are increasingly faced with similar policy problems, for example, stimulating increased participation in sport and physical activities, controlling the use of drugs in sport and achieving elite sporting success, it is commonsense to look to the experience of other countries as a way of informing domestic policy choices (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000; Rose 2005). A second possible benefit for domestic policy-making is that a heightened awareness of the policy process and practices in other countries can sharpen sensitivity to those in one’s own and thus avoid culture-bound solutions/policies (Heidenheimer et al 1990).

Although the use of comparative study as a means of improving policy-making is a valuable endeavour our concern is less with comparative analysis for policy and more concerned with comparative analysis of policy and with the emphasis on the identification and explanation of differences between domestic policy infrastructures, processes and outcomes. One frequently used approach to the identification and explanation of differences between domestic policy regimes is through the use of typologies which not only stimulates discussion of the relative importance of particular regime characteristics, but also enables the formulation and testing of hypotheses. Finally, one of the most compelling arguments in favour of comparative domestic policy analysis is that there are some aspects of policy regimes that can best be explored through the adoption of a comparative approach. As Keman observes 'the goal of comparative politics is to explain those "puzzles" which cannot be studied without comparing' (2002: 34). Comparative policy analysis may therefore be justified as an approach that seeks to establish and validate its conclusions as a result of theoretically informed comparison between domestic policy regimes.

2 Comparative sport policy studies

Over the last 35 years or so there has been a steady, but very slow, increase in the number of comparative studies of sport policy although they vary greatly in terms of focus, theoretical basis, and methodology. Rodger (1978) and Szalai (1972) were pioneers adopting a comparative approach in their studies of the use of leisure time. Rodger's study was commissioned by the Council of Europe, as indeed were many subsequent comparative studies concerned with sport, and was designed to provide information and analysis for policy-makers rather than provide an analysis of the leisure policy process. A similar priority to inform policy-making underpins many of the analyses of physical education and school sport. Bennet et al (1975) Simri (1979) and, more recently, Hardman and Marshall (2000) and Hardman (2002) provided much valuable data regarding patterns and trends in curriculum time allocated for physical education. All four studies were focused on the evaluation of policy outputs rather than on analysing the policy process that produced the outputs or the pattern of
interaction between policy actors that generated the policy inputs. The work of Vrijman (1995) and Chaker (1998), dealing with the legal and administrative infrastructure for doping control, and the general legal framework for sport respectively, are typical of much of the policy-related comparative research insofar as they are large surveys/reviews which produce valuable baseline data or snapshots of current provision in a particular area. While these studies are analytical there is no explicit theoretical comparative framework and the analysis tends to focus on policy outputs and outcomes rather than inputs and policy process. The recent studies of high performance sports systems by Digel are similar in many respects although there is a stronger focus on model building. Digel's review of the elite sports system in eight countries has an explicit policy orientation insofar as the objective is to 'develop a resources model for successful top level sport' (2002: 37). As such these valuable studies, like the earlier work of Rodger and Simri, are more concerned with contributing to the policy process than analysing it.

The body of comparative literature on sport which is not explicitly concerned to provide analysis for policy, or which has not been commissioned by a particular policy actor is small. Arbena's (1988) study of sport in Latin America, Wilson's (1988) comparison of sport structures and policy in the UK, United States and in a number of totalitarian regimes, Riordan's (1978) study of sport in five communist states, Houlihan's (1997) study of sport policy in five countries, and Green and Houlihan's (2005) analysis of three elite sports development systems all provide useful insights into a wide range of countries and regime types but are generally concerned to identify patterns of difference and similarity rather than use the comparative data to develop theoretical explanations of policy change and regime type. The study by Stamm and Lemprecht (2001) of the impact of a range of socio-economic factors on the success of countries participating in the Olympic Games is one of the few large studies which aims to generate data for use by policy-makers and also connect to debates within the study of policy processes. Finally, the two volumes by Bramham et al (1989 & 1993) also go some way toward combining description, analysis and explanation. However, both books explicitly exclude comparative analysis as the organising framework for their city and country-based case studies. In the study of leisure policy in selected western European cities they note that 'each [study] deals predominantly with aspects of policy development in a single nation-state' (1989: 4). The more recent volume gives greater emphasis to comparison as it examines the motives of government. However, the case studies focus on the identification of 'the variety of "local" features of ...national leisure policy' (1993: 5) with the consequence that although the studies contain a wealth of empirical data there is little explicit reference to comparative theory.

As this brief review indicates the comparative sport policy literature is modest and much of the literature that has been produced is substantially concerned to fulfil the important but narrow functions of, on the one hand, providing information on policy trends and impact and, on the other hand, providing data for actors involved in the sport policy process. However, the paucity of comparative literature in sport policy is less a reflection of the limited value of comparison and more the result of the practical constraints on comparative research arising from inadequate funding and an
insufficient core of interested researchers. There is no reason to expect that the comparative study of sport policy would not yield the same rich insights into the policy process that have been generated in other areas, especially those of education policy, industrial policy and social welfare policy.

