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An analysis of the significance of sub-regional partnerships in the community sport policy process

by

Spencer Harris

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
The degree of Ph.D. of Loughborough University

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Abbreviations

AC	Audit Commission
ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
APS	Active People Survey
ASA	Amateur Swimming Association
BAF	British Athletics Federation
BOA	British Olympic Association
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CCPR	Central Council of Physical Recreation
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CSN	Community Sport Network
CSP	County Sport Partnership
CSPN	County Sports Partnership Network (national)
DCLG	Department of Communities & Local Government
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media & Sport
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
DNH	Department of National Heritage
EA	England Athletics
EB	England Basketball
ECB	England & Wales Cricket Board
EGP	England Golf Partnership
EN	England Netball
FA	Football Association
GBSC	GB Sports Council
IOC	International Olympic Committee
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGA	Local Government Association
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
MSF	Multiple Streams Framework
NAO	National Audit Office
NCF	National Coaching Foundation
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body
NGB	National Governing Body of Sport
NI8	National Indicator 8 (sports participation)
NJSP	National Junior Sport Programme
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RCSR	Regional Councils for Sport & Recreation
SE	Sport England
SDO	Sport Development Officer
SRA	Sport & Recreation Alliance
SSP	School Sport Partnership
UKA	UK Athletics
VSC	Voluntary Sport Club
WSP	Whole Sport Plan
YST	Youth Sport Trust

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Any mistakes or omissions contained herein are my own.

Abstract

Community sport policy is characterised as complex and multi-faceted partly due to the number of agencies involved. This thesis explores the community sport policy process in England, specifically the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in the community sport policy process. The four key objectives of this study are (i) to analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs with regard to the national community sport policy process; (ii) to analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in local-level policy making and policy implementation; (iii) to identify CSP and NGB attitudes and perceptions toward the community sport policy process; and as the study focuses on the meso-level of analysis, (iv) to evaluate the explanatory value of selected meso-level theories of the policy process in developing a better understanding of the community sport policy process.

This study uses a mixed method comprising a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Initially, a quantitative questionnaire was used to gather information regarding CSPs and NGBs and support the selection of CSP cases. From this CSP-based case studies were developed involving semi-structured interviews with CSP, NGB and local authority representatives. The study draws attention to the hierarchical nature of the community sport policy process, the implications for collaboration, the mediating role of CSPs in national and local policy settings, and the associated challenges that agents face in implementing community sport policy. The study emphasises the value of theoretical pluralism in analysing the community sport field, particularly the combined used of meso-level frameworks such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework and the Policy Networks Approach with micro-level considerations from implementation theory and the partnership literature. It concludes that empirically, it is only by giving policy agents a voice that we can develop a more accurate understanding of the policy process and that practically only by harnessing the commitment and energy of the grassroots can we step toward a more effective policy community.

Keywords: community sport, CSPs, NGBs, policy process, implementation, England

Chapter 1
Introduction

Research aims, objectives and theoretical context

The focus of this thesis is the community sport policy process in England. More specifically, the aim of the research is to analyse the significance of the relationship between county sport partnerships (CSPs) and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) in the community sport policy process. Specific detail concerning the role and responsibilities of CSPs and NGBs is provided in Chapter 4.

Community sport itself is a relative newcomer to the sport policy landscape in England. Located between school sport and elite sport, community sport retains a somewhat vague conception as an instrument by which political, economic and social goals can be achieved or as an end in itself. An assortment of terms is often used including: grassroots sport, mass participation, sport for all, recreational sport, informal sport, club-based sport, and competitive (but not performance level) sport. Whilst recent political announcements suggest that community sport policy is concerned with both the intrinsic and instrumental value of sport, the operational definition of community sport policy remains fixed on frequency of participation (i.e. regular once a week) at the grassroots level (Sport England, 2012a). More specifically, the current (2012) goals of community sport policy are: (i) a year-on-year increase in the number of people who play sport for at least once a week for at least 30 minutes, particularly amongst people aged 14-25, and (ii) a reduction in the number of young people who drop-out of sport. Interestingly, whilst community sport may be viewed as a relative newcomer to the sport policy landscape, increasing participation in sport and reducing drop-out are both issues that can be traced as far back as the CCPR commissioned Wolfenden report published in 1960. In 2008 the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS), through Sport England, identified NGBs as the lead agency for achieving community sport objectives and also identified CSPs as key supporting institutions at the sub-regional level. Just as the relationship between Sport England and NGBs at the national level is central to community sport policy, the relationship between CSPs and NGBs at the sub-regional level is crucial to effective policy implementation.

The empirical element of the thesis uses a mixed methods approach involving a quantitative phase of research followed by a qualitative phase of research. The quantitative phase of research involved 47 of 49 CSPs located in England together with 27 of 44[1] 'Whole Sport Plan 08-13' NGBs. This phase of research was primarily undertaken to identify CSP-based cases, thus the results are appended to the thesis and will be referred to in the methodology chapter. The qualitative phase of research involved three case studies selected at the CSP level and included the CSP Director, the CSP NGB Lead Officer, and the CSP Chairperson. In addition, regional or county-level NGB representatives from eight sports and sport development professionals from three local authorities were also involved in each of the three case studies. The cases will also refer to the quantitative research, as and where appropriate.

In order to ensure that the overarching research aim detailed above is met, a number of more specific research objectives have been developed:

- To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs with regard to the national community sport policy process
- To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in local-level policy making and policy implementation
- To identify CSP and NGB attitudes and perceptions toward the community sport policy process
- To evaluate the explanatory value of selected meso-level theories of the policy process in developing a better understanding of the community sport policy process

Whilst a central feature of this study is the value of meso-level theory in examining the community sport policy process, it has been positioned within a broader, macro-level framework to identify and reveal the distinct power relations between the state and society. This also enhances our awareness of who the important policy actors are, the role they play, how they come to be in privileged positions, and whose interests they serve (Marsh & Stoker, 1995). Furthermore, the theoretical framework

[1] There are 46 sports producing whole sport plans across a total of 44 NGBs. Some NGBs are responsible for more than one whole sport plan.

draws from micro-level theory, specifically that related to implementation and partnership given their relevance to the study's objects.

Rationale for investigating the community sport policy process

The very basis of community sport—that is, increasing participation in sport—has been at the forefront of sport policy since the introduction of the Advisory Sports Council in 1965 (Houlihan & White, 2002). However, it has been a relatively turbulent policy area with numerous shifts in focus, most notably oscillation between sport and broader physical activity, young people or adults aged over 16, and changes in the way in which community sport policy implementation has been led and coordinated, from a local authority-driven system in the 1990s, to a CSP-led system in the early to mid-2000s, and from 2008 onwards, an NGB-led process via the Whole Sport planning process (Harris, 2012). In addition, the focus for community sport has shifted from the broader instrumental use of sport (development through sport), to a more recent concentration on sport for sport sake (cf. Collins, 2010). In short, community sport is a highly politicised policy field, in relative terms, one which is often subject to the 'whim and caprice' of the latest Secretary of State or Minister for Sport (Houlihan & White, 2002: 206), making it fertile ground for a study which seeks to bring closer attention to the policy process, specifically the significance of the relationship between key actors, and their attitudes and perceptions towards the policy process.

Whilst the future of community sport policy is far from guaranteed, particularly in the longer term, it has been offered some level of safeguarding against far-reaching central government cuts, primarily due its position as a key priority within the explicit legacy aspirations flowing from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Whilst the original targets for increased sports participation have been downsized, the notion of using the Games as a catalyst to drive and increase "grassroots sports participation" remains[2]. The legacy aspirations add to the interest in community sport, in particular they draw attention to the realism of the goals, the machinery responsible and the beliefs, values and perceptions that underpin the system.

[2] a year-on-year increase in the number of people who play sport for at least once a week for at least 30 minutes, particularly amongst people aged 14-25.

This analysis of the delivery system and its beliefs, values and perceptions is made more urgent by the participation statistics revealed by the annual Active People survey (Sport England, 2012a). Whilst these statistics revealed a recent upturn in once a week participation in a small number of sports, the participation trend between 2008 (baseline year) and 2012 has been declining for the majority of sports, despite millions of pounds of investment. Indeed, some sports have witnessed significant decreases in participation (swimming, golf), whilst a small group of sports (athletics, cycling, netball, boxing, and table tennis) are witnessing sizeable growth due primarily to the expansion of "convenience-laden" and relatively low-cost, informal participation opportunities (see Table 1.1 below for a more detailed breakdown by sport). This is a key driver in terms of presenting a rationale for investigating the community sport policy process as the data suggests policy failure—that is, that either the notion of increasing sports participation is fundamentally flawed or that the plans prepared and delivered up to this point have, for the majority of sports, been largely ineffective. This research will provide a more detailed analysis of the key actors charged with leading the delivery of community sport policy as well as study their relationship with CSPs.

Table 1.1 Once a week participation rates by sport (source: Sport England, 2013)

1 x 30 sport indicator	APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006)		APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008)		APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009)		APS4 (Oct 2009-Oct 2010)		APS5 (Oct 2010 - Oct 2011)		APS6 (Oct 2011 - Oct 2012)		
Sport England NGB 09-13 Funded sports	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	Statistically significant change from APS 2
Swimming	8.04%	3,273,800	7.83%	3,244,300	7.57%	3,162,400	7.50%	3,156,300	6.62%	2,809,300	6.81%	2,933,100	Decrease
Football	4.97%	2,021,700	5.18%	2,144,700	5.08%	2,122,700	4.96%	2,090,000	4.98%	2,117,000	4.94%	2,126,800	Decrease
Athletics	3.33%	1,353,800	3.89%	1,612,100	4.16%	1,739,700	4.45%	1,875,500	4.47%	1,899,400	4.72%	2,033,700	Increase
Cycling	4.02%	1,634,800	4.26%	1,767,100	4.50%	1,880,000	4.43%	1,866,300	4.15%	1,761,200	4.55%	1,962,000	Increase
Golf	2.18%	889,100	2.29%	948,300	2.15%	897,600	2.04%	860,900	1.96%	833,200	1.97%	850,500	Decrease
Badminton	1.27%	516,700	1.29%	535,700	1.29%	539,400	1.24%	520,900	1.20%	510,300	1.26%	544,200	No change
Tennis	1.12%	457,200	1.18%	487,500	1.27%	530,900	1.04%	437,500	0.88%	375,800	1.03%	445,100	Decrease
Equestrian	0.77%	314,600	0.82%	341,700	0.82%	341,500	0.80%	337,800	0.74%	312,600	0.77%	331,000	No change
Squash and racketball	0.74%	299,800	0.71%	293,900	0.72%	299,500	0.69%	290,100	0.67%	284,800	0.61%	263,200	Decrease
Bowls	3.13%	251,900	3.40%	277,800	3.07%	254,400	2.92%	246,600	2.55%	219,800	2.45%	214,100	Decrease
Cricket	0.48%	195,200	0.49%	204,800	0.49%	206,600	0.41%	171,900	0.51%	215,500	0.43%	183,400	Decrease
Rugby Union	0.46%	185,600	0.56%	230,300	0.50%	207,500	0.46%	194,200	0.42%	178,900	0.42%	183,000	Decrease
Netball	0.27%	111,700	0.29%	118,800	0.32%	133,500	0.34%	145,200	0.31%	131,700	0.37%	159,300	Increase
Basketball	0.39%	158,300	0.45%	186,000	0.46%	193,100	0.36%	151,800	0.36%	151,500	0.35%	152,900	Decrease
Boxing	0.28%	115,500	0.26%	106,800	0.29%	121,400	0.28%	117,200	0.35%	149,700	0.33%	140,400	Increase
Angling	*	*	*	*	0.14%	60,500	0.12%	51,000	0.32%	134,100	0.30%	129,200	*
Hockey	0.23%	93,900	0.24%	99,800	0.23%	95,700	0.21%	86,800	0.19%	79,200	0.25%	109,200	No change
Table Tennis	0.17%	69,400	0.18%	75,600	0.20%	85,600	0.20%	86,200	0.32%	134,900	0.23%	98,800	Increase
Mountaineering	0.16%	67,000	0.21%	86,100	0.20%	83,700	0.26%	111,300	0.26%	109,600	0.23%	98,700	No change
Weightlifting	0.26%	107,800	0.29%	118,400	0.28%	116,000	0.18%	77,600	0.17%	73,400	0.20%	86,100	Decrease
Snowsport	0.31%	127,400	0.29%	120,600	0.26%	106,800	0.25%	104,500	0.25%	106,500	0.19%	80,400	Decrease
Sailing	0.16%	64,000	0.22%	89,900	0.20%	83,000	0.15%	65,100	0.12%	52,300	0.15%	64,400	Decrease
Rugby League	0.18%	73,700	0.20%	82,000	0.15%	63,000	0.12%	52,300	0.12%	51,000	0.12%	51,100	Decrease
Gymnastics	0.14%	58,900	0.15%	61,200	0.12%	48,300	0.12%	50,300	0.11%	48,000	0.12%	49,800	Decrease
Canoeing	0.09%	36,500	0.10%	43,500	0.15%	62,900	0.12%	51,100	0.11%	46,900	0.11%	46,600	No change
Rowing	0.10%	39,300	0.13%	54,900	0.12%	49,000	0.11%	45,300	0.09%	40,300	0.10%	42,100	Decrease
Volleyball	0.08%	32,700	0.12%	48,400	0.09%	39,200	0.09%	37,500	0.07%	31,500	0.06%	27,500	Decrease
Judo	0.04%	17,200	0.05%	18,700	0.04%	15,100	0.06%	24,500	0.03%	11,800	0.06%	25,200	No change
Taekwondo	0.05%	19,000	0.06%	23,500	0.06%	27,000	0.06%	25,900	0.06%	27,100	0.05%	22,000	No change
Rounders	0.04%	16,500	0.06%	25,900	0.04%	18,000	0.05%	19,900	0.04%	18,300	0.04%	19,300	Decrease
Fencing	0.03%	13,600	0.04%	15,000	0.03%	12,200	0.02%	8,000	0.03%	13,700	0.03%	13,700	No change
Archery	*	*	*	*	0.03%	12,300	0.04%	16,300	0.03%	13,000	0.03%	12,300	*
Baseball & Softball	0.02%	9,300	0.02%	6,700	0.02%	6,600	0.02%	9,100	0.02%	7,200	*	*	*
Waterskiing	0.01%	3,600	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

**Sample size not sufficient (or in case of Angling, no data collected 2006-2008)*

Another key driver underpinning this study is the implicit delivery system required, for most sports, to actually realise and achieve growth in participation. To grow their sport, make it more accessible to more people, and sustain this growth, an NGB requires the collaboration of networks, organisations, and individuals at the local level, particularly voluntary sports clubs (VSCs). This is a concern for community sport insomuch as the governance arrangements for the Games Legacy (and thus for community sport) tend to follow a hierarchical, top-down process (see Figure 1.1). In this model of governance, government departments agree the precise definition of policy objectives and how they should be implemented. Non-Governmental Public Bodies such as Sport England agree the rules upon which resources will be allocated, provide support to NGBs, allocate resources, and then measure and evaluate the impact of their investment. NGBs develop their Whole Sport Plans detailing what, how and where the plans will be implemented.

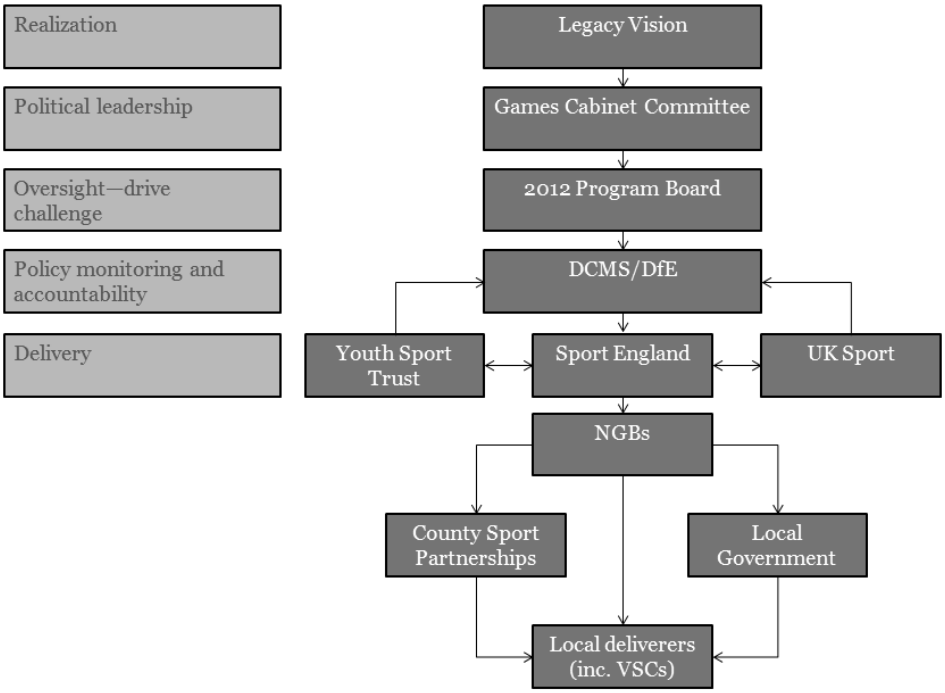

Figure 1.1 Governance arrangements for the 2012 Games Legacy (source: adapted from DCMS, 2008)

The primary cause for concern emerges at the delivery or implementation stage particularly in the relation between NGBs, CSPs, local authorities and local deliverers (such as VSCs). Here, VSCs (and others) are expected to deliver plans which they have had little, if any, involvement in developing. Moreover, many VSCs have been found to lack awareness of community sport policy aspirations and, when advised of

these aspirations, respond either with a resistant or indifferent attitude (Harris *et al.*, 2009; May *et al.*, 2012). This study will give this issue greater attention, specifically the awareness that CSPs and NGBs have regarding this tension, and more importantly, the strategies that CSPs and NGBs are utilising to increase participation in sport and reduce drop-out from sport amongst young people.

The final rationale for this study is the government's stated intention to replace the traditional 'Westminster model' of governance and facilitate local-level governance through local partnerships and networks—thus redistributing power from the state to society (Cabinet Office, 2011). Supporting this neo-liberal position the government have launched a range of ideas, initiatives and government bills such as the Big Society, local community ownership or asset transfer, and the localism bill to empower local communities to drive and achieve social change (*ibid*, 2011). However, the extent to which these ideas truly reflect the transference of power to local communities remains open to debate. Within this context, this study will seek to analyse the perceptions and attitudes of key actors involved in the policy system to assess whether decentralisation is rhetoric or reality.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2, Theorising the policy process, sets out the study's theoretical framework and examines macro-, meso- and micro-level theory. This begins with a review of three notable macro-level theories of the state – pluralism, Marxism and corporatism. The chapter then reviews meso-level policy analysis frameworks, with emphasises on frameworks that meet certain conditions relating to stability, completeness, relevance and analysis over the medium term (10 years). Using these criteria, four frameworks have been identified and reviewed: institutional analysis, multiple streams, advocacy coalitions, and policy networks. The final section of the chapter focuses on micro-level theory, specifically a review of implementation and partnership. This is an important addition as it enables magnification of certain aspects of the policy process that are not given detailed attention yet are important in relation to the aims of the study. The chapter does not conclude with recommendations regarding the most suitable theoretical approach for analysing the community sport policy process. Instead, the evaluation of theory takes place retrospectively after the empirical exercise and is discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

Chapter 3 highlights the study's research strategy and the methods used to achieve this. It sets out the differing philosophical assumptions associated with research and details the study's philosophical paradigm. The chapter demonstrates a logical flow in the methodological decision-making process, from the ontological assumptions underpinning the study through to the methods that are used to gather data. The chapter underlines the strategic-relational view of structure and agency, which considers the role of the strategic actor against the broader strategic context within which they act. It also emphasises the value of the case study method in unpacking the complexities of social and political life, allowing for a thick description of actor's realities (Geertz, 1973).

Chapter 4, The Government policy context, follows the recent evolution of government policy. The chapter is divided into two parts, with the first section tracing the evolution of community sport policy in England. This gives particular consideration to key political and policy landmarks that have both shaped and represented community sport as well as more recent developments that resulted from the 2010 change in political leadership. The second section provides a contextual overview of broader political concerns regarding modernisation and partnerships and contrasts this with community sport policy. The aim here is to demonstrate the broader political and policy framework that community sport works within as well as highlighting how broader government policy can influence sport policy as well as showing how, at times, sport policy appears to contradict broader government policy.

The evidence from the three cases is presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Each chapter starts by considering the organisational and geographic context of the CSP case. It then presents a range of evidence in relation to the range of factors that shape the CSP-NGB relationship, the role of CSPs-NGBs in the policy process, and the beliefs, attitudes and experiences of CSP/NGB agents regarding the community sport policy process. The dimensions are particularly important as they address the research objectives directing the study. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key themes and distinctive features of each case.

The final chapter, the Discussion, directly addresses the research objectives presented in Chapter 1. The first section utilises the theoretical, methodological and contextual insights to illuminate the empirical findings. In particular, attention is given to the predominant themes across cases or the distinctive nature of themes in relation to specific cases and/or particular organisations. The second section provides a more detailed evaluation of the study's theoretical insights. More specifically, the empirical exercise is used as a guide to ascertain the utility of the four meso-level frameworks in analysing the community sport policy process. A reflection on the research process, including the potential for future research in community sport, is addressed in the third and final section of the chapter

Chapter 2
Theorising the policy process

Introduction

Theory relevant to policy analysis can largely be divided into three categories: macro, micro and meso-level (Houlihan, 2013). Macro (or grand) theory refers to theories covering a broad social landscape and attempts to explain social life, history or human experience (Turner & Boyns, 2006). Notable examples of grand theory and its application to sport include pluralism, Marxist theory and feminist theory (cf. Houlihan, 2013). Micro-level theory attempts to explain more specific issues, decisions and organisations, usually involving local cases. Meso-level analysis is focussed on national organisations, specifically government departments, Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), NGBs and other interest groups. Theory at the meso-level aims to bring the processes of sport policymaking into sharp relief whilst also explaining policy stability and change (*ibid*, 2009).

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study, focussing on macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis. However, it should be noted that the principal level of analysis will be at the meso-level due to the study's central focus on national-level policy and the relationship between national-level NGBs of sport and sub-regional CSPs (Houlihan, 2005; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Marsh & Stoker, 1995). The chapter begins with an evaluation of three theories of the state: namely pluralism, Marxism and corporatism. This is followed by an overview of power and power relations between the state and other key actors. The chapter then provides an evaluation of the conceptual innovations in policy analysis, focussing on meso level analytical frameworks that are believed to be useful in unravelling sports policy. The chapter will conclude with an exploration of the key tenets of implementation theory as well as an overview of the partnership literature.

Macro-level theories of the state

It is important for this study to consider macro-level theory insofar as it recognises that meso-level frameworks are founded on macro-level assumptions. It also focuses on the state and examines power relations between the state and society as a whole (Hill, 1997). That said, macro theory is exceptionally broad and it is beyond the scope

of this thesis to analyse all available theories. Therefore, this section will summarise the dominant macro-level theories, in particular those that share a clear relationship with the meso-level theories reviewed below, namely pluralism, Marxism and corporatism.

Pluralism

Pluralism is a broad construct and involves many different interpretations (see Smith, 1995: 209-227). It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a review of all interpretations here. However, it is important to provide a summary of classic pluralism. This is most commonly thought to emanate from Dahl's 1961 work, *Who governs?* Classic pluralism recognises and values diversity in social, institutional and ideological practices (Vincent, 1987). Thus, the reality of the modern, liberal state is that 'power in society is dispersed among the politically active citizenry', and no single group, class or organisation can dominate (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Houlihan, 1991: 155). Normative pluralism asserts that political decisions are made in the interests of the public they serve. Given the competitive nature of modern society, entwined with 'complexity and divisions of interest', decisions will never entirely be in the interests of the public or achieve 'the ideals of Athenian democracy' (Held, 1996: 201). In this regard, the classical pluralist position posits that interest groups have more dominant influence over governing decisions than the electoral process (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). Interest groups are the most commonly noted feature of the pluralist perspective and their influence is primarily manifest by applying pressure and lobbying government decision makers, as was seen to be the case with the NGB lobby for greater responsibility pre-2008 in the leadership of the community sport policy process. Such interest groups do not necessarily represent the public view but are comprised of agents who pursue particular agendas tightly aligned to their own interests.

Importantly then, pluralists focus on groups, and the relationship between the state—at differing levels—and these groups (Ham & Hill, 1993). Whilst politics and decisions may be primarily directed by government, pluralism acknowledges that many non-governmental agencies use their resources to exert influence on government (Connolly, 1995). In this respect, groups form an important part of the political process, insomuch as politics can be seen as a means by which conflicting

interests can be resolved (Smith, 1995). Indeed, in order to function effectively, Smith argued the need for 'some degree of consensus concerning the fundamental values of a society shared by competing groups' (1995: 213). Thus, government can be viewed not as the creator of grand majorities, but as a way of maintaining 'steady appeasement of relatively small groups' (Dahl, 1956: 145).

So, at its centre, pluralism is firmly concerned with the distribution of power across the state and non-government agencies and, specifically, the power held by particular interest groups. Consequently, it is important to discuss the implications of power in the context of individual interest groups. The first consideration is that often interest groups are concerned with only a specific issue or small range of issues; therefore, their overall power is limited to a very small sub-section of the state (Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987). These authors continue to argue that even in cases where interest groups do become overly powerful, counter groups are likely to form in order to resist or oppose it (*ibid*, 1987). Interest groups are also likely to have cross-membership between groups, so internal divisions and subsequent weaknesses are inevitable (Held, 1996). As a result, power tends to be dispersed across a wide range of units, a situation viewed positively by classical pluralists (Jordan, 1990). Finally, Smith (1995) suggested an interpretation of pluralism which views the policy-making process as open, with no particular interests being permanently excluded—he also warned against mistaking opportunities to express views and consultations for real influence over the resultant policies (*ibid,* 1995).

In recent years, a number of challenges have been made in relation to classical pluralism. First, citizens and groups are not as politically aware as is assumed in pluralist thinking (Bogdanor, 1981). Second, some interests are sufficiently powerful as to restrict the 'openness' of the policy system and therefore prevent issues getting onto the agenda (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970). Third, Lindblom (1977) argued that corporations must be viewed as privileged participants rather than just one of a number of interest groups due to their power and pre-eminent position in directly impacting significant government objectives, namely employment and economic growth. Fourth, Lukes emphasised that Dahl's notion of power, which underpins classical pluralism, is misleading (Lukes 1974). Dahl (1961, 1967) contended that A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would not

otherwise do. Lukes argued that this view of power is one-dimensional and fails to recognise 'the less-visible ways in which a pluralist system may be biased in favour of certain groups and against others' (1974: 179). Power, as an implicit part of the policy process (Giddens, 2006), is a particularly important analytic concept for this thesis and will be given more detailed attention below.

As a result of these criticisms, a number of competing approaches have evolved, the most notable being the neo-pluralist perspective (Held, 1996). The neo-pluralist position maintains a commitment to pluralist values, in particular the view that liberal democracies attempt to satisfy, albeit inadequately, the wants of the masses (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). The discernible difference of this approach is its 'concern to describe political processes more accurately and to take account of the ambiguities and paradoxes in the policy-making process' (Houlihan, 1991: 156). The theory emphasizes the significance of business interests in shaping policy (Held, 1996), and acknowledges 'active participation' of the state, rather than control by citizens (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). Moreover, neo-pluralism provides a more realistic account of the complexities of the policy process (Held, 1996), where piecemeal change, bargaining, compromise and negotiation all play integral roles (Houlihan, 1991). Thus, neo-pluralism can be seen to illuminate the nature of the relationship between actors and the strategies that actors adopt to influence policy, as well as identify the resources available to different actors involved in the negotiations (Houlihan, 1991). In this respect, neo-pluralism starts to call into question the principles, features and conditions of democracy (Held, 1996)—a similar position to that of Marxism.

Marxism

Class structure and class struggle are key features of Marxist literature. In any state where there is private ownership of capital, those who own or control the means of production form a dominant or ruling class (Marx, 1964). The dominant class exercises both economic and political power over the working class in order to further its accumulation of capital (Vincent, 1987).

Marxist theory can be divided into two strands commonly referred to as instrumentalist and structuralist (Held, 1996; Pickvance, 1995; Taylor, 1995). The

instrumentalist account views the state and its policy as being controlled by the dominant class in order to promote their interests and preserve their power (Milliband, 1982). Indeed, a distinctive aspect of instrumentalism is that capitalists, state bureaucrats and political leaders are grouped into a single cohesive group unified 'by their common social origin, similar lifestyles, values and by the existence of numerous networks and forums where coordinated strategies for public policy are hammered out' (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987: 237).

In sharp contrast, the structuralist approach distinguishes the state from the ruling class, stressing the state's 'relative autonomy' from the control of the dominant class (Poulantzas, 1972). However, it is still 'constrained by those who own and control the means of production' (Taylor, 1995: 249) as the state's key function is to preserve 'the political unity of the ruling class' (Houlihan, 1991: 154). This can only be achieved if the state is in a position to mediate between the various class factions, although the state is highly likely to support and act in the interests of capitalism (*ibid*, 1991). However, Poulantzas (1972) contended that the structural mechanisms of the state ensure that the dominant class remains organised; the state presents itself as neutral and as having 'relative autonomy', but in reality acts in the interests of capitalism. This is in line with Gramsi (1971) who highlighted the use of cultural and ideational leadership approaches to produce hegemonic rule with the consent of the subordinate class. Conversely, Offe's (1975, 1984) neo-Marxist writings offer a different perspective of the relationship between the state and capitalism. He suggested that the state must maintain the illusion of impartial arbiter—particularly in relation to class interests (Offe, 1984). However, at the same time, state finance is directly affected by private accumulation, which it does not directly control (Offe, 1984). This brings into focus the 'institutional self-interest of the state', particularly with regard to strengthening the capitalist economy. Such efforts help to support the continuation and development of the state (Held, 1996). Thus, it is possible to observe a convergence of theoretical thinking between elements of pluralism and Marxism (Held, 1996; Marsh & Stoker, 1995).

Corporatism

Whilst corporatism can be viewed as the least developed of the macro-theories reviewed, Cawson (1986) argued that it offers three specific perspectives of the

interaction between public and private sectors: (i) that which is primarily focused on the economy (Winkler, 1976), (ii) that which views the state as taking on specific forms of representation and intervention (Jessop, 1990), and (iii) the most commonly applied perspective, which attempts to illuminate the relationship between government and interest groups in specific sectors (Smith, 1993). These relations are a result of the increased complexity of industrial society, combined with the concentration of power within particular groups, which forces the state to incorporate groups into the policy process in order to ensure economic growth and avoid class conflict (*ibid*, 1993). In addition, corporatism refers to the relations between groups and political authority with restrictionist implications for economic policy (Bealey, 1998). In this context, those in favour of corporatist solutions want to reduce confrontation and conflict, while those opposed view conflict as inevitable and welcome the prospect of competition (*ibid*, 1998).

Schmitter (1974) contended that the key feature of corporatism was the existence of, so-called 'peak' organisations that share a special relationship with the state. Peak organisations enjoyed a privileged position where they could access the inner workings of the state and discuss the creation and formulation of policy, not to mention be in a strong position in discussions relating to policy implementation (Birch, 2007). To clarify, Schmitter viewed corporatism as

> ... a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports (1974: 93-94).

Birch (2007), in support of the primarily economic view held by Schmitter, argued that corporatism involved a tripartite relationship between government and peak organisations either representing business or labour at the national level. This is where the views of corporatism differ most, specifically in relation to (i) the scope of the theory, (ii) the interests represented by peak organisations, and (iii) the degree to which the theory is applied. For example, Cawson (1978), and Cawson & Saunders (1981) contended that 'corporate relations tend to characterise the politics of

production, whilst competitive politics dominate the politics of consumption (in Ham & Hill, 1993: 39). Cawson (1978) argued against a single economically-focused theory, stating that the various units of the capitalist state are subject to different political influences. Thus, Cawson's view of corporatism is broader, acknowledging corporatist relations beyond those groups purely focused on business or labour, as well as considering local- as well as national-level relations (1978).

Clearly, corporatism shares similarities with pluralism, particularly the neo-pluralist position assumed by Lindblom (1977). Whilst not reviewed here, certain strains of corporatism are closely aligned with elitism, specifically the focus on a small number of elite agencies who maintain influence over the policy agenda (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987). However, Birch (2007) contended that the acknowledged presence of peak organisations separates it from both pluralist and elitist perspectives.

The following section discusses in more depth the concept of power which is central to both macro- and meso- level theorising.

The concept of power

As Lukes acknowledged, 'thinking clearly about power is not easy and it gets more difficult, offering more opportunities for confusion when we try to think about power in social life, not least because we all talk and write about it … in confusingly different ways' (2005: 70-71). Despite the definitional debates associated with power, many researchers turn to Weber's original conception as a starting point. This definition permits a broader articulation of power as both 'power over' and 'power to'. Weber (1976) defined power as the 'opportunity to have one's will prevail within a social relationship, also against resistance, no matter what this opportunity is based on'[3]. Thus, power can be viewed as a 'relational phenomenon in that it cannot be *grasped* without first identifying a social relationship' (Berenskoetter, 2007: 4). This social relationship is viewed as the environment where an individual's will is formed and the behaviour that takes place is 'adjusted and oriented towards each other' (Weber, 1976: 13). Second, it can be understood as an opportunity or potential which does not

[3] Many English texts use the translation of Weber found in Dahl. However, this translation has been offered as Dahl's translation is criticised for understanding the German 'chance' as probability, whereas Berenskoetter argued that Weber more likely meant opportunity

have to be realized; Weber's orientation provides for power as both a capability and an effect (Berenskoetter, 2007). Also, the acceptance that resistance need not be a feature of all forms of power leaves us with a conception involving both resistance and cooperation (Weber, 1976 in Berenskoetter, 2007), enveloping both 'power over' and 'power to'.

The 'power over' conceptualisation assumes that A holds power over B (Dahl, 1961). Thus, power is a zero-sum enterprise in that there is limited power distributed between different actors (Goehler, 2000). This perspective sees A using their power in order to achieve their interests, whilst B may use the power at their disposal to resist this, either overtly or covertly (Kenny, 1975). In this regard, the study of power is about the achievement, or otherwise, of specific outcomes (Lukes, 2005). The primary authors in the 'power over' school are Dahl, Bachrach & Baratz, and Lukes. Each has developed a specific conceptualisation based on differing ontological and epistemological foundations. The initial one-dimensional view of power was developed by Dahl and is often referred to as the pluralist view of power (Lukes, 2005). Dahl was primarily fixed on the visible exercise of power in specific decision making processes (1956). In particular, actors working in diverse policy systems have very specific and transparent interests which are acted upon rationally in negotiations and conflicts within political arenas (*ibid*, 1956). Focused on behaviour, decision-making, preferences and overt conflict, the one-dimensional view sees power as intentional and active (Lukes, 2005). In this sense, power could be measured by examining the extent to which various actors are able to achieve their stated aims (Polsby, 1963 in Lukes, 2005).

The second dimension of power was primarily developed by Bachrach & Baratz, who criticised the one-dimensional view as being limited by its focus on overt decision making (1970). Whilst they accepted the one-dimensional view as a partial explanation, they contended that power has two faces (Lukes, 2005). The second face of power underscores what Bachrach & Baratz term the 'mobilization of bias'; in other words, the systematic bias which influences the status given to various issues (Parsons, 1995). Thus, the exercise of power in this second dimension is less transparent or not as visible as the first. The exercise of power is more discrete, hidden by the debate of what issues shall be included and more importantly by

ignoring any reference to those issues that may threaten the interests of privileged agents involved in the policy process (Lukes, 2005; Scott, 2001).

Lukes' (1974) critique of the second dimension argued that it is inadequate to assume that power is conceived exclusively through overt or observable behaviour—thus, it is unacceptable to simply conceive of power through a focus on behaviourism. In a move away from positivist discourse, Lukes pointed to the need for a more nuanced view which would consider how A exercises power over B 'by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants' (2005: 27). This third, more insidious form of power exists in the control and manipulation of ideas (Scott, 2001), following along the lines of the Gramscian notion of hegemony. For example, political leaders and the mass media are identified as commonly exercising power to keep certain issues from reaching the political agenda (Lukes, 2005). In this way, political leaders and the mass media propagate a false consciousness (Goverde *et al.,* 2000), shaping and manipulating perceptions, cognitions and preferences, thereby preventing grievances from occurring as agents are either unaware of alternative solutions or view the order of things as natural (Lorenzi, 2006). Importantly, the absence of grievances then does not necessarily denote consensus; it could equally point to the manipulative and insidious exercise of power. As Lukes asserted, 'the collective forces and social arrangements … the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups and practice of institutions' (2005: 28) influence our preferences. Thus, 'preferences can themselves be the effect of the exercise of power' (Isaac, 1987: 13).

However, the conceptualisations of power presented thus far have been criticised for over-emphasising power as a purely conflictual phenomena or focusing wholly on the power of one over another (Haugaard, 2000). In addition, other criticisms have accentuated the inability of Lukes' work to empirically establish real interests (Young, 1988), critiqued its overly agency-focused conceptualisation (Hayward, 2006), and questioned its overly subjective and 'condescending conception' (Hay, 1997: 48). As a result Lukes added a further two chapters to the 2005 edition of 'Power: A Radical View', which readily acknowledges some of the inadequacies of the original edition. He addresses criticisms that the original text was unsatisfactory due to the over-emphasis of domination and the lack of attention to the multiple ways in which power can be "productive, transformative, authoritative, and compatible with

dignity" (Luke, 2005: 109). Still, he goes on to defend his original thesis and leaves the remainder of the text unaltered.

In contrast, a number of scholars have approached power as a process that affects outcomes (Habermas, 1986), and in particular as the capacity for action (Arendt, 1986), and/or harnessing the potential for collective action as opposed to the domination of one actor over another (Goehler, 2000). Parsons (1963) developed a particular line of enquiry exploring the consensual nature of power. In addition, this contrasting notion of power as capacity, collective, and consensual is viewed as a 'positive-sum game' where the actions of rational actors benefit not only themselves but others (Parsons, 1963, Scott, 2001). Indeed, in cases of collective power, Goehler (2000) argued that power becomes self-reinforcing, thus the more power is exercised the greater the drive for more intensive collective effort which in turn enhances levels of power.

However, Lukes has argued that these conceptualisations of power, whilst 'rationally defensible ... are of less value' than those he proposed (2005: 34). In particular, the 'power to' proposition is challenged as it is viewed as overly normative (Goehler, 2000; Habermas, 1986), ignoring the 'power over aspect'. As a result, 'the conflictual aspect of power, the fact that it is exercised over people—disappears altogether from view' (Lukes, 2005: 34). Thus, the central feature of power relations—that is, an interest in securing people's compliance by overcoming and averting their opposition, is lost in the 'power to' theory (Lukes, 2005).

Thus, it is plausible then to present power as a dichotomy—we accept either the coercive or consensual interpretation. Considerately, both Lukes and Parsons offered insights where the researcher can begin to integrate these concepts and present a more thorough, inclusive representation of power. First, Lukes argued that Parsons and Arendt's commitment to consensual behaviour could be included in the third dimension of power, as opposed to simply replacing it. Luke's argued that 'members of a group acting in concert are exercising power', viewing this as 'co-operative activity where individuals or groups significantly affect one another in the absence of conflict of interests between them', and categorised it as influence within his

conceptualisation of the third dimension (Lukes, 2005: 35). Second, Parsons noted the need to consider both perspectives, offering

> … a resolution of the old dilemma as to whether power is "essentially" a phenomenon of coercion or of consensus. It is both, precisely because it is a phenomenon which integrates a plurality of factors and outputs of political effectiveness and is not to be identified with any one of them (1963: 258).

Furthermore, Foucault offered a conceptualisation of power which pulls on both the coercive or repressive form of power as well as the cooperative, productive elements discussed above. Fundamentally for Foucault, 'power is not a thing or a capacity which can be owned by the State, social class or particular individuals' (O'Farrell, 2005: 99). Rather, power is omnipresent and is located at the micro-level of social relations between agents (individuals and groups) (Faubion, 2000). Thus, power in Foucault's conception is constructed as a pervasive, ubiquitous feature of all social relations (Hindness, 1996). In his more recent accounts of power and resistance, Foucault articulated power as a way of changing people's conduct or a mode of action upon the actions of others (Foucault, 1982: 341; O'Farrell, 2005: 99). Importantly in this conception, he argued that 'agents will always seek to modify the actions of others, whilst assuming that agents at the same time will resist such attempts' (O'Farrell, 2005: 109). Thus, power can only be exercised over free subjects, as 'there is no power without potential refusal or revolt' (Foucault, 1981: 324).

In addition, Foucault distinguished his ideas on power by pointing to those notions of power purely residing in the State (Foucault, 1977). This aspect of Foucault's work is highly relevant to this study as it draws attention to the 'complex micro-relations of power at every level of the social body' (O'Farrell, 2005: 100). In other words, individual agents in CSPs, NGBs, local authorities and sports clubs are connected to one another in myriad ways, so the policies and 'grand strategy of the State rely on the cooperation of a whole network of local and individualised tactics of power in which everybody is involved' (O'Farrell, 2005: 100).

The third and final point from Foucault draws on his broader view of power as not only coercion and resistance, but also productive in that it can support cooperation,

contribute to and generate knowledge and further cultural order (Faubion, 2000). Of particular interest is Foucault's notion of 'the *microphysics of power'* and '*capillary power'* where 'power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives' (Foucault, 1975: 39). It is this form of omnipresent power, which touches all individuals, that Foucault views as productive rather than repressive (O'Farrell, 2005). This account of power has been criticised by Lukes (2005) for being overly normative and not permitting individuals the freedom embedded within his third dimension. In support of Lukes, Dowding criticized Foucault for an "idealist' model which views 'all social relationships in the same relativistic light and where all—dominant and dominated alike—are subject to the same power relations and moral responsibility' (2006: 136). That said, Foucault's approach does give attention to both coercion and cooperation. It also offers tools that help to better understand the tactics of power at the local level and the implications of this in terms of the CSP-NGB relationship. In short, the broader notion of power is inseparable from the policy process. It plays a critical role in the more obvious range of factors that directly shape and constrain the policy process, for example the easy to view arena of interests that are harnessed in the formulation of policy. At the same time it plays an important role in the more discrete mechanisms that influence agent behaviour and network interactions. Thus, it is important for policy analysis tools to give explicit attention to power and the way in which it affects the policy process. This will be considered further in the following section.

Analytical Frameworks of the Policy Process

Policy processes and systems are being reported as becoming increasingly complex (de Leon & Vogenbeck, 2007; Sabatier, 2007), challenged by a range of variables that singularly or collectively disrupt and, in some cases, derail the policy process. These variables include (i) the myriad actors involved in the policy process; (ii) the time required to make, implement and evaluate policy; (iii) the various programmes, levels of government and the impact of programmes on a range of issues; (iv) technical disputes concerning the nature of the problem, its causes and the likely impact of alternative policy ideas, and (v) the authoritative coercion used to secure support and validate policies (Sabatier, 2007: 3-4). Such wide-ranging (and in some cases discrete) variables make it extremely difficult for the analyst to look for and see

everything. The risk is that analysis is shallow, incomplete or inaccurate. In assessing approaches to policy analysis, Sabatier presented two strategies: the first is a 'method of common sense', whereby the analyst's world view is informed in an 'implicit, ad hoc' manner, based principally on prior experience (2007: 5). The alternative strategy relies wholeheartedly on science; 'its fundamental ontological assumption is that a smaller set of critical relationships underlies the bewildering complexity of phenomena' (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Fundamentally, this science-based approach, whilst overly positivist for some social scientists, is designed to identify errors, self-correct and drive the development of coherent and logical theories (Sabatier, 1999). Theoretical frameworks are therefore helpful in providing a systematic response to this complexity, offering the analyst 'the very tools to understand the broader questions of public policy' (Birkland, 2005: 14).

In addition, analytical and normative theorising plays an important role in allowing the researcher to move beyond rational models of policy making and investigate critical issues such as belief systems, principles relating to collective action, and the broad range of actors that contribute to specific policy systems (Sabatier, 2007). Houlihan (2005) demonstrated, through his adaptation of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the value of theoretical approaches in identifying patterns of behaviour amongst interest groups, the impact of exogenous factors (e.g. recession), dominant and service specific policy paradigms and the way in which power affects policy outputs and outcomes. Theory offers the possibility of a richer, deeper understanding of the policy process, facilitating what Birkland referred to as a 'healthy criticism' of those aspects that do little to address the broader public interest (2005: 22).

Whilst the final chapter of the thesis will include a fuller analysis of the value of each framework, set against the empirical findings, there is a need for a set of criteria to undertake a preliminary evaluation of the frameworks' potential and, thus, their inclusion in the theoretical review. To support this, previous work from Sabatier (1997), who developed criteria for the selection of frameworks for non-specific policy analysis, has been combined with Houlihan (2005), who developed a criteria to select frameworks for the analysis of sports-related policy. Synthesis of these two approaches offers a clear and logical set of principles to support a preliminary evaluation.

First, any framework should be able to sufficiently explain both policy stability and change (John, 1998, Sabatier, 1999). Houlihan stressed that this capacity to explain change has particular import in the sports domain due to the relatively quick turnover of sports policy in many industrial countries (2005:167). The second criterion is the ability to identify and clarify a range of aspects associated with the policy process. Too many frameworks focus attention on discrete elements or stages of the process. They lack a holistic view, and many are deficient in terms of examining the interrelationship between actors, aspects or stages (Houlihan, 2005). Sabatier supported this stating that 'each framework must be a positive theory seeking to explain much of the policy process (1999: 8). The third criterion is relevance to contemporary policymaking, ensuring that frameworks have been applied to a wide range of policy disciplines (Houlihan, 2005) and appropriately scrutinised and tested by policy scholars in order to confirm their value as models and frameworks that can sufficiently analyse the policy process (Sabatier, 1999, 2007). The fourth and final criterion relates to time, insomuch as a certain number of years need to pass to reasonably distinguish minor adjustments in policy (Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier, 2007). In addition, a significant time span is a prerequisite when aiming to identify causal drivers and other explanatory factors (Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier, 1999). Therefore, both Houlihan (2005) and Sabatier (1997; 2007) recommended that any framework should facilitate a medium term (~10 years) analysis of policy change. In the following subsections, four dominant frameworks will be outlined and evaluated against the above criteria.

Institutional Analysis

Institutions are central to the policy process as the arena within which policymaking takes place (John, 1998). Institutional analysis has therefore emerged as a robust theoretical paradigm within political science that focuses on the influence of institutions in defining the behaviour of actors through rules, regulations and norms (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Peters, 1999). Taking this view into account, there is a need to develop and refine our understanding of institutions as independent and intervening variables in the process (Houlihan, 2005: 170). Analysis of the critical role of institutions in shaping sports policy is an area previously addressed by Green (2003), Henry (2001), Houlihan (2005), and Houlihan & White (2002). However, for some, institutions are a highly abstract and invisible element of the policy

environment, meaning that the term requires clear definition (Ostrom, 1999). Institutions may be formally described in legislation, policy or procedure or informally viewed as norms, operating practices or habits (*ibid*, 1999). Individually, or nested in a set of more formal arrangements, they are mechanisms for coordinating behaviour and activities amongst two or more individuals (Hurwicz, 1994). Houlihan (2005) offered clarification, identifying two orientations in the literature that distinguished institutional analysis. The first relates to the importance of institutions as organisational entities (parliament, government departments, non-departmental public bodies, NGBs, Local Authorities etc.). The second is concerned with what Houlihan terms cultural institutionalism (2005:170), which represents shared values, norms and beliefs. This, in particular, gives attention to the social construction of meaning, specifically how specific organisations, interest groups, politicians and others decide their policy preferences (Fischer, 2003).

As a leading scholar in the field of institutional analysis, Ostrom (1999, 2007) through an Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD), viewed the policy process as being centred on an action arena, whereby groups of individuals make decisions over some course of action. Drawn from the political economy field, the framework (Figure 2.1), assumes that processes and outcomes are influenced by variables exogenous to the individual, specifically physical and material conditions, attributes of the community of which actors are part, and rules that create incentives and constraints for certain actions (Ostrom, 1999; 2007).

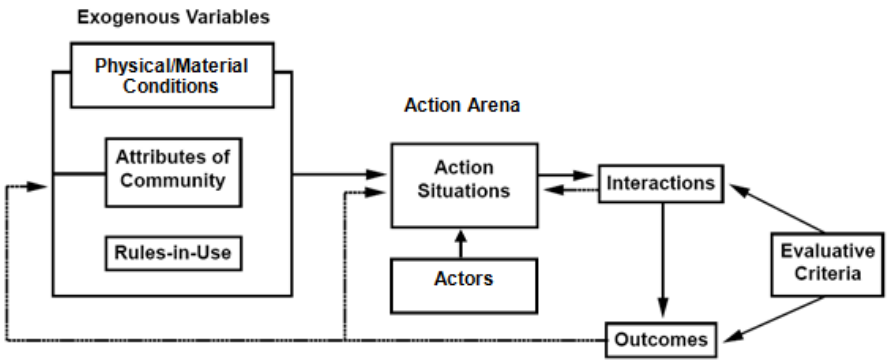

Figure 2.1 Framework for institutional analysis (source: Ostrom, 2007)

Exogenous variables

Polski & Ostrom advised that the institutional framework allows the analyst to work forward through each stage, or work backward through the flow diagram to re-affirm

or revise policy objectives or evaluate policy outcomes (1999: 7). This illuminates the factors that affect action arenas and policy outputs and aids in the organisation and explanation of actor behaviour and action in specific policy systems (Polksi & Ostrom, 1999). The IAD framework is based on the principle of 'bounded rationality'; in other words, the idea that individuals will try to maximise utility but are constrained by cognitive limitations and what Vincent Ostrom (2007) termed 'socio-psychological limitations' (access to resources, knowledge, social influence). The framework enables the analyst to consider exogenous factors and the role that these factors play in influencing and shaping actor behaviour (Ostrom, 2007). Thus, whilst we may presume that actors involved in policymaking engage in rational decision making processes based on sound evidence, this is not always the case (Polski & Ostrom, 1999). Three exogenous factors are reported to significantly influence behaviour amongst actors in the action arena: physical and material conditions, attributes of community, and rules-in-use. Physical and material settings refer to the physical and human resources required to produce goods and services (Polski & Ostrom, 1999). This includes production inputs such as capital costs and workforce costs (i.e. labour and training) as well as sources of funding and delivery mechanisms. Factors such as availability of funds, training, and delivery mechanisms can significantly affect action situations and constrain behaviour in the action arena. For example, in the sport policy system, many actors are faced with decisions regarding allocation of resources within policy subsystems, for example school and community sport. Value judgements about the relative importance of the subsystem will influence resource allocation as well as actor behaviour within the action arena. The attributes of a community that directly affect policy include the demography of the community, the accepted norms about policy activities, the level of understanding amongst participants about policy activities and the extent to which community preferences are homogenous (Ostrom, 2007). As Polski & Ostrom noted, investigating community and cultural attributes is notoriously difficult, and the validity and reliability of findings are frequently controversial (1999: 14). However, the same scholars strongly encouraged analysts to make an effort to understand the cultural context, citing the vast literature that sees policy failure primarily as a result of inconsistencies with cultural norms and routines. A notable example is the lack of understanding of cultural norms within voluntary sport and the implications for community sport policy. This includes ambitious targets for voluntary sport without

taking account of the attributes of the voluntary sport community or addressing the previous literature identifying the key issues confronting the voluntary sports community (see Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006, Harris *et al.*, 2009; Nichols & James, 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2003).

The types of rules applied are important in 'explaining policy related actions, interactions and outcomes (Polski & Ostrom, 1999: 15). Despite rules being seen as abstract phenomena (*ibid*, 1999), it is possible to define several types of rules-in-use that can be seen to structure behaviour within the action arena, see Table 2.1. These rules demonstrate the range of variables that can influence actor behaviour as well as highlight the role of the institution in determining the action of agents.

Table 2.1 Rules-in-use (source: Ostrom, 2007)

Rules	**Explanation**	**Examples in sport**
Entry and exit rules	Determine the quantity of individuals involved within an action arena and the restrictions placed on them in terms of decision making	Sport England conditions of grant-aid applied to the whole sport plan process
Position rules	Define the set of positions or roles that participants assume in an action situation	Decisions taken by the CSP regarding the structure of its board and its core team
Authority rules	Specify the actions participants in given positions may take	The job descriptions and work programmes of individual agents working within CSPs and NGBs
Scope rules	Distinguish the possible outcomes and from a subsequent position agree the actors responsible for the outcome	The role of NGB senior management teams in determining who will be responsible for what outcomes
Information rules	Controls what information (type and amount) is available and to who	Sport England's presentation and dissemination of Active People data
Aggregation rules	Establish the capacity of control that an actor can exert within an action situation	The capacity of the CSP to strategically coordinate actions for sport at the sub-regional level
Payoff rules	Determine the costs, payments and sanctions that determine action	The carrot and stick approach of Sport England and the way in which this determines action (to strive for rewards and reduce risk of punishment).

Ostrom (2007) presented the IAD as a multi-tier conceptual map, explaining that part of the framework is primarily concerned with action, patterns of interaction, the resulting outcomes and the evaluation of these outcomes. Action arenas operate at

the operational, collective-choice or constitutional level, with myriad groups of actors involved at each level (Kiser & Ostrom 1982; Ostrom *et al.*, 2004). The operational level involves activities that ordinarily affect society on a day-to-day basis (Ostrom *et al.*, 2004). The actors within this action arena typically involve the community affected by policy and constitutional rules (Imperial & Yandle, 2005). Examples of operational actions in sport might include the task of encouraging CSPs to support clubs in the pursuit of club accreditation standards or delivering more hours of community sports coaching in areas that are likely to help grow participation in community sport. The collective-choice (or policy) level is where rules are created and re-created by decision makers (Ostrom, 2007). The decisions taken at this level affect both the structure of the arena and the operational actions agreed by actors (Ostrom, 2007). Recent examples in community sport include changes in the philosophical foundation of policy. Over the past 20 years, this has also included the frequently shifting sands of prioritising one sports policy objective (i.e. elite or school sport) over another, (i.e. community) and with this, varying levels of commitment to different institutions involved in strategising and implementing policy (particularly the differing priorities and views toward NGBs and Local Authorities). Finally, the rules that govern who is eligible to participate in policy making as well as the rules that govern the policy-making process are established at the constitutional level (Ostrom, 2007). Examples in sport include the Royal Charter bestowed on UK Sport and Sport England.

Patterns of Interaction

Flowing from the action situation is what Ostrom (1997) termed 'patterns of interaction', also referred to as a behavioural consequence of action situations (Rudd, 2004) that allows an examination of how actors involved in the action arena behave (Hess & Ostrom, 2004). A range of issues require consideration when reflecting on patterns of interaction, for example; 'are participants able to gain sufficient information about the structure of the situation, the opportunities they and other participants face, and the costs of diverse action, that they develop increasing trust that the situation helps to generate productive outcomes and in the expected behaviour of others (*ibid*, 2004: 19)?' In a tightly constrained policy environment, with little or no uncertainty, actors have very few strategy options and analysts can make strong inferences and predictions about likely patterns of behaviour (Ostrom,

et al., 2004). However, the majority of policy decisions are less certain and more complex to predict. Rather than entirely independent decisions, individuals make decisions within the context of 'community norms' or they meet with other actors in the situation to solve problems. In these situations, a more diverse range of strategic options exist and strategies can develop and change over time as stakeholders learn about the results of previous actions (Polski & Ostrom, 1999: 23:24). Consequently, analysis in these policy areas is complex and inferences relating to interaction and outcomes are weaker. Furthermore, patterns of interaction can be subject to high levels of conflict, especially in situations where there is change in the actors involved in the action arena, their values and goals (Ostrom, 2007) or perhaps a change in the balance of power between actors. In addition to conflict, interactions may prove unfocussed or muddled, where quick wins or quick-fix solutions take priority over collaborative, more analytical processes (Hess & Ostrom, 2004).

Outcomes

Analysis of outcomes is essentially an analysis of the performance of the policy system (Ostrom, 2007). Just as patterns of interaction flow logically from a rigorous analysis of the actors involved and the action situation, 'insight about outcomes flows from similarly well-founded observations about patterns of interaction' (Hess & Ostrom, 2004: 25). In order to undertake objective assessment, some form of comparator data is required to track change. For example, the Active People dataset provides the community sport policy objective with baseline data at a range of geographic levels (i.e. national, regional, sub-regional and local). This allows performance, in outcome terms (i.e. overall participation levels) to be evaluated and compared. In addition, analysts will want to undertake more extensive evaluation of outcomes together with the anticipated outcomes that could be achieved under alternative institutional arrangements (Polksi & Ostrom, 1999). Ostrom focussed attention on six criteria: (i) economic efficiency, (ii) equity through fiscal equivalence, (iii) redistributional equity, (iv) accountability, (v) conformance to general morality, and (vi) adaptability (2007: 33). Elsewhere, contribution to knowledge has also been included as a key criterion to include in the evaluation of outcomes (Hess & Ostrom, 2004: 21).

Evaluating the framework

Institutional analysis provides a valuable insight into the role of institutional pressures in shaping human incentives and behaviour (Ostrom, 1997). In evaluating the relevance of institutional analysis to sports policy, Houlihan (2005) highlighted the potential of the approach to challenge the pluralist doctrine that views organisations as establishments in which politics occur, rather than exogenous variables that determine policy. Institutional analysis illuminates the behaviour of actors and the structures in which they operate (Hall, 1986).

Despite the strength of the framework, there are substantial criticisms regarding its ability to analyse aspects of the policy process (Houlihan, 2005). Campbell (2004) argued that the framework lacks a theoretical foundation in institutional change and fails to clarify the underlying causal factors behind change. An example is the framework's inability to consider internal and strategic factors when explaining institutional change, relying instead on an explanation based on exogenous factors (Skille, 2008). This led Houlihan (2005) to conclude that institutional analysis was severely limited in explaining policy stability and change. In contrast, its strengths include its consideration of rules and norms on individual incentives (Rudd, 2004), its examination of criteria that influences institutional performance (Imperial & Yandle, 2005), its multiple levels of analysis at different levels of rule making (Imperial & Yandle, 2005; Ostrom, 1999), and its ability to examine power and its relation to the policy-making process (Houlihan, 2005; Ostrom, 2007; Skille, 2008). Despite these advantages, Houlihan argued that the framework is limited in relation to the second criterion, essentially as a result of its bias toward structure over agency (2005:171). Further, Houlihan (2005) has criticised institutional approaches for their rational actor approach which 'depends on a vague ideational formulation, or which collapses into a crude form of institutional determinism' (2005: 170). With regards to the third criterion, the framework has been scrutinised and applied in numerous policy systems (see Ostrom, 2007) and deemed useful in concentrating attention on the significant role of organisational and cultural structures on policymaking (Houlihan, 2005; Ostrom, 2007). In this regard, with organisational and cultural context a central tenet of the framework, institutional analysis is well-equipped to meet the requirements of the final criterion, providing a framework that

can adequately manage and analyse policy over the medium term (Houlihan, 2005; Ostrom, 2007; Sabatier, 2007).

In summary, whilst institutional analysis offers clear strengths, particularly in relation to organisation, culture and norms it fails to address (i) the degree to which institutions impact the policy process; (ii) the circumstances in which institutions may be more or less important; and (iii) equal consideration of agency alongside structure. Further, the framework is seen as an overly complex analytic model, difficult to apply to real-life situations (Schlager, 2007). Whilst complexity can be overcome, this is far from ideal in policy systems such as sport, particularly UK sport, where there is a long and turbulent past with diverse characteristics, norms and rules and where boundaries with other policy areas, particularly education, health and community cohesion, are blurred (Houlihan & White, 2002).

Multiple Streams Framework

The Multiple Streams (MS) Framework explores the relationship between three sets of interrelated factors contributing to policy agenda setting. In contrast to the dominant rational actor paradigm of other approaches, the MS framework emphasises ambiguity, complexity and randomness in policymaking (Houlihan, 2005). Kingdon (1995) classified the causal factors contributing to policy formation into three streams which run parallel through the policy system. The streams comprise of a *problem stream* consisting of the issues which have been identified and require attention, and two secondary streams encompassing prospective solutions to the problem—the *policy stream* and the *politics stream,* independent to the other streams and primarily concerned with politics and public opinion. The MS framework asserts that policy formulation is a result of the confluence of these streams at specific stages in time, rather than being dependent on the power of interests (John, 1998).

Windows are opened by significant problems or events that may occur in the political stream and this encourages policy change, such as that in political leadership, or by a 'focusing event' (Zahariadis, 2007) that highlights policy failures and provides opportunities for policy learning (Birkland, 2005). The opening of a policy window can be exploited by advocates of proposals to divert attention to specific problems in

order to raise an issue on the agenda (Kingdon, 1995). Birkland (2005) used the example of the impact of 9/11 events upon airline security and regulations to demonstrate the 'coupling' of the problem, policy and politics streams, creating a policy window or opportunity for policy change.

In a sporting context, one can look to the clarification of sport policy objectives brought about in early 2008, by (i) rising levels of childhood and adult obesity being reported in the media, (ii) reported increases in school sports participation, improved Olympic and World Championship results but declining (or, at best, stagnant) adult community sports participation, (iii) declining sports club membership, (iv) a change in the Secretary of State for Culture and Sport (Jowell to Purnell) and Minister for Sport (Caborn to Sutcliffe); (v) the need for a high-profile, high-impact legacy as part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; and (vi) a very powerful NGB lobby galvanised by the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR). Here, as Buamgartner & Jones (1993) argue, the chance of policy change is more likely due to what they term 'focussing events' in each of the streams and the resultant impact of these on the relationships in a policy arena, the way in which they might attract negative attention to existing policy as well as provide opportunities for policy learning. The MS framework is based on five structural elements: problem, policies, politics, policy windows and policy entrepreneurs (Figure 2.2).

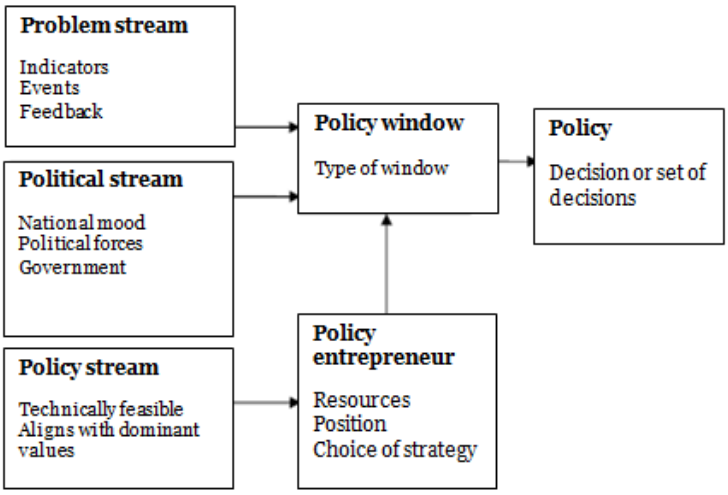

Figure 2.2 Multiple streams framework (source: Zahariadis, 2007)

Problem stream

The problem stream consists of issues and conditions which some actors wish to view as problems that require attention (Kingdon, 1995). These issues are often raised through indicators such as the release of statistics (obesity or Active People statistics, for example), events (Olympic expenditure) and feedback from policies (unrealistic participation targets). The particular issue may not be seen as a problem by all actors involved in the policy system and on occasions the phenomena can be ambiguous or difficult to define (Zahariadis, 2007). In addition, actor's values and ideological beliefs will shape their view of certain phenomena. Therefore, it is likely that actors will try to advocate or even manipulate the definition of the problem, presenting it in such a way that promotes their interest (*ibid*, 2007).

Indicators can be monitored either routinely or through special studies (Zahariadis, 2007). For example, data from the Active People survey is completed annually to assess a range of variables including participation, volunteering and club membership across different communities. These indicators can be used to assess the magnitude of conditions as well as drive discussion about the scope for change (Zahariadis, 2007). Focusing events are a further trigger for opening policy windows by drawing attention to problematic conditions (Birkland, 2005). Attention is typically set by media or policy entrepreneurs who direct attention to specific evaluative dimensions of particular problems—an unrealistic target to achieve 70% of the English population as active, for example (see DCMS, 2002). Finally, feedback from previous policies will highlight which interventions have been successful and which have been unsuccessful (Zahariadis, 2007). Whilst a small number of journalistic case studies may exist, sport has to do much more to embed robust evaluation into the design and delivery of interventions and ensure a reliable source of information about what works in terms of increasing participation in sport.

Policy stream

The policy stream consists of ideas conceptualised by coalitions which compete for attention within policy networks. Zahariadis reported this as a 'soup of ideas that compete to win acceptance in policy networks' (2007: 72). In other words, ideas generated and presented by politicians, National Sport Organisation (NSO) and NGB officials, academics and other specific actors (e.g. CSP representatives, Local

Government Association representatives, CCPR etc). Within the UK sport policy system, proposals for change amongst specialists include lobbyists from groups that form a consensus about a particular policy subsystem such as elite sport (DCMS, UK Sport, NGBs, British Olympic Association, English Institute of Sport), community sport (DCMS, Sport England, NGBs) and PE and school sport (The Department for Education, DCMS, Youth Sport Trust, Sport England, school sport partnerships). Out of the numerous issues that circulate within the policy stream, a relatively small number receive serious attention (Zahariadis, 2007). Ideas survive, are integrated into new proposals or disappear. Ideas are more likely to receive serious attention if they are considered technically feasible (i.e. general agreement that the idea can be delivered within certain resource parameters) and clearly align to the dominant values of the key actors involved in the policy community (Kingdon, 1995).

Political stream

The political stream, independent of the other two streams, consists of three key elements: national mood (elsewhere referred to as public opinion), political forces (made up of political parties and interest groups) and government (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007). Through monitoring public mood, the government can act to promote certain items on the agenda or conversely, dim the prospects of others (Zahariadis, 2007). For example, the success of the British Olympics Team at the Beijing 2008 Games resulted in greater government investment into team development for the London 2012 Games, as well as an ongoing and proactive commitment to hosting more international sports events in the UK.

Further, changes in key government personnel can be seen to have had a significant impact on sport policy objectives over the last decade or so. For example, the installment of New Labour in 1997 brought with it an ostensible commitment to a policy paradigm of social investment strategies to address multiple deprivation (Lister, 2001), overcome social exclusion (Giddens, 2006), deliver departmental modernisation (Houlihan & White, 2002) as well as embed education as the central plank of social reform (Giddens, 1998). More recent changes in ministerial appointments have also played a key role in a change of focus on a tighter definition of sport (pure sport as opposed to sport and active recreation) as well as adopting a more conservative policy goal for community sport.

Policy windows

Kingdon (1995) defined policy windows as the result of the three streams coinciding or being coupled at critical moments. These are seen as rare occasions that enable lobbyists and other actors involved in the policy process to divert attention to their specific problems. There are two types of policy window, those that open in the policy stream and those that open in the politics stream (Kingdon, 1995: 168). A window that has been created by a problem triggers a search for suitable ideas in the policy stream, where the definition of the problem may be in progress at the same time. A policy window opened in the politics stream implies that ideas relating to problems are being presented. The ability to predict the opening of policy windows varies (Howlett, 1998; Kingdon, 1995). Howlett (1998: 499) further explained that windows can be opened with high or low predictability, which results in four types of window (see Figure 2.3).

This indicates that the opening of some windows is easier to predict than others. However, coupling is not an automatic response and windows are usually only open for a short period of time. While a window is open, a lobbyist or policy entrepreneur must be ready to take action and push attention to their particular problems and solutions. Policy entrepreneurs must be cautious, however, as Zahariadis (2007) warned problems can arise when advocates seek to push issues using the wrong window.

Degree of institutionalism		
High	Routine windows	Windows open in the politics stream with high predictability due to events determined by institutional arrangements (e.g. election, budget or comprehensive spending review).
	Spill over windows	Windows open in the problem stream when certain issues are drawn into windows that currently open. For this to happen, actors must perceive problems to be in the same category (e.g. rising obesity and the drive to grow participation rates in sport).
	Discretionary windows	Windows open in the politics stream and are difficult to predict as these are usually the result of actors' actions (e.g. change in key government personnel).
Low	Random windows	Windows open in the problem stream as a result of unpredictable events (e.g. major worldwide recession).

Figure 2.3 Types of Policy Window (source: Howlett, 1998)

Policy entrepreneurs

Individuals who attempt to couple the three streams are known as policy entrepreneurs (Kingdon, 1995). Policy entrepreneurs are highly influential in the policy process, proposing solutions to problems, assembling opinions and influencing institutions to ensure their initiative is well distinguished (Zahariadis, 2007). Importantly, in contrast to other frameworks presented here, the inclusion of the policy entrepreneur attempts to rebalance structure and agency and allows for a more detailed analysis of agency and its impact on the policy process. Houlihan and Green (2006), for example, presented Sue Campbell (then Chief Executive of the Youth Sport Trust) as a key policy entrepreneur in advocating the potential of PE and school sport to support the broader academic agenda. Campbell's persuasion of civil servants and ministers allowed her to push her ideas onto the agenda despite initial departmental criticism of these ideas (Houlihan & Green, 2006). Clearly, the policy entrepreneur must be highly skilled at coupling the three streams together and finding politicians who will give support to their ideas. Evidently, this was the case with Campbell, who exploited the policy window (with the New Labour manifesto commitment of 'education, education, education' as the focussing event) in order to attach problems (poor educational standards) to solutions (the use of PE and school sport to re-engage certain pupils and, therefore, improve educational performance). Entrepreneurs must also 'employ manipulating strategies to accomplish their goal of coupling the three streams' (Zahariadis, 2007).

Evaluating the framework

The MS framework offers a reassuring critique of the assumption of rational decision-making seen in other policy analysis frameworks. It offers a more reasonable insight into the sometimes irrational and often ambiguous policy-making process (Zahariadis, 2007). In addition, the framework offers escape from the single focus on institutional interests that distort the political system (Houlihan, 2005: 172). However, further evaluation of the framework, specifically against the four specific criteria, reveals a range of limitations. First, whilst the framework considers agency through the analysis of the policy entrepreneur, this is only a partial focus and attention remains fixed on structural factors and institutional power (Houlihan, 2005). In addition, a number of critics have argued that the three streams are not independent of each other, as changes in one stream can trigger or reinforce changes

in another, making coupling less unexpected and the process of policy windows opening more purposive and strategic (Mucciaroni, 1992). Second, the MS framework is primarily concerned with policy formulation, specifically agenda setting (Zahariadis, 2007), and offers little currency in analysing aspects of the process, such as implementation (Houlihan, 2005), thus diminishing its appeal as a framework that can be applied to the entire policy process (Sabatier, 2007). Third, the MS Framework has been widely applied, both generally (Birkland, 1997, 2004; Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis & Allen, 1995) and specifically to sports policy (Chalip, 1996; Houlihan & Green, 2006). Its usefulness in illuminating the sports policy process is highlighted in Houlihan (2005) and Houlihan & Green (2006), who identified its value to sports policy, particularly in the concept of 'spill over' (Kingdon, 1995), whereby adjacent policy sectors are influenced by one another. A crucial issue is the framework's application to the UK policy system. Although the framework has been shown to be an effective method of sports policy analysis, it was designed to accommodate a federal system of decision making such as that in the US and consequently its transfer to a centralised political system in the UK may not be as insightful (Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier, 2007). Nevertheless, Houlihan (2005) argues that its applicability should not be overlooked given its capacity to pinpoint a range of issues which are likely to be relevant in a number of different political systems. Fourth, with its focus on the coupling of three streams over time, the model lends itself particularly well to the analysis of policy over the medium term (Houlihan, 2005; Zahariadis, 2007).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) has much in common with the policy network school (John, 1998: 169). It is regarded as a highly sophisticated method in the field of policy analysis designed to analyse a broader set of processes than previous works (Green & Houlihan, 2004; Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007; Schlager, 1995). According to its founder, the framework aims to synthesise the best of top-down and bottom-up perspectives of policy (Sabatier, 1993). The framework is based on three 'foundation stones' (Sabatier & Weible, 2007: 191-192): (i) a macro-level view that policymaking occurs amongst specialists in a policy subsystem and that their behaviour is affected by relatively stable parameters and external events; (ii) a micro-level view of the

individuals involved in the policy subsystem based on their beliefs; and (iii) a meso-level assumption that the most effective way to analyse the behaviour of myriad actors is to cluster them into 'advocacy coalitions'. Further, the ACF predicts that policy change is initiated when four processes conducive to policy change disturb the policy subsystem: policy orientated learning, external perturbations, internal perturbations, and negotiated agreements. Figure 2.4 illustrates the key components of the enhanced ACF framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). It shows the role of advocacy coalitions within the policy subsystem and the interrelationship with factors exogenous to the policy subsystem that directly or indirectly shape the constraints and opportunities affecting the policy community (*ibid*, 2007). The section below will aim to present more information concerning each of these components.

External factors

The majority of policymaking occurs within the policy subsystem as a result of negotiations between actors (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). However, actor's behaviour can be influenced by two sets of exogenous factors, one fairly stable and the other dynamic (*ibid*, 1993). The relatively stable parameters represent a set of exogenous factors consisting of the basic attributes of the problem area, the basic distribution of natural resources, the fundamental socio-cultural values and social structure and the basic constitutional structure (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Consequently, they rarely impinge on policy change, although they do play a key role in influencing the resources and constraints that affect policy actors. The dynamic (or external) events include changes in socioeconomic conditions, changes in the governing coalition (i.e. from Sport England leadership to NGB) and policy decisions from other subsystems. These factors also influence actor behaviour, 'their ability to change substantially over a period of 10 years or more make them critical factors in affecting major policy change' (*ibid*, 2007: 193).

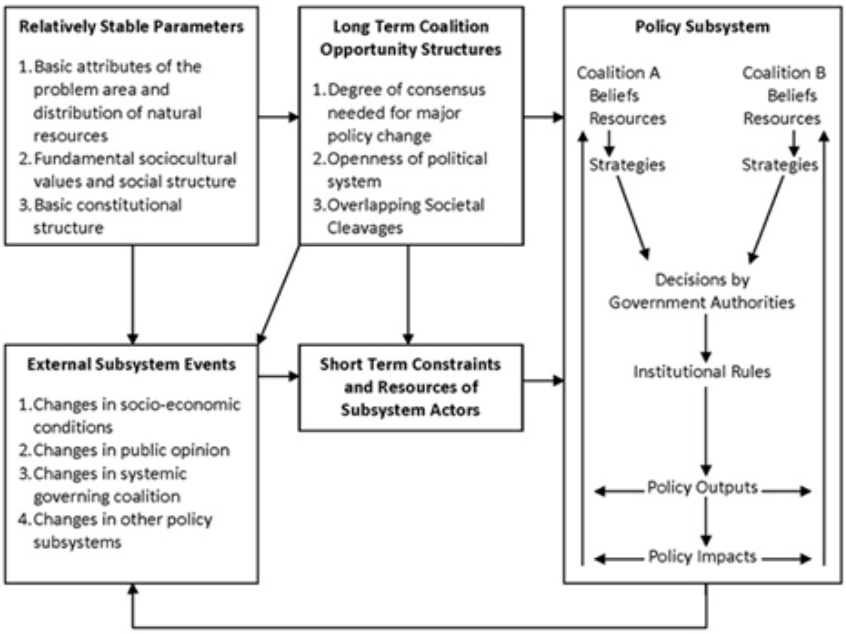

Figure 2.4 The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (source: Sabatier & Weible, 2007)

Policy subsystem

It is the relatively stable parameters that structure policymaking within a policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The policy subsystem encompasses a collection of actors from various institutions and at various levels, all of whom seek to influence decisions in a specific policy domain (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Typically, policy subsystems contain two to five competing coalitions comprised of actors grouped around similar policy-orientated beliefs (*ibid*, 2007). Policy subsystems are characterised by their size, policy area, and the plethora of actors involved from interest groups, media, academia and various levels of government (Kingdon, 1995; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The sports policy subsystem is defined by the multiplicity of actors who seek to influence policy decisions. These actors could include government agencies (particularly DCMS, The Department of Education, Communities & Local Government, and The Department of Health), Non-Department Public Bodies (Sport England, UK Sport), other relevant organisations (NGBs, Central Council of Physical Recreation, British Olympic Association and CSPs), and specific academic institutes and media organisations. However, defining policy subsystems is not always a straightforward task due to links between various policy participants (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). For example, sport overlaps with a wide range of government concerns including health, education, community

cohesion, community safety, foreign affairs and employment. Despite this definitional challenge, the framework has the flexibility to consider a range of actors from different backgrounds, making it highly relevant and more applicable to the study of a wide range of policy arenas (*ibid*, 2007).