3 Policy processes and approaches to comparison

It is a truism that while empirical case studies that eschew theoretical questions 'can be interesting in themselves the possibilities of explanation, generalisation and analysis is limited' (Higgins 1981: 16). In this study we are concerned to identify and analyse similarities and differences in both policy processes and in policy outputs in order to fulfil the primary aim of examining questions of policy convergence. More specifically, we need a framework that will facilitate investigation of a number of aspects of the policy process. Three aspects of the policy process have been identified as offering the opportunity to develop a broad based assessment of the extent and character of convergence. Thus rather than just focus on one aspect of the policy process – policy outputs for example – we will examine: the sources of policy inputs; the mediation of policy inputs; and policy outputs. As regards the sources of policy inputs we will explore both endogenous sources such as the activities of interest groups/advocacy coalitions as well as exogenous sources including the actions of international organisations such as the international federations, IOC and sports media businesses. The second aspect, the mediation of policy inputs, refers to the role of a variety of institutions in shaping access to the policy agenda and the way issues are presented and interpreted and would include the impact of culture, political parties, advocacy coalitions and administrative structures and traditions. The third aspect is concerned with the nature of policy outputs – that is the balance between active and passive responses to issues and, where action is initiated, the particular mix of instruments (sanctions, incentives and information) that are selected.

As is the case across the social sciences the identification of the empirical focus of the research is inseparable from debates on epistemology. Lichbach (1997) provides a typology identifying three broad approaches to comparison – rationalist, structuralist and culturalist – each of which is based on a distinctive set of epistemological assumptions.

Rationalist perspectives stress the importance of studying the intentional features of choices made by individuals as the basis of aggregate policy processes and outputs. In contrast to rationalist and individualist perspectives structuralists focus on the holistic aspects of the policy process and the interdependence between institutions, organisations and human agency. The key assumption is that, over time, institutions become reified and consequently constrain or facilitate policy-making activity (Blom-Hansen 1997). Culturalist perspectives also emphasise the importance of an holistic approach, but one that seeks to uncover the shared meanings and understandings (“deep structure” to use Benson's (1982) phrase) which define and bind communities and shape their perception of policy issues and solutions (Lichbach 1997; Ross 1997). Landman sums up the differing emphases of these three approaches as follows,
'Rationalists focus on the *interests and actions* of individuals, culturalists focus on the *ideas and norms* of human communities, and structuralists focus on the *institutions and relationships* that constrain and facilitate political activity' (2000: 205).

The research communities identified by Lichbach reflect the long-standing tension in social science between those researchers who emphasise the significance of structure and those who emphasise agency. Those who give priority to structural factors in explaining policy outputs and impact would emphasise, for example, the significance of the institutional and funding relationship between government and sports organisations, the administrative arrangements of government, the allocation of responsibility for sport between central and sub-national levels of government, and whether particular functions of government are statutory or discretionary. Thus the frequent calls in the UK for sport to be made a statutory responsibility of local government or that sport should have a separate minister at Cabinet level are often based on the perceived effectiveness of these institutional/structural arrangements in other countries. As will be discussed more thoroughly below the concept of an institution covers not only the allocation of function between departments and the arrangement of departments and agencies within the machinery of government, but also the interconnected pattern of rules and informal routines that provide the ideological structure of a political system.

Our preferred approach to the present comparative study is to seek an epistemological and methodological foundation which enables us to recognise the importance of structure, but also acknowledges the significance of agency. We intend to work within a modified structuralist perspective which draws on the critical realist perspective developed by Bhaskar (1975; 1998) which is summarised by Sayer as follows:

‘…the explanation of social phenomena entails that we critically evaluate them. Moreover, criticism cannot reasonably be limited to false ideas, abstracted from the practical context in which they are constitutive, but must extend to critical evaluation of their associated practices and the material structures which they produce and which in turn help to sustain those practices’ (1992: 40).

Thus critical realism offers a structure-centred approach to the analysis of policy and political action, but one in which ‘structure and agency are seen as recursively related. Each is both a condition for and a consequence of the other’ (Lewis 2002: 18).

With critical realism as the broad context there is a need to explore in more depth a number of overlapping bodies of literature from within policy analysis and broader political analysis which will provide specific concepts and analytical frameworks for the study. Analyses of welfare state regimes as well as institutional approaches, network analysis and the advocacy coalition framework are drawn from debates on meso-level policy analysis and provide a series of insights into the significance of structure and agency in initiating policy debates and, more significantly, in mediating policy inputs and decision-making within the political system.
4 Institutions and policy regimes

Interest in institutions was stimulated by growing dissatisfaction with the behavioural emphasis in much of American political science of the 1960s which, it was argued, obscured the deeply entrenched socio-economic and political structures that shaped behaviour. Institutions include not only the formal apparatus of government, but also established patterns of norms and conventions found within a policy field. For Ostrom et al. (1994) policy is made within 'action arenas' that develop operational rules which are nested within other more deeply rooted rules namely, collective choice rules and, at a deeper level, constitutional choice rules which are more resistant to change. For Thelen and Steinmo, institutions 'shape how political actors define their interests and ... structure their relations of power to other groups' (1992: 2). As Olsen comments 'Political institutions are the building blocks of political life. They influence the available options for policy-making .... They also influence the choices made among available options' (1998: 95), while for Keman (2002: 11) they are the 'conditions under which policy-making takes place .... [they] define the room for manoeuvre for each actor involved in policy-making'. To suggest that there is a causal relationship between institutional/administrative arrangements and a particular policy impact would be to overstate the case, but institutions, such as federalism, corporatism, the allocation of functions at central/federal government level and the arrangements for local government, constitute important intervening variables. As intervening variables institutions are recognised as links between policy inputs (agenda-setting activities) and policy outputs.

While state institutions are seen as significant constraints and mediating factors in politics, which 'leave their own imprint' (Thelen & Steinmo 1992: 8), they are not the only or even the dominant constraints and, as such, fit comfortably with neo-pluralist theories of interests and power which stress the influence of non-state actors such as sports businesses or governing federations of sport. One of the clear strengths of this framework is that it directs attention to both the behaviour of actors and the structures within which they operate. In addition, it is a powerful corrective to those who are too ready to ignore the significance of state institutions, as well as ministers and public officials in the policy process. Moreover, the institutional framework has the capacity to explain temporal continuities within policy arenas and also address differences across countries.

Where the institutionalist framework is weaker is in its treatment of policy dynamics which are, at best, indistinct often relying on an implicit rational model of actor behaviour. A further related weakness concerns the treatment of interests – the tendency to substitute ideas for interests, and the assumption that institutions strongly influence interests (Pontusson 1995). Attempts to suggest sources of institutional dynamics – such as previously latent institutions becoming more prominent, exogenous changes in wider socio-economic environment, or the breakdown, replacement and creation of new institutions go some way to overcoming this weakness but are still not wholly satisfactory.

Although the institutional framework is far from being a completely persuasive explanation of the policy process it is important in emphasising the need to
take account of the institutional context within which policy is made. Sport policy, in particular, is often made in a variety of institutional settings, (for example within tourism or education policy areas), at multiple levels of government, and with the involvement of a mix of public, not-for-profit and commercial organisations, the combination of which will affect how issues are defined, objectives are set, and impact assessed. However, of particular importance is the extent to which the deeply-rooted policy orientations and rules of collective choice become institutionalised to the extent that they can be identified as distinct and stable regime types. The identification and specification of regime types has been most fully explored in the area of welfare policy.

The development of modern welfare states is characterised by a stepwise expansion of government responsibilities, from the basic and ‘state-defining’ tasks of defence and policing via core welfare state issues, e.g. social security, to what could be considered to be secondary welfare state issues like leisure policy. It is not self evident how to regard sport in this connection. Sport and physical fitness could be seen as a prerequisite for effective defence, and thus a basic responsibility for the state. Emphasis could be placed on sport’s effect on health, one of the core issues of the welfare state. Finally sport could be viewed as leisure activity and a welfare state responsibility of secondary order. The question of what sport is and the related question of what the government responsibilities with regard to sport should be, are political questions. Consequently – and especially when we compare countries – we would not expect one answer, but several answers at variance with each other.

In his analysis of welfare states, Esping-Andersen (1990) distinguished between three welfare regimes: liberal, conservative and social democratic. The distinction is based on the private-public mix, the degree of de-commodification and modes of stratification or solidarities. Liberal welfare regimes ‘reflect a political commitment to minimize the state, to individualize risks, and to promote market solutions’. It is ‘residual’ in the sense that ‘social guarantees are typically restricted to “bad risks”’, due to its ‘narrow conception of what risks should be considered “social”’, and its ‘encouragement of the market’ (Esping-Andersen 1999:74ff). Liberal welfare regimes include Canada and the UK.

According to Esping-Andersen (1999:78ff) the social democratic welfare regime is ‘virtually synonymous with the Nordic countries’, including Norway. The social democratic welfare regime is ‘committed to comprehensive risk coverage, generous benefit levels, and egalitarianism’. It is distinct for its active ‘effort to de-commodify welfare’, for the ‘fusion of universalism with generosity’ and its ‘comprehensive socialization of risks’. The social democratic regime is ‘inevitably a state-dominated welfare nexus’.

Our final case, Germany, represents what Esping-Andersen (1999:81ff) labels a conservative welfare regime. The ‘essence’ of this regime ‘lies in its blend of status segmentation and familialism’. Social security systems are based on occupational schemes and corporatist status divisions. The ‘accent on compulsory social insurance’ means that ‘purely private market provision of welfare remains marginal’. In some countries ‘a significant part of health care is […] non-state but this is chiefly due to
the role played by non-profit, ‘voluntary’ associations, frequently affiliated with the Church’. The family is the central care-giver and ‘ultimately responsible for its members’ welfare’.

Esping-Andersen's research remains a landmark in the development of the comparative analysis of welfare/social policy, as much for the stimulus it gave to similar research as for the initial identification of the three distinct types of welfare systems. The tripartite categorisation between liberal welfare regimes, conservative corporatist welfare states, and social democratic welfare states has been criticised on a number of grounds and has led to a series of refinements of, and extensions to, his initial model. Some of the critics have challenged the allocation of countries to particular categories. For example Castles and Mitchell (1990) argued that the UK should not be placed in the liberal category as they considered that it embodied an unresolved tension between economic liberalism and welfare collectivism. Similarly, Liebfried (1990) argued that southern European welfare states constituted a separate category – the Latin Rim. Others directed their criticism towards the methodological assumptions that underpinned Esping-Andersen's typology.

Siaroff (1994), who developed a cluster analysis of welfare states in developed countries based on the extent to which they met women's needs, provided one of the most interesting critical re-analyses of Esping-Andersen's work. Women's needs were defined in relations to three criteria: the general family welfare orientation of policy, the desirability of female work (e.g. the extent to which the state supports women's employment with subsidised child care facilities), and which parent receives child benefits. Interestingly, Siaroff's analysis produced clusters very similar to Esping-Andersen's except that there was also a distinct category similar to the Latin Rim identified by Liebfried and that countries such as Spain and Switzerland were also placed in a distinct category. Siaroff labelled his categories the Protestant liberal welfare states (e.g. the UK), the advanced Christian democratic welfare state (e.g. Germany), the Protestant social democratic welfare states (e.g. Sweden) and the late female mobilisation welfare state (e.g. Spain and Switzerland) (see Table 1).