Much like the IAD framework, the ACF assumes individuals to be 'rational utility maximisers' and more likely to ignore information that does not accord with their key beliefs (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Indeed, actors may discount information that challenges their beliefs and are likely to be more apprehensive of individuals with different views (*ibid*, 2007). Belief systems are therefore relatively stable and can be resistant to change (Sabatier, 1993). Critically, when forming coalitions, individuals will seek others who share similar beliefs, helping to galvanise support for their cause and create greater cohesion within coalitions (Houlihan, 2005). At the same time, this greater cohesion amongst actors can stimulate and intensify greater levels of conflict amongst competing coalitions (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The framework's micro-level analysis of the individual organises belief systems into a three-tiered hierarchical structure. This structure also reflects varying levels of resistance to change, with the highest level being more resistant (*ibid*, 2007). At the highest level, deep core beliefs consist of normative ideas that define an individual's personal philosophy, such as the relative priority of values associated with freedom and power (Sabatier, 1993). These beliefs span most policy subsystems, and as a product of childhood socialisation, they tend to be firmly rooted, ontological assumptions about human nature that are exceptionally difficult to change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). At the next level are policy core beliefs, applications of deep core beliefs that span the entire policy subsystem (*ibid*, 2007: 194). The general assumption is that effort will be invested strategically 'to apply certain deep core beliefs and to develop policy core beliefs in that subsystem' (*ibid*, 2007: 195). However, not all "policy core beliefs" correspond with "deep core beliefs" (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). For example, whilst the Conservative ideology provides a strong preference for market solutions, the present Conservative-Liberal coalition promotes the importance of the 2012 legacy plan and therefore the need to retain a significant leadership role in the pure-sport related objectives detailed in the plan (cf. DCMS, 2008). The third level consists of secondary beliefs.

These are narrower in scope than deep core and policy beliefs and address specific or causal issues, for example rules or budgets applied to specific programmes or the cause of particular problem (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Secondary beliefs are most susceptible to change or revision due to their specific nature and the requirement of modifications necessary for policy core maintenance (*ibid*, 2007).

Advocacy coalitions

The framework assumes that actors will gravitate towards others with similar policy core beliefs in order to translate their policy core beliefs into actual policy (*ibid*, 2007). Allying themselves with actors who share consensus on policy objectives significantly increases the chances of policy change occurring (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). An advocacy coalition, therefore, is simply distinguished by policy actors with homogenous policy core beliefs who engage in coordinated action (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). In relation to sport, Green & Houlihan (2005) found that an advocacy coalition existed in the sport policy domain, with UK Sport and the NGBs found to be the salient coalitions behind elite sport success. Further, the sport policy domain can be seen to represent murky waters, where there is little clarity regarding the coalition(s). It is unclear whether sport is a single policy subsystem advocating all forms of sport (mass/elite, youth/adult), or in fact a fractured policy subsystem where various actors are scrambling for resources for their particular area of interest (i.e. Youth Sports Trust: school sport, Sport England: community sport, UK Sport: elite sport). The waters are further muddied by the interest of various actors who are principally concerned with the utility of sport as a means to deliver broader social benefits (particularly local authorities) against those more concerned with commitment to sport for its own sake (NGBs). The degree to which these actors work cooperatively within one policy subsystem or competitively in differing coalitions remains open to question.

Policy brokers

Conflicting strategies from coalitions are mediated by policy brokers whose concern is to find a reasonable compromise between coalitions (Parrish, 2003: 9). Consensus is most likely to be reached if the broker ensures that each advocacy coalition's core beliefs and values remain unthreatened or unchanged. Houlihan (2005) states that the role of the broker is applicable to the UK sports system due to the level of

organisational complexity in UK sport, an issue that is further complicated by the dual role of key policy brokers such as Sue Campbell, chair of UK Sport and chair of the Youth Sports Trust.

Resources

The ACF hypothesises that policy actors will utilise a set of resources to initiate strategies that may influence future policy, although the degree of detail related to types of resource was an area previously underdeveloped (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Using a number of studies (from Kelman, 1984; Sewell, 2005), a range of resources that actors can use has been identified, including (i) the formal legal authority to make decisions (i.e. officials, legislators and judges), (ii) public opinion – a major resource where this accords with actor's beliefs, (iii) information, particularly intelligence regarding the problem and how to address it, (iv) mobilising troops – bringing lobbyists and the attentive public together to advocate and demonstrate on particular issues, (v) financial resources – to fund research, think tanks and possibly, programme development, and finally (vi) skillful leadership – highly skilled policy brokers are seen as a critical to policy change.

Critical paths to policy change

The analysis of individual behaviour presents a framework which allows for a more explicit understanding of change within the policy subsystem. The creation of advocacy coalitions comprising actors with similar belief systems makes it improbable that group members will change policy core beliefs voluntarily (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Thus, the ACF identifies a total of four paths to major policy change: policy-orientated learning, external perturbations and shocks, internal shocks and negotiated agreements (*ibid*, 2007). Policy-orientated learning results from previous experience or information which may result in implications or the revision of policy objectives (*ibid*, 2007). The influence on policy change is straightforward in that policies are modified due to coalition members amending their perception of existing policies (Norstedt, 2008). However, due to the hierarchical structure of belief systems, the capacity for policy change varies depending on the type of belief affected.

Perturbations and shocks external to the policy subsystem, such as socioeconomic conditions or disaster, are credited as a further underlying factor to policy change that shifts agendas and focuses public attention (Houlihan 2005; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Significantly, external shocks can result in a redistribution of resources or a replacement of the dominant coalition (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) due to changes in socio-economic conditions, public opinion, a governing coalition or as a direct result of policy decisions from other subsystems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The poor performance of the UK swimming squad at the London 2012 Games provides an apposite example. The squad's performance has led to increased negative media attention to the structure of the sport as well as significant funding cuts for team development ahead of the Rio de Janeiro Games in 2016.

Finally, since the publication of the second edition of Sabatier's *Theories of the Policy Process* (2007), two further factors have been identified as critical paths of policy change, the first of which is internal shocks within a policy subsystem. Sabatier & Weible (2007) argued that this can affect policy change by highlighting the inadequacies of a coalition and their subsequent belief systems, or through the redistribution or drawing in of political resources such as financial or public support. A recent example in the community sport policy domain is the reallocation and distribution of substantial lottery funding to NGB whole sport plans for the period 2009-13, primarily a result of ministerial changes coupled with intense NGB-led lobbying. The second factor concerns the integration of literature on alternative dispute resolution to allow analysis of the causal drivers and conditions where agreements involving policy change are developed by previously 'warring' coalitions (Sabatier & Weible, 2007: 205). A recent example of negotiated agreement in community sport was the attempt to galvanise a clear and cohesive 'single-system' or 'delivery-chain' for community sport, where clear roles and responsibilities and collective commitment were key tenets.

Evaluating the framework

The ACF attempts to explain stability in terms of 'dominant coalitions and the persistence of deep core and policy core beliefs (Houlihan, 2005: 173). However, the approach has been criticised for its overly heavy focus on the hierarchy of belief

systems which are perceived as stable across all actors within coalitions. Schlager (1995) argued that it is not feasible to suggest that within a coalition all actors will share the same beliefs; rather, it is more practicable to suggest coalitions are made up of actors with a difference in opinions. Further, belief systems embedded in the ACF can only be predicted rather than determined, being an exceptionally difficult phenomena to measure. (deLeon, 1994). Also, individual beliefs cannot be distinguished from the policy interests of the organisation with which they are affiliated due to the supposition that policy actors agree with the beliefs advocated by their organisations (Oliver, 1991). The framework is also criticised for its lack of consideration regarding the influence of institutions (Skille, 2008), a significant omission given the power of institutions to affect action (Schlager, 2007). The framework's explanation of change is considered 'complex' and not particularly convincing, relying on a combination of rational assumptions, exogenous events and policy learning, with a lack of attention to the concept of power that may flow across and between coalitions (Houlihan, 2005). Therefore, the framework only partially meets the requirements of the first criterion.

The ACF is seen by some as a holistic framework for analysing multiple levels of the policy process, offering a broader focus than that of other frameworks (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Whilst it may facilitate a comprehensive analysis and a broad view of the entire policy-making process, it fails to consider the relative influence of multi-tier policymaking, that is, policymaking at a variety of levels, local, sub regional, regional, national and transnational (Houlihan, 2005). Similarly, the theory does not offer an examination of the implementing actor, the sports club, for example. The framework fails to address implementation at the local level (Skille, 2008), despite claims that the framework was designed to provide a holistic analysis of all stages of the policy process by integrating the best of "top down" and "bottom up" approaches (Sabatier, 1999; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Elsewhere, the theory has been criticised for a lack of insight into 'the organisational arrangements of the state and of state civil society interaction', such as governmental departments, county sports partnerships, local authorities and sports clubs (Green & Houlihan, 2004: 401). Therefore, with regards to the second criterion, whilst the framework can be seen to offer a wide-ranging analysis of the policy process, it does not sufficiently

offer insight into the organisational arrangements that affect the policy process, particularly the implementation of policy.

The ACF has been applied across a range of policy areas in a range of countries (Sabatier, 2007). Its application to the UK context has recently been enhanced through the incorporation of 'community opportunity structures' as a means for increasing its fit with non-pluralist systems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Certainly, this relates to the UK system where decision making is more centralised (John, 1998). Indeed, Sabatier & Weible's (2007: 200) assertion that within centralised systems 'participation is restricted to a small number of central government authorities and leaders of peak association' certainly applies to the UK, where decision-making is less open than the US federal system and primarily coordinated by a smaller number of agencies (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Despite its limitations (Houlihan, 2005), the relative use of the framework could be argued to be reasonable to good (see Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan, 2005; Parrish, 2003). Therefore, with regards to the third criterion, the framework can be seen as a credible approach, tested in a variety of contexts and with utility in analysing the sport policy domain. Finally, the framework clearly meets the fourth criterion as it was specifically designed for the purpose of analysing policy change over the medium-term (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

Policy Networks/Communities

Policy network theory has developed, partly in response to an overly rational and limited view of policy making resulting from government interest (Heclo, 1978), which disregards the influence of the numerous organisations that exist in between organisations and beyond formal rules (Miller & Demir, 2006). Howlett (1998) reinforced the position of policy network theory as a major analytical approach to the study of public policy making. One of the challenges of this approach, however, is the lack of a single, accepted definition (John, 1998; Peterson, 2003). Kickert *et al.*, (1996: 6) defined policy networks as 'stable patterns of social relations existing between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or programmes'. In a similar vein, Benson (1982: 148) observed policy networks as 'dependency relationships that emerge between both organisations and individuals who are in frequent contact with each other in particular policy areas'. Others

highlighted the non-hierarchical patterns of interaction between government agencies, interest groups, elected officials, other institutions and individuals exogenous to formal government organizations (Kenis & Schneider, 1991), and how these interactions modify the way power is exercised and influences the actions of the government (Miller & Demir, 2006). To summarise the variety of approaches to network analysis, Dowding (1995) and Marsh & Smith (2000) agreed that there were four notable approaches (i) rational choice, (ii) personal interaction, (iii) formal network analysis, and (iv) the structural approach.

The interactions amongst actors in numerous policy subsystems in varied contexts has resulted in the use of a plethora of concepts, including policy communities, policy networks, iron triangles and issue networks (Miller & Demir, 2006). Thus, it is helpful to utilise the Marsh & Rhodes (1992) typology, which provides a framework for categorising networks by membership, integration, resources, and power. This provides the analyst with a spectrum to plot various networks depending on their varying characteristics, with policy communities at one end and issue networks at the other (Figure 2.5).

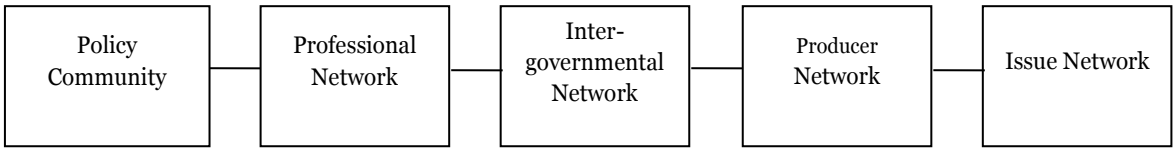

Figure 2.5 Network classification (source: Marsh & Rhodes, 1992)

Policy communities are characterised by their close-knit, integrated structure with members sharing a common set of values (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Miller & Demir, 2006). Government is often the key agency in a policy community, with other agencies often consciously excluded (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). At the other end of the spectrum, issue networks are characterised by their large memberships with diverse affected interests (*ibid*, 1992). They are often viewed as 'unstable', being seen to lack stability over time and are frequently associated with policy consultation rather than being directly involved in the development of policy (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). This categorisation of network types is useful in demonstrating the various forms of partnership that exist at different levels of the policy process (i.e. international, multi-national, national, regional, sub-regional and local). Table 2.2 provides a more

detailed insight into the varying characteristics of policy communities and issue networks. However, Smith (1993) cautioned that policy communities and issue networks simply represent extreme forms of a policy network, whereas in practice, networks do not generally exhibit all the characteristics of either.

Table 2.2 Types and characteristics of policy networks (source: Marsh & Rhodes, 1992)

Dimension	Policy community	Issue network
Membership		
Number of participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded.	Large.
Types of interest	Economic and/or professional interests dominate.	Encompasses range of affected interests.
Integration		
Frequency of interaction	Frequent, high quality interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issues.	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and interaction.
Continuity	Memberships, values and outcomes persistent over time.	Access fluctuates significantly.
Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept legitimacy of the outcome.	A measure of agreement exists, but conflict is ever present.
Resources		
Distribution of resources (within network)	All participants have resources; basic relationship is an exchange relationship.	Some participants may have resources but they are limited, basic relationship is consultative.
Internal distribution	Hierarchical	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members.
Power		
Power	There is a balance of power among members. Although one group may dominate, it must be a positive sum game if community is to persist.	Unequal powers, reflecting unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero sum game.

Such typologies are criticised for inconsistencies of approach, with numerous typologies utilising different labels to explain the same phenomena or the same labels to explain different phenomena (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). In an attempt to start afresh, Adam & Kriesi proposed a two dimensional typology which captures 'essential network characteristics' (2007: 133). Policy networks involve two fundamental elements: actors and the relations between them. Consequently, two variables clarify these elements: (i) composition variables—these relate to actor attributes and (ii) structural variables, referring to the types of relations between actors (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). With regards to composition variables, Adam & Kriesi (2007) pay particular attention to capabilities, in particular the distribution of capabilities across the group of actors. In other words, the first part of Adam & Kriesi's typology is

concerned with the distribution of power across the set of actors involved in the policy subsystem. This aspect considers whether power is concentrated in the hands of one dominant actor or coalition or whether power is shared across actors. Borrowing from the advocacy coalition framework, the typology assumes that actors will be organised into a limited number of coalitions with varying degrees of power in the policy process (*ibid*, 2007).

A subsidiary element of the distribution of power is consideration of the relative share of power across different coalitions. It is important to assess the structure of coalitions and acknowledge the different actors involved. Adam & Kriesi (2007) distinguished between state actors and three other actor types (political parties, interest groups and nongovernmental organisations or social movement organisations); although it is important in the context of corporatism-pluralism to extend interest groups to include a larger range of participants that may be involved in the policy process. State actors are separated from other actors due to their unique characteristics: for example, they have access to resources and decisions are generally considered binding (Coleman & Perl, 1999). A final consideration is that coalitions can be composed of one type of actor only (homogenous) or different actor types (heterogeneous) (Adam & Kriesi, 2007: 134).

The second aspect of the typology addresses the degree of cooperation between actors and coalitions and illuminates specific arrangements within networks. It also demonstrates how these relate to policy change and policy outcomes. Cooperation is distinguished in one of three predominant forms—(i) conflict/competition, (ii) cooperation and with elements of both, (iii) bargaining/negotiation (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). The consideration of distribution of power and the type of interaction within policy networks reveals six network types that are useful in determining the potential for and type of policy change (Figure 2.6) (Adam & Kriesi, 2007).

Distribution of power	Types of interaction		
	Conflict	Bargaining	Cooperation
Concentration	Dominance	Asymmetric bargaining	Hierarchical cooperation
Fragmentation	Competition	Symmetric bargaining	Horizontal cooperation

Figure 2.6 Typology of Network Structures (source: Adam & Kriesi, 2007)

Alongside the typology, Adam & Kriesi provided a detailed insight into the determinants of policy networks, in particular 'the territorial and functional specificities' of policy networks, where political and domain-specific issues shape and formalise a network (2007: 137). For example, for policy networks within European sport, we would need to consider European, domestic and the domain-specific contexts. Figure 2.7 sets out in further detail Adam & Kriesi's perspective of the determinants of policy networks and illustrates the impacts associated with networks (2007: 148). This model is assessed in more detail below:

Transnational Context

The growing influence of international factors must be taken into account when considering the form of domestic policy networks (Adam & Kriesi, 2007; Coleman & Perl, 1999). Coleman & Perl noted growth in connections between international, national, regional and sub national levels in public policy domains, arguing that 'domestic policy making is increasingly constrained by international economic, political and cultural forces' (1999: 692). In a sporting context, Green & Houlihan (2005) alluded to the homogenisation of elite sport policy in the UK, Australia and Canada based on the global environment, where 'international states interpret and adapt external policy pressures to their particular national circumstances and history' (Houlihan, 2009: 66). Further, it is reported that transferable policies are initiated into domestic ones based on the scanning of the global policy environment as well as an international process of regime development which together contribute to the homogenisation of aspects of sports policy (Houlihan, 2009).

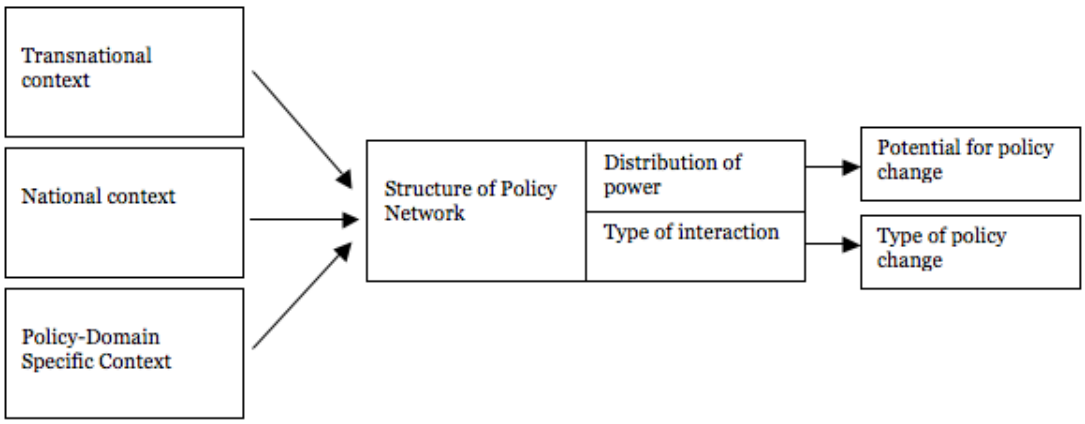

Figure 2.7 The Network Approach (source: Adam & Kriesi, 2007)

International policy environments are believed to influence domestic policy networks through the redistribution of resources, opening of new access points and creation of new venues that allow for reopening matters previously settled at the national level. International redistribution policies within the sport policy domain are limited but have been more common in recent years, with notable examples including transnational investment in sport for development projects led by organisations such as Right to Play in addition to the International Inspiration programme, which was an integral part of the Singapore vision (see UK Sport, 2009) and a key plank within the London 2012 Legacy Plan.

Transnational contexts are, however, insufficient in explaining influences upon policy networks at domestic level (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Global influence on domestic policy systems is significant, but responses are difficult to predict, and do not necessarily result in a uniform reaction or secure cooperation across policy systems.

National Contexts

Adam & Kriesi (2007) asserted that both components of their typology are influenced by the formal national institutional context. Using Ljiphart's (1999) typology of democracies, it is necessary to distinguish between specific country institutional structures and how power is concentrated (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). For example, *consensus democracies* apportion power across a number of institutions, whilst *majoritarian democracies* concentrate power amongst a smaller group of political institutions and actors. Kriesi *et al.,* (2006) argue that consensus democracies are more likely to experience a fragmentation of power due to the plurality of power amongst political institutions, whilst majoritarian democracies are likely to resemble networks where power is concentrated in a smaller number of institutions. Further, patterns of interaction are expected to be more cooperative in consensus democracies than majoritarian democracies, where competition among actors is more likely to occur (Adam & Kriesi, 2007).

Borrowing from Ljiphart (1999), Adam & Kriesi (2007) categorise countries in three groups: consensual-federal democracies (such as Switzerland or Germany), consensual-Unitarian democracies (Scandinavian nations, Netherlands, Italy) and

majoritarian-federal (United States or Spain). The UK system is a majoritarian-unitarian democracy as decision making is concentrated amongst a small number of institutions and actors (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Coleman (1988) advised that uneven political distribution of power is directly related to policy formulation and implementation and that specific configurations of subsystem membership and modes of interaction are directly linked to propensities for specific types of policy change.

Policy-specific and domain-specific contexts

The consideration of policy-specific factors reveals the structure of policy networks in policy-specific subsystems. Two types of variables affect the structure of policy networks: (i) general policy-specific variables (see Coleman & Perl., 1999; Kenis, 1991; Schneider, 1992) and (ii) situational policy-specific variables (see Dudley & Richardson, 1996; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). In terms of general variables, the context that is specific to a particular policy subsystem and the features of that subsystem will inevitably influence the shape and structure of the policy network (Coleman & Perl., 1999). Specifically, policies and networks differ according to the resources and incentives provided for network formation, the expectations that are generated, their visibility among the mass public and the ability to measure impact (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Linking these to the typology above, those policy subsystems with invited group formation are likely to produce networks with fragmented structures (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Policies characterised by high expectations, high visibility/salience and easy traceability of policy effects may cause conflict as state actors have to defend their positions against important groups as well as the mass public (Adam & Kriesi, 2007).

Situational policy-specific variables analyse the reason for change within networks. It is assumed that the characteristics of a policy network remain stable unless affected by exogenous shocks or the mobilisation of competing coalitions (Adam & Kriesi, 2007; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). Exogenous factors may destabilise the structure of policy networks (Sabatier, 1993; Houlihan, 2005; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). They can include 'significant events' brought about by changes in socio-economic conditions, public opinion, the governing coalition or policy decisions from other subsystems (Sabatier, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Although a number of authors

have recognised the pertinence of this concept to fields such as national security (Birkland, 2005), its application to the sports policy process is limited. Green (2004) and Green & Houlihan (2004) highlighted the impact of the national lottery in providing a more systematic approach to UK elite sport development in the UK as just one example of an exogenous factor on policy change. Indeed, the influence of lottery funding significantly altered the approach to elite sports development, with more methodical, scientific approaches and methods being developed in order to maintain the UKs position in the sports-performance league table (Green, 2004). Another driver of policy change is the influence of 'ideas, values and knowledge' (Adam & Kriesi, 2007: 142). It has been suggested that idea change precedes changes in policy (Hay, 2002) as 'new ideas and information to [lead to] new patterns of behaviour' (Haas, 1992: 3).

Impact of policy networks

Networks are believed to directly impact policy change and outcomes. Indeed, the 'extent and speed of change' in policy is influenced by networks and, in particular their 'capacity to mediate, and often minimise, the effect of such change' (Marsh & Smith, 2000: 8). Subsequently, policy change should not be seen as a purely rational response to problems but as a result of a range of interrelated factors, including agents and the interaction of agents in networks (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). Towards this end, researchers have studied the structure of networks to assess relationships between network type/structure and policy change. Coleman & Perl., (1999) claimed that it was more likely for abrupt policy change to occur in pluralist networks whereas negotiated change is the norm in corporatist networks. Extending this work specifically to the field of implementation, corporatist networks are seen as cooperative, working collectively and sharing the burden of policy delivery (see Schneider, 1992), whereas the competitive character of pluralist regimes often leads to conflict and may require legislative intervention (Adam & Kriesi, 2007).

Thus, policy networks are connected to policy outcomes and the type of change within policy subsystems that leads to these outcomes (*ibid*, 2007). To highlight the likelihood and type of policy change, Adam & Kriesi (2007) linked their network typology with the potential for and type of policy change. They argued that the type of interaction between network actors largely determines the form of policy change

(*ibid*, 2007: 145). Networks that experience more routine conflict usually generate rapid policy shifts, whereas in networks where bargaining is common, slower, incremental policy change is more likely and cooperative structures are likely to preserve the status quo (*ibid*, 2007). Further, the network dynamic and potential for change is further altered by the distribution of power. Adam & Kriesi (2007) assumed that the potential for change was greater if power is fragmented, as the pendulum is more easily swayed by the competing coalition (*ibid*, 2007). Conversely, if power remains concentrated, others lack the resources to break the policy monopoly (Figure 2.8) (*ibid*, 2007).

Distribution of power	Types of interaction		
	Conflict	Bargaining	Cooperation
Concentration	Moderate potential for rapid shift	Low to moderate potential for incremental change	Low potential for change-maintenance of status quo
Fragmentation	High potential for rapid shift	Moderate to high potential for incremental change	Low to moderate potential for change-maintenance of status quo

Figure 2.8 Potential of type of policy change (source: Adam & Kriesi, 2007)

Prior to the development of the Adam & Kriesi model, Marsh & Smith reviewed the four principal approaches to the study of policy networks (rational choice, personal interaction, formal network analysis and the structural approach) and found that whilst each had particular strengths, their common failure was little, if any, attempt to 'use policy networks as an explanatory variable' (2000: 5). In contrast to the Adam & Kriesi model presented above, Marsh & Smith (2000) presented a dialectical model of policy networks which aimed to illuminate the two-way relationship between variables and the way in which one variable might affect the other in a continuing iterative process (Marsh & Smith, 2000). In much the same way as Adam & Kriesi have attempted, Marsh & Smith's dialectical approach has helped to develop a greater understanding of the way structural context affects networks. However, the models differ and Marsh & Smith offer a potentially more insightful model in their explicit representation and consideration of agent as well as analysing the interrelationship between structure and agency, network and context, and network and outcome (2000: 5).

With regards to structure and agency, Marsh & Smith stressed the need for a model that considers both structure and agency as although 'structures matter, it is agents who interpret these structures and make decisions (2000: 5). The dialectical model (see Figure 2.9) highlighted that broader structural context influences both the network structure and the resources that agents have at their disposal (*ibid*, 2000). It also stressed the innate skill and learning that shape the agent and their ability to influence network interaction (Marsh & Smith, 2000). Network interaction is not only shaped by the actors' skills and resources, but also by the network structure (Marsh & Smith, 2000). Thus, Adam & Kriesi's (2007) typology could be used within this model, pointing to types of interaction and power distribution within networks. In addition, network interaction is affected by policy outcome, in particular policy learning and the realisation that network interaction influences policy implementation (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Similarly, policy outcomes shape network structures as do the interaction amongst networks, the skills and resources of actors and the structural context (Marsh & Smith, 2000). The model also considers the critical drivers of policy outcomes, namely network structures and network interaction (Marsh & Smith, 2000). However, there appear to be aspects of Adam & Kriesi's (2007) work that have utility within the dialectical model; the use of the typology of network structures in the examination of structures and the interaction between them, for example.

In addition to the focus on agency (as well as structural context), the dialectical model differs to Adam & Kriesi (2007) in its presentation of the two-way relationship between variables. In this way, the model offers greater utility in examining the role of structure and agency and well as the interrelationship between context, agents, network structures, interaction and outcomes.

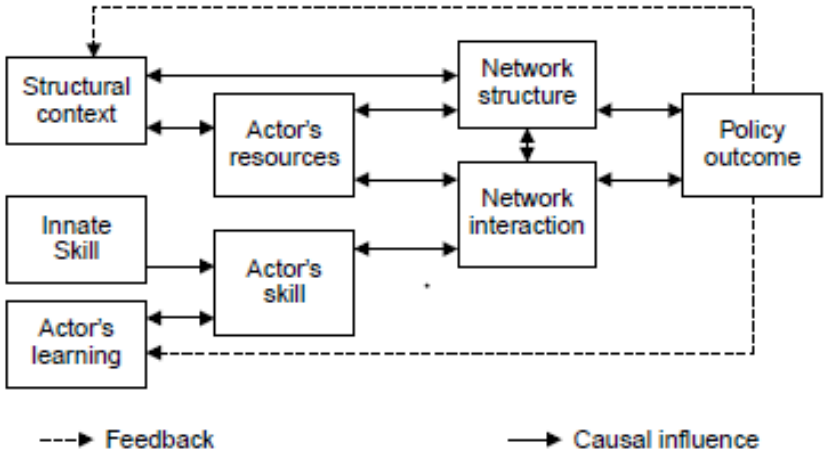

Figure 2.9 Dialectical model (source: Marsh & Smith, 2000)

Evaluating the framework

The policy network approach provides a rich vein of information that is useful in highlighting a range of variables that are integral to policy change and, more generally, the policymaking process. The policy network literature is helpful in analysing stability change, particularly in relation to sport policy (cf. Enjolras & Waldahl, 2007; Lindsey, 2006). That said, some notable authors have criticised network approaches for lacking a theoretical basis. Specifically, the network approach has been seen more as a 'theoretical toolbox' than a theory (Borzel, 1998; Dowding, 1995; Miller & Demir, 2006) and has also been criticised for developing informal models that lack formal modelling robustness and do little to explain the policy process beyond that which could be achieved by good quality empirical work (Dowding, no date). In addition, the policy network approach has been criticised for its lack of consideration of institutions or the role of the state in particular in the interactions of policy networks (John, 1998), although this is an issue which both models presented above arguably address by recognising the network structure, network interactions and structural context affecting these variables. Despite these criticisms, Lindsey's (2006) application of the dialectical model to the sport policy domain illustrates its utility, specifically its analytical value in explicitly considering structure and agency as well as the interrelationship between network structure and agents, the network and the context it operates in, and the network and policy outcomes. In summary, whilst the network approach is not without its limitations, it offers a helpful analytic framework in constructing specific empirical work to review policy stability and change in the sport policy domain. With regards to the second

criterion, Marsh & Smith's dialectical model addresses the limitations of previous work (specifically Marsh & Rhodes, 1992) which focuses more specifically on structure, paying insufficient attention to agency (Dowding, 1995). The dialectical model, however, places a specific emphasis on the role of agency and demonstrates that policy outcomes are 'the result of the actions of strategically calculating subjects' (Marsh & Smith, 2000: 6). In addition, the model considers the structural elements that 'constrain and facilitate' the agents that operate within them (Marsh & Smith, 2000: 5). However, despite the above models' explicit mention of network interaction and the influence of power, the network approach is widely criticised for its inability to fully consider and analyse the distribution of power beyond a meso or sub-systematic level of governance (Peterson, 2003). There is a need to deploy theories that explain outcomes at different levels of governance (i.e. international, multi-national, national, regional, sub-regional and local) (Bomberg & Stubb 2003; Peterson 2003). This is a particularly important consideration in relation to the UK sport policy domain given the structural arrangements and multi-level governance practices that are evident within UK sport. Overall, network approaches are generally favoured for their ability to import relevant theories and provide a tool for holistic analysis of the policy process. However, it is important to be mindful of the limitations of the approach, particularly with regard to multi-level governance and a consideration of power distribution across these levels.

In terms of relevance, policy networks have been the subject of growing debate and literature and numerous publications have focussed attention on network approaches and their utility in policy analysis (see Sabatier, 2007). However, a major problem is defining policy networks (Miller & Demir, 2006) as numerous approaches and concepts are developed under the banner of policy networks with a lack of consistency in terminology and/or application (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). In addition, literature is often focussed on 'trivial questions of terminology and can be embarrassingly self-absorbed' (Peterson, 2003: 15). This results in an ambiguous, confusing and, at times, unproductive literature which does little to aid good quality analysis of policy. Whilst the general quality and credibility of literature focussing on policy networks is good, the confusing variety of approaches is not helpful. As a result, any study with a policy network focus should ensure that it clearly refers to the specific literature being used from the policy network family. The two approaches

presented above, with consideration of structural context, agency, network structure and interaction, require a commitment to medium-to-long term analysis in order to identify policy change and/or analysis of the outputs from various interrelationships within the dialectical model and the overall impact on policy outcomes, thereby meeting the requirements on the fourth criterion.

Summary of Policy Analysis Frameworks

This section has examined four relevant policy analysis frameworks. When used in isolation, a number of limitations are exposed which render the frameworks inadequate when used as individual tools of analysis (Houlihan, 2005). Furthermore, the tools fail to provide the necessary precision to facilitate a full analysis of policy implementation. Whilst it forms part of the ACF and policy network frameworks, it lacks specific attention to the range of features that exist within implementation theory. The former challenge infers a need for theoretical pluralism, an issue that will be discussed further in Chapter 8 in the evaluation of policy frameworks. The latter issue will be addressed in the following section. This looks more closely at highly relevant micro-level theory including implementation and partnerships. The following review demonstrates the applicability of the literature and the way in which it can be synthesised with policy analysis tools to provide a fuller, more comprehensive analysis of the policy process.

Implementation theory

This section briefly considers the term implementation, gives attention to the evolution of policy implementation literature, evaluates the top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation and concludes with a synthesis of the top-down and bottom-up approaches.

The founding fathers of implementation, Pressman & Wildavsky, defined implementation as 'the process of interaction between the setting of goals and the actions geared to achieve them (1984: xi-xxiii). A clear focus on the interaction of two variables, namely the setting of goals and strategies, programmes, initiatives, etc., that form part of the process of actions that—for the rational agent at least—work in tandem to deliver the initial policy goal. Pressman & Wildavsky made clear that implementation theory was about more than 'impact' in that it relates to what

happened but is more about the reasons why it happened (1973). More generally, de Leon reported that implementation was primarily concerned with 'what happens between policy expectations and policy results' (1999: 134). More specifically, van Meter & van Horn (1975: 447-8) defined implementation as 'encompassing actions by public and private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions'. A more formal, legally-bound definition of implementation has been offered by Mazmanian & Sabatier (1981: 20-1):

> Implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and in a variety of ways, 'structures' the implementation process.

Whilst these definitions help to draw common parameters around what implementation is (and is not), they fail to adequately recognise the importance of actors, and specifically the interaction amongst actors involved in the implementation process. This is a central aspect of this study; thus consideration of actors and the interaction amongst them is considered a vitally important part of the very large black box which sits between what O'Toole referred to as 'government intention and actual results' (1995: 43). In an attempt to get closer to an operational definition that fits the parameters and objectives of this study, Barrett & Fudge asserted that implementation

> needs to be regarded as a process on interaction and negotiation, taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends (1981: 4).

Seen as part of a policy-action continuum developed by Barrett & Fudge (1981), this approach provides insight into the 'organic growth' of the relationship between policy and action. The policy-action continuum views the state and local-level deliverers as mutually interacting elements of an adaptive policy system (*ibid*, 1981). Critically, power is a central force within this model, particularly when considering 'bargaining and negotiation over the control of resources' (*ibid*, 1981: 25). It views policy implementation as a multi-dimensional, multi-organisational field of

interaction. Thus, policy is not viewed as constant, but a property which is mediated by actors, 'which inevitably undergoes interpretation and modification and, in some cases, subversion' (*ibid*, 1981: 21).

Part of the reason for the rich and vastly diverse definitions of implementation is the evolutionary nature of the field, coming in and out of vogue in public administration and political science, as an area of 'relevant' study over the past 30 years (Barrett, 2004). Indeed, it is possible to delineate three generations of research into policy implementation, although this appears contentious with different scholars referring to different phases in the history of implementation (see Goggin *et al.*, 1990; Pulzl & Treib, 2006). This thesis is concerned with Goggin and colleagues' more recent analysis of implementation and also refers to previous, classical works dating back to constitutional theorists such as Hume.

First-generation policy implementation theory tended to be based on the Weberian notion of a bureaucratically and rationally-led society (Cantelon & Ingham, 2002). This classical model of policy administration and the resulting metaphor of government as a 'machine' supported the commonly held view of implementation as an automatic cog controlled by the rationalised machinery of government (*ibid*, 1982). Building on this, a number of case-based studies were completed in the post-second world war period looking at chains of command and the carrying out of single decisions, primarily focussed on reconstruction and social welfare. Pressman & Wildavsky's work is a prime example of implementation studies undertaken in the first generation (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Their research began to pinpoint the limitations associated with the rational and machine-like system of policy implementation, highlighting the complexities of the policy implementation process, and referring to it more as a process of 'muddling through' (Lindblom, 1977). As this generation evolved through the 1980s there was a more focussed effort to analyse and understand the factors that facilitated or constrained the policy implementation process (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981).

The second-generation implementation literature primarily focussed on the relationship between policy and practice (Goggin *et al.*, 1990). Empirical work revealed a number of important issues including the importance of time periods (i.e.

the time needed to implement policy) (van Horn, 1987); the reality that policy very often does mandate what matters at the local-level; the fact that values and beliefs are central to local responses; and the understanding that effective implementation relies on a careful balance of pressure and support (McLaughlin, 1987: 176). This period also saw the construction of the first analytic models to help explain policy implementation success and failure (Goggin *et al.*, 1990). Indeed, much of the research in this period focussed on implementation failure or implementation gaps, that is, the difference between outcome and the original policy intention. Emerging from the study of failure were two distinctive schools of thought. The first, top-down perspective was based on the premise of clear national level policies and compliant implementers. The bottom-up perspective argued that effective policy is ultimately contingent upon its implementation; thus, theory should start from this position and work upwards (Hill & Hupe, 2009).These differing approaches to studying policy implementation are explored further below. Whilst the first and second generation provided an understanding of what implementation is, and how and why it varies, it has not offered a distinct or robust theory of policy implementation identifying casual mechanisms or independent variables that have general import in implementation performance (Lester *et al.*, 1995). Indeed, a major criticism of the first and second generations has been the ongoing focus on producing and adding to the list of variables that may affect the policy implementation process (Goggin, 1986). However, the contribution of policy network theorists (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Marsh & Smith, 2000; Smith, 1993) and coalition-based contributions from Sabatier (1993, 1997; see preceding section for detailed account) has arguably done much to fill the void and provide explicit theoretical models which integrate the macro system of policymaking with the micro system of policy implementation (Barrett, 2004; Hill & Hupe, 2009). But as a point of note, Matland observed 'if implementation research is to provide explanation or understanding it should be tied to a specific policy, rather than to all actions in a policy field (1995: 152). Further, it is argued that a specific problem associated with the development of the policy networks and frameworks addressed above is the difficulty of separating policy formation from implementation, 'which in turn is part of a wider problem about how to identify the features of a very complex process, occurring across time and space and involving multiple actors' (O'Gorman, 2010: 143). This reinforces the limitations of meso-level

theory, in particular the difficulty of extending to the micro-level and examining with sufficient detail issues such as implementation processes (Hill & Hupe, 2009).

As previously mentioned, the second-generation literature witnessed a distinct division in theoretical approaches to implementation with the evolution of top-down and bottom-up perspectives toward implementation (see figure 2.10). Both top-down and bottom-up research aimed to illuminate the major reasons for implementation failure, pointing to issues such as the difference between political intentions and administrative practice, the nature of social problems, the policy design process, governance systems, organisational arrangements in which policy must operate, and the awareness, desire and capacity of the agents expected to implement policy (van Meter & van Horn, 1975). Many of the theoretical contributions were based upon principal–agent (Braun & Guston 2003) and/or rational choice (O'Toole 1995; Sabatier 2007) theories, in which the principal relies upon local-level agent(s) to implement policies. In this context, the agent's actions are directed by rational choice, where utility maximization is a primary principle directing human behaviour. Thus, both principal and agent are viewed as being motivated by self-interest, meaning that incentives and evaluation systems are important in terms of influencing local-level agents. In addition, a lack of clarity in policy objectives—particularly in respect of the requirements of local-level implementers' can compromise the success of policy implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1981; Pressman & Wildavsky 1973; Van Meter & Van Horn 1975; Wetherly & Lipsky 1977).

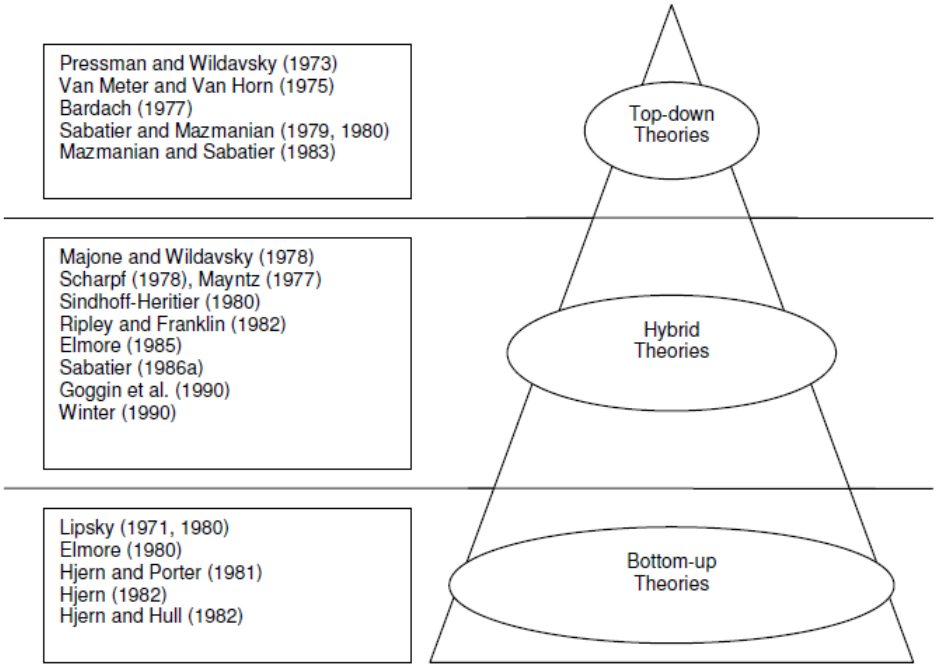

Figure 2.10 Top-down, Bottom-up, and Hybrid Theories: Major Contributors (source: Adapted from Pulzl & Treib, 2006)

Traditionally, top-down theorists have an interest in the centralist model of policy formation, the compliance of implementers, and argue that implementation is largely successful if those responsible for implementation are compliant. In contrast, bottom-up theorists are more interested in the perspectives of grassroots implementers or '*street-level bureaucrats*' as it is these agents that possess ultimate power in relation to implementation success or failure. That said, one of the most bewildering aspects of implementation is whether the top-down and bottom-up perspectives relate to the reality of the policy system (for example, the study of a centralist, top-down system), or the perspective from which an empirical analysis of implementation should be undertaken, or a combination of the two.

The top-down perspective tends to reflect the Weberian idea of social order via bureaucratic hierarchy (Cantelon & Ingham 2002). Theorists utilizing top-down approaches tend to focus on centralist policy formation, usually at national level. This is then translated and delivered via a chain of command (Pressman & Wildavsky 1973), descending through national, regional, sub-regional levels, and finally onto local level. Thus, the top-down approach presupposes a rational top-down chain of command whereby governments and others issue policy, and street-level workers

(e.g. clubs, schools, coaches, private enterprise) implement it. Advocates of the top-down perspective point to factors they argue result in successful implementation, including policies with clearly defined goals (van Meter & van Horn, 1975), a single authority responsible for the policy (Birkland, 2005), responsibility for implementation with agencies sympathetic to the policy's objectives (Sabatier, 1986; van Meter & van Horn, 1975), and the presence of an 'implementation chain' which operates linearly (Birkland, 2005).

Notably, Pressman & Wildavsky's (1973) research pointed to implementation failure as a result of lack of coordination between the collaborative agencies involved in implementation. Resources, particularly funding and lines of communication from the central level down were reported as relatively strong, thus the implication was that one of the major problems was local-level coordination and, in particular, the way in which policy was implemented (or not). Van Meter & van Horn (1975) built on Pressman & Wildavsky's (1973) pioneering insights into implementation to provide a systematic model of the implementation process (see Figure 2.11).

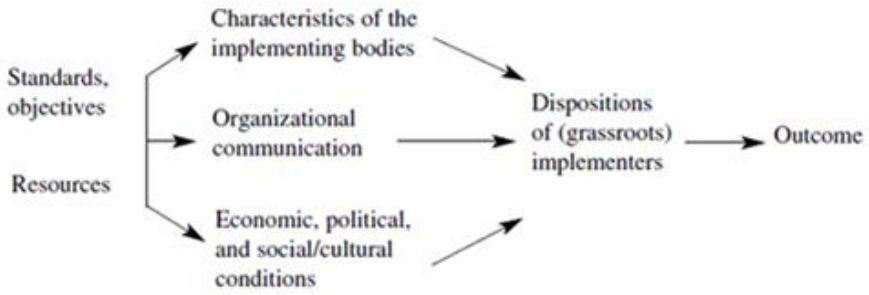

Figure 2.11: The Policy Implementation Process (source: van Meter & van Horn, 1975)

Directed by three strands of literature (organizational theory, public policy impact and intergovernmental relations), van Meter & van Horn (1975) suggested that the degree of participatory consensus and the extent of change initiated by the policy must be taken into account if successful implementation is to be achieved. They argued that successful implementation is likely only when marginal policy change is required and when consensus amongst policy implementers is high. Six variables are seen as key to the policy outcome, beginning with the initial policy objectives and allocation of resources, then filtering hierarchically through inter-organizational communications, characteristics of implementing agencies and current economic

and political conditions, concluding with the disposition of implementing agents (van Meter & van Horn 1975: 482). The authors also argue that implementation is more likely to be undermined if policy objectives do not agree with the implementers' personal values, sense of self-interest and/or extra-organizational loyalties, or if implementation is likely to alter features of the organization or procedures that implementers like. May *et al.*, (2012) argued that this model has analytic value in the community sport policy process insofar as it provides both an analysis of both top-down mechanisms and gives detailed attention to the dispositions of grass-roots implementers, specifically their awareness of policy, their direction of response to it (i.e. acceptance, neutrality, or rejection), and the intensity of that response.

Adding to the debate, Dunsire (1990) focussed on implementation failure articulating this as a breakdown in rationality, meaning that those responsible for carrying out policy either failed in the design or execution of programmes or plans, or simply failed in following instructions. Similarly, Elmore's conceptualisation of 'suboptimization' required greater delegation of authority coupled with a strong top-down agent overseeing performance and minimising the potential for implementation gaps or mistakes (1978, 1979). Further, the central agent must 'psychologically attune' implementers' views, ensuring that they align with the aims and aspirations of the central agent (O'Gorman, 2011), an assertion which mirrors a Gramscian hegemonic view of policy implementation, or perhaps the notion of 'shaping agents' preferences' associated with Lukes' third dimension of power. Whilst on first sight Elmore's perspective may appear highly relevant to the community sport policy system, its overly rational assumption of agents at the top of the chain being willing to delegate power to subordinates, and of implementation failures being a result of poor performance by implementers is too mechanistic and simplistic in a complex, dynamic policy environment such as community sport.

Further criticisms of the top-down perspective include the presupposition that policymakers can simply issue a new policy-based command and expect those below them to deliver successful outcomes. This assumes boundless rationality amongst implementers (O'Gorman, 2011), fails to take account of the diverse nature of the policy process, the problematic nature of inter-agency collaboration (as with CSP and NGB in the community sport policy), and fails to fully consider norms, behaviours,

values and attitudes of implementing agents (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Hjern & Hull, 1982; Lipsky, 1980). Thus, the top-down perspective is considered naive (Hill & Hupe, 2009). Top-down approaches are also heavily criticised for ignoring the potential for service deliverers to subvert or modify the original policy decision. For example, Garrett's (2004) study of Voluntary Sports Clubs (VSCs) receiving sports Lottery funding found them habitually resisting the demands of sport policies as a result of their independent nature and the increased expectations and interferences that current policy objectives place on them (May *et al.*, 2012). For Skille (2008), VSCs' willingness and ultimate decision regarding policy implementation are influenced by local contexts. The imposed policy goals of others may therefore be rejected if agents' interpretation of them does not correspond to their aims (Skille, 2008; van Meter & van Horn, 1975).

These criticisms of the traditional top-down approaches led to bottom-up models where a more realistic understanding of implementation emerges by analysing it from the perspective of the service deliverer (Hill & Hupe, 2009). The bottom-up school generally sees policy implementation on two levels (Berman, 1978). At the macroimplementation level programmes and initiatives are devised. At the microimplementation level, local organisations respond to these macro level plans, develop their own programmes, and implement them (*ibid*, 1978). Indeed, this situation is clear to see in community sport with initiatives such as the School Games and Sportivate being conceived nationally and being delivered locally by CSPs and NGBs alongside numerous other programmes. In this regard, most implementation-related problems stem from the interaction of a policy with the micro-level institutional setting. Central actors have limited direct control over micro-level settings; thus, there is potential for a wide variation in how the same national policy is implemented locally (*ibid*, 1978). This is a reported issue within the sport policy system, going back to the policies of the 1990s with sports development initiatives such as TOP Play, BT Top Sport, Champion Coaching and Girl Sport; specifically, the challenge is that of implementing a centrally developed, one-size-fits-all programme in a number of differing environments. This is reinforced by Matland (1995) who argued that contextual factors are critical, more so than the nationally conceived parameters governing policy. Therefore, if local-level implementers are not given the

freedom to adapt programmes to local conditions, implementation is likely to break down and fail (Palumbo, *et al.*, 1984).

Importantly, the bottom-up model is mediated by negotiation and consensus building within the policy system in which they are working, where skills, abilities of actors, and the culture of their organisations are all important factors that shape the environment within which policy is implemented. Whilst normative elements can be found in bottom-up perspectives (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Hjern, 1982; Lipksy, 1980), the predominant view is incrementalist in that it concentrates attention on the numerous actions of the implementer (Hill & Hupe, 2009). Proponents of the bottom-up approach argue that this produces a more realistic mode of operation for implementing agents, since their decisions and routines established to cope with the increased burden of policy delivery essentially become the policies delivered. This is partially due to the paradox of the street-level worker, as Lipsky asserted:

> On the one hand, the work is often highly scripted to achieve policy objectives that have their origins in the political process. On the other hand, the work requires improvisation and responsiveness to the individual case (2010: xii).

Attached to this, Lipsky argued that workers' self-perception is that of being a cog in a system, 'oppressed by the bureaucracy within which they work' (O'Gorman, 2010: 148). At the same time the worker experiences substantial freedoms and autonomy (Lipsky, 1980). Thus, whilst the worker has freedoms, they are ultimately constrained by the nature of the work, resource allocation and outcomes. This provides a variant on the Marxist dictum 'man makes his own history even though he does not do so under conditions of his own choosing' (Hill & Hupe, 2002: 53).

Street-level bureaucracy originally referred to public workers performing under certain conditions, where typically they interact with citizens and have discretion in exercising authority. In addition, Lipsky opined that street-level workers did the best they could in adverse work-related circumstances (Lipsky, 1980). This was primary because 'jobs cannot be performed according to the highest standards of decision making in the various fields as street-level workers lacked the time, information or other resources necessary to respond properly (*ibid*, 1980: 12). Thus, workers

‘manage their difficult jobs by developing routines of practice and psychologically simplifying their clientele and environment in ways that strongly influence the outcomes of their efforts’ (*ibid*, 2010, xii). Therefore, the actions of street-level workers lead to ‘agency policy’ (*ibid*, 2010: 221), or in other words, ‘the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out’ (*ibid*, 1980:12). Further, Lipsky qualified this by stating that whilst street-level bureaucrats may make policy, ‘they do so only in the context of broad policy structures of which their decisions are a part (2010: 221). Thus in a broader analysis of policy it is important to consider the entire policy context within which street-level workers operate (*ibid*, 2010).

In addition to Lipsky’s seminal work, Hjern and a number of his colleagues (Porter, Hanf, & Hull) contributed significantly to the bottom-up literature (Hill & Hupe, 2009), criticizing the top-down perspective as overly hierarchical and viewing implementation from the perspective of central decision-makers rather than agents more directly affected by the societal environment within which policy is to be implemented (Hanf, 1982; Hjern & Hull, 1982; Hjern & Porter, 1981). Articulated as the ‘organisational networks approach’ (Hanf, 1982), the ‘implementation structures approach’ (Hjern & Porter, 1981), or as ‘empirical constitutionalism’ (Hjern & Hull, 1982), they stressed that politics and administration are so closely bound that implementation research should not assume them to be distinct in the first place (*ibid*, 1982). In addition, they argued that the ‘ordering principle of implementation research should not be policy problems as defined … by the formal political system but as defined and addressed by relevant social actors (Hjern & Hull, 1982: 114). In particular, Hjern and colleagues emphasised the ‘network constellations’ of service deliverers (Hjern & Porter, 1981), where activities are bound by ‘implementation structures formed from within pools of organizations and formed through processes of self-selection’ (Hill & Hupe, 2009: 53). This enabled an understanding of the strategic coalitions formed at the local level as well as the unintended effects of policy and the dynamic nature of policy implementation (Matland, 1995). Hjern’s work related to Bermans (1978) essentially pointing to the problem of centrally conceived policy initiatives and how these tend to be ‘poorly adapted to local conditions’. In large part ‘programme success depends on the skills of individuals in the local

implementation structure who can adapt policy to local conditions; it depends only to a limited degree on central activities' (Matland, 1995: 149).

Elmore's (1979) concept of backward mapping was also a notable addition to the bottom-up school (Parsons, 1995). It suggested that the lowest level or end point of the implementation process should be the starting point in any analysis of policy implementation (Elmore, 1979), as it illuminates the reality of implementation rather than the rhetoric associated with policy statements and strategies. This makes it possible to analyse the implementers' cognition of policy as well as patterns of behaviour and any prevailing conflict. Further, de Leon & de Leon (2002) and Dunleavy (1991) argued that service deliverers may be more compliant implementers if they are involved in the initial policy decision. This proposition relates to the policy-action continuum idea offered by Barrett & Fudge (1981). As briefly mentioned above, this model views power as the central feature, particularly when considering bargaining and negotiation in relation to resource allocation (*ibid*, 1981). Importantly, policy and action are the focus in an interactive process between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom actions depend (*ibid*, 1981: 25). In this regard, Barrett & Fudge argued that policy is an 'agency-centered property which inevitably undergoes interpretation and modification and in some cases subversion' (1981: 251). Thus, a critical dimension of this approach is the need for an open and honest environment in which those responsible for action can bargain and negotiate with those responsible for policy, the result being a more closely aligned policy-action dynamic focussed on the performance of policy rather than conformance (*ibid*, 1981). However, the work of Barrett & Fudge pinpointed methodological problems in that if it is not possible or advisable to separate policy formation from policy implementation, how do we set limits for implementation studies (Hill & Hupe, 2009)? For example, an analysis of community sport policy solely from the perspective of grassroots deliverers would likely evolve and be revised, leading to difficulties in identifying the initial collective policy agreed centrally by the DCMS, thus providing limited utility in studying the implementation of centrally developed policy.

The bottom-up perspectives underline the mediating influence of policy implementers and the broader social context within which implementation occurs, in

particular the neatness of fit between nationally constructed policies and programmes, and the implementers' perception of them, not to mention the reality underpinning local conditions. Despite offering these valuable insights, the bottom-up perspective is criticised for both normative and methodological shortcomings. The normative-based criticism is that, in a democratic society, 'policy control should be exercised by actors whose power derives from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives' (Matland, 1995: 149). Thus, actors at the top of the top-down paradigm can be seen to possess political legitimacy. If power is to be shifted to the local level, then this should only occur within the context of central authority. The second criticism focuses on a misrepresentation of the level of autonomy experienced by street-level workers (Matland, 1995). Whilst classic organisational theory has provided a plentiful supply of examples of actors subordinating government or institutional goals (cf. March & Simon, 1958, Merton, 1957, Michels, 1962, Selznick, 1949), variations in policy actions can largely be explained by local contextual differences (Matland, 1995). In these cases, policy actions fall within a relatively limited range, usually specified by centrally determined policy (*ibid*, 1995). In addition, bottom-up approaches simplistically overstate the intervention of central government in the policy formation process, whilst ignoring their common function whereby they empower other special interest groups (e.g. environmental groups) to enforce policies that are in their interests (Sabatier, 1993).

In sum, there are limitations and value in both the rational, top-down as well as the incremental, bottom-up models of implementation. Whilst it has been argued that the incremental view may be a little closer to the reality of policy implementation (O'Gorman, 2011), the notion of rationalism—not least its representation of the way in which community sport policy is conceived (see *May et al.*, 2012)—is seen as both authoritative and highly relevant. Thus, there is a need to balance 'the desirability of a prescriptive approach and the reality of the need to recognise that implementation involves a continuation of complex processes of bargaining, negotiation, and interaction' (Hill, 1997: 112). As a result, authors have argued that the approaches are complementary, not contradictory (Sabatier, 1993), and that the approaches combined offer a richer, more insightful analysis of the implementation process than either does alone (Fox, 1990, O'Toole, 2004; Sabatier, 1999).

To get the best of both top-down and bottom-up approaches, researchers have made attempts to synthesize the two. On the one hand there have been concerted efforts to combine the two approaches within one model, and on the other an analysis of the conditions under which one approach is more appropriate than the other (Matland, 1995: 150). In more recent years, however, it is important to acknowledge that the top-down and bottom-up debate, whilst still in existence, has to a large extent been superseded by a new third generation of policy literature (i.e. ACF and Policy Networks, discussed in detail, above). That said, it is important to review the synthesis of top-down and bottom-up perspectives in order complete the discussion of traditional approaches to the study of policy implementation so that appropriate distinctions can be drawn between these and the aforementioned third generation models.

Elmore's concept of forward and backward mapping (1982, 1985) aimed to bring top-down and bottom-up approaches into one model. For example, in forward mapping, Elmore (1982, 1985) argued the need to set out clearly the precise nature of policy objectives, analyse means-ends schemes, and specify exacting criteria to evaluate policy at each stage of the process. Backward-mapping consisted of stating the behaviour's requiring change at grassroots-level of delivery, clarifying the mechanisms that are likely to bring about change, then 'repeating the procedure upwards by steps until the central level is reached' (Matland, 1995: 151). Whilst it is possible to observe some contradictory elements in this approach (i.e. backward mapping as a bottom-up approach, while highlighting the need to change the behaviour of the grassroots implementer to match that of the centralist policy maker), it does consider both the nature of policy, which tends to be top-down in approach, as well as the needs of micro-level implementers and target groups.

Goggin *et al.*, (1990) created a scientific, meta-theoretical (de Leon and de Leon, 2002; Goggin *et al.*, 1990) 'communication model'. It presupposes that the primary implementation problem involves organisation management, specifically communication between different levels in the implementation system (Cline, 2000). In sum, the communication model is based on a conceptualisation of policy-making as an 'implementation subsystem full of messages, messengers, channels, and targets operating within a broader communications system' (Goggin *et al.*, 1990, 33). It is

concerned primarily with the interactions between Federal and State regulators, and the extent to which messages are accepted or rejected between the different levels of the implementation system. Whilst the model attempts to refocus from the previous top-down versus bottom-up debate, there remains an implied bias towards the rational assumption of hierarchical, Federal leadership, and an assumption that state and local-level implementers adapt to fit Federal requirements (Cline, 2000). Also, the model is overly rational, failing to take account of 'interests, objectives, perceptions, and strategies of other actors and the institutional context in which they function (Kickert *et al.*, 1997: 184). This limits the model's applicability to policies delivered through partnerships or networks (Cline, 2000).

Schofield (2004) developed a 'model of learned implementation', asserting that there is 'a tendency to assume that managers actually have the detailed technical knowledge by which to enact such new policies (*ibid*, 2004: 283). In reality, local-level workers have to learn a range of new techniques to be able to implement what are often unclear or ambiguous policy directives (*ibid*, 2004: 284) which reflects an assertion previously identified by Marsh & Smith (2000) in their dialectical model of policy networks (presented above). Schofield's model, based on the British National Health Service, utilized six organizational variables to demonstrate how learning occurs and also identified the problems that are intertwined with the introduction of new policies (Schofield, 2004). Furthermore, it highlights how local-level implementers operationalise these policies, over time, into work schedules and daily working practices (*ibid*, 2004). However, this model has been criticised for its myopic analysis of learning at the expense of other important factors, as well as adding to the list of variables upon which implementation can be analysed without exploring the relationship between them (O'Gorman, 2010).

Stoker (1991) argued that in addition to the view of single-authority management of the implementation process, it is important to acknowledge that conflict of interest is often an inherent part of the process. This means it is necessary to analyse and understand how agents elicit cooperation from those who participate in the implementation process (*ibid*, 1991). Stoker developed an institutional regime framework which considers regimes to be both 'an institutional arrangement that institutionalises values important in public decision making', and 'a set of

organisational arrangements that helps define and support the political in it' (1991: 55). 'At the organisational level a regime consists of a set of rules, norms and procedures' that shape 'the interaction of participants in collective decision making' (Cline, 2000: 556). Moreover, Stoker pointed to an implementation regime as 'an arrangement among implementation participants that identifies the values to be served during the implementation process' (1991: 55) and provides an organisational framework in which these values can be espoused. Of particular importance is the need to reconcile the desire for central leadership with the reality of diffuse implementation authority (*ibid*, 1991). In particular, such diffusion requires the participation of implementers who may 'represent interests that are divergent from the national policy' (Cline, 2000: 556).

Thus, Stoker argued that the critical factor within implementation is the creation of a context that will promote cooperation despite the presence of conflict (Stoker, 1991). Stoker, then, articulated context as both strategic and institutional (1991). Strategic context refers to the degree of conflict that exists between the key agents involved in the implementation process (*ibid*, 1991), and the idea that cooperation can only exist in the aftermath of conflict (Keohane, 1984). Stoker viewed cooperation as 'negotiation to bring separate entities into conformity with one another' (Keohane, in Stoker, 1991: 61). An example of this in community sport is the conflict over the leadership of community sport given to NGBs in 2008 (Collins, 2010; Harris, 2008). What followed was a year or two of negotiation with some NGBs working closely with CSPs and others continuing the work on which they had previously been focused. However, over time, Sport England developed a core specification which reflected the common needs of NGBs and required CSPs to cooperate by ensuring that key aspects of the CSPs strategy, work programmes and daily activities aligned with these needs. This attempt to enhance cooperation amongst CSPs and NGBs was by no means subtle, and the extent to which it has brought implementing agents closer will be examined further in the results and discussion chapters. In contrast, the institutional context refers to the processes and mechanisms used to promote cooperation (Cline, 2000). Stoker posited that long-term relationships rely on the expectations of future interactions and a commitment of resources to promote trust and reciprocity (Axelrod, 1984; Stoker, 1991). Examples of this in community sport include CSPs hosting NGB development staff, CSPs and NGBs developing joint programmes and

initiatives, and complementary secondment arrangements where CSP and NGB personnel can switch roles, thereby transferring knowledge and gaining a deeper understanding of what the community sport world looks like from the other viewpoint. Finally, Stoker (1991) recognised that regimes did not evolve in a political vacuum; indeed, there are frequent situations where 'policy formulators must seek partnerships with those who control enough resources to have leverage in an otherwise gridlocked world' (Stone, 1989: 230). An example of this in community sport could be the disproportionate level of funding awarded to large, resource-laden NGBs in the 2013-17 whole sport plan funding (e.g. football, tennis, cricket, rugby union, rugby league, swimming), rather than smaller, relatively resource-poor NGBs (table tennis, triathlon, softball, lacrosse, etc.).

In a recent study O'Gorman (2011) argued that Matland's conflict and ambiguity model has utility in examining specific sports policies. Matland (1995) asserted that this model provides a much more careful evaluation of the characteristics of policy implementation, arguing that top-downers typically evaluate relatively clear policy, whereas bottom-uppers tend to study policy with 'greater uncertainty inherent in the policy' (Matland, 1995: 155). He went on to argue that because so many of the studies are single-case studies, very few approaches consider how implementation varies when different policy is evaluated (*ibid*, 1995). Thus, evaluating the inherent characteristics of policy can be far more insightful and lead to a richer understanding of implementation (*ibid*, 1995). Using organizational and decision-making theory, Matland identified two central characteristics—ambiguity and conflict, he argued that these can be observed in all policy, although the extent to which they occur varies according to policy area (*ibid*, 1995). Conflict plays a central role in decision-making processes; both the rational and bureaucratic politics model of decision-making assume that agents are primarily motivated by self-interest (*ibid*, 1995). These models differ, though, on the extent to which goal congruence exists. Rational models assume that policy-makers and implementers agree upon policy goals, where the bureaucratic politics model assume that there is no agreed upon goal, so conflict is its principle interest (*ibid*, 1995). As with the work of Stoker (above), it posits that conflict drives change and agents resort to processes and mechanisms such as bargaining, performance oversight, incentives and penalties to secure cooperation and hold loose coalitions together (Matland, 1995). It is important to note that these

measures do not normally secure agreement on goals, but do secure agreement on the actions required to meet goals (*ibid*, 1995). Moreover, for conflict to be present there must be an interdependence of actors, an incompatibility of objectives, and a perceived zero-sum aspect to the interactions of agents (Dahrendorf, 1958). In addition, policy conflict is likely when some implementing agents see policy as directly relevant to their goals and others have resistant or indifferent views (Matland, 1995).

The second part of Matland's model states that policy ambiguity relates to either (i) the ambiguity of policy goals, and/or (ii) the ambiguity of policy means. Central to this argument is the extent to which policy goals and the means to achieve them have been explicitly mentioned in strategies and plans. Where this is the case, Matland (1995) pointed to the democratic principle and suggested that policy-makers goals' have a superior value. In such cases, implementation success is dependent on loyalty to prescribed goals (O'Gorman, 2011). But, when a policy does not have clearly stated goals, standardization is complex and more general societal norms and values come into play (Matland, 1995: 155).

Interestingly, policy ambiguity is often negatively correlated with policy conflict. Matland (1995) concluded that ambiguity can be used to cloak inherent risks associated with policy implementation, particularly those that affect implementation agents' interests, and thus ambiguity can be used as a strategy to avoid conflict. Ambiguity of policy is prevalent when there are uncertainties about the roles of agents, or when the implementation environment and/or policy goals make it difficult to know what tools and techniques are needed to succeed, as seems to be the case with the implementation of community sport policy (see Active People participation data – Sport England, 2012b). Whilst the conflict and ambiguity model provides an interesting analysis of characteristics inherent in policy implementation, it fails to take account of the broader range of variables such as those relevant to the study of implementation. In addition, the model offers the greatest utility when comparing policy implementation in a range of policy areas, rather than single case studies.

This completes the review of synthesized implementation literature. All that remains is to point out the paradox created by policy and implementation-related studies. On the one hand, the availability of third-generation 'network-based' policy analysis frameworks offer researchers a more complete, holistic evaluation of the policy process. On the other, the lack of specific consideration to implementation in these new models means that their utility in examining implementation is limited. As Matland argued, if implementation research is to provide an explanation or understanding, it should be tied specifically to an examination of implementation processes in a specific policy area, rather than to all actions in a policy field (1995). Furthermore, the breadth and comprehensive nature of the policy analysis frameworks may not be well-suited to the specific nature of policy implementation per se but more suited to the analysis of context and all actions in a policy field. Alongside the need for a framework that considers implementation is the need for specific attention to partnerships. As detailed in Chapter 4, the community sport policy process has for many years depended on collaboration and partnership in order to work toward policy outcomes. Partnerships form an important and distinctive part of the community sport landscape. The following section is focused on the partnership literature, in particular the different models of partnership and the factors that help or hinder collaboration.

Partnership literature

In normative terms, partnerships have been understood as being positive or inherently progressive (McDonald, 2005). According to Finlayson (2003: 63) 'partnership is an up word that makes things sound exciting, progressive and positive'. The notion of partnership tends to be justified in that it increases the pool of resources (expertise and administrative capacity), promotes greater effectiveness and efficiency, and enhances legitimacy through the involvement of a range of stakeholders close to the end user (McQuaid, 2000). For Mackinstosh (1992), the rationalisation for partnerships rests on the potential to expand budgets, add value through the more effective use of resources, and multiply the potential benefits as a result of different organisations working together. An additional explanation which helps to explain the growth and formalisation of partnerships in community sport, and one which wholeheartedly exploited the normative view of partnership, is the national lottery sports fund. Not only did this promote the normative ideal of

partnership working, but went so far as to require applicants to demonstrate partnerships with a variety of local and sub-regional agents. The following section aims to give more attention to the notion of partnership—in particular, four models of partnership which aim to explicate the diversity of partnership types as well as an analysis of the range of factors that can aid or adversely affect collaboration.

The first model to be reviewed is Scheberle's (2004) typology of working relationships. This analyses the interaction between federal-level and state-level implementers, specifically in relation to environmental policy in the United States. It is important and highly relevant as it focuses primarily on working relations between agents involved at different levels in the implementation of national-level policy. Whilst federal- and state-level interaction is not applicable to this study, the range of factors considered in Scheberle's work provides a model for evaluating the working relations between Sport England, national, regional and sub-regional-level NGBs, and sub-regional level CSPs.

The 'role orientations' of agents involved in implementation, particularly those at the federal or national level, can have a significant impact on working relationships and the effectiveness of implementation at the street level (Scheberle, 2004). In fact, researchers have noted that there are problems associated with national agents leaning too heavily on local-level implementers to secure compliance with their goals (Agranoff, 2007). Seeing that coercion was not the most effective approach for national oversight of policy implementation, Scheberle (2004) developed a conceptual model highlighting the conditions which are more likely to facilitate effective working relationships between implementation agents that are separate yet interdependent. Two characteristics emerged as 'most critical in predicting' the effectiveness of working relations between implementing agents: specifically, mutual trust and involvement (Cline, 2000; Scheberle, 2004: 20). High levels of trust exist when implementing agents 'share similar goals, respect the actions of others, allow flexibility, and support individuals within the programme' (Scheberle, 2004: 20). The typology of working relations reflects this in its assertion that individuals have either low or high levels of trust for implementation agents outside their own organisation, see Figure 2.12 (*ibid*, 2004).

High trust	**High trust / low involvement** • A cooperative but lonely relationship • Agents respect role of partner but lack sufficient interaction • Agents have room to make their own decisions, but may not be aware of decisions of others involved in implementation • But when interactions occur usually positive due to high levels	**High trust / high involvement** • The strongest kind of working relationship • All pulling in same direction • High goal consensus • Challenging to achieve genuine HT/HI relationships
Low trust	**Low trust / low involvement** • Low trust results in suboptimal working relationships • Communication is likely to be incomplete, confusing and even dishonest • Few reasons remain for partners to work together—except for statutory or legal obligations • These relationships tend to be tokenistic, with limited expectations amongst participants for positive outcomes	**Low trust / high involvement** • Problems based on lack of trust between agents • Participants are highly frustrated • Involvement is perceived as either interfering or unhelpful • Communication flows freely but does not lead to satisfying results • Frequent complaints of micromanagement are common • May comply with requirements on paper while running the program they want on the ground
	Low involvement	**High involvement**

Figure 2.12 Adapted typology of working relations (source: Scheberle, 2004)

The other critical characteristic—involvement—relates to the extent of involvement or oversight by national-level implementers, such as Sport England and/or NGBs. The typology reflects both low and high involvement, as shown in Figure 2.12. Involvement includes a wide range of interactions such as communication (formal and informal), monitoring and evaluation activities, funding provision, sharing resources, and giving advice (*ibid*, 2004). Scheberle advised that whilst trust is normative (more is good), this is not necessarily true for involvement, insomuch as high levels of involvement may be perceived as micromanagement and 'could be counterproductive' in establishing highly effective working relations between implementation agents (2004: 21). Scheberle argued that creating 'synergistic relationships' is not easy and involves considerable work and the commitment of all organisations (2004: 27). She also pointed out that working relationships do not exist in a vacuum, emphasising that working relations between implementing agents are an integral part of policy implementation (*ibid*, 2004). Whilst the model does not seek to analyse policy systems or even implementation processes, it does examine an aspect of implementation given scant attention and also provides a framework which is directly relevant to the aims of this study.

The second model, conceived by Mackintosh, was inspired by the ambiguity and conflict present in an ever increasing private-public partnership environment. It examines the three types of processes at work within partnerships (Mackintosh, 1992). The first process considered is synergy. This includes the synergies that exist across partners, and, the extent to which resources, skills and power are combined to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (*ibid*, 1992). The second process relates to transformation, in particular the work of one or more partners to transform the objectives and cultures of other partners so that they more closely match their own (*ibid*, 1992). The third process, budget enlargement, relates to the acquisition of resources from external sources. A major criticism of this theoretical model is the overly normative view of partnerships and limited consideration of power (Hastings, 1996).

Third, Ling (2000) offered a typology of partnerships using four dimensions to analyse partnerships. The first is membership, including consideration of who the members are, whether they are individuals or organisational representatives and how they came to be members of the partnership (*ibid*, 2000). The second dimension is links between partners. This includes the nature of the links (formal/informal), levels of trust and equity, and the way in which partners affect each other during the lifetime of the partnership (co-evolution, coupling, convergence). The third dimension relates to scales and boundaries; for example, the primary focus of the partnership (broad/specific), how and where boundaries are drawn, and whether these are mandated or self-directed (*ibid*, 2000). The final dimension relates to the partnership context, including issues such as alignment between the partner organisation (culture, structures) and the partnership, the maturity of the partnership, and the extent to which the partnership is dependent on external resources (*ibid*, 2000). While Ling's typology holds the potential for a broader critique of partnerships, it does not consider inter-partnership resources (expertise and funding) and the resultant status or power of different actors within the partnership.