What is most notable about the typology summarised in Table 1 is the extent to which the initial identification of regime types by Esping-Andersen remains intact. However, the debate about classification of welfare regimes and particularly the contribution from Siaroff, has emphasised the importance of considering the distributional consequences (i.e. impact) of different regimes. Using the Esping-Andersen’s typology it is possible to ask a series of research questions focused on outputs and impacts designed to establish whether sport policy conformed to the pattern evident for the general welfare regimes. On the basis of Esping-Andersen’s typology one would expect, in liberal welfare regimes like Canada and England, the state to play a limited role and to leave welfare supply to the market. In social democratic welfare regimes like Norway we would expect the state to play an active role and to take responsibility for citizens’ welfare. In conservative welfare regimes like Germany we would expect non-state but non-profit associations and the family to take care of matters related to welfare.
Table 1: Welfare regimes in OECD countries and Eastern Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare regime type</th>
<th>Typical country</th>
<th>Entitlement basis of benefits</th>
<th>Distributional impact of benefits</th>
<th>Extent of meeting women’s needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism (Protestant liberal)</td>
<td>USA, Australia</td>
<td>Commodified</td>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism (advanced Christian democratic)</td>
<td>Germany, France</td>
<td>Semi-decommodified (insurance)</td>
<td>Status differential maintained</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social democratic (Protestant social democratic)</td>
<td>Sweden, Denmark</td>
<td>Decommodified (citizenship)</td>
<td>Redistribution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late female mobilisation</td>
<td>Japan, Spain</td>
<td>Semi-commodified (insurance)</td>
<td>Status differential maintained</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State bureaucratic</td>
<td>Bulgaria, Russia</td>
<td>Decommodified (work loyalty)</td>
<td>Proletarianised but privileges</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Deacon 1997: 42

It is not obvious that welfare policy should include sport. Sport can hardly be said to belong to the core issues of the welfare state. Consequently, we would expect the state to play a relatively passive role with regard to sport. However, especially since WW II the welfare state has expanded in most western countries. As the welfare state expands it becomes more likely that ‘secondary’ matters, like sport, will be included in the responsibilities taken by public authorities. Accordingly we would expect the state in a social democratic welfare regime like Norway to play an active role with regard to sport policy. In liberal regimes like Canada and England we would expect the state to be more passive and to encourage commercialisation of sport. Finally, in conservative welfare regimes like Germany we would expect voluntary associations to play the most important role with regard to sport policy.

5 Analytical dimensions

Among the institutional features and associated analytic dimensions relevant to an analysis of sport policy are: state systems (federal or unitary, decentralised or centralised) and executive-legislative relations (strength of government/administration versus parliament/opposition); concentrations of private and public power (corporatism/corporatist representation versus pluralism/lobbyism and degree of segmentation and policy networks); and strategic implications for political actors (alliance and coalition building and generalisation of interests).
5.1 State systems and executive-legislative relations

Within the overall framework of different welfare regimes we would expect government responsibilities with regard to welfare policies and sport policy to vary with regard to other aspects of the government systems. The four countries we have chosen for our study include two federal systems, Canada and Germany, and two unitary states, Norway and England/the UK. The Canadian provinces and German länder play far more important roles than the English counties and Norwegian fylker. Furthermore a distinction may be drawn between centralised and decentralised versions of federalism and unitary states, as is done by Schmidt (2002: 177). He depicts Canadian federalism as decentralised, German federalism as centralised, the Norwegian unitary state as decentralised, and finally the British unitary state as centralised. Lijphart (1999:189) agrees that Norway and the UK are decentralised and centralised unitary states respectively. He does not distinguish between Canada and Germany, both are characterised as federal and decentralised. However, central government’s tax share is a little higher in Germany than in Canada, thus indicating that Germany is a bit more centralised (Lijphart 1999:193) although the difference between the two countries is small.

It is not clear how we should rank a decentralised unitary state in comparison with a centralised federal state. Nevertheless, we would expect the differences to have an impact on the allocation of responsibilities between the national/state level, the sub-national/province/county level, and the local/municipal level of government. Combining welfare regimes with the federal-unitary and decentralised-centralised dimensions produces the following expectations:

- English sport policy is expected to be limited in scope, but dominated by the state. Local government is expected to play a minor role, and sport is expected to be commercialised.
- Norwegian sport policy is expected to be comprehensive, but less dominated by the state. Local government should play an important role and sport is expected to be less commercialised.
- German sport policy is expected to be dominated by the länder. Voluntary sport associations are expected to play an important role and an intermediate degree of commercialisation of sport is expected.
- Canadian sport policy is expected to be limited and dominated by the provinces and local government. Sport is expected to be commercialised.

Using the terminology in the previous section, we may say that in corporatist systems public power is concentrated in the hands of the executive. Researchers within the corporatist tradition tend to ignore legislatures or subscribe to the ‘decline of parliaments’ thesis. In corporatist systems organised interests are supposed to influence government directly, bypassing parliament. In the case of Norway in the 1960s, Rokkan (1966: 107) found that crucial decisions were ‘rarely taken in the parties or in Parliament’. Kvavik (1976: 118f) observed that ‘legislation was shaped in the administration; once in parliament, the lines were fixed’ and that parliamentary
institutions received ‘an exceedingly weak evaluation’ among leaders of Norwegian interest groups. However, according to Olsen (1983: 72), during the last part of the 1970s the Norwegian Parliament ‘became a more rather than a less significant institution’. More recent studies clearly indicate that during the 1980s and 1990s the Norwegian Parliament strengthened its position vis-à-vis the executive (Rommetvedt, 2003, 2005).