Fourth, McDonald's (2005) theoretical approach to partnerships principally combined the Habermasian theory of communicative action and Newman's model of governance. The model differentiated partnerships using two dimensions: change

(between the extremes of continuity and innovation), and control (between the extremes of central control and decentralisation). These two dimensions and their extreme positions created four models of partnership (see Figure 2.13): (i) an innovative, flexible, open systems model predicated on flows of power within the partnership; (ii) a strategic, criteria-driven, rational goal model wedded to systems of hierarchical or managerial power; (iii) a standardised, hierarchical model directed by formal authority; and (iv) a self-regulated, self-governance model based upon citizen or community power. In sum, the model provides a comprehensive, if somewhat complex, theory of partnership working,

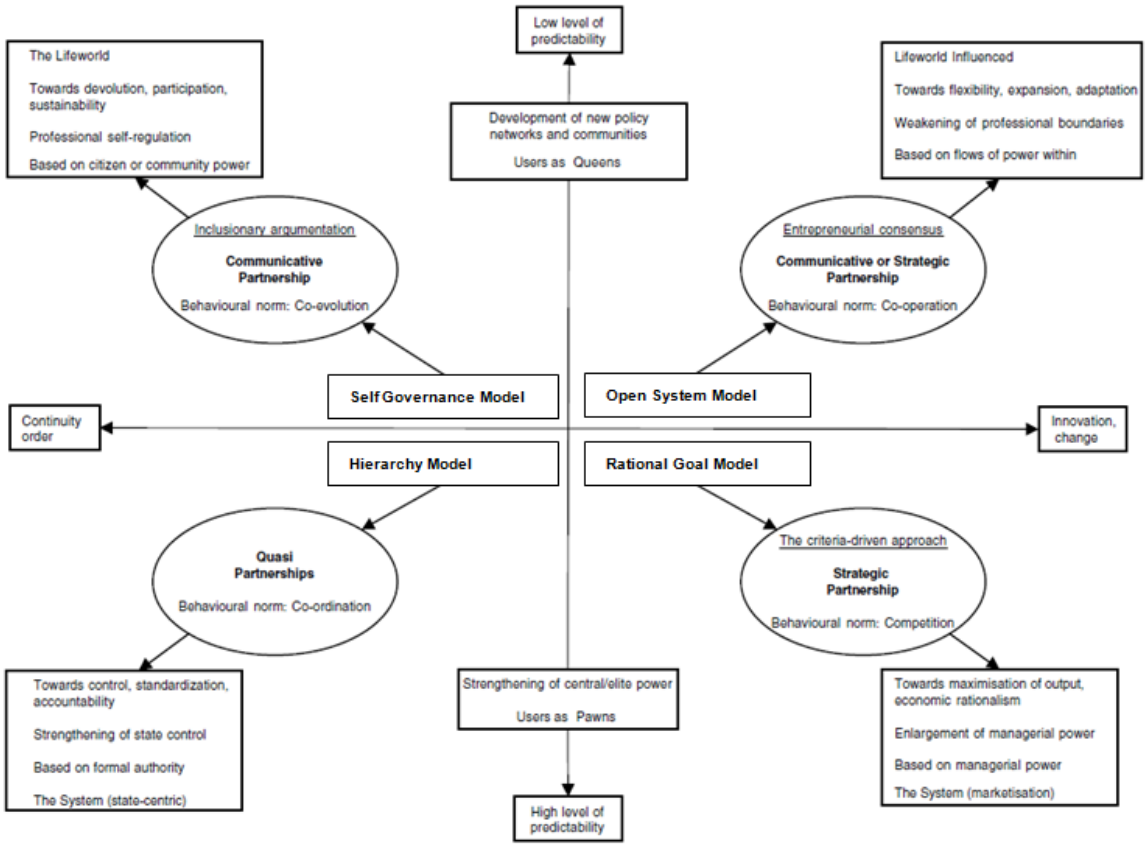

Figure 2.13 Differentiated theory of partnership working (source: McDonald, 2005)

The partnership literature explores a range of factors that can facilitate or work as barriers to effective partnership working. Among facilitators, the skills of the workforce are critical. Organisations need an actor that has the range of skills required of a 'collaborative leader' (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Feyerherm, 1994)—one who can lead where issues are complex and ambiguous, and 'one able to promote a broader good amongst competing parochial interests' (Williams & Sullivan, 2007:

41). Researchers note that the success of the partnership often depends on the leaders' skills, particularly the commitment, energy, and ability to fully leverage the partnership's potential (Bleak & Fulmer, 2009). Also relevant to leadership in partnerships is the role of 'boundary spanners' (Daft, 1989; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). These individuals have certain characteristics (see Table 2.3) which allow them to build shared meaning and trust with individuals involved in the partnership, regardless of real or artificial boundaries.

Table 2.3 Characteristics of boundary spanners

Ferlie & Pettigrew, 1996	Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002
• Strong interpersonal, communication and listening skills; an ability to persuade; a readiness to trade and to engage in reciprocal rather than manipulative behaviour and an ability to construct long-term relationships. • The ability to cross a variety of occupational, organisational, social and political boundaries; an ability to speak different languages; an ability to act as an interpreter between different groups; to be credible with a range of different groups. • Tolerance of high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty; a long term as well as a short term view; a good strategic sense, vision and ideas; an ability to reflect on experience and to conceptualise; a capacity to learn quickly and to adapt to new situations. • An ability to impart knowledge to others; to act as teacher and mentor; an ability to transfer knowledge from one setting to another; an ability to convey requisite standards and attitudes to others inside and outside the organisation.	• Critical appreciation of environment and problems/opportunities presented; • understanding different organisational contexts; • knowing the role and playing it; • communication; networking; negotiating; conflict resolution; risk-taking; problem solving; self-management.

A second critical success factor is the clarity and stability of the partnerships' objectives (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008). Clarity is particularly important in a discretionary policy space such as community sport given that policy objectives have been subject to frequent change (Collins, 2010; Houlihan, 2011). CSPs have been known to confuse policy advice from one government department (e.g. five bouts of physical activity per week, Department of Health) for a policy objective from another

department (e.g. at least 30 minutes of sport and active recreation three times a week, DCMS) (personal communication, 2008). This would not be noteworthy except that (i) the CSP involved was genuinely confused about which policy they were implementing, and (ii) was developing strategies and programmes focused on the former, whilst being evaluated on the latter.

Stability of objectives is also an important issue. For example, there is potential for significant variation in the organisational objectives of the 49 CSPs. While this requires further investigation, if this is the case, it could create confusion for any partner organisations that work beyond the sub-regional level with more than one CSP. Also, there needs to be space within partnerships 'to negotiate a shared sense of purpose and common objectives' (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008), which is often an intricate and time-consuming process of balancing involvement and ownership with appropriate goals that match both national and local priorities (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

A number of scholars have explored the reality of partnership and how it deviates from the rhetoric. For some, the advantages of partnership are outweighed by the disadvantages (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008). Some of the problems common to partnerships include a large and unwieldy membership, mission drift (Goss, 2001), a lack of consensus, a tendency for one or two members to dominate (McQuaid, 2000), overcoming cultural differences, building trust, and the fine balance between gaining advantage through collaboration and the development of committee-based inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In their study of local sports development officers, Bloyce *et al.*, (2008) identified a bureaucratisation associated with partnership working, where development officers devoted more time to managing complex figurations[4], decreasing the time available for developing sport within their communities.

Some of the principal barriers that prevent or restrict partnerships within the community sport policy context include policy congestion (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008), power imbalance within partnerships (Goodwin & Grix, 2011; Grix, 2010a;

[4] The concept of figuration refers to individuals and their relationships with others, otherwise referred to as networks of interdependency (Bloyce & Smith, 2008)

Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008), and lack of *'collaborative capacity'* (Hudson *et al.*, 1999). Policy congestion refers to the need for agencies to compete with others for space within a busy and tightly bound policy environment (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008). The range of agencies includes CSPs, NGBs, local authorities, CSNs/CPANs, Universities, Further Education Colleges, School Games Networks, the community trusts of professional teams (football, rugby, and cricket), and myriad voluntary-run sports clubs involved in the implementation of community sport. Despite recent attempts to organise these agencies into a single system for sport, there remains a very real risk 'that the establishment of a cluster of delivery mechanisms results not in synergy and the development of specialist expertise, but in confusion, competition and congestion' (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008: 239).

The predominant concern regarding partnerships is the substantive yet sometimes indiscernible issue of power (*ibid*, 2008). While some partnerships may offer a modern and effective form of governance, 'others may be ideological fig leaves for dominant powers', reproducing and reinforcing existing patterns of power among a multiplicity of actors (McDonald, 2005: 579). It is more accurate to view partnerships as the product of existing power relations, rather than a new, democratic form of governance (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008). One must be fully sensitised to the notion of partnerships as a vehicle 'for legitimising and diverting attention away from embedded power inequalities'; while the rhetoric of partnership may offer the illusion of equality, it actually 'masks a substantive inequality in influence' (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008: 227).

Looking at the complexity of power relations within the partnership environment, Bloyce *et al.*, (2008: 376) pinpointed a potentially significant unintended outcome:

> [W]hile government policy has increasingly constrained SDOs to work with a wide variety of other organizations in order to achieve the government's non-sport policy goals, the outcomes of this increasingly complex interweaving of the actions of the many different groups may well have made it more difficult for SDOs to achieve the government's goals in relation to sports development proper, an outcome which it is fair to assume was neither intended nor desired by government.

The notion of partnership assumes equity between members, obscuring the reality of power imbalance, resource dependency, and hierarchy (Grix & Phillpots, 2011). Such hierarchy and asymmetrical relations tend to be prevalent in partnerships founded on enforced cooperation, where—despite differences of culture, leadership, strategy, and priorities—agencies are required, usually as condition of grant aid, to demonstrate effective partnership working (Phillpotts *et al.*, 2010; Robson, 2008). Such enforced partnerships can fundamentally compromise the principle of partnership (Powell & Glendinning, 2002). Reinforcing this view, Rummery argued that enforced partnerships are contractual relationships rather than true partnerships:

> Contracts bind the parties into behaviours that they would otherwise not engage in. If a partnership needs to be 'enforced' through a contractual relationship, can the relationship be said to be a partnership at all? (2002: 236).

This is a particularly relevant issue insofar as the partnership between CSPs and NGBs is enforced as a condition of funding to both the NGB (via the whole sport plan mechanism) and the CSP (via the core funding). NGBs in particular are required to demonstrate how they will work alongside CSPs as part of the whole sport plan process. This is then evaluated in the NGB reporting process and the ongoing discussions between NGBs and the NGB relationship team at Sport England. Similarly, CSPs are required to support NGBs in delivering cross sport support services to meet NGB priorities, and to develop and maintain the strategic alliances and local networks NGBs and SE need to drive, deliver and secure resources (Sport England, 2012c). The extent to which the CSP is achieving these goals is evaluated in the CSP quarterly performance review and through ongoing dialogue with NGBs. The substantial funding of NGBs in comparison to CSPs (see Appendix 1), not to mention the privileged position of NGBs in the evaluation process, are likely to create and/or maintain a power imbalance between the two organisations.

The third barrier relates to 'collaborative capacity' (cf. Beckley *et al.*, 2008; Chaskin, 2001; Hudson *et al.*, 1999; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). This version of capacity refers to the collective ability of the group to combine various forms of capital within institutional and relational contexts to produce desired results or outcomes (Beckley

et al., 2008: 60). More specifically, collaborative capacity has been viewed as 'the interaction of human capital, organisational resources, and social capital' that can be used to solve collective problems and maintain the wellbeing of a given partnership or community (Chaskin, 2001: 295). The challenges arising with collaborative capacity at the individual agent level tend to be related to skills, attributes and attitudes (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). Barriers at the strategic or organisational level include a lack of clarity regarding vision or divergent goals (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002), competition for resources (Jansen *et al.*, 2008), expectations concerning other partner agencies based on prior behaviour or reputation, and the level of mutual respect and trust which ultimately directs the organisations' willingness and commitment to the partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). These factors, particularly trust and respect, can be positively influenced as part of a positive feedback loop when outcomes have been achieved and this is directly attributed to the partnership effort. In such cases, the achievement of outcomes can then serve the function of developing collaborative capacity to achieve future outcomes (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). However, this path relies on small or quick wins to incrementally build trust and respect. This is unlikely in contractual partnerships where specific funding is allocated in order to achieve a goal by a certain deadline (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

The scale and complexity of the barriers listed above are not insignificant, particularly in the context of community sport, where trust and respect have been shaped by deviations in sport policy, directly influenced by agents who appear to have had the Minister's ear (cf. Bloyce *et al.*, 2008; Collins, 2010; Keech, 2011). The purpose of this summary of partnership literature and context is not to argue against the notion of partnership, it is to emphasise the reality, rather than the rhetoric, of partnership, and to move away from an overly normative view of partnership working.

Conclusions

This chapter evaluated three prominent macro-level perspectives of state theory, the concept of power, four meso-level approaches to policy analysis, and implementation and partnership theories. The purpose of the following summary is to identify its

most relevant aspects and to clarify the way in which these aspects connect to each other.

The first aspect relates to macro-level theory. This is an important consideration for this study as it 'provides an overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world' (Houlihan 2013, 12). Macro-theories examine policy influence and the way in which this shapes policy and determines what the state does (Hill, 1997). Of particular relevance to this study are macro theories that give direct attention to the relationship between the state and society and, in particular, the distribution of power within society. Neo-pluralism offers a particularly apposite perspective as it does not privilege 'a single, dominant causal factor (whether it be market processes or class struggle)' (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987 in Green, 2005). Instead, it views the state as an active participant in the policy making process in protecting and promoting its own interests (Houlihan, 2013) and highlights the fragmentation of the state, the growth of decentralised networks, and the role and influence of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (Green, 2005). In this way, neo-pluralism provides a clearly focussed lens through which the fragmented structure of community sport can be analysed. For example, it has particular relevance in drawing attention to the nature of interactions between a range of national, sub-regional and local groups (SE, NGBs, CSPs, local government, CSNs, and clubs, etc.) as well as underlining the largely unequal influence of agents involved in the community sport policy field (Houlihan, 2013).

Set within macro-level theory and guided by its broader theory of power, meso-level frameworks take as their starting point the assumptions inherent within macro-level theory. In considering a more precise insight into the integration of macro- and meso- level theories, Daugbjerg & Marsh offer the following:

> ... the macro-level of analysis deals with the relationships between the state and civil society, that is state theory, and, more specifically, the broader political structures and processes within which the policy network [or policy subsystem] is located. State theory offers an explanation of the pattern of inclusion and exclusion within the network and an hypothesis about whose

> interests are served by the outputs from the network. The meso-level deals with the pattern of interest group intermediation … it concentrates upon questions concerning the structures and patterns of interaction within them (1998: 54).

The range of variables contained within the meso-level frameworks, and the relationship between them, serve as a conceptual map to guide the analyst, facilitating a deeper, more rigorous study than would otherwise be possible through ad hoc exploration (Sabatier, 2007). More specifically, the frameworks highlight a range of variables that are likely to influence policy stability and change, including the policy environment, administrative arrangements, interaction between interest groups, as well as values, beliefs and norms. Despite their utility, however, all frameworks contain weaknesses, leading some researchers to conclude that they are inadequate as individual tools of analysis (Houlihan, 2005). Consequently, the researcher has three options. The first option is to develop a new policy framework, although it is important to recognise that previous work has advised that this will do little other than adding another framework (and its associated limitations) to the numerous frameworks already published (Houlihan, 2005; van der Heijden, 2012). Second, one could utilise the framework offering the greatest potential in analysing the policy process whilst accepting its associated limitations. Here, the network concept that forms a central part of the Policy Network approach as well as a notable part of the ACF, would be likely to provide the greatest utility in analysing a policy field such as community sport that is characterised by networks (e.g. NGBs, SSPs, CSPs, CSNs, etc.). Marsh & Smith's (2000) Policy Network model could also have considerable potential, primarily due to its dialectical consideration of structure and agency as well as its central focus on resources, actors skills, actor learning and the way in which these shape and are shaped by network structure and network interaction. The third approach to analysis is via theoretical pluralism (Cairney, 2011; van der Heijden, 2012). Theoretical pluralism encourages the use of complementary theories that reveal a richer insight of policy. The key point here is that theories be complementary so that the different approaches are aligned and closely associated, thus enabling a cogent and coherent analysis, rather than simply selecting theories with little or no consideration of their relationship. With this in mind, neo-pluralism together with the associated meso-level frameworks of either the ACF or the

networks approach hold the greater potential to provide a deeper, more persuasive analysis of the community sport policy process. This pluralist approach, with the close association of neo-pluralism together with the networks approach and an examination of advocacy coalitions, gives attention to the state as an active agent, the fragmentation of the policy community and the unequal power across agents. It also underscores the importance of the structure and interaction of different groups, the way in which interaction is shaped by values and belief systems, as well as the dialectical nature of the policy process, one where agents are shaped by events as well as directly shaping their environment.

The analysis can be further enhanced with consideration of micro-level theories, thus extending beyond the state and organisational level to consider individuals and their role in the policy process. Particularly relevant here is the close relationship between the network approach and the implementation literature, particularly that which gives attention to the values, beliefs and ideas of individual implementing agents such as that presented by Lipksy. Furthermore, the realist examination of partnerships such as that presented by Scheberle (2004) provides a clearer, more coherent benchmark against which partnerships can be analysed. This work, giving attention to trust and involvement together with Huxham & Vangen's (2005) insights into the difficulties of achieving collaborative capacity within enforced partnerships, is considered particularly valuable given the structural context of the community sport policy process, in particular the enforced nature of the CSP-NGB relationship (discussed further in Chapter 4).

In sum, the use of multiple theories provides a richer, more complete analysis of the policy process, bringing the societal, institutional and individual levels into view and providing multiple perspectives from which to analyse the policy field. Furthermore, the use of diverse (but complementary) theories helps guard against the potential for a *Rashomon effect,* where different but equally plausible accounts of policy can emerge from the use of a single lens (van der Heijden, 2012). A more detailed evaluation of theory to analyse the community sport policy process will be presented in Chapter 8. Here, the empirical evidence will be used to further examine the utility of theory, particularly those at the meso-level.

Chapter 3
Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains and evaluates the research strategy employed for this study based on an understanding of the philosophic assumptions that underpin research. The purpose of the proposed research--that is, the knowledge it seeks to develop—is largely a product of a researcher's ontology and epistemology. These philosophic traditions dictate the researcher's view of reality—her world view and understanding of what there is to be known, as well as his understanding of how we can acquire knowledge, or how we can know about reality (Grix, 2002, 2010b). It follows that these deep issues lay the foundations upon which research ideas are formulated, and specific research questions created. It may therefore appear illogical or out of sequence to present the research aim and questions before the philosophic issues. However, doing so clarifies the overall purpose of the research and the key areas of enquiry, thus providing a point of reference and context for the philosophic assumptions set out in detail below.

The aim of the study is to analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in the community sport policy process. This broad aim has the following objectives:

- To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs with regard to the national community sport policy process
- To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in local-level policy making and policy implementation
- To identify CSP and NGB attitudes and perceptions toward the community sport policy process
- To evaluate the explanatory value of selected meso-level theories of the policy process in developing a better understanding of the community sport policy process

Philosophic assumptions

Ontological and epistemological assumptions either implicitly or explicitly form the basis of research, which is guided by deep philosophical assumptions that ultimately dictate the nature and purpose of the research enterprise (Sparkes, 1992). Clarification regarding the researcher's ontological and epistemological position enhances the reader's awareness of the critical issues of assumption and decision-making, and is significant in understanding the researcher's capacity to interpret the nature of social reality. It is particularly important to be aware that different paradigms offer a different view of reality and, therefore, competing interpretations of how the social world can be known (Blaikie, 1993). Understanding this brings greater transparency and appreciation of the core assumptions associated with research and those factors that instruct the choice of research questions, methodology, methods and sources (Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2010b). Similarly, understanding these issues provides the rationale for developing specific methods and avoids treating the 'philosophical position' as a pullover that is to be put on when addressing such issues and taken off when doing the research (Marsh & Smith, 2000). Ontology and epistemology are not merely a response to academic research protocol, they form the very base of the research, revealing deep-seated, philosophical assumptions that shape the researcher's paradigm (Sparkes, 1992) and provide insight into the guiding principles that instruct important decisions regarding the research strategy (Bates & Jenkins, 2007).

Grix (2002) advised that ontology and epistemology, whilst closely linked, are separate terms and that ontological considerations should be the logical starting place in setting out one's philosophical position. Sparkes (1992: 14) underlined the point:

> Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions which have methodological implications for the choices made regarding particular techniques of data collection, the interpretation of these findings and the eventual ways they are written about and presented.

To the social scientist, ontology is a branch of philosophy that is primarily concerned with the nature of reality (Marsh & Furlong, 2002). Blaikie, in an oft-cited quote, clarified ontology as:

> The claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other (2000: 8).

Ontology is therefore concerned with the matter of reality and an awareness of 'what exists that we might acquire knowledge of' (Hay, 2002: 61 in Grix, 2010a) or the meaning of what is to be known (Blaikie, 2000). Varying positions exist within the ontological branch, principally represented by 'objectivism' (or actualism) and 'constructivism' (Blaikie, 2000; Grix, 2002). Objectivism is an ontological position where 'social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors' (Grix, 2002: 177). Thus, knowledge is generated through social structures, beyond the influence of social actors, and these external structures dictate reality (Bryman, 2008). The constructivist paradigm offers an alternative view, whereby phenomena and their meanings are continually shaped by social actors (Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2010b). Thus, the constructionist view of the actor is of particular import, where the social actor interprets, constructs and continually revises a reality based on his numerous experiences and interactions (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2002). In summary, this is where the objectivist-constructivist paradigmatic debate fundamentally resides; where the objectivist believes in an objective truth, the constructivist assumes the real world is mediated by our social construction of it.

However, dividing this dualism is a third, midway paradigm[5], commonly referred to as critical realism (Bhasker, 1975; 1978). Critical realism combines a general philosophy of science with a philosophy of social science to underline the deeply intertwined relationship between the natural and social world (Bhasker, 1978). It accepts that social reality exists, whilst also accepting that knowledge is a social construct (Baert, 2005). One of the major difficulties associated with critical realism is its diffuse nature, evidenced by the wide range of terms used and the identification

[5] Midway insomuch as it occupies the midway point on the continuum of ontological approaches to social science research (Wood and Kruger, 2000).

of particular traditions or strands within the paradigm. In particular, the two critical realist strands of radical humanism and radical structuralism (Bryman, 2008; May, 2001) represent opposing interpretations of how one can know the world. Radical humanism represents a position more closely aligned to interpretivism whilst radical structuralism is closer to positivism (Sparkes, 1992). However, critical realists reject both positivist and interpretivist positions based on their incomplete accounts of social behaviour, in particular, the lack of attention to political or ideological contexts (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). From a critical realist perspective, positivism is criticised for its sole focus on observable events and its failure to relate how these observations are influenced by prior causal mechanisms and external influences (Collier, 1993). In a more positive vein, critical realists acknowledge the utility of interpretivist approaches in understanding the causal mechanisms related to human behaviour. However, realists are ultimately critical of interpretivism as it fails to consider the extent to which social phenomena are influenced by social structures (Hindess, 1996). Critical realism helps to 'bridge the object-subject gap' (Neuman, 2003: 85), allowing a fuller consideration of agency and the relationship between this and the social structures that shape and condition human behaviour (Bhaskar, 1979).

Linked to the ontological and located between it and the methodological is the epistemological. Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge, paying particular attention to methods, validation and the variety of ways of gaining knowledge of social reality (Blaikie, 2000). Whilst ontology is concerned with 'what we may know', epistemology is concerned with how knowledge of the social world is constructed and, in particular, the principles and procedures that are used to uncover this (Bryman, 2008). In other words, epistemology focuses on 'how we come to know what we know' (Grix, 2002: 177).

As with the ontological branch, it is possible to distinguish between positivist (functionalist or foundationalist) and interpretivist (anti-foundationalist) traditions that underpin epistemological assumptions. Positivism is idealised in the notion that reality consists of what is available to the senses (Bryman, 2008). In other words, positivists view the social world as an entity involving facts and figures that can be observed, measured and understood (Sparkes, 1992). Value is placed on those phenomena which can be observed and measured, and thus valid knowledge is

ostensibly free from values attributed to it by individuals (Bryman, 2008). As a result, the beliefs and perceptions held by individuals are not considered knowledge. Adopting a positivist viewpoint requires a methodology capable of testing the relationship between variables in order to assess the validity of particular hypotheses or theories (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Interpretivism, in direct opposition to positivism, is humanistic. Knowledge is essentially viewed as a 'human construction' which is gained from individual interpretations of social reality (Blaikie, 1993; Sparkes, 1992). Interpretivism places value on the individual's experience, belief and understanding, and respects the differences between people. Whilst interpretivism identifies social reality as the interpretation that individuals have of the social world in which they exist, this is not to argue that all individuals develop a different interpretation of reality. As Blaikie asserted, 'social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meaning for actions and situations (1993: 96). Furthermore, these interpretations are not normally fixed but open to constant construction and refinement (Bryman, 2008). By its very nature, interpretivism requires the social scientist to grasp the 'subjective meaning of social action' (*ibid*, 2008), aiding the researcher in developing a more emphatic meaning of human action rather than concentrating on the external forces that act upon it (Blaikie, 1993). Consequently, research is not merely an exercise of generating objective facts and explanation but rather an interpretive understanding. The interpretivist position facilitates consideration of experience, belief and understanding, and by doing so demonstrates the highly subjective nature of human behaviour (Bryman, 2008).

Grix, in his work on the border between epistemological positions, criticises the stark dichotomy between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism, arguing that this may impoverish research and restrict real-world research in the 'messy social sciences'[6] (2010b: 12). In an attempt to clarify epistemological positions, Grix (2002) noted that the positivist or foundational view can be seen to rely wholly on empirical realism, a world made up of observable objects, and no unobservable qualities (Sayer, 2000). Post-positivism, however, tends towards critical realism, a broad

[6] Grix (2010, p12-13) uses messy because people are often unpredictable and emotional, the motives for their actions are often the same.

research paradigm which Bhasker (1978) viewed as 'critical social science'. Sayer (2000: 2-3) advocated the value of the post-positivist epistemology, offering a powerful alternative to positivism through its emphasis on the 'interpretation of meaning'. Thus, a post-positivist epistemology allows the researcher to link positivist and interpretivist perspectives, thereby combining the objective, explanatory value of positivism with the subjective understanding offered by interpretivism (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2002).

The Research Paradigm

This section will set out the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin the study, otherwise known as the research paradigm. The term 'paradigm' is widely attributed to Kuhn (1962), who defined it as: what is to be observed, the kind of questions that are supposed to be asked in relation to this subject, how these questions are to be structured, how the results of scientific investigations should be interpreted, and how the experiment is to be conducted. Thus, the research paradigm can be seen as the cluster of beliefs that direct key decisions and guide the research (Bryman, 2008), or the 'basic belief system or worldview' with which the research is inextricably bound (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Blaikie (2010) provided an elaborate presentation of classical and contemporary research paradigms, where the classical approach considers positivist, critical rationalism, classical hermeneutics, and interpretivism, and the contemporary includes paradigms as diffuse as critical theory, ethnomethodology, social realism, contemporary hermeneutics, structuration theory, feminism and complexity theory. Grix (2002) and Guba & Lincoln (1994) presented a broader overview of paradigmatic positions focussed on positivism, post-positivism, and constructivism (or interpretivism). In the case of the latter, they present an additional position which they refer to as critical theory – a blanket term representing Marxism, feminism, materialism, etc. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 109). Figure 3.1 presents a continuum of research paradigms, synthesising ideas from Grix (2002) and Guba & Lincoln (1994) and illustrating how these align to ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as showing the key differences in the explanatory and interpretative value attached to each position on the continuum. This approach was considered more useful to the discussion of research paradigms for this study as it

provided a broader, yet clearly defined classification; it aligned with the philosophic assumptions presented above, and it was highly relevant to the field of political science, which provides the major theoretical basis of this study (Hay, 2002; Marsh & Stoker, 2002).

As Marsh & Smith (2001) reminded us, political science requires ontological and epistemological issues to be taken seriously. Epistemology, they argue, represents a skin—a permanent, irremovable commitment; not a position that can be changed or adapted to suit. All researchers have ontological and epistemological positions and all research contains assumptions directed by these positions. The issue, then, is about ensuring that (i) the researcher is fully aware of these positions/assumptions, and (ii) is clear and transparent about their specific position.

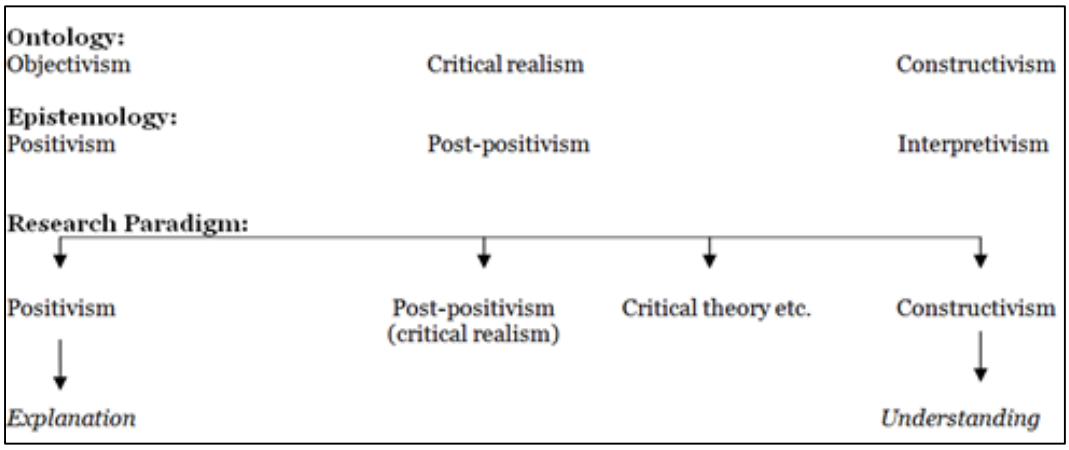

Figure 3.1 Continuum of research paradigms (source: adapted from Grix, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

The research has been directed ontologically by critical realism—viewing reality as both objective and socially constructed, and a post-positivist epistemological position—whereby knowledge is seen to be socially and historically conditioned (Hay, 2002). It is important to note that critical realism is distinct and separate from critical theory. That said, the two do share some assumptions, specifically: (i) an active critique of positivism, whereby both reject concepts of naturalness, (ii) a commitment to real problems as both a subject, and as a justification for theorising, (iii) the application of hermeneutic techniques to interpret the multiple realities of actors, and (iv) the emancipatory objective, that they seek not only to identify and

explain problems but to provide tools for resolving them, thereby enabling people to acquire more control over their lives (Gibson, 1983).

Primarily driven by the work of Bhaskar (1975, 1979), critical realism is seen as a legitimate critical paradigm that provides a robust, methodical approach to the social sciences whilst also offering a lucid critique of objectivism (Baert, 2005). At its foundation, critical realism (and the other labels used to represent it) rests on two fundamental beliefs. First, positivists consider that the scientist's conceptualisation of reality directly reflects that reality, whereas critical realists view this simply as a way of knowing (Bhaskar, 1975). Thus, realists recognise the fundamental distinction between the objects that are the focus of their study and the ways in which they describe and understand them (Bryman, 2008). Second, critical realists will admit into their explanations theoretical considerations that are not directly observable, although their effects are (*ibid*, 2008). Thus, critical realists maintain that events and discourses occurring in the social world can only be measured accurately through a combination of empirical investigation and theory construction (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). Critical realism understands reality as a construction of both observable and unobservable features, a consideration of both structure and agency (Bhaskar, 1975). Observable features include the actions of individuals as well as organisations, while unobservable features include those deeper structures and relations that are not directly observable but lie behind the surface of social reality (Bryman, 2008). In this regard, critical realists argue that a distinction exists between the social and natural world, and that social structures are maintained and reproduced by the activities of agents, whilst the activities of agents are shaped by pre-existing social structures (Bhaskar, 1975).

As such, critical realism enables a consideration of reality as both objective and socially constructed via a stratified ontology which views reality as multilayered. Bhaskar's (1975) domains of reality present three overlapping positions: the real, the actual and the empirical (see Figure 3.2). The 'domain of real' refers to processes, structures and causal mechanisms (Bryman, 2008). Bhaskar asserted that 'causal structures and generative mechanisms of nature must exist and act independently of the conditions that allow men to access them, so that they must be structured and intransitive' (1978: 56). In other words, these generative mechanisms are wholly

independent in that they function or occur regardless of whether anyone knows about or observes them. Importantly, these generative mechanisms should be seen as 'tendencies of things, not conjunctions of events' (Bhaskar, 1975: 10). Tendencies can be viewed as omnipresent, although they may not be productive or active (Danermark *et al.*, 2002). In addition, the activation of such generative mechanisms is not contingent upon a specific sequence of events (Bhaskar, 1975). Thus, they are explained as tendencies.

The 'domain of actual', as opposed to real, refers to existing phenomena, both observable and unobservable. Thus, this domain is primarily concerned with the events and experiences resulting from the generative mechanisms detailed above. Bhaskar (1975: 56) argues that 'events must occur independently of the experiences that are apprehended'.

	Domain of real	**Domain of actual**	**Domain of empirical**
Mechanisms	√		
Events	√	√	
Experiences	√	√	√

Figure 3.2 Domains of reality (source: adapted from Bhaskar, 1975)

The third and final domain, 'the empirical', is concerned with direct observation, the sense-experience mediated by individual perceptions of actual events (Bhaskar, 1975). It is possible for results of the real to go unobserved or unnoticed in which case the real would remain within the domain of the actual.

Critical realism offers an approach which allows for the synthesis of the intransitive real with the socially constructed experience. In other words, it understands the differences between appearances and reality (Hay, 2002). Ontologically, this research adopts the realist view, that the world is seen as existing independently of our knowledge of it (Bhaskar, 1975). This approach accepts that whilst the researcher can investigate reality at the empirical level, it cannot be used as evidence of reality as it does not include consideration of unobserved phenomenon (Bhaskar, 1975).

Epistemologically, this research accepts that knowledge is based on the subjective perspective of participants, which in turn is shaped by structures, organisational

relations and other conditions (Sparkes, 1992: 39). While the observation of agents and some structures may be possible, other 'deep' structures may not be directly observable. As a result, research in the post-positivist tradition uses theory to identify and clarify the influence of these unobservable structures (Bryman, 2008; Marsh & Smith, 2001). For example, the study aimed to explore the realities and perceptions of individuals within CSPs, NGBs and local government, and developed a sense of both individual and organisational perspectives in an attempt to provide a detailed analysis of the implementation of community sport policy. However, some of the key underlying structures that affect the role of CSPs in delivering policy objectives were unobservable. As a result, the meso-level theory presented above can help to explicate and clarify the underlying structures which affect policy implementation and, ultimately, policy outputs. To develop the point about structure further, it is necessary to be explicit about the position of the research in relation to the structure and agency problem. This problem is largely concerned with that which 'guides, determines, constrains or facilitates actions' (Grix, 2002: 49). Some research places structure—that is, the social context in which individuals act—as the key driver or constraint of change, whereas others prioritise individual agency, seeing the individual as that which creates and develops the social context and institutions around them (Grix, 2002, Hay, 2002).

More recently, the academic literature has developed a more elaborate consideration of the structure and agency problem. In this regard, Hay (2002) presented a useful, if broad, starting point in developing a clearer understanding of the relationship between structure and agency and, in particular, the way in which the two are inextricably bound:

> Agents are situated within a structured context which presents an uneven distribution of opportunities and constraints on them. Actors influence the development of that context over time through the consequences of their actions (2002: 166-7).

Greater clarity on the position can be attained by considering three differing approaches: structuration theory (Giddens, 1979), morphogenetic (Archer *et al.*, 1998) and the strategic-relational approach (Hay, 2002).

Founded on the ontological assumption of the duality of structure and agency, structuration theory presents structure and agency as one, and the division between structure and agency is essentially seen as false (Giddens, 1979). Thus, 'social structures are both constituted by human agency, and at the same time are the very medium of its constitution' (Giddens, 1976: 211). Whilst structuration does accept that structures exist independently of individuals, their very creation and reproduction is a result of human action. Indeed, Giddens (1979) suggested that individual agency actively seeks to create structures and institutions as all individuals desire a degree of predictability in their lives. As a result, Giddens (1979) rejected the notion of agents as puppets of society, stressing the ability of all agents to exercise choice.

Archer *et al.*, (1998) criticised structuration theory, arguing that, through its dualistic foci, reasonable attention is not given to the significance of structure. This was first articulated by Urry (1982) and developed by Thompson (1989) who claimed that, in his efforts to make them enabling as well as constraining, Giddens reduced structures to such a point that it is next to impossible to see, let alone analyse, them. The result is analytic paralysis, where it is impossible to separate and analyse each element (Hay, 2002).

In contrast to structuration theory, Archer (1995) presented her morphogenetic approach, which rests on two principles. First, that effective sociological research requires a clear distinction between actors and structures. Archer argued that 'our explanations will be unable to do justice to what we observe unless, for the sake of analysis, we think of societies and individuals as different things' (1995: 158). Second, the ontological approach in Archer's morphogenetic theory is inextricably bound to critical realism, so the ontology becomes a prerequisite for empirical work (*ibid*, 1995). This latter issue is the major criticism of morphogenetic theory, with Hay (2002) suggesting that this combination may lead to subtle differences in understanding the relationship between structure and agency. Further, this ontological requirement may be seen as limiting the range of potential debate as well as restricting our view of new or interesting phenomena (Healy, 1998).

An alternative approach, which goes beyond the duality of structuralism theory, is to examine structure in relation to action, and action in relation to structure (see Hay, 2002; Jessop, 1990). Framed as a strategic-relational approach, this views structure and agency as interwoven and mutually constitutive, as Hay confirms:

> Structure and agency are best seen, not so much as flip-sides of the same coin, as metals in the alloy from which the coin is forged. . . . Structure and agency, though analytically separable, are in practice completely interwoven (we cannot see either metal in the alloy only the product of their fusion (2002: 127).

Whilst the strategic-relational approach stresses the relational interaction between structure and agency, as stated above, the approach advocates separation in order to facilitate a detailed and thorough analysis of the relationship between each element (Grix, 2002). Thus, the strategic-relational approach develops the artificial dualism of structure and agency into a duality between a strategic actor who exists in a strategically selective context (Jessop, 1990). The CSP or NGB representative or organisation exists through their relational interaction with a strategically selective context—in this regard, the strategic context surrounding the aspiration to sustain and grow adult participation in sport, which includes the DCMS and Sport England national strategies, the comprehensive spending review, and the 2012 Games Legacy Plan. In addition, and perhaps more important, is the need to consider the relationship between agency and wider, strategic context or structural issues such as competing demands (i.e. school sport, elite sport, the DoH Physical Activity framework), resource dependency (i.e. majority of funding from one source) and the demography issue (i.e. the demographic make-up of populations differs substantially across the country and this results in unique structural relationships for different CSPs and NGBs).

With regards to the criticisms of the strategic-relational approach, Akram (2010) argued that it privileges agency and ideas over structure. In addition, despite Hay's (2002) criticism of Rational Choice Theory, the strategic-relational approach primarily conceives of 'agential consciousness and intentionality', with limited consideration of the unconscious and pre-reflexive aspects of agency (Akram, 2010: 13). With reference to the latter, Akram (2010) criticises the lack of attention given to

consideration of the unconscious in Hay's account of agency, which prioritises strategic and intentional actors.

Having considered the issues presented above, this research adopted a similar position to that advocated by the strategic-relational approach. This was primarily attributable to (i) the emphasis within the strategic-relational approach on the strategic context of action (Hay, 2002) and the direct relevance and importance of this to the research aim, and (ii) no criticisms of the approach that would fundamentally affect the research aim or the ability to address the research questions.

In summary, the strategic-relational approach recognises that actions are motivated by the intention to realise certain outcomes, and also understand that to be successful, 'action must be informed by a strategic assessment of the relevant context in which the strategy occurs and upon which it subsequently impinges' (Hay, 2002: 129). A key point with regard to this study is that the strategic-relational approach recognises the reality of 'uneven context' and the way in which this can favour certain strategies over others (*ibid*, 2002). Thus, this approach allows for the perceptions and reflections of individual and collective actors about the identities and interests that shape their strategies. Individuals can be reflexive, can reformulate their ideas and identities, and can engage in strategic decisions about the objective interests that flow from these identities (Jessop, 1990). In addition, the strategic-relationship approach could help to illustrate 'how specific structures and structural configurations selectively reinforce specific forms of action and discourage others' (Jessop, 2002: 8). As a result, this approach will enable continuing interaction between the reflexive reorganisation of strategically selected contexts to be assessed, as well as examine the selection and retention of specific strategies and tactics oriented to the selected contexts (Jessop, 2002).

Research strategy and methodological issues

This section will clarify the research strategy and a range of methodological issues flowing from the choice of strategy. Specifically, these include: a brief consideration of different forms of data, identifying the most appropriate data to meet the

requirements of the research aim, issues relating to the reliability and validity of data, and issues concerning the relationship between researcher, and the research.

Research strategy

The research strategy can be seen as the 'logic of enquiry and series of stages' that will combine to answer the research questions (Blaikie, 2010: 104). To do this, the researcher needs to understand and differentiate methodological approaches in relation to how they consider the sources of theories and hypotheses and how these are tested (Gill & Johnson, 2002). In this respect the researcher has two distinct approaches, deductive (theory to data) and inductive (data to theory) research (Daft, 1985). A deductive approach seeks explanation through existing theory, where theory is 'borrowed or invented and expressed as a deductive argument' (Blaikie, 2010: 86). The conclusion of the theoretical idea presented forms the proposition or hypothesis, which is then tested against empirical data to see if it can be accepted or rejected (*ibid*, 2010). Thus, the process begins with a broad conceptualisation of theory in an attempt to apply the theory in such a way as to identify new findings or observations (Bryman, 2008). The outcome is either (i) un-falsified findings that explain the past and/or predict the future, or (ii) the falsification and discarding of theory, as proposed by Popper (1972). According to Collis & Hussey (2003), deduction is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences and is more commonly aligned to the positivist research paradigm (Grix, 2002).

In sharp contrast, induction involves the development of generalisable inferences out of observations (Bryman, 2008), or the process by which conclusions are drawn from direct observation of empirical evidence (Landman, 2000, 226). Therefore, the starting point shifts to the empirical and the collection of data, which is used to construct an explanation and possibly a theory regarding that which has been observed (Blaikie, 2010). The researcher is therefore looking for characteristics, patterns and relationships in the data to help construct an understanding or explanation of a particular phenomenon (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2008). Gill & Johnson (2002) advised that the modern justification for taking an inductive approach in the social sciences is predicated on (i) explanation being seen as worthless unless grounded in observation and experience, and (ii) the close

relationship between deduction and positivism, where the social world is seen to be observed in the same way as the natural.

In his reflection on the distinction between deduction and induction, Grix (2002: 114) asserted that this separation is 'useful only up to a point'. Using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as an example of *a priori* assumptions, Grix (2002) questioned the exact terms of the deductive and inductive approaches and argued, in support of Ragin (1994), that in practical terms, most research relies on the interaction between theory and observation and therefore uses both induction and deduction. Ragin (1994) refers to this as retroduction, a reflexive approach that enables the researcher to move, as required, between evidence and ideas (Grix, 2002). Bhaskar (1978) added that retroduction involves the creation of hypothetical models to depict those structures and mechanisms that produce empirical observations. The process starts from the data and works backwards, using theory to develop a possible explanation (Blaikie, 2010). Given its realist position and the nature of the research aim, this research will follow the structuralist version of the retroductive research strategy advocated by Bhaskar (1978) and more recently developed into research practice as an explanatory model by Pawson & Tilley (1997). This strategy is particularly relevant for this research as it will attempt to reveal the mechanisms (within social rather than cognitive structures) that influence the role of the CSP in the community sport policy domain as well as enhance understanding of the contexts in which they operate. Furthermore, this approach upholds the aforementioned strengths of the inductive approach and addresses the theoretical separation of evidence and ideas as presented by Grix (2002).

Methodological issues

Forms of data

In simplistic terms, data is available in two principal forms, as numbers or words, although other forms of data, visual data in the form of images—video for example—are increasingly used by social scientists. Whilst on the surface this seems to be a clear distinction, the 'status of the distinction is ambiguous' (Bryman, 2008: 21). For some, there is a fundamental distinction, for others a false antithesis (Layder, 1985; Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2008). On one level, there is a clear difference in that the

quantitative approach seeks to measure, whilst the qualitative approach does not (Bryman, 2008). Of a more fundamental nature is the perceived connection between theory, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study and the research methods, where the general tendency is for positivists to take a deductive approach and utilise quantification to test theories, and for constructivists to emphasise an inductive approach and interpret the empirical data with the aim of generating theory (Bryman, 2008). However, it should be stressed that this is a tendency, not a law, and others see no reason why methods should not be mixed, so long as the methods are relevant to the enquiry, and accurately used and reported (Grix, 2002).

The questions guiding this project focussed on the role of CSPs and NGBs in relation to community sport policy, specifically the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs. This emphasised the differing structure and strategy of CSPs and NGBs, their influence on policy outputs at a national or local level, the mechanisms and processes that underpin effective relations, and the challenges that inhibit the community sport policy area.

Justification of mixed methods approach

Given these questions and the research paradigm detailed above, a mixed methods approach was considered the most appropriate for the following reasons: first, whilst mixed methods are generally regarded as a partner to the philosophic position of pragmatism (Denscombe, 2007), others remind us that methods are tools for collecting data, and are not of themselves 'rooted in ontological or epistemological commitments' (Bryman, 2001: 445; Halfpenny, 1997). There should, therefore, be no problem associated with the relationship between the research paradigm and the methods used so long as the researcher remains aware of how specific methods are being used, the purpose of their use and how this relates to the use of other methods (Grix, 2002).

Second, Bryman (2008) argued that combining qualitative and quantitative methods brings together the strengths and benefits of each while reducing their respective weaknesses and limitations. Qualitative data emphasises the importance of contextual understanding of behaviour, whereas quantitative research is more

concerned with quantification or measurement in order to accept or reject a particular hypothesis (Bryman, 2008). For example, a survey of CSPs could yield useful quantitative data about certain aspects of their strategy, structure and context, but could not explore, in depth, the experiences and underlying perceptions of paid staff and volunteers involved in the CSP's operation. Conversely, conducting interviews with a sub-sample of CSPs provided a 'thick description' of CSP experience and perception in relation to the community sport policy-making process. However, this approach did not identify the full range of CSP strategy as the study involved only three of 49 CSPs. However, the combination of approaches offered a pragmatic solution to the collation of a wide range of data that helped to address the research objectives.

Third, and connected to the previous point, the selection of the mixed methods approach was determined by the study's objectives, not the research paradigm. There are different approaches to mixed methods research based on the priority and sequence decision (Morgan, 1998). Priority relates to whether the qualitative or quantitative method is the principal data-gathering tool, and sequence refers to order or sequence in which one method may follow the other. Given the objectives directing this study, the mixed method approach followed that of M4 shown in Figure 3.3. Elsewhere, this approach has been presented as a facilitative mixed method approach (Hammersley, 2000). This is an important justification for this study as this pragmatic approach allowed a complementary combination of methods, where the first stage of the research--in this case a quantitative approach—supported and facilitated a deeper qualitative enquiry. This was particularly helpful to the aims of this study as it allowed for a range of data to be analysed across a greater number of CSPs and NGBs than would have been possible using qualitative approaches. Moreover, the mixed methods approach generated the necessary data to identify and differentiate CSP types, thereby aiding the selection of CSP cases. This in turn facilitated a deeper exploration of the role of these different types of CSP in the community sport policy process, and in relation to the strategic context within which they operate. As indicated above, the qualitative element of this research provided the more substantive data in relation to the study's objectives.

		Priority	
		Quantitative	*Qualitative*
Sequence	*Preliminary*	M1	M2
	Follow-up	M3	M4

Figure 3.3 Classification of approaches to mixed methods research (source: Morgan, 1998)

Fourth, whilst there may be purists on both sides that advocate the incompatibility thesis, (i.e. the incompatibility between specific paradigms and methods see discussion above, see Howe, 1988 for a more detailed insight), more pragmatic researchers (including Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Cresswell, 2003; Grix, 2002; Hammersley, 2000; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 1998; Nau, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Yin, 1994) argued for the need to move beyond the paradigm wars, because both approaches are important and useful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 14). More than this, mixed methods offer the opportunity to develop a more complete picture in that the data produced by the different methods can be complementary (Denscombe, 2007). They can provide different perspectives, or different angles from which the object of study can be observed (Grix, 2002). As a result, the fifth point in the rationale for a mixed methods approach is the potential for triangulation of the data across the different methods used. Denzin (1978: 303) identified four principles of methodological triangulation:

- The nature of the research problem and its relevance to a particular method should be assessed and, where necessary, the method tailored to the problem at hand
- Methods should be combined with a 'checks and balances' approach so that threats to internal and external validity are reduced as much as possible; i.e.: the particular weakness of one method is compensated for by the particular strength of another
- The theoretical relevance of each method must be considered as well as the implications of combining methods which at first may appear contradictory

- Researchers should continually reflect on their methods, being ready to develop or alter them in the light of developments in the field and emerging data.

Thus, combining mixed methods enables the researcher to 'observe an object of study from different angles' (Grix, 2002: 137) and as a result the findings are likely to be more convincing and more accurate (Yin, 1994). There was a clear and compelling case for the use of facilitative mixed methods approach, in line with the M4 type presented by Morgan (1998). This approach brought together complementary methods that generated a broad range of specific data regarding CSP operation, followed by a deeper analysis of social reality from the perspective of CSPs which could not be captured via quantitative means (Silverman, 2000). Importantly, the way in which the methods were used aligned with the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin the study, and the original phenomenon under investigation remained consistent regardless of the method being used, although clearly the specific questions varied from method to method.

Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity provide the researcher with a range of methodical considerations which will be used by the reader to establish and assess the overall quality of the research (Bryman, 2008). Thus, given the critical realist position of this study, the reliability and validity considerations of the quantitative and qualitative methods was addressed separately.

With regards to the quantitative method, the term 'reliability' is primarily concerned with the consistency of the measure being used (*ibid*, 2008). More specifically, consistency relates to stability, inter-observer reliability, and internal reliability. Stability relates to whether the measure is stable over time (commonly known as test-re-test), inter-observer reliability assesses the extent to which different individuals would give similar scores to the same phenomenon, and internal reliability is concerned with consistency across questions that are aimed at measuring the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2008). Given the paradigmatic nature of the study, and in particular the consideration of the relationship between the strategic actor and strategic context, the issue of stability and inter observer

reliability were irrelevant. The study findings were bound by the context in which the research participant resides, and this context is likely to change over time and to differ from area to area. Therefore, the issue of consistency of response over time and between different respondents did not directly affect the reliability of the research as the research did not aim to meet these particular conditions. The internal reliability of the quantitative method is highly relevant to the research and this was tested via a Cronbach's Alpha test. This statistical test calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients (*ibid*, 2008). Authors vary in their opinions of an acceptable level of reliability (where 1 = perfect internal reliability), ranging between 0.60 (*ibid*, 2008) and 0.80 (Berthoud, 2000). This study followed the mid-point in line with the advice of Nunnally (1978) and used an alpha coefficient of 0.70. The results from the Cronbach's Alpha test are discussed in the questionnaire section below.

Validity in quantitative terms is primarily concerned with whether a research instrument accurately measures what it purports to measure (Bryman, 2008). This can be measured via face, concurrent, predictive, construct or convergent validity (*ibid*, 2008). For this study, face validity was considered an appropriate test. This involved a total of 10 academic and sports sector representatives to test the clarity of the questions and ensure that the measure was accurate in addressing the concept which was the focus of attention.

Bryman (2008) and Maxwell (1992) both identified the problematic relationship between reliability and validity and qualitative research, particularly in relation to the positivist nature of reliability and validity. To address this, Yin (2003) advocated mixed methods approaches, arguing that, given the tradition of qualitative approaches, multiple sources of evidence can help to validate research findings. Mason (1996) argued that reliability and validity are achieved according to the conventions of specific methodologies. In a substantial shift away from the positivist nature of reliability and validity, Lincoln & Guba (1985) argued the need for different criteria to judge and evaluate qualitative research. They proposed that naturalistic enquiry should be judged based on two key tenets—trustworthiness and authenticity (*ibid*, 1985). Trustworthiness provides parallel reliability and validity criteria for

qualitative research, whereas authenticity raises wider issues regarding the potential impact of the research (Bryman, 2008).

Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility parallel to internal validity, transferability parallel to external validity, dependability equal to reliability, and confirmability, which can be seen as objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With regards to credibility, this research has involved mixed methods and triangulation of data from a range of sources including questionnaires, interviews, and official documentation. Respondent validation was also undertaken through a summary discussion at the end of each interview—recapping and confirming the details of the discussion, as well as sending each research participant a full copy of the transcript, and a clear process to identify any concerns or issues with the transcript. The notion of transferability was addressed using the development of thick description (Geertz, 1973), where rich accounts of context are provided, offering the opportunity for others to judge the transferability to other environs (Bryman, 2008). The dependability of the data relies on the availability of a clear audit trail throughout the research process. In this regard, thorough records of each stage of the research process were maintained, including information relating to the initial identification of the research aim and key questions, the process of categorising quantitative responses, details of the non-probability, purposive sample, transcripts and full details of the coding exercise. These documents were maintained in a clearly labelled document library and are available to third parties for cross-checking and re-analysis. Confirmability recognises the impossibility of complete objectivity in social research (*ibid*, 2008) and is more concerned that the researcher has acted in good faith, is self aware and cognisant of both his position and relationship to the research. In this respect, the researcher was committed to the principle of good faith. Evidence of this good faith is available through the aforementioned document library which offers the findings in their original form. The relationship between researcher and research is an issue addressed in further detail below.

The relationship between researcher and the research

This section seeks to clarify the level of detachment or involvement of the researcher in the overall research process, as well as recognise the self-awareness of the

researcher in relation to his position in, and influence over the research exercise. This is an important consideration in terms of being objective, particularly as social science research is not value-free (Sparkes, 1992). Patton (2001) reinforced the need for objectivity, encouraging the researcher to clarify the values that he brings to the study, as well as being clear about how he may affect data collection and analysis. The values directing this study, with regard to the research paradigm, strategic-relational view of structure and agency, and the choice of research strategy are discussed above. In addition, it is important to briefly highlight the motives underpinning the study, discuss the relationship between the researcher and the research participants, and summarise the researcher's stance towards the research process and participants.

The study was driven by a combination of personal and academic motives. It provided the opportunity to investigate an area of personal interest (the delivery of community sport) in an area of the social sciences to which the researcher is professionally bound and personally committed (sport) and in a specific field of study (policy process and power) where there are innumerable challenges and a genuine need for further investigation in order to contribute to knowledge and develop potential solutions to address the current challenges (Blaikie, 2010).

As mentioned above, there is a need to discuss briefly the implications of the relationship between the researcher and the individuals and organisations that are research participants. It is necessary to acknowledge CSPs and NGBs as socially constructed entities. That is, CSPs and NGBs are institutions that are made up of a range of individuals who, within certain parameters, shape what the organisation is and does. The individuals include core personnel (paid staff), volunteers, and partnership representatives who work primarily with, or as part of the CSP, to develop various strategies and deliver specific interventions. The researcher was an outside agent, external to this partnership and it was recognised that this could have influenced the research participant's response as well as researcher's interpretation of this response. Indeed, the critical realist tradition accepts that there is a relationship between researcher and the researched, viewing the researcher as a part of the social world under investigation. However, it is important to set out clear parameters, in that critical realism does not extend substantial import to individual

meaning as within interpretivism. The researcher therefore strived for an objective study that aimed to develop a better understanding of the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in the community sport policy process, in contrast to the local and national context within which the CSP finds itself. Whilst the research accepts as inevitable that the relationship between the researcher and CSPs and NGBs will, to some extent, influence the research, this relation should not substantially alter the research or its findings. Nor should it extend to an interpretivist account where significant privilege is given to individual interpretation of their position in specific relation to the research, or generally regarding their place in the world.

Reinforcing the summary above, Blaikie (2010: 163) argued that it is impossible to produce any data without researchers having had an influence on it. However, researchers can be transparent in their approach and objective in their execution of the research. Part of this process involves clarity regarding the researcher's stance to the research and the research participants. In this regard, I adopted an empathetic-observer stance (*ibid*, 2010: 51). Maintaining objectivity is a central tenet, although the empathetic observer approach encourages the researcher to put himself in the shoes of social actors and develop real insight, what Weber (1964) referred to as *Verstehen*. In this way, researchers can grasp the full meaning that social actors attach to specific phenomena and thus begin to understand their actions (Blaikie, 2010).

Research methods

This section examines the specific research methods used in this study. Three data collection methods were used: questionnaires, interviews, and documentary analysis. These methods were directed by a case study framework. The two-phase research design used a mixed methods approach with questionnaires being the primary method used in Phase One and interviews the primary method used in Phase Two. Documentary analysis was used to underpin and triangulate the data collected in Phase One and Two. The following sections provide further details of each method—including specific details of how they were employed in this study.

Phase One: Questionnaire

A questionnaire is simply a list of questions, usually sent to specific individuals who then respond (Grix, 2002), and is one of the main instruments for gathering data in social science research (Bryman, 2001). Questionnaires are usually developed in one of two ways, either via a self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview-based questionnaire using a range of closed questions, led by an interviewer (Bryman, 2008). This study used self-completion questionnaires as they are an efficient means of gathering a wide range of relatively simple data (Denscombe, 2007) and a useful aid to the development of a sample for interviews (Bryman, 2008). Grix (2002: 129) advised that self-completion questionnaires can be particularly 'effective when used alongside other methods such as interviews'. The purpose of using a self-completion questionnaire in this study was twofold: (i) to gather a range of data relating to the structure, strategy and perceptions relating to relationships and the policy process of the 49 CSPs and 44 NGBs[7] across England, something that would not be possible, given the scope of this study, via other methods, and (ii) to aid in the selection of CSP-based cases for the second phase of the research. Given that the use of the questionnaire in this study was part of a mixed methods approach, many of the disadvantages of questionnaires (i.e. not permitting prompting or probing, little opportunity for gathering additional data, and respondent fatigue; Denscombe, 2007) were minimised by using other methods with different strengths (Bryman, 2008).

In the area of questionnaire design, advice was taken from Bryman (2008), who suggested that questionnaires should mainly include closed questions, have easy-to-follow designs, and generally be shorter in order to reduce the likelihood of respondent fatigue. In addition, Bryman (2008) pointed to the need for clear instructions as well as suggesting that an attractive presentation is likely to enhance response rates. Ultimately, the quality of the questionnaire rests on whether the questions are clear, unambiguous and easy to understand (Kumar, 1999: 110). The questionnaire design generally followed this guidance, with a specific number of questions, the majority of which were closed. The questions were piloted with a total of 10 representatives (researchers, CSP employees and NGB representatives) prior to

[7] The NGBs included in this study were restricted to the NGBs in receipt of 2009-2013 Whole Sport Plan funding.

distribution to check the clarity of the questions, minimise the potential for ambiguity, and to check the average time taken to complete the questionnaire. As detailed in the reliability section above, a Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire. In line with Nunally's (1978) advice, any questions with a coefficient below 0.70 were deleted from the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. The Cronbach's Alpha test results can be found in Appendix 3.

As the entire English CSP (n=49) and Whole Sport Plan NGBs (n=44) populations were included in the study, there was no need to develop a sampling frame. The online questionnaire was developed using the Bristol Online Survey tool and were distributed electronically to the 49 CSPs and 44 NGBs, addressed to the Director or Chief Executive Officer of the CSP, and the Chief Executive or Development Director of the NGB (see Table 3.2 below). According to a range of methodological literature (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Check & Schutt, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Lohr, 2009; Mangione, 1995; Oppenheim, 1992), the response rates were good with 47 CSPs (96%), and 27 NGBs (61%) responding. This was primarily a result of pursing a personal approach with CSP and NGB representatives including the identification of key contacts, the offer of a summary report being provided to all respondents, and one follow-up email and one follow-up telephone call to request completion.

Given the role of the Phase One CSP research in informing the selection of cases for Phase Two, a number of statistical tests were completed to test the hypotheses presented below. Specifically, these tests were conducted to identify any discernible patterns or statistically significant differences between CSPs. Advice was taken from Gill & Johnson (2002) regarding context and diversity and two distinct predictor (independent) variables were identified to best reflect the diversity of CSP operations and the context within which they operate, namely: (i) whether CSPs are hosted by another organisation (e.g. local government or Higher Education) or whether they were non-hosted and independent; and (ii) the financial context of each CSP, specifically their annual turnover. In this respect, some CSPs rely on Sport England core funding (< £1 million), some have a variety of revenue sources (>£2 million), and others sit in between (£1-2 million).

Particular attention was given to hosting arrangements as these vary among CSPs. Of the 47 CSPs completing the questionnaire, 33 were hosted by a third-party (24 local authorities, seven higher education institutions, and two by charitable trusts). In addition, the 14 non-hosted CSPs all had independent Company Limited by Guarantee status, with nine of these also having Charitable Status. Thus, it is logical to explore whether these different organisational contexts produce distinct strategic and/or operational differences and/or lead to differing views and perceptions towards CSP-NGB relations and the community sport policy process. Turnover was also included as a predictor variable due to the fact that some CSPs were more reliant upon Sport England core funding than others, and an assumption that those CSPs were more likely to feel obligated to meet Sport England requirements, feel more dependent rather than autonomous and view NGB relations and the community sport policy process in a more positive light due to the aforementioned sense of dependence, together with a lack of resources and/or choice to pursue other areas of work.

Alongside these predictor variables, two outcome variables were considered important in relation to the research aim and objectives, namely: (i) CSP perceptions toward the NGB-CSP relationship, and (ii) CSP perceptions toward the community sport policy process. Given the combination of outcome and predictor variables, the following non-directional hypotheses will be tested: (hypothesis 1, H1) that there will be a difference between hosted and non-hosted CSPs in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship; (hypothesis 2, H2) that there will be a difference between CSPs by turnover in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship; (hypothesis 3, H3) that there will be a difference between hosted and non-hosted CSPs in attitudes toward the community sport policy process; and (hypothesis 4, H4) that there will be a difference between CSPs by turnover in attitudes toward the community sport policy process. It is important to note that the same statistical tests were not undertaken on the first phase NGB data as this was not used to identify cases. Instead, NGBs were selected as embedded units, along with local authorities, within each CSP case study. However, an overview of the descriptive results from the Phase One NGB questionnaire is provided alongside the CSP results to provide insight into the NGB

structure, strategy structure, and perceptions of the CSP-NGB relationship and the community sport policy process.

The statistical procedures were completed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 18. The data were analysed using two non-parametric tests. The Mann-Whitney test was used to compare CSPs by hosting arrangement as this consisted of two independent samples (hosted and non-hosted). A Kruskall-Wallis test was required to compare CSPs by turnover as this was involved more than two groups (<£1M, £1-2M, and >£2M). Non-parametric tests were employed as assumptions for normality could not be satisfied. Specifically, the data is not normally distributed. Further, the first-phase analysis is primarily based on ordinal data and therefore requires an analysis of median rather than mean data. Due to the methodological implications of selecting cases for Phase Two, it is necessary to mention briefly that no significant differences were found by hosting arrangement or CSP turnover where significance = <0.01. Whilst the quantitative data provides a range of important context for both CSPs and NGBs, the primary reason for undertaking this research was to select a range of different CSP types as determined by the statistically significant differences of their responses to certain questions pertaining to CSP-NGB relations and/or the community sport policy process. Conversely, this process also demonstrated that such differences do not exist and therefore supported an alternative approach to selecting CSP cases. As no significant differences were found, the results of the quantitative research have been organised and presented in Appendix 4. Important quantitative findings will be used to support the data presented in each case. A more detailed discussion of the methodological implications for selecting cases and how these were managed follows.

Case Studies

Phase Two of the research involved interviews embedded within three CSP-based case studies. The cases were selected using data from the CSP completed questionnaires in Phase One, above. This will be explained in more detail following a brief critique of case-based methodology.

The case-based methodology offers a framework of enquiry which investigates phenomena within a realist context (Yin, 2003); in other words, examining

experience or action without separating this from the context in which it occurred. This is supported by Robson (2002, 178) who defined case studies as 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence'. Whilst not a data collection method in themselves, Hakim (2000) noted the value of case studies, especially their ability to examine what might normally be considered insignificant issues, and to reveal explanatory value of behaviour or action. Bryman (2008: 53) focused on the analytical insight offered via an 'intensive, detailed examination of a case, where 'the aim is the illuminate the general by looking at the particular' (Denscombe, 2007: 36). Further, case studies can be used with a range of data collection methods and are useful in situations where there are a small number of cases and large number of variables (de Vaus, 2001). However, Bryman (2008: 54) does warn the researcher to think carefully about the unit of analysis to ensure that it reflects the nature of a case study (i.e. developing a specific example of a case that can then be used to reflect and discuss others). This study has a particularly clear unit of analysis (CSPs), and the research paradigm, strategic-relational view of structure and agency, the empathetic-observer stance, and the selected methods alongside the issues presented above all contributed to the justification of a case-based method being highly relevant for this particular study.

The case study method offers a range of applications, which can best be summarised as the critical, the unique, the typical and revelatory and the longitudinal (cf. Yin, 2003 for a more detailed overview). The type adopted for this study most closely resembles the typical, or what Bryman (2008: 56) prefers to label as the 'exemplifying case'. These cases are not selected for their uniqueness, but rather their ability to represent a broader category to which they belong (*ibid*, 2008), something which only becomes apparent once the research has begun (Bryman, 2001). In this instance, the first phase of research categorised CSPs into types, and the second phase of research involved the identification of specific cases representing each CSP type. The overall objective of the exemplifying case is 'to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation' (Yin, 2003: 41).

With regards to the selection of cases, Yin (2003) identifies four different types based on the number of cases (single or multiple cases) and the sources of evidence to be

used in each case (holistic or embedded design features). Whilst single cases are a common feature in social research (Hakim, 2000; Yin, 2003) they are criticised due to a lack of internal or external validity (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2003). As an alternative, Yin (2003) advocated the use of multiple cases based on the logic of replication where multiple cases allow for comparison across cases, and are more likely to provide compelling findings and more meaningful insight than is possible through a single case (de Vaus, 2001). For these reasons, a multiple design method was utilised. When using multiple cases, Yin (2003) advised that methods are designed using literal replication, where similar findings are expected, or theoretical replication, where the theoretical logic is used to explain the differences in findings. Bryman (2008) criticised the narrow focus of replication and pointed to the difficulties associated with the process. He recommended the comparative design as an alternative for multiple cases as the logic of comparison requires a consistent approach to data collection, ensuring that information is collected on the same variables across the units of analysis (*ibid*, 2008). Given the primary focus of this research, and the importance of comparing across CSP types, the comparative design provides the most appropriate approach, ensuring the collection of information against a consistent set of variables across different cases.

As mentioned above, the focus on CSP types led to the statistical analysis of Phase One data to identify patterns or differences between hosted and non-hosted CSPs and/or CSPs more or less dependent on Sport England core funding. It is argued that this approach would enable a comparative design across CSPs. However, as noted above, the statistical tests revealed no significant differences. Consequently, a pragmatic approach to identifying cases was developed based on a number of core criteria to ensure that the cases best reflected the diversity of CSP operations and the geographical, infrastructural and resource-based contexts within which they exist (Gill & Johnson, 2002). This approach maintains a commitment to Bryman's (2008) principle of comparative design. In addition to the predictor variables above (hosting arrangements and turnover), the area served by the CSP was viewed as an important distinguishing feature of CSPs given such diverse geographical contexts as rural Cornwall, Suffolk and Northumberland and inner-city Birmingham, Manchester, and London. It was viewed as sensible to explore the possibility of differences arising from such population and demography, not to mention infrastructural differences,

particularly between urban and rural communities. In addition, location is an important predictor of sports participation, inasmuch as local situations vary significantly and these local variations heavily influence sports participation rates (Mindshare, 2010). Whilst a key limitation is an inability to represent all geographical contexts, an attempt has been made to use CSP cases in each of the three geographical settings (urban, rural and mixed). These classifications were based on the self-report return from the research participant.

Based on the discussion above, the following conditions were developed for identifying CSP-based cases:

- At least one hosted and one non-hosted CSP;
- At least one CSP with a turnover less than £1 million and one CSP with a turnover greater than £1 million;
- One case each from urban, rural and mixed populations;
- The CSP Director and Chair had been in post for at least the past 2 years;
- The CSP Director, Chair and NGB-Lead Officer all agreed to fully cooperate and take part in the research.

Given the time and financial resources available for this study, it was important to take a pragmatic approach, with priority given to those CSPs that were the first to respond and meet the conditions listed above. Clearly, this pragmatic approach was not without its limitations. These will be considered in more detail later in this chapter and be taken into account when drawing conclusions. Further, whilst the positivist requirement for generalization does not fit with the research philosophy nor the more general goals associated with this research, it can be argued that, so long as differences in context and organisational culture are considered, that some transferability of findings to others [CSPs in this case], is possible (Bryman, 2008). Three CSP-based cases were identified for further study. These are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Selection of CSP cases

Criteria	CSP 1	CSP 2	CSP 3
Hosting arrangements	Independent Company Limited by Guarantee	Independent charity	Hosted by local authority
Turnover	£1,000,000	£700,000	£1,300,000
Area type & population[8]	Urban 1,100,000	Mixed 635,000	Rural 700,000

After selecting cases, it was necessary to decide whether the case studies should be holistic or embedded. The holistic case study involves one unit of analysis for each case. The major criticism of holistic cases is the inability to triangulate information from different sources, which can feed scepticism in relation to the reliability and validity of the findings (Yin, 2003). In contrast, embedded cases are divided into multiple sub-units (Yin, 2003), and each sub-unit relates to a specific part of the entity being studied. This could include other organisations that work alongside the CSP, for example, NGBs, local authorities and County Sports Associations. As a result, embedded cases are largely seen as a more robust approach, as evidence can be triangulated from a range of sources, providing the potential to corroborate or contradict specific inferences across the subunits. For this reason, embedded cases were selected for this study. Further details regarding the specific units included in each case study are detailed below in the interview section (see Table 3.2 and Table 3.3).

The final issue with regards to the case studies is data analysis. This is an issue which numerous researchers highlighted as problematic due to a lack of universal rules that govern the analysis of qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2001; Yin, 2003). Whilst this has led to criticism regarding subjectivity and validity of the case study design, Yin argued that this can be prevented through the development of a clear analytic framework which would enable the researcher to '...treat the evidence fairly, produce compelling analytical conclusions, and rule out alternative interpretations (2003: 111). Further, to support the researcher, Yin (2003) presented four techniques that can be used in analysing data for the preparation of case studies, and as a result improve the validity of the research, namely pattern-matching,

[8] The population figures have been taken from the ONS annual population survey for 2009

explanation building, time-series analysis and programme-logic modelling. Given the explanatory focus of this study, the technique of explanation building was considered the most relevant. Explanation building is considered an iterative process, in line with the retroductive process, enabling the researcher to use the empirical research to refine theoretical propositions. In particular, the technique was reported as having value in facilitating cross-case analysis (*ibid*, 2003). As an iterative process, the following steps for the analysis of the case studies were developed:

(i) Completed initial analysis of data from a single CSP case using the theoretical concepts presented above
(ii) Compared this initial evidence with the theoretical concepts to check for relevance prior to further analysis of data in other CSP cases
(iii) Reviewed and, if necessary, revised initial understanding of the use of the theoretical concepts
(iv) Completed analysis of all data in the single CSP case, applying the revised understanding of theoretical concepts
(v) Reviewed the entire empirical evidence from one case alongside theoretical propositions and undertook final revisions in understanding theoretical concepts
(vi) Completed revised analysis of final two CSP cases
(vii) Reviewed and reconsidered entire evidence alongside theoretical concepts with the aim of refining theoretical propositions.

Importantly, Yin (2003) warned researchers that the iterative nature of explanation building can be distracting and lead to the researcher drifting away from the original focus of the research, and that constant reference to the research aims and questions is necessary in order to manage this problem. Detailed information regarding the primary methods used to populate the case study framework follows.

Phase Two: Interviews

Qualitative interviews were a highly relevant method for this study as they allow the researcher to get close to '...the social actors' meanings and interpretations, to their accounts of the social interaction in which they have been involved' (Blaikie, 2010). Further, this method provides the opportunity to analyse actor perceptions toward

events and relationships, and also considers the context within which these events and relationships take place (Bryman, 2008; May, 2001). Interviews were also selected as they provide a complementary method to the case study framework by providing a range of rich and detailed data to support the development of each case study (Yin, 2003).

Bryman (2008) identified four main types of qualitative interview: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and group. Structured interviews involve 'tight control over the format of questions and answers' (Denscombe, 2007: 175). At the other end of the spectrum, unstructured interviews involve no pre-set questions and no recognised order (Bryman, 2008). Both of these options lack flexibility and were considered a poor epistemological fit, being favoured by positivists and interpretivists, respectively. Semi-structured interviews, in contrast, combine structure with standardised open-ended questions (Bryman, 2008). Thus, semi-structured interviews were seen as a more appropriate balance between openness which aids discussion and structure which aids comparison of responses and analysis (Oppenheim, 1992). A major problem of such an approach is the potential to steer agents' responses toward specific codes and themes. A number of strategies were used to mitigate this risk. First, the study only included actors responsible for strategic-level decision making at the sub-regional level, where I anticipated a greater diversity of perspectives due to the heterogeneity of local context and the role this plays in shaping actor beliefs and perspectives (Lewis, 2002). Second, the questions were designed in such a way as to create an open dialogue without leading the interviewee to certain ideas or specifying particular characteristics that might generate a particular opinion (Bryman, 2008). This included follow-up probing questions used to unpack points of particular interest. This was useful in focusing the discussion on the agents' perspective rather than the question (May, 2001), and gave each interviewee the freedom to explore issues that were particularly pertinent to their context, rather than being constrained by a very narrow series of questions. The schedule of interview questions is included in appendix 5.

As detailed above, the specific cases were identified using the data from the Phase One research using a non-probability, purposive sample. Equally important was the selection of the embedded units across the county area, specifically NGB

representatives, local authorities, and county sport associations. To support the purposive sampling process, selection criteria identified by Denscombe (2007) was used, with particular attention given to the suitability and pragmatic criteria relating specifically to the embedded units. The rationale for the suitability of each interviewee is detailed in Table 3.2 below. The pragmatic issues included consideration of the prospective interviewee's willingness to participate, and the intrinsic interest of the prospective interviewee (in the context of the overall case study). Table 3.2 sets out how many individuals, per institution, were invited to participate and the total number that declined, and highlights the intrinsic interest of the interviewee.

Following Gill & Johnson (2002), a number of core criteria were identified to ensure the diversity of NGBs and local authorities represented within the study. It is necessary to briefly expand on the criteria used to select NGBs, specifically the sports that were selected as either team or individual sports and those sports deemed large, medium and small according to annual turnover (see table 3.3 for selection criteria for NGBs). On the issue of turnover, this was used rather than other measures of size (i.e. number of clubs, number of affiliated clubs or number of staff) primarily because it was possible to access relevant data relating to all NGBs whereas it was not possible to obtain accurate data relating to number of clubs. In addition, turnover is argued to be a highly relevant measure as it gives a strong indication of revenue. Thus, larger NGBs are likely to have greater resources to develop appropriate infrastructure to grow and govern their sport as they choose. As a result it is plausible to consider that these NGBs may have slightly different perceptions toward national strategy, relationships with CSPs, and their role in this, as opposed to smaller NGBs that are more reliant upon funding provision from Sport England.

Table 3.2 Selection of interviewees

Descriptor	CSP representatives	NGBs	LA representatives
Case Study 1			
Positions/organisations involved in research	Chief Executive NGB Lead Officer/Commissioning Officer Chairperson	CDO, Football CDO, Cricket CDO, Tennis CDO, Netball CDO, Athletics RDM, Swimming RDM, Basketball RDM, Golf	Head of Community Services, MBC Principal Sport & Recreation Manager, MBC Community Development Manager, MBC
No. invited to take part	3	8	3
No. declined	0	0	0
Case Study 2			
Positions/organisations involved in research	Chief Executive NGB Lead Officer NGB Lead – Board Member	CDO, Football CDO, Cricket CDO, Tennis CDO, Netball CDO, Athletics RDM, Swimming RDM, Basketball RDM, Golf	Head of Community Services, City Council Sport Development Manager, County Council Head of Community Services, District Council
No. invited to take part	3	8	3
No. declined	0	0	0
Case Study 3			
Positions/organisations involved in research	Director NGB Lead Officer Chairperson	CDO, Football CDO, Cricket CDO, Tennis CDO, Netball CDO, Athletics RDM, Swimming RDM, Basketball RDM, Golf	Head of Cultural Services, County Council Sport Development Manager, Borough Council Cultural Services Manager, District Council
No. invited to take part	3	8	3
No. declined	0	0	0
General comments			
Suitability of inclusion in research	CSPs are the primary focus of the research	Community sport policy is led by 46 NGBs.	Strong tradition of local level sports development work. Many LAs work alongside CSP (via CSN or CSPAN) with regards to community sport
Intrinsic interest	3 CSPs selected according to criteria detailed above	Balance of team/individual, and small, medium and large sports	Mix of upper and lower tier authorities plus a balance of sport and non sport positions

Local authorities were primarily selected based on type (metropolitan, city, borough, district), existence of a sport development function, and willingness to participate in the study.

Table 3.3 Selection of NGBs

	Large NGB (by turnover)	Medium NGB (by turnover)	Small NGB (by turnover)
Team sports (n=4)	Cricket Football	Netball	Basketball
Individual sports (n=4)	Tennis	Athletics Swimming	Golf

The study involved 38 interviews which in turn generated voluminous data, thereby representing what Miles (1979) referred to as the 'attractive nuisance' associated with qualitative research. To address the challenge of qualitative research, Bryman (2008) offers two notable strategies: analytic induction and grounded theory. Analytic induction seeks 'universal explanations of phenomena by pursing the collection of data until no cases that are inconsistent with a hypothetical explanation of a phenomena are found' (Bryman, 2008: 539). The researcher is constantly reformulating or redefining the hypothesis. Grounded theory is an iterative process, which allows theory to be derived from data which has been systematically gathered and analysed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Whilst both approaches are viewed as methodically sound, analytic induction can require constant reanalysis and reorganisation of data and does not provide guidance regarding the number of cases to be explored before deciding on the absence of negative cases, nor does it sufficiently explain the validity of the hypothetical explanation (Bryman, 2008). Grounded theory, on the other hand, does not require the rejection of a hypothetical explanation—it focuses on the data and categorises these into component parts, so the 'researcher's interpretation of data shape his or her emergent codes' [or themes] (Charmaz, 2000: 515). The grounded theory approach also enables the researcher to consider action in relation to context (Bryman, 2008).

Whilst this study does not follow all conventions of the grounded theory approach, principles have been taken from the data analysis aspect of grounded theory and applied to this study. Coding is a central feature within grounded theory, allowing the researcher to label, separate and compile data (Charmaz, 2000). The data are seen as

'potential indicators' of meaning and concepts (Bryman, 2008). As a result, the coding exercise is iterative or fluid and in a frequent state of revision in order to identify clear and compelling themes as well as identify relationships between them (Strauss, 1987). Strauss & Corbin (1990) distinguish between the three types of complementary coding practice that can be used in the grounded theory approach. First, the data are exposed to open coding, which involves the 'breaking-down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 61). In open coding the focus is the creation of concepts (Bryman, 2008). Second, axial coding makes connections between codes and contexts, and also considers the relationship between codes, consequences, patterns of interaction and causes (Bryman, 2008). Third, selective coding is 'the procedure for selecting a core category' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 116). This can be seen as the 'central issue or feature around which all other categories are integrated' (Bryman, 2008: 543). This approach aligns with the retroductive research strategy (going back and forth between literature and empirical findings) and fits neatly with the research aim and objectives and the requirement to understand the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in to community sport, and the importance of the strategic consideration of context.

Clearly, as with almost all qualitative data analysis techniques, the quality of the analysis initially rests on the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the interview. As detailed within the reliability and validity section above, all interviews ended with a summary of key points, and all interviewees received a full copy of the transcript to ensure this was a true and accurate record of the event. In addition to this, once the open coding exercise was completed, data were shared with another researcher and the interviewee's with the aim of checking and challenging the interpretation of the data (Devine, 1995). Despite these attempts to develop a robust and reliable piece of research, it is acknowledged that all research methods have weaknesses. Further discussion of the limitations of the interview method is provided below.

Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis can provide both descriptive factual information and illuminate the processes through which the documents themselves were formed

(Scott, 1990). Similarly, certain documents, particularly policy documents, are likely to reflect one of the key mediums through which social power is communicated to others (May, 2001). Parsons (1995) referred to this as a 'deep approach', whereby state-related documents can be seen to underline the power relations between different agencies. Scott (1990) distinguished two broad categories of documentation, personal and official, sub-dividing the latter into state and private documents. The majority of documents used in this study fall into the official state category (see Table 3.4).

In addition, four criteria were used in this study to assess the quality of documents, namely authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Scott, 1990). With regard to authenticity, the documents used in this study have been checked to ensure that they are genuine and of unquestionable origin. Credibility considers the sincerity of the authors and the particular interests they were serving in writing the document (*ibid*, 1990). Whilst we should not unnecessarily doubt the sincerity of the authors, there is a need to remain aware of who the document was written for, and for what specific purpose (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2003). Throughout the process of reading and re-reading documents, the analysis has been undertaken to identify relevant content, ensuring that it is set against context as well as triangulated with evidence from the other methods. Given their nature and authors, the documents included in Table 3.4 were seen to meet Scott's (1990) representative criteria, where a document is considered typical of its genre. The final criterion relates to meaning. Scott (1990) identified three clear meanings of documents: (i) the meaning from the author, (ii) the meaning from the reader, and (iii) an internal meaning. This latter issue is concerned with understanding the wider context within which the document was conceived, specifically the unstated values, ideas and theories that all contributed in some way to the development of the final product (Scott, 1990). The analysis of documents therefore involved 'relat[ing] the literal meaning of the document to the contexts in which they were produced' in order to develop a broader appreciation of their significance (Scott, 1990: 30). This context will be provided via both the theoretical framework and the data from the questionnaire and interviews.

Table 3.4 Key documents used in the study

Name	Author	Type of document	Year
Creating a Sporting Habit for Life	DCMS	National strategy	2012
The Conservative Plan for Sport	DCMS	National strategy	2010
Before During After: 2012 Games Legacy Plan	DCMS	National strategy	2008
Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Games	DCMS	National strategy	2010
Playing to Win	DCMS	National strategy	2008
Sport England Strategy 2012-2017	Sport England	National strategy	2012
CSP core funding specification updated version	Sport England	Policy document	2012
CSPs working with NGBs – spreadsheet	Sport England	Working document	2012
CSP profiles	Sport England	Working document	2010
Local sport profiles	Sport England	Working document	2010
Sport England Strategy 2008-2012	Sport England	National strategy	2008
National Game Strategy 2011-2015	FA	National strategy	2011
Club Development Strategy	ECB	National strategy	2012
Blueprint: Progress Update	LTA	National strategy	2010
ASA National Strategy	ASA	National strategy	2009
EA Fulfilling Our Promises	England Athletics	National strategy	2011
Vision & Strategic Goals	England Netball	Webpages	2012
Aims & Objectives	England Basketball	Webpages	2012
Growing the Game	England Golf	National strategy	2009
CSP strategies x 3	CSPs x 3	County strategy	Various
Local Authority strategies (sport, community, etc)	LAs x 9	Local strategy	Various

Summary of procedure

Yin (2003) underlined the need for a clear research protocol in the implementation of the research methods. Table 3.5 below aims to provide an overview of the sequence of stages involved in executing the methods involved in this study. This is further supported by details of key phases and the timeline of the study presented in Appendix 6.

Table 3.5 Summary of methodological procedures

Stages	Summary
Stage 1 Quantitative survey of CSPs & NGBs	The questionnaire was piloted with 10 individuals (academics, CSP and NGB representatives). The final questionnaire was developed and disseminated electronically to 49 CSP Directors/CEOs and 44 NGB CEOs or Development Directors. An iterative process of emailing and calling potential respondents helped to achieve a good response rate. Data was transferred from Bristol Online Survey into the IMB Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to enable a one-way analysis of variance between the predictor variables (CSP hosting arrangements and CSP turnover) and the outcome variable (perception of NGB-CSP relations and perception of community sport policy process.
Stage 2 Documentary analysis	This stage involved the start of documentary analysis, specifically the evaluation of the national strategies and documents detailed above. Key summary notes relating to each document were prepared to compare and contrast with data from the primary research.

Stage 3 Identification of cases	This stage involved the identification of cases based on the results of the statistical analysis Phase One CSP results. However, there were no significant differences by hosting arrangement and/or CSP turnover; therefore, pragmatic criteria were selected reflecting the diversity of and different contexts faced by CSPs. These conditions have been discussed in more detail above. Once identified, CSPs, via the CSP Chief Executive Officer or Director, were asked for their consent to take part in the research. Where a Chief Executive or Director either refused to take part or did not respond to requests to participate in the research, an alternative was sought with a view to maintaining the contextual diversity previously mentioned. In this regard, one mixed non-hosted CSP refused to take part and one urban hosted CSP did not respond to requests to take part in the research prior to agreeing the three CSP-based cases being selected in accordance with the criteria set out in Table 3.1 above.
Stage 4 Interviews	Stage 4 focused on the interviews with CSP, NGB and local authority representatives. All interviews (except two) were completed in an individual, one-to-one setting and followed the ethical considerations of informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm. The interviews with CSP representatives in Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 were completed in a group setting with all three CSP representatives present in one interview. Questions were presented individually and specifically to each individual representative. However, this slightly different methodological approach is likely to have had implications, primarily with regards to idea sharing, thought provocation, and debate that we associate with focus group methodology (cf. Silverman, 2009). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis, and to enable each interviewee to confirm the accuracy of the data upon which the results were based. As detailed above, the names of the CSPs and the representatives from each CSP were substituted with alphanumeric codes to preserve the anonymity of the data. See appendix 7 for an extract from one of the interview transcripts.
Stage 5 Coding and analysing of the qualitative data	This stage involved coding and analysing the transcripts. This followed the coding protocol set out above. In addition, the documentary analysis was re-visited to compare and contrast the content with the categories and codes that emanated from the empirical research.
Stage 6 Re-analysis of the qualitative data and synthesis with literature	Stage six of the research process involved re-analysis of transcripts and key documents to ensure that all key themes had been identified. Key concepts that emerged from the theoretical review were synthesised with the data for two reasons: first, to provide a framework with which the key findings can be compared with a view to using the framework to help identify and illuminate issues that may have otherwise gone undetected and, second, in relation to the research objectives, to reflect upon the explanatory value of the meso-level policy analysis frameworks as they relate to the implementation of community sport policy.

Limitations

Whilst a mixed-method approach can help to minimize some of the problems of a single-method approach, no research methodology is without its problems (Sale, *et al.*, 2002). The purpose of this section is to pinpoint briefly the problems and potential problems posed by the methodology outlined above.

First, there is a common concern regarding the lack of scientific generalisation permitted by case studies (Bryman, 2008). However, Yin argued that when researchers utilise the logic of replication applied to multiple cases, as detailed above, then 'case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions' (1994: 10). That said, as Blaikie (2010) stated, individual perceptions of reality vary, so it is important to make clear that the researcher understands that the analysis of transcripts is subject to differing perceptions or interpretations and therefore any attempt to generalise should be made with caution.

The second issue, linked to the first, concerns a lack of rigor or, more specifically, eliciting the potential for bias to influence the analysis (Yin, 1994), or seeking responses that are desirable rather than an accurate representation of the findings (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). Silverman (2000) advised that qualitative approaches such as case studies are equally credible as alternative methods, if undertaken appropriately. He insisted that credible qualitative analysis focuses on all of the data collected, compares and contrasts data with other sources, and searches for data that does not correspond with initial conclusions (*ibid*, 2000). Yin saw one of the major problems of case study research as being reliability, arguing that much of this can be managed by a researcher who ensures that the data is organised and dependable with a clear audit trail of evidence (as detailed in the validity section above). All of these techniques have been employed in this study. The researcher also provided interviewees with the opportunity to check and clarify the key points taken from the transcript.

Third, whilst the research attempted to identify significant differences or distinct patterns in CSP type, the statistical tests did not identify any such differences or patterns. Therefore, it was necessary to create a number of criteria in order to select CSP-based cases that reflected both their diversity and strategic context. This approach is not without its problems. The first relates to the selection of CSP cases; whilst not arbitrary, it is not based upon any statistically supported difference across CSP types. Second, the three CSPs selected are not likely to reflect the internal range and diversity of all 49 CSPs. Third, the external or strategic context—specifically, the range of local-level partners, distinct local challenges, commitment to sport development in the area, existing participation rates, multiple deprivation, club

infrastructure, facility infrastructure and so on—is relatively unique to each CSP. Whilst there will undoubtedly be common themes and issues, it is important to recognise that no two CSPs bedded in their local context are the same. This is an issue which is related to the philosophical underpinnings of the study insomuch as its central concern of is not to reveal generalisable knowledge and facts about CSPs and NGBs. Rather, the study is concerned with understanding and explaining focal phenomena of the cases under investigation, revealing the specific, very real issues that directly impact and shape CSP-NGB relations at the local level. That said, further understanding and more generally applied knowledge of CSP-NGB relations can be developed by triangulating methods and comparing the data with other research. This is particularly relevant in this research where the first phase of research received a strong response from both the CSP and NGB populations. Therefore, the research could have value in illuminating CSP-NGB relations more generally, particularly any common or consistent themes that emerge across CSPs, NGBs and local authorities, especially those supported by the other methods or previous research. So, whilst the findings may be generalised, this should be done with caution, particularly when considering the distinctive nature of strategic context and its dialectical relationship with agency.

Conclusions

This section summarises the study's research strategy, giving brief attention to the interrelationship of the key components used therein. This is not to suggest a mechanistic or rigid association between components; rather, it stresses the close, directional relationship that should exist between ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources (Grix, 2002, 2010b; Green, 2003).

The research strategy followed advice from a range of experienced researchers (Blaikie, 2010; Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2002, 2010; Hay, 2002; Sparkes, 1992) in an attempt to present a logical flow in the methodological decision making process, from the ontological assumptions underpinning the study through to the techniques that were used to gather data. The critical realist ontological assumptions that directed the research influenced the post-positivist epistemological position of the study, which in turn set the boundaries for the particular methods used, which are 'inextricably linked to the research questions posed and to the sources of data

collected' (Grix, 2002: 179). It is important to acknowledge that despite depicting a logical, directional relationship between components, this is not to argue that one component determines another. In other words, the selection of a particular ontological position does not presuppose a particular epistemological position (Grix, 2002, 2010b). Therefore, whilst this study adopts a critical realist ontology which acknowledges the 'real world', it also recognises that not all 'phenomena are directly observable, structures exist that cannot be observed and those that can may not present the social and political world as it actually is' (Grix, 2002: 183). This assumption directs the epistemological position of the study where actors are considered alongside the broader structural context that facilitates or constrains their action. Further, the imperfect nature of our knowledge of the world adds weight to the post-positivist epistemology guiding the study. Here, we need to both understand the external 'reality' and the social construction of that 'reality' if we are to explain the relationship between social/political phenomena (Marsh & Furlong, 2002 in Green , 2003). The research strategy and specifically the methodology and selection of quantitative and qualitative methods embedded within a case-based approach were based upon these philosophical positions. The post-positivist epistemological position also directed attention to the strategic-relational view of the structure and agency problem where the role of the strategic actor is examined against the social context within which the actor operates primarily as it is this which facilitates or constrains the beliefs, values and actions of actors.

Chapter 4
The Government policy context

Introduction

As a policy sector, community sport does not enjoy the same recognition or prominence as its elite counterpart. This is evident in the range of literature focussing on elite sport as compared to the sparse literature devoted to community sport. As discussed in the introductory chapter, this might be explained by the lack of definitional stability for community sport—it has been and remains a pendulum-like feature in government sport policy, oscillating between young people and adults, physical activity and sport, and the frequent changes in motives between the purist notion of sport for sport and instrumentalism, or sport for good (cf. Coalter, 2007, Collins, 2010; Houlihan, 2011; Houlihan & White, 2002). More recently, central government and Sport England have suggested that the latter point is a non-issue in that community sport can do both: it can be fun, stimulating, challenging and personally rewarding whilst also delivering positive outcomes on a range of important social policy issues such as education, health and community safety (DCMS, 2012; Sport England, 2012a). Alternatively, elite sport's attraction could be explained by the glamour, celebrity, and nationalism with which it is closely associated.

This chapter aims to explore these issues in more detail and provide insight into the context and processes that directly shape contemporary community sport policy and is divided into two parts. The first reviews the development of community sport as a policy concern. This involves a brief review of community sport up to the late 1990s. Whilst historical perspectives of policy development have an important sensitising role (Green, 2003), this section is deliberately brief as the parameters and focus of community sport as a policy concern have changed dramatically over the past 40 years. Furthermore, while it is acknowledged that the historical development influences contemporary policy this is an area of research that has been covered in some detail elsewhere and consequently will not be rehearsed in this chapter (see for example Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Coalter, 2007; Collins, 2010; Green, 2003; Houlihan & Green, 2011; Houlihan & White, 2002; Hylton & Totten, 2013; King, 2009). Following the historical review of the sport policy context, a more detailed analysis of

the emergence of community sport from the early 2000s onwards will be provided. The second part of the chapter concerns the efforts of successive governments to modernise public services. In particular, this section will review the relatively recent notions of modernisation and partnership, the strategies that result from these new ways of governing and the implications they carry for community sport.

Community sport up to 2005

From the 19th century through to the post-war period of the 20th century, government intervention in sport in England has been 'haphazard and ad hoc' (Coghlan, 1990; Green, 2003; Houlihan, 1991; 1997; Roche, 1993). The persistent themes of 'paternalism, defence of privilege, fitness of the nation's youth, social control and international prestige' underscored the sport-politics relation during this time (Green, 2003: 120). The prevailing social democratic consensus of the 1960s is generally viewed as the era where sport was first considered a 'legitimate government responsibility' (Houlihan, 1991: 27) as political interest was more apparent and government approaches to sport policy more organised and proactive than in previous years (Hargreaves, 1985). Much of this attention was provoked by the 57 recommendations of Wolfenden committee *Sport and the Community* paper (CCPR, 1961). Whilst not referred to as community sport per se, many of the recommendations remain pertinent issues within the community sport policy discourse today. For example, many focussed on the promotion and development of sport for its own sake, with a particular emphasis on developing the facility base, increasing participation in sport, and reducing the number of young people who drop out of sport once compulsory education is complete (CCPR, 1961). The initial response from the Conservative government in the early 1960s was indifferent, but the Labour government elected in 1964 was more concerned by Wolfenden's recommendations (Houlihan & White, 2002). As a result, the Wilson government created an Advisory Sports Council (ASC) in 1965, a decision seen to be driven by the government's enthusiasm to extend the welfare state to include a range of community services (*ibid*, 2002; Bloyce & Smith, 2010). The work of the Council centred on two priorities, namely the development of community sport facilities and investment in NGBs for talent and elite development (Coghlan, 1990). Despite this dual focus, Walter Winterbottom, the Director of the ASC, noted that 'we were into

excellence … initially a lot of funds went into elite sport' (quoted in Coalter, 1988), a theme which has pervaded sport policy discourse ever since.

1970s

The increasing professionalisation of the state's approach to sport development continued in 1972 when the ASC was granted executive powers under Royal Charter and was renamed the Great Britain Sports Council (GBSC). At the time, the organisational emphasis and general consensus was that more needed to be done to promote sports participation and increase the number of sports facilities available for community use (Coghlan, 1990; Houlihan & White, 2002). These priorities stimulated the creation of the GBSC's Sport for All campaign which followed the government's endorsement of the Council of Europe's Sport for All policy in 1966 (see Table 4.1). Whilst the campaign pre-empted a key finding from the Cobham Report (published in 1973), which argued for a 'more concerted policy towards mass sport' participation (Green, 2003: 122), others have argued that in reality 'Sport for All' was a misleading slogan (Henry, 1993) and a more accurate strapline would have been 'sport for the disadvantaged' or 'sport for inner city youth' (Houlihan, 1991: 99). Furthermore, the 1975 government White Paper directed the Sports Council (and the subsidiary Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation (RCSR)) to support the government's urban programme and prioritise deprived areas for grant-aid of recreational projects in support of the ideals of social democracy, in particular to widen the welfare system and rebalance economic inequities (Coalter, 1988; Henry, 1993). The most notable development in community sport during this period was the rapid and extensive development of public sector leisure facilities (Houlihan & White, 2002). This supported the government's intent to widen the welfare system (Henry, 1993) and responded to the demands of the new leisure age (Blackie *et al.*, 1979; Sillotoe, 1969; Veal, 1982). Leisure facility development was made possible by the combination of Sports Council grants and local government reorganisation, which led to the abolition of many small authorities, some of which used their remaining capital to build sport facilities, and the creation of larger local authorities with greater spending power (Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Houlihan & White, 2002).

Table 4.1 Key political/policy landmarks in relation to community sport, 1970s

Key political/policy event	Organisational and administrative implications	Funding implications	Implications for community sport
1972, GB Sports Council established	Strategic/coordinating role between government and NGBs/voluntary organisations. Key objective was increased participation	Grant aid to NGBs rose significantly from £3.6M in '72 to £15.2M in '79	Despite the Sport for All slogan, critics condemned funding of NGBs as elitist
1973, House of Lords Report, Sport & Leisure (Cobham Report)	Set direction for future debates regarding role of sport in social policy issues	Funding should be aligned more to latent demand rather than identified demand	Emphasised broader conception of recreation over and beyond sport
1975, White Paper, Sport and Recreation	Confirmed sport and recreation as a legitimate part of the welfare state; policies targeted at marginalised groups	Funding increasing diverted to areas of deprivation, primarily inner city areas	Use of sport to address broader social problems, targeted delivery of projects
1977, White Paper: A Policy for Inner Cities	Increasing economic decline and rising unemployment results in sport being used as a social policy instrument	Growing congruence between government and Sports Council policies (e.g. Urban Programme)	Sport projects created to meet requirements of social issues rather than meeting needs of sport
1979, "New Right" Conservative party elected with Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister	Government demanded greater degree of accountability and corporate planning from organisations such as the Sports Council	Sports Council increasingly directed by government to account for NGB funding	Increased pressure to demonstrate how NGB support impacted on sports social role

Source: Adapted from Green (2003); Houlihan & White (2002)

1980-1997

The 1980s were characterised by the promotion of participation amongst target groups, specifically those that were perceived to 'constitute social problems'; a 'conventional policy response' to the urban riots of 1981, including such initiatives as Action Sport (Houlihan & White, 2002: 34-35). Action Sport was a targeted, interventionist community development scheme that sought to improve accessibility by reaching out into local communities, employing leaders with appropriate skills and delivering a broad range of mainstream and alternative sports activities, thereby offering a different approach to the range of public sector leisure facilities that had been developed; this according to Coalter (2007) was clearly the catalyst for today's community sport development.

Whilst the rhetoric of sport as a welfare instrument and tool to engage the disengaged may have been potentially attractive the sector 'remained politically weak and relatively marginal to core public policy developments' (Coalter, 2007: 11). This is despite schemes targeting social and recreational deprivation being a central

feature of *Sport in the Community: The next 10 years*, the GB Sports Council's strategic document for the 1980s (see Table 4.2) (Glyptis, 1993; Sports Council, 1982). Further evidence of the marginal position of sport as welfare included the funding strategy of the Sports Council at the time, in which the largest single sum was allocated to elite sport (Coalter, 1988). The degree of UK government interest was variable in the 1980s depending on the Minister of Sport and his/her particular enthusiasm for sport. Margaret Thatcher generally had little time for sport (Bloyce & Smith, 2010), and the government's involvement in what it considered a marginal policy matter did not fit well with the neo-liberal politics of Thatcherism. In addition, inter-agency tensions, particularly between the Sports Council and the CCPR added to the instability, with a growing perception that sport was poorly organised, divided and 'bedevilled by the lack of a coherent voice' (Green & Houlihan, 2005: 54). To this end Roche asserted that:

> ...the effort to produce positive national community benefits by means of sport has been undertaken by one of the most divided, confused and conflictive policy communities [if indeed it can be referred to as such] in British politics (1993: 144).

In slight contrast to Bloyce & Smith's (2010) assertion of limited government interest in sport, Roche pointed to the division and lack of coherence as a corollary of government interference in sport:

> Like the other great cultural policy quangos of the 1960s and 1970s ..., the Sports Council was supposed to be independent and answerable to the fixed terms of its charter, rather than to the changing policies of governments. It was intended to operate at arm's length from the state rather than simply as an arm of the state (1993: 146).

Towards the end of the 1980s, the Sports Council produced *Sport in the Community: into the 90s* which maintained the twin focus of community and elite sport, with the focus on the former fixed on improving access to and increasing participation in sport amongst target groups (women and young people, in particular). However, the extent to which the aspirations of the strategy were realised was hindered by 'the major gaps between ... sport policy rhetoric and the historical and social realities' of

low sports participation rates (Roche, 1993: 148); and by broader political and ideological change which militated against policy continuity.

Table 4.2 Key political/policy landmarks in relation to community sport, 1980-1997

Key political/policy event	Organisational and administrative implications	Funding implications	Implications for community sport
1982, GB Sports Council strategy, Sport in the Community: The Next Ten Years	Broad strategy reflecting changes of last '70s towards increased accountability, specific target groups and increasing links with government policy	Acknowledged that, despite growing trend toward welfarism, grant-in-aid had been weighted toward elitism	Focus on quality of sport experience and specific services required for participation and elite
1986, Rossi Committee Report	Examined the basis of, and justification for, the GB Sports Council existence	Considerable debate regarding how grant monies were distributed	Recommendations to more clearly differentiate efforts between Sports Council, CCPR and BOA
1988, Sports Council strategy, Sport in the Community: Into the 90s	Focus on women and young people as target groups	Greater funding allocated to target group projects; continued discussion re: funding of NGBs	Continued emphasis on target groups; limited response from NGBs
1988, Creation of first conceptualisation of sport development continuum	Widely used by organisations to illustrate the interdependent nature of sport development	Help to delineate the four primary parts of sports development—all requiring resources	Gave coherence to sport development, underlined importance of participation
1990, Major appointed leader of Conservative Party and PM	Major's appointment heralded a change in the government's approach to sport; application of private sector principles to public sector sport (CCT)	Major began process of ring-fencing more funding for school and elite sport	Greater emphasis on cost recovery and user pays re: facilities, local sports developments not directly impacted by CCT
1992, Department of National Heritage established	Reflected personal commitment of Major; attempted to bring together a fragmented policy area	Twinned with above, brought about greater centralised control of funding for sport	Increased profile of sport (particularly school and elite sport) at cabinet level
1994, National Lottery created	Crucial impact on sport and recreation, largely for capital projects in early years	Major a driving force behind lottery and sport as good cause; additional £250M for sport by 1999	Arguably single most important factor in development of community sport
1995, Conservative Government policy statement, Sport Raising the Game	Focused on two areas: youth sport development programmes and the creation of elite sport training facilities/programmes	Significant funding invested into school and elite programmes via the Lottery Sports Fund	Significant support for school and elite sport, spill over benefits for community sport (e.g. TOPs, Champion Coaching

Source: Adapted from Green (2003); Houlihan & White (2002)

Following the 1987 election Coalter observed that 'sport occupied an uneasy place between the ideologies of the market and welfare', with policies being modified to reflect the government's political ideology and the economic reality of the time' (1988: 188). A striking example of the tension between market and welfare ideologies was the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). This directly affected the provision and management of public sector leisure facilities, but failed to

alter the objectives of community sport development to the extent initially expected (cf. Sports Council, 1994). Despite the uncertainty brought about by CCT, the Sports Council focussed efforts on the new continuum approach to sports development (see Figure 4.1). This approach served to bring a 'conceptual coherence' to sports development (Houlihan & White, 2002: 41), showing the logic of a joined up approach where mass participation (i.e. community sport) fed and benefited elite sport and elite sport—via role models—benefited mass participation. In addition, the Sports Council provided grant aid to approximately one third of local authorities for the purpose of supporting local authority employed sport development officers (Houlihan & White, 2002).

Despite the focus on local government and an attempt to align more closely with the equity concerns of local government, central government generally maintained a distance, a general neglect and lack of interest, more a reflection of general indifference than the fact that the majority of local councils were controlled by a Labour administration (Houlihan & White, 2002). However, this was set to change fairly radically after John Major replaced Margaret Thatcher as the Conservative leader and led the party to victory at the 1992 general elections. Major's approach to sport, in stark contrast to Thatcher, was generally enthusiastic, a result of his personal interest in sport and the values associated with school and elite sport reflecting his 'more traditional view of Conservatism' (Coalter, 2007: 14).

During Major's leadership, the government were involved in three significant initiatives which brought about a period of sustained investment and more active government involvement in sport (Bloyce & Smith, 2010). The first of these was the creation of the Department of National Heritage (DNH) in 1992. This was followed by the reorganisation of the Sports Council, with the formation of an English Sports Council (alongside similar Home Country Sports Councils in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), and a UK Sports Council responsible for elite sports development (Houlihan & White, 2002).

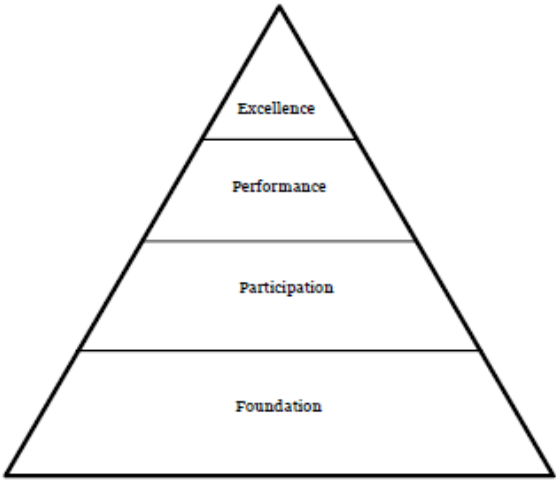

Figure 4.1 The pyramid sports development continuum, (source: English Sports Council, 1990)

The second major development, and a catalyst for more direct government involvement in sport, was the establishment of the National Lottery in 1994. This 'masterstroke of leisure policy' (Henry, 2001: 92) enabled the government to leverage greater financial opportunity for good causes such as sport, art and heritage without any increase in tax-related subsidy. Following the launch of the lottery and the apparent growing government interest in sport, the Conservative party published the second government sports strategy: *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage, 1995). The traditional focus of one-nation Conservatism prioritised school and elite sport, primarily for their intrinsic benefits, their ability to harness the true competitive nature of sport, and their capacity to harness Major's one nation ideology (Coalter, 2007; Houlihan & White, 2002). The strategy all but ignored local community sport, in particular the impetus that had grown around sports equity and recognition of the critical role of local authorities, not only as sports facility providers, but also as the employers of a growing network of professional sports development officers. Furthermore, comments from Iain Sproat, the Minister with responsibility for sport at the time, underscored the priority status given to school and elite sport at the expense of community sport:

> The new body will withdraw from the promotion of mass participation, informal recreation and leisure pursuits and from health promotion. Those are laudable aims, but they are secondary to the pursuit of high standards of sporting achievement (Sproat, 1994).

Thus, the 'one nation' Conservative ideology put to an end its 'dangerous liaison with community, replacing it with the more comfortable world of sport' (Lentell, 1993: 147). However, despite the Ministerial pronouncements and strategy rhetoric, local government continued to recruit SDOs and YSDOs in order to create, develop and manage local community sport development programmes. Importantly, for many authorities this was achieved with financial support from the Sports Council specifically for the recruitment of SDOs and/or YSDOs on fixed-term contracts, primarily financed by pump-prime funding from the Sports Council in order to continue to support the integrated notion of the sports development continuum. Whilst these funded posts were required to deliver against specific programmes detailed in *Sport: Raising the Game*, it would be naive to think that this was their sole focus. Indeed, many local authorities were astute in using the Sports Council funding to deliver aspects of *Sport: Raising the Game* (the National Junior Sports programme, for example) whilst at the same time supporting initiatives that had been created in response to local community sport needs and justifying this on the basis of the important role they played in the participation element of the sports development continuum. This approach by local authorities illustrated well the sizeable gap that existed between the 'storylines' (Fischer, 2003: 88) that represent national sport policy (as read in national strategies and as taken from Ministerial speeches) and the realities of national sport policy as played out by the key players involved in the policy community (Roche, 1993).

1997-2004

A new Labour government was elected in 1997 and its particular approach to sport ushered in a raft of changes which were to bring community sport to the fore as well as underline the importance of equality of access and using sport as a developmental tool to tackle multiple deprivation (as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation). Led by a new Third Way ideology and a commitment to reform and modernise the machinery of government, this new politics was reported as 'a modernised version of social democracy' and a progressive means to modernise government, strengthen civil society and address issues of social exclusion, particularly when compared to the left-right positions of traditional politics (Coalter, 2007: 15). In this respect the Third Way is positioned between the opposing commitments to heavy state intervention and anti-individualism, and the

'Thatcherite neoliberal, free-market policies and extreme individualism' (*ibid*, 2007: 15).

The new Labour government immediately replaced the DNH with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The English Sports Council (branded Sport England) responded quickly and used the opportunity to develop a package of programmes, referred to commonly as the 'Big Picture' (see Figure 4.2) with community sport, predominantly a 'development through sport' model, forming a central part of the package. Specifically, the Big Picture involved four interconnected programme areas: Active Schools, Active Communities, Active Sports and World Class, and the initiatives developed within each area were shaped by the key tenets broadly associated with the Third Way politics of the new government and the party's manifesto for sport, produced in 1996 (Bloyce & Smith, 2010). Important in the context of this study is the 'Active Sport' element of the Big Picture, in particular the establishment of primarily county-based Active Sports Partnerships. These partnerships were responsible for the sub-regional coordination of sport development pathways working across local authority sport development teams, NGBs, county sports associations and local voluntary-run sports clubs. These partnerships were the forerunner to County Sports Partnerships discussed in more detail below.

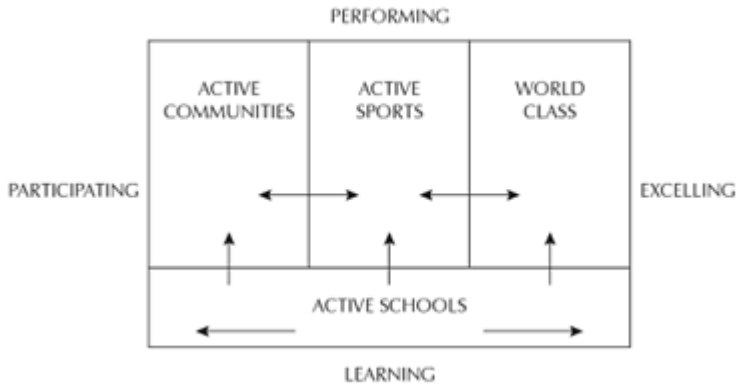

Figure 4.2 The Big Picture (source: English Sports Council, 1998)

During the latter part of the 1990s, central government were directly involved in sport, pursuing a range of innovations that moved sport from the margins of government policy to the centre stage (Houlihan & White, 2002) (see Table 4.3) in

addition to modernizing Sport England 'to ensure a more strategic role with meaningful, outcome driven targets against which performance could be measured' (cf. Houlihan & Green, 2009: 6). This differed from previous government approaches insomuch as they tended to delegate responsibility to quangos, whereas the DCMS were more visible, clearly involved in leading specific policies, strategies and programmes that would shape the growth of sports development. During this period the Cabinet's strategy office also led the Quinquennial Review of the Sports Council. These developments were brought together under the new government's sports strategy, *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000). This emphasised school and elite sport, and endorsed local authorities as both facility provider and enabler of community sports development (Green, 2008). Indeed, local authorities were identified as lead agencies in the quest to break down barriers and work toward fair access in sports participation (DCMS, 2000). However, the aspirations of *A Sporting Future for All* were short-lived, as the DCMS and the government's Strategy Unit published *Game Plan: A Strategy for Delivering Government's Sport and Physical Activity Objectives* in 2002 (DCMS, 2002). This detailed document provided the government rationale for investing in sport and focussed on physical activity with the objective of encouraging 70 percent of the population to be 'reasonably active' by 2020 (DCMS, 2002). According to the authors the strategy presented a more balanced approach to community sport (mass participation) and elite performance than those in Australia, USA and Finland, which the DCMS argued were either more laissez-faire or one-dimensional (see Figure 4.3).

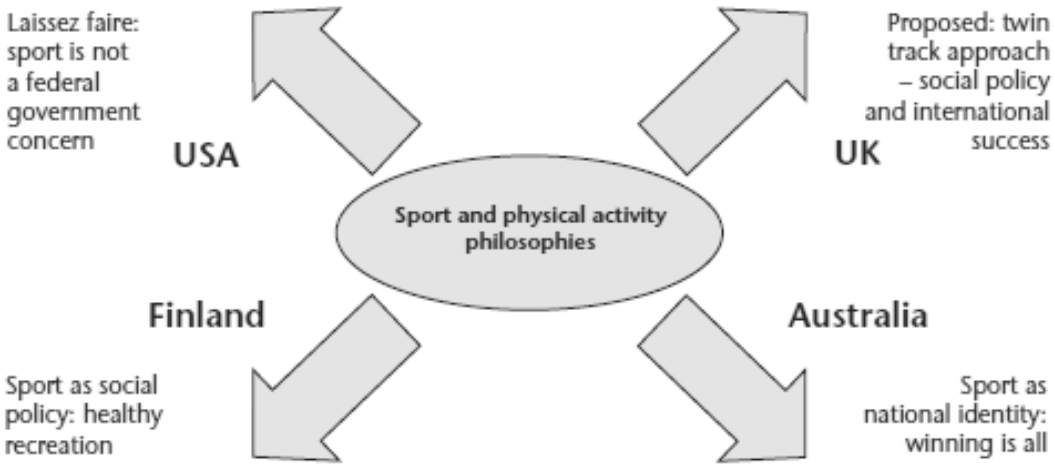

Figure 4.3 International Sport and Physical Activity Philosophies (source: DCMS, 2002)

The range of innovations that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s represented a fundamental shift from the welfare approach of developing sport in communities to the development of communities through sport (Houlihan & White, 2002; Coalter, 2007). This reflected Tony Blair's passion for sport (Houlihan & Green, 2009) and more generally, New Labour's view of sport and, in particular, their view of its value in promoting active citizenship, or what Coalter refers to as the 'systematic attempt to use sport as an economy of remedies to a variety of social problems' (2007: 18). However, whilst the government's approach to community sport, as enshrined in *A Sporting Future for All* and *Game Plan*, gave it greater prominence, many of the government's aspirations were not realised; a genuine case of overly-eager Ministers over-promising and under-delivering.

Table 4.3 Key political/policy landmarks in relation to community sport, 1997-2003

Key political/policy event	**Organisational and administrative implications**	**Funding implications**	**Implications for community sport**
1997, New Labour administration elected	Replaced CCT with Best Value in attempt to modernise local government services, including sport; social inclusion becomes key policy direction; DNH renamed DCMS	Increased rhetoric regarding sports potential in addressing social exclusion	Transitioning from school-link and youth sport development work to more social inclusion type project work
1999, Sport England, Lottery Sport Fund Strategy (1999-2009)	Two priorities consistent through all funding—community awards and projects to enhance medal winning chances at international level	Two strands: Community Projects Fund (150M) and World Class Fund (50M); Later evolved into Big Picture concept, Active Schools, Active Comm's, Active Sports and World Class	Significant funding committed for facilities and sport for development projects (e.g. SAZ, ACDF)
1999, Government National strategy for neighbourhood renewal (PAT 10) report: the contribution of sport and the arts	Framework provided detailed discussion and some evidence of the role of sport and the arts in neighbourhood renewal	More direct funding channelled into sport for development, specifically social inclusion-related objectives; Report useful as advocacy document for sport to leverage support from regeneration projects (New Deal for Comm's, EAZ, HAZ, etc.)	Greater awareness and general acceptance of view of sport as a valuable tool to support neighbourhood renewal
2000, Labour government policy statement, A Sporting Future for All	Reiterated much of rhetoric in Sport: Raising the Game, linked to Best Value objectives, creation of new Specialist Sports Colleges	NGB funding directly linked to performance targets	Very vague aspirations regarding participation, preventing sale of playing fields and developing more facilities
2002 Game Plan: A Strategy for Delivering Governments Sport and Physical Activity Objectives	Major government review of all levels, structures and financing of sport; links between sport, health, education and inclusion all emphasised	Recommendations would later lead to 'simplifying the fragmented funding arrangements for sport'	Specific targets for increased participation, criticism re: poor data, fragmented organisation

2004/5, Development of CSP network and single system for community sport	As a result of Game Plan, a new single system for sport was created, with 45 (later 49) CSPs developed as key coordinating structure linking the national level (Sport England, NGBs) with the local (local authorities, clubs) – see Figure 4.5 below	Core funding and programmatic funding increasingly challenged through infrastructure and networks e.g. School Sport Partnerships, CSPs, and NGBs	A recognised delivery system for sport responsible for delivering community sport elements of Game Plan and the subsequent National Framework for Sport

Source: Adapted from Green (2003); Houlihan & White (2002)

Galvanising community sport policy, 2005 onwards

2005-2010

The 2004 publication of Sport England's *National Framework for Sport: A Vision For 2020* set the tone—both in terms of the aspirations and enormity of the challenge—for community sport in England. The strategy included a conceptual framework directing the outcomes associated with change (see Figure 4.4). This was arguably the first concrete manifestation of the oft quoted evidence-based approach to community sport.

Alongside the framework, a series of other developments significantly influenced community sport between 2004 and 2010. The first of these was the DCMS/Treasury—commissioned Carter Review. The review was established to modernise the sport infrastructure through the establishment of a more efficient, performance-motivated and business-like Sport England (Carter, 2005). Carter identified five priority areas for action: (i) the development of robust measurement and monitoring systems; (ii) the promotion of the personal benefits of sport and physical activity; (iii) the improvement of the delivery of sport; (iv) the creation of a single access point and brand for sport in England; and (v) the provision of targeted incentives for commercial investors via a new National Sports Foundation (*ibid*, 2005).

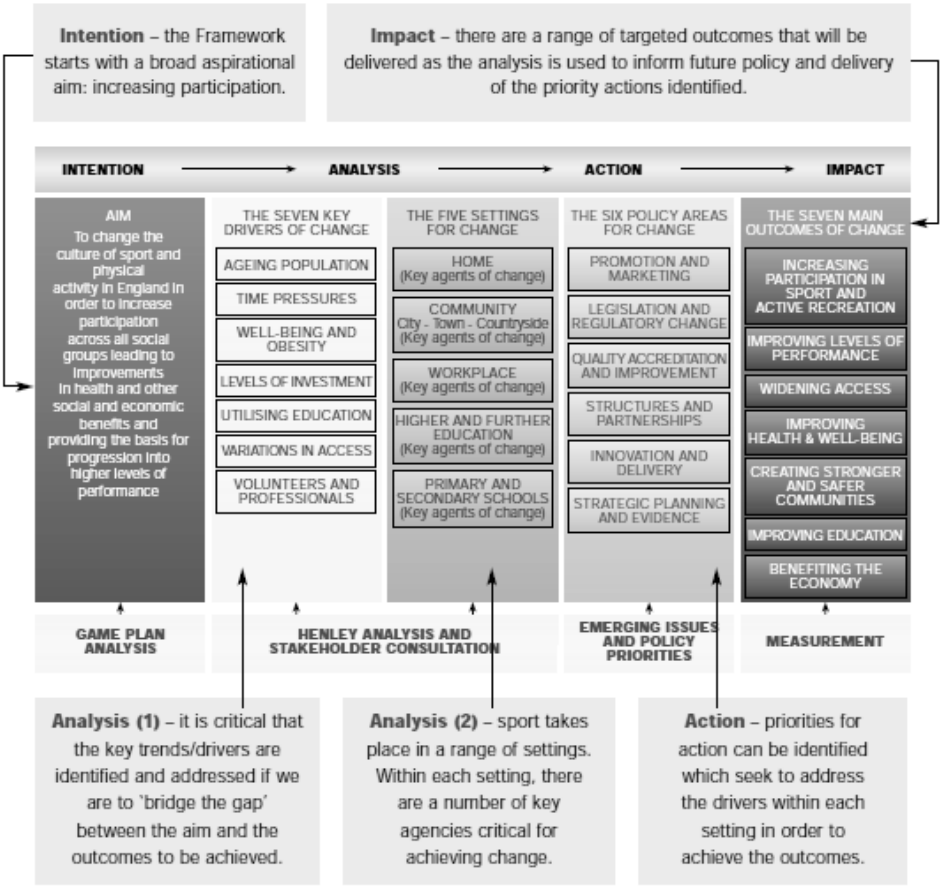

Figure 4.4 Conceptual framework for community sport (source: Sport England, 2004)

Although county partnerships were first mooted in *Game Plan* in 2002 (p10 and p188), Sport England responded almost immediately to Carter's recommendations by transitioning the former Active Sport partnerships[9] (the majority of which were county-based) to CSPs which formed a key part of the single system, or the delivery system for sport, as it was later called. The delivery system for sport sought to clearly coordinate and align responsibilities between national, regional, sub-regional and local agents involved in planning, delivering and evaluating sport— clarifying who does what and galvanising a collective approach to increasing participation in PE, sport, and active recreation—right down to the people behind the people (parents, coaches, volunteers) and the people taking part (see Figure 4.5). The work of CSPs within this structure was initially guided by three core responsibilities established by the major funder, Sport England: (i) the strategic sub-regional coordination of sport

[9] The Active Sport Partnership was a Sport England funded development programme that aimed to bring together local-level agencies under the umbrella of a county partnership in order to develop a coordinated pathway for young people to pursue sport from foundation level to excellence.

and active recreation, (ii) measurement and evaluation of performance in relation to sports participation and a range of proxy measures, and (iii) coordination of marketing and communication for sport across the sub-region (Sport England, 2008a). In theoretical terms, the CSP was the lead agency for community sport at the sub-regional level, responsible for strategically coordinating sport; bringing together the disparate initiatives of local authorities, NGBs, county sport associations, and sports clubs into a structured and complementary programme of community sport opportunities. This role was not without its challenges and for many, the reality of community sport sat separately from the policy rhetoric (cf. Grix, 2010a). Coordinating sport at the sub-regional level was bedevilled by the policy and politics of county sport associations and local government (McDonald, 1995), some of which reflected the national picture, some of which contradicted or even opposed it. This was a situation exacerbated by the autonomy and diversity of the complex network of agents involved in community sport (Bloyce & Smith, 2010), the fluctuating tensions between sport and physical activity (cf. Keech, 2011), not to mention the unrealistic aspiration to drive participation rates so that 70% of the population regularly participate in sport (Collins, 2010). Although the delivery system did succeed in illustrating a clear, linear model of delivery, it did little to articulate the complexity, specifically the range and depth of issues that directly shaped relations between CSPs, NGBs, county sport associations and local government.

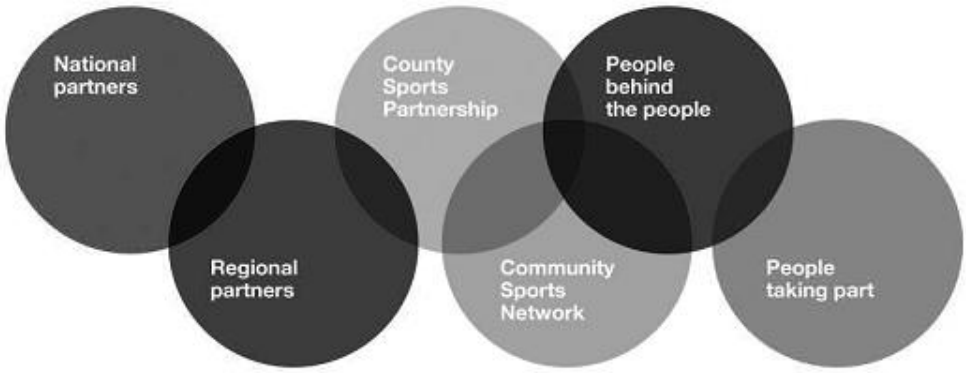

Figure 4.5 The delivery system for sport (source: Sport England, 2005)

Another significant theme permeating community sport in recent years has been the 'fragmentation, fractiousness and perceived ineffectiveness' of the key agents involved in the policy area (Houlihan & Green, 2009: 2). Thus, community sport

formed part of the suite of public services that New Labour pledged to modernise and reform—primarily through pressure exerted on and through Sport England as well as a range of performance-based initiatives rolled out across local government (Harris, 2012). Examples included audit and inspection regimes applied to local authorities (Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment) and incentivised targets aligned to specific national priorities and agreed with NDPBs and local authorities (Public Service Agreements and Local Area Agreements (LAAs)). Importantly, these were not simply improvement programmes, but were more symptomatic of a new culture focusing on the enhancement of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Tomkinson, 2007). Moreover, the Labour government went beyond the modernisation of organisations through the LAAs and Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) programmes, which were predominantly aimed at 'place shaping', in other words regenerating and improving local areas. The result of these changes for community sport was continued financial pressure, with efficiency savings being achieved through different operating mechanisms (leisure trusts) or through reductions in sport development budgets. In addition, resources were being used for continuous improvement processes, for example the employment of performance and improvement officers and independent consultants to oversee specific improvement projects, shifting more resource into internal restructuring and away from frontline service delivery (Harris, 2012). Notable during this period was the arrival of a new evidence-based orthodoxy that required all public services to develop strategies and services based upon robust evidence relating to end-user needs. In sport this was visible in major research projects such as Sport England's Driving Up Participation series as well as the Active People survey, the Taking Part Survey and the Experian-based Sport Market Segmentation tool. Finally, it is important to note the growing tension during this period relating to the use of performance management techniques, the focus on broader physical activity promotion up to 2008 and the significant shift to 'pure sport' from 2008 onwards (discussed further below). This tension was also a result of a growing realisation of nationally-driven targets being pushed down through mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), Public Service Agreements (PSA) and Local Area Agreements (LAA), and the desire for local areas to focus attention on local needs and priorities. An example of this in community sport was the government's primary concern with increasing mass participation in sport, as compared to a number of

local authorities whose core priorities emphasised either equality (widening rather than increasing participation) or the instrumental value of community sport.

The most dramatic shift in community sports policy during this period followed the Prime Ministerial change from Blair to Brown in 2007, and the subsequent Cabinet reshuffle in June 2007. In taking up his new appointment as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, James Purnell repositioned the DCMS so that it would focus on 'pure sport' and 'sport for its own sake', as opposed to the instrumental use of sport (DCMS, 2008). This change was partially driven by Purnell's apparent desire to separate the vision for his department from the priorities of other government departments or cross-government objectives. He stated that the DCMS would fund the creation of a world-leading sports development system, involving high-quality PE and school sport, high levels of community sports participation, and enhanced elite performances with record medal wins at major events (Purnell, 2008). In contrast, he stated that the 'spill-over benefits', the wider education, crime reduction or health promotion-related benefits attributed to sport would require funding from other government departments (*ibid*, 2007). Purnell also promoted NGBs as the leading agency of community sport, with their whole sport plans providing a clear focus for the more detailed translation of community sport policy into sport-specific plans detailing how increased participation in sport will be achieved:

> We are announcing the start of this process with a review of Sport England's strategy to focus the delivery of an excellent sporting infrastructure from the grass roots up. That means creating excellent national governing bodies, clubs, coaches and volunteers, supported by the investment we've already made in facilities. And the sporting bodies in our country will be critical. My offer to them is clear. We want to create whole sports plans, with a single funding pot. We will free them up from the bureaucracy and bidding that they complain about today. But, in return, they will need to commit to clear goals to improve participation, coaching and the club structure (Purnell, 2008).

Whilst Purnell's tenure within the DCMS was short-lived, his influence was seen in the new central leadership role in community sport given to NGBs, the DCMS strategy *Playing to Win*, the resignation of Derek Mapp, the Chairman of Sport England (cf. Keech, 2011), the subsequent "pure sport" focus of the Sport England

strategy 2009-13 (Collins, 2010), and the response to both Carter and Jowell's criticism of sporting structures as being 'unfathomably complex' and a 'nightmare' (Carter, 2005; Jowell, 2004). The *Landscape for Sport* was created promptly (see Figure 4.6), illustrating a simplified structure of sport which sought to 'improve focus at every level of sport policy (school, community and elite), and better knit the three delivery bodies (Youth Sport Trust, Sport England, and UK Sport) together; (DCMS, 2008: 6).

In addition, during Purnell's leadership of the DCMS, Sport England's target of increasing participation in community sport by one million participants by 2012 formed a central part of the government's Legacy strategy and was also ratified as both a national level PSA between government and Sport England, as well as being included as a national indicator (NI8) within the suite of performance indicators that local authorities could select from for their LAA (Harris, 2012). Securing approval for this to be included within the national indicator set was a major symbolic achievement for both the DCMS and Sport England. More importantly, it provided leverage for Sport England and CSPs to utilise 'evidence' such as Active People statistics and Market Segmentation profiles and encourage local authorities to include NI8 within their LAA. This was crucial for Sport England and CSPs as it was seen as a way in which local authority attention and delivery could be harnessed, bringing local authorities back into a central role in the delivery of community sport. This was perhaps a response to the perception amongst some in Sport England that the balance had shifted too far toward NGBs, further alienating relations with local authorities, as well as a growing acceptance that a modernised local government infrastructure did not necessarily include any direct provision for sport development or community sport.

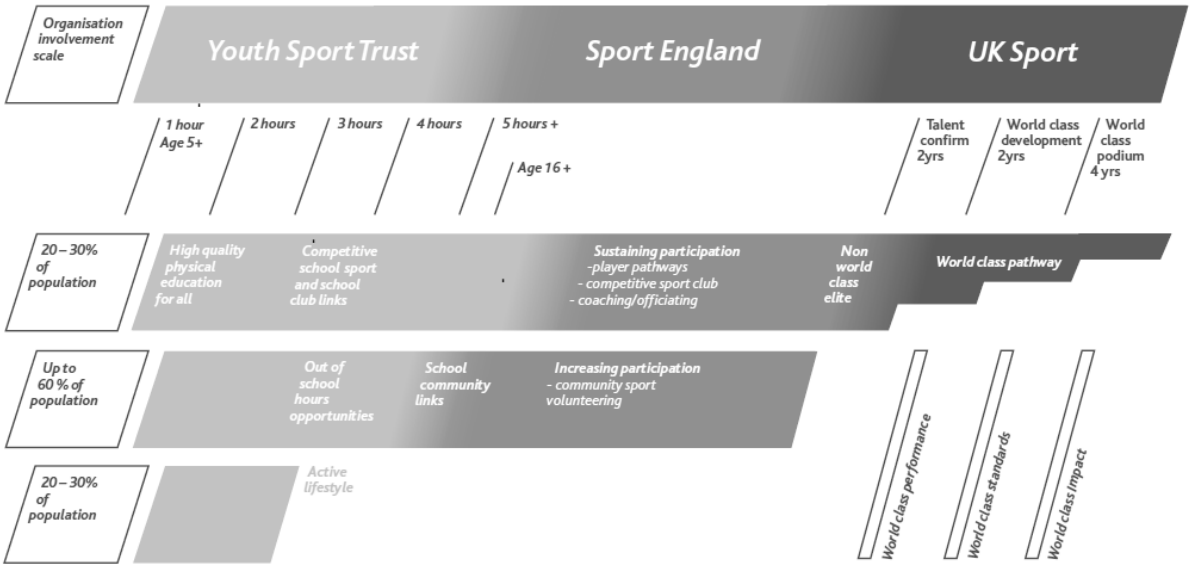

Figure 4.6 The landscape for sport (source: DCMS, 2008)

<u>Enter the Coalition Government - 2010 onwards</u>

The political change resulting from the UK General Election in May 2010 brought stability to some areas of sport policy, and considerable change to others. The Conservative party vision for sport was clearly articulated in the party's policy document published in 2009 and was the dominant position adopted by the Conservative Liberal coalition in 2010, hardly surprising given the dominance of Tory ministers in the DCMS. The Party's vision emphasised a balanced approach, viewing 'sport as both an end in itself and a means to achieve a better society' (Conservative Party, 2009: 4). Whilst it was possible to observe some level of continuity in the government's policy objectives for sport, particularly in relation to the community and elite sport policy systems, there was considerable change in school sport policy with the abandonment of School Sport Partnerships, made particularly conspicuous by the way in which policy was changed, and the contradiction between the changes made and the stated intentions or policies of government departments (Grix, 2010a). With regards to this study, it is important to draw attention to four significant developments that impacted and, in many cases, continue to impact community sport policy.

First, under the direction of Minister for Sport, Hugh Robertson, the DCMS published their new sports strategy, *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*, which

reinforced the government's commitment to an NGB-led delivery system for community sport as well as redirecting attention away from the now well-publicised Legacy target of one million new regular adult participants in sport (DCMS, 2012). This shift was not particularly surprising given the poor performance of the majority of NGBs in receipt of WSP funding to increase adult participation in sport, the profile of the participation target as part of the 2012 Games Legacy, the government's promise to reverse what they viewed as New Labour's obsession with performance targets, and the view of the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Jeremy Hunt, that the community sport target was wholly unrealistic (Hunt quoted in Gibson, 2012). The government replaced it with a new 5-point plan to increase sports participation amongst 14 to 25-year-olds, focussing on (i) a network of sports competitions amongst schools, (ii) enhanced links between schools and clubs via Doorstep clubs, (iii) NGB whole sport plans to develop a primary focus on youth sport to encourage young people to play and continue playing sport, (iv) funding programmes to support sport facility developments, and (v) an average of £10 million pounds a year to support local government and community and voluntary sports organisations (DCMS, 2012). For some, the headlines within the new strategy may be viewed as nothing more than an attempt to replace challenging participation targets (sports participation based on three occasions per week) for something a little more attainable (sports participation based on one occasion per week) (Gibson, 2012), to refocus attention on a slightly more accessible and attractive (to NGBs, at least) youth market, to repackage existing programmes and ideas, and to portray relatively minor funding for local government and community organisations as being wide-ranging and significant[10] (cf. DCMS, 2012).

Second, underlining the prominence of the new DCMS strategy and the close involvement of Sport England CEO, Jennie Price, in its development (personal communication, 2012), Sport England produced a conspicuously brief two-page Strategy Outline, detailing the principles underpinning investment into NGBs, pinpointing how £1 billion will be invested into community sport, and illustrating how programmes would combine to bring about increased sports participation,

[10] This relates specifically to £50 million investment (over 5 years, £10 million per year) into local government, and voluntary and community organisations.

reduce the numbers of people dropping out of sport, as well as giving specific attention to disability sport (Sport England, 2012a). Of particular note to this study, the strategy outlines Sport England's expectations of CSPs and NGBs:

> National governing bodies will continue to play a pivotal role [in community sport] as the stewards of their sport. County sport partnerships will support NGBs, foster local links, and help transition young people into clubs (Sport England, 2012a: 1).

The third issue relates directly to the above point, specifically the role of CSPs as a support agency for the delivery of NGB interventions. Whilst this has been the case since 2008, it has in recent years received more direct attention, most recently and prescriptively in the Sport England CSP core specification 2012-13 (Sport England, 2012c). This set out the secondary, supporting role of CSPs in relation to NGB priorities (discussed further in partnerships section, below). Importantly, the core specification underscores the top-down reality of CSP-NGB relations whereby the NGB develops the plans and agrees the priorities, and the CSP is responsible for assisting the NGB in delivering their plan. This position has received opposition from a number of sources, including former Sports Minister Richard Caborn, who has argued that the NGB-led strategy is seriously flawed as NGBs simply do not have the capacity or infrastructure in place to extend into local communities and deliver mass participation (Walker, 2011). Furthermore, the majority of NGBs are primarily motivated by elite success (Allison, 2001, Green, 2003, 2008; Green & Houlihan, 2005), with community sport playing a distant, secondary role (Collins, 2010). Finally, given the overview of power discourse, above, it remains to be seen to what extent one organisational structure (the CSP) will defer to another—particularly given the broader social context within which CSPs and NGBs operate.

Fourth, local government and its ability to continue committing to community sport has been compromised in a number of ways. The most notable is the public sector austerity measures introduced by central government, particularly the substantially reduced financial settlements received by local government (LGA, 2012), and the considerable challenge this poses to the sustained funding of any non-statutory service such as sport (King, 2013). Indeed, the LGA have developed a preliminary model of spending up to the year 2020 which suggests that local authorities will be

unable to commit any budgetary provision to discretionary services such as sport (LGA, 2012). This presents daunting implications for both the continued provision of local-level infrastructure (facilities and staffing) as well as important support services such as local grant programmes and advice and support for voluntary sport clubs (May *et al.*, 2012). One of the first changes the coalition government made upon entry to office was to scrap the LAA. Whilst this may not be perceived to be as problematic as the austerity measures, it would be easy to underestimate the implications for sport. The LAA process helped to secure community sport a place on the political agenda at local level, with over 70% of local authorities in England selecting NI8 (Sport England, 2010). As a result, local authorities were ring-fencing specific resources, developing infrastructure, delivery plans and local-needs based interventions in order to meet their agreed target for NI8. Whilst it can be argued that removing the requirement for local authorities to deliver these targets has reduced a considerable bureaucratic burden (Cameron, 2010), it could also be argued that the attention and resources allocated to community sport are likely to suffer as a result. The final issue affecting local government is part 5 of the Localism Act, 2011, specifically the distribution of new powers to local communities, such as community asset transfer and right to buy. This is one of many processes developed by the government to shift power from Whitehall to local communities (Cameron, 2009), provide local opportunities for citizens to participate in civil society (Cabinet Office, 2011), and to continue what Thatcher started in driving the wholesale modernisation of public services with the aim of substituting perceived public sector ineptitude for private sector efficiency. Modernisation, and in particular the modernisation programme of the coalition government, is discussed further below. This includes reference to broader government-led issues which tend to dictate the policy environment, specifically governance arrangements and the promotion of partnerships as an antidote to the conventional Westminster model.

The modernisation of public services and the impact of the coalition government

Modernisation is a relatively recent political phenomenon which has evolved from the economic and managerialist legacy of Thatcher, the repositioning of Labour Party socialism under Blair, and a view of success as the 'progressive expansion of the

sphere of individual responsibility' (Leadbetter, in Finlayson, 1999: 273) rather than the expansion of the public sector (Houlihan & Green, 2009).

The general view of modernisation appears divided. The government typically point to a shift of power from Whitehall to local communities and a collection of new programmes aimed at improving service efficiency and effectiveness, whereas political scientists tend to underline modernisation as a 'rhetorical discourse which is less concerned with describing or prescribing a particular set of practices and more concerned with persuasion and motivation' (Finlayson, in Houlihan & Green, 2009: 3). Indeed, Finlayson underlined modernisation as being commonly associated with 'exciting, progressive and positive' ideals (2003: 63). That said, Houlihan & Green (2009) offered a more balanced view, highlighting the lack of precision relating to the concept of modernisation, noting that narratives, programmes, and specific techniques help to create a more tangible concept of modernisation.

Since the election of the coalition government in 2010, there has been a subtle shift in the narrative relating to modernisation. Prior to this, the zeitgeist of New Labour ideology was characterised by a relentless commitment to public sector modernisation which included wide-ranging targets, inspection programmes, Beacon Authorities and similar initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. For New Labour, modernisation represented the need to ensure that policy was joined-up and strategic, that public services were provided based on public need, and public services were high quality and efficient Cabinet Office, (1999: 6-7). Whilst the coalition government claimed to support the same efficiency goals, they criticised New Labour's programme as having been flawed and highly unlikely to deliver greater efficiency (Cameron, 2010). Moreover, the Conservative (and Liberal Democrat) leadership underscored the need for public sector reform in order to address inequality and to improve public services by decentralising power and giving local citizens more control over the management and delivery of public services (Cabinet Office, 2011). The coalition government's modernisation programme reflects a neo-liberal lineage in that it aims to pursue alternative models of delivery (from those that are traditionally state-led), remove targets and inspection regimes, give choice to end users, encourage greater competition amongst suppliers, and pay by results (Cameron, 2010).

Two distinct manifestations of the coalition government's modernisation programme—the focus on empowering local communities and citizen-centeredness—are considered below in a discussion of the government's approach to governance and the continued commitment to partnerships. Whilst these developments are broader than community sport itself, they impact community sport and, in some cases (but certainly not all) directly shape the way in which community sport policy is formulated, implemented and evaluated. The following sub-sections will consider these two manifestations in more detail, specifically the key theoretical considerations related to each as well as the issues and implications of each for the community sport policy sector.

Governing and governance

Given the variety of literature on governing and governance, it is useful to define its meaning for the purposes of this study. Governing is taken to mean 'the activities of social, political and administrative actors that can be seen as purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage sectors of society' (Kooiman, 1993: 2). Governing, then, is an interactive process as no single actor has the power or resource capacity to act unilaterally (Stoker, 1998). As a result, governing is shaped by a persistent tension between the need for authoritative action and a reliance on the compliance and action of others (Rhodes, 1996). In contrast, whilst governance has a variety of meanings (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998), there is general agreement within the realms of public policy that it refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors are blurred (Stoker, 1998).

For many years, governance has been viewed as an integral part of the language of modernisation, a 'vogue word for reforming the public services' (Rhodes, 1996 in Kjaer, 2004). Indeed, a quick look at the modernisation programmes of the past two governments reveals little change. Governance continues to be popularised by governments who eagerly promote their variety of community empowerment. The governance narrative is represented by a rich literature concerning the shift in British politics from the Westminster model associated with a unitary state, strong cabinet government, parliamentary sovereignty, and hierarchical control over policy to the overloaded, hollowed out, and congested state (Skelcher, 2000 in Goodwin & Grix, 2011), where power is devolved through arms length agencies, networks, and

partnerships. The governance narrative according to Grix (2010: 161) highlights the 'erosion of central government power and, with it, the state's ability to determine and deliver policy'. It also brings into sharp relief the problems of the traditional top-down policy system and represents a new model of governing, where power is distributed horizontally through a series of networks representing a range of interests (Kooiman, 1993; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). Indeed, Marsh & Rhodes' (1992) 'hollowing out' thesis contended that governance is all about self-reliant, self-organising networks made up of mutually resource-dependent actors, where the state holds no position of privilege beyond that of any other stakeholder (Goodwin & Grix, 2011; Rhodes, 1996).

The means by which government can empower people and simultaneously reduce the size of government played an important role in the 2010 general election as well as the subsequent modernisation programme of the coalition government. Whilst the election itself was primarily fought on the issue of the recession and the public borrowing deficit—and a largely unanimous agreement across parties about the need to reduce public borrowing—it did reveal 'fundamental differences over the role of the state and the relationship between the state and the market' (Smith, 2010: 818). According to Boyle (2011) Labour's response was reliance on the Keynesian and social democratic model, whereas Cameron's neo-liberal commitment was to significantly reduce the size of the state primarily through the realisation of a 'big society' and to decentralise public services so that these would be co-produced with local citizens. The latter appears to be an anchor to which the coalition government's localism and big society ideology is firmly fixed.

The Localism Act itself is a central player in the coalition government's modernisation plans. It, in theory at least, provides for a new model of governance, one which seeks to give local government greater autonomy, borrowing elements from Popper's (1945) 'open society' and Ostrom's (1973) notion of co-production—the idea of democratic governance beyond mere consultation or representation, in particular. The Localism Act provides community groups and citizens with the opportunity to manage parks, sports centres, or youth play programmes; more importantly, it gives them the right to use their skills and knowledge to manage and deliver such services. This trend toward co-creation and co-production is not simply

about greater efficiency in public service delivery, but is more about re-defining the nature, culture and way in which public services are designed and delivered.

> If we can re-define public service clients as assets who have skills that are vital to the delivery of services, then we have a way that public services can genuinely start to rebuild the neighbourhoods around them. The point is that there are some services, like friendship, which neighbours provide very much better than professionals. Co-production is about broadening public services so that these human needs can be met (Boyle, 2011:10).

That said, the normative view presented by the governance narrative and contained within the rhetoric of legislation or government inspired programmes has been heavily criticised in recent years by the growing literature on the decentred approach to governance (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, 2006; Bevir & Richards, 2009) as well as other authors who have criticised the overly rational, normative assumptions associated with the governance narrative (cf. Jessop, 2002; Kooiman, 2000; Newman, 2005; Skelcher, 2000, 2008). The criticisms are twofold: first, at the ontological and epistemological level, whereby individual accounts are considered less relevant than the agentless, technocratic accounts included in previous work (Goodwin & Grix, 2011). Second, the governance narrative assumes the state to be a neutral or equal player alongside other network stakeholders, largely ignoring the likelihood of government exercising coercive forms of power (Newman, 2005: 8), particularly in times when networks and local actors desire a different path than that preferred by government representatives. In other words, it fails to recognise the significance of the state in 'metagovernance', 'setting the rules of the game within which networks operate and steering the overall process of coordination' (Jessop, 2002; Kooiman, 2000 in Newman, 2005: 8). Skelcher rejects the notion of networks as self-organised, autonomous groups, emphasising their dependence on government support (2000). Indeed, the majority of local sport-related networks (CSPs, CSNs, sport-specific fora) are, in large part, created and sustained by government through the provision of financial resources. Thus, the governance narrative fails to recognise the attempt of government to reassert control, albeit through different means (Skelcher, 2000).

In examining these issues further, Goodwin & Grix (2011) applied the decentred perspective specifically to community sport. They advanced an epistemologically modified perspective incorporating structures and institutions and 'acknowledging the role of these on actors, their beliefs and their actions' to develop insight into the governance of community sport policy (2011: 546). Their research identified the governance paradox at work in sport, where the rhetoric of devolved power through a diverse range of networks (e.g. government departments, non-departmental government bodies, NGBs, schools, local authorities, CSPs, CSNs, etc.) and more freedom and control (DCMS, 2008: 21) contradicts the empirical evidence of an overly resource-dependent relationship where the government dictate the strategic direction of sport (Houlihan & Green, 2009) and maintain, albeit via Sport England and NGBs, tight control on the policy process (Goodwin & Grix, 2011; Grix, 2010a). This is a theme reinforced elsewhere in that government dictate the specific nature of community sport policy and strategy, but more importantly frequently change the parameters and require local agents such as CSPs to align themselves with the change, regardless of how this may impact their existing priorities, structure or other local contextual issues (Mackintosh, 2011).

Interestingly, and in subtle contrast to the community sport strategies of the previous CSR cycle (2008-2011) referred to in the studies detailed above, the DCMS vision proffered a more nuanced version of their approach to strategic matters:

> Our vision is to help create the conditions for growth ....Where we judge there is a need for a particular intervention, we will provide real support and set strategy and direction. But we want our sectors and industries to drive their own agenda (DCMS, 2011: 1).

In a similar show of inconsistency (or ambiguity) identified by Goodwin & Grix (2011), the document also asserted that the department 'will no longer hold onto power, over regulate, or spend as much money on administration' (DCMS, 2011: 4). In addition, the department's most recent sports strategy asserted that the DCMS would

> ... bring a sharper sense of direction and purpose across the entire sporting family through payment-by-results: a collective discipline

> of building on what works, and discarding what doesn't. The most successful organisations will be rewarded; and those which don't deliver will see their funding reduced or removed (DCMS, 2012: 2).

The issue here is not about the extent to which government retain a strategic involvement in policy, but more the language that is used to create the illusion of an empowered and autonomous community, when in fact the balance of power is retained centrally and freedoms are only granted within relatively narrow parameters set by government. A brief, alternative explanation can be derived from Foucault's work on governmentality, specifically the idea that the power possessed by the state 'is not used to govern society per se, but to promote individual and institutional conduct that is consistent with government objectives' (Raco & Imrie, 2000: 2191). From this perspective, government is involved in governing at a distance, allowing increased local responsibility and at the same time ensuring increased central control (MacKinnon, 2000). This form of governance relies upon a complex and interwoven system comprising political narrative, programmatic development, and specific technologies (Lindsey, 2010) in order to progress the conflicting notions of increased local responsibility and, increased central control simultaneously.

A final issue is the seemingly disjointed response of government departments to the call for greater power in the sub-regions (Hethrington, 2011). Whilst it is possible to identify a clear narrative, and in some cases, trace elements of power being shifted to the local level in departmental areas such as Communities and Local Government, Education, and Health, the same cannot be said of the increasingly centralist DCMS. This is evidenced by a range of recent developments, including for example, the centralisation of Sport England, the departmental (as opposed to Sport England) ownership of the national strategy for community sport, the continued focus on centralist NGB Whole Sport Plans, and the primary focus of those aspects of sport policy that aid economic development (in particular, hosting major events and supporting elite development). In sum, it is arguably the range and sum of the issues presented above that have led to the characterisation of community sport as a 'deviant case' to the traditional governance narrative, one which requires a fuller examination of structures and institutions alongside the ideas, culture and beliefs of actors (Goodwin & Grix, 2011: 1).

Partnerships in community sport

Partnerships and partnership working are terms which are synonymous with sport in England and have been since the formative years of 'outreach and interventionist' sport development in the early 1980s. Theoretically, partnerships have been viewed as a reflection of 'both market- and state-led forms of governance', while in the policy-related narrative, they are depicted as being 'resource-efficient, outcome-effective, and an inclusive-progressive form of policy delivery' (McDonald, 2005: 579).

In community sport, the formalisation of partnerships occurred in the mid-1990s as a result of the government's new enthusiasm for sport (Houlihan & White, 2002), and in particular, the creation of multi-agency programmes such as Top Play, Top Sport and Champion Coaching. Sport England and the National Coaching Foundation (NCF – now known as Sports Coach UK) funded county sport development officers and county sports development fora with the aim of bringing together a range of multi-agency partners, particularly from local authority sport development, local education authorities, schools, NGBs, county sport associations, the Youth Sport Trust and Sport England in order to ensure the 'joined-up' design, delivery and evaluation of the programmes. This formalisation of partnerships continued with the election of New Labour in 1997 (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008) and the development of the Active England programme (Active Schools, Active Communities and Active Sports). This focus on bringing a relatively similar range of organisations together over a sustained period to design, deliver and evaluate specific programmes has been viewed as important by governments and Sport England, not only in terms of creating a more coherent, readily identifiable network of policy implementers, but also in terms of bringing together the lead agencies to ensure that pathways were understood, joined-up and working as expected.