Analysing the influence of legislatures, Polsby (1975 / 1990:148) distinguish between ‘transformative’ legislatures and legislatures as merely ‘arenas’, thus indicating that the former has more policy-making power than the latter. He characterises the US Congress as ‘highly transformative’, the Swedish Riksdag as ‘modified transformative’, the German as Bundestag a ‘modified arena’, and the British Parliament an ‘arena’. Unfortunately, Canada and Norway were not included in the examples given by Polsby. However, all four countries in our study are included in Lijphart’s analysis (1999: 132f). He has constructed an index of ‘executive dominance’ on the basis of cabinet duration. The calculations show that executive dominance is most pronounced in the UK followed by Canada. Germany followed by Norway has the lowest score on the index of executive dominance.

The per cent of government time in office for minimal winning cabinets and single party cabinets may also tell us something about the strength of the executive. Lijphart (1999:110f) has calculated mean percentages for minimal winning and single party cabinets from 1945 to 1996. Among our cases, UK gets the highest score, closely followed by Canada. We find Norway in third place, mainly due to the frequent occurrence of single party governments, and Germany in forth place due to the lack of such cabinets.

In government systems based on the principle of parliamentarianism, the government has to be supported, or at least accepted, by the majority of the parliament. The parliamentary branch of governing parties is supposed to make sure that the government’s proposals are adopted by the parliament. Consequently it may be difficult to distinguish between the government and the majority of the parliament. Arguably the parliament should not be viewed as a single entity, but rather as two (or more) entities: government and opposition. Accordingly, instead of measuring the strength of parliament we should measure opposition strength.

Forestiere (2005) has measured opposition strength as a function of various party system attributes and institutional resources. Her calculations show that in ‘our’ countries we find the strongest opposition in Norway followed by Germany. The weakest opposition is found in the UK. In fact, the UK occupies the last position on a list of thirteen countries. Norway is number four and Germany number six. Unfortunately, Canada was not included in Forestiere’s calculations.

In the previous section we mentioned that corporatist representation, to some degree at least, has been replaced by lobbyism. Taking executive-legislative relations into consideration, we may also ask whether the lobbying efforts of various interest groups are directed at the civil service or parliament. In the case of Norway (and Denmark), organised interests have more frequent contacts with the public
administration than with parliament. However, parliamentary contacts have increased more than administrative contacts with regard to both frequency and importance. This may be interpreted as a reflection of the strengthening of parliaments vis-à-vis executives (Christiansen and Rommetvedt 1999). Is this a general trend? And what are the implications with regard to sport policy?

Taken altogether, the various assessments of the strength of legislatures and/or oppositions clearly indicate that in general the parliaments of Norway and Germany play a more central role in policy-making than the parliaments of Canada and the UK. The question we ask in our context is whether this is also the case with regard to sport policy. If so, we should expect Norwegian and German sport policy-making to be dominated by the parliament, and Canadian and English sport policy-making to be dominated by the executive.

5.2 Corporatism versus pluralism – segmentation and policy networks

Organised interest and voluntary associations play important roles in the four countries we have chosen for our study. Among all the voluntary associations and interest groups that exist, sport associations can show some of the highest membership figures. Interest groups may be more or less integrated into the processes concerned with formulating and implementing public policies. In the previous sections we have mentioned briefly the importance of voluntary associations and corporatism (especially in relation to conservative welfare regimes). Corporatism and pluralism are frequently used terms for highly integrated and institutionalised government-interest group relations and less integrated and institutionalised relationships respectively. Corporatism includes the representation of selected interest groups in governmental boards, committees and councils. Pluralism on the other hand is characterised by a multiplicity of interest groups and associations competing for members and lobbying for political influence.

In his pathbreaking study Schmitter (1979) differentiates between two forms of corporatism: state corporatism and societal corporatism. The ‘stronger’ version – state corporatism – is found in countries with ‘singular, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered, sectorally compartmentalized, interest associations exercising representational monopolies and accepting (…) governmentally imposed or negotiated limitations on the type of leaders they elect and on the scope and intensity of demands they routinely make upon the state’ (Schmitter 1979:18). Such interest associations have attained a quasi-legal status and a prescriptive right to speak for their segments of the population. They influence the process of government directly, bypassing parliament. Societal corporatism, on the other hand, ‘is found embedded in political systems with relatively autonomous, multilayered territorial units; open, competitive electoral processes and party systems; ideologically varied, coalitionally based executive authorities’ (Schmitter 1979:21f).

Corporatism and pluralism are also important categories in the description of government systems given by Heinz et al. (1993: 395f). Combining two dimensions, the degrees of concentration of private power and concentration of government power
respectively, they attain a fourfold typology of government systems. Corporatist and pluralist systems are characterised by respectively high or low concentrations of both private and government power. Low concentration of government power and high concentration of private power paves the way for private government. Finally, state directed systems are based on low concentration of private power and highly concentrated government power.

With the exception of the state directed government system in the former German Democratic Republic, we consider corporatism and pluralism to be the relevant categories for the countries we have selected for our study. Furthermore we believe that concentrations of power are matters of degree – not categorical variables. For the purpose of this study, we may treat corporatism versus pluralism as a continuous dimension or variable.

In comparative studies Norway is commonly ranked at – or close to – the top of the list of corporatist countries. Schmitter mentioned Norway, together with Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark, as one of the best examples of societal corporatism. In Siaroff’s presentation of the ‘agreed’ rankings of twenty-three different analyses, Norway is considered to be ‘strongly corporatist’, surpassed only by Austria. (West) Germany is categorised as ‘moderately-to-strongly corporatist’ and the UK as ‘weakly or only somewhat corporatist’. Finally, Canada is characterised as ‘not at all corporatist, but rather pluralist’ (Siaroff 1999:184).

The corporatist ranking of Norway is based on what we may call conventional wisdom. However, in recent years important changes have taken place. Norway has moved in a pluralist direction (Rommetvedt 2005). On the private side of the coin the number of interest groups and associations has increased substantially and on the public side the number of corporatist arrangement like governmental boards and councils has been significantly reduced. Consequently the corporatist channel has been ‘overcrowded’ and corporatist representation replaced by less institutionalised forms of lobbyism.

What then about sport politics? To what degree is sport policy-making and policy implementation characterised by corporatism and corporatist representation or pluralism and lobbyism? According to the conventional wisdom we should expect to find Norway and Germany in the corporatist category, and Canada and England in the pluralist position. However, in line with the general trend we may also expect Norwegian and perhaps also German sport and sport policy to be moving in the pluralist direction. But what about Canada and England – are they moving in a corporatist direction? Or is sport rather a clearly demarcated political segment or policy community in the sense we have described above?

The typology of Heinz et al has been elaborated in order to distinguish between two types of concentration of power: public as well as private power may be concentrated in a monolithic or a sectorised or segmented way thus constituting a fifth type of government systems: the segmented state (Rommetvedt 2005).

The term ‘segmented state’ was introduced by Egeberg et al. (1978). Political segments may be found within particular economic areas such as agriculture, fisheries
and industry, or around functions like health care, communications, education and defence. Members of a segment come from various institutions such as ministries, parliamentary committees, interest organisations, research institutions, the mass media etc. They ‘are assumed to share certain basic values and perceptions, such that their models of the world coincide more with one another than with those of representatives of other segments’ (Christensen and Egeberg, 1979: 253). A simplified interpretation of general trends in Norway indicates that after periods with high degrees of corporatism in the 1950s and 1960s and segmentation in some sectors in the 1970s, Norway has become more pluralist and less segmented since the 1980s. The pattern of contacts between organised interests and public authorities in the 1990s and in the beginning 21st century seems to be less segmented than suggested by the thesis of the segmented state (Rommetvedt 2005).

The segmentation of the policy process described above has led to considerable theorising regarding the characteristics and dynamics of sectorised policy-making. Political segments bear a clear resemblance to concepts like ‘sub government’ and ‘policy communities’ in the family of ‘policy network’ concepts covering the spectrum from strong and closed ‘policy communities’ to loose and more open ‘issue networks’ (see König 1998 for an overview).

From the late 1970s academic attention focused on the utility of the metaphor of networks as a starting point for concept development and theory-building. The metaphor draws attention to the role of informal networks (or communities) in shaping policy agendas and decision-making, and also in facilitating policy implementation. The metaphor also draws attention to the interaction between informal networks and the formal policy-making procedures of government. Influenced by the work of Heclo (1978) and Benson (1982) in the United States and Richardson and Jordan (1979) in Britain Rhodes (1981) described a sectorised or segmented polity where policy-making was best explained through the pattern of exchange and resource dependency (see also Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Smith 1993). The room for manoeuvre that organisations have to make policy is circumscribed by the need to develop resource dependency relationships which, over time, coalesce into relatively stable policy networks. For Rhodes there are a variety of types of policy network including issue networks which have loose, more open and shifting memberships and policy communities which are characterised by more stable and restricted membership. It was the concept of the policy community, rather than issue network, which seemed especially useful in understanding the policy process in many European countries. The policy community, particularly when it included members from state agencies and departments, proved attractive at an intuitive level but was also supported by a body of empirical research which seemed to confirm both the existence and influence of policy communities and the robustness of the network metaphor (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). Not only was the metaphor useful in capturing the sectorised natured of the policy process, but it was also an effective tool for identifying differences between policy outcomes by reference to differences in their characteristics (the strength and exclusiveness of relationships in particular).
However, the utility of the network metaphor has been challenged at both the theoretical and empirical levels. At the theoretical level the concept has been criticised for being: too vague (all policy-making is about relationships) (John 1998); descriptive rather than explanatory (Sabatier 1999); and redundant due to the core importance of resource dependency relations rather than any distinctive features of community (Dowding 1995). At the empirical level it was argued that definition of community membership and community boundaries was extremely difficult (Kassim 1994) and that in many policy sectors there seemed to be multiple clusters of allied organisations rather than a simple community with recognisable members and non-members.

5.3 Strategic implications: generalisation of interests and alliance building

A development towards an increasingly pluralistic society characterised by dispersion of power among a multiplicity of organised interests, political parties, and public institutions, downsizing of the corporatist apparatus and strengthening of the parliament vis-à-vis the cabinet have certain strategic implications for political actors who seek to influence policy-making. We have already mentioned restricted corporatist representation and increased lobbyism, especially targeted at the parliament. Furthermore, we will pay attention to need for alliance building and the related strategy of generalisation of interests.

In a pluralist society, political power is divided and there are no actors with a monopoly of power. Political actors cannot simply resort to force and rely on their own power in the pursuit of self-interest. They need to gain support from a majority – literally as well as figuratively speaking. In other words, political actors have to build alliances. The more numerous the participants and interests in the political process, the broader the alliances need to be. Consequently, political actors have to widen their appeal. General or public interests have a wider appeal and basis of legitimacy than self-interests, and generalisation of interests is thus a way to enhance legitimacy and win more support. Actors who are able to show, or to argue convincingly, that their viewpoints and suggestions promote the public good have better chances of obtaining general acceptance or of acquiring support from the necessary number and kinds of alliance partners.