Indeed, the requirement for actors to commit to work in partnership with each other is one that has remained stable within the policy field, more so than the actual policies they were initially expected to deliver. Recent examples include School Sport Partnerships, School Games Networks, Community Sport Networks, CSPs and the partnership between CSPs and NGBs. Bloyce and colleagues (2008) underscore the unintended consequences of the ongoing commitment to partnership work within

community sport, in particular the added complexity of partnership work and the implications of the complexity of attempting to address policy problems. In short, the complexity of enforced CSP-NGB cooperation may actually add to the range of policy problems rather than address them. The complexity of the CSP-NGB relationship is not solely a result of the differences in the range of goals traditionally associated with each organisational type (Collins, 2010), but also the nature and culture of each network, and their respective resource power, positional power (Bloyce *et al.*, 2008) and the social context within which each operates (Grix, 2010a). In practical terms, NGBs have been primarily concerned with the development of their sport and in particular growth in the talent pool, with an emphasis on young people and the development of elite performers (Collins, 2008; Houlihan & White, 2002). In contrast, CSPs have been more focused on working with the community at the local level, in particular local authorities and the PCT, in order to increase the number of people engaged in regular physical activity (including sport) (Collins, 2010; Mackintosh, 2011; Robson, 2008). Another important consideration in the relationship between CSPs and NGBs is the sheer diversity in the size, shape and structure in each group of organisations. Space and the heterogeneity of types preclude a detailed examination; the following merely serves to illustrate the complexity of partnerships between CSPs and NGBs.

Generally speaking, the NGBs formally involved in the community sport policy process in England are traditionally non-profit organisations (Katwala, 2000). Enforcing rules, selecting international teams and organising competitions are amongst their primary interests (Hindley, 2002). Although, more recently, one could add corporatisation and commercialisation (Taylor & O'Sullivan, 2009). The majority of NGBs have a core national team with responsibility for policy and strategy including the development of the NGB's whole sport plan and the agreement of the NGB's plans regarding community sport. The regional infrastructure of NGBs tends to be highly variable, usually directed by the wealth of the sport, which is directly related to its commercial attractiveness, the grant from the whole sport plan budget and the NGB's strategic priorities. At the sub-regional level, many sports have a network of long-standing county sport associations with differing models of governance used to guide the NGB-county sport association relationship (Taylor & O'Sullivan, 2009). At the local or neighbourhood level, almost all NGBs rely on the

network of predominantly voluntarily managed sports clubs (some of which are affiliated to the NGB) and/or school sport programmes to provide recreational and competitive opportunities.

In contrast, the 49 CSPs are a more recent introduction to the sporting landscape in England. They are perhaps best understood as an umbrella organisation for sport in each county (Grix, 2010a: 458) in that they were initially introduced to address the perennial problem of fragmentation in sports delivery, in particular fragmentation between local authorities (districts/boroughs, cities, and counties), NGBs, schools and clubs (Charlton, 2010). Since their arrival in the community sport policy sector, CSPs have been challenged by the whim of government ministers and the subsequent re-writing of policy. Most recently, in return for annual core funding of £240,000 from Sport England, CSPs have been given four key business objectives, as set out in the CSP Core Specification for 2012-2013 (Sport England, 2012c):

- to deliver cross sport services to meet NGB priorities,
- to develop and maintain the strategic alliances and local networks NGBs and SE need to drive, deliver and secure resources,
- to deliver cross-sport coaching services to meet local need, and
- to manage and operate the CSP and ensure sound governance.

Following the CSP Core Specification, it is important to briefly clarify the structure and meaning placed on the term CSP, particularly as the study analyses partnerships between agencies which themselves are based on partnerships (e.g. the CSP). Indeed, the structure of CSPs has created some confusion (cf. Mackintosh, 2011), and can be simplified by defining the meaning or representation of the partnership at three distinct levels:

(i) the core team (a team of professionals e.g. CSP Director, NGB Lead Officer, who are employed by the CSP to develop and deliver against the CSPs strategy and Core Specification);

(ii) the board (selected representatives or individuals), whose primary role is to advise the CSP core team, provide guidance and make decisions on matters of strategic importance; and,

(iii) the broader partnership (a network of organisations that have an association with the area served by the CSP, usually involving, but not limited to, local authorities, NGBs, clubs, the schools games networks and the primary care trust).

While this articulation of CSPs is relatively consistent, the structure, size and representation of each vary from CSP to CSP. Another distinct although not unproblematic feature of CSPs, is the apparent struggle for autonomy, and at the same time, a reliance on funding from Sport England (Phillpots *et al.*, 2010). Whilst the clear majority of CSPs are hosted (e.g. by a local authority or University), 14 have independent status as a limited company or charitable trust. Regardless, all CSPs are autonomous insofar as their legal status, employment terms and conditions, number of staff, budgetary process etc. are agreed by the CSP Director and the CSP board and are independent of government departments or Sport England. This is a problematic issue due to the original conceptualisation of the CSP as a Sport England agency (Grix, 2010a), the ability of some CSPs to source significant sums of funding from outside Sport England, the development of a network of high calibre CSP directors and chair people, and the implications of frequent changes in the policy landscape, not least the uncertainty of long-term funding for CSPs (Keech, 2011). At their extremes the resultant power relations have seen Sport England grappling for greater control (Phillpots *et al.*, 2010) and CSPs emphasising their independence (CSP Network, 2012). As a result, a number of new public management techniques, including core specifications, interpretation guides and performance measurement frameworks have been developed in order to more clearly define the relationship between Sport England and CSPs and work towards greater consistency across the 49 CSPs (Sport England, 2012c).

As previously mentioned, the above summary of CSPs and NGBs is not intended as a definitive or even partial explanation of the diversity of NGB or CSP types. It simply illustrates the complexity that pervades the interaction within and across networks, which could harm rather than harness attempts to achieve government goals for community sport (Bloyce *et al.*, 2008).

Conclusions

Most important in this chapter are four themes that are particularly noteworthy for the way in which they characterise community sport and/or the implications they hold for it.

The first theme relates to the process that underpins community sport. This has evolved from the passive provision of facilities (i.e. provide the facility and wait for users) to the interventionist role of contemporary agents where, in theory, the focus is taking sport to new markets and working at the micro-level to help individuals change behaviour. This change in strategy has been accompanied by a shift in the approach of local agents. In the 1970s strategy largely consisted of direct provision, where providers such as local government directly provided services to citizens. In the 1980s/1990s, this evolved to an enabling role, where agents worked through others either by virtue of regulation (e.g. Facilities subject to CCT or Best Value) or by choice (e.g. sport development via local clubs/associations). More recently, the neo-liberal ideology of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, and in particular the rhetoric of Big Society and small government, emphasise the need to engage the grass roots, to work-through civic society associations to build local interest and empower local communities. This raises empirical questions about the policy process and the efforts made to secure participatory consensus with such associations.

The second theme concerns fragmentation. The community sport policy sector is conflictive, disorganised (Roche, 1993) and 'fragmented, fractious, and ineffective' (Houlihan & Green, 2009: 2). This can perhaps partially be explained by the 'fuzziness' or lack of precision applied to community sport (Houlihan, 2011). The very meaning of community sport is ambiguous and has, at different times, included young people/adults, sport/physical activity, sport for sport/sport for development. This differs from elite sport in that elite sport has a universal definition that extends beyond the nation. There are pre-arranged parameters (training and preparation for major events) and, for most sports, a clearly defined output (performance at the event) which is outside the reach of governments. In contrast, community sport is a domestic concern. Politicians, civil servants, the senior management of Sport England, NGBs and others debate and ultimately agree what it is and what it is not.

However, whilst the notion of fragmentation commonly precedes any explanation of community sport, a more precise understanding of the community sport policy process and, in particular, the extent to which coalitions exist in advocating community sport remains an empirical question.

The problem of perennial change is the third theme. This includes changes in policy and the associated strategies, structures and programmes. Examples include the shift in policy from youth sport development in the early/mid 1990s, to a more pronounced focus on sport for development in the late 1990s/early 2000s, to a vague aim to increase participation in the mid-2000s, to a tighter, more specific goal of increasing adult participation from 2008 onwards. The frequent and hasty nature of change in policy has had severe implications for community sport. First, it projects an image of a failing policy sector, one that requires continual attention and frequent change (Collins, 2010). Second, it gives those working in the policy sector limited time to make an impact or achieve policy aspirations (Coalter, 2007). Third, the instability and uncertainty that comes from frequent change constrains cooperation and promotes competition (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). It is important to note the rapid changes in the policy system, and the way in which this past behaviour is likely to shape current relations between different organisational actors, particularly in relation to two fundamental principles of partnership working—trust and respect. If nothing else, we have come to realise that the community sport policy field is one where change is fairly certain, partially a result of its free form and its ability to be domestically defined, but also a result of deeper structures of power. Thus, it is critically important, given these theoretical and practical considerations, not to ascribe too much significance to the normative representation of partnership (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2008), specifically when applied to the community sport policy sector.

More broadly, the implication of the government's wider policies pertaining to public sector modernisation and governance through local partnerships requires further investigation. Examples of reform such as the abandonment of public sector modernisation policies including the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Local Area Agreements indicate, on the one hand, a desire to lessen bureaucratic burdens

and reduce the number of targets for which the public sector are responsible. Similarly, the creation of legislation such as the Localism Act shows that the government are seriously considering a number of options that more directly involve local citizens in the front-line delivery of public services. On the other hand, these changes underscore a populist, ideological shift aimed at differentiating this administration from the previous one. The extent to which these overarching changes in policy--particularly the removal of performance targets and shifted power from the centre to local communities--have impacted community sport will be examined as part of the empirical exercise.

Chapter 5
Case Study 1: CSP 1

Introduction

This chapter narrows the focus of analysis to the first of three CSP cases. As detailed in the research methods chapter, the three cases represent CSPs working in different geographical, organisational and financial contexts. Each case consists of three CSP representatives (Director, Chairperson and NGB Lead Officer) and embedded units comprising National Governing Bodies and local authorities. These units included county or regional level representation from eight NGBs and three representatives from local authorities (either sport, culture or community services according to each authority's structure). The rationale for selecting these embedded units is detailed in the methods chapter above. The case studies presented in chapters 5-7 draw on empirical data from interviews with key actors and are supplemented with data from the annual reports, strategies and/or action plans of Sport England, CSPs, NGBs and local authorities.

Each case is organised around the following four parts. The first focuses on the administrative context, organisational structure and the strategic priorities of each CSP. This includes geographical and demographic context as well as a comparative analysis of sports participation trends[11]. Given the importance of the CSP-NGB relationship to the implementation of community sport policy, the second part of the chapter discusses the CSP-NGB relationship. This includes a brief overview of the way in which partnership arrangements between the CSP and NGBs are managed and the factors that positively or negatively affect the creation of effective partnerships. This section will be set against the implementation and partnership literature. The third section is concerned with the role of CSPs and NGBs in policy making and implementation at the national and the local-level and draws on theory from Chapter 2. The fourth section takes a broader view of the community sport policy process, presenting the experiences and attitudes of key actors. A coding

[11] The 2006-2012 timeline aligns with Sport England's Active People survey which is the method used to measure community sport policy. The analysis compares sports participation in CSP 1 against sports participation nationally in England.

framework illustrating the key themes arising from the three cases is included in Appendix 8.

Organisation, administration and strategic priorities

Geographic and demographic context

CSP 1 covers a large metropolitan area totalling 356 square kilometres and forming part of the largest conurbation outside London. It is made up of 25 towns, three large urban centres and a city. Each area has developed into a strong community with distinctive characteristics, often based on a particular manufacturing specialism. Whilst these towns have now largely coalesced into a continuous urban area, local identities and loyalties remain important (Local Enterprise Partnership, 2011). The population of the area is 1.1 million with 48.7% of the population male and 51.3% female (ONS, 2012). It is a comparatively diverse population with 18.9% of people from Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) origins as compared to the national England average of 12.1% (*ibid*, 2012). In terms of age, there is a higher proportion of young (14-24) and old people (65+ years) than the national population (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 2012 Population by gender, age (14+) and ethnicity, (source: ONS, 2012)

Group	CSP Population '000	%	England population '000	%
Male	427.6	48.7	20,644.8	49.0
Female	449.9	51.3	21,509.3	51.0
14-15	29.8	3.2	1,291.4	2.9
16-19	54.9	6.3	2,528.6	6.0
20-24	80.1	9.1	3,588.0	8.5
25-34	152.6	17.4	7,079.0	16.8
35-49	213.5	24.3	11,097.9	26.3
50-64	176.0	20.1	9,431.9	22.4
65+	200.4	22.8	8,428.6	20.0
White	703.3	80.1	36,866.8	87.5
Non white	165.9	18.9	5,101.3	12.1

The sub-region faces a number a socioeconomic challenges. It is dominated by low priced private housing and large areas of social rented housing with 5.1% of total dwellings classified as being unfit (Local Enterprise Partnership, 2011). Furthermore, 20% of the sub region's super output areas (SOAs[12]) are in the 10% most deprived in

[12] Super Output Areas were introduced by the Office of National Statistics as a new geographic classification system for collecting, aggregating and reporting statistics at the local level. They were specifically introduced to help develop the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Unlike wards, the boundaries to SOAs rarely change thus allowing the monitoring of data over time.

the country (CLG, 2007) and only 15.0% of the population are in social groups A and B compared to the national average of 22.0%. Further, with regards to deprivation, three of the four upper tier authorities in the sub region are ranked within the 20% most deprived nationally. More specifically, three authorities are ranked 2, 4, 5 most deprived in the region (from 39 authorities) and 12, 21, 30 most deprived nationally (from 353 authorities). The remaining (fourth) authority is ranked 8 in the region and 104 nationally.

Over the past 30 years the local economy has been underperforming with an estimated £2.6 billion output gap (based on Gross Value Added), a result of low employment rates, low skills, and low business birth rates (Sub-Regional Regeneration Agency, 2006). This is exacerbated by worklessness in the sub region which has reportedly increased from 15.1% in 2005 to 17.4% in 2011, compared national figures of 11.4% in 2005 and 11.9% in 2011 (DWP, 2011).

The health profile for the sub-region reinforces the impression that the area requires considerable post-industrial regeneration. When compared to national averages, obesity levels are higher, life expectancy for males and females is lower and health costs of physical inactivity are calculated to be significantly higher in all five disease categories. More specifically, 27.9% of the sub-regional adult population are obese compared to 24.2% of the national population. A similar picture is painted by childhood obesity levels with 23.6% of the sub-regional child population classified as obese compared to 19.0% nationally. Life expectancy for males in the sub-region is 76.8 years compared to 78.6 years nationally. The gap between sub-regional and national life expectancy for females is narrower with a mean of 81.5 years for the sub-region compared to 82.6 years nationally. In addition, the data for the projected costs of physical activity are projected to be substantially higher in the sub-region than the regional or national averages (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Health care costs of physical inactivity (source: Sport England. 2013)

Geography	Total cost	Cost per 100,000 pop.
Sub-region	£23,304.830	£2,120,023
Region	£106,379,927	£1,937,438
England	£944,289,723	£1,817,285

Local government: boundaries and resources

The area consists of four local authorities: three Metropolitan Borough Councils and one City Council. The political picture has been a relatively stable one, with the sub-region being a Labour stronghold. At the time of research, three of the four authorities were Labour controlled, with no overall control in the remaining authority. As large, upper tier authorities, all four Councils have a strong traditional commitment to sport development. Despite the public sector austerity measures, all four authorities have retained relatively large sport development teams (three to 12+ officers), with two authorities outsourcing the development function to a leisure trust and the remaining two housing sports development internally. In budgetary terms, the four local authorities allocated a combined budget of £15 million for sport in 2010/11 (CLG, 2011, 2012). This fell sharply to £12,199,000 in 2011/12 primarily due to one authority reducing its budget by £2.5 million. In contrast, the city council increased their budget by 19.1%, the result of selling off formerly owned council land for retail development and reallocating revenue budgets to develop a new community sport strategy (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Budget for sport by local authorities in the CSP 1 area (source: CLG, 2011, 2012)

Authority	£ 2010/11	£ 2011/12	£ Diff +/-	% change 10/11 to 11/12
City Council	2,746,000	3,271,000	+525,000	+19.1
Metropolitan Borough 1	3,146,000	411,000	-2,735,000	-86.9%
Metropolitan Borough 2	5,890,000	5,353,000	-537,000	-9.1%
Metropolitan Borough 3	3,255,000	3,164,000	-91,000	-2.8%
Overall	15,037,000	12,199,000	2,838,000	-18.8%

CSP structure, organisation and strategic priorities

The CSP is registered as a company limited by guarantee and housed within the sub-regional Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). According to the CSP's strategy, 'the partnership represents all the main stakeholders in PE, sport and physical activity including local authorities, NGBs, PCTs, further education, University, and the voluntary and community sector, private sector, leisure trusts and the LEP' (CSP 1 Strategy 2013). Underpinning this, the three strategic priorities for CSP 1 for the period 2012-2015 are (i) increasing adult participation in sport and physical activity,

(ii) increasing youth participation in sport and physical activity, and (iii) increasing the quantity and quality of the sport workforce across the partnership area. With regards to organisational governance, the CSP board hold ultimate accountability for the partnership's work. The board is a voluntary, representative board whereby individuals receive no fee or remuneration, and are elected to represent a particular sector. In total there are 13 board members representing NGBs (three representatives), local authorities (two representatives), the workforce and skills forum, the LEP, a local leisure trust, public health, further/higher education, the commercial sector, community sport networks and the director of the CSP. In theory, the board discuss and agree the CSPs strategy and direct the work of the CSP sport team (otherwise known as the core team). The core team consists of 10 FTE members of staff with a variety of positions and responsibilities as detailed in Figure 5.1. As is the case with all 49 CSPs, Sport England provides the CSP with annual core funding of £240,000 (based on the 2011/12 allocation). In addition, the highest performing CSPs have the opportunity to secure a share of £80,000[13]. In return for this the CSP is required to meet the conditions of the CSP core specification as detailed in Chapter 4. The CSP also receives contributions and grants from local authorities, the PCT and the LEP. These contributions together with Sport England funding and programme-related income gave the CSP a turnover of £1,000,000 for the 2011/12 financial year.

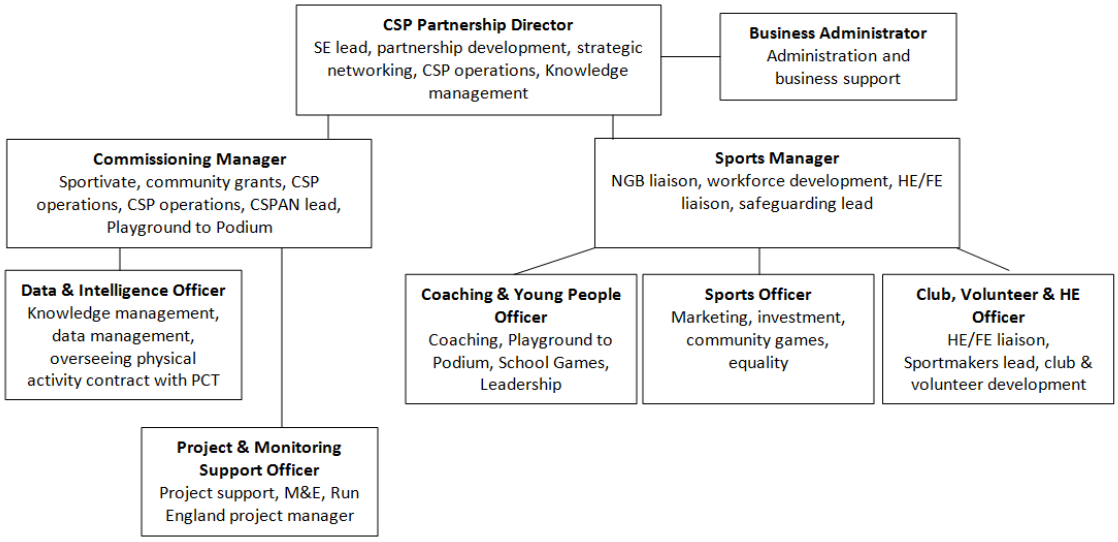

Figure 5.1 Structure of core team, CSP 1

[13] At the time of writing, no decision had been made regarding the allocation of the additional £80,000 investment.

Sports participation trends

Sports participation in CSP 1 has been significantly lower than national and regional averages (see Table 5.4). However, participation rates in the area have increased by 1.2% over the six year period between 2005/6 and 2011/12, although the gap between national and regional averages, and CSP 1 has widened from 5.5% to 6.1% (national) and 3.2% to 3.6% (regional) over the same period. These differences arguably reflect the range of negative correlates of participation that exist within the area, when compared to the national data. For example, in comparison to the national and regional picture, CSP 1 has a larger 65+ population, higher numbers of people working in lowly paid employment, more worklessness and greater unemployed and higher levels of multiple deprivation. Given this context, a 1.2% increase in sports participation over a 6-year period could be viewed as positive.

Table 5.4 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once a week *) (source: Sport England, 2013)

Year	CSP 1	Region	England
2005/06	28.70%	31.90%	34.20%
2007/08	27.70%	33.40%	35.80%
2008/09	28.70%	33.60%	35.70%
2009/10	28.50%	32.90%	35.30%
2010/11	29.40%	32.70%	34.80%
2011/12	29.90%	33.50%	36.00%

The data reveal a relatively consistent variation between the area and the regional and national levels when analysing sports participation by demographic group. The area has lower participation in almost all demographic groups with the exception of socioeconomic group 4 (NS SEC 4) and the non-white population. That said, participation in most demographic groups has increased in the area between the baseline year of 2005/6 and 2011/12 with notable gains (≥1.0%) in the following populations: male, non white, 26-34 age group, NS SEC 1-2, NS SEC 4. Nevertheless, there appears to be little change in participation amongst groups more commonly reported as being excluded (Collins & Kay, 2004), including: females, minority ethnic groups, and the 55+ (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once a week *) by demographic group (source: Sport England, 2013)

	CSP 1		Region		England	
Year	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12
All	28.70%	29.90%	31.90%	33.50%	34.20%	36.00%
Male	34.20%	36.70%	36.30%	38.60%	38.90%	41.10%
Female	23.40%	23.50%	27.70%	28.60%	29.80%	31.10%
White	28.20%	30.00%	32.00%	33.50%	34.30%	36.20%
Non-White	31.80%	30.30%	31.20%	34.10%	33.20%	35.50%
Limiting Disability	12.30%	16.00%	13.50%	16.10%	15.10%	18.30%
No Limiting Disability	32.30%	33.10%	35.60%	37.10%	37.80%	39.40%
16-25	51.00%	49.50%	53.40%	51.40%	55.70%	54.00%
26-34	33.50%	42.30%	41.70%	45.00%	45.20%	47.10%
35-54	30.40%	30.70%	33.10%	34.60%	35.20%	37.60%
55+	15.40%	15.40%	17.30%	19.80%	18.80%	21.30%
NS SEC 1-2	35.00%	37.80%	38.70%	41.30%	40.10%	42.70%
NS SEC 3	26.80%	26.60%	31.00%	31.40%	32.30%	33.70%
NS SEC 4	33.70%	35.80%	31.70%	31.00%	32.40%	32.90%
NS SEC 5-8	22.80%	23.70%	24.50%	25.60%	26.90%	27.10%

Estimates suggest that the growth potential for adult participation in sport in the CSP 1 area is 52.8%, or 463,500 people (Sport England, 2013). In other words, more than half of the local population have expressed interest in wanting to do more sport. This compares to 55.1% and 55.4% at regional and national levels, respectively. The three sports with the highest growth potential in the area are reported as swimming (87,200/9.9%), cycling (61,400/7.0%) and football (29,300/3.3%) (Sport England, 2013). Other sport-related indicators such as volunteering in sport, club membership, coaching, and competitive sport present a similar picture to that above insomuch as the local area generally has lower levels of participation in formal sport compared to regional and national means (see Table 5.6). In contrast to the data above, all of the indicators have decreased with the exception of sport volunteering. This, combined with the increase in once a week participation noted above, and the decrease in formal sports noted below, leads one to deduce that the increase in sports participation is primarily a result of non-traditional or informal sports participation.

Table 5.6 Other Sport Indicators: Volunteering and formal sports participation (source: Sport England, 2013)

Indicator	CSP A3		Region		England	
	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12
KPI2 - Volunteering at least one hour a week	4.5%	6.4%	4.7%	8.1%	4.7%	7.6%
KPI3 - Club Membership in the last 4 weeks	19.8%	15.9%	22.8%	21.7%	24.1%	22.8%
KPI4 - Received tuition / coaching in last 12 mths	13.5%	11.5%	16.2%	16.0%	17.5%	16.8%
KPI5 - Took part in organised competition in last 12 months	11.9%	10.9%	13.3%	14.0%	14.4%	14.4%

The CSP-NGB relationship

The initial, quantitative phase of the research explored the CSP-NGB relationship from the perspective of both the CSP and NGBs. A statistical analysis of results revealed no significant difference in the views toward the CSP-NGB relationship when analysing by situational factors such as CSP hosting arrangement or CSP turnover, and no significant difference in the view of NGBs when analysed by NGB size (see Appendix 4). Of greater import was the attitude and experience of the research participant (in most cases the CSP Director or the NGB National Development Manager). Here, the follow-up qualitative phase of research explored agent attitudes and experiences in relation to three aspects that are of integral importance to the CSP-NGB relationship: (i) the CSP leadership of NGB relations, (ii) the factors that have positively influenced CSP-NGB relationships; and (iii) the problems and challenges that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship.

The CSP leadership of NGB relations

Whilst the CSP-NGB relationship is primarily the result of an enforced partnership, insofar as all CSPs are required to develop and manage relationships with NGBs, the way in which relationships are managed varies from CSP to CSP. At the board level, CSP 1 could be described as unidirectional and informational. In other words the board appeared to take a very hands-off approach with regards to strategic matters, including strategic relations with partners such as NGBs, leaving these matters to the CSP core team under the leadership of the CSP Director, the Commissioning Manager, and the Sports Manager. As one representative put it '...at the board level

there is far too much programme specific talk, an update about Sportivate or SportMakers or the Youth Games, but not enough engagement of the big strategic issues for sport in the area' *(Interview: Principal Sport & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012)*. Indeed, the evidence outside the CSP suggests that partners view the CSP board leadership as playing a more informal role, maintaining a 'watching brief', one where they predominantly listen to operational updates, financial reports and details of new programmes, led by members of the core team, Sport England and other agents.

With regards to the core team, Figure 5.1 above illustrates how CSP 1 manages partnership arrangements with NGBs. This is primarily led by the Sports Manager with strategic support for partnership development provided by the CSP Director. This approach to partnership development had initially been established as the CSP 1 senior management team viewed it as the most effective approach in developing deep and trusting relationships with NGBs:

> You need trust, open communication and bloody good people. I think very often the relationship develops depending on the experience of the people involved in it ... If we coordinate everything through the one lead officer, then we can easily track progress, identify problems and be confident about the service we are offering NGBs *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*.

Nonetheless, this approach to managing partnership arrangements with the CSP had a number of problems. First, the vast workload involved in managing relations with up to 44 NGBs stretched the capacity of the Sports Manager. Second, the CSP was keen to enhance its offer and wanted to provide NGBs with support from officers with some sport-specific expertise. In this regard, the sport-specific expertise of the Sport Manager across a range of sports did not nearly match that offered by the sum of the core team. In response to these challenges CSP 1 were, at the time of research, developing a new system of prioritising support for different NGBs/sports as well as transitioning to a new approach to NGB partnership management.

The prioritisation of sports involved the CSP developing a three-tiered system of support, with NGBs being categorised as Gold, Silver or Bronze sports[14]. The way in which sports are categorised depends on each NGB and the degree to which they consider the sub-region a priority and/or whether the sport has local significance (i.e. it forms part of the sport legacy programme delivered by the CSP). The Gold sports are those that the CSP view as being the highest priority and where the CSP would endeavour to work more closely with these NGBs on a day-to-day basis. Those sports who have not identified the sub-region and are not a local priority will be allocated in the Bronze category. These NGBs will receive standard support in line with the core specification. The NGBs that have elected to work across the whole of England, and have not identified the sub region as a priority would be categorised as a Silver sport. The CSPs would spend a little more time and provide more support and resources for these NGBs than that required by the core specification, but not to the same extent as Gold sports. The CSP feel compelled to take this approach 'to ensure that all sports receive the bare minimum in line with the core specification … as well as targeting our resources accordingly' *(Interview: Sports Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

With regards to the new approach to leading partnership work with NGBs, the plan was for the CSP Director to maintain responsibility for strategic-level partnership development, the Sport Manager to maintain responsibility for overseeing all NGB liaisons, but responsibility for day-to-day support being delegated across the CSP. This would appease capacity issues through a more equal distribution of NGB work across a larger number of people in the CSP. It would also serve the purpose of enhancing the legitimacy of the CSP by supporting NGBs with CSP representatives who are knowledgeable and interested in the sport. This would be achieved by matching NGB lead responsibilities in the CSP with officer's background, interests and knowledge.

> I think it is important that we can relate to the NGB … part of this is demonstrating some knowledge about the sport in question, rather than just knowledge about the NGB. So, we are starting to share

[14] At the time of the writing the distribution of sports across Gold, Silver and Bronze categories had not been decided.

> NGB liaison responsibilities across the office. It's a real challenge to cover all the sports ... but it's about utilising the skills and knowledge that we have [within the CSP] more effectively *(Interview: Sports Manager, CSP 1; 25 May, 2012).*

That said, for the NGB the legitimacy of the CSP emanates from the knowledge, local understanding and network of local contacts that the CSP holds. Whilst sports-specific knowledge may well be a desirable feature, the core requirement is that the 'CSP provides the local context' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Lawn Tennis Association; 29 May 2012)*, 'holds a clear and common understanding of the local issues' *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*, and '[has] the local knowledge needed to identify the most effective way of delivering [the NGB's] products *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Netball; 6 June 2012*). Indeed, the need for local expertise and understanding appears to be clearly understood by the CSP and, whilst they may aim for enhanced legitimacy through the added value of its representatives having sport-specific expertise, this is not at the expense of their knowledge or expertise about the local area.

> Every area is unique, there are nuances and there are certain ways to approach things ... we have considerable data on the [CSP 1 area]. NGBs can come and meet with us and we can help them to develop a greater local understanding of the area, the issues, who to approach, who not to approach, that sort of thing *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May, 2012).*

In short, both area-based and sport-specific knowledge were reported as important factors in the CSP's leadership of CSP-NGB relations. In particular, the frequent reference to data and/or knowledge supports the relatively new evidence-based orthodoxy permeating community sport policy. Moreover, CSP 1 does not solely collate and utilise data to enhance practice, it also promotes itself as an organisation that can broker and facilitate the use of data, knowledge and intelligence. Thus, it helps other organisations, particularly NGBs, to develop an evidence-based approach to increasing sports participation. This serves the dual purpose of aiding the CSP-NGB relationship and enhancing the legitimacy of the CSP. This latter point aligns with Parrish's (2003) more general view of the sports development profession as having gained legitimacy and influence primarily due to its technical expertise

relating to policy, programmes and funding initiatives. It could be argued that the more expertise the CSP accumulates and publically demonstrates, the more legitimate and influential they believe themselves to be. More importantly, the other agents involved in community sport are likely to develop a general perception of the CSP as a highly professional, legitimate organisation, although this will likely also be shaped by other mediating factors that are important in the context of CSP-NGB relations, including those presented in the following sub-section.

Factors that have positively influenced the CSP-NGB relationship

To recap, NGBs are the lead organisation in community sport policy. In total, 44 NGBs were selected to receive resources for the development and implementation of a whole sport plan for 2013-17. These plans set out targets for adult participation, youth drop-off and talent development for each sport and, more importantly, detail how these targets will be achieved. Underpinning this, each of the 49 CSPs receive core funding from Sport England. In return for funding, CSPs are required to deliver cross-sport services to meet NGB priorities, and to develop and maintain the strategic alliances and local networks that NGBs and Sport England need to drive, deliver and secure resources (Sport England, 2012c: 1-4). Thus, the interaction of CSP and NGB networks are critical in the implementation of community sport policy.

An obvious but important starting point in studying the interaction of CSP-NGB relations, regardless of the CSP's prioritisation of NGBs, is the recognition that it represents neither a singular nor consistent arrangement. The very notion of the CSP-NGB relationship is dependent on a range of individual actors and institutions (primarily the CSP core team, NGB regional or sub-regional team or county sport association, and sometimes the local authority) and is multifaceted in that it can involve relations between numerous individuals within the CSP core team and between a range of individuals in each NGB, across a total of 44 NGBs. General attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship reflect the variation experienced both by the CSP and by sports:

> There are clearly a wide range of different CSP-NGB relations. Some work well, others not so well. In some areas they speak as and when they have to, in other areas they have a far more well-developed

> partnership *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May, 2012).*

The phase 1 data presented a similar theme where attitudes toward the relationship tended to vary depending both on the CSP and/or the sport and, more specifically, the quality of the personnel employed.

> In some instances the NGBs are great to work with and innovative, very often it is personality driven rather than anything to do with systems or performance management *(Online survey: Non-hosted CSP).*

> CSPs are all very different--some are exceptionally good to work with, others are difficult to work with. The best explanation for this is the type of staff, their attitudes, experiences and ability to work hard to develop positive relationships. Some CSP staff are excellent, others do not have the time of day for us *(Online survey: Small NGB).*

The evidence from the case suggests that *individuals* are the most important correlate of effective CSP-NGB relations: '...the people are what really matter, having the right people with the right skills and the right attitude. 'If you have that then everything else tends to fall into place' *(Interview: County representative, England Athletics; 6 June 2012*); 'ultimately it is about personal relationships and strong working partnerships, this comes down to speaking with people, getting along, having empathy toward one another and understanding each other's position' *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board;*). This was a theme addressed by almost all representatives involved in the case. In exploring the notion of having the *right people,* the data infers a combination of style and substance. "Style" refers to a set of characteristics that are generally perceived as positive, such as being open, adaptable, professional, friendly, and passionate about sport. "Substance" is the competencies, skills and behaviours that individual actors possess. Most importantly, this idea of having the "right people working in the system" *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May, 2013)* appears, initially at least, to be an individual judgement of other professionals involved in the policy community, specifically a judgement of their character and ability to the job. Whether these perceptions are objective and based on firm evidence, or subjective and based on

common narratives or storylines is of little concern to this study. What is important is the way in which these views of individual character or ability alter actor behaviour and belief systems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007) and ultimately influence the nature of the CSP-NGB relationship and any subsequent efforts to implement policy.

The process of developing partnerships also received considerable attention. Four principles were identified as being critical in establishing and developing effective working relations between CSPs and NGBs: (i) mutual respect, (ii) trust between CSPs and NGBs, (iii) engagement and (iv) resources. Scheberle's (2004) typology of working relationships highlights trust and involvement as key factors that underpin highly effective working relations. Indeed, the case supports Scheberle's assertion that the most effective partnerships are those with high levels of mutual trust, support, goal consensus and a clear commitment to action.

The CSP Chair viewed mutual respect as an important pre-requisite of effective partnership working in the sub-region. He underlined the importance of both CSPs and NGBs understanding and respecting the different positions and priorities of the other, putting the largely resource-fuelled disputes behind them, and focusing on areas of common interest. A number of NGBs emphasised the importance of mutual respect: 'you need to respect each other's direction and purpose and work out where there is common ground' *(Interview: County representative, England Athletics; 6 June 2012);* '...it's all about communication and respect, open communication builds respect and trust, and at the end of the day, the relationships where we have respect and trust are the ones where we reap the benefits *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 24 May 2012).* Unsurprisingly, trust was identified by a number of CSP and NGB representatives as being important in the context of effective CSP-NGB relationships. More importantly, whilst there were high levels of awareness regarding the need for trust, there was relatively limited evidence of a high-trust relationship between the CSP and NGBs. Instead, the reality of the CSP-NGB relationship is more reasonably reflected as one that functions with variable levels of trust.

Predictably, engagement was a critical issue for all partners. 'Being committed and involved' was commonly viewed as a correlate of effective partnership working in the

CSP. To be clear, relationships were viewed to be highly effective where there was clear and consistent involvement of partners, a commitment to following up on actions, and a high level of trust between partners, regardless of the overall outcome of the partnership (i.e. its effect on increasing participation of sport), supporting the argument that partnerships had, in some respects, become an end in themselves. The CSP Sport Manager suggested that they have or are close to developing this type of 'high quality' relationship with eight sports, namely: athletics, badminton, basketball, cricket, football, golf, netball and swimming. Moreover, the level of engagement, commitment to action and making the partnership work was ultimately seen to be directed by the individuals involved in the partnership. Having the right people with the right skills is identified as the key prerequisite to effective partnership work within the CSP. It is reasonable to assume, that over time as the partnership solidifies and strengthens, working relations of this type will cultivate higher levels of trust and respect amongst individual agents. Conversely, it is important to note that higher levels of engagement also present a higher level of risk in terms of a 'shock event' or situation adversely affecting the respect and trust that underpins the relationship over time. Interestingly but perhaps not wholly surprising given the complex and interdependent figuration of potential relations, a more common theme in the CSP related to a lack of engagement and the problems that this created for the partnership from the perspective of the CSP, local authorities and NGBs. These issues will be examined further in the following sub-section.

The final factor that partners reported as important was other institutional resources such as programmes and finances. Given the previous criticisms of programme overload or *'initiativitis'* (Collins & Kay, 2002), the identification of pre-packaged programmes was surprising. Indeed, the implications of nationally-developed programmes does not sit well in the context of literature pointing to the tension in community sport between traditional top-down approaches (cf. Harris *et al.*, 2009, May *et al.*, 2012) and the deep power structures that underpin community sport. A closer examination of the data shows that the desire for programmes comes solely from the CSP and some of the key NGBs with which the CSP works, specifically badminton, football, golf and netball. Local authorities stressed that the potential of convenient recreational pursuits such as running/jogging and cycling was greater

than that of NGB products, which all three local authorities viewed as traditional sport development interventions focusing on player, coach and club development.

In contrast, the CSP and NGB comments associated national programmes with effective CSP-NGB relationships, crediting them with giving the relationship a tangible focal point to direct discussion and efforts. The CSP Sports Manager pointed out that the relationship can be quickly focused on programme delivery rather than spending weeks or months agreeing what, if anything, the partners should do and how they should go about doing it. The positive effect of national programmes for the CSP was dampened by the issue of funding. Indeed, cost and price were attached to the issue of national programmes in two ways. First, the CSP urged NGBs to develop programmes and products with participation as the primary goal. They pinpointed certain sports that they viewed as developing sensible programmes and products which were affordable, adaptable and generally positive and helpful to the partnership. However, NGBs such as cycling were charging £30,000 per annum per local authority (£120,000 for the sub region) for their national programme—a strategy which the CSP and the local authorities viewed as having more to do with commercial opportunism than increasing participation in sport. Second, the CSP argued that there is a need for low-price programmes. This was something that it considered exceptionally important, mainly based on the high levels of poverty and multiple deprivation reported in the sub-region. The CSP reported strong working relations with NGBs and leisure operators that understood and were prepared to adapt to this context (see sports listed above). In short, NGB national programmes that are appropriately priced and packaged for the local socio-economic environment are seen as a resource that can galvanise partners and aid the development of an effective partnership between the CSP and NGB. On the other hand, prescriptive national programmes that cannot be adapted to local needs or are cost-prohibitive may generate tension and jeopardise the CSP-NGB relationship.

<u>The problems that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship</u>

The problems that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship in the CSP 1 case have been grouped together into three categories: (i) lack of engagement, (ii) diversity of priorities, and (iii) process over people. Before exploring each of these issues, it is interesting to note the comments of three NGB representatives who

stressed the need for greater honesty and openness, particularly with regard to problems concerning the CSP-NGB relationship. For one NGB the issue was about being honest with CSPs when the relationship was not working:

> We have to be honest about what is working and what is not. We tend to want to say what others want to hear. I think we are still caught up in trying to please everybody. I think we should just stop and focus on working with those CSPs where it's working well *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball; 29 May 2012)*.

This sentiment was echoed by another NGB representative:

> We like to present this idea that everything is rosy, everything is wonderful. We have to be more prepared to discuss the problems and the things that are not working as much as we do those things that are working well *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*.

The first of the three major problem areas detailed above was engagement. The term "engagement" on its own does not fully represent the range or depth of this issue. Here, it refers to a true, genuine cooperation where there is respect, trust, a clear goal consensus, commitment to actions and a deep commitment to the relationship. The partnership literature notes difficulties with engagement, in particular the high desire for collaborative capacity on the one hand, but the practical difficulties associated with realising it on the other (cf. Beckley *et al.*, 2008; Chaskin, 2001; Hudson *et al.*, 1999; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). Huxham & Vangen (2005) noted that collaborative capacity was unlikely to be achieved in 'contractual relationships' where partnerships are enforced or required. Such partnerships tend to lack the conditions required for sustained cooperation (Axelrod, 1984). Whilst the CSP 1 case does not provide unequivocal evidence to support the lack of collaborative capacity—there are some sports with which the CSP has a positive and constructive relationship—the evidence does suggest that this is a significant issue which challenges both the philosophical position of the CSP as well as the nature of the community sport policy system, which essentially rests upon its ability to work collaboratively. The following paragraphs will address the former issue, whilst the

latter will be addressed in the final section of this chapter, which focuses on attitudes toward the community sport policy process.

The problem of engagement can be seen in three distinct areas: the broader conception of the CSP, specifically the CSP's role in the strategic leadership of sport across the area; the NGB whole sport planning process; and the involvement of NGBs in the CSP. If we go back to the creation of CSPs in the early 2000s, one of the core functions of each CSP was to provide leadership and coordination for sport across its area. CSPs were conceived as broader partnerships, umbrella organisations that would represent local authorities, county sport associations and others involved in sport. The CSP would be the voice for sport for the area, the lead agency responsible for enhancing communication and coordinating efforts to grow sports participation and enhance talent. Whilst this broader conception of the partnership remains a feature of CSPs, to do this effectively, two conditions must be met. First, the CSP must develop and pursue a strategic role. Second, it must be viewed and sanctioned as the strategic lead for sport by these agencies. This case is a prime example of the CSP assuming the former without the latter having taken place. The CSP 1 senior management team view themselves as the strategic lead for sport in the sub region: 'first and foremost we are a strategic agency' (*Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012*); 'we have got to be seen in our area as taking the lead, we manage programmes and utilise local authorities and community networks to deliver' *(Interview: Sports Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*. In contrast, NGB and local authority partners reveal a range of perspectives, which underscore their independence and resistance to leadership from an outside source. All three local authorities involved in the case study highlight the constant challenge of leadership and ownership of sport in the area. Rather than representing a collective approach in which the CSP and local authorities work hand-in-hand, the local authority perspectives illuminate a more complex and, at times, divisive relationship where they feel that the CSP are attempting to take a lead role or dictate strategic and operational matters, where the local authority felt better placed to do so:

> The CSP talks about being the strategic lead, strategic lead this, strategic lead that...but actually, strategic leadership comes at the local level...there is an argument that there is no need for CSPs. If NGBs worked more effectively with local authorities there would be

> more resources available to coordinate programmes in order to sustain and grow participation *(Interview: Principal Sports & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012).*

Adding to this, the Community Development Manager of the City Council stressed the unique nature of the sub-region, the size of the four authorities and their traditional involvement in sport development going back 30 years as the potential causes of the tension created by the notion of a sport partnership. More importantly, she pointed to Local Authorities as being better placed to implement policy due to their local links and local knowledge:

> I don't think we actually need the CSP...we could do the work ourselves if we had the funding. I would argue that we are better placed because we have the local links to make these things sustainable, we have the local knowledge and understanding to make sure it is needs-based and being delivered where it should be delivered, and to make sure that it is clearly coordinated with other services and programmes *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

While the CSP may represent a partnership in name, the original broad conception of the partnership to provide a strategic lead and a voice for sport for the sub-region encompassing local authorities, county sport associations and others has not yet transpired. Thus, rather than aiding policy implementation, the deep structures of power underpinning the partnership will more likely make the exercise of achieving government goals more challenging (Bloyce *et al.*, 2008). Further, according to the Principal Sports & Recreation Manager at one of the three Metropolitan Borough Councils, the inability of the CSP to work strategically across the sub-region creates major problems and frustrations for NGBs. He cited the lost opportunities of working strategically with NGBs on planning for and securing a number of sports-specific posts like those in neighbouring CSPs. He also suggested that the area had proved to be frustrating because of the lack of consensus across the CSP and the four local authorities, arguing that NGBs were more likely to go and work in the larger CSPs nearby.

The second issue relating to engagement concerns the NGB whole sport planning process. As this issue relates directly to roles within policy making and policy implementation, it will be discussed more fully in the next section. However, the CSP, local authorities and one NGB representative stressed the need for greater partner involvement and engagement in the whole sport plan process. The lack of engagement in the process was seen to adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship in three specific ways: first, it reinforces the notion of hierarchy and a top-down approach, not to mention the 'privileged position' of the NGB, particularly where the CSP is required to deliver specific programmes and activities on behalf of the NGB, yet the same conditions are not applied to NGBs. Second, the CSP and local authorities are less likely to commit to a plan where they have no involvement, particularly if the plan carries implications for them. Third, both the CSP and the local authorities believe that they are best placed to advise on the development of plans and strategies for the area:

> Very often there is a lack of understanding between the people who put the plans together in NGBs and what is actually going on on the ground. NGBs should be more open and more willing to speak to people who have a better understanding of what is actually happening on the ground *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

Thus, from the viewpoint of CSP and local authorities, NGBs neither need nor choose to engage partners in the development of their whole sport plans. They believe this leads to a plan which is either not detailed enough (i.e. does not translate specific actions/priorities for the sub-region) or is not based on the best intelligence. Consequently, NGBs are seen to selectively pursue their own interests and exclude others.

The final issue relating to engagement concerns the lack of NGB involvement in the CSP. This is not an issue from the CSP perspective: the NGB excludes itself from the CSP and/or determines that other partners or methods are a higher priority: 'If I'm honest I don't spend a lot of hours with them through the year, it's not a priority, my priorities are schools and clubs, and places to play' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Lawn Tennis Association; 29 May 2012),* 'while I'm mindful

of the core funding that CSPs receive, it is difficult to drill down to clearly see what value and support the CSP can offer' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association; 24 May 2012)*. This reinforces the evidence from local authorities concerning the lack of consensus regarding the place of the CSP as the strategic lead for sport for the sub-region and underscores the pervasive nature of power and the way in which this intersects with seemingly rational and positive attempts to create strategic leadership for sport at the sub-regional level:

> [A] lot of it is about the CSP wanting to be seen as the gatekeeper of sport in the area, but they're not necessarily seen as this. I mean we would rather do the work ourselves than rely on a gatekeeper (*Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*.

The swimming representative discussed how hard they worked to push the CSP and agree specific areas of work, stating that not doing this 'would result in little more than a cosmetic relationship' between the CSP and the NGB (*Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*. This also underlines the diverse nature of interactions between the CSP and NGBs.

The second problem area that was commonly reported as adversely affecting the CSP-NGB relationship is the historic and, to some extent, embedded organisational priorities associated with the CSP and NGBs. Here, the highest priority of CSP 1 is to increase the number of people in the sub–region who regularly engage in physical activity, with sport included as one of many physical activities. In contrast, NGBs may take a slightly different geographical view (and not include the sub-region as a priority) with the majority focussing squarely on increasing participation, enhancing talent, and supporting high performance and elite athletes. The particular issue here is not that of differing priorities, but more the implications of this in relation to the design and development of interventions and, in particular, the brokering and sustained development of partnerships between the CSP and NGBs. First, the CSP and NGBs are primarily directed by activities and programmes that will enable them to achieve their goals. So the CSP works on activities that will help to promote engagement in sport and physical activity, while the NGB is more concerned with working on activities that will increase participation in its particular sport, as well as

pursuing strategies that will support player, coach, club, volunteer, competition, and event development.

> One of the major challenges is that we are all in different places ... NGBs want more people playing their sport, but also, of course, they want to make sure that they are investing in and developing talent. The CSP is more concerned with getting people active, so more closely matched to what the local authorities and the PCT are doing. But, we have to work with NGBs, even though our agendas do not match so closely, that is a key part of the agreement with Sport England *(Interview: Chairman, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

One implication of these diverse organisational priorities is a relatively small overlap of priorities between the agencies. More important is the range of competing priorities that sit outside of this which divert the attention and resources of the CSP and NGBs to a different group of partners that are viewed as being close allies and critical partners in supporting each to achieve their priorities. In this way the CSP can be seen closely allied with the sub-regional development corporation and the four sub-regional PCTs (up to March 31, 2013; transitioning to four Clinical Commissioning Groups from April, 1, 2013). In contrast, many regional level NGBs tend to more closely associate with schools, clubs and coaches. The point here is not about whether either agency should or should not have a set of wider priorities or a wider group of relations with which realisation of these priorities may be achieved. It is merely to demonstrate that this carries implications for the CSP-NGB relationship and for the implementation of community sport policy.

The final problem area that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship concerned the weight given to new performance management techniques, what has been termed 'process over people'. This involves an overt emphasis on processes such as the core specification, the annual CSP performance management process, and the quarterly trend analysis of participation statistics provided through the Active People survey. While a relatively small number of agents highlighted the benefits of performance management techniques, particularly with regard to 'being more focused and more target driven' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 24 May 2012),* the majority underlined a more critical view of such techniques, revealing a tension whereby performance management is seen to

replicate the form-filling and bureaucracy associated with an outdated public sector, stifling the softer skills and attention needed to broker and enhance partnerships and partnership interactions:

> Sport England has all those documents like the core specification that we as a CSP have to use, but they are just pieces of paper. What is more interesting for us is the people behind the plan. The papers sit on the shelf, it's about getting beyond that to actually make it happen *(Interview: Sports Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

The emphasis on performance management techniques had more striking implications for one local authority representative who had worked in sport development for over 10 years. She stated that the skills of the workforce are being adversely affected as their attention is focussed on process-related issues such as structures, datasets, and the core specification at the expense of acquiring softer skills required for maintaining effective partnership working:

> ...we all have lots on knowledge on the system and the structures and things like Active People and Market Segmentation and that sort of thing, but we are all a little wet behind the ears when it comes to partnership working and understanding how to go about initiating and managing good working relations *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

Whilst this point was directed at the existing workforce, the representative also extended the criticism to the future workforce, explaining that her experience of recent graduates was similar in that they had reasonable knowledge of policy and the relevant structures and agencies, but very little understanding of the softer skills required to broker and maintain effective working relationships. This point resonates with literature on collaborative capacity, in particular the assumption that the people involved in the collaboration have the skills and competencies to maintain the wellbeing of the partnership and get the best out of the collaboration (Chaskin, 2001). Further, it reinforces the skills and leadership deficit that Allison (2012) viewed as adversely affecting the ability of the community sport sector to realise the 2012 legacy goals.

The role of the CSP-NGBs in policy making and implementation

This sub-section is primarily concerned with the role of the CSP-NGB relationship in policy making and policy implementation at the national and local levels. The literature presented in Chapter 2 will be used to analyse the empirical findings and discuss how these realities relate to the rhetoric of national and local policy. First, to provide context for the ensuing discussion, a summary of the policy making process for community sport is provided.

To recap from Chapter 4, the community sport policy making process has five stages: (1) national agencies (the DCMS and Sport England) debate and agree the policy objective; (2) NGBs prepare a whole sport plan for a 3-year period, detailing how they will achieve targets for participation, youth drop-off, and talent development; (3) Sport England reviews the NGBs' plan and makes a grant award, primarily sourced from the Lottery Sports Fund; (4) NGBs work with other partners, including CSPs, to implement aspects of the plan, and (5) Sport England evaluates progress against agreed targets and takes remedial action as necessary (May *et al.*, 2012). This section is particularly concerned with reviewing the role of the CSP and NGBs in national and local level policymaking for community sport, the role of the CSP and NGBs in the preparation of the whole sport plan, and the relationship between the CSP and NGBs in the implementation of community sport policy.

<u>The role of the CSP and NGBs in national and local policy making</u>

The case clearly supports a top-down approach to community sport policy, consistent with Kay's (1996) view of sport policy in the 1990s. There was clear agreement from all CSP and local authority representatives that, whilst they may form part of the subsystem which influences local policy relevant to sport, they are not part of the system responsible for initiating, formalising and selecting national-level policy objectives for community sport; for example: 'we don't really get involved in the national stuff, it's really just something between the DCMS and Sport England' *(Interview: Community Services Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012);* 'nationally, we have a very limited role, it's not really our job' *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*. This is the role that the CSP noted may change with the formalisation of the national CSP network, although the CSP Director noted that it was 'still very early

days and difficult to say what impact the CSP Network will have in the longer term' *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

In contrast, a number of NGBs indicated that they were involved in discussions regarding the formalisation of national policy objectives for sport through their Chief Officer, for example: 'David [Sparkes] is our Chief Executive and at the national level I think he is very effective at influencing and lobbying for the sport' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association; 24 May 2012);* 'I tend to not get too involved at my level, but I know that my Director and Chief Executive are heavily involved in discussions with Sport England and the DCMS' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Football Association; 24 May 2012).* Within the discussion concerning policymaking for community sport, it became clear that regional and county-level NGB representatives view their whole sport plan as the de facto policy for community sport for the NGB. Four of the NGB representatives referred to a broad and open process, developed to ensure that the whole sport plan involved staff across the NGB (at regional and sub regional levels), not solely those at national level. This was particularly the case in netball and cricket, both of whom highlighted the work that goes into creating an inclusive whole sport plan in which a number of personnel in the NGB are involved. Similarly, football and cricket representatives pointed to the advantages of the *National Frameworks* that have emanated from the whole sport plan process. These frameworks detail the strategic priorities of the sport nationally. Priorities and desired actions at the local-level are then determined and allocated to the appropriate national priority, thus enabling an operation similar to Elmore's (1982, 1985) 'forward and backward mapping'[15].

On reflection, the national policymaking process for community sport is viewed by the agents involved in the CSP to be driven by a limited coalition made up of representatives from the DCMS and Sport England, with some external influence, particularly from the medium/large NGBs. Outside the formal policymaking

[15] For example, the FA has developed the seven pillars framework. This is built around four goals: growth and retention, raising standards, better players and running the game, and three enablers: workforce, facilities and marketing. At the local level, the county association, football development partnership (involving the local authorities, CSP, clubs, etc) and other key agents will discuss and agree actions for the county for each of the strategic priorities.

environment, the representatives of some NGBs feel connected to the formalisation of community sport policy through the NGB's whole sport plan process. It is important to stress that this is not something which is unanimous across all NGBs in the case, with four (from eight) NGB representatives stating that they felt involved in the development of the NGB's whole sport plan.

With regards to local policy, unsurprisingly, all local authorities in the case revealed a compelling self-belief in their role in initiating and formalising sport-related policy at the local-level, as the following assertion serves to illustrate: 'this is what I do, what I am about ... I play a very direct role in shaping local sport policy ... I think it is one of the strengths of my role' *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012)*. This was a point that was reinforced by the senior management team of the CSP:

> Locally, we work very closely with the four local authorities, advocating and influencing local policy issues that relate to sport, for example planning policies, in particular on section 106 monies to ensure reinvestment back into sport, anti-social behaviour and using sport to address problems in certain areas, and local health promotion strategies. We've led a number of strategic or policy issues across the area, including the facilities strategy work, the Sportivate programme as well as a number of regeneration projects *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*.

This also serves to illustrate the commitment of both local authorities and the CSP to development through sport objectives. In fact, the local authorities involved in the case are frequently involved in demonstrating and advocating the role of sport in a range of local policy areas. This is partly driven by the survival instinct, whereby local authorities understand the need to anchor sport to major priority issues such as community safety, health and wellbeing or economic development in order to secure resources, preserve their status, and sustain their future against the backdrop of increasingly aggressive public sector austerity measures, particularly as the service remains a discretionary function of local government. It is also driven by a deep philosophical belief regarding sport's wider social value. For example:

> For us sport is a tool ... we are more concerned with things like promoting active lifestyles, community development, economic development and projects that engage young people, sport has the ability to tackle some of these agendas *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

This local-level commitment to sport for development may stem from the long-standing tradition of programmes such as Action Sport, Active Communities and Positive Futures, or the existing evidence base for sport and its role in addressing wide-ranging societal problems, or a more parochially-driven concern for the overly normative value of sport. Whatever the basis of commitment, the local authorities in the case can be seen to harness policies and programmes regarding the instrumental use of sport, thus blurring the homogeneity of community sport policy and creating added complexity in the coordination and implementation of different programmes to achieve differing national and local priorities:

> ...certainly the last national policy objective [for community sport] was driven by sport for sports sake, and you know, all the investment going to NGBs. But it's the local outcome frameworks that partners like local authorities are really interested in, looking at things like economic regeneration, particularly in an area like [...]. So we are in the middle of it all really. We have to work with NGBs to support and plan for the sport for sport focus, but at the same time make sure that we do not lose focus on the wider role of sport, you know the things that our local partners are focused on *(Interview: Commissioning Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

Thus, the multifarious nature of community sport in the CSP 1 case was seen to create added complexity, particularly when considered alongside the socioeconomic context of the area. The Director of the CSP provided an interesting insight into this reality of community sport, clarifying that the two aims were not mutually beneficial insomuch as they required a completely different strategy:

> The debate about sport for sport's sake and sport for development is huge. Some people say that it doesn't matter, they both ultimately lead to the same thing. But I disagree. They are fundamentally different. They lead you to work in a completely different way. One is about the broader impact of sport, the other is simply about getting as many people as active as possible. You cannot play the

> numbers game when you are involved in sport for development. This is a huge issue in an area like ours *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*.

Not only does this underscore the reality of the community sport policy making process and how these may differ at national and local levels, it also, more subtly, takes issue with statements from the Minister of Sport and the Sport England CEO regarding the broad interpretation of community sport policy as being concerned with both intrinsic and instrumental goals.

<u>The role of the CSP and NGBs in the preparation of whole sport plans</u>

As mentioned above, the whole sport plan represents a sport-specific community sport policy. This emphasises the importance of the plan and the process used to prepare and develop the plan. When reviewing the evidence, it is useful to return to the quantitative data from the first phase of research. This revealed some notable differences between CSPs and NGBs, particularly with regards to the whole sport plan process. The majority of CSPs suggested that there was a need for greater clarity in how national plans will be implemented locally. The majority of NGBs involved in the first phase research did not agree (see Appendix 4). Interestingly, in the first phase of research, CSP 1 was neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the need for greater clarity in how national plans will be implemented. However, in the qualitative phase of the research the CSP senior management team had a different view asserting that there was a need for greater clarity in how national plans will be implemented. Not only does this highlight the potentially inconsistent results of differing methodologies, it also underscores the need for caution when attempting to draw distinct or absolute conclusions from the data.

With regards to the NGB whole sport plans, the CSP Director suggested that the CSP-NGB relationship required maturity, openness, transparency and shared goals, "a lot more like a marriage than a partnership". He underlined the insular nature of the whole sport planning process and the need for greater involvement of partners outside the NGB: "One of the big problems is that the NGBs devise their own plans and programmes and become very attached to them without involving local partners". "This is just not going to work … they don't have the necessary buy-in to make it happen" *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*. That said, the CSP

Director and Sports Manager did refer to Sport England's attempt to facilitate greater cross-agency dialogue ahead of the 2013-17 whole sport planning process through the organisation of a series of regional workshops targeting CSPs, NGBs and local authorities. However, whilst the CSP suggested that this was an interesting and worthwhile initiative, the lack of engagement and action following the workshop led the CSP to view the exercise as one designed to create the illusion of involvement rather than actually realising it.

The overall criticism of the NGB whole sport planning process is more problematic when viewed using V. Ostrom's (1973) notion of co-production. This requires the selection and inclusion of certain interests to help co-produce strategies and programmes, whilst other interests are excluded (intentionally or otherwise). The CSP viewed engagement in the NGB whole sport plan process as being highly selective, essentially involving only those groups or interests that provide grant aid (DCMS and Sport England) and/or represent shared norms, values and beliefs (national, regional and some county levels of the NGB). Thus, the general approach of NGBs is generally viewed by the CSP as one which prioritises the traditional, Weberian approach (Cantelon & Ingram, 2002) over the ideals of democratic governance promoted in strategies such as *Creating a Sporting Habit*. The whole sport planning process utilised by the majority of NGBs fails to secure participatory consensus amongst grassroots implementers, a prerequisite of successful policy implementation according to van Meter & van Horn (1975). It also assumes the rationality of grassroots implementers in following NGB strategy and underlines the more general problem of centrally conceived policy initiatives and how these tend to be poorly adapted to local conditions (Berman, 1978; Hjern & Porter, 1981).

<u>The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation</u>

Three key themes were noted in the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation: first, the dichotomous position of the CSP as a strategic sub-regional agency or local-level deliverer; second, the shift from local authorities to CSPs as the lead implementing agent at the local level; and third, the lack of capacity to implement community sport policy at the local level.

The role of the CSP in policy implementation has been blurred by changes in policy since 2002. When CSPs were created in the early 2000s, there was far more certainty regarding their role in policy implementation; their core function was to provide strategic coordination for sport across the sub-region. However, since NGBs assumed leadership of the community sport policy process in 2008, increasingly more delivery funding has flowed from Sport England to CSPs for the delivery of specific programmes such as Sportivate, Sport Makers, and the School Games. Further, the NGB leadership of community sport has driven a more diverse set of requirements, with some NGBs requiring the CSP to play a strategic role, some wanting more support with direct delivery and others wanting a combination of the two. This has created a rather muddled situation where there is limited agreement on the CSP's role in policy implementation. This may be partially due to the highly dynamic nature of the relationship, on the one hand, which frequently requires change as a result of Sport England funding agreements and NGB requirements. On the other hand, perceptions of the CSP's role in policy implementation are entrenched in the recent historical context, where perhaps the CSP has been more involved in coordinating strategic matters such as a sub-regional facility strategy or advocating the place of sport in the Local Area Agreements. In short, the role of the CSP in policy implementation appears to be subject to a range of differing opinion, with different actors holding different views.

The CSP 1 senior management team clearly viewed the CSP as a strategic agency: 'first and foremost we are a strategic agency. We have to be responsible for strategic coordination' *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012);* 'we don't deliver anything, we commission and contract' (*Interview: Sports Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012);* 'we manage programmes and utilise our community networks and local authorities as the delivery agent' (*Interview: Commissioning Manager, CSP 1; 25 May 2012*). In contrast, the local authorities emphasised a different reality:

> [T]he CSP certainly likes to view itself as being more strategic than it actually is ... they have the potential to get a lot more involved in strategic work like advocacy, advice, facility planning, influencing local strategy and policy but in reality their staff tend to get sucked into delivery programmes *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

> [T]hey are supposed to work on a strategic basis ... our partnership talks about being the strategic lead, but I tend to think that the strategic leadership comes at the local level, [the area] has four strong local authorities who have a history of looking after their own patch ... the CSP say they are going to strategically drive things, like for example sub regional facilities strategy, but it typically ends up falling apart, just like the strategy did *(Interview: Principal Sports & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012).*

In contrast, the NGB perspective of the role of CSPs in policy implementation was more varied. Small NGBs (golf and basketball) and one of the three medium-sized NGBs (athletics) stressed the need for support with delivery. For example, 'what is important to us is delivery and we need more help, more support with that ... the more involved they are in delivery the better' (*Interview: County representative, England Athletics; 6 June 2012*); 'I think it is for the NGB to play the strategic role ... the CSP in my view should be there to support the delivery of our strategy' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 24 May 2012).* Alternatively, the large (football, tennis, cricket) and two of three medium-sized NGBs (swimming and netball) stressed the importance of strategic level support, particularly assistance with issues such as local authority advocacy, investment into sport, and facility planning. The Regional Development Manager for the Amateur Swimming Association summed up the problem regarding the CSP and the role the NGB would like them to play across the sub-region:

> We need more support in working strategically with the four local authorities in the area, particularly with regard to facilities and programming issues. But the CSP don't really have a strong relationship or strong tradition of working with the four authorities. It has been a difficult partnership from day one ... I'm not quite sure how we can be strategic with the CSP across the four authorities, when the authorities don't buy into the CSP in the first place. *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association; 24 May 2012).*

A final observation made by both local authorities and NGBs related to the CSPs' resource dependency and how this has, in recent years, directed more attention

toward the management of delivery programmes such as Sportivate and the School Games as indicated by the County Development Director of the England & Wales Cricket Board: 'I think it's a case of the piper calling the tune ... Sport England have the funding and they require CSPs to get more involved in project delivery'. Indeed, the practical challenge confronting the CSP in emphasising the strategic or delivery orientation of the CSP is one which is an issue reinforced by the Chair of the CSP:

> I want the CSP to be more strategic, to be more of a leader for sport in the sub-region. But we have to be realistic, we need funding to survive and most of the funding is attached to the delivery of programmes. So, it's making sure that we have the structure to be able to manage the deliverables and then it is about getting the board and the management team working strategically *(Interview: Chair, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

Another factor which has arguably shifted CSPs away from strategic leadership and closer to the direct line of project delivery is the changing nature of traditional local-level implementers, in particular the replacement of local authorities with the CSP as the local-lead agency for community sport, a view particularly strongly held by some NGBs. The County Director for the England & Wales Cricket Board supported this point: 'Nowadays the CSP is the closest thing that [Sport England] have to a reliable delivery network'. On the one hand this change in the place of local authorities in local level implementation could be a result of the creation and continued commitment to CSPs as well as the significant reduction in infrastructural-related funding provided to local government. However, the local authorities involved in the case rejected any notion of being 'squeezed out' of community sport. They did not view their role in community sport as being determined by other agents such as Sport England or the CSP. In fact, all three local authorities reinforced their claim to autonomy, their duty to focus on the needs of their local community, their power to act on wider social issues such as wellbeing and inclusion, and the continued pressure to reduce expenditure in non-statutory areas of provision.

The final theme relating to the role of NGBs and the CSP in policy implementation was the lack of capacity to implement community sport policy. This supports the quantitative data, which found that 72% of CSPs disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was sufficient capacity to implement community sport policy. The view of

NGBs was mildly more conservative, with 52% of those taking part in the study disagreeing with the statement. Thus, regardless of the explicit or agreed roles of the CSP or NGBs, the majority of agents involved in the policy process agree that there is not sufficient capacity to achieve the policy aspirations for community sport. The evidence from the case suggests that this perceived lack of capacity is primarily attributable to two factors. The first is related to the funding decisions of key agents. NGBs in particular were seen to utilise resources to develop their infrastructure at a national or regional level, with limited resources flowing down to street-level. This was a view held not only a by the CSP and local authorities, but also by some NGB representatives:

> The structure from national to local level is not ideal. There are a number of developments at national and regional level, but it seems that the county has been sidelined *(Interview: County representative, England Athletics; 6 June 2012).*
>
> We have gone through quite a number of organisational changes and I think we have tried to trim some of the administration, but at the end of the day everything happens out on the ground, not in the central office, I think there needs to be more of a balance, we definitely need more foot soldiers ... more people out on the ground delivering *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association; 24 May 2012).*
>
> Infrastructure wise it's all there for NGBs from regional up to national level. The problem is that regional officers haven't got a budget to deliver. Everyone looks at everyone else for delivery money *(Interview: Principal Sports & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012).*

The second issue is one which has received considerable attention in community sport in recent years (cf. Harris *et al.*, 2009; May *et al.*, 2012; Nichols & James, 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2007), namely the dependence on the voluntary workforce and the assumption that, because clubs coordinate sport for its members at the local level, they would want to play a direct role in increasing the numbers of people playing their sport. As one NGB representative remarked, 'the biggest challenge, as with all sport, is the volunteer network because we need more volunteers ... we rely on them so heavily' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf*

Partnership; 24 May 2012). Reliance on volunteers and not having enough volunteers were cited by all NGBs involved in the case, with the exception of the FA. The Regional Development Manager for the FA actually stressed 'the sheer numbers of volunteers out there', and suggested that 'the sport needs to do more to support these volunteers'. The Chair of the CSP noted the challenge associated with voluntary sport clubs, not least the range of clubs from those that deeply resist change and involvement in community work to those that are proactive and want to grow:

> We need more volunteers and also the right kind of volunteers. I mean we need them and cannot do what we need to do without them. But there is a lot of resistance to change, particularly with things like club accreditation, junior club development and getting involved in community schemes. A lot of them just want to be left alone. But there are also a bunch of proactive clubs, you know the ones that want to change, want to grow and develop *(Interview: Chair, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

The Community Development Manager at the City Council argued the need for more realistic expectations regarding the role of volunteers in community sport policy implementation:

> It's the whole Big Society thing, expecting people to do more for themselves, I understand where this is coming from but it's completely detached from reality. We struggle for volunteers as it is, to try and get them to take on more responsibility and deliver services on our behalf is just not going to happen *(Interview: Community Development Manager, City Council; 25 May 2012).*

In short, the evidence reinforces previous research, in particular the heavy reliance of the professional workforce on the voluntary workforce, and more importantly, the assumption that the voluntary sector is willing and able to play a role in community sport policy implementation without fully considering the diverse dispositions of voluntary sport clubs, their awareness of policy or their direction and intensity of response to it (Harris, 2012; May *et al.*, 2013; van Meter & van Horn, 1975).

Agents' beliefs, attitudes and experiences in regard to the community sport policy process

This final section takes a broader view of policy, examining the beliefs, attitudes and experiences of agents in the community sport policy process. The quantitative phase of the research revealed no significant differences in the attitudes of CSPs toward the community sport policy process based on CSP hosting arrangements or turnover (see Appendix 4). As previously mentioned, more notable were the particular beliefs, attitudes and experiences of the CSP Director completing the questionnaire. Using the National Audit Office/Audit Commission assessment of policy delivery chains, the CSP rated the overall community sport system at zero out of a possible maximum of +12 and a minimum of -12. This compared to the mean of +4 based on the scores from 47 CSPs. In short, this signifies that the CSP believes that the community sport delivery chain requires significant improvement.

The qualitative phase of research was used to explore the reality of the community sport policy process. These data reinforced some aspects identified in the quantitative research, in particular issues regarding performance management and collaboration (as discussed above). The qualitative data also revealed agents' attitudes and experiences in relation to three specific aspects of the community sport policy process, namely: (i) the nature of the policy process; (ii) the extent to which agents believe they are part of a collective system, and (iii) agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport policy outcomes.

<u>The nature of the policy process</u>

The dominant view of the community sport process was that it was a top-down policy system whereby the DCMS and Sport England discuss and agree the policy objective; provide funding to NGBs (whole sport plan funding), CSPs (core funding and programme-specific funding) and other agencies (open-grant fund) to develop strategies and programmes; and evaluate progress using the annual Active People survey. Particularly notable was the suggestion that national level agencies do not adequately think through the system of local implementation, commonly assuming that this will organically grow through traditional routes such as the county sport associations and affiliated clubs of NGBs. There appears to be a distinct lack of

engagement and a complete lack of understanding of sport at the frontline, as one local authority representative remarked:

> We have a very heavy top-down system ... that is all well and good, but if you don't know what is going on at the local level, who has agreed to do what, what is working and what is not, you're not likely to be very successful (*Interview: Principal Sports & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012).*

Adding to this, the County Director for the ECB noted that:

> There has to be more two-way communication, more transparent, open channels of discussion where we can discuss needs, differences, challenges and problems without feeling that these will somehow adversely affect how the centre see us. There has to be a move away from the one size fits all approach ... a move to a more intelligent approach where we acknowledge and embrace individual differences (*Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012).*

In sum, the case characterised the community sport policy process as being top-down, with the majority of dialogue and resource being invested at the national and regional level and a weak or limited association with the range of street-level agents. The case also reinforced criticism of the sport policy sector as one which is subject to 'the whim and caprice of governments' (Houlihan & White, 2002: 206). In particular, community sport was seen to be subject to relatively frequent change in definition, focus, resource allocation and an imposed and diverse set of national programmes, creating a sense of initiative-overload or 'initiativitess' (Collins, 2010; Collins & Kay, 2002). The evidence from local authorities and NGBs in the case also suggests significant duplication across the system. The County Director for the ECB commented on the duplication between CSP-led programmes and the programmes that cricket were developing nationally and locally, although he admitted that this was likely to be a problem that was limited to larger NGBs:

> I think in lots of cases there is duplication. For example, we are employing a range of cricket activators. It's basically sport makers—but specifically for cricket. We see things that are happening in the game and try to address these and of course you get overlap with

> some of the national initiatives that have been developed. I think this probably works differently for the smaller sports as they do not necessarily have the resources to do their own thing, whereas we do (*Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012).*

The issue of duplication also relates to a previous point regarding the strategic leadership of sport where the head of service at one of the Metropolitan Borough Councils inferred that the existence of the CSP itself was duplicating the traditional role of local authorities in the sub-region. Unlike the comment about duplication of initiatives, which concerns improved coordination and communication in order to bring about improved efficiency, this remark regarding the role of the CSP has fundamental implications as it suggests that CSPs are unnecessary and that the community sport system would be more efficient and effective if NGBs worked directly with local authorities.

The final point regarding the nature of the community sport policy process relates to Smith's (1966; 1759) original conception of consequentialism or, more recently, Merton's (1936) concept of unintended consequences. The evidence in the case suggests that the predominant focus on numerical goals in community sport is driving a set of perverse behaviours that are not in the broader interests of community sport policy. Examples of these behaviours include (i) 'focusing on the low hanging fruit' *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012)*, in other words, focusing efforts on the demographic groups that are easier to reach and more amenable to change; (ii) open competition between NGBs, whereby sports attempt to target and recruit participants from other sports in order to boost the numbers of people playing 'their' sport *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*; and (iii) the pressure to effect change in the participation numbers by any means possible, for example focusing on the social and economic regeneration of the sub region as this will change the demographic profile of the area and will likely increase the SEC 1-4[16] population, which will in turn increase participation in sport as the SEC 1-4 population tend to be more actively engaged in sport.

[16] SEC is a classification system for socio-economic status developed by the Office of National Statistics.

> If we look at the Sport England segmentation, we need more knowledge workers and those types if we are going to increase participation in sport. So, we need more housing development, more four and five bedroom houses, then we will attract more of the right people that we need to drive up participation *(Interview: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012).*

This behaviour could be argued to be an exemplar of Deming's (2000) seminal work on the effect of management by objectives (MBOs). Deming viewed numerical targets and evaluation of performance as one of seven deadly diseases of management, arguing that they drive undesirable behaviours which may help to achieve desirable outcomes but fail to address or change the processes of operation, and thus fail to tackle the root of the problem.