In a highly segmented state, each political segment (or policy community) may ‘live its own life’ more or less independent of other segments. A limited number of members of a segment may, on the basis of shared values and perceptions, obtain a dominant position with regard to defining relevant expertise, problems and possible solution within their domain. The members constitute an alliance within the segment or community. Strong segments are closed and do not need to pay much attention to other interest and concerns. However, in modern societies efficient communications and communication technologies and critical mass media enhance contact, openness and transparency and ‘everything depends on everything’. Consequently, there is an increasing need for coordination and specialised interests need to build alliances across sectors and segments (Rommetvedt, 2002). In the process of building broad
alliances it becomes more likely that ‘one has to phrase one’s argument in impartial terms, as if one were arguing for the public good and not for one’s own self-interest’ (Elster, 1992: 18). In a modern pluralist society there is, in other words, a need for generalisation of interests in order to gain the necessary support.

Naturally, in appealing to the public good one has to take into account the general cultural and political values of the society concerned. In a comparative perspective we would expect variations in basic cultural and political values to have an impact on the various activities of social actors, including policy-making. We have already indicated some differences between our Anglo-American and North and Continental European cases. Broadly speaking, we would expect the cultures of England and Canada to be characterised by individualist, elitist and commercialist values and the cultures of Germany and Norway to be more oriented towards collectivist, egalitarian and non-commercial values.

In line with this, we would expect English and Canadian sports to be competitive, elite oriented and commercialised and German and Norwegian sports to be less competitive, more sport-for-all oriented and less commercialised. Correspondingly, sport policies in Canada and England on the one hand and Germany and Norway on the other should be expected to give priority to competitive elite sport and non-competitive sport-for-all respectively. Furthermore, we would expect governments in Germany and Norway to be more involved with sport while the governments of Canada and England should be expected to leave sport to market actors.

Following this line of reasoning, what kind of general interests exogenous to sport should we expect sport to appeal to in order to get support? In highly commercialised societies sport may underline the potential of sport to contribute to business development, job creation and economic profits. Competitive elite sports may accentuate national prestige and the reputation associated with gold medalists in World Cups and Olympic Games. In egalitarian societies sport may underline the importance of physical training and sport-for-all’s contribution to fitness and improvement of defensive power, public health, social integration etc.

So far, we have emphasised differences. However, in the age of globalisation pluralism and neo-liberalism seem to be more widespread. Ideas of ‘New Public Management’ seem to have a strong impact on public sector reforms in many countries. Market and market-like mechanisms are implemented in areas that were formerly taken care of by public monopolies, either through privatisation of public institutions or through the introduction of free choices of service suppliers and competition between public schools, hospitals and the like. As a consequence, over time we should expect decreased variation in, and convergence of sports and sport policies in, the countries we are studying.

One meso-level analytical framework which has been applied across a range of political systems and which has the capacity to take into account the impact of sustained globalising pressures as well as constitutional and administrative complexity into account is the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) which has
emerged as a highly regarded basis for policy analysis. The framework is based on five assumptions: first, a time perspective of at least ten years is required for the analysis of policy change; second, a focus on policy sub-systems/policy communities, which for, Sabatier, consist ‘of actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue ... and who regularly seek to influence public policy in that domain’ (1998: 99); third, sub-systems involve actors from different levels and units of government and increasingly from international organisations and other countries; fourth, the possession and use of technical information is important; and finally, public policy incorporates implicit 'sets of value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realize them' (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier 1994: 178).

Policy sub-systems normally comprise between two and four coalitions which would be competing for influence, although one might be a dominant coalition. Belief systems provide the primary source of cohesion within coalitions with beliefs being disaggregated into three levels: first, 'deep core' beliefs which cover basic values regarding gender relations and individual property rights for example; second, 'policy core' beliefs which are the basic normative commitments within the sub-system; and third, secondary policy core beliefs which are narrower beliefs regarding, for example, the seriousness of particular issues and the details of resource allocation within the sub-system.

Conflict between coalitions, often mediated by a 'policy broker', is a source of policy outputs and policy dynamics although change can occur as a result of medium to long term 'policy-oriented learning' (Sabatier 1998: 104). Policy-oriented learning describes relatively long term changes in beliefs that result from 'experience and/or new information' (Sabatier 1998: 104). Although Sabatier accepts that coalitions will resist the acceptance of information that challenges core beliefs, he argues for the essential rationality of coalition behaviour. Further sources of policy change include exogenous developments such as economic recession and war, and also changes in personnel, both of which constitute examples of 'non-cognitive source[s] of change that can substantially alter the political resources of various coalitions and thus policy decisions' (Sabatier, 1998: 105).

The ACF has been applied in over thirty case studies across a range of policy areas mainly in the United States, but also in Canada, the UK, Italy, and Poland which has led Sabatier to conclude that 'the existence of advocacy coalitions ..... is now largely beyond dispute' (Sabatier 1998: 108). In many respects the ACF, with its greater acknowledgment of human agency, complements the emphasis on structure found in the institutionalist approach. Stability is explained in terms of dominant coalitions and the persistence of deep core and policy core beliefs, while the explanation of change rests on a combination of the instrumental rationality of coalition interaction, exogenous events, and policy learning. Despite the strength of the advocacy coalition framework and its complementarity with institutionalism it is not without areas of weaknesses that need to be acknowledged. The first is that the membership of coalitions is only vaguely specified as is the relationship between members of a coalition. As regards membership, the implication that membership of
coalitions is open requires more empirical support than is currently available. Second, the framework is not wholly convincing in its theorisation of power. The concept of power receives very little attention because the underlying rationalist assumption is that, in the medium term, evidence from policy learning will result in policy change even if it challenges policy core beliefs. Power then is primarily a property of ideas rather than the outcome of resource control and the pursuit of sectional/personal interests. The failure of actors to act in accordance with evidence is due to factors such as limited time, computational constraints, or cognitive dissonance rather than the mobilisation of bias to manipulate the policy agenda. On a more positive note the ACF is explicitly designed to enable comparison over time, accepts the permeability of the domestic policy process, and acknowledges that coalitions may well include non-domestic policy actors.