<u>The extent to which agents believe that they are part of a collective system</u>

In short, the evidence from the case suggests that what appears to be absent is the collective whole sport system concept first articulated in the Carter report (2005). Despite the recommendations and the subsequent creation of the single system for sport (Sport England, 2005) and the sporting landscape (Sport England, 2008b), the CSP, local authorities and NGBs revealed views and attitudes which emphasised the enforced nature of relations between CSPs and NGBs, rather than a relationship resulting from a genuine interest or mutual benefit. Furthermore, attitudes tended to underline the competitive and parochial nature of the policy community, particularly in relation to resource allocation. Here, each agent tended to view itself as being best placed to lead community sport policy. CSPs and local authorities were critical of the leadership role delegated to NGBs, local authorities viewed the resources given to CSPs as being potentially wasteful, and NGBs felt that the scale of investment into CSPs was excessive given that their focus was to provide a support service to NGBs. Each agent reinforced the importance of its own priorities, its own survival and growth and there was a distinct lack of evidence of a collective community sport system. Exacerbating this issue was a general lack of consensus regarding priority issues. Whilst the overall focus on increasing participation in sport was a concern for all partners, the differing values and culture of the various institutions meant that the motives behind various strategies and programmes, and the processes used to achieve increased participation varied considerably. The lack of collective values and

objectives led one local authority representative to describe the community sport sector as 'a number of mini sectors within one sector' (*Interview: Principal Sports & Recreation Manager, Metropolitan Borough Council; 6 June 2012)*, supporting the idea that the community sport system is more a title than a representation of a network of organisations that work interdependently to achieve mutually important goals. In short, the evidence from the case supports the view that collaborative capacity is difficult to achieve in enforced partnerships (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport outcomes

The final line of enquiry regarding the community sport policy process related to agents and their belief that they would be able to achieve increased participation in sport. The majority of NGBs in the case felt that they did have the ability to bring about growth in participation in their sport. Despite this, the most notable challenges from an NGB perspective were (i) a lack of good quality and affordable facilities and expectations that this would become increasingly challenging due to public sector cuts, (ii) having sufficiently qualified local capacity, particularly coaches and suitably skilled volunteers, and (iii) having trust within the NGB to empower regions and counties: 'you know you have got to trust the counties to make the right decision, rather than setting things in stone down in London' *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 25 May 2012)*. The CSP and local authorities all stressed the enormity of the community sport challenge, as did one smaller NGB (golf). When discussing the nature of the challenge, CSP agents focused on four factors: (i) the notion that progress required a longer period of time in order to successfully bring about sustained behaviour change at the micro level, (ii) that the workforce required the appropriate skills and resources to provide this support, and (iii) more investment in delivery, particularly in the delivery of programmes and support for the professional and volunteer workforce. In short, CSP agents argued that the role of CSPs and NGBs in implementing community sport was fundamentally flawed as neither had the skills, resources or capacity to bring about the scale of change required, particularly in the context of a policy system which has been subject to considerable change in a relatively short period of time. In contrast, NGB representatives provided a more optimistic account of their ability to implement policy, although they identified (i) a lack of high quality facilities, (ii) trust

within the NGB, and (iii) insufficient capacity at the local level as barriers to effective implementation.

Conclusions

Much of the evidence presented above is consistent across all three cases and/or reinforces the existing literature on community sport. This will be discussed further in the conclusion to case 3.

Despite the consistency of certain themes across the three CSP cases, the evidence reflects the unique geographical structure of case 1. The CSP is not bound by traditional county or metropolitan boundaries. Instead, it is formalised around what was traditionally an industrial sub-region and nowadays is more commonly referred to as a Local Enterprise Partnership. As a result, the community sport agents within the sub-region have not had the same level of experience in working cooperatively with one another. Furthermore, all four local authorities in the sub-region are large Metropolitan Boroughs with a strong, traditional commitment to sports development. The combination of these factors together with the autocratic approach of the CSP senior management team has resulted in a more guarded environment where agents appear more prepared for competition than cooperation.

The issue of diversity was also stressed throughout the case, both in terms of the inconsistency of CSP structure and strategy, the differences in NGB needs and the problems these cause for implementation. The evidence from NGB agents points to an informal evaluation of CSPs based on their experience of the relationship with the CSP, in particular its ability to galvanise local efforts, provide strategic leadership and to follow through on agreed actions. NGBs were clear about the difficulties facing the CSP and cautious about their ability to galvanise a collaborative effort across local authorities. In contrast, it was interesting to note the CSP's view of the impossibility of managing relationships with over 40 sports. To manage this complexity more efficiently the CSP had embarked on a prioritisation process where sports would be ranked based primarily on their local relevance. This is a noteworthy point as it illustrates the mechanisms being utilised by CSPs to cope with the complexity of myriad partnerships. It also gives a slightly more sophisticated insight into the nature of asymmetrical power relations between CSPs and NGBs. While

NGBs receive considerably more funding and hold more direct power through the development of their whole sport plan, CSPs retain operational freedoms, albeit within the parameters of Sport England performance framework, to strategise and prioritise in accordance with local conditions. This is not to argue that CSPs have complete freedom to pursue their interests, but it does stress the nuance and ubiquitous nature of power, particularly the potential of the CSP to determine operational priorities and thus manipulate policy.

The final point of interest relates more generally to the nature of the policy process, in particular the 'window dressing', which appears to be a common feature of community sport. This is a criticism that applies to all agents—Sport England, NGBs and CSPs, where the desire to present oneself in the best possible light prevails over honesty—a behaviour which can be attributed to the resource dependency of all three types of organisation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Some agents commented on the opportunity to start building a more genuine policy environment, one which encourages the sharing of experience (good, bad or otherwise). Favouring honesty over the illusion of world-class performance would also help in creating a more open, cooperative policy environment where agents did not fear failure but actually sought to share experiences, minimising the chances of future failure and optimising effective practice (Axelrod, 1984).

Chapter 6
Case 2: CSP 2

Introduction

This chapter is organised around the same principal themes as Chapter 5: (i) the organisational, administration and strategic priorities of each CSP; (ii) the CSP-NGB relationship; (iii) The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making and implementation; and (iv) CSP and NGB beliefs, attitudes and experiences regarding the community sport policy process.

Organisation, administration and strategic priorities

Geographic and demographic context

The CSP is a large non-metropolitan area covering 3,389 square kilometres. The area was described by the CSP Director as mixed urban and rural, consisting of three cities and 13 market towns. The population of the area is just over 635,000, with 49.8% of the population male and 50.2% female (ONS, 2012). The non-white population is 8.4%, lower than the national average of 12.1% (*ibid*, 2012). With regards to age, the area very closely mirrors the England average, although there is a comparatively higher percentage of people aged 14-19 and a slightly lower percentage of the population aged 65+ (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 2012 Population by gender, age (14+) and ethnicity, (ONS, 2012)

Group	CSP Population '000	%	England population '000	%
Male	315.8	49.8	20,644.8	49.0
Female	319.4	50.2	21,509.3	51.0
14-15	19.3	4.9	1,291.4	2.9
16-19	38.8	6.1	2,528.6	6.0
20-24	53.3	8.4	3,588.0	8.5
25-34	107.4	16.9	7,079.0	16.8
35-49	171.2	27.0	11,097.9	26.3
50-64	141.7	22.3	9,431.9	22.4
65+	122.7	19.3	8,428.6	20.0
White	578.7	91.1	36,866.8	87.5
Non white	53.6	8.4	5,101.3	12.1

In deprivation terms the sub-region has only three super output areas within the 20% most deprived nationally. In short, it does not face widespread deprivation,

however, it does face the challenge posed by small pockets of deprivation, particularly in the inner city wards and the outlaying rural areas located in the north of the sub-region. The local economy is reported to be performing well. Based on 2012 data, the total GVA (Gross Value Added) per capita was 22.0, compared to 19.7 nationally. This is supported by relatively low levels of unemployment, with unemployment as a proportion of those economically active set at 7.3% compared to 8.1% nationally (ONS, 2012).

The health profile for the CSP area also reveals a relatively positive picture when compared to national averages, obesity levels are lower, life expectancy for males and females is higher, and the health costs associated with of physical inactivity are predicted to be considerably lower. In particular, 21.9% of the adult population are obese, compared to 24.2% nationally. With regards to childhood obesity, the rate is 17.5%, compared to the national average of 19.0%. Life expectancy for males and females is 79.6 and 83.2 years compared to 78.6 and 82.6 years. The data for the health care costs of physical inactivity for the sub-region exceed £1.66 million per 100,000 people. Whilst significant, this is lower than regional and national averages (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Health care costs of physical inactivity (Sport England, 2013)

Geography	Total cost	Cost per 100,000 pop.
Sub-region	£12,711,959	£1,662,119
Region	£103,548,774	£1,776,768
England	£944,289,723	£1,817,285

Local government: boundaries and resources

The area has a complex figuration of local government authorities with a two-tier (county/district) structure and a relatively small area (349 square kilometres) in the north-west of the area overseen by a single-tier unitary. The two-tier structure involves a county council which oversees the majority of the sub-region (3,046 square kilometres), with four district councils and one city council. Until recently, the political make up of the county council has been relatively stable with the Conservative party maintaining overall control. However, this changed after the 2013 election with no party having overall control. All four districts and the unitary remain

under Conservative control. In contrast, the Liberal Democrat party have controlled the city council since 2000.

Whilst not as substantial as the four authorities in the first case, the financial commitment to sport made by six of the seven authorities is significant. Indeed, the budgetary allocation can be viewed as reflecting the authority type (primarily district councils) and the relatively low population density. That said, the unitary authority, the city council and two of the four district councils have a local reputation for being committed to sport, a legacy from their commitment to the numerous sport development programmes created in the 1990s and early 2000s. Overall, the six local authorities allocated a combined budget of £7,059,000 for sport in 2011/12 (CLG, 2011, 2012). This represents an overall reduction of 6.1% when compared to the previous financial year. However, it is important to note that a reduction in local authority sport-related budgets was not constant across all local authorities in the area (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Budget for sport by local authorities in CSP 2 (source: CLG, 2011, 2012)

Authority	£ 2010/11	£ 2011/12	£ Diff +/-	% change 10/11 to 11/12
City Council	1,495,000	1,580,000	+85,000	+5.7%
Unitary Authority	1,666,000	1,515,000	-151,000	- 9.1%
District Council 1	320,000	492,000	+172,000	+53.8%
District Council 2	450,000	441,000	-9,000	-2.0%
District Council 3	2,136,000	1,739,000	-397,000	-18.6%
District Council 4	1,452,000	1,292,000	-160,000	-11.0%
Overall	7,519,000	7,059,000	-460,000	-6.1%

<u>CSP structure, organisation and strategic priorities</u>

CSP 2 is an independent (non-hosted) partnership. It was officially formed in 2006, taking over the responsibilities of the County Active Sport Partnership. It is registered as a company limited by guarantee and attained charitable status in 2007. The CSP has its own offices in a central location to the rest of the sub-region, a feature reported by the CSP Director to be of considerable importance.

According to the CSP 2 strategic plan 2011-2015, the overall vision of the partnership is 'active and healthy communities where everyone can play, achieve and enjoy'. The CSP state that this will be delivered by:

> Engaging with key local strategic priorities and partners and promot[ing] the importance and value of sport, and highlighting the benefits it can bring to local communities. Through supporting sports clubs, organisations, and the sporting workforce, we will help to improve the quality and quantity of sport delivered in the area (CSP 2, 2011).

The CSP have developed four specific priority areas that underpin this vision: participation, partnership development, people development and information management, with each having a specific strategic objective (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 CSP 2 Priority areas and strategic objectives (source: CSP 2 Strategic Plan, 2011)

Priority area	Strategic objectives
Participation	- To grow participation in sport and physical activity. - To support improved access to facilities for sport and physical activity
Partnership development	- To increase quality opportunities for participation in sport by improving the capacity of 46 National Governing Bodies (NGB's) to deliver their Whole Sport Plans - To increase the delivery of high quality sport and physical activity by interpreting and communicating how sport can support wider partnerships and strategic agendas - To encourage and support the adoption of quality standards in sport and physical activity provision
People development	- To improve the capacity and sustainability of community sport
Information management	- To improve the planning and development of sport and physical activity by increasing the effective use of data - To improve the quantity and quality of monitoring and evaluation

The charitable trust is overseen by a board of trustees which is accountable for the partnership's work. The board is voluntary and skills-based, so individuals receive no fee or remuneration, and are elected based on their skills, experience and competencies. In total, there are 15 board members; seven of the representatives come from a business/commerce background, two work at a senior level within NGBs, three work for local authorities, two work in education, and the final representative is the CSP Director. The board discuss and agree the CSP's strategy

and direct the work of the CSP sport team (otherwise referred to as the core team), and are responsible for the financial status of the partnership. The core team consists of 12 full time staff with a variety of positions and responsibilities as detailed in Figure 6.1. Sport England provides the CSP with annual core funding of £240,000 (based on the 2011/12 allocation). The highest performing CSPs have the opportunity to secure of a share of £80,000[17]. In return the CSP is required to meet the conditions of the CSP core specification as detailed in Chapter 4. The CSP have also received a grant from the BIG lottery fund (for one full-time post) plus relatively minor contributions from local authorities and the former PCT. The annual turnover for the 2011/12 financial year was £700,000.

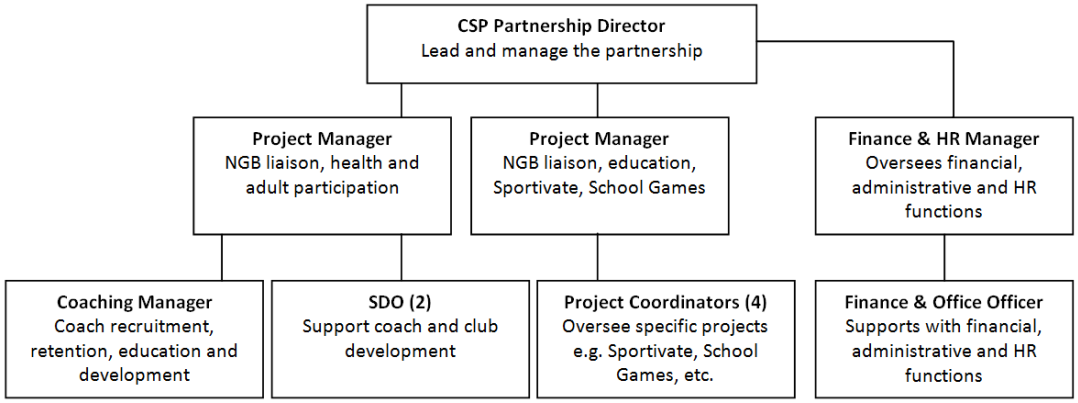

Figure 6.1 Structure of CSP 2 core team

Sports participation trends

Sports participation rates in the CSP 2 area have been relatively high since the start of the Active People survey in 2005/6. The area has consistently recorded annual participation rates higher than regional and national averages, with the exception of 2009/10, when participation rates were 0.1% lower than the national average (see Table 6.5). Participation rates appear to have fluctuated through the years with a 2.1% increase between 2005/6-2008/9 and a 2.6% decrease between 2008/9 and 2009/10. Still, there has been an overall increase of 1.6% in sports participation when comparing the latest full-year figure of 37.3% to the original benchmark 35.7%. The positive trend in participation rates reflects the range of positive correlations of

[17] At the time of writing, no decision had been made regarding the allocation of the additional £80,000 investment.

participation such as relatively low levels of multiple deprivation, high employment, a buoyant local economy, and a relatively positive health profile.

Table 6.5 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once a week) (source: Sport England, 2013)

Year	CSP B4	Region	England
2005/06	35.7%	34.8%	34.2%
2007/08	37.1%	36.5%	35.8%
2008/09	37.8%	35.6%	35.7%
2009/10	35.2%	34.9%	35.3%
2010/11	36.0%	34.7%	34.8%
2011/12	37.3%	36.0%	36.0%

The positive trend is consistent in most demographic groups, although there are one or two exceptions. Table 6.6 reveals increased participation in all demographic groups in CSP 2 between 2005/6 and 2011/12. In particular, the differences in means for 55+ age group (+4.0%) and the NS SEC 3 classification (+5.5%) between 2005/6 and 2011/12 were noteworthy, although it is important to consider the smaller population for these groups and thus the higher confidence interval applied to these data. In terms of decreases within the area, there were two notable reductions in participation—amongst the 16-25 year old age group (-1.2%) and the 26-34 year old age group (-4.0%). That said, the same logic regarding reduced population and an increased confidence level also applies to these data.

As mentioned, the data reveal a relatively consistent variation between the area and regional and national level when analysing sports participation by demographic group. In short, when applying the latest participation data from Active People 2011/12, the area has higher participation rates than the national average in almost all demographic groups with a marginally lower rate for males, people with a limited disability, the 16-34 age group and NS SEC 4, whereas participation for almost all other demographic groups is higher in the sub-region, reflecting the socio-economic profile of the area. Interestingly, many of the populations who are commonly cited as being excluded (i.e. women, non-white, elderly and socioeconomic groups 5-8) have significantly higher participation in the sub region than is reported regionally or nationally (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once a week *), by demographic group (source: Sport England, 2013)

	CSP B4		Region		England	
Year	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12
All	35.7%	37.3%	34.8%	36.0%	34.2%	36.0%
Male	39.2%	40.4%	38.6%	39.8%	38.9%	41.1%
Female	32.3%	34.1%	31.2%	32.3%	29.8%	31.1%
White	35.4%	37.1%	34.8%	35.7%	34.3%	36.2%
Non-White	40.8%	42.9%	35.7%	40.0%	33.2%	35.5%
Limiting Disability	16.7%	17.4%	15.7%	18.5%	15.1%	18.3%
No Limiting Disability	38.9%	40.8%	38.1%	39.2%	37.8%	39.4%
16-25	55.4%	54.2%	56.5%	55.2%	55.7%	54.0%
26-34	45.3%	41.3%	46.1%	44.8%	45.2%	47.1%
35-54	37.4%	41.0%	36.5%	38.6%	35.2%	37.6%
55+	19.5%	23.5%	20.3%	22.4%	18.8%	21.3%
NS SEC 1-2	40.9%	43.5%	39.9%	41.3%	40.1%	42.7%
NS SEC 3	32.9%	38.4%	33.7%	34.2%	32.3%	33.7%
NS SEC 4	27.3%	28.9%	32.9%	32.8%	32.4%	32.9%
NS SEC 5-8	29.3%	31.7%	28.7%	27.9%	26.9%	27.1%

Estimates suggest that the growth potential for adult participation in sport in the CSP 2 area is 55.1% (273,000 people) compared to 54.5% regionally and 55.4% nationally. The three sports with the highest growth potential in the area are cycling (56,500/11.4%), swimming (51,600/10.4%), and gym-based activity (i.e. weights/cardio workout) (43,800/8.8%) (Sport England, 2013).

Other sport-related indicators such as volunteering in sport, club membership, coaching, and competitive sport present an inconsistent picture when compared to regional and national data (see Table 6.7). For example, volunteering in sport has increased in the area, but not as sharply as it has regionally or nationally. In contrast, participation in organised sport (club membership, coaching, and/or competition) appears to be a significant growth area in CSP 2 despite notable decreases in regional and national averages.

Table 6.7 Other Sport Indicators: Volunteering and formal sports participation (source: Sport England, 2013)

Indicator	CSP B4		Region		England	
	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12
KPI2^ - Volunteering at least one hour a week	5.0%	6.4%	4.7%	7.4%	4.7%	7.6%
KPI3 - Club Membership in the last 4 weeks	24.9%	29.1%	25.5%	23.7%	24.1%	22.8%
KPI4 - Received tuition / coaching in last 12 mths	20.0%	22.4%	18.3%	17.4%	17.5%	16.8%
KPI5 - Took part in organised competition in last 12 months	16.2%	19.0%	14.7%	15.1%	14.4%	14.4%

The CSP-NGB relationship

This section provides an overview of CSP leadership, with specific reference to the way in which the CSP manages relations with NGBs. It will also illuminate the attitudes and experiences of CSP, NGB and local authority agents in relation to the range of factors that have positively influenced CSP-NGB relations in case 2 as well as the problems that have adversely affected the relationship.

The CSP leadership of NGB relations

The CSP is led by the Chair and board of Trustees together with the CEO. The board is made up of 14 representatives and the CEO. The Chair and board of trustees have all served on the board for at least three years. The Chair, deputy Chair and six other members of the board have been trustees since the Trust's inception in 2007. Thus, 'insight and continuity' are two of the board's cited strengths *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*). In addition, the board is viewed externally as being 'full of experience' *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012)*. Comments such as these refer to the board's representatives, locally known and very successful businesspeople; an NGB Chief Executive and an NGB Director who both started their early sport development careers in the area and still reside in the area; and chief officers and members of local government.

The board is generally regarded as being proactive in the work of the CSP. They are forthright in setting the vision, mission and objectives of the partnership and play a

critical role in the 'ongoing improvement and oversight' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*. The board's function is primarily achieved through a structure of sub-committees focusing on remuneration, risk and governance, finance, and a community interest company (necessary for any profit making activities, as part of Charitable Trust status). Sounding boards are also created, as and when necessary. These involve appropriate board members and core team members and focus on discussing specific issues and agreeing recommendations for full board. Whilst the board make an active and engaged contribution to the work of the CSP, this work is primarily strategic in nature. Both the CSP CEO and the Board representative clarified the importance of the core team having autonomy in operational, day-to-day matters, such as managing NGB relations.

The CSP core team have had a number of changes to the way in which they manage relations with NGBs. Up to December 2011, the responsibility for initiating, managing and developing NGB relations fell to a single member of the core team, the NGB lead officer. Whilst this led to positive and productive work with some NGBs, the implications of the approach were problematic as other members of the core team were isolated from the growing and increasingly central NGB-related work. Also, the CSP echoed the concerns raised in the first case about the capacity of the NGB lead to manage a growing portfolio of work with over 40 sports. A new approach was advanced in 2012 whereby NGB lead and liaison responsibilities were delegated to individual members of the core team. The CEO reflected on this as an interesting project, noting, 'there was some great work, some excellent projects and some really strong relationships' but they were generally limited to the sports that aligned with the personal interests of the core team. This realisation led the board to discuss a new approach which involved the prioritisation of sports as well as the CEO developing new structural arrangements for the management of NGB relations.

The prioritisation process developed by the CSP centred on four factors. This included, first and foremost, (i) those NGBs that had identified the CSP as a priority, then (ii) the priority sports as identified by local authority partners, (iii) the latent demand for participation in different sports in the area (via Active People), and (iv) the professional judgement of core team/board members regarding the local capacity and capability of NGBs. This process led to a prioritisation of 10 sports: cycling,

athletics, netball, football, badminton, hockey, golf, tennis, equestrian, and swimming.

In terms of structural arrangements, the CSP have decided to try a third way of managing relations with NGBs. This approach was being developed at the time of research and was slated to coincide with the official start of the 2013-17 whole sport plans. The CEO felt that a new structure was required in order to respond to the expectations for the new whole sport plan funding:

> We're moving into the new [whole sport plan] period where, in theory, NGBs are expected to have far more local delivery activity in their WSP. Alongside this, Sport England has facilitated a number of regional engagement days to press the NGBs into looking at local engagement with CSPs. These are opportunities for us to get focused and get things right from day one *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*.

The new structure will involve two lead officers for all 46 NGBs with a small number (two to three) of high priority sports being allocated to each core member of the CSP team (referred to as their sport liaison role). The NGB lead officers will work closely with other members of the core team and the NGB in developing 'action plans' for high priority sports. These plans will be developed over a series of CSP-NGB workshops, to achieve what the CSP's NGB lead referred to as 'a coming together of ideas', not to mention the opportunity to get to know the representatives across the two organisations. The intended outcome of the workshop is a smaller, area-specific version of the NGB's whole sport plan, identifying priorities, detailing specific actions as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities. On a day-to-day basis the CSP's sport liaison representative will be responsible for working with the NGB to ensure that roles are fulfilled and that the plan is implemented. The plan will be routinely evaluated with the CSP's NGB lead, sport liaison representative and NGB representatives as part of the CSP quarterly performance management process. The CEO stated that the 'relationship with non-priority sports will be managed by the two lead officers to ensure that the requirements of the Sport England core specification are met'.

The CSP's motive for making these changes stems from a desire to focus more on meeting targets: 'We have to get far more focussed on delivering our targets. We were guilty of process managing rather than focussing on targets, building nice relationships and talking in generalities rather than specific delivery' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*. As previously mentioned, this management behaviour corresponds with Deming's (2000) deadly disease of management specifically the overemphasis of numerical targets at the expense of attention to the critical processes of operation. It is reasonable to assume that this behaviour is driven by Sport England's performance management process, including the increasing emphasis on payment-by-results and the opportunity to 'secure more funding by securing more greens'[18]. Interestingly, this renewed focus on numerical targets contradicts evidence elsewhere within the case which suggests that performance management can stifle the CSP-NGB relationship and that there is a greater need to focus on process, in particular the process of creating and managing effective relations. This theme will be explored in greater detail in the section titled *The problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship*, below.

A final point of contextual interest relating to the CSP leadership of NGB relations concerned the CSP-NGB dynamic across the sub-region:

> In this area you could argue that it is the CSP driving the NGBs rather than the other way around ... I think you have this positional imbalance whereby CSP staff, particularly at the senior level, are older and more experienced. You compare that to most of the NGB staff at the county level and most are at the junior level. They may have a little bit of experience, but most of the positions are kind of entry level. So you have this reverse dynamic where the key decisions are taken by the CSP, rather than being led by NGBs *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/: National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*).

[18] The CSP performance management system is based on a traffic light system. Green is awarded for good performance, amber for performance requiring remedial action, and red requires urgent attention. The payment by results system has led Sport England to offer enhanced financial incentives for CSPs who achieve more results coded green.

Factors that have positively influenced the CSP-NGB relationship

As in the first case, this case reinforced *individuals* and *principles* as being key factors that positively influence the CSP-NGB relationship. In addition, the evidence suggests that clarity of purpose, structures and the culture of the workforce in the area are all significant factors that positively shape CSP-NGB relations.

Unsurprisingly, given the weight of evidence from the first case, *individuals* were viewed as a 'critical part of the community sport jigsaw' *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012)*; 'when I think of the good relationships that we have with CSPs, it's largely due to the people and personalities involved' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 30 May 2012);* 'the final thing is the personal relationship, you know to be able to pick up the phone or sit across the table from someone and have a discussion where you can understand each other and buy into the idea of working together' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, County FA; 23 May 2012);* 'the quality of the relationship tends to depend upon the people involved...in my experience, the most effective relationships are with CSPs where I have a rapport with the CSP lead or another member of the team' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball; 29 May 2012);* 'I suppose it comes down to the personnel...are they thinking on the same lines? Do they get on? Can they work together?' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 29 May 2012):* 'If I reflect on the relationship with CSPs across the region, the key thing is the difference between the people involved in the different CSPs, it's ultimately about good people' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, LTA; 7 June 2012);* 'the really effective partnerships that I have been involved in are perceived as effective because they deliver, they deliver because of the people involved, their desire and their commitment to make it work' *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012).*

Again in line with the first case, there were several comments regarding the importance of certain principles in fostering effective working relations. Themes were largely consistent with those mentioned in the first case, in particular mutual respect and trust and the critical role these play in shaping the opinion and perspective of agents towards other community sport partners. Here it is also

important to consider the 'conditions of action' (Betts, 1986); in other words, the broader structure within which agents operate. In particular, agents' views of others will be directly shaped by their past experience of working with the partner. Thus, where the experience has generally been positive, there is more likely to be high trust and respect—important for implementing partnerships (Scheberle, 2004) and of course for policy implementation itself. This point could also be mediated by two further considerations. First, there is Axelrod's (1984) notion of indirect reciprocity, where cooperation between agents is shaped by a reliable history being projected from past agents to future agents. Second, and related to the first, past experience shapes institutional paradigms, which influence agents' beliefs and directly affect levels of trust and respect towards partner agencies (Christensen, 2003).

In addition to trust and respect, the notion of effective leadership was also commonly cited, in particular comments about leadership style. With regards to the CSP, the evidence highlighted three key issues: the ability of the CSP to understand and articulate the diverse needs of the area, to develop a democratic approach enabling all partners to feel part of the broader partnership, and to create and pursue a clear vision which did not solely represent the core team but the broader partnership. In short, the 'collaborative leadership' (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Feyerherm, 1994) of the CSP was something that local authority representatives commended. However, the view of NGBs varied. Here it is possible that institutional paradigms play a more critical role in shaping the view of NGBs toward the CSP, an issue which will be discussed further below. Comments about NGB leadership were more directly associated with issues of engagement and clarity of purpose. Engagement was also viewed to be critical, particularly with VSCs at the local-level. A small number of NGBs (netball and cricket) were held up as doing good work to involve the grass-roots deliverers in the design stage of plans and programmes. This was seen as being a somewhat unique yet important development in that it aligns with the principles of co-creation and co-production (Ostrom, V. 1973), it involves and empowers community-level agents, it provides the strategic apex of the NGB with a feedback loop about what is and is not likely to work, it is more likely to secure local-level commitment, and more likely to be seen as positive and proactive leadership.

Clarity of purpose related to both internal and external dimensions. Externally, CSPs, local authorities and a small number of NGBs referred to the importance of the NGBs' whole sport plan being clearly articulated so that the sports priorities were known by all and were clearly understood at the local level. Similarly, NGBs emphasised the importance of understanding the CSP, in particular its priorities, structures and the way in which it could support growth in sports participation across the sub-region. The Chief Executive of the County FA underlined the importance of attitude and communication as mechanisms that facilitate external clarity of purpose:

> I think the most important thing is having the genuine interest, the willingness to work in partnership. Underpinning this there has to be clear and open channels of communication, a sharing and clarification of vision, goals, priorities and roles and responsibilities between the key agencies ... it's also important that these are kept as simple and straightforward as possible *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, County FA; 23 May 2012)*.

This was a point reinforced by the chairperson of the county athletics association:

> The thinkers and doers need to be speaking with each other, making sure that the plans and priorities are agreed and clearly coordinated and everyone is clear about their role. I think we saw more evidence of this within school sport, I think we still have a long way to go in community sport *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012)*.

Further, with regard to consistency, representatives of the CSP made reference to the notable issue of internal consistency regarding clarity of purpose across NGBs, in other words, the extent to which there was constructive alignment of purpose within each NGB from national to local level. This was viewed as being communicated well in some sports such as football and cricket, but not so evident in others sports where there were seen to be mixed messages:

> Consistency of message is proving to be a major challenge for both CSPs and NGBs. Within NGBs, NGBs locally may have a different message to the national NGB. And across CSPs I think consistency of message is also a problem ... For example, the CSP may get a clear

> message from the CSP Network that this is what sports are going to do, that these are their priorities, and that this is what they require from CSPs. That should remain consistent at the local level so that local NGB representatives reflect what has been said nationally. Where it works well, this happens. But very often that is not the case, there are some sports where the local officers are just not on the same page *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*).

Similarly, NGBs commented on the lack of consistency and clarity of purpose across CSPs, an issue which will be discussed further in the section below.

Structural issues were also mentioned as being important in influencing positive working relations between the CSP and NGBs. NGBs mentioned structures as did one CSP representative. In particular, agents argued that having appropriate structural arrangements was important as it provided the capacity and intelligence to support CSP-NGB partnership work as well as extending this to the local level through appropriate support for clubs and coaches. Here, appropriate structural arrangements related to networks and/or individuals whose primary responsibility was to work at the local-level. For example, football, swimming and golf all mentioned their sport-specific county networks; cricket mentioned their focus club structures; and netball and golf mentioned the hosting arrangements that they had negotiated for their sport-specific officers whereby NGB officers were hosted by the CSP, an arrangement that was seen to work particularly well in brokering a sound CSP-NGB relationship and securing opportunities to get the sport more involved in local level projects than otherwise might have been the case.

> I would say that one of the most important things for us has been the close relationship that our development officer has with the CSP. It's one of our best counties nationally, mainly because of her skills and the type of person she is, but also because anything that pops up, 'Get Back Into' or 'Fit for Work', she is there, she is one of the first people they speak to, and we want to be engaged and involved in these types of projects *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 30 May 2012).*

This view reinforces the benefits that network reciprocity can have for cooperation, in particular where geographical or social factors drive an increase in network

interaction (Axelrod, 1984). Here, the location of the NGB officer relative to the CSP can be important in developing closer cooperation between the CSP and NGBs as it provides the potential for closer co-working and enables the CSP and NGB to develop a more similar understanding of the local context.

The culture of the sub-regional workforce was the final factor the data showed to have positively influenced the CSP-NGB relationship. There appeared to be five micro-level factors that resulted in a strong task and social cohesiveness across the CSP, NGBs and local authorities. The first of these was the length of service of officers working in community sport across the sub-region, particularly those in leadership positions such as the Head of Arts & Recreation at the City Council, the County Sport Development Manager at the County Council, the Head of Community Services at the Unitary authority, the Chief Executive Officer of the CSP, plus two or three NGB officers who had all started their careers in the sub-region. This not only benefited the partnership in terms of the understanding of the major issues and changes in the area, but also brought a sense of unity as many of the key agents felt this was a journey they had made together, rather than one taken individually with different people joining along the way. The second factor is that a number of officers working in the sub-region have worked in different capacities and different positions across the area. This has resulted in CSP staff now working in NGBs and vice-versa. This had led to the third factor, the creation of a group that have empathy for each other, making it easier for agents to understand the context and challenges that confront partner agencies. The fourth factor relates to knowledge and understanding insomuch as agents tend to report high levels of role clarity; they generally appear to be aware of who does what and the agreed roles and responsibilities of different agencies across the sub-region. The final factor is attitude—CSP, local authority and the majority of NGB partners seem to want to make the relationship work and the evidence reveals a commitment to the partnership ideal, helping one another out, and doing what it takes to get the job done. Clearly, there are problems that challenge this ideal, which are discussed further below. However, the overriding sense is that agencies have, over time and through experience, gained advantage through collaboration rather than the bureaucracy and inertia sometimes associated with partnerships (Bloyce *et al.*, 2008; Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

> In [area 2] we all work very closely together … everybody knows one another, everyone works with each other. We have a lot of very good, close relationships. You can pick up the phone to 99% of the people, you know, you know what you are doing, who you are talking to, what they are doing. Maybe it's because so many of us have been around for so long … Part of it is the CSP, they have definitely had a hand in the process, they work hard to bring us altogether and keep us together *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012)*.

<u>The problems that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship</u>

Given the nature of the factors that positively influence CSP-NGB relations in the case, more problems were identified in this case than in the first case. This could be the result of the social context affecting each case, the nature of the problems, the variations in the researcher relationship from organisation to organisation, which could play a role in eliciting a broader or more explicit range of data, and linked to this, the extent to which research participants are open and honest about the problems affecting the relationship.

The range of problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship in case 2 have been grouped into five categories: a lack of engagement, diversity of priorities, process over people, the complexity of inconsistency, and a lack of empathy. The first three of these categories reflect the issues identified in case 1, the latter two issues are unique to case 2.

Notably, with regards to the first category, a lack of engagement, the evidence in this case focuses on the same three sub-categories as those in the first case, namely: (i) the CSP-local authority relationship, (ii) the NGB whole sport plan process, and (iii) the NGB's engagement with the CSP. That said, the CSP-local authority relationship in this case did not appear to face the same issues with regards to the strategic leadership of sport. Some local authorities indicated that the relationship took time to evolve: 'CSPs were initially viewed as a threat, taking over work that they had previously led on. But others really embraced it and saw it as an opportunity to further their commissioning role' *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012)*. For other local authorities, the relatively new focus

on CSPs and NGBs might make fiscal sense, given the cuts in public sector budgets, but could result in a lack of local contextual intelligence:

> I think that there is a lot of local information, local knowledge, and opportunities to engage local people being lost because there is no one playing that really local role anymore—local authorities are no longer a key part of the system. In my opinion they should be, but they no longer are. It's now all about NGBs and the CSP ... anyway, local authorities just do not have the manpower anymore *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council).*

The final concern from a local authority perspective was the potential for duplication and, as a result, the need for open and clear channels of communication between agencies.

> I think sometimes there is a little bit of duplication which can lead to animosity or frustration. For example, [the CSP] have started working on this disability sport bid, why are they doing that? I've been leading disability sport in the county for years. You wonder what is behind this? Where do I fit into it? *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council).*

Indeed, failure on the part of the CSP to communicate and engage partners in such developments can be seen as a flagrant exercise of power insomuch as agendas are developed without the input of agents who have a traditional involvement in related issues. This can be seen to mirror Lukes (1974) second dimension of power and is likely, if perceived to be a constant and consistent behaviour, to alienate traditional partners such as the County Sport Development Manager. The City Council representative also talked about the importance of transparency and open communication, for example making sure that key documents, strategies, minutes, board decisions and so on were posted on the CSP website so that partners could access these as required. She felt that the issue was not just about being able to access the documentation, but also 'about the message this sends to partners about the CSP being transparent, you know, not a closed shop' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).*

With regards to the NGB whole sport plan process, the CSP, local authorities and even some NGBs in the case noted the relatively limited engagement of wider partners (outside the NGB) in the development of whole sport plans. As in the first case, this led to a range of problems, including a lack of awareness of the NGBs priorities and a lack of consent or commitment to priorities that are perceived as being owned by another organisation. The former issue was viewed as particularly important by CSPs as they are required 'to provide a support service to NGBs and this is difficult to achieve if you are not clear of their priorities' (Interview: *Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012*). The latter issue was seen to be critical for two reasons. First, it is critical in terms of the opportunity to dovetail NGB priorities with CSP-led programmes such as Sportivate, *Back To* projects, and other locally run initiatives. Secondly, it is important in engaging street-level operators such as club representatives and sport coaches in the formalisation of the NGB's local priorities both to (i) make sure that they are aware of these priorities and (ii) to secure mutual consent and commitment:

> I guess there may be an assumption that clubs will do the delivery bit, but very few professionals working in the system are aware of the whole sport plan details, so how on earth can we expect volunteers to know the details? *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

Ultimately, the extent to which NGBs appear to be autonomous, despite large amounts of public funding, is an issue that agents, particularly local authorities, underlined. In short, the idiosyncrasies of the community sport policy process, in particular the way in which different organisations appear to be faced with different conditions of operation, give a prevailing sense that NGBs are privileged and receive special exceptions that are not extended to other funded agencies in community sport:

> NGBs seem to get away with things that CSPs and local authorities would never get away with. For example, the completely ludicrous growth targets which they set because they knew they could lever in more funding. I think it is important to hold NGBs to account, ultimately it will lead to more of them taking the work seriously and thinking twice about their growth targets and the logic behind them

> *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).*

As in the first case, NGBs revealed differing levels of commitment to working alongside the CSP, with some of the smaller and moderately sized sports suggesting that the CSP play a crucial role in supporting the NGB (golf, swimming, athletics, and netball) whereas other, particularly the larger NGBs, appear to reveal a more casual attitude (tennis, football and cricket), and even an indifference toward the role of the CSP:

> The nature of the relationship can sometimes feel a little bit artificial. There is no doubt that some are just going through the motions. I think a lot of it is down to the people—their experience and their personality. Some of it comes from the sport though, you can see that some sports are really keen and want to work with us, whereas others, it just feels like they do it because they have to be seen to be doing it *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

> A lot of the stuff is not hugely relevant to us. We pick and choose what we go to and what we need. A lot of the time the messages across CSPs are pretty similar, because they are dealing with national structures and objectives. So if you go to one, you have pretty much got it covered because it's things like Sportivate, Schools Games and all that. So all those things are replicated. So yeah, we pick and choose a little bit which CSP we engage with. The last year or so we've not really been involved with [CSP 2], mainly since the [last NGB lead] left ... But I need to meet [the new NGB lead] and just have a chat with her as to how tennis can better engage with the CSP *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, LTA; 7 June 2012).*

The second problem that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship is the diversity of priorities within community sport, echoing many of the points detailed in the first case. In particular, the philosophical differences of key agents: 'our priority is our local community and raising levels of physical activity, the CSP has to deliver on its agreement with Sport England, and NGBs' number one priority is international success' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012)*. The County Sport Development Manager reinforced this view:

> We [the County Council] are involved in sport because our members believe it can bring communities closer together, it's a community development tool. However, sports are involved because they want to grow their sport, get more talented individuals playing their sport, and win more medals. There's such intense media interest, pressure and expectation now on international success, NGBs have to deliver this, they have no choice, it's their bread and butter *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012).*

Furthermore, the implications of these differences were emphasised, particularly the point that NGBs as the agencies leading the community sport system also lead the delivery of high-performance and elite sport; very much seen as the number one priority for NGBs. In contrast, the CSP tended to lead on PCT-funded projects focusing on active lifestyles, obesity and health issues. This was seen as being problematic for the CSP-NGB relationship:

> We are all involved in overlapping areas but many of these require very different approaches ... different types of work, different programmes, different target audiences, marketing strategies and so on *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012).*

Whilst these diverse priorities do not make the community sport aspirations impossible, they extend the range of interest and blur the focal point of each agency's primary concern. Moreover, as in the first case, the deeper problem of diverse priorities lies in the implication for the way in which budgets and resources are allocated, the specialist skills required for the different priorities and how each agency goes about addressing these. Attention to these issues affects the capacity and desire of the CSP and NGBs to work collaboratively toward community sport goals.

The third category of problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship was the perceived prioritisation of performance management processes over people. The evidence was of three types: first, the superficiality of the core specification and the way in which this tends to inhibit deeper or more genuine partnership work.

> I guess the final thing to say is about the target mentality that we all work in now. On the one hand it's fine, we need direction, we need it to help prioritise ... The core specification is a little like that, okay, this is what I need to do, what I need to offer to be seen in a good light. But partnership working needs to be more genuine, it needs to go beyond this, it requires a more open conversation about vision, priorities and roles and responsibilities *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*).

Reinforcing this view, the Regional Development Manager for the England Golf Partnership conceded that 'the core specification is a bit of a tick box exercise for us, if we're really honest'. The second type of evidence related more specifically to a lack of time or focus given to the development of the partnership: 'very often the problem is that partnerships are not given the time to develop. We do not spend enough time cultivating the relationship' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012)*. Supporting this, the Projects Manager for the CSP argued that 'we need to give CSPs and NGBs the time and space to create and sustain positive working relations'. The CSP's Governance Committee Chair (also a National Director of the ECB) underlined the third type of evidence linked to this point, namely the development of appropriate skills to support collaborative working and community sport more generally, particularly skills that pertain directly to collaborative working such as communication, brokering, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills.

The final two categories of problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship were the complexity of inconsistency and a lack of empathy. Neither of these issues was identified in the first case. The phrase *complexity of inconsistency* has been used to represent the difficulties that agents face within the community sport system, which has such a complex web of actors and institutions. This resembles the unintended consequence noted by Bloyce *et al.* (2008: 376) where 'the increasingly complex interweaving of the actions of many different groups' adds unnecessary and undesirable complexity, thus making it more difficult for agents to achieve policy goals. The CSP referred to the inconsistency of NGBs and local authorities: 'we have local authorities who want to play the strategic role in their patch, others who want us to do it. The same thing with NGBs, some want us to play a strategic role, others want more delivery support' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*.

The local authority perspective addressed a theme mentioned in the previous section in relation to inconsistency within NGBs: 'there appears to me to be a tension between what governing bodies do at the national level and what they do at the local level. Often the two can seem awfully remote from one another' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012)*. The view from NGBs highlighted the difficulties of inconsistency in the CSP approach: 'I think one of the major problems is that they all work so differently from one to the other. Some really seem to get it and want to work with the NGB, whereas others are not very forthcoming' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball; 29 May 2012)*. The point about the inconsistency of CSP structure and practice is something which the CSP's Chief Executive addressed in a passing comment about Sport England and NGB expectations:

> I understand the idea of a consistent service, a consistent offer, but I think it is unrealistic to expect 49 organisations to be the same. It's all quite laughable ... we're expected to be the same, but the 46 NGBs are not. It seems a little unfair or biased.

The noteworthy inference from the data is that the key issue relates more to the nature of the work and the perception that community sport lacks uniformity or consistency of approach across the same types of organisations (in particular: CSPs, NGBs and local authorities), rather than it being solely about the myriad organisations that occupy the community sport landscape. Each agent criticises the need to understand how other partner agents work in order to work effectively, instead pointing to the efficient model that could be offered by universal CSPs or uniformity across NGBs. Yet each agent argues for flexibility to ensure that policy fits appropriately with its own local socio-economic and/or organisational context. Thus, it seems that the need for autonomy and individuality is understood and respected when applied to one's own institution, yet viewed as complex or inconvenient when applied to others.

A point which directly relates to this paradoxical situation is a lack of empathy, particularly in relation to the broader context and challenges which confront other agencies. Whilst there was relatively limited data concerning this point, it was a

noteworthy issue that underpins other problems such as the frustration at the inconsistency of other organisational types, whether real or perceived. This relates to expectations; as one NGB representative put it, 'I think there is sometimes a fairly large difference in expectations and reality, you know I expect the CSP to do this or provide that, the reality is often different' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012)*. The CSP's CEO provided a more detailed overview of what he saw as a key problem underpinning CSP-NGB relations:

> One of the biggest problems is a lack of understanding, a lack of communication and misconceptions about each other's priorities. We need to spend less time judging and making assumptions about each other and, as we are trying to do, spend more time on the relationship, more time communicating, working out how we can work together to achieve our goals *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012*).

This view was based on his 13+ years working in the sub-region, first as the Active Sport Officer, then as the NGB lead officer for the CSP and more recently as the CEO. What he saw as being of utmost importance, based on his experience, was the need to look at things from the perspective of partner agencies, to raise one's own understanding and awareness of the context in which partners are working. His view emphasised the importance of empathy and understanding in areas of work that require collaboration, insofar as they help to promote genuine collaborative capacity where community sport targets are met through collective effort and shared responsibility.

The role of the CSP-NGBs in policy making and implementation

As in the first case, this section focuses on three specific issues: firstly, the role of the CSP and NGBs in national and local level policymaking for community sport; secondly, the role of the CSP and NGBs in the preparation of the whole sport plan; and thirdly the relationship between the CSP and NGBs in the implementation of community sport policy.

<u>The role of the CSP and NGBs in national and local policy making</u>

This case reinforced many of the comments in case 1. There was a relatively consistent view that community sport policy objectives are discussed and agreed by

the DCMS and Sport England with little or no influence from outside agencies, although in line with the first case, both the FA and ASA mentioned close liaison with Sport England and the DCMS on policy related matters at the national level. Notably, the tone of the evidence reflected a pragmatic attitude toward the top-down reality of community sport policy: 'from what I have seen, there is not a great deal of influence from CSPs or NGBs. Policy is pretty much dictated by the DCMS and Sport England' *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012);* 'nationally we do not play any role in policy, I think that is the problem that sport has always had, or local authorities have always had, we have traditionally been weak in influencing policy' *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012*). A deeper insight came from the City Council representative who referred to potential opportunities to influence national sport policy albeit, limited to organised consultation:

> ...at the national level our ability to influence is limited to consultations and things of that sort. I willingly take part in these sorts of things. I don't know how much impact this has, but I think it is important to take up the opportunity and highlight your experiences and opinions *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).*

This is something that other agents criticised as a façade that presents the illusion of inclusion and engagement. The Chief Executive of the CSP reiterated this view, stating that: 'we really lack lobbying power, community sport is not an active group or coalition, the agenda is set by DCMS and Sport England and we get on with whatever is agreed. There are consultation periods and you do have the opportunity to contribute views through workshops and meetings, but I am not naive enough to think that any of this really influences national policy' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).* In short, the evidence suggests that the coalition responsible for establishing policy goals is exceptionally narrow and consists of national groups with homogenous interests, an environment which allows groups to promote their own interests and exclude those groups that may have different views or interests (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The majority of NGB representatives viewed the whole sport plan as the de facto policy and did not as much as acknowledge the CSPs strategy. Indeed, their involvement in the whole sport plan process is viewed as the primary way in which they may influence policy and thus influenced their perception of their role in national policy making. That said, for many NGBs, involvement in the development of the whole sport plan was limited to consultation. For some, however, the whole sport plan itself was driven nationally with little or no involvement from regional or sub-regional representatives:

> There is a lack of consultation and a lack of involvement, maybe even a lack of interest. It's just a case of this is what we need you to do and this is what we will give you to do it. I guess it just makes you a little cynical, you tend to feel isolated, not really involved in the decisions, even though you have a better grasp of what is going on in local communities than the people making the decisions *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012*).

That said, the ECB County Director did remark that she felt that the 2013-17 whole sport process represented progress, primarily due to the development of a national framework: 'despite my earlier criticisms of [the NGB], I do buy into the 4Ps—people, places, policy and playing. It's a sensible framework and allows for national and local priorities to be addressed'. This was a point echoed by the Chief Executive of the County FA regarding their approach to developing the national whole sport plan for football:

> We have a framework approach, this is agreed nationally and every county delivers within the seven pillars of the framework. This approach works really well in balancing national and local priorities. It ensures a level of consistency across the country on seven broad themes, but at the same time gives every county the opportunity to focus on the things that are most important to them. The four goals are growth and retention, raising standards, better players and raising the game and the three enablers are workforce, facilities and marketing *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, County FA; 23 May 2012*).

These framework approaches developed by the FA and ECB appear, from the perspective of NGB representatives, to provide a more balanced approach to policy

making, whereby national priority areas can be agreed with a level of a commitment from across the organisation and with local priorities being incorporated within this, thereby providing regional and sub-regional representatives with a direct role in policy making as well as addressing issues which are perceived to be important locally.

The CSP's Chief Executive reiterated the above points from a CSP perspective, emphasising the passive role of the CSP in national policy making. Despite this, he simultaneously talked at length about how the CSPs are now viewed as the 'arm of Sport England for the sub-region'. He clarified this as a delegation of responsibilities, where the CSP is charged with certain responsibilities and given very specific guidance from Sport England nationally, but underlined the fact that these responsibilities did not in any way extend into discussions or opportunities to shape national policy. However, he did not view CSPs as completely powerless in the policymaking arena; he saw it more of a case of observing how developments unfold, in particular what he referred to as the 'potential of the national CSP Network'. He viewed this as 'the strongest and best route for CSPs to influence policy'—through the collective power and influence of 49 CSPs, rather than relying on each partnership to do this individually. At the time of research he conceded that it was too early to comment on how fully the national CSP network will play this particular role and that to a large extent it would depend on how well CSPs could work together to coordinate efforts and 'speak with one voice' or indeed how other, traditionally powerful agencies would respond, in particular Sport England, the DCMS and perhaps the Sport and Recreation Alliance (the national representative body for NGBs).

In line with the first case, the three local authority representatives underlined their employer's leadership of local-level policy and thus their direct role in contributing to the development of sport-related policy: 'I develop the county strategy for sport which is the County Council's policy for sport, members approve it, I then oversee its delivery and report back to Council ... so I am very involved in the local policy making for sport in the county'. The city council representative highlighted her team's central role in local policy as well as the importance of engaging the wider community in policy formulation:

> Locally, I think we are a key player in formulating policy for sport. Me and my team make recommendations to local members about sport, about our strategy and about how sport can contribute to the Council's priorities. Members then approve or reject these recommendations. If they approve them, they become policy. I think it is really important to engage the local community in this process and give them the opportunity to talk about what is important to them. We can then make sure that policy is based on local issues and is more likely to be owned and driven by the local community *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).*

Local authority representatives referred to the 'broader' local policy landscape where it is critical to demonstrate how sport can contribute to the Council's values or corporate priorities rather than promoting local policy solely concerned with 'sport for sport motives'. All three representatives identified issues such as housing growth, the local economy, low levels of crime, health and wellbeing and quality of life as important agendas. Thus, influencing local-level policy for sport requires strategies and programmes that clearly impact these agendas. Failure to do so would undoubtedly result in a reallocation of resource to other, high-priority public services. In short, whilst there is a clear overlap relating to participation between the national policy for community sport and local-level policies, the motives underpinning these policies are distinct and quite different, which carries significant implications for the way in which they are implemented which can then adversely affect relations in the community sport policy sector, as discussed above.

The CSP admitted that they were not as involved in local policy formulation as they would like to be, hindered somewhat by the CSPs preoccupation with project management and delivery:

> I think in terms of policy we have been in a bit of a vacuum in many ways, a policy vacuum. Now is the time. Probably the opportunity is there for us to challenge ourselves or even test ourselves ... You know when local authorities are writing new strategies we need to be there saying, well have you considered this ... we need to be advocating and representing the best interests for community sport in the area *(Interview: Project Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*

The role of the CSP and NGBs in the preparation of whole sport plans

The three prominent issues in the first case also proved to be highly visible in the data in this case. The first concerns the lack of clarity regarding the whole sport plan, the priorities detailed in the plan and how these translate to the sub-region. This was a point made by all representatives of the CSP; as the board representative and ECB Director asserted:

> The major challenge concerns the NGBs and them being clear about the whole sport plan and how this translates to the local level. This time around [the next WSP process, 2013-17] NGBs must be clearer about the specific targets for local areas, what is expected of the CSP and being sure that these messages are consistent from national level to county level *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*).

Similarly, the CSP viewed the whole sport plan process as being a wasted opportunity. The inference here is that the planning process is an opportunity to secure participatory consensus (van Meter & van Horn, 1975), build mutual trust and respect (Scheberle, 2004) as well as ensure that proposed plans are well-suited to local conditions (Hjern & Porter, 1981). However, the majority of NGBs choose to pursue an independent path where they create and develop their plan with limited external involvement. Consequently, the CSP's NGB Lead Officer is left questioning the nature of the relationship, whether it is a balanced and fair relationship, and in some cases, viewing 'the relationship as being artificial … a case of just going through the motions because that is what is required in order to secure the funding' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

Whilst the majority of NGBs cited a number of opportunities where they had the opportunity to influence their sport's whole sport plan, representatives from cricket and athletics criticised the whole sport plan process. Both representatives are based within county structures and both criticised the top-down approach to the whole sport plan process, citing a complete 'lack of engagement and involvement in the process' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012).* This was seen to be particularly problematic from the county representative perspective due to the 'message' it sends, reconfirming the notion of *them and us*, and the 'ivory tower'

where privileged people with little or no understanding of field conditions set out plans for those in the field without involving them in the process.

The traditional top-down leadership of sport, as represented in the whole sport plan process, is seen as being divisive in some sports further exacerbating the division between the national and local levels of the sport and resulting in alienating the grass-roots operators from the national level strategists. Whilst this dynamic is certainly not representative of all sports, sport is reportedly challenged in 'securing consensus' or developing a 'truly collective approach' from national to local level. A part of this could be attributed to the historical divide between NGBs and county associations of sport, in particular the power and resource that the centre are seen to possess versus the voluntary hours committed and local level knowledge generated at the local level. It could also be seen to relate to an intentional lack of engagement in order to avoid conflict (Matland, 1995) a result of too much power being held by a relatively small number of people. As one NGB representative put it, 'even in the bad old days there was more democratic decision making, more sense of ownership of the sport than there is today. The problem is that too much influence is concentrated on too few people' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012).* The Chairman of the County Association, who has been involved in athletics in the county for over 20 years, talked about the pressure that the voluntary-run clubs face. In particular, he noted the tension between the aspirations of the whole sport plan to grow participation in sport, and the strain that many clubs feel in terms of having enough coaches and volunteers to look after these people. Thus, he views the NGB's paradigm as the major problem, whereby NGB policy is driven by Sport England and not by the NGB's membership:

> We have lost sight of what we are supposed to be about. The priority or focus now tends to be looking toward meeting the requirements of Sport England, whereas the sport needs to look outwards to the clubs to make sure it is thinking about how it can help clubs and support clubs in developing the sport *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012).*

Whilst the specific issue of having a narrowed focus is not one cited by other NGB representatives, the general issue of relations between the NGB and VSCs was

commented on by all representatives. This is an issue that will receive further attention in the following sub-section.

The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation

Almost all of the evidence relating to the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation in this case fall under the same three themes identified in the first case, namely: (i) the strategic or delivery focus of the CSP; (ii) the changing role of local authorities in community sport policy implementation, and (iii) the lack of capacity to implement community sport policy.

The CSP's NGB lead officer talked briefly about the blurred distinction between the CSP's role as a strategic lead agency for sport and physical activity versus its most recent role in the management of specific community sport projects.

> The strategy-delivery issue is one where there are clashes, I think it is developing into a major tension. We think we should be doing one thing, but actually we end up doing something entirely different, primarily because of funding and because Sport England say so *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

The implications that flow from this are what concern the CSP most, particularly the issue of having a strategic lead for sport, somebody taking the overview, advocating for sport and ensuring that the 'community sport offer' is joined up: 'if there is no overview, there is the potential for duplication, missed opportunities and short-termism rather than long-term, coordinated work which really can deliver sustained change' (*Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).* As a result the NGB Lead Officer felt it important that the CSP do not assume a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather position themselves according to programmes and partner agencies: 'for some programmes and areas of work we take the strategic lead, for example Sportivate or Disability Sport. But more generally we have to position ourselves according to what the local authorities want and what kind of support NGBs want' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

As in the first case, the NGB perspective of the role of CSPs varied. The larger sports (tennis, football, and cricket) and one medium sport (swimming) stressed the need

for greater coordination and, in particular, more advocacy work with local government to ensure that community sport was embedded within local policy frameworks. All four sports were concerned about the ageing facility stock and the potential for new facilities to be developed as part of plans for major residential development for the sub-region. In contrast, three of the four remaining sports (netball, athletics, basketball) underlined support with delivery as being the priority, particularly the development and delivery of programmes that helped to 'land their sport in local communities and provide opportunities for growth in new or lapsed participants' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball; 29 May 2012)*; 'the partnership plays a critical role in delivering things like Sportivate and the School Games, if they don't do it, who else will?' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012)*. The Regional Development Manager for the England Golf Partnership highlighted the need for a more balanced approach: 'the ideal is having a bit of both [strategic and delivery], to have some strategic coordination and advocacy and some delivery support'. All three local authority representatives highlighted the same view, that the CSP needed to retain both strategic and delivery roles. Most importantly, the local authority representatives underlined the need for the CSP to 'recognise the work of existing providers and develop an approach which complements and strengthens existing provision *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012)* and to develop an approach which is best suited to the needs of the county:

> I think the problem is expecting a one-size-fits-all-approach—you are either this or that. You are never going to get that, nor should you expect it. All counties are different, all CSPs are different and it is important for partnerships to work out what is best for their patch *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012)*.

Again reinforcing the findings in the first case, both NGBs and local authorities recognised the challenge facing the CSP insomuch as it aspires to respond to the needs of the county but also needs funding in order to survive. This funding predominantly comes from Sport England and usually requires the CSP to project manage the delivery of specific programmes without considering how they fit with

the local context. This was a point the CSP clearly recognised: 'what it comes down to is funding and you don't get any money for being strategic' *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*); 'we want to play a more strategic role, but the funding from Sport England means that we have to get more involved in delivery' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*; 'we need to develop a sustainable future for [the CSP], so as long as Sport England give us funding, we'll be happy to receive it and to make sure that we deliver against their specification' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

> It is a difficult situation for the CSP. We want to be entirely autonomous, to be separate from Sport England, but the reality is that we rely on funding from Sport England, without this we would not be in business *(Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*)

Evidence of this type opens up a slightly different debate about the nature of the CSP's priorities in that it suggests that the focus is really about funding and ensuring that the CSP can sustain its own future, despite claims about the CSP's autonomy; the CSP is anything that the funder wants it to be.

The shifting focus of local authorities is another causal factor which has resulted in CSPs taking a more delivery-orientated approach. Local authorities in the case explain that this change has been brought about by a number of factors, including: 'local authority members taking the decision to de-prioritise sport mainly due to the need to reprioritise budgets', a decision that was made easier due to 'the creation of CSPs and the lesser attention that Sport England give Councils' *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012),* or the perception that 'local authorities are no longer needed or no longer seen as important to Sport England *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council, 21 May 2012).* The result of these forces has given local authorities 'the space and opportunity to focus on our own priorities without much interference from external agencies' *(Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).* This has led to the majority of authorities maintaining a service focused on broader community development outcomes associated with health and wellbeing, community safety and community cohesion. At the same time, the majority of authorities are pursuing the

neo-liberal ideals associated with the Localism Bill and the Big Society and are commissioning community-based and third-sector organisations to deliver public services, including sport. Indeed, this approach is impacting the role of the CSP insofar as some local authorities view the CSP as a delivery mechanism that it can commission to deliver services at a fraction of the cost it could manage itself:

> ... the [local authority] relies on [the CSP] to deliver what it used to do itself ... it has actually reduced the council-led role in sport and outsourced it to the CSP. By doing this, members can say that they still provide a sport service to the local community ... they can do this without employing any staff and therefore do it for a fraction of the cost *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012).*

The final theme relating to the role of NGBs and the CSP in policy implementation was the lack of capacity to implement community sport policy. The range and depth of data relating to this issue suggests that it is significant. The majority of evidence underscores a perception that there is a lack of capacity at street-level: 'we need more people delivering sport' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012);* 'we need more coaches at the local level' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012);* 'we need more volunteers at the coalface, so to speak' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, LTA; 7 June 2012);* and 'with regards to delivery we have the constant challenge of volunteers, particularly a lack of proactive volunteers' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, County FA; 23 May 2012).*

The lack of capacity was principally attributed to funding; in particular the evidence suggested that agents perceive an imbalance in resource allocation: 'what actually happens with the whole sport plan money is that we invest in the sports themselves, in the sport infrastructure. This may be good for the sport, it may help the sport to be more organised and professional, but it does little for the man on the street' *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012);* 'I think the problem is pretty obvious, there is not enough resource getting down the chain, down to local community level' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

> It's quite simple really, if we want to bring about a change at the local level we need more support, we need more capacity at the local level. Most of the NGB resource tends to get sucked up at the national or regional level. I understand why, but we need to challenge ourselves more to get the funding committed at the grassroots level, this is where the money is needed and where it will make the most difference *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012).*

More optimistically, the CSP's NGB Lead Officer talked about recent developments where sports are now starting to look more critically at their own infrastructure to determine whether it is fit for the purpose of growing participation in sport:

> NGBs do not allocate enough funding to delivery, but it is changing. Previously, the majority of the whole sport funding was committed to NGB infrastructure, but now I think a few sports are starting to think about how they can get more resources for delivery *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

Adding to the optimistic tone of this commitment, the CSP's Chief Executive mentioned the opportunity of the NGB's adapted games, citing examples such as No Strings Badminton, Rush Hockey, Back to Netball, Running Networks and Last Man Standing (cricket). Whilst these programmes are another example of top-down policy their flexible design allows for local adaptation and innovation without putting more pressure on the traditional sports volunteer network:

> I think there is a tremendous opportunity with the new version of the game. They are easy to set up, do not require excessive amounts of time and financial commitment and they do not rely on traditional club networks. I think they offer a real opportunity for growth *(Interview: CSP Director, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

Still, the evidence clearly highlighted an overreliance on volunteers as a method to deliver community sport policy, although this was a view far more prevalent amongst the CSP and local authority representatives than it was NGBs: 'it's the same old thing, we rely on clubs and volunteers, this is where sport happens, so if we want to get more participants it automatically falls to those already providing sport' *(Interview: Leisure Development Officer, District Council; 21 May 2012).* The

County Sport Development Officer viewed this as being a 'major assumption' and a significant problem in terms of delivery because the majority of clubs were more concerned with 'playing their sport and keeping their members happy', a point reiterated by the CSP's NGB Lead Officer: 'most clubs, particularly the smaller clubs, just want to play the game, they don't want to be told that they have to meet this, change this, or do this ... it's not why they do what they do' *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*. This is a problem that resonates with the evidence from the first case as well as previous research (cf. Allison, 2001; Taylor *et al.*, 2007). The majority of NGB representatives referred more to the operational aspects associated with working with volunteers, for example needing more volunteers, volunteer development, the need for more volunteer leaders and more coaches, rather than referring to fundamental principles such as the professional-volunteer dynamic which underpins the NGB-VSC relationship. That said, the chair of the County Athletics Association offered a unique bottom-up view of the NGB, its understanding of its membership, and the place of community sport across its members:

> The connection between the clubs and the NGBs is not well formed. There is a clear disconnect between national folk and local clubs. Their focus is on a centralised strategy, they do not understand the practical implications of delivering the sport, the ins and outs of running the club and where something like growth or sustaining participation may feature within this. The people centrally do not understand the culture of the sport, they are not close enough to it on a daily basis to really get it *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012)*.

Here, the reference to 'the culture of the sport' implies that this is something distinct and not understood by professional administrators. Similarly, the comment about where growth may feature suggests a general lack of awareness on the part of the NGB in not understanding that these issues are not important to volunteer-run athletics clubs. Whilst specific perspectives such as this were not common amongst NGB representatives involved in case 2, it does link with an earlier point about the lack of consistency across sport from national to local level. It also reveals a somewhat unique perspective of the NGB from the viewpoint of the County Association, one which could be partially explained by the predominantly voluntary

nature of the County Athletics Association, the longstanding 'amateur' tradition with which athletics is associated, and, in particular, the resentment and apathy of the Chairmen toward the ongoing assumption that clubs will play an active role in policy implementation.

Agents' beliefs, attitudes and experiences in regard to the community sport policy process

The following section will highlight agents' attitudes and experiences regarding three aspects of the community sport policy process: the nature of the policy process; the extent to which agents believe they are part of a collective system; and agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport policy outcomes.

The nature of the policy process

The data revealed four key themes that pertain to agents' views of the nature of the community sport policy process: a top-down system with a lack of participatory consensus, duplication across the system, more assertive oversight, and the unintended consequences associated with community sport.

As presented in the sections above, agents emphasised a view of community sport as a top-down policy system, with limited engagement, involvement or consensus across the system, particularly at the point of implementation. In some instances there was confusion or 'a lack of clarity regarding who would be doing what and when' for different sports *(Interview: CSP Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012),* and in others' complete bewilderment regarding the lack of involvement of street-level operators:

> ..unless you have a structure which involves the people that are supposedly going to do it, you are forever going to be in conflict, either that or kidding yourself that people are or will do things that they have no intention of doing *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012).*

In short, the evidence echoed that presented in the first case, in particular the characterisation of the community sport policy process as being top-down with a lack of participatory consensus from street-level operators. This is problematic as it has

an implied bias towards the bounded rationality of hierarchical, government leadership (Cline, 2000), it fails to take account of the 'interests, objectives, perceptions, and strategies of other actors and the institutional context in which they function (Kickert *et al.*, 1997: 184), and simply fails to secure the participatory consensus of street-level operators (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; de Leon & de Leon, 2002; Dunleavy, 1991; van Meter & van Horn, 1975).

Agents also noted inefficiencies in the system, in particular areas of duplication, 'which leads to animosity and considerable frustration ... you know, treading on each others' toes' *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012)*. This was seen to be a particular issue between the CSP and NGBs: 'there is quite a bit of duplication between what the CSP is trying to do and what the NGB does, for example, child protection, school-club links, club development and support. It's a huge challenge, we have this dual set up for community sport but no real clarity on who is doing what' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012)*. The NGB Lead reported the same problem, although she viewed it more as a tension regarding the leadership in certain work areas:

> There is a tension around who leads what, say for example club development. Some NGBs see this as their key role, some local authorities also do it, and obviously we have a club development officer. So there is a need for us to work through this and be clearer about who does what *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*.

The final points regarding the nature of the community sport policy process relate to the more assertive oversight of the community sport policy process and the unintended consequences of policy. The first issue relates to the range of data in the case that referred to the 'more assertive role of Sport England' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*, where they are viewed as being 'more demanding' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012)*; and 'a lot more professional and doing a lot more thinking, a lot more analysis, and a lot more questioning' (*Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*), leading NGB representatives to state that 'we are now very clear about the implications of not hitting targets' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager,*

England Basketball; 29 May 2012). This view seems to be driven by a number of factors, including the exacting focus on numbers and targets, the actual follow-through with recouping investment, the change in leadership and the way in which this has affected the political perception of Sport England:

> I think the change has come with the new leadership. You know, Sport England is a lot stronger now. They have very clear targets and very clear systems of evaluating whether the targets have been hit. NGBs know that they have to take them seriously, whereas in the past maybe there was a little bit of lip service ... NGBs now realise that they have to take them serious or risk losing their funding *(Interview: Projects Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*
>
> If you look at it, Jennie Price has done a brilliant job ... I think she is a very sharp political operator. I think that five years ago if we had seen Sport England in the position it is in we would all be amazed. I mean, it wasn't that long ago that the now Minister [Hugh Robinson] was calling for Sport England to be scrapped *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

With regards to unintended consequences, two specific issues emerged in the data. The first of these concerns the definition and division of community sport, pointing to the specific age range of community sport policy and how this fails to align to the practical realties of implementing sport policy: '... the way in which policy is set makes no sense, the focus on 16+, or this age group or that, it's just not how it works in the real world' (*Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*); 'we don't tend to work in ages, we want to work with young people now to get them involved and keep them involved' (*Interview: Regional Development Manager, LTA; 7 June 2012)*; 'having separate policies, strategies and networks for youth sport and adult sport makes absolutely no sense; *(Interview: County Sport Development Manager, County Council; 21 May 2012).* This view of sport being artificially divided for the purpose of policy was a common theme in the case and something about which CSP, local authority and NGB representatives generally agreed.

The second issue is a result of the overemphasis on indicators, targets and 'hitting the numbers' which has in turn transformed the fundamental nature of community

sport from being focused on 'personal, community and social development, to a situation where I need to get 100 people attending this project, how and where do I get them? We have become obsessed with numbers, bean counters to an extent' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 7 June 2012)*. This was a view shared by a number of representatives in the case, particularly the County Sport Development Manager, the CSP's Chief Executive and the City Council's Head of Arts and Recreation, who all noted the preoccupation with numbers, which they viewed as being useful for focusing the mind, but at the same time saw this detracting from the deeper and more meaningful aspects of sport.

<u>The extent to which agents believe that they are part of a collective system</u>

The two predominant themes in this case highlight agents' general lack of belief regarding community sport being a collective system. The first related to a sense that competition was a more prominent characteristic than cooperation, primarily driven by resource dependency. The second relates to a lack of consensus regarding priorities. Agents highlighted an emphasises on competition over cooperation, particularly open competition between sports 'ultimately, there are only so many people that want to play sport ... you end up finding that you are competing with other sports for the same people' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, Amateur Swimming Association; 8 June 2012)*; 'every sport is so keen to promote its own sport, we need a greater focus on cooperation across sports, rather than competing against each other as has been the case for the past three years' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP B3; 7 June 2012);* 'there is generally a lack of collaboration across sports. Fractures appear when we work in isolation, we end up competing against one another and one party does not know what the other is doing' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, FA; 23 May 2012)*. Other representatives viewed the system as being more competitive than cooperative, a situation which is created by the resource dependency of the majority of agents involved in community sport: '...there is an element of fighting for survival, you know, we have all been at this for some time now ... local authorities, NGBs, CSPs ... whilst we all get on, we're all chasing funding, trying to demonstrate our value or justify our position' *(Interview: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*; 'there are common accusations that we chase pots of funding, but you have to remember Sport England

could decide to stop funding at any time … we have to find ways to sustain ourselves' *(Interview: Project Manager, CSP 2; 7 June 2012).*

The second issue was a lack of consensus regarding priorities. The main point here is that the key agents involved in community sport share overlapping yet distinct priorities and at the same time each is fully aware of the broader range of interests of their partners. Part of this awareness comes through experience—in particular the different experience of actors who may well have worked within a local authority, CSP, NGB and possibly even Sport England—and part through storylines and narratives. Thus, a truly collective system is difficult, if not impossible to achieve. As the County Sport Development Manager put it, 'a truly collective system would have all parts working toward the same end goal, and we know that is not the case in [community] sport'. Whilst the key actors in community sport may share the common goal of increasing participation in 14+ sport, they also have their own very distinct interests and priorities. These are a significant hurdle when attempting to create a collective system particularly when one considers the number of NGB, local authority, VSC (and other) agents involved in each sub-regional system. Given the range and diversity of agencies involved in community sport it is of no surprise to find that they do not feel part of a collective community sport system.

<u>Agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport outcomes</u>

Local authority and CSP agents generally viewed the outcomes to be exceptionally challenging, particularly against the backdrop of more stringent public sector budget reductions, which would likely not only affect the workforce but also the facilities infrastructure. This would inevitably lead to new models of delivery or finding different ways to do things and ultimately the ability 'to do more with less' (*Interview: Head of Arts & Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012).* Further, CSP and local authority representatives underlined the need for greater consensus across sports from national to local level, including clarity regarding NGB priorities and how these priorities would be delivered. Within this, agents emphasised the need for a clearer delivery chain for each sport, including more investment into delivery as well as promoting the need for more non-traditional delivery methods to be explored. The issue of intelligence and being clearer about what works was also highlighted: 'we need to be a little sharper in terms of understanding latent demand,

and understanding exactly what is needed and where it is needed (*Interview: Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP 2/National Director, ECB; 21 May 2012*). More fundamentally, the CSP Chief Executive identified the 'alien sport culture' as one that needs to be addressed. By this, he meant the 'organised, structured, elitist' view of sport as something that you have to be good at to do. He felt that this was a major problem and a significant challenge in achieving the policy outcome, not just for his sub-region but for the entire country.

NGBs, on the other hand, generally appeared to be more positive about their ability to achieve community sport outcomes, maybe because they directly own or are responsible for the outcomes. That said, three specific barriers were identified across sports: (i) the lack of a captive audience: 'adult participation is really hard, the biggest difficulty is accessing adults ... if you are working with children you have got schools, you've got a captive audience, but with adults, when you promote Get Back Into, you have not really got an audience as such, you need to go and find one' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 31 May 2012)*; (ii) for the majority of sports, the ongoing provision of public sector facilities was seen to be a priority issue, and was a particular concern for a number of NGBs due to the common perception that facilities were ageing, in need of repair or at risk of closure due to budget reductions; and (iii) reduced opportunities for schools as a result of the decision to stop funding School Sport Partnerships. The major concern in relation to school sport was the impact this would have on adult sports participation over the longer term.

Conclusions

In contrast to the first case, one of the more distinctive findings in case 2 was the evidence of effective collaboration. This appeared to be driven by the stability of the local-level sport development infrastructure and the CSP's leadership of community sport. On the former issue, a number of senior officers involved in sport at the sub-regional level remain in position. This has benefitted the partnership as the local context is clearly and commonly understood. It has also created a sense of unity in the network as many of the same officers were involved in the creation of the partnership. These key actors share an experience of co-creating the CSP and thus feel more invested in it than might otherwise be the case. Both the CSP board and senior management team are respected as experienced professionals. Their initial

role in co-creating the CSP together with high levels of trust amongst local authorities creates an environment that is more conducive to cooperation. First, local authorities are more accepting of the strategic leadership role of the CSP. Second, this secures greater credibility and legitimacy with NGBs. In this way, local authorities could be viewed as a gatekeeper to the CSP-NGB relationship insofar as good quality CSP-local authority relations are more likely to facilitate good quality CSP-NGB relations.

Although the environment is generally more cooperative than case 1, both the CSP and local authority indicated the tension with NGBs, especially the privileged position of NGBs within the policy process. This view was driven by a perception that NGBs operate under a different set of externally imposed rules than the CSP or local authorities. In particular, the conditions that govern the preparation of NGB whole sport plans, performance management requirements and the overall implementation of their strategy were viewed as being lax especially when compared to the conditions attached to CSP funding. However, it is important here to include the caveat that whilst NGBs may be afforded certain freedoms in the initial stages of the policy process, their failure to achieve targets (or to get reasonably close to them) is likely to result in funding being severely reduced as seen in a number of sports toward the end of the 2009-13 cycle.

Another notable observation in this case which relates to both the issue of CSP leadership and power at the local level is the individual relationship between CSP and NGB representatives, specifically the imbalance between the CSP Director and NGB local-level personnel. In this case, the Director is a sport development professional and leader with considerable experience, knowledge and an extensive network of professional contacts. In contrast, the NGB infrastructure at the local-level usually consists of junior officers, many of whom are recent graduates. The primary observation here is not the inexperience of the NGB officers at the local level, although this is not an insignificant observation in the implications it carries for community sport, but another nuance in the power relationship between CSP and NGBs at the local level.