In relation to the capacity of the ACF to take account of the peculiarities of the sports policy the conceptualisation of the policy area as comprising a number of competing advocacy coalitions has not only an intuitive appeal, but also a growing body of empirical support which suggests the emergence and consolidation, in both the UK and Canada, of competing coalitions around elite sport, sport for all, physical activity and health, and school sport (Houlihan & White, 2002; Green, 2003; Green and Houlihan 2005). In addition, the concept of the ‘policy broker’ has potential value given the extent of administrative dispersal found in many countries and the degree to which coalitions are in competition for the same resources.

### 6 Summary

According to Heidenheimer et al (1990: 3) the study of comparative public policy is defined by its concern to determine ‘how, why and to what effect different governments pursue particular courses of action or inaction’. The concern to identify ‘how’ governments decide to act draws attention not only to the pattern of institutional arrangements in a country or to the extent and pattern of interest group interaction, but also to the structure of deeply-rooted values and beliefs in societies. Furthermore it also directs attention to the significance of transnational actors and the permeability of domestic policy processes. Asking ‘why’ governments act in the way that they do requires an understanding and analysis of the cultural, historical and ideological context of policy making. The concern expressed by Heidenheimer et al to also explore the ‘effect’ of policy decisions is a timely reminder of Lasswell’s succinct definition of politics as the study of the distributional consequences of policy decisions, in other words ‘Who gets what, when and how’.

While there has been little theoretically informed comparative analysis of sport policy there has been, as shown in this chapter, substantial comparative analysis involving the four countries that form the basis for this study. In particular, there has also been considerable theorising of the implications of the mix constitutional and political characteristics of their political systems for policy in general and welfare policy in particular. This body of literature and analysis, summarised in Table 2, consequently provides an important reference point for the present study. The table
includes expectations regarding sport policies based on general characterisations of the four countries in our study. However, two important questions are to be investigated in this study: (1) Are the general characteristics adequate for the sport sector as well? (2) Can we observe changes and a trend towards toward ‘homogenisation’ of sport policies in the four countries (due to e.g. the process of globalisation)?

The research framework that we propose draws on a series of overlapping bodies of literature to allow the investigation and comparison across the four countries of individual aspects of the policy process as well as of the process as a whole. Institutional analysis and the ACF share a concern with inputs and with the mediation of policy in the decision-making process and complement each other in their respective emphasis on structure and agency and the well established typologies of welfare regimes provides a strong framework for comparing sport policy impacts. However, in order to recognise and appreciate the significance of structure and the scope for agency in particular countries it is important to understand the historical context within which the current arrangements of government and characteristics of political life have developed and also to identify the societal trends of especial importance to an analysis of sport policy. It is to these questions that we turn in the next chapter.
Table 2: Summary of analytical dimensions and their suggested implications for sport policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical dimension</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State structure</td>
<td>Decentralised federalism</td>
<td>Centralised unitary</td>
<td>Centralised federalism</td>
<td>Decentralised unitary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong role for the provinces</td>
<td>Policy dominated by central</td>
<td>Strong role for the länder</td>
<td>Substantial local policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>government; minor role for</td>
<td></td>
<td>discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>municipalities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive-legislative relations</td>
<td>Executive dominance</td>
<td>Executive dominance</td>
<td>Stronger role for the legislative</td>
<td>Stronger role for the legislative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport policy shaped by the</td>
<td>Sport policy shaped by the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare regime type</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Social democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited role for the state in</td>
<td>Limited role for the state in</td>
<td>Substantial role for non-state</td>
<td>Active state; limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sport. Significant role for the</td>
<td>sport. Significant role for</td>
<td>voluntary sector and the family</td>
<td>commodification of sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>commercial sector</td>
<td>commercial sector</td>
<td>in sports provision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government system</td>
<td>Pluralist</td>
<td>Pluralist</td>
<td>Weakly corporatist</td>
<td>Strongly corporatist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loose policy networks for</td>
<td>Loose policy networks for</td>
<td>Closer to a policy community</td>
<td>Relatively closed policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sport</td>
<td>sport</td>
<td>than a looser network</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisation of interests and coalition building</td>
<td>Dominant interests: elite, commercial and competitive sport</td>
<td>Dominant interests: elite, commercial and competitive sport</td>
<td>Dominant interests: sport for all, and sport and community</td>
<td>Dominant interests: sport for all, and sport and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appealing to the public good</td>
<td>Appealing to the public good</td>
<td>Appealing to the public good</td>
<td>Appealing to the public good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in terms of business</td>
<td>in terms of business</td>
<td>in terms of health, fitness</td>
<td>in terms of health, fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opportunities, job creation,</td>
<td>opportunities, national</td>
<td>and community development</td>
<td>and community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>national prestige and profit</td>
<td>prestige, job creation and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>profit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


23