Similar to the call for a more genuine policy community in case 1, case 2 underlined an additional emotive requirement: the need for greater empathy within the policy process. This would require agents to 'wear the shoes of others' and more clearly understand the context and conditions that influence their actions. Whilst both the CSP and NGBs robustly defend the need to respond to their own local contexts, both could do more to recognise and respect the contexts that influence the other. In addition, over the longer term such behaviour is likely to build reciprocity across the network, thereby forming a more reliable foundation upon which cooperation could be sustained (Axelrod, 1984).

A final observation from the case concerned sport more broadly particularly the place of sport within national identity. The point being made was a general observation, an anecdotal remark that participation was not as prevalent or as important as being a fan—it does not form a part of the national culture. In fact, the argument being made was that for the majority of the population, sport is part of an alien culture, something in which they have no interest and no desire to get involved. The reason for mentioning this here is to underline the potential forces at play. We have a policy field of actors—where it is reasonable to assume that the majority are involved and deeply passionate about sport—providing for a population, the majority of which do not share the same interests. This dynamic requires further examination. This could consider how well policy agents are able to cater for a group with a very different relationship to sport and what strategies are more likely to be successful with such populations. Whilst such work has been explored in the broader field of physical activity, no such work has been undertaken in community sport.

Chapter 7
Case 3: CSP 3

Introduction

The structure of this chapter will mirror that of Chapters 5 and 6, focusing on the following sections: (i) the organisational, administrative and strategic priorities of each CSP; (ii) the CSP-NGB relationship; (iii) The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making and implementation; and (iv) CSP and NGB beliefs, attitudes and experiences regarding the community sport policy process.

Organisation, administration and strategic priorities

Geographic and demographic context

CSP 3 is non-metropolitan and has a largely rural character. It has no cities, three major towns, 25 smaller towns, and covers an area of 3,798 square kilometres. The population is just over 730,000 with 49.0% of the population male and 51.0% female (ONS, 2012) (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 2012 Population by gender, age (14+) and ethnicity, (ONS, 2012)

Group	CSP Population '000	%	England population '000	%
Male	284.2	49.0	20,644.8	49.0
Female	296.1	51.0	21,509.3	51.0
14-15	17.8	2.9	1,291.4	2.9
16-19	32.0	5.5	2,528.6	6.0
20-24	35.9	6.2	3,588.0	8.5
25-34	82.0	14.1	7,079.0	16.8
35-49	146.8	25.3	11,097.9	26.3
50-64	142.4	24.5	9,431.9	22.4
65+	141.1	24.3	8,428.6	20.0
White	559.7	96.5	36,866.8	87.5
Non white	20.0	3.4	5,101.3	12.1

CSP 3 faces relatively low levels of deprivation. Based on a categorisation of local authorities into quintiles none of the seven local authorities are ranked in the 20% most deprived, two authorities are ranked in the second worst 20%, four authorities are ranked in the second least deprived, and one authority is ranked in the least

deprived 20%. However, the Rural Development Commission (2008) argued that standard deprivation measures underestimate rural deprivation as they do not fully consider low pay and intermittent employment, problems of accessing public services due to distance and poor transportation links, and that deprivation in rural areas is usually clustered in exceptionally small areas not appropriately identified within the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The economic output per capita for the area is £17,735 (as measured by Gross Value Added) compared to the England average of £21,103, whereas unemployment as a proportion of those economically active is relatively low, with the county reporting 7.3% against a national average of 8.1% (ONS, 2012). These comparative data generally support the point being made in the study regarding the dominance of low-skilled work and low-pay sectors within the county (County Council, 2011).

The health profile presents an inconsistent picture when compared to regional and national averages. Obesity levels in the county are higher than the regional average and in line with the national average. However, life expectancy for both males and females is marginally higher than regional and national averages. The obesity rate is 24.3%, compared to 24.2% nationally. The childhood obesity rate is 17.5%, lower than both the regional (17.7%) and national averages (19.0%). The health care costs of physical inactivity for the sub-region exceed £1.88 million per 100,000 people, significantly higher than the regional average of 1.78 million and marginally higher than the national average of £1.82 million (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Health care costs of physical inactivity (Sport England, 2013)

Geography	Total cost	Cost per 100,000 pop.
Sub-region	£14, 457,460	£1,880,156
Region	£103,548,774	£1,776,768
England	£944,289,723	£1,817,285

Local government: boundaries and resources

The administrative structure of the sub-region consists of a traditional two-tier system with seven local authority districts and a county council. The Conservative party have maintained overall control of the County Council since 2005, taking leadership after a period of no majority between the years 1993-2005. Furthermore, five of the seven districts are controlled by a Conservative administration, with one

with no majority and the Labour party maintaining overall control of the remaining authority.

The seven districts allocated a total budget of £7.0 million to sport and recreation. This allocation fell slightly in 2011/12 to £6.6 million, although this reduction was primarily the result of one district reducing its commitment to sport and recreation by £583,000 (representing a 87.0% reduction in the district's budget). Whilst the reduction for this one authority was substantial, the budget reduction across other authorities were less substantial, ranging between 7.7% and 16.9%. Despite the increasing pressure to find savings in the public sector, three authorities increased their annual budget allocation for sport and recreation between 2010/11 and 2011/12 with budgetary increases ranging from 4.7% (£63,000 in real terms) to 34.1% (£140,000 in real terms) (see Table 7.3). Despite this, the County Council's Head of Culture and Sport[19] referred to the problems of decreasing expertise in local authorities, a result of increasing financial pressures:

> The reality is that there has been a big loss of expertise in the local government sector ... There's a hope that the third sector and private sector fills that space ... The shift is definitely to downsize [sport in local authorities], it's a struggle unless you're in a really strong sporting area and region in the country and got really strong political leadership behind it *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012).*

[19] The Head of Culture & Sport for the County Council was, at the time of research, also the Chairman of the national Chief Culture and Leisure Officers (CCLOA) group.

Table 7.3 Budget for sport by local authorities in CSP 3 (source: CLG, 2011, 2012)

Authority	£ 2010/11	£ 2011/12	£ Diff +/-	% change 10/11 to 11/12
District Council 1	681,000	626,000	-55,000	-8.1%
District Council 2	1,421,000	1,180,000	-240,000	-16.9%
District Council 3	1,590,000	1,877,000	+287,000	+18.0%
District Council 4	411,000	551,000	+140,000	+34.1%
District Council 5	942,000	869,000	-73,000	-7.7%
District Council 6	1,329,000	1,392,000	+63,000	+4.7%
District Council 7	669,000	86,000	-583,000	-87.0%
Overall	7,043,000	6,581,000	-462,000	-6.5%

CSP structure, organisation and strategic priorities

The partnership has been in existence as a formal body since 1996, initially serving as a network forum for sport development within the county before evolving into the Active Sport Partnership in 2000 and then the County Sport Partnership in 2005/6. The official organisational status of the CSP is hosted, meaning that all staff are employed by the host organisation, all budgets are contained within the host's budgetary system, and the place of work (office, facilities, etc) is provided by the host organisation. At the time of writing, the host organisation was one of the District Councils (District 6 in Table 7.3). The senior management team and board have investigated the implications and financial benefits attached to independent status (specifically Company limited by guarantee and Charitable Status), but, after review they agreed that maintaining the status quo as a hosted organisation was in the best interests of the partnership.

The vision for the CSP is 'to make the county a physically active and successful sporting county through the provision of high quality opportunities for everyone' (CSP Business Plan, 2012). The priorities underpinning this vision are (i) increasing participation in sport and physical activity, (ii) strategic coordination of sport and physical activity across the county; (iii) NGB support, and (iv) workforce development. A board of nine voluntary representatives, the CSP Director and a Sport England representative oversee the work of the CSP. Board members are appointed by Sport England together with existing board members and the CSP Director based on skills, experience and competencies rather than on the basis of the

representation of certain sectors or organisations. Individuals receive no fee or remuneration. A range of skills are represented including many that address the CSP's priority work areas, including marketing and promotion, funding, strategic planning, governance and performance management, club development, as well as particular interests such as young people, workforce and the community. Of the nine board members; four currently work in business/commerce, one in a senior management position in local government (this representative is also chair of the Chief Culture and Leisure Officers Association ((CCLOA), another as the CEO for a local not-for-profit health promotion agency, one is an elected member of the County Council, one is the CEO of a local leisure trust, and the Chair is a Professor of Sport Studies at a local higher education institution.

The board are ultimately responsible for the governance of the CSP. This includes agreeing the CSP's strategy, reviewing performance and monitoring the financial health of the partnership. The core team consists of 14 full-time staff who fulfil a variety of positions and responsibilities as detailed in Figure 7.1. Sport England provides the CSP with annual core funding of £240,000 (based on the 2011/12 allocation). The highest performing CSPs have the opportunity to secure a share of £80,000[20]. In return the CSP is required to meet the conditions of the CSP core specification as detailed in Chapter 4. The annual turnover for the 2011/12 financial year was £1,300,000.

[20] At the time of writing, no decision had been made regarding the allocation of the additional £80,000 investment.

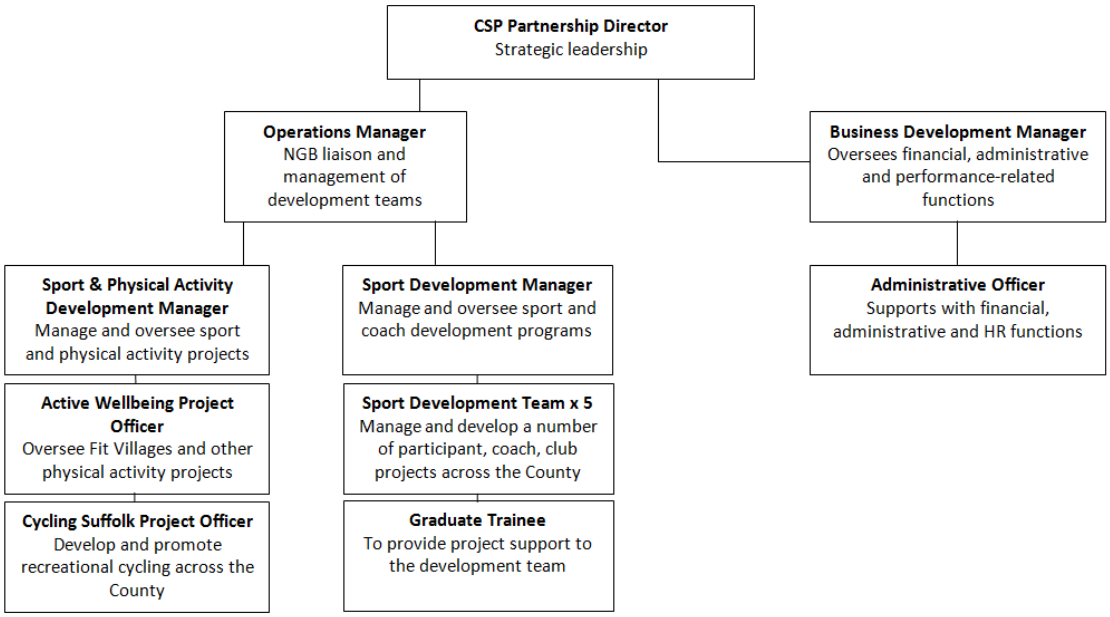

Figure 7.1 Structure of CSP 3 core team`

Sports participation trends

Sports participation rates in the partnership area have been inconsistent over the 2005/6–2011/12 period. Whilst participation rates increased steadily between 2005/6 and 2009/10 with an overall gain of 3.8%, this was followed in 2010/11 by a sharp decrease of 3.9%. The most recent participation statistics (2011/12) from Active People reveal a rate of 33.9%, a 2.1% increase when compared to the 2005/6 benchmark of 31.8% (see Table 7.4). When compared to regional and national averages, participation rates in the county have been consistently lower, with the exception of 2009/10 when participation rates were reportedly 0.7% higher in the county than the regional average and 0.3% higher than the national average. In 2011/12 participation was 2.1% lower than both the regional and national average.

Table 7.4 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once pw), by year (source: Sport England, 2013)

Year	CSP C5	Region	England
2005/06	31.8%	34.8%	34.2%
2007/08	33.8%	36.5%	35.8%
2008/09	34.3%	35.6%	35.7%
2009/10	35.6%	34.9%	35.3%
2010/11	31.7%	34.7%	34.8%
2011/12	33.9%	36.0%	36.0%

The growth in participation between 2005/6 and 2011/12 is notable in most demographic groups, specifically female (+4.3%), white (+2.5%), 26-34 years (+5.6%) and 55+ (+3.5%) populations (see Table 7.5). Despite this growth, there were populations where participation rates reportedly decreased; in particular, the non-white population (-4.6%), NS SEC 3 (-1.2%), NS SEC 4 (-0.4%), and NS SEC 5-8 (-0.8%).

Table 7.5 Adult (16+) Participation in Sport (at least once a week *), by demographic group (source: Sport England, 2013)

Year	CSP C5		Region		England	
	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12	2005/06	2011/12
All	31.8%	33.9%	34.8%	36.0%	34.2%	36.0%
Male	34.7%	39.0%	38.6%	39.8%	38.9%	41.1%
Female	29.1%	29.0%	31.2%	32.3%	29.8%	31.1%
White	31.6%	34.1%	34.8%	35.7%	34.3%	36.2%
Non-White	38.0%	33.4%	35.7%	40.0%	33.2%	35.5%
Limiting Disability	14.5%	16.5%	15.7%	18.5%	15.1%	18.3%
No Limiting Disability	35.0%	37.2%	38.1%	39.2%	37.8%	39.4%
16-25	54.3%	55.4%	56.5%	55.2%	55.7%	54.0%
26-34	42.4%	48.0%	46.1%	44.8%	45.2%	47.1%
35-54	34.2%	34.4%	36.5%	38.6%	35.2%	37.6%
55+	18.7%	22.2%	20.3%	22.4%	18.8%	21.3%
NS SEC 1-2	36.6%	39.8%	39.9%	41.3%	40.1%	42.7%
NS SEC 3	33.5%	32.3%	33.7%	34.2%	32.3%	33.7%
NS SEC 4	28.5%	28.1%	32.9%	32.8%	32.4%	32.9%
NS SEC 5-8	27.0%	26.2%	28.7%	27.9%	26.9%	27.1%

Estimates suggest that the growth potential for adult participation in sport in the CSP 3 area is 49.9%, considerably lower than the regional (55.1%) and national averages (55.4%). That said, this represents a total of 289,300 people in the county who have expressed interest in doing more sport. The three sports with the highest growth potential in the area are swimming (57,300/9.9%), cycling (43,100/7.4%) and athletics (16,900/2.9%) (Sport England, 2013).

The sub-region appears to be performing well in other sport indicators. Between 2008/9 and 2011/12 there were significant gains in volunteering (+2.9%), club membership (+7.2%), receiving coaching (21.2%), and participating in competitive sport (+4.7%) (see Table 7.6). Further, the increases show that the sub-region has

more people volunteering in sport and participating in organised sport (receiving coaching, club membership, and competition) than the regional and national averages.

Table 7.6 Other Sport Indicators: Volunteering and formal sports participation (source: Sport England, 2013)

Indicator	CSP C5		Region		England	
	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12	2008/09	2011/12
KPI2^ - Volunteering at least one hour a week	4.7%	8.6%	4.7%	7.4%	4.7%	7.6%
KPI3 - Club Membership in the last 4 weeks	25.0%	32.2%	25.5%	23.7%	24.1%	22.8%
KPI4 - Received tuition / coaching in last 12 mths	17.2%	21.2%	18.3%	17.4%	17.5%	16.8%
KPI5 - Took part in organised competition in last 12 months	13.7%	17.0%	14.7%	15.1%	14.4%	14.4%

The CSP-NGB relationship

This section will present agents' attitudes and experiences in relation to three aspects that are of integral importance to the CSP-NGB relationship: (i) the CSP leadership of NGB relations, (ii) the factors that have positively influenced CSP-NGB relationships; and (iii) the problems and challenges that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship.

The CSP leadership of NGB relations

The board reportedly operated at a strategic level and left the day-to-day management of the CSP to the core team. The board primarily served an important function in the governance of the CSP, particularly in terms of updating the strategy and approving the financial reports. It was also seen as a useful forum for debating operational issues and identifying appropriate solutions to problems. What was seen to be particularly helpful in this regard was the 'rich skill set' across the board's membership. Operational matters such as the strategic leadership of relations with NGBs and the identification of priority sports were delegated to the CSP Director and core team.

Partnership arrangements with NGBs are solely led by the Operations Manager, a role that has been held by the same person since the creation of the Active Sport

Partnership in July 2000. The exception to this arrangement is cycling for which the CSP has a full-time, sport-specific development officer. In addition, half of the time of one the sport development officer is devoted to basketball. The Operations Manager reflected on the strengths and challenges associated with this approach, noting that:

> ...it's a lot of work but I think it works well. It allows us to build up trust and strike a relationship and to keep things in check ... you soon get to know where it is working and where it's not ... we have thought about sharing the responsibilities across the team a little bit more, and we have started to do that with some of the project stuff, [but] I think the positives [of this approach] outweigh the negatives *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

The role of the Operations Manager was to agree to an action plan for each sport in the county, to decide the priorities and key actions over the whole sport plan period, and then delegate this to the appropriate development officer to manage on a day-to-day basis. Routine planning meetings were arranged with these sports in order to monitor progress against proposed actions and to agree actions for the forthcoming period. The Operations Manager was clear that this approach has not worked with all sports, 'but it worked well with those sports where we have well developed relations' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

This approach appears to have primarily evolved from the 'positional power' that the Operations Manager has consolidated, having been in post since 2000. It is clear from the research that the Director would like to review the arrangements. This would address the sole reliance on the Operations Manager and also involve other members of the team more directly in an NGB liaison role, resulting in greater efficiency as well as the personal development of the relatively junior members of the sport development team.

One of the CSP's more recent initiatives was the creation of priority sports. This is similar to processes presented in cases 1 and 2 whereby sports are prioritised and given an enhanced service beyond that required by the core specification. Sports were rated on a number of criteria, including: NGB relationship potential, Sport England strategy priority, NGB track record of delivery in the county, fit with

dominant market segments, fit of target audience with NGB products, and facility accessibility. This exercise identified 12 priority sports: angling, athletics, badminton, basketball, cricket, cycling, football, golf, netball, swimming, rugby, tennis. The CSP aims to work more closely with these sports in order to grow participation in the county. This will include enhanced partnership services beyond the core specification, in order to 'work in a focused way with those sports that were more likely to deliver growth' as well as 'enabling [the CSP] to develop softer interpersonal relationship which is more effective than the tick box approach' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

Factors that have positively influenced the CSP-NGB relationship

The case revealed three prominent factors that are seen to positively influence relations between the CSP and NGBs, factors that were also identified in cases 1 and 2.

The first factor identified in the evidence related to individuals. A number of agents viewed individuals—their personality, character and approach to their work—as being critical in developing positive working relations between the CSP and NGBs. A number of representatives mentioned the importance of personal relations; for the County Netball Development Officer this was the key issue in the CSP-NGB: 'for me, it's about personalities; you have to be able to get on with the people you work with' *(Interview: County Netball Development Officer, England Netball; 21 May 2013)*. The Borough Council's Sport Development Manager echoed this view, suggesting that although it takes time to develop relations, it tends to lead to more effective outcomes: 'ultimately, it comes down to people, I've always seen better results through investment of my time initially to build relationships with people' *(Interview: Borough Council Sport Development Manager; 1 June 2012)*. The CSP Director, a former Director of Leisure Services of the borough council within the county, also stressed the importance of personal relations, in particular the need for strong personal relations to deal with challenging or adverse circumstances:

> I would still go back to my actual point about the individuals involved in the process and making sure the time is spent building up the relationship between individuals ... if we continue to do that and do it well, we can work through all the other issues and address

> the other challenges that affect our work *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

Unlike case 1 and case 2, there were two specific comments that questioned the significance of individuals and personalities for positive CSP-NGB relations: 'we are first and foremost professionals, paid to do a particular job ... personalities and personal relations should not come into it' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*. Interestingly, the other challenge came from the CSP's Operations Manager. Whilst he did view individuals and personal relations as somewhat important, he emphasised follow-through and the trust this builds rather than simply viewing personal relations as important:

> All of the personal, people stuff is important, but you can have a great relationship and great fun with somebody and get on very well with them, but afterwards you think, hang on, nothing has happened. Whereas, you can endear yourself to somebody who actually says, we'll have that done or we'll get back to you, and they follow through ... that builds trust and that is what is really important *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

This view leads onto a range of evidence in the case relating to the second factor, the principles that underpin the CSP-NGB relationship, in particular the fundamental importance of trust between partner agencies. The evidence suggested that the issue of trust related specifically to action, in particular 'trusting them to deliver and follow up on the things that they said they would do ... if you don't have this, things fall to pieces' *(Interview: County Development Manager, County FA; 1 June, 2012)*. Linked to this point, the evidence relating to trust also highlights the importance of trusting partners to share responsibility and to take the work and agreed actions seriously. Where the CSP-NGB relationship works well, it is due to 'a shared responsibility between the two of us ... we both take the work seriously, we follow up on what we agreed and we make sure that our plans become reality' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*. In relationships such as this you get this 'instinct or gut feeling that the NGB respects your position, takes you serious[ly] and that there is a mutual commitment to the work ... not just spinning the wheels because this is what they are expected to do' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*. This view reinforces the notion of reciprocity, where stakeholders

see each other as being equally committed to the partnership, which forms a foundation for cooperation (Axelrod, 1984).

The second issue relates to agents' attitudes toward the partnership, in particular their willingness and commitment to the partnership. This directly correlates to the level of trust that agents have toward the partnership (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Scheberle, 2004). Here, the data suggest that the CSP has developed a more serious, more professional approach to working with the NGB. This is no longer something which is viewed as being 'nice to do'; rather, the CSP now works more proactively. The CSP Chairman articulated this as 'taking greater responsibility and taking a more professional approach':

> I think we now feel a greater responsibility to make the partnership work than we perhaps did in the past. So where the relationship wasn't particularly effective or didn't exist, I think in the past we would probably have taken the view—there's the core specification, we are more than happy to work with you, but it is up to you to come knock on our door and tell us what you want. Whereas now, I would say that we recognise that we need to take a more proactive approach to managing the relationship and saying to [NGBs] not only is it here, we want to meet with you, we want to talk with you about your interventions in the county, and we want to help you deliver *(Interview: Chairman, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

This change is attributed in part to the overly 'generic and vague nature of the core specification' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*. More substantially, it is an attitude that has been facilitated by the clarity and focus provided by Sport England's relatively new performance management measures, specifically the new CSP quarterly reporting system, the NGB feedback process (in which NGBs evaluate the CSP support service), the incentives and penalties associated with performance—particularly the opportunity for high performing CSPs to obtain additional funding—as well as the ongoing issue of longer term funding and therefore the longer-term future of the CSP. As the CSP's Director noted:

> There has been a shift in the way CSPs are viewed by Sport England. There is definitely a greater expectation on CSPs ... the whole process of relationship management is something which is

> going to be far more carefully evaluated *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

Although the change in attitude may ultimately be positive for CSP-NGB relations, the process that led to this change may have as much to do with short-term financial incentives and potential for longer-term sustained funding as it does mutual trust. If this is the case and CSP-NGB relations are predicated on financial incentives, the medium to long term success of the strategy is highly questionable (Rummery, 2002).

Alongside trust and attitude, clarity of purpose was identified as an important principle underpinning effective partnership work across the sub-region: 'I think we work well together, we have really clear goals and clear roles, so we know what needs to be done and who is responsible for what' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012);* 'I think it works well, mainly because we are clear about who is doing what' *(Interview: Chair, County Lawn Tennis Association; 31 May 2012);* 'I think [the relationship] works well in the county ... we understand and respect each other's priorities' *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 22 May 2012).* This need for clarity of purpose is a point that the CSP Director highlighted:

> ... what is important to us is that the NGB comes to us with absolute clarity about what sort of things we can help them to deliver ... it is not just about coming to us and saying, if you deliver the core specification for us that would be great ... it doesn't help us at all and it doesn't help us to help them. What we need is specifics, you know, we've got this programme and we're rolling it out here, here and here and we need you to do x, y and z *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

The emphasis here is clearly on the need for NGBs to provide clarity of purpose and specific details regarding the support they require, a point which illuminates the nature of the community sport policy process, specifically the NGB leadership of community sport policy as well as the heterogeneous nature of NGBs.

The final factor was the structure of each sport. This point resembled case 2 inasmuch as the evidence supports the need for appropriate structures at the sub-regional level. In particular, the CSP stressed a tendency for a more positive relationship with sports that have a well-developed infrastructure at the local level or where the CSP had strong relations with a particular sport at the local level regardless of NGB input:

> The other thing about infrastructure is that the effectiveness of the NGB often comes down to the relationship that they have and that we have with the local infrastructure, normally the local club representatives ... at the end of the day, we can have a very good relationship with certain sports, deliver a lot in the local community and not see the NGB from one day to the next *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

That said, the most effective relationships were reportedly with sports where the NGB was closely connected to the local-level infrastructure, primarily as this 'can help to join up national plans with local capacity ... [and] the NGB is more likely to understand local needs and circumstances' (Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2013). This was reported to be the case with netball, cycling and basketball, which are all sports hosted by the CSP. In most cases, the NGB employs or pays a significant part of the development officer's salary and they are housed within the CSP's offices and work alongside the CSP core team. This structural arrangement was viewed as being conducive to positive CSP-NGB relations as 'it brings us closer together ... helps to build understanding between what we are trying to do and what the sport are trying to ... and the fact that they are on the doorstep just means that things like planning and communication are that little bit easier *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012);* 'I think just having the time to be around the CSP hot-desking or being hosted ... it makes all the difference, I think it really helps to bridge the gap between NGBs and CSPs, it helps bring them closer together and improves the understanding that we have of them and that they have of us' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012*). The point here is that a shared base not only provides NGBs with the opportunity to engage with the CSP more frequently, it also houses the NGB in the same social context as the CSP, so they are more likely to share similar experiences and develop a

respectful understanding of the local context (Axelrod, 1984) or the 'conditions of action' (Betts, 1986) that directly shapes their work.

The problems that have adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship

The majority of problems that had adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship fell into one of four groups: a lack of clarity of purpose, lack of engagement, diversity of priorities, and the complexity arising from inconsistency. In addition to these problems, the Director referred to the potential problems associated with the core specification. Whilst, in his opinion, this had not adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship, he believed that it had the potential to promote a reductionist approach to the CSP-NGB relationship, which could be a 'barrier to effective relations'. Thus, his view is that the relationship needs to be developed beyond the core specification in order to really understand one another's priorities and the role and functions that each can fulfil in delivering on these priorities.

The first problem relates to clarity of purpose, a factor that, when achieved, positively influences CSP-NGB relations. For Houlihan & Lindsey (2008), clarity of purpose is particularly important in a discretionary policy space such as community sport given that objectives tend to change frequently. Thus, a lack of clarity regarding vision or goals can create significant problems for partnerships at strategic or organisational levels (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). The evidence from the case shows that whilst some CSP-NGB relations enjoy a clear two-way understanding, others are still working toward it: 'one of the biggest frustrations is just understanding each other, understanding our work and our priorities, we're not there yet but we are moving in the right direction' *(Interview: Chair, County Tennis Association; 31 May 2012)*. There was an acknowledgement that this takes time but forms a critical part of the foundation of CSP-NGB relations, and without this, misconceptions or false expectations can arise based upon prior behaviour or reputation (Huxham & Vangen, 2005):

> ...it's really important to invest time in the relationship, to develop a clear understanding and respect for the overall vision of the organisation, priorities, and roles ... otherwise I think we second guess, we develop our own expectations of what they should be doing rather than fully understanding what they do and why

> *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012).*

This was a point supported by the Community & Cultural Services Manager of one of the District Councils: 'I think sometimes we expect or assume that certain organisations should be doing this or that without fully understanding their priorities' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012).* Summing up the depth of the problem, the CSP Director viewed clarity of purpose as the number one priority issue requiring further attention in the CSP-NGB relationship:

> It's clarity for me, clarity of purpose around what it is that each of us aspires to and how practically we go about achieving this because if you can get to this point we can actually start to plan it and do it, but for as long as you don't have it, you move no further forward (Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).

The data suggest that a part of the problem originates in organisations themselves when there are mixed messages or a lack of clarity about the key priorities for the organisation. The CSP criticised a number of NGBs for this. The CSP Operations Manager mentioned a lack of clarity in the original whole sport plans (2009-13), where sports themselves did not know their priorities, suggesting that this was a time for learning and would provide a sound foundation for the 2013-17 cycle:

> The experience of the last four years has shown that most NGB strategies were top-down, were focused on the national level, and most did not know what they wanted to do at the local level. You could go and sit down and have a meeting with them and they would not be able to articulate their priorities for [the area] or how they wanted us to help them ... I think those four years have been a learning process for NGBs. I think it will be a lot better in the next cycle ... it has to be *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

Another explanation for this lack of clarity is the 'inward view' or 'tunnel vision' that NGBs develop in pursuit of their goals, a contrary view to that presented by the Chair of County Athletics in case 2:

> We are constantly looking inward at the sport, we get tunnel vision, caught up in our work and don't look outward or share this with external agencies as well as we could ... I have to put my hand up and say that I still don't really understand [the CSP] and their aims or their strategy. I just have so many other priorities, it's nice to work alongside the partnership and get their support, but ultimately my focus is on cricket and working with local clubs, leagues and coaches' *(Interview: County Director, England & Wales Cricket Board; 22 May* 2012).

Also, a lack of broader engagement in the establishment of the NGB's whole sport plan contributes to the lack of clarity regarding NGB priorities. This lack of engagement not only refers to engagement with external partners such as CSPs and local authorities, but also across the NGB structure, particularly engagement and dissemination of information vertically, from the national level down to sub-regional and local levels.

Indeed, the wealth of data relating to a lack of engagement indicates that this is another common problem that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship. There were two specific problems relating to lack of engagement that were clearly identifiable in the case. The first concerned the problem of engagement between the CSP and local authorities. The second related more specifically to issues regarding engagement in the whole sport plan process.

The problem of engagement between the CSP and local authorities was one that was unique to this case. In particular, the problem related more to funding and the perceived value of funding CSPs:

> Our leaders have recently questioned what added value we get from the CSP, what do we get for being part of this? Why do we have to pay? They do not really see the rationale or the reasons why, they don't really get it. Financially, things are getting tight and difficult decisions need to be made. So they decided to cut the funding to the CSP. It's not like it was significant funding anyway. But it's symbolic. I think the CSP saw it as being unsupportive ... it was a bit of a blow to them. Now there is a fair amount of tension between senior officers and the senior management within the CSP

(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012).

Whilst this was by no means representative of all local authorities, the decision of one local authority to cease funding the CSP had broader implications across the county where other local authorities also started to question the value of funding the CSP. It also 'created a domino effect where others are now starting to think—well if they don't do it why should we' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012),* given that all seven local authorities had previously funded the CSP the same amount annually.

The issues relating to the lack of engagement in the whole sport plan process adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship as the lack of engagement in the process creates tension, a lack of commitment and gives the impression of an autocratic NGB leadership style. Whilst leadership styles vary across sports, a democratic, consultative approach is more likely to leverage greater support and harness collaborative capacity than one where partners 'get the impression that they are being told what to do, dictated to' *(Interview: Chair, County Athletics Association; 29 May 2012)* or 'lack ownership or commitment because they have not been involved' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*. These approaches have proven to be particularly problematic for the CSP-NGB relationship, primarily as they are seen to contradict both the governance narrative (Goodwin & Grix, 2011) as well as openly demonstrating the power imbalance and hierarchy evident in the relationship (Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Houlihan & Lindsey, 2008). Furthermore, this behaviour perpetuates a view of NGBs as 'elite or arrogant', as it demonstrates that they are neither required nor choose to involve external partners in the development of their plans and priorities. This is problematic as it forms part of the feedback loop upon which opinions are formed, reputations created and expectations developed (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Furthermore, partners' past experiences are important as cooperative action is more likely to evolve where partners have a reliable history of past action (Axelrod, 1984).

In line with cases 1 and 2, the fourth theme related to the diversity of priorities across the key agents involved in community sport. The CSP and local authorities

highlighted two issues: first, the countywide focus on increasing levels of physical activity and second, the 'sport for sport' and 'sport for good' debate. The importance of the first priority is borne out by the county's vision to be the most physically active county in the country by 2020, a priority which has CEO and leader commitment from all seven local authorities, as well as the County Council, and the two clinical commissioning groups in the county. As the Head of Culture and Sport for the County Council enthused: 'we have an energised consensus [...] commitment at the highest level, across a range of partners toward making this goal a reality'. Again, whilst sport can contribute to this overall goal, the vision is driven by a set of much broader activities which are excluded in community sport policy terms. As a result, the CSP must manage this situation and ensure that it clearly contributes to both the national community sport priority as well as the 2020 vision for the county. Whilst this is not an impossible task, it arguably stretches capacity and divides the CSP's attention between community sport and providing support for NGBs, and on physical activity and managing relations with a network pursuing 'physical activity' goals.

The second issue regarding priorities relates more specifically to the 'sport for sport' and 'sport for good' debate (Coalter, 2008; Houlihan & White, 2002). Here, the philosophical difference can be seen to create institutional divisions resulting in three groups of actors: those such as local authorities who are more concerned with the instrumental value of sport; NGBs and county sport associations who are generally more concerned with the player, coach, club and competition development associated with the sport for sport ethos; and finally CSPs, who arguably, sit between the two:

> we have to be about both...we want to grow sport, work with NGBs to develop and improve sport, but at the same time we see the broader value of sport and how it can help to improve communities, improve health and wellbeing and all those sorts of things (Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).

> Whilst managing and overcoming these divisions is not impossible, these philosophical differences create a more challenging environment in which to develop and foster effective CSP-NGB relations: I think there is a danger of CSPs just being seen as the

> local branch of Sport England ... you know, delivering the national mandate or the national agenda. But we fund the CSP too and we are very clear about the outcomes we expect to see *(Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*.

> ... our priorities are not the same as the national priority [for community sport]. A lot of what we do is not about numbers, it's actually about working with relatively small numbers, for example interventions for young people to prevent anti-social behaviour. It's important work and can have a hugely positive impact, but it is never going to increase participation in sport *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*.

Recognising the diversity of priorities, in particular the local authority emphasis on sport for good and the NGB emphasis on traditional sport development, the CSP Director asserted:

> we do our best ... there are balancing acts that need to be achieved and conflicts to manage, we know we have slightly different priorities, so it's just a case of being clear about our common goals and how we can work together to achieve them ... ultimately, our priorities are about participation, supporting NGBs, volunteers and coaches, and providing strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is all about joining stuff up at the local level, whether that is stuff coming down from national level or whether it's working locally across things like health and physical activity *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

This implies that the CSP take responsibility for managing the strategic landscape, to the best of their ability, to ensure that agents understand how different partnership projects deliver against their priority issues. This is undoubtedly a challenging area of work. At the time of research one authority had already withdrawn funding, citing a lack of added value and the CSP's failure to deliver against its priorities, and more were reportedly considering withdrawing funding in the future. These issues, not to mention the difficulties of managing the varying priorities of NGBs, create significant problems in maintaining effective CSP-NGB relations.

The final problem pertains to inconsistency. As in case 2, agents talked about the complexity of the community sport system, in particular the range of institutions and the lack of consistency across CSPs, NGBs and local authorities: 'one of the challenges is about CSPs, you know they are all a little different structure-wise but also things like their priorities, funding, and just their general approach and enthusiasm to work with us' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball; 29 May, 2012)*. A slightly different perspective was provided by the County Council's Head of Culture and Sport, who viewed the complexity stemming from 'the differing interests, slightly different priorities and the competition for resources' at the different institutions involved in community sport, stating that these differences 'do not provide the ideal ground for a partnership'. This is a point supported by Jansen *et al.*, (2008) who found *competition for resources* to be one of the major barriers to effective partnerships between agents.

Another area of inconsistency related to political inconsistencies and the different views of key stakeholders, in particular the differences between the districts in the county and the county council. All authorities were vying to protect their own historical boundaries and identities, largely a result of the long-term plans to change the two-tier local government structure to a single-tier structure with two unitary authorities, a plan which has since been revoked. This created difficulties for the CSP and for the county council as neither were seen as being representative of the more localised version of the new unitary authority. As mentioned above, the CSP has addressed this challenge by working with the County Council to develop a consistent vision—albeit one focussed on physical activity rather than community sport—to which all local government partners can commit:

> I think the other key challenge to the partnership is the political dimension. Working across a county with a different set of councillors, different political persuasions, and the identity that each district wants, it creates a lot of problems for the CSP and for the County Council. We've used sensitive leadership skills to bring people together ... to secure a consensus to make the county the most active in the country. It seems that members and senior officers, whatever background or political persuasion, can relate to it in some way (*Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*.

The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making and implementation

Looking at the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making and implementation, this case exhibits many similar characteristics for those in cases 1 and 2. Therefore, case 3 follows the same structure: the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making, the whole sport plan as the NGBs policy, and the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation.

The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making

The CSP in case 3 largely supported the evidence from the other cases regarding the close resemblance of the community sport policy process to Hume's original conception of political organisation as a single authority, top-down, machine-like system (cf. Hjern & Hull, 1982). Within the community sport system, national policy is seen to be debated and agreed by a tightly controlled group of actors primarily made up of government departments, Sport England and some of the larger, more powerful NGBs:

> one of the problems is that there is no collective voice for community sport ... there is no real coalition as such, ... everything is discussed and agreed by the DCMS, Sport England and two or three of the bigger sports *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

Despite this view regarding the absence of a coalition, the Director did see a developing role for the CSP Network as part of the community sport coalition, particularly if CSPs continue to enhance their credibility as an agency that can deliver:

> I think there are signs that the CSP Network has a role to play in shaping national policy. In terms of them being able to do that, to play that role, they are only as good as the CSPs that make up the network. I think that the fact that the CSPs have been able to deliver has given them the ammunition to say 'actually, you need to maintain faith in CSPs' ... We have had a change in government and huge cuts within local authority sport. If you look at any organisation working in the sport sector, CSPs were probably the only organisation that came out of the process with a greater remit and enhanced reputation and similar level of funding to what they

> had in the past ... this is partly down to CSPs delivering on previous projects and also down to the network and what they were able to do nationally in terms of being able to convince people that it was a meaningful and coherent network that actually delivers stuff *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

Local authorities and the majority of NGBs supported the view of community sport policy-making as hierarchical and top-down: 'it's very much a top-down system' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*; 'It's all nationally led, there is no involvement of county associations or clubs' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 29 May 2012)*; 'the problem is that the policies are developed nationally and then passed down and clubs, coaches and volunteers who are just expected to get on with it' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012)*; '[policy] is driven through nationally, then things come down through the regions, counties and down to our ClubMark clubs' *(Interview: Chairman, County Tennis Association; 31 May, 2012)*. These views reflect the notion of policy being developed by a narrow group of interests making the alignment between policy and the dominant values of key actors more straightforward (Kingdon, 1995). This highlights the potential freedom and oppression of agents such as CSPs. On the one hand, CSPs are oppressed by the tight definition and bureaucracy associated with community sport, but on the other, they experience substantial freedom and autonomy to pursue a range of interests both within and outside of community sport (Lipsky, 1980). In other words, whilst the policy directive and outcome associated with it are carefully and tightly defined, the way in which implementing agents deliver activities in response to it receives far less direct attention.

Consultation exercises were generally seen as being a superficial part of the process and, for some, non-existent: 'yeah there are consultations ... but by the time we get the draft proposal I think DCMS and Sport England are pretty clear about what they want' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012)*; 'there is an expectation that clubs will do this and do that but there is absolutely no consultation ... I've spoken to senior people, like Chris Jones [England Athletics CEO] and others about it ... I got the impression that they don't want to listen' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 29 May 2012)*. Indeed, these

views reflect the importance of taking analytical work beyond the surface level in order to extend beyond the *governance narrative* and reveal a deeper understanding of the 'hierarchical nature of relations' and the effect of agents' beliefs and behaviours (Goodwin & Grix, 2011). The hierarchal reality of community sport was a notable frustration for the Head of Sport and Culture at the County Council: 'It is so top heavy, policy pushed down from national level ... it completely flies in the face of things like localism and the community's right to buy[21]' *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*. This was a particular frustration as the community sport policy was seen to contradict the philosophical underpinnings of modernity that has shaped and continues to reshape local government services, not least the co-creation and co-production of policies in conjunction with local citizens (Boyle, 2011; Ostrom, V. 1973). The frustration also appears to stem from the publication of the new DCMS strategy: Creating a Sporting Habit:

> The DCMS strategy in general was shocking, its omission of local government altogether was unbelievable ... on the other hand it's not that much of a surprise really, it's the usual sort of shenanigans that we have to put up with in dealing with government departments. *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*.

That said, the Head of Culture and Sport also talked about 'the far more important issue of local policy' and, in particular, 'how we go about creating an active county ... that is what really matters' *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*. As with case 1 and 2, the issue of local policy received considerable attention, in particular the central role that local government play in the development of local policy: 'we as a department are very close to local policy, we create the frameworks and present the recommendations to members for their decision, so I guess members ultimately decide policy, our role is to advise' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*; 'we certainly influence local policy for sport, I feel very close to that ... making sure that sport features within the local agenda, that is a major part of my job' *(Interview: Borough Council Sport Development Manager; 1 June 2012)*.

[21] This term is used in reference to provisions within the Localism Act for local community groups to bid to take over the management of local services.

In short, the role of the CSP and NGBs in local policy making was limited. The CSP articulated a 'strategic influence' across the county to help galvanise and coordinate local policy concerns so that these reflected countywide priorities, for example the work that the CSP was involved in with the County Council to create the County 2020 physical activity vision. However, outside of this, there was no evidence that the CSP had any influence over local policy. The situation for NGBs was similar, although responses fell into two groups. First, there were some NGBs who reported no involvement and/or stated that local policy making was not a priority issue: 'we don't really get involved, nationally or locally' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball, 22 May 2012)*; 'it's not really a priority for us' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership, 30 May 2012); '...it's not something that we feel we need to get too involved in' (Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Basketball, 29 May 2012).* Second, there was a group of 'larger' NGBs that are reliant upon local authority facilities (i.e. swimming) or concerned about diminishing facility stock and/or standard of provision (i.e. tennis and football). These NGBs stressed the need to get more involved in discussions regarding local policy with the LTA and FA using grant funding as an incentive to broker discussions regarding facilities issues. In contrast, the ASA rely on their team of Regional Development Managers and argue the need for greater support from the CSP:

> ...our biggest problem is getting pool time, we need more pools and more pool time in order to grow the sport and to enhance performance ... we have to be at the table influencing policy around new pool development, opening up existing pools, and discussing programming and cross-programming of facilities so that there is optimum time given to the public whilst at the same time providing for clubs. We need a more strategic approach to planning and development issues ... we need support from the CSP to work with local authorities and pool operators to make sure that we have the necessary capacity and infrastructure to grow the sport *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, ASA; 8 June 2012).*

Whilst the FA and LTA have resources to support the retention and modernisation of public sector facilities, this is not the case with the ASA—partly due to the comparatively limited resources of the NGB and partly due to the costs associated

with facility development. That said, the ASA have created a new Asset Transfer department and developed Asset Transfer resources in order to work more closely with local authorities and pool operators. These developments create a much needed legitimacy that is likely to help broker closer links between local authorities and the ASA. Nevertheless, the financial implications associated with public pools and the differences in local authority and NGB philosophies of use means that local authorities may ignore information that challenges their beliefs (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), in which case the local policy governing public pools is likely to remain a challenging area of work for the ASA.

Preparation of the whole sport plan

The NGB whole sport plan was seen to be an important part of the community sport policy process as the NGB are the lead community sport agency and they set out the NGB's priorities and goals for a four-year cycle (2013-17). More than this, the plan, in particular the potential that each sport demonstrates for growing participation and for addressing the post 14 drop off in participation, represents the basis of Sport England's investment. Thus, the plans are an important part of the overall policy process and provide a sport-specific translation of community sport policy for each of the 46 funded sports.

The case reflected four distinct issues in the whole sport plan process. Three are issues identified in cases 1 and 2, namely: a lack of clarity regarding NGB priorities—an issue that was also identified as one that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship; a lack of involvement in the whole sport plan process; and a lack of consensus from street-level agents. The fourth issue involved the increasing importance of participation amongst NGBs.

The first two issues are closely related insomuch as one reason why there appears to be a lack of clarity about NGB priorities is that the plan and priorities only involve a small number of people, usually from the upper echelons of the NGB. This strategy of using a relatively homogenous group of representatives to create the NGB plan could be to ensure high levels of cooperation and consensus regarding the network's priorities (Adam & Kriesi, 2007), ensuring that policy core beliefs correspond to the deeper core interests of the NGB, and that the NGB retain control of the secondary

beliefs, specifically infrastructure and programmes and the way in which budgets are allocated (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Once the plans have been agreed, these have either not been consistently articulated or shared with regional or county representatives of the NGB or with other stakeholders involved in community sport, leading to confusion or 'a real lack of clarity regarding their priorities' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*; 'a lack of transparency' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012); and* a sense that 'NGBs are not held to account in the same way that other recipients of public funds are' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*. Furthermore, the lack of involvement of other parties can be seen as problematic as it fails to consider the norms, behaviours, values and attitudes of implementing agents (Lipsky, 1980); allows for confusion or ambiguity and thus the potential for wide variation in how national policy is implemented (Berman, 1978); and it can be divisive as it fails to secure the commitment or consent of external stakeholders (van Meter & van Horn, 1975). Further, Dunleavy (1991) suggests that implementation agents are far more likely to be compliant implementers if they are involved in the initial policy decision. Thus, the individualistic, top-down approach of many NGBs' whole sport plans represents a missed opportunity; one which should be used to share ideas, galvanise support and start the process of building genuine collaborative capacity (Hudson *et al.*, 1999). Instead, many NGBs have created a process that alienates partners, sending a message that their involvement or consent is neither warranted nor required:

> The problem with many NGBs is that they don't even try ... I mean, why not come and talk to us? We know what is best for the local area; we represent it ... why don't you talk to us about how we can develop this together? I don't pretend it's easy, but I think it comes down to the nature of how [community sport] policy has developed and the organisational culture of many NGBs ... they are not required to do it, so they don't. We've actually had a lot of conversations recently from a CCLOA perspective with the NGBs, with regards to the whole sport plan process and the plans needing to be more reflective of local context. I'm sure this is just a tick box exercise that they will go through in order to access the funding *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*.

This was also seen to be an issue internally across sports, particularly the lack of involvement and lack of consensus between the professionals who determine policy and the street-level operators who are expected to implement it: 'one of the big problems is just getting the message down to our clubs, to support programmes and initiatives and to try and get more people playing tennis' *(Interview: Chairman, County Tennis Association; 31 May 2012)*. This has underlined an issue of control and being told what to do, and as one representative asserted, 'nobody likes being told what to do' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012)*. This was a point echoed by the Chair of the County Athletics Association, who emphasised leadership style as being critically important in fostering improved relations between professionals and volunteers:

> The other issue is about control ... a lot of our clubs have been around for years, I think many of them have the impression that they are being told what to do, dictated to and they don't like it. But at the same time the sport does need to change, it needs to move with the times ... but the change needs to be made sensitively and it needs to be made by taking the clubs along as well rather than creating this divide *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association; 29 May 2012)*.

The County Director for the ECB talked about the new approach that the NGB had been taking in attempting to pass power to the counties. However, in a similar vein to other instances presented in case 1 and 2, this is seen to be more about the NGB creating the illusion of delegating authority rather than actually doing it or using their power to promote conduct that is consistent with institutional aims (Raco & Imrie, 2000). The County Director acknowledges the practical challenge confronting the ECB:

> Over the past 18 months to two years the ECB, in theory, have relinquished some of its power and passed it down to the County Boards to say, look, you as the County Board know how it operates at the local level. You decide the strategy and how to operate it at the local level. But they are still saying, we'd like you to do this and do that, we'll give you the funding for it. I think it's one of those want their cake and eat it type situations. I think that in reality the danger is that if they handed complete ownership over to county boards, we would say, well actually this does not fit and that does

> not fit and if every county took that view then the ECB would have no way of meeting their own targets, so I completely understand why they are doing it, I would just prefer that there wasn't this sort of cover up type of thing. I would prefer them to say, okay you have flexibility and freedom over this and this, but we need you to do this and that *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 22 May 2012)*.

The growing importance of sports participation amongst NGBs is the final factor. This was a point made more interesting in that NGBs themselves felt the need to reemphasise this, particularly the three large NGBs in the case (football, tennis and cricket): 'most of what we've done in the past has been focused on youth football, but we are definitely getting more involved in the adult game and developing programmes to keep adults playing football' *(Interview: County Development Manager, County FA; 1 June 2012)*; 'there was a time when it was all about talent development; we are still focused on talent, but the importance given to participation and getting more people to play the game has grown' *(Interview: Chairman, County Tennis Association; 31 May 2012)*; 'We still prioritise youth participation, but we are now thinking a lot more seriously about how we can retain and grow the numbers playing the adult game' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 22 May 2012)*. The evidence suggests that the strategies of policy brokers such as Jennie Price, specifically the use of financial resources and skilful leadership (Kelman, 1984, Sewell, 2005, Weible, 2006), has been particularly helpful in bringing participation-related policy into clearer focus. Nonetheless, the CSP's Operations Manager spoke cautiously about the growing importance of participation amongst NGBs, suggesting that there is still an element of doubt regarding the priority given to participation within NGBs and still much work to do in terms of addressing relations between the NGB professionals and the club volunteers:

> There has been a tremendous growth in the number of products and programmes that NGBs have developed for community sport. But my fear is the motivation behind their move. Is it because they want to actually get serious about community sport or is it for the money? They'll all say that they really want to drive participation, but it remains to be seen. It'll be interesting to see how they engage and the effectiveness of their engagement with their volunteers on the ground *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

The Operations Manager viewed this latter point as being particularly crucial as for many sports; 'the only way that they can grow participation in a sustained manner is through the network of voluntary sports clubs'. At the same time, however, in many sports there is a division between the goals and aspirations of professionals working for the NGB and volunteers who freely give their time to help support the day-to-day running of their club.

The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation

This sub-section will address three facets of the role of the CSP and NGBs in policy implementation: the changing role of the CSP from strategic agent to delivery agent; the changing focus of local authorities across the county; and the evidence regarding the lack of capacity to implement community sport.

As in the previous cases, agents reported a change in the role of CSPs from one which was generally more strategic and autonomous to one which is more delivery oriented and focused on securing financial contracts. As Lipsky advised (1980), these changes are largely symptomatic of top-down policy systems where change can be introduced quickly by government departments and others with little consideration for the norms, values and attitudes of street-level operators. The tightly controlled policy agenda, the centralisation and greater importance of new performance management techniques, not to mention the resource dependency of CSPs, the perceived risk of public sector funding cuts that threaten the future of CSPs, and the affect on the CSP's ability to respond more assertively to these changes. Thus, the patterns of interaction are largely controlled by resources, and performance management techniques and quick-fix solutions take priority over more time-consuming, collaborative processes (Hess & Ostrom, 2004).

For some CSPs, the change in Sport England expectations about autonomy and, more specifically, the need for CSPs to be financially independent and secure funding from outside Sport England may be viewed as positive:

> When CSPs were first conceived there was a desire for them to be independent or self-sufficient, you know, generating and securing their own funding, not just Sport England funding ... While they want and expect CSPs to be independent in terms of their board,

> and being seen to be independent by partners and the locality, whilst that still exists, I think there is less desire to see them become completely independent and autonomous organisations because I think the jury is out. I think there are still questions about the benefits and problems of company status or charitable status. I also think Sport England have relaxed the requirement ... [Securing independent status] used to be a regular item of discussion, nowadays you hear very little about it *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

The relationship between autonomy and funding is important to this study as it highlights the issue of resource dependency and the extent to which CSPs are viewed as part of the Sport England machinery or whether they are perceived as broader, more autonomous policy instruments funded by a range of partners and with a balance of national and sub-regional priorities. The implication from the quote above is that initially Sport England expected the latter, although at the time of research the pressure to do this had subsided. There is no legal or contractual requirement for CSPs to remain independent or hosted organisations; this is a matter which is entirely at the board's discretion. However, the benefits, for Sport England of preserving the status quo as a hosted organisation are fewer distractions and greater potential for control from Sport England, whereas the benefit for the CSP is less pressure to secure other major sources of funding. Nevertheless, failing to secure a broader range of funding in the medium to long term preserves the CSP's reliance on one primary funder, which in turn increases the risk of policy change adversely affecting the long-term viability of CSPs.

With regards to the change in the role of the CSP from strategic agent to delivery agent, the CSP Director asserted that CSP 3 have attempted to steer a *middle path*:

> I think we play [strategic and delivery] roles. We have a clear strategic role in terms of the 2020 vision and with things like advocacy, particularly with local authorities, but we also deliver stuff. We support NGB delivery and we also deliver Sport England programmes. I think this role has grown because we have shown we can do it. We deliver against targets. As a consequence of that, Sport England use us as a delivery vehicle. So you've got things like the Sport Unlimited programme, the Sportivate programme, SportMakers ... you've got a whole raft of programmes that Sport

> England wants delivered and they see us as a vehicle to do that because of CSPs track record. I mean, yeah, there are one or two that haven't delivered, but generally speaking Sport England now knows that if you give CSPs a task, they deliver *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

The local authority representatives in the case generally echoed the view that the CSP plays both a strategic and delivery role, depending on the purpose of the work and the partner agencies involved (e.g. local authorities, CCGs, NGBs etc.). As in case 1 and 2, representatives pointed to funding and stressed the resource dependency of CSPs in pursuing delivery objectives: 'I think they tailor what they do in order to secure funding' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*; '...a lot of the work and a lot of the focus is on sustaining [the CSP], making sure that they are financially viable and have a long-term future' (Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012). This accusation appeared to be a particularly sensitive one:

> Of course we take the issue of sustainability very seriously. We have to exist. Well, we don't have to exist, but most organisations fight for survival, I mean we don't want to do ourselves out of a job, so I think it has been important for all CSPs to secure their position ... I think that you have to do that. Having said that, I would say that in pursuing that objective I think there is a belief that CSPs have a contribution to make to the increasing participation agenda. I can only talk for us, but I don't think we have compromised that aspiration in trying to maintain our existence *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

The dual attention to strategic and delivery concerns was perceived to result in a CSP that was more effective in some strategic areas than it was others. In particular, it was seen to play an effective role in the County 2020 vision, but was reported to be relatively weak in terms of advocacy and was not viewed as a strategic agent by health-related agencies such as the PCT. These two weaknesses were areas that all three local authorities reported as requiring urgent attention:

> I think the issue is reasonably straightforward, they should first and foremost be a strategic agency, planning, advocacy, visioning work, that kind of thing ... But they are not so prominent with local

> authorities or with the PCT as they were two or three years ago, I think it is probably due to funding and pressure and their efforts being invested elsewhere *(Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council, 1 June 2012)*.

The evidence from NGBs regarding the role of NGBs as a strategic or delivery agent generally echoed that presented in cases 1 and 2. The larger sports such as football, tennis and cricket suggested that there was a limited need for the CSP to get involved in delivery, although cricket and tennis both highlighted the important role that the CSP play in delivering their sports as part of the Sportivate programme. All three larger sports and swimming agreed about the importance of the CSP's strategic role, particularly with regards to facilities planning and development: 'It would be useful to have a little more strategic coordination with local authorities, they are a key stakeholder for us, particularly from the facilities perspective, we find it difficult to engage them' *(Interview: County Development Manager, County FA; 1 June 2012)*. The remaining sports presented a supportive attitude toward the CSP balancing both strategic and delivery responsibilities: 'I think it works quite well ... I think they have a good balance between strategy and delivery type work, particularly with some of the legacy programmes ... the most important thing is working together so that we work to our strengths and avoid duplicating one another' *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 22 May 2012)*.

The second factor shifts attention to the changing focus of local authorities in case 2, a factor that was previously reported as contributing to the positioning of CSPs as a delivery agent. Whilst one might argue that local authorities have been squeezed out of the community sport policy process primarily a result of DCMS strategy and subsequent Sport England funding decisions over the past 10 years (Collins, 2010; Houlihan & Lindsey, 2011), local authorities themselves point to a range of factors that have led them away from a central role in the implementation of community sport policy. In the interest of balance, it is also important to consider the extent to which this wholly represents the local authority view, rather than an attempt for some local authorities to rationalise defeat. That said, the fallout from the Local Area Agreement (LAA) policy and the refocusing of attention on local government's broader duty concerning the wellbeing of its local community provide a reasonably strong rationale to support the local authority view: 'over the last few years,

particularly after the LAA, we have become more and more concerned about access and getting more physically active. This is not necessarily about sport but more about addressing health inequalities and creating a healthier, more active community' *(Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council, 1 June 2012)*. The second factor relates to funding. From a sport perspective local authorities have, in recent years, been challenged with the withdrawal of Sport England funded infrastructure and the need to find year-on-year budget savings: 'the big issue is the economic climate and the ongoing challenge to cut our budgets' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012);* 'NGBs and Sport England need to appreciate the role and priorities of local authorities, we have many more responsibilities than just sport and less and less resources to deliver ... we have to prioritise' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012);* Despite the general tone of this latter comment, other agents highlighted a very recent shift in the Sport England approach toward local authorities: 'I think [Sport England] now realise how important local authorities are and that they have neglected them a little over recent years' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*; 'there is certainly a desire to work more closely with local authorities, I think [Sport England] want to work more closely with us now and they want to make sure that we are a part of the CSP' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council; 1 June 2012)*.

The third factor relates to a philosophical view of sport, whereby the majority of authorities value sport and consider investing in sport to achieve social objectives rather than aspiring to increase mass participation or contribute to sport development outcomes: 'we want to develop communities, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, improve health ... these are important local issues and they are things that we think sport can help to tackle' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*. The fourth factor was about 'new models of local leadership':

> There are a range of things that have affected local government's involvement in sport. The big one in my view is that local government is changing and will continue to change, it's just the nature of the beast. Particularly when there is very little funding in the system and particularly when we embark on new models of local

> leadership. You know, it was all about direct provision, enabling, then place shaping. Now it's moving to being a slim, efficient strategic unit that can commission services and work with the third sector to bring about sustainable community improvement. So, we might not do sport directly ourselves but we may commission or work through others to deliver sport-related outcomes *(Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council, 1 June 2012)*.

This comment was particularly interesting given that the CSP Director indicated that he is already having initial discussions with local government senior officers about 'economies of scale' and a new, more efficient model of sport and physical activity across the county:

> The commissioning of the CSP to deliver sport-related services across the County has been an issue that has been on and off the agenda with various authorities over the past couple of years. I think it is likely to come back on the agenda, particularly with the scale of cuts that are on the horizon ... I think we can provide a more efficient model, a countywide sport service which is driven and supported by all authorities across the county *(Interview: Director, CSP 3, 22 May 2012)*.

Notwithstanding the positive nature of this comment, the CSP Director did touch on the negative consequences associated with such a model, including a complete abdication of any responsibility for sport, the loss of a network of professionals who provide expertise and insight into local matters, and also the potential loss of political leadership for sport in each of the local authorities, which he considered to carry the most significant implications for the continuation of public sector sport, including the network of local authority-owned facilities across the county.

The final theme was the lack of capacity to implement community sport policy: 'I think the most challenging thing is the lack of deliverers, particularly from an NGB perspective' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*; 'one of the key things I see at the moment is where NGBs want to drive things forward from their whole sport plans, but they have very little funding for it, and no capacity to deliver it ... so what I see is this dumping or attempting to dump on local deliverers, be it clubs, county associations or local authorities' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager,*

Borough Council; 1 June 2012). Again, as in cases 1 and 2, this lack of capacity was believed to be the result of insufficient resources being committed to delivery, partly due to, according to the local authority, the majority of funding being used to bolster the national and sub-regional NGB infrastructure: 'the criticisms of NGB investment over the last four years is that they have tended to invest in infrastructure and not in local delivery, particularly their own infrastructure, there has to be more investment into things like club support, club development, local authority support and joint projects with trusts and facility operators' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*; 'A lot of funding that goes into sport is still spent on bureaucracy at the top. It has got better, but there is still a huge difference in the money committed in NGBs at the national and regional level as compared to the local level. I'm sorry but it is just not good enough. We need more funding locally in clubs, facilities, local authorities, to do the work, to make it happen' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*; 'we need to channel a lot more funding into the grassroots, particularly into clubs; *(Interview: County Development Manager, County FA; 1 June 2012)*; 'A lot of funding goes into infrastructure, governance, management, etcetera – you know, to improve and modernise the sport. The trouble is that not a lot is left over for delivery. Everyone tends to be looking at everyone else to fund the delivery of activities to actually increase participation in sport; *(Interview: Sport Development Manager; Borough Council; 1 June 2012)*; 'if we want and expect the community to do more, then we have to invest in it' *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June, 2012)*.

The challenging NGB-VSC dynamic was viewed to exacerbate an already difficult situation. Many VSCs pay an annual fee to remain members of the NGB representing their sport. According to Harris (2008), this has created tensions in the professional-volunteer relationship, particularly where the NGB is perceived to 'take the money and run', providing nothing in return for the VSC's annual subscription, or where the NGB is viewed as autocratic and not wholly representative of the sport in that it fails to galvanise the voluntary membership. More specifically, the typical NGB-VSC relationship is characterised by top-down NGB policy and operations, a lack of involvement of VSCs in the NGB policy process, and a lack of consent of VSCs to implement NGB policy, failing to harness the potential collaborative capacity of sports. In many cases the assumptions, expectations and general lack of involvement

reconfirm the divided culture of many sports, which is likely to adversely affect the CSP-NGB ability to implement policy: 'I think our problem is about our approach, we are getting better but many of our clubs feel like they are being dictated to by the county association or the ECB' *(Interview: County Director, ECB; 22 May 2012*); 'there is very little consultation with the clubs ... but at the same time there is a greater emphasis on volunteers doing the ground work ... the thing is most of this work will not happen ... this is not what volunteers have signed up do to' *(Interview: Chairman, County Athletics Association, 29 May 2012)*.

Notably, the Sport Development Manager at the Borough Council viewed the NGB-VSC relationship as one being divided by priorities and expectations. The NGB's priorities are participation and performance; their expectation is that clubs and coaches will deliver at the local level, 'but in reality, how many clubs are really worried about this kind of stuff ... maybe some of the bigger, more established clubs, but most are concerned with having somewhere to play their sport and being able to get a team out next week' *(Interview: Sport Development Officer, Borough Council, 1 June 2012)*. This comment is notable as is suggests that street-level operators lack the resources and/or motivation to respond appropriately. Lipsky argues that, as a result agents are likely to ignore policy or create 'agency policy'—in other words, the 'decisions that street-level operators take, actions they perform and the devices they create to cope with uncertainties and work pressures merge into the public policies that they carry out' (Lipksy, 2010: 221).

The final factor regarding the capacity of the CSP-NGBs to implement community sport policy related to a lack of volunteers, a point that was mentioned by a number of agents. The common perception is that securing volunteers for sport in the county is problematic and becoming increasingly difficult. However, the Active People data shows a substantial increase in the number of people volunteering in sport across the county. This could be explained by more people being willing to do short bursts of volunteering for one or two hours per week (Nichols & Taylor, 2010). Conversely, it could be explained by the power of common narrative, rather than statistical data such as Active People, in determining perception. Linked to the point about the pressure facing volunteers and the need for more volunteers, a small number of NGBs (athletics, cricket, basketball, swimming) mentioned the need for volunteer

leaders or volunteers with the appropriate skills to lead and direct work: 'we need more volunteers, but we need people with the right skills, the right knowledge, that is the difficult part' *(Interview; Chairman, County Athletics Association, 29 May 2012)*. Other sports such as tennis, added to this, arguing that whilst the clubs have the capacity (i.e. the space for new members), they lack volunteers with the knowhow to do anything about it:

> I think that there is capacity in most clubs to take more numbers. The problem is about getting the clubs to recognise this and to do something about it. Knowing how to go and attract new members is not something that we are very good at. We need more volunteers who have skills in these sorts of areas, but getting volunteers to run things nowadays is getting more and more difficult *(Interview: Chairman, County Tennis Association; 31 May 2012)*.

Agents' beliefs, attitudes and experiences in regard to the community sport policy process

The final section presents agents' attitudes toward three aspects of the community sport policy process: (i) the nature of the policy process; (ii) the extent to which agents believe they are part of a collective system, and (iii) agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport outcomes.

<u>The nature of the policy process</u>

The overriding view of the community sport policy process was that it was a top-down policy system with national agencies such as government departments and Sport England setting the agenda, with limited lobbying from some of the more powerful NGB representatives. Furthermore, this case provided a similar view of sport-specific policy in the form of the whole sport plans:

> We know that the 09-13 plans were essentially a top down thing. They were developed nationally, people on the ground locally didn't even know what was in them and it has taken NGBs probably 3 years to even think about what we are actually going to deliver on the ground *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*

In short, case 3 exhibited many characteristics similar to cases 1 and 2 regarding the nature of the policy process. It was seen as hierarchical and controlled by a narrow coalition. The case reiterated the problem of a lack of dialogue between national-level strategists, CSPs, local authorities and street-level operators, and a lack of resource invested specifically for implementation. As the above quote suggests, the evidence also showed the time required to support policy orientated learning to be an issue, in line with Birkland, (2005); Marsh & Smith, (2000); Sabatier & Weible, (2007). The CSP's Operations Manager touched on policy learning, suggesting that the learning from the last round of whole sport funding should provide useful experience for NGBs in the 2013-17 round: 'in the last round of funding most NGBs did not know what they were doing, most did not have the right sort of interventions ...they were learning as they were going along, so from that perspective they should be better placed this time round' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012).*

Another key point which also emerged in cases 1 and 2 is the perception that the community sport policy process has become more 'business-like', a view driven by the use of new performance management techniques, in particular evidence-based practice, new product development, and the 'carrot and stick' approach associated with incentivising high performance and penalising poor performance: 'more than anything else, it sends a message that they [Sport England] are serious ... if you don't perform then you will lose your funding' *(Interview: Operations Manager, CSP 3; 22 May 2012);* 'expectations have changed, it's far more business-like nowadays, the need for evidence, product development, marketing campaigns and targets. We are all expected to set targets that we can achieve and if we don't achieve them, then we know that there is a good chance we will lose our funding *(Interview: County Development Manager, England Netball; 21 May 2012);* I think the fact that some sports have lost their funding has made us think more seriously about our targets and what we do to hit them' *(Interview: Regional Development Manager, England Golf Partnership; 30 May 2012).*

The unintended consequences of policy were also highlighted by a number of agents, specifically, the (i) the definition and division of community sport policy, (ii) the capricious nature of politics and the resultant policies that emerge from this, and (iii) competition across sports. The first factor echoed a similar comment in case 2

regarding the artificial divide in policy, particularly between school sport and community and how this fails to reflect reality: 'policy starts to break down when you get to the practicalities ... what does it mean in terms of starting policy at 14? Who works that way? What NGB works in that way, let alone a local authority? Of course money can be allocated in that way, but it does not mean that it is being spent specifically in that way' *(Interview: Community & Cultural Services Manager, District Council; 22 May 2012)*. The Community and Cultural Services Manager also touched on the causal relationship between policies, whereby 'school sport directly affects attitudes toward sport and the likelihood of continuing to play sport after 14' although the extent to which community sport partners can influence the school sport experience is relatively limited despite the significance of the relationship. The second factor relates to the capricious nature of politics and the way in which this is seen to shape policy: 'sometimes me and my colleagues sit here in complete amazement, you just think, where the hell did that one come from ... a really good example is the Gold Challenge[22], I mean where did that come from, that really was a Friday afternoon job wasn't it' *(Interview: Head of Culture and Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*. The primary concern in relation to this comment is the way in which policy is viewed as whimsical rather than the more methodical, evidence-based approach articulated in strategies, guidance notes and Ministerial speeches. According to Norstedt (2008), experiences such as this can create a cynical, even contemptuous perception of the policy aspirations of government.

The competition amongst sports to achieve participation targets represents the final factor. Here, NGBs openly acknowledge that they are competing for a limited market and in many cases are competing with other sports for the same people:

> ...if we want to grow participation, we have to compete with the other sports, particularly football. We've got to make sure that tennis is available in schools and get more kids playing in schools. We've got to improve access to clubs and generally make the game more attractive. If we do these sorts of things then we have a chance

[22] As part of the 2012 Legacy Plans the Gold Challenge initiative was launched by the DCMS, BOA, Paralympics GB, and Sport England to inspire more people to try Olympic Sports and at the same time allow participants the opportunity to raise money for charity.

> of taking some of the sporty kids away from football or cricket and getting them into tennis *(Interview: Chairman, County Tennis Association; 31 May 2012).*

Whilst for some this competition between sports may be seen as healthy, it also brings to light the fact that the community sport policy process involves a 'competitive network of agents' with fragmented power and a lack of cooperation (Adam & Kreisi, 2007). On the one hand, this may be helpful for a small number of sports in retaining focus on their specific targets. Still, an approach where sports see themselves as focusing on the same 'sporty types' as football is likely to stifle the market, unlikely to lead to the exploitation of new markets and is unlikely to yield the growth required to achieve the overall participation target.

<u>The extent to which agents believe that they are part of a collective system</u>

The evidence strongly supports that presented in cases 1 and 2, especially with regards to the diversity of agents involved in community sport as the resultant lack of a joined-up approach: 'we need community sport to be represented by one entity, one voice, particularly at the local level' *(Interview: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council; 1 June 2012)*; 'there is no collective voice for community sport' *(Interview: Director, CSP 3, 22 May 2012)*. Whilst collaboration clearly exists between agents, the quality and effectiveness of collaboration is directly affected by their differing strategies, programmes and priorities. These differences create a schism in the community sport system, creating problems with regards to expectations and behaviours, not to mention more specific operational matters such as programme design, delivery and evaluation. In part, these problems can be explained by the power imbalance in community sport (Grix & Phillpots, 2011). Here it is useful to refer to Parsons' (1963: 253) note concerning 'power as both a phenomenon of coercion or of consensus'. Indeed, NGBs have power to both coerce and to secure consensus, primarily through their privileged position as lead agents in the community sport system, not to mention the significant funding that they receive to pursue community sport outcomes. In line with Lukes' (1974) second dimension of power, NGBs have the power to determine who and what is included on the agenda, and perhaps more importantly, who and what is kept from the agenda. This is primarily achieved through the NGB's whole sport plan.

Furthermore, NGBs have the power to coerce and secure consensus through mechanisms such as the CSP core specification CSP performance review process. However, this one-sided version of power relations between the CSP and NGB is overly simplistic and fails to take account of the omnipresent nature of power and the way in which power permeates social relations between actors at the local level (Foucault, 1982). It also fails to recognise the power of the CSP to subvert, modify or resist the actions of NGBs (*ibid*, 1982). In sum, the case emphasises the exercise of power to support each agent in the pursuit of their own interests rather than a genuine attempt to exercise power for the purpose of harnessing collective action (Goehler, 2000). This situation is one that can be partly explained by the diversity of actors involved in the community sport policy process, the range of priorities and the competition for resources amongst these actors, and the historical experiences of key agents, which tends to reinforce the negative perspective of the community sport policy sector as being: 'one of the most divided, confused, and conflictive policy communities in British politics' (Roche, 1993: 144).

Agents' belief in their ability to achieve community sport outcomes

The final category of data related to agents' views and beliefs in their ability to achieve increased participation in sport. Local authorities and the CSP stressed five challenges in achieving the community sport outcomes: (i) the need for a more realistic period of time (20 years) in order to develop effective workforce and programmes to bring sustained behaviour change, (ii) the ongoing challenge of resources, specifically funding for sport and 'the need to get more out of less' *(Interview: Sport Development Manager, Borough Council, 1 June 2012)*; (iii) the need for more informal, non-traditional routes to sport participation, which would have the dual effect of diversifying the range and type of sport people could access as well as taking pressure off volunteers; (iv) linked to (iii), the issue of capacity and more specifically having the appropriate workforce, with the skills and funding to bring about increased participation in sport, and (v) an acceptance that change will only be possible for some, and the majority of the population has no interest in playing regular sport. Therefore, as long as the focus is specifically on sport participation, there is a need to retain a level of realism regarding what is possible:

> If you assumed that 25% of the population take part ... 75% don't. Of these, over half are in the difficult to shift group. If you take all the resources that are currently in the system you wouldn't be able to make those shifts across this population, they're just not interested *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

In addition, NGBs noted a significant challenge for local authorities in maintaining a high quality network of facilities, something which is clearly viewed as a direct responsibility of local government, despite local authorities having no statutory responsibility to provide. This is a major issue for community sport due to the budget pressures facing local authorities and the possibility of a significantly reduced budget for sport (LGA, 2012) not to mention the likely implications of fewer public sector facilities on sport-specific participation rates. This challenge underscores the interdependent nature of community sport and the potential for a problematic causal relationship where stagnant or falling participation, an NGB responsibility, is in part or wholly caused by a lack of public sector facilities, something which is outside the direct control of the NGB.

The majority of NGBs felt that community sport outcomes were attainable, with only two challenges identified: (i) the need for a clearer link between school sport and community sport policy, an issue that was seen to be partially addressed through the change in community sport policy from 16+ to 14+; and (ii) the need for more resources and capacity at the local level to support the delivery of community sport. Interestingly, the major challenge facing NGBs from the perspective of local authorities and the CSP was the assumptions associated with delivering community sport outcomes, in particular the assumption that clubs will deliver policy, the assumption that people generally want to play sport, and finally, the assumption that those who do want to participate wish to do so in a traditional, club environment.

Conclusions

Much of the evidence presented here reinforces the existing literature on community sport or is consistent across all three cases. For example, the cases reinforce the existing literature in underlining the fragmented nature of the system (Charlton, 2010; Houlihan & Green, 2009; Houlihan & White, 2002; McDonald, 1995; Roche,

1992), the asymmetrical power relations (Goodwin & Grix, 2011; Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Phillpots *et al.*, 2010), the lack of consent from implementing agents (May *et al.*, 2012) and the expectation of short-term policy (Houlihan & White, 2002). The themes that are notable for their consistency across cases include the lack of NGB goal clarity at the local level; the workforce skills deficit; the implications of endemic resource dependency across Sport England, CSPs and NGBs; the lack of capacity to implement policy; the structural complexity of the community sport system; the insular nature of the NGB whole sport plan process; the privileged position of NGB strategy over CSP strategy; and the attention given to performance processes and the adverse implications of this for collaboration. These concerns will be discussed further, utilising literature from Chapter 2, in the following chapter.

More specifically, the evidence in case 3 points to cooperative local-level environment whilst also making note of the fragmented nature of the policy system. This local-level situation appears to be the result of CSP and County Council led strategies that attempt to bind local agents, particularly local authorities, into a cohesive network. Some of the proactive strategies used by the CSP include regular local authority workshops and delegated funding for initiatives such as Sportivate, where funding is delegated by the CSP to local authorities. Furthermore, the countywide 2020 physical activity strategy also plays a key role in bringing these agents together. This was a strategy conceived by local authorities and the CSP with strong political support across the sub-region, evidence of the capacity of CSP agents to pursue differing interests at the local level. Another mitigating factor that likely influenced the positive collaboration between local authorities and the CSP was the CSP Director's background. The Director has amassed considerable experience in leisure and sport within the county over a number of years, working most recently as the Director of Leisure for the county's largest borough council. This experience gives him important contextual insight along with the respect that he has earned from partner agencies for over 20 years of service. As with case 2, the positive CSP-local authority relationship contributed to the quality of relations between the CSP and NGBs at the sub-regional level. Whilst tensions were a common theme underpinning relations with NGBs, this was something about which the CSP were not alarmed. In fact the attitude from the Director was that this is to be expected in partnership work. That said, relations with some NGBs were clearly stronger than others. This was

largely viewed to be the result of the people working in the system, the traditional relationships that have existed in the county, and the CSP hosting or providing hot-desk facilities for NGB staff. The latter was viewed as particularly important in building the softer skills and contextual understanding that are required in order to create strong and resilient partnerships, as well as have an NGB that is more closely connected with local-level infrastructure.

Whilst environmental conditions were largely viewed as positive or conducive to collaboration, a cautionary note for the partnership over the coming years is the ability and willingness of local authorities to financially commit to the partnership. The significance of the contribution is largely symbolic, and seen as a commitment to the work of the partnership. However, one authority decided to cut funding and this has carried significant implications in terms of the cooperation between the local authority and the CSP, not to mention the other local authorities who are now said to be reconsidering future funding commitments. Decisions of this type require careful consideration as it is not necessarily the financial change that creates the largest challenge, but the way in which it disrupts future collaborative efforts.

Another interesting point from the case was the suggestion that local government has re-emerged as a Sport England priority. This was an observation of the CSP Director and a comment based on experience of increased co-working with Sport England from a Borough Council SDO. This is interesting as it suggests that Sport England recognise the importance of local government, despite their published strategy, and the decision to fund CSPs and NGBs rather than local authorities. This suggests a more nuanced approach, a dual Sport England strategy where on the one hand they must follow the political imperative of prioritising NGBs and the support role of CSPs, whilst on the other hand they strategically maintain (or re-establish) relations with local government to ensure that they remain a key community sport partner.

Chapter 8
Discussion and conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to bring much-needed attention to the community sport policy process. In particular, it aimed to illuminate the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in the implementation of community sport policy. This culminating chapter addresses the research objectives presented in Chapter 1. These are repeated below:

1. To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs with regard to the national community sport policy process
2. To analyse the significance of the relationship between CSPs and NGBs in local-level policy making and policy implementation
3. To identify CSP and NGB attitudes and perceptions toward the community sport policy process
4. To evaluate the explanatory value of selected meso-level theories of the policy process in developing a better understanding of the community sport policy process

The first section of the chapter draws together the first and second phases of research and compares the empirical findings of the three cases, highlighting the similarities and differences across the cases. The theoretical considerations presented in Chapter 2 will be incorporated to explicate the empirical work. The contextual background discussed in Chapter 4 is applied as appropriate to illuminate the broader environment that has shaped the policy sector and the NGB-CSP relationship. Thus, the first section addresses questions one to three. The second section addresses question four and provides an analysis of the utility of the meso-level frameworks in Chapter 2. The third section of this chapter provides a brief reflection on the research process.

Empirical Findings

<u>The significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in the national community sport policy process</u>

Four substantial findings emerged from the three cases in relation to the first research objective. The first finding concerns the nature of the community sport policy process, in particular the hierarchical, top-down order that characterises it. Second, with regard to the translation of national policy through the NGB whole sport plans, the evidence underscores their insular nature and a range of factors that affect the implementation of the plans. The final two findings concern the range of factors that positively or adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship. These factors are important to this study as they reveal elements of the 'black box' that makes up 'network interactions' and the mechanisms that can aid or hinder effective relationships (Charmaz, 2000).

A hierarchical, top down policy process

Adding weight to previous research (cf. Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Phillpots *et al.*, 2010), a primary theme emerging from the 'bottom-up' view of the community sport policy process is that it reflects the Weberian notion of a bureaucratic, top-down policy led by a narrow coalition made up primarily of government departments and NDPBs (see Figure 8.1). With reference to national level policy the Director of CSP 3 stated, 'there is no real coalition for community sport outside of the DCMS and Sport England' *(Interview: 22 May 2012)*. The majority of agents involved in the three cases reinforced this view.

The evidence underscores a policy subsystem characterised by its exclusivity, involving those with complementary policy-related beliefs. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the narrow subsystem enables government to form a coalition with others who share similar beliefs and exclude or discount information that challenges their beliefs (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Second, the government works with Sport England, where the pattern of authority reflects the pattern of resource dependence within the subsystem. In other words, despite the quasi-autonomous status that comes with the Royal Charter, Sport England's capacity and authority is heavily dependent on the resources it receives from the Exchequer and the National Lottery, which are controlled by government. Thus, it is in Sport England's interest to cooperate and support government, to reflect their ideals and norms (Raco & Imrie, 2000), rather than bargain or enter into conflict regarding the nature of community sport policy. It is reasonable, then, to argue that community sport policy is little more

than a government-conceived vision with little, if any, broader coalition involving the stakeholders expected to deliver it. This top-down, government-centred reality contradicts the notion of a *hollowed out state* (Rhodes, 1994) and the broader governance narrative (cf. Goodwin & Grix, 2011; Phillpots *et al.*, 2010; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 2000), which points to the increasing power and enhanced role of networks and partnerships in policy deliberation. The implications of this top-down dynamic, specifically the aspirations of policy makers at the national-level and the reality of these aspirations at the street-level, will be explored further below.

It was surprising that whilst CSPs and NGBs were quick to note the top-down reality of the policy system, their response more closely represented a general acceptance or indifference toward the top-down policy process rather than opposition or resistance: '...the agenda is set by DCMS and Sport England and we get on with whatever is agreed' *(Interview case 2: Chief Executive Officer, CSP 2; 7 June 2012)*. In short, for the majority of agents, it was not viewed as something that they should be getting involved in. CSPs articulated their role as being more about translating and making national policy work locally rather than actively contributing to national policy objectives. However, the role of the newly created national CSP Network is one that requires further evaluation. CSP Directors cautiously noted its potential value as a representative body that would carry more influence than CSPs acting individually, so long as individual CSPs took the Network seriously and committed appropriate time and expertise to it. More importantly, given the structural and administrative diversity of the 49 CSPs, their potential as an influential lobby group perhaps lies in their ability to formulate a collective and consistent set of policy core beliefs (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

The majority of NGB representatives reinforced the notion of a top-down process as well as supporting the view of community sport policy as being formulated solely by government departments and Sport England. This was somewhat surprising as the assumption going into the research was that NGBs' views were represented in community sport policy by the Sport & Recreation Alliance (SRA). However, the study provided very little evidence to support this. Despite the view of the majority, a small number of large sports do appear to play a role in shaping community sport policy. Whilst they are not directly involved in the formal negotiations of the

community sport subsystem, the evidence indicates that sports such as football, cricket, and swimming have influenced the precise policy definition and the methodology used to measure it. This lobbying or bargaining role only appears to be open to large, commercial and financially autonomous sports or to those with long-serving CEOs such as ASA CEO, David Sparkes. How such NGBs have come to develop this role is less clear. It is reasonable to assume that some NGBs have acquired a privileged position through the social networks that have evolved over time between sports and government. Further, the role of certain NGBs has been augmented by a 'policy broker' (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 122). For example, David Sparkes could be viewed as a policy broker insofar as he is a leader with political legitimacy and the ability to mediate and represent the NGB's position without threatening the subsystem's core beliefs or values (*ibid*, 1999). A final point on the privileged position of some NGBs is that the patterns of power across NGBs appear to bear no relation to the potential of each sport to deliver community sport policy. In this respect, all three sports listed above (football, cricket, swimming) failed to deliver against their whole sport plan targets during the 2008-2013 cycle, whereas other sports such as cycling, athletics and netball all exceeded their targets but appear to have relatively little involvement in policy formulation.

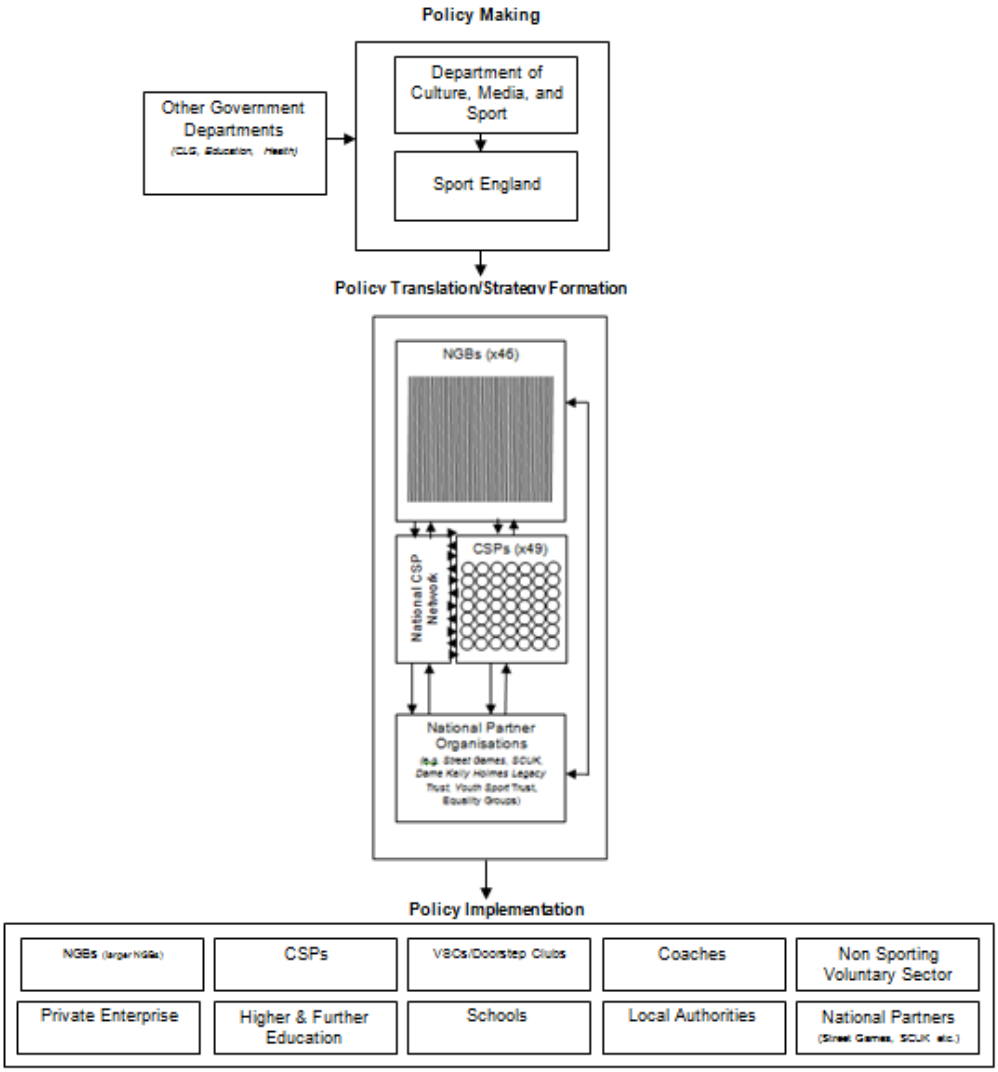

Figure 8.1 The top-down community sport policy system

The insular nature of the Whole Sport Plan process

Despite the limited role of CSPs and NGBs in the formulation of national policy, NGBs play a significant role in the next level down, where they translate policy for their sport through their whole sport plan. This sets out the 'community sport policy' for each NGB, detailing the targets and how the targets will be achieved. In this respect, the NGBs' translation of national policy reflects the multi-tiered nature of policy subsystems (Kingdon, 1995). Here, NGBs have the opportunity to focus attention on their beliefs and values so long as these generally agree with the deep core beliefs that span the entire policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993), which are most visible in the funding criteria and conditions of grant set down by Sport England.

In developing their plans, NGBs have the opportunity to engage with stakeholders for a multitude of purposes including accessing new ideas, accessing resources (Mackintosh, 1992) and securing commitment and consent from grassroots implementers (van Meter & van Horn, 1975). However, the evidence from the three cases suggests that the majority of NGBs continue to pursue an insular approach, led by the upper echelons of the organisation. This is despite Sport England facilitating a series of roadshows with the aim of improving stakeholder engagement in the NGB whole sport planning process, an exercise which was viewed by some CSP and local authority representatives as being largely superficial, designed to create the illusion of engagement and consultation. This leaves us with a second tier policy process (i.e. the NGB-specific policy), which appears to emulate that of the DCMS and Sport England at the national level. It follows a top-down trajectory, involves a limited group of actors at the national level, and excludes a number of actors at the regional and sub-regional levels. This approach not only misses the aforementioned opportunities, it also perpetuates the view of the superior *imposing its passions* on its subordinate and reflects more generally the principal-agent dilemma where there are difficulties in motivating the agent to act in the best interest of the principle rather than in his or her best interests (Braun & Guston 2003). This dynamic is particularly notable in community sport as it runs through all levels of the process—national, regional and local levels. This situation invites further exploration. In particular, it would be useful to consider the range of strategies that could be used within the context of the NGB whole sport plan to develop greater CSP-NGB cooperation. Equally, it would be helpful to have a more detailed insight into the organisational culture of NGBs and the various strategies that could be used to facilitate the organisational change process.

Internally, the approach of many NGBs creates two major policy-related problems. First, it limits the insight of the NGB to a partial view of the important structural context affecting network structures, network interaction and, ultimately, policy outcomes (Marsh & Smith, 2000). Second, the top-down process reinforces the power imbalance between central HQ, the regional/county infrastructure and the volunteer workforce. As one NGB representative explained, making reference to the collapse of the British Athletics Federation and the creation of UK Athletics, 'even in the bad old days there was more democratic decision making, more sense of

ownership of the sport than there is today' *(Interview case 2: Chairman, County Athletics Association, 7 June 2012)*. Such comments demonstrate the alienation that some NGB and VSC representatives experience. This, in turn, creates and perpetuates a 'them and us' culture, it can create confusion or ambiguity concerning goals and, at its extreme, create an apathetic or hostile environment where street-level workers seek to modify or subvert policy because it is unclear or fails to relate to the local context within which they operate (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Lipsky, 1980). In short, the top-down approach of a narrow coalition may offer the NGB a relatively quick and efficient means of developing policy, but it does little to secure the participatory consensus of grassroots implementers and invites the subversion of policy at sub-regional and local levels (van Meter & van Horn, 1975).

To offer some level of balance to the discussion, two NGBs (FA and ECB) have developed strategic frameworks which aim to place the sub-regional context at the centre of their plan, albeit within a framework of national priorities. The following insight from the County Director of the ECB in case 3 serves to illustrate the attempt to disperse power and at the same time the problems associated with the NGB's goals, their reliance on partner agencies, in particular:

> Over the past 18 months to two years the ECB, in theory, have relinquished some of its power and passed it down to the County Boards to say, look, you as the County Board know how it operates at the local level. You decide the strategy and how to operate it at the local level. But they are still saying, we'd like you to do this and do that, we'll give you the funding for it. I think it's one of those want their cake and eat it type situations. I think that in reality the danger is that if they handed complete ownership over to county boards, we would say, well actually this does not fit and that does not fit and if every county took that view then the ECB would have no way of meeting their own targets, so I completely understand why they are doing it I would just prefer that there wasn't this sort of cover up type of thing. I would prefer them to say, okay you have flexibility and freedom over this and this, but we need you to do this and that *(Interview: 22 May 2012)*.

The above comment underscores the county representative's awareness of the paradox in which the NGB finds itself. On the one hand, they may wish to pass power

down to the counties. However, an entire shift of power to the counties would leave the NGB with limited authority and, more importantly, would severely affect their ability to pursue their own goals and targets. Thus, power must be exercised sensitively, creating over the longer term an environment where national agents harness cooperative forms of power, respect the power and structural context constraining the work of their colleagues (Hindness, 1996; Marsh & Smith, 2000), and as a result, foster a more genuine form of collaborative capacity where the collective ability of the NGB and the county associations can be brought together to raise awareness of problems, solve problems and work collectively toward the realisation of certain outcomes (Beckley *et al.*, 2008; Chaskin, 2001; Hudson *et al.*, 1999; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002).

Externally, CSPs and local authorities were unanimous in their criticism of the NGB whole sport plan process. The evidence was consistent in all three cases across two connected concerns the first of which is a lack of clarity regarding the priorities of the whole sport plan, a point underlined by the majority of CSPs in the quantitative phase of research. One of the major issues here is that CSPs are required to support NGBs with the implementation of their whole sport plans. This is a contractual requirement in return for the core funding supplied by Sport England. However, CSPs have not been able to provide appropriate support to some sports as the NGB has not been able to clearly articulate its priorities. As the CSP Operations Manager in case 3 in stated 'you could go and sit down and have a meeting with them and they would not be able to articulate their priorities for [the area] or how they wanted us to help them' *(Interview: 22 May 2012)*. It is this ambiguity that is argued to be one of the principal causes of ineffective CSP-NGB relations.

The problem of ambiguity can be viewed as partially a result of the second concern which relates to the NGB's leadership of the whole sport plan process and the decision to control this internally with limited engagement of external actors: 'one of the big problems is that NGBs devise their own plans and programmes and become very attached to them without involving local partners' *(Interview case 1: Director, CSP 1; 25 May 2012);* 'the problem with many NGBs is that they don't even try ... I mean why not come and talk to us? We know what is best for the local area, we represent it'; *(Interview case 3: Head of Culture & Sport, County Council; 1 June*

2012). While this is notable in itself, of greater interest here is the consistency of this finding across the three cases and thus its implications. The consequences of this largely insular approach include goal ambiguity (Berman, 1978), a failure to consider social context or local conditions (Hjern & Porter, 1981; Marsh & Smith, 2000), and a lack of participatory consensus from policy implementers (Dunleavy, 1991; van Meter & van Horn, 1975). In short, the NGB process favours hierarchical order over democratic governance (Cantleton & Ingram, 2002), and so doing loses the potential 'positive-sum' gains associated with co-production (Ostrom, V. 1973) and collaborative capacity (Beckley *et al.*, 2008; Chaskin, 2001; Hudson *et al.*, 1999; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). However, the extreme alternative of local determination would likely lead to inconsistent and haphazard policy. The solution perhaps lies in more transformative policy leadership which sets clear and transparent policy goals and fully engages implementing agents in the process in order to secure consensus amongst implementing agents.

NGBs clearly pursue a top-down strategy of formulating policy with limited involvement of other agents. A large part of the frustration with this approach comes from the nature of the policy process. Community sport policy requires joint effort and collaboration. No single agent has the capacity to deliver the targets single-handedly. Thus, it is incumbent upon the NGB as the lead agency to galvanise support for its strategy and to adopt a collaborative approach in implementing it. In this respect it would be useful for NGBs to cultivate more *collaborative leaders* (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Feyerherm, 1994) who have the ability to lead through complexity, promote broader good amongst competing interests and ultimately leverage the partnership's potential in achieving a series of joint goals (Bleak & Fulmer, 2009).

Another frustration appeared to be fuelled by the perceived hypocrisy of some community sport policy actors, where NGBs appear to operate with limited interference and under different conditions to other agents: 'NGBs seem to get away with things that CSPs and local authorities would never get away with. For example, 'the completely ludicrous growth targets which they set because they knew they could lever in more funding' *(Interview case 2: Head of Arts and Recreation, City Council; 21 May 2012)*. Further, NGBs' centralist policies appear to contradict the principle of

broader government policy concerning localism and ignore the need for bottom-up approaches that are embedded within the numerous modernisation programmes in the public sector. Thus, some agents are resentful of the operational flexibilities afforded to the NGB (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) and justify their apathetic attitude toward policy by pointing to the problems they associate with it. However, this point can be more generally applied to all three groups of agents involved in the study. In particular, agents appear to stress the need for their own operational flexibility, but lack empathy when it comes to operational flexibility for other agents. This carries significant implications for the policy environment and for CSP-NGB interactions. This also relates to reciprocity and the way in which it becomes the thing to do (Axelrod, 1984). In other words, the more that actors are able to treat others as they themselves would like to be treated, the more likely they are to see this reciprocated. In this way reciprocation is viewed as a basis for developing mutual cooperation (*ibid*, 2004).

The whole sport plan process brings to the fore the enforced nature of the CSP-NGB relationship. Despite fundamental cultural, strategic and operational differences (Phillpots *et al.*, 2010), CSPs and NGBs are required to work together and demonstrate effective partnership working. However, this highlights another perceived double-standard for CSPs as they are required to support NGBs and their performance is evaluated accordingly, whereas no reciprocal arrangement is in place to direct the NGB's interaction with CSPs. In this way the Sport England contract with CSPs and NGBs differs. On the one hand, it requires the CSP to develop effective working relationships with NGBs, but does not require the same of NGBs. Not only does this bind the CSP into behaviours that they might otherwise not engage in (Rummery, 2002), it also fundamentally compromises the principles of partnership (Powell & Glendinning, 2002) and cooperation (Axelrod, 1984).

To sum up, whilst the regulatory framework governing CSP and NGB relations is unlikely to change, the experience and *policy learning* (Marsh & Smith, 2000; Schofield, 2004) to which NGBs have been exposed from the 2009-13 cycle might, in some sports, lead to a more collaborative and inclusive approach to the development of the whole sport plan.

Critical factors that shape the CSP-NGB relationship

The CSP-NGB relationship is a reflection of the national policy making process rather than a self-determined relationship created for mutual benefit. The literature reinforced this view, stating that the CSP-NGB relationship is 'less a relationship between individuals (or organisations) characterised by mutual cooperation, responsibility and benefit, but more a case of enforced cooperation between unequal partners' (Grix & Phillpots, 2011: 12). The incentive to make the relationship work is the core funding (offered at a time when the future funding of CSPs was being reviewed) as well as the performance management system, which provides high performing CSPs with financial incentives. The same conditions are not placed on the NGB. Whilst the NGB faces sanctions for poor performance against agreed targets, it is free to determine how and with whom it works. Despite this imbalance, CSPs and NGBs identified a range of factors that positively influence the CSP-NGB relationship. Figure 8.2 outlines these factors. Whilst we have already discussed the limited role of the CSP-NGB relationship in the formal policy formulation process, the relationship does play a more significant role in the translation of policy at the sub-regional level as well as implementation. This is seen by some as an alternative form of policy formulation as those closer to the point of implementation take key decisions over what is implemented (Lipsky, 1981); in this view, a more accurate representation of actual policy comes from looking at the system from the bottom up. This accentuates the importance of the CSP-NGB relationship, particularly the notion of co-production where agents can work closely to agree what will be implemented, how and by whom. Such an approach is more likely to result in alignment between initial policy goals and the programmes and activities implemented by CSPs and others.

Unsurprisingly, CSPs and NGBs felt that the particular individuals involved in the system were the most important factor in the CSP-NGB relationship. The evidence revealed a range of considerations, including both style and substance. Here, individuals who have commitment and a range of skills (in particular leadership, communication and organisation) are viewed as critical to the development of effective CSP-NGB relations. These individuals have been referred to elsewhere as 'boundary spanners' as they possess certain characteristics which allow them to build shared meaning and trust across diverse and, at times, divisive policy environs (Daft,

1989; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Thus, trust and respect is created and harnessed at the micro-level where individual agents develop trust based on their interactions and, importantly, the follow-through on actions that flow from interactions. Whilst initial interactions may be moderated by institutional paradigms of the partner organisation (Christensen, 2003), it is the micro-level perspectives that are dominant in building trust and mutual respect. This is despite institutional paradigms that in some cases breed distrust at the meso-level, principally due to competition for resources and pre-existing social structures (Lewis, 2000). The final micro-level factor that positively influences the relationship is stakeholder engagement. This refers to the two-way process of engagement where CSPs are involved in the NGB whole sport plan process and respond as appropriate, and where NGBs are invited to work alongside the CSP, viewing it as an important part of the delivery system. This reinforces the importance of securing compliance and support from policy agents (Dunleavy, 1991) and not leaning too heavily on partner agencies or over-relying on coercion in order to achieve policy goals (Agranoff, 2007).

At the meso-level, the most critical factors in the CSP-NGB relationship were viewed to be goal clarity, financial resources and structures. These factors were commonly cited across all three cases and from a range of different actors, supporting the findings of previous studies (Chaskin, 2001; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002). Here, the issue of goal clarity was viewed as particularly important, primarily as CSPs commonly reported a lack of clarity or ambiguity regarding the whole sport plan process and priorities. Whilst this was an issue in the 2009-13 whole sport plan process, the expectations of CSPs are likely to change for the 2013-17 process, largely due to the experience of the 2009-13 cycle. This follows Marsh & Smith's dialectical Policy Network Model (2000), in particular the causal relationship between actor's learning, actor's skill and network interactions and the result of these changes on policy outcomes. The policy learning in the 2009-13 cycle may enhance the actor's skill, develop network interactions and as a result, improve the overall policy outcome. Conversely, the policy analysis literature reminds us that policy frameworks can simplify the policy process and result in an overly rational view which fails to take account of the sheer range of variables that are likely to shape the policy community (Heclo, 1978). Finally, whilst structures were not a common feature across all three cases, this was considered an important finding due to the

implications for policy implementation, not to mention the objectives directing this study. Structures were viewed as a critical element by some actors as they reflect the ability of the NGB to act upon and implement its whole sport plan. A small number of NGBs have a clearly articulated system of delivery for some aspects of their plan (e.g. England Netball and the *Back to Netball* programme; the ECB and the *Chance to Shine* initiative). Further, the act of developing 'implementation structures' itself signifies that the NGB has considered the reality of their plan and given the issue serious consideration. Such steps, particularly where these have involved the CSP, are reported to be particularly advantageous to the development of effective CSP-NGB relationships.

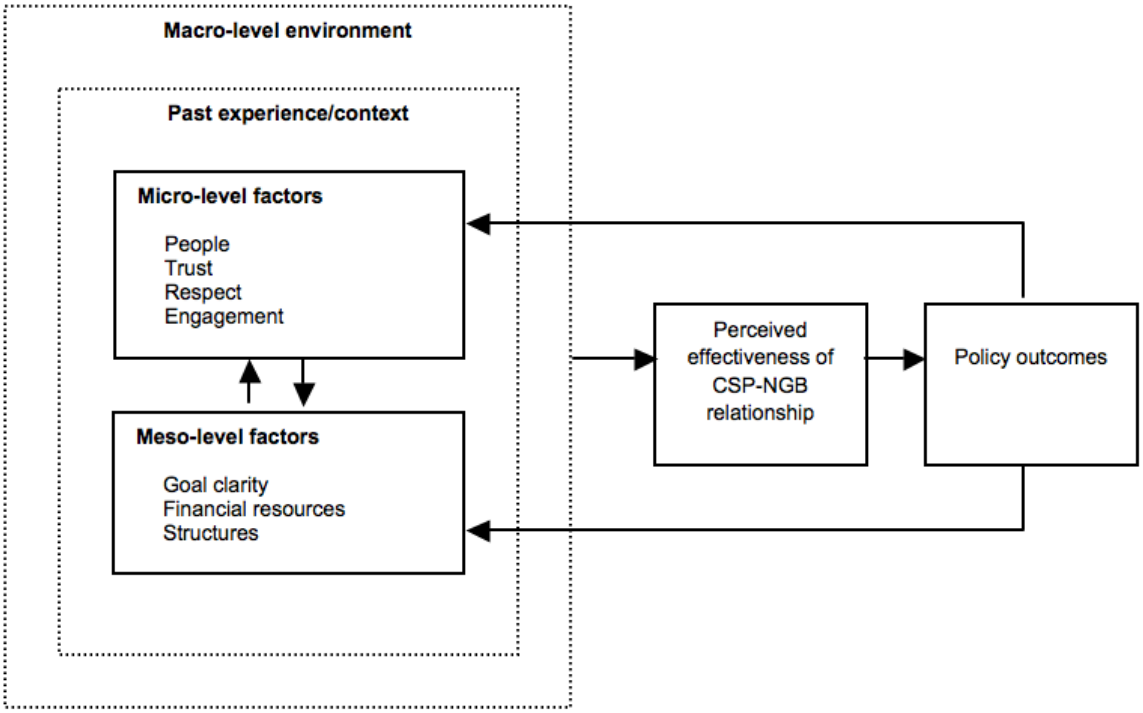

Figure 8.2 Meso- and micro-level factors that positively influence the CSP-NGB relationship

In terms of barriers or problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship four were identified across the three cases. The first of these, lack of engagement, contradicts the point concerning the positive influence of engagement detailed above. More specifically, the problem of lack of engagement related to three factors (i) the lack of local authority engagement in the CSP, (ii) the lack of CSP/local authority engagement in the NGB whole sport plan process, and (iii) the lack of NGB engagement in the CSP. The first and third factors will be discussed together as they both concern a lack of engagement in the CSP. The second issue will not be addressed specifically as this was given detailed attention above (see the *Insular Nature of the Whole Sport Plan* section, page 297 above). The lack of engagement of local authorities and the NGB in the CSP related more specifically to the notion of self-exclusion, where local authority and NGB agents did not actively engage with the CSP rather than the CSP not attempting to engage them. This was an issue in case 1 in particular, where there were tensions over the role of the CSP, specifically the way in which it assumed strategic leadership of sport in the sub-region. Local authorities vehemently disputed this, questioning the role and capacity of the CSP, and argued that they would be better placed to fulfil the role. This case highlights the fragmentation of power at the community level, where the policy community is best

characterised as 'competitive' (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). It also illustrates the capability of networks to produce inertia, particularly when the partnership is viewed as a zero-sum game leading organisations to defend policy territory. The evidence in case 1 was distinct from that in cases 2 and 3, where the network was viewed to be more cooperative. This can be explained in part at least by the distinct nature of the sub region in case 1. This is not a county area per se, and actors within the sub-region have limited experience of working together. Also, the partnerships in cases 2 and 3 evolved from earlier iterations that were established by local authorities, and therefore authorities had a stronger connection with the partnership. Further, the authorities in case 1 were large Metropolitan Authorities with a strong community sport tradition and the majority retained a relatively large sport development team. In contrast, the smaller authorities in cases 2 and 3 had a streamlined community sport development workforce, resulting in greater dependence on the resources that the CSP could leverage. Finally, the contrast between the first case and cases 2 and 3 suggests that situational policy-specific variables are significant in determining the likelihood of partnership cooperation (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). The higher levels of trust between partners in cases 2 and 3 may be the product of the relatively long history of partnership working which was absent in case 1 and/or the experience of CSP personnel, many of whom had worked previously in a local government context.

The extent to which NGBs were engaged with the CSP was more or less consistent across the three cases. The smaller and medium sports (basketball, golf, athletics, swimming and netball) were perceived to be more engaged (despite generally having fewer personnel), whereas the larger sports (football, cricket, and tennis) were viewed to be less engaged, primarily due to their resources and infrastructure which, as the County Director of the ECB in case 3 stated, allows them to focus wholly on their own priorities with limited attention to the wider work of CSPs or local authorities. Nevertheless, the continuing pressure facing local authority budgets and the resulting uncertainty regarding the future of local public sector facility provision did prove to be issues that energised the interest of larger NGBs, particularly football and cricket. However, the degree to which this galvanised NGB involvement in the CSP varied depending on the NGB's perception of the CSP and the extent to which it was seen to represent the network of local authorities in the sub-region. In this respect, the larger NGBs are more likely to engage with the CSP if it is viewed to have

legitimacy and is able to bring local authorities together as a coordinated network to discuss pertinent issues such as facility provision and future facilities planning.

The second major problem that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship is one that has troubled the entire community sport policy process since the early 1990s, and relates to the philosophical basis of each agent's involvement in sport. Here, local authorities are concerned with their community, in particular health and wellbeing and improving the quality of life of their local community. In contrast, NGBs are concerned with the furtherance of their particular sport, including (but not limited to) increasing participation, commercial success and developing excellence. Figure 8.3 illustrates the differing priorities of key agents involved in community sport at the sub-regional level.

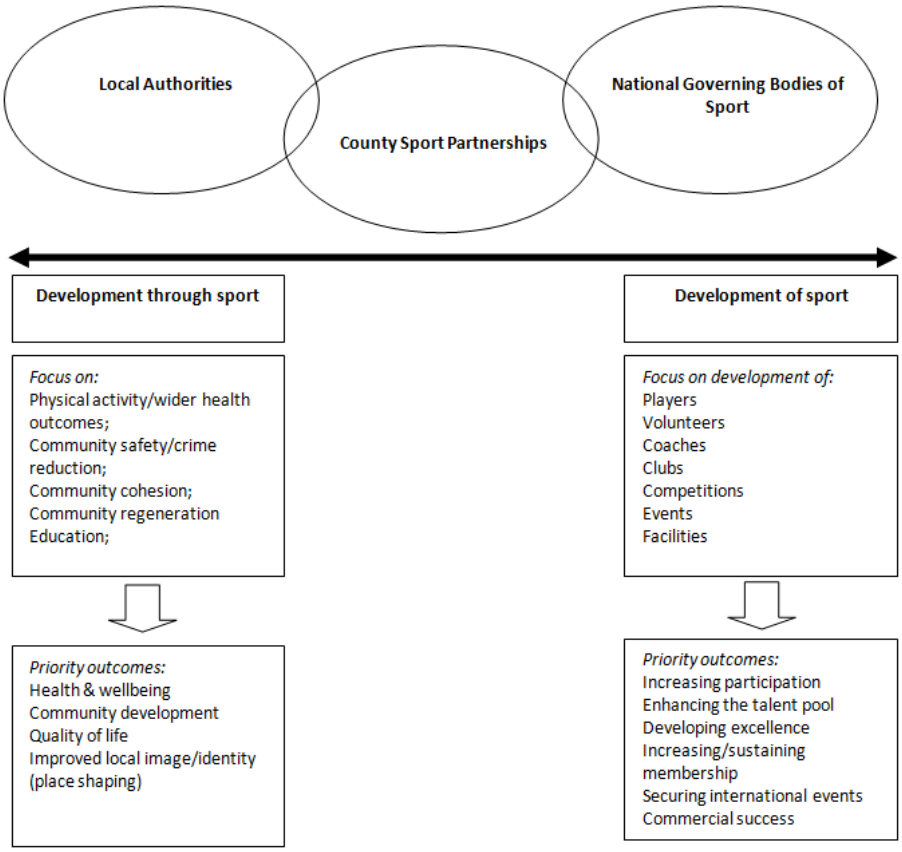

Figure 8.3 Diversity of priorities in community sport: sub-regional level

At a strategic level, these differences divide the policy sector and create competing coalitions. Local authorities utilise *policy venues* (Sabatier & Jenkins Smith, 1999) such as the LGA and CCLOA conferences, not to mention national statistics such as

adult and childhood obesity, to bargain and lobby for a wider definition of sport as well as underline the social, instrumental role of sport. However, the extent to which they do this methodically or consistently is open to debate. In contrast, NGBs utilise the politically attractive sphere of potential international success to underscore the importance of investing in *pure sport*.

At the operational level, the implications of the differing philosophies mean that community sport agents often pursue a range of strategies and programmes. In all three cases CSPs argued that they embraced a strategic level, which involves translating and coordinating policy at the local level, as the Director of CSP 3 explains:

> we do our best ... there are balancing acts that need to be achieved and conflicts to manage, we know we have slightly different priorities, so it's just a case of being clear about our common goals and how we can work together to achieve them ... ultimately, our priorities are about participation, supporting NGBs, volunteers and coaches, and providing strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is all about joining stuff up at the local level, whether that is stuff coming down from national level or whether it's working locally across things like health and physical activity *(Interview: Director, CSP 3; 22 May 2012)*.

This is a position driven in part by the resource dependency of the CSP, not least their reliance on Sport England funding which requires them to support NGBs and local authorities, the second largest funder of CSPs. The dynamic also highlights the ubiquitous and complex nature of power within community sport. Whilst the DCMS and Sport England delegate the primary leadership role in community sport to NGBs together with significant funding to support this, the majority of NGBs depend on local authority facility provision to enable them to achieve their goals. Also, many NGBs require support (financial and knowledge) at the community level to enable them to effectively implement their programmes. In contrast, although a small number of authorities may require NGB support with securing external funding for facility development[23], the majority do not require or depend on NGBs to achieve

[23] Applications to the Lottery Sport Fund for facility developments now require strategic support from NGBs.

their goals. As a result, CSPs find themselves playing a key mediating role in which they must focus on the mutual benefits of the CSP-NGB relationship whilst working more closely with local partners such as local authorities to pursue locally derived priorities. Thus, CSPs generally adopt a twin-track strategy where they work as close allies of NGBs in community sport policy, as well as working with local community partners (including local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, etc.) to address broader health and wellbeing concerns. The reality of the situation requires that CSPs do their best in a situation that is less than ideal, but the lack of alignment of values and priorities is a significant problem that compromises the fundamental premise of partnership (Ling, 2000) and takes time and resources away from addressing actual policy outcomes (Bloyce *et al.*, 2008).

The third problem that adversely affects the CSP-NGB relationship is, from the perspective of the CSP, the creation of a comprehensive performance management system that requires the CSP to frequently report performance and demonstrate how it is meeting the requirements of Sport England's core specifications as well as the annual targets for participation and drop-off. Whilst this was seen by some CSPs to be useful in focusing attention and resources, processes such as the core specification and the carrot-and-stick approach attached to achieving numerical targets were generally seen to stifle the CSP-NGB relationship and to drive behaviours that were more concerned with the superficial appearance of the CSP-NGB relationship rather than the deeper skills and processes that underpin it:

> I guess the final thing to say is about the target mentality that we all work in now. On the one hand it's fine, we need direction, we need it to help prioritise ... The core specification is a little like that, okay, this is what I need to do, what I need to offer to be seen in a good light. But partnership working needs to be more genuine, it needs to go beyond this, it requires a more open conversation about vision, priorities and roles and responsibilities *(Interview: Regional Director, ECB /Governance Chair, Trustee, CSP B4*).

Here, Demming's (2000) work on the deadly diseases of management is instructive as it points to the counterproductive nature of overt performance management systems, particularly the way in which such systems encourage actions that present the impression of effective performance without actually producing effective

performance in the longer term. Such systems also affect secondary beliefs which, whilst amenable to change, are important in influencing how agents perceive and thus behave within the policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). In short, the evidence raises questions about the normative values attached to performance management systems and the long-term implications for developing a genuine and effective CSP-NGB relationship.

The final problem relates to the complexity arising from inconsistency. A number of agents referred to the problem of inconsistency. NGBs referred to the inconsistent structure and strategy of CSPs. CSPs complained about the lack of consistency within NGBs, where at the sub-regional and local levels they are unable to articulate the same priorities as those at the national level. In this way the evidence suggests that the complexity associated with community sport is more about the nature of the work and the perception that community sport lacks uniformity or consistency of approach across the same types of organisational types (CSPs or NGBs), rather than being solely about the myriad organisations that occupy the community sport landscape. Notably, agents argued for greater uniformity across partner organisations whilst at the same time underlining their autonomy and individuality, and argued for greater flexibility in policy to ensure that it fits appropriately with their local socio-economic and/or organisational context. This accentuates a contradiction where the need for and importance of autonomy and individuality is understood and respected when applied to one's own institution, yet viewed as complex or inconvenient when applied to others. It is also possible that *complexity* is used as a smokescreen for other problems in the policy system. Whilst the term has a relatively long and common association with community sport, it is possible that it has been used in this study to disguise or hide other problems that agents would rather not reveal. This seems reasonable to assume as, on the one hand, the system may appear complex to the outsider looking in, but on the other, understanding and making sense of intricacies and unique features of the sub-regional system should form an integral part of the agent's day-to-day work, particularly when one considers the transitory nature of the sport development workforce where it is often the case that CSP personnel work within NGBs or local government, and vice versa.

The significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in local policy making and implementation

This sub-section has been divided into two parts to address first, the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in local policy making and second, the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in policy implementation.

The significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in local policy making

While acknowledging that the NGB-led sport for sport coalition has lobbied for and secured commitment toward goals that largely align with their traditional sport development beliefs at the national level, this has yet to occur at the local level. Consequently, the sport for sport coalition is dominant at the national level, but remains part of the weaker coalition when considering local-level policy concerns – see Figure 8.4. This is associated, in part, with the power and legitimacy of local government, which prioritises objectives associated with development through sport over those more concerned with the development of sport. Local governments' legitimacy is a function of its mandate from the local electorate, specifically to create and pursue policies that support the local community, such as those relating to master planning, facility development, health and wellbeing as well as the potential afforded by new revenue streams such as Section 106 monies. The dominant position of local government in local sport-related policy can also be explained by the recent past (Chitty, 2004), in particular, local government's tradition of formulating sport-related policy at the local level, whether through formal policy documentation (strategies, planning policies, funding criteria) or through the actions of local operators (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Further, local government's central position in local policy can be seen to be a result of a lack of alternatives (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). At the local level, the sport for sport coalition is diluted and fragmented as sports compete with one another to retain and/or attract new participants and pursue their own interests. This creates significant problems for the CSP-NGB relationship as, rather than representing a more powerful, collective voice for community sport, the relationship reflects the reality of the singular arrangements that exist between the CSP and individual sports. Whilst some sports may be able to galvanise a more effective collaborative effort than others due to their organisational capacity, resources, traditional links in

the area, or relations with local-level agents, the overall lack of collaboration across sports weakens the position of the sport-for-sport coalition.

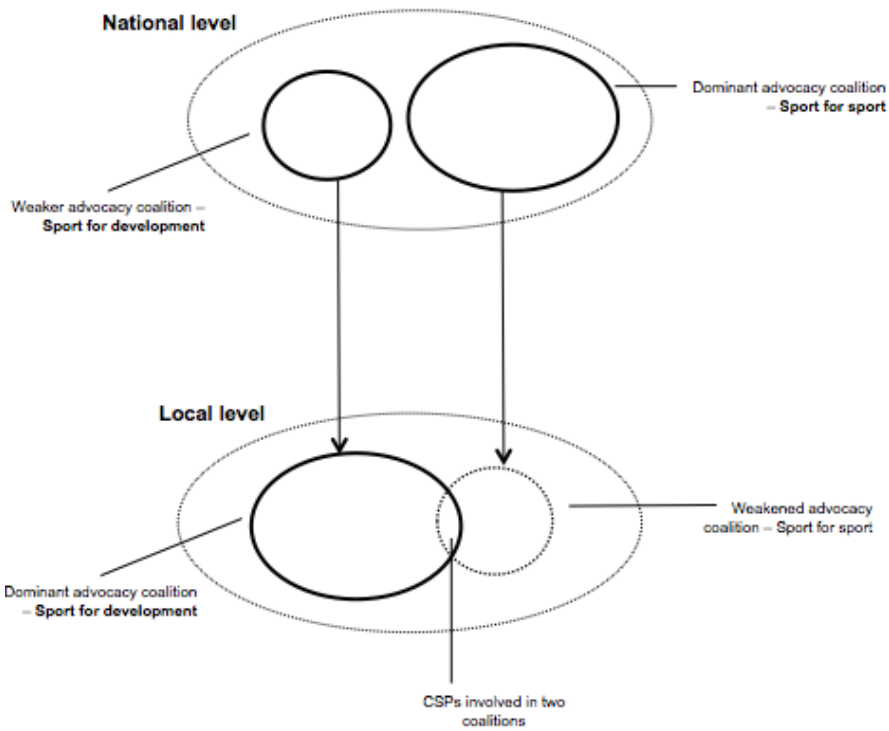

Figure 8.4 Community sport policy subsystem and coalitions at national and local levels

The evidence from the three cases suggests that CSPs attempt to reconcile a position in the local level subsystem where they can respond to the needs of the top-down sport for sport coalition and at the same time support the development and implementation of local policy, which is more commonly concerned with sport for development. The ability of CSPs to fulfil this role varies considerably. This is a position driven by the CSP's reputation and is based on its track record in cooperating with local partners and mediated by the beliefs and values of agents involved in the local network (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Policy-specific context such as this plays a significant role in determining whether CSPs play a cooperative or competitive role in local policy networks. Here, Adam & Kriesi's (2007) power/interaction model provides a useful lens through which to view the fragmentation of power at the community level. As previously mentioned, case 1 exhibits a pattern best characterised as 'competition', while cases 2 and 3 are more closely associated with 'horizontal cooperation'. What the first case also

illustrates is the capacity of networks to result in inertia when the partnership is perceived as a zero-sum game in which organisations defend policy territory. Case 2 and 3 generally exhibited signs of closer collaboration in the local policy process, which can be explained in part at least by historical context, not least the initial role of local authorities in the creation of the countywide partnership. It can be attributed in part to the relatively limited community sport development capacity in the local authorities creating greater dependence on CSP resources. The contrast between case 1 and cases 2 and 3 underline the significance of the situational policy-specific variables in determining the likelihood of partnership cooperation (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). The higher level of cooperation found in cases 2 and 3 could be explained by the higher level of trust and respect between partners, which may be the product of the relatively long history of partnership working which was absent in case 1, the high proportion of staff who were former local authority employees, and/or the more consultative, democratic leadership style of the CSP senior management teams in cases 2 and 3.

So, while the CSP-NGB relationship does not in itself play a significant role in the formulation of local sport-related policy, CSPs perceived as being effective can and do play an important role in local-level policy networks. This does not alter the subordinate and constrained position of the CSPs in the national policy context (cf. Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Phillpots, 2010); however, it does offer a broader perspective of the relative power and autonomy of CSPs to utilise their skills and resources to pursue other, locally determined interests that may fall outside the tightly defined area of community sport. In this respect, cases 2 and 3 more closely represent the integrated structure of policy communities where a common set of values direct the work of the CSP (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). An example of this is the countywide 2020 vision and strategy for physical activity discussed in case 3. In contrast, case 1 more closely reflects an issue network where a measure of agreement exists, but conflict is ever-present (*ibid*, 1992).

Despite the distinct differences in the structure and interaction of networks at the sub-regional level, the extent to which any of the three CSPs represent anything more than a core team of sports professionals remains a point of debate. Certainly, agents expressed more respect for the CSP leadership in cases 2 and 3 compared to case 1.

However, this did not include any evidence of the CSP's ability to develop a true partnership that involved and represented the interests of agents at the sub-regional level. The CSP is viewed as another agent, another institution or layer in the system with which other agents need to cooperate, rather than a representative or umbrella body for sport to which other agents belonged. This is problematic at the theoretical level as it challenges the beliefs of CSP personnel and contradicts one of the founding principles upon which CSPs were developed. Moreover, on a practical level this separation of the CSP can waste resources, duplicate effort, and create *a them and us* work culture. It also raises serious questions about the CSP's capacity to strategically lead sport at the sub-regional level. Given the extant literature and the empirical work presented above, the broader notion of partnership with which the CSP is associated remains a rhetorical point requiring further investigation.

The significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in policy implementation

The findings relating to implementation underscored the major problems associated with implementing community sport policy and highlighted some of the progress that has been made in relation to criticisms presented in earlier implementation studies (Bardach, 1977; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). The quantitative and qualitative evidence in the study pointed to a clearly defined policy objective, a renewed focus on policy objectives and a clear system of evaluating progress. While it acknowledges the progress made since the 1970s, the evidence is more useful in highlighting the range of challenges that affect the capacity of the CSP-NGB relationship in implementing community sport policy. In particular, three factors were viewed as being important in considering the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in policy implementation: (i) the reality of partnership-based implementation, (ii) the funding and capacity allocated to implementation, and the (iii) the skills and competencies of the community sport workforce.

The evidence challenges Carter's (2005) vision of a cohesive community sport implementation system. Whilst the evidence did reveal close collaboration between some CSPs and NGBs in policy implementation—particularly in areas where micro-level relations were strong and thus trust between agents high—this can at best be described as patchy. This can partly be explained by the challenges that are embedded in the reality of policy action. This is a point that Pressman & Wildavsky

(1973) emphasise, in particular that the exercise of *doing* is inherently more complex than *thinking*. Here, attention to and consensus on *what is to be done* is vital. This is particularly difficult for community sport as *agreeing what is to be done* should not be the work of one agent alone but, given the interdependent nature of community sport, an agreement that should be made across a number of agents. As Good observed:

> Although administrative reforms are usually designed by a few people, invariably they are implemented by many. It is through the implementation, and not the design, that the issues, contradictions and dilemmas rise to the surface and become grounded in the reality of administration and politics. And it is often the implementers, not the designers, who are called upon to reconcile them (2003: 182).

Thus, rather than aiding the pursuit of policy outcomes, the enforced CSP-NGB relationship presents another obstacle and thus makes the process more challenging (Bardach, 1977; Bloyce *et al.*, 2008; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). In sum, community sport policy can generally be seen to reflect the schism between those who conceive policy and those who have to implement it, a schism made wider by the hierarchical, top-down nature of the community sport policy process. In this respect, the evidence draws attention to two common and significant problems in community sport policy: (i) the need for future policy conception to take account of the whole picture, not just the formulation of policy but also the reality of executing it (Bardach, 1973), and (ii) less steering and directing of implementing agents and greater emphasis on 'the growth of reflective organisations which are capable of their own self-transformation' and their own self organisation, and thus more likely to achieve policy outcomes (Parsons, 2002: 51).

The quantitative and qualitative evidence is convincing in underscoring the perceived lack of funding allocated to implementation. To clarify, the evidence does not suggest that the £450m allocated to NGB whole sport plans or the £37m invested into CSPs for the 2013-17 is insufficient. Rather, it draws attention to the resource allocation behaviour of CSPs and NGBs. Here, the dominant view is that resources are used to develop the organisational capacity of the NGB rather than being invested in the sport at the street-level. This is problematic because, although it broadens the NGB's

infrastructure, it leaves little leeway for developing the capacity of street-level agents or for investment into specific implementation projects. Representing this view, the Chairman of the Athletics Association in case 2 argued that:

> It's quite simple really, if we want to bring about a change at the local level we need more support, we need more capacity at the local level. Most of the NGB resource tends to get sucked up at the national or regional level. I understand why, but we need to challenge ourselves more to get the funding committed at the grassroots level, this is where the money is needed and where it will make the most difference (Interview: 7 June , 2012).

There are three possible explanations of this behaviour. First, Ostrom's (2007) Institutional Analysis Framework underlines the importance of value judgements about the relative importance of the subsystem and how these judgements influence the resource allocation behaviour of NGBs. Here, considerations such as the accepted norms about policy activities, the level of understanding amongst participants about policy activities and the extent to which preferences are homogenous in the action arena are important in formalising values and thus influencing how institutions allocate resources (Ostrom, 2007). The fragmented nature of community sport, particularly the lack of accepted norms, the relatively weak understanding of policy activities and the diversity of preferences amongst policy actors helps to explain why many NGBs invest internally rather than allocating funding to other policy agents. Second, the distribution of external resources into organisations brings with it an uncertainty which carries implications for organisational action and behaviour. This uncertainty and the actions and behaviour that flow from it are typical in organisations that are dependent on or have become accustomed to receiving external resources (Polski & Ostrom, 1999). Their first priority is often to secure the viability of the organisation for as long as possible (Johnson, 1990). Long-term security can be seen as more likely if organisations retain direct control of resources rather than committing them to external activities or to third parties (Benson, 1975). Similar, viability in the longer term is perceived as being more likely if organisations have the human capacity to achieve goals and leverage additional resources. This is particularly relevant in the context of the old 'new public management techniques' which are being utilised in community sport as organisations are incentivised with additional resources if they achieve goals but penalised through the claw back of

funding if they fail to achieve targets. Third, from an operational perspective, NGBs may justify their resource allocation behaviour on the basis of not having the human/physical resource to manage and oversee the new, additional activities and the associated work. Here, it can be argued that NGBs do their best with what they have in terms of developing an infrastructure to create and manage new projects, leverage additional resources and meet performance reporting requirements. Furthermore, the infrastructure gets NGBs closer to the point of delivery (e.g. regional or county level) than would otherwise be possible, enabling them to better support existing operators (clubs, colleges and coaches) as well as build new local-level capacity.

Marsh & Smith's (2000) dialectical model is instructive when considering the implications of this behaviour. It underscores the complex range of cause and effect relations within the policy process, in particular the interdependent relationship between the policy environment (the structural context) and the actors operating within the policy network. The model gives attention to the resource allocation behaviour of NGBs and the way in which this is shaped by the environment and the policy network and also considers the way in which this influences the policy environment and policy network. One implication of this behaviour is that it creates (and sustains) a cultural context that more closely represents individualism, self-interest and institutional survival than one promoting co-operation, common interest, and the achievement of positive outcomes for society. Network structures and interactions find it difficult to flourish in such a context, which fails to stimulate high trust/high involvement interactions (Scheberle, 2004) and emboldens the range of socio-psychological limitations that can damage network interactions (Ostrom, 1999). It is in the broader interests of the policy community to recognise such effects, explore different models of resource allocation behaviour, and study the effects of such behaviour on network interaction, policy outcomes and, ultimately, the broader cultural context within which community sport is inextricably bound.

Another implication of this resource allocation behaviour is the expectation placed on volunteers as implementation agents. Whilst this may be viewed as a broader problem of the community sport policy process (cf. Harris *et al.*, 2009; Nichols & James, 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2007), it can be directly attributed to the resource

allocation decisions of Sport England, NGBs and CSPs. More specifically, these circumstances can be viewed as being the result of a lack of resources and the inability of (most) NGBs to implement policy at the local level. However, such views should be tempered with a more optimistic analysis. For example, imagine policy including no reference to VSCs. This would be criticised for being both exclusive and short-sighted in ignoring the potential of volunteer-run clubs, many of which delivered local sport long before the relatively recent conception of community sport. From this standpoint, VSCs are included as implementation agents to harness the potential capacity of volunteers. This fits well with the neo-liberal ideology of recent governments, in particular the communitarian thinking of New Labour and the Big Society rhetoric of the coalition government. This also has the potential to facilitate positive sum results for Sport England, NGBs, local sport clubs as well as harness active citizenship and lighten the burden on the public purse.

There are, however, a number of problems with this positive assessment. First, the position of VSCs within the community sport policy process is assumed and not agreed. Their position at the end of the delivery chain requires them to implement strategies and programmes of which they have no awareness and no hand in developing or consenting to (Harris *et al.*, 2009). This is an issue requiring redress, not least as a lack of consent has been shown to be a common cause of policy failure (Bardach, 1977; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; van Meter & van Horn, 1975). The second problem flows directly from the resource allocation decisions of NGBs discussed above, specifically a lack of funding allocated to clubs for implementing policy. Even when VSCs are aware and consent to their role in policy, they usually face the challenge of pursuing external funding (via the Sport Lottery Fund, for example) or implementing policy with no additional resource. This adds to the range of pressures facing VSCs, which include a lack of volunteers, increased bureaucracy, poor or insufficient facilities and competing pressures from their members (Harris *et al.*, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2007). A final problem relates to a lack of understanding or respect for the heterogeneity of VSCs (May *et al.*, 2012; Nichols *et al.*, 2012). Little attention is given to the range of motives that direct VSCs' efforts. Research has shown that larger, more formal clubs are more likely to play a more effective role in policy implementation, whereas smaller or informal club types are more likely to be concerned with day-to-day operations (Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006; Harris *et al.*, 2009; May

et al., 2012; Nichols & James, 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2007). More detailed analysis of VSC diversity would allow policy makers to more effectively categorise VSC types and allocate resources more efficiently, working with clubs that have the enthusiasm and capacity to implement community sport policy. To sum up, while it would be foolhardy to ignore the potential of the third sector, policy makers and practitioners still have a long way to go in developing effective collaboration with the sector.

Whilst recognising the passion and interest of the workforce—indeed, many employees are solely driven by the desire to work in sport (Pitchford & Collins, 2010)—the evidence reveals a perception that it lacks the broader skills needed to be highly effective in the policy community. This is a point underlined by the comment from the Community Services Manager at the City Council in case 1:

> ...we all have lots on knowledge on the system and the structures and things like Active People and Market Segmentation and that sort of thing, but we are all a little wet behind the ears when it comes to partnership working and understanding how to go about initiating and managing good working relations *(Interview: 25 May 2012)*.

This is a view reinforced by Allison (2012). As a previous Head of Leisure at Leicester City Council, Improvement Manager at Sport England, and Head of Sport/Culture at the Improvement and Development Agency, Allison has considerable experience of working with NGBs, CSPs and local government. His primary criticism of the sector is that it lacks the skills, in particular the quality of leadership, 'to drive and steer the sector through the chaotic landscape ... and as a result [there are] growing levels of inertia' (*ibid*, 2012: 4). This a largely due to ongoing public sector reforms which have resulted in increased competition, externalisation of services, and less collaborative leadership within sport as well as a lack of renowned champions for sport as older leaders have retired and newer leaders have neither the requisite skills nor the positional power to fill their shoes (*ibid*, 2012). The importance of this issue is highlighted further by the collaborative capacity literature, which stresses that there is an assumption that agents involved in collaboration have the skills, knowledge and competencies to maintain the wellbeing of the partnership and get the best out of the collaboration (Chaskin, 2001). Thus, it is incumbent on the wider

network of agents (policy makers, Sector Skills Council, the Chartered Institute, Higher Education, NGBs, and CSPs) to more fully assess the skills-based needs of the sector. Once these needs are understood, organisations can begin to evaluate existing strategies and programmes, and adapt and add refreshed or new programmes that are tailored to the needs of the workforce (professional and voluntary; current and future). It is important to note here that as is often the case, this is a subject far easier to write about than it is to organise. The challenge remains for the wider network (as above) to develop a renewed offer of multi-level programmes and courses that more closely relate to the operational needs of contemporary sport policy. Doing so will likely lead to the policy community having access to more collaborative leaders and more actors with the skills required to develop and sustain effective collaborations. However, the extent to which these developments will influence policy outcomes will depend upon the will and patience of politicians. Unfortunately, political expedience is often more important than the potential policy outcomes of such developments. These tend to be displaced by shorter, more time-sensitive initiatives that fit neatly with a five-year political term.

CSP and NGB attitudes toward the community sport policy process

The final part of this section is concerned with the attitudes of CSP and NGB agents toward the community sport policy process. The discussion focuses on two specific aspects. The first, which is evaluated using van Meter & van Horn's Policy Implementation Process model, is agents' attitudes toward the policy process, specifically their direction of response to policy as well as the intensity of response. The second aspect is the range of barriers that prevent the network from realising policy outcomes. This is illustrative of a more practical type of policy learning that occurs where actors identify and learn to cope with or overcome the problems associated with policy implementation (Adam & Kriesi, 2007; Birkland, 2005; Marsh & Smith, 2000, Schofield, 2004).

Agents' attitudes toward the policy process

The quantitative evidence suggests that CSPs and NGBs view community sport policy as being clearly defined, with transparent systems of performance management and processes in place for regular review. However, their overall assessment of policy using the NAO/Audit Commission's 12 Strategic Questions suggests that there are

considerable risks to delivery and reduced efficiency within the policy system. Most notably, CSPs and NGBs questioned the resources committed to the policy and CSPs raised concerns over the capacity to deliver community sport policy and the lack of clarity of NGB plans detailing how and what will be delivered in order to meet community sport policy objectives. Further, the quantitative data reinforces previous concerns regarding the fragmented nature of the community sport policy process (Green, 2003; Houlihan & Green, 2009; Houlihan & White, 2002; McDonald, 1995; Roche, 1992), as represented by the diverse priorities of CSPs and NGBs and the differing networks of stakeholders with which CSPs and NGBs tend to associate.

Using van Meter & van Horn's Implementation Framework, the qualitative evidence from the three cases suggests that agents generally *accept* community sport policy. This positive response contrasts with other implementation agents such as local authorities or VSCs, who more commonly demonstrate *neutrality* or *resistance* (Harris *et al.,* 2009). This is a position that is likely to be mediated, at least in part, by the significant resources invested into CSPs and NGBs. However, whilst CSPs and NGBs may generally accept policy goals, they characterise the policy community as being problematic due to the top-down nature of policy, the fragmentation that persists across community sport policy and the frequent changes in policy objectives, strategy and/or structure.

The evidence from the three case studies underlined the top-down reality of the community sport policy system and also reinforced the findings of earlier studies that reveal the contradiction between policy rhetoric and policy reality (cf. Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Phillpots *et al.*, 2010). Here, the rhetoric suggests greater freedom and autonomy, but the reality of the community sport policy field reflects a hierarchical system, tightly controlled by government. Some CSP and local authority agents did acknowledge the attempts of Sport England and/or NGBs to consult; however, these attempts were largely viewed as an exercise designed to create the illusion of stakeholder engagement rather than genuinely representing any attempt to develop a bottom-up approach to policy.

The view of community sport policy as the product of a top-down, centralised system is one that is perpetuated across different levels in the system. In this way one group

or coalition is always seen to be *in power* and imposing their interests and passions on others from national to the sub-regional level. Such processes are problematic as they expose a hierarchical structure founded on a largely superficial notion of power. For example, one view of power relations between NGBs and CSPs may see NGBs as exercising power over CSPs due to systems and resources established by the DCMS and Sport England. However, this interpretation fails to recognise the power of CSPs, particular the agency of CSP personnel, many of whom are better connected, and more experienced and knowledgeable than the NGB representatives with whom they are negotiating. This perspective reinforces the notion of power as being ubiquitous and points to the subtle ways in which power permeates social relations (Foucault, 1982). The cases underline the agency of CSPs to pursue local-level priorities whilst also retaining focus on the national community sport priorities. The three cases suggest that this works most effectively when the CSP has sufficient resources, including human capacity and experience as well as credibility amongst local stakeholders. Case 1 in particular illustrated the difficulties in engineering collaborative work across CSPs, NGBs and local authorities, especially acceptance of a strategic coordinating role for CSPs by local authorities. Cases 2 and 3 illustrated the importance of human capacity, experience and credibility, both in terms of establishing relations with NGBs pursuing community sport outcomes as well as coordinating action on local-level priorities against wider health or sport for development outcomes. This perspective builds on the self-organised and non-hierarchical view of networks (Kenis & Schneider, 1991) and the more recent view of the CSP as being externally managed and part of a formal hierarchy (Phillpots *et al.*, 2010). Combining these views, the evidence demonstrates the nuances of social context and its critical role in mediating the nature of interactions at the local level. Cases 2 and 3 illustrate networks that have some degree of self-organisation (in alliance with other local partners) to pursue interests and priorities that fall outside community sport. In contrast, the lack of commitment to a local-level network in case 1 resulted in the CSP working only within the relatively constrained and hierarchical community sport field. The evidence also suggests a subtle or informal regulation of NGBs at the local level primarily by their more experienced CSP counterparts. In this way one can view NGBs as being regulated at both national and local levels, albeit through different means.

All three cases provided evidence to support the notion of community sport as a fragmented subsystem as argued in previous studies (cf. Green, 2003; Houlihan & Green, 2009; Houlihan & White, 2002; McDonald, 1995; Roche, 1992). Moreover, whilst acknowledging that strong and effective CSP-NGB relations do exist, a number of comments pointed to the more common experience of community sport being preoccupied with competition rather than with building cooperation and consensus. These tensions continue despite numerous reviews, reorganisations and restructurings. This can be attributed, in part, to the diversity of agents involved in policy and the resource allocation amongst them. The problem is deepened by the variation in basic value priorities (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), the differing social context and local conditions that influence CSP and NGB decisions (Hjern & Porter, 1981; Marsh & Smith, 2000), and the differing leadership styles exhibited by CSPs and NGBs (Stoker, 1991). The evidence from all three cases underscores the institutional prioritisation of self-preservation and long-term survival over community sport outcomes, especially amongst CSPs who suffer from a relatively short history and a shallow institutional foundation. The concern here is not agents' self-interest but the behaviours that flow from it and the wider ramifications for the community sport policy field. Table 8.1 provides examples of such behaviours, which reflect the extent to which decisions are taken in the interest of the organisation over and above those of the policy field. This behaviour severely compromises effective collaboration (Frisby *et al.,* 2004; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002) and the ability of agents to coalesce and formalise a genuine epistemic community focussed on the interests of policy community (Hass, 1992).

Furthermore, the meanings and common narrative (Lewis, 2000) associated with community sport exacerbate its image as an uneven and fragmented policy community. In a cyclical system, the factors mentioned above are fuelled by such meanings and narratives and help to preserve the fragmented and divisive image of community sport. Thus, the solution for policymakers and practitioners not only lies in addressing the complex and deep-seated range of factors that contribute to fragmentation in community sport, but also in changing the meanings and narrative so closely associated with it.

Table 8.1 Examples of behaviours that flow from self interest in community sport policy

Behaviour in relation to	Description of behaviour
Financial resources	Resource allocation decisions based principally on what is best for the organisation rather than what is more likely to achieve policy outcomes.
Knowledge	The threat of empowering stakeholders through the sharing of knowledge restricts the flow of intelligence across the policy community.
Monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring and evaluation efforts tend to reflect efforts to publicise and sell the good work of each organisation rather than genuinely reflecting the achievements and problems associated with policy implementation.

The final criticism of policy related to the issue of policy change. The problem here relates to both the reasons for change and the associated implications. The evidence in case 1 and 2 suggests that CSPs view policy as being too easily changed for ideological reasons, following the whim of the latest Minister—a criticism which has received considerable attention in the literature (cf. Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Collins, 2010; Houlihan & White, 2002; Hylton & Totten, 2013). This is not only viewed as hypocrisy when scrutinised against the backdrop of a government-led campaign for greater evidenced-based policy, but it also carries significant implications for implementing agents, both operationally and in their ability to realistically achieve policy outcomes. Operational concerns rest largely on the agents' ability to prepare for policy. CSPs and NGBs are expected to start implementation on day one, a problem exacerbated by the pressure to realise policy goals in a relatively short amount of time, and the expectation that, regardless of previous achievements, policy goals are likely to change (as was the case in 2005, 2008 and 2011). In contrast, the evidence reveals that it takes considerable time to assemble the necessary machinery to support implementation. This involves activities such as recruiting personnel, discussing and agreeing local initiatives, preparing work programmes, securing additional funding, marketing and evaluation. Thus, frequent policy change promotes an environment where actors are expected to respond from day one, despite the need for preparation and policy-learning where agents need to understand the more intricate nature of policy and develop appropriate solutions (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). As a result, agents muddle through the first few years of the

policy cycle combining efforts to prepare strategy, structures and collaborations with attempts to develop short-term initiatives that aim to demonstrate that they are actively pursuing policy goals. The broader concerns regarding CSPs' and NGBs' ability to realistically achieve policy outcomes relate more directly to perceptions about the nature of the policy goal. Here, agents cite the difficulty and the time needed to support and sustain behaviour change at the micro level as well as change the sports culture in England from one concerned principally with spectating to one more concerned with playing.

The barriers to effective implementation

A final point that directly relates to agents' response to policy is their perception of the challenges or barriers that prevent them from realising community sport policy outcomes. Whilst each case presented a range of similar themes, there were differences between CSPs and NGBs – see Table 8.2. Interestingly, both sets of actors tended to focus on general issues (e.g. financial pressures, skills deficit in workforce) or specific issues that were the direct responsibility of other stakeholders (e.g. facilities). The exception to this was NGBs who identified trust within NGBs (case 1) and lack of local level capacity (case 1 and 3) as barriers to effective implementation. Almost all NGB representatives in all three cases identified the lack of good quality facilities as a major barrier to implementation. The concern here related to access, the ageing stock and declining quality of public sector facilities as well as reduced facility development primarily seen to be a result of public sector budget reductions. NGBs also pointed to the lack of synthesis between school sport and community sport as a major barrier to achieving policy outcomes. Agents were particularly vocal about the dismantled school sport policy and infrastructure and the implications of this for community sport. Related to this, they also voiced concern about the futile separation of youth and adult policies as adult participation is far more likely amongst adults with high levels of sporting capital in which the school experience plays a significant role (Rowe, 2012).

From a CSP perspective, the most commonly cited barrier was overreliance on volunteers and volunteer-run sports clubs, underlining concerns raised above about the lack of capacity to implement policy. This reinforced findings of earlier studies (Harris *et al.*, 2009; May *et al.*, 2012; Nichols & James, 2008). Other notable

barriers from CSPs perspectives included increasing financial pressure triggered by broader economic conditions and public sector austerity measures; the lack of a sports participation culture; a lack of time to enable policy to be effectively implemented—a particular challenge when addressing problems which require behaviour change at the micro-level; a lack of tradition or culture in adult sports participation across England, and a perceived lack of skills in the community sport workforce to be able to address the challenges associated with policy.

Table 8.2 Barriers to implementing community sport policy

Case	**Barriers**	
	CSPs	**NGBs**
Case 1	• Over-reliance on volunteers • More realistic period of time • Skills deficit in workforce	• Lack of good quality facilities • Trust within the NGB • Insufficient capacity at local level
Case 2	• Over-reliance on volunteers • Financial pressure • Lack of clarity re: NGB priorities • Lack of sport culture	• Lack of good quality facilities • Impact of school sport policy on community sport policy • Difficulties identifying audience
Case 3	• Over-reliance on volunteers • Financial pressure • More realistic period of time • Skills deficit in workforce • Lack of sports culture	• Lack of good quality facilities • Impact of school sport policy on community sport policy • Insufficient capacity at local level

Empirical findings – concluding thoughts

This study represents the first detailed analysis of partnerships in community sport, specifically the enforced partnership between CSPs and NGBs. It contributes to knowledge in five particular areas.

First, it closely examines the nature of the community sport policy process. This provides a more specific analysis of community sport policy, which reinforces the view of community sport as a deviant and fragmented policy system (cf. Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Collins, 2010; Grix & Phillpots, 2011; Houlihan & White, 2002; Hylton & Totten, 2013): deviant as it fails to represent the shift in power from the centre out or the genuine network governance portrayed in the governance narrative (Grix & Phillpots, 2011), and fragmented due to its disjointed structure, diverse priorities, and deep and complex structures of power. More specifically, the embedded units involved in each case (CSPs, NGBs and local authorities) had distinct perceptions

more so than each case being distinctive. In other words, agents' views and perceptions were more closely aligned according to organisational type rather than the case study of which they were part.

Second, it examines the CSP-NGB relationship and the range of factors that positively influence and adversely affect it. Here, meso-level factors such as organisational structures, strategies, and resources were found to be critical. However, more notable within this meso-level context was the role of individuals working in the system. Here, the style (character/approach) and substance (perceived skills) of individuals was a critical factor in facilitating high levels of trust and mutual respect. This, in turn, led to higher levels of engagement and thus helped to build collaborative capacity and therefore more effective CSP-NGB relationships. In contrast, the study provided detailed insight into four common barriers that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship, specifically: (i) a lack of engagement, including the self-exclusion of NGBs and LAs in the CSP and the lack of involvement of CSPs in the NGB whole sport planning process, (ii) the differing priorities of NGBs, CSPs and LAs, (iii) the emphasis on performance management techniques and the implications these carry for building the CSP-NGB relationship, and (iv) the complexity that flows from multiple agencies with differing strategies and structural arrangements.

Third, the study clarifies the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in local policy making. It draws attention to the dominant nature of the sport for sport coalition at national level in contrast to the sport for development coalition, dominant at the local level. It also underlines the central role of local government in creating and developing local policy, primarily a function of its mandate from the local electorate. Indeed, the central role of local government in developing local policy is the primary reason why local policy appears to focus squarely on the instrumental value of sport. The thesis also brings the pivotal nature of the CSP into sharp relief. The evidence highlights the role of the CSP in reconciling a position between NGBs and LAs which bridges both sport for sport and sport for development outcomes. Finally, the perceptions of LA and NGB agents call into question the extent to which the CSP represent a true strategic partnership. This is a highly relevant finding, as it appears that for many agents the CSP represents another agent in an already saturated policy

space, rather than the original conception of a strategic or umbrella organisation that brings together key sub-regional agencies.

The significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in policy implementation represents the fourth major contribution. The enforced CSP-NGB relationship is more likely to provide another obstacle to policy implementation rather than support for it. For some NGBs, the partnership with CSPs makes sense and forms an integral part of the implementation system. However, this is not the case for all. Alongside this, NGBs and LAs provide differing accounts regarding the value of CSPs. Some see them as a valuable network, and others view them as an additional tier in the community sport bureaucracy. Given the diverse views toward CSPs and the differing social context within which actors operate, it would be more effective for agents to determine the most appropriate means by which their goals can be achieved. Also related to implementation, the findings underscore the self-interest that permeates community sport policy as evidenced by the insular nature of the whole sport plan process and the associated resource allocation decisions of NGBs. This lack of participatory consensus across the community sport system creates a cultural context that is more akin to individualism, self-interest and institutional survival than it is a cooperative, collective approach to policy implementation. The capacity of the workforce was a final factor that caused major concern in regards to the implementation of community sport policy. Specific concerns included the lack of resources invested into frontline delivery, the lack of leadership and skills across the community sport workforce, and the sustained expectation, for many NGBs, that the traditional local-level infrastructure (i.e. VSCs) is the primary deliverer of community sport policy.

The fifth area relates to agents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the community sport policy process. Here it was clear that agents view both the beginning and end of the policy process—policy objectives and policy evaluation mechanisms—to be clearly defined and well understood. More problematic, as discussed above, was the middle ground of policy implementation. In addressing the major barriers to policy implementation, it was notable to see a distinct and different pattern when comparing NGB attitudes to those of LAs and CSPs. For example, the latter cited capacity (an overreliance on volunteers) as the major barrier to policy implementation, whereas NGBs viewed facilities and the ageing stock of primarily

publically owned sports facilities as a major barrier to policy implementation. Not only do these differences reinforce the diverse views across CSPs and NGBs, they also have a defensive tone—neither happens to have direct control over what they perceive to be the major barrier preventing policy implementation.

Before concluding the chapter, it is important to acknowledge that many individual CSP-NGB relations do manage to flourish, despite the problems noted above. The issue is, however, that many more would likely do so under more favourable conditions. Moreover, the efficacy of the policy system could be enhanced if the basis of the system were viewed to be more about efficiency and effectiveness and less about ideology and political expedience. The literature suggests that community sport policy could make major gains by balancing the dominant top-down approach with a genuine grassroots approach to implementation (Elmore, 1980; Hjern & Porter, 1981; Hjern & Hull, 1982; Lipsky, 1971; 1980), thus building greater consensus with grassroots implementers (Dunleavy, 1991; van Meter & van Horn, 1975); simplifying implementation structures (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973); giving networks the freedom to select appropriate partners (Ostrom, 1973); and ensuring that more human and financial resource is allocated directly to implementation. Table 8.3 attempts to crystallise the key findings and provide a more complete overview of the problematic nature of the community sport policy process and the issues that require redress to create a more favourable policy environment.

Table 8.3 The problematic nature of the community sport policy process

Variables	Description
Social/economic /political context	Changes in political leadership emphasising neo-liberal values. Uncertain economic conditions. Increasingly aggressive public sector austerity measures. Rising incidence of childhood and adult obesity. Participation trends emphasise greater interest in informal, individual sport-related pursuits rather than traditional team sports.
The policy sub-system	Top-down process of policy formulation led by narrow, government-led coalition with little or no consensus from street-level operators; policy suffers from perceived instability a result of frequent change; attempts to consult stakeholders in process seen as a game rather than real engagement; policy implementation is overseen by a fragmented group of organisations where synthesis of values/priorities is patchy; a lack of financial and human resources are allocated directly to implementation.
CSP-NGB	Interaction characterised by sense of enforced cooperation; asymmetric

interaction	governance arrangements between CSPs and NGBs in community sport but this does not prevent CSP pursuing local priorities; NGB strategy is emphasised over and above CSP strategy, however, NGB strategy fails to specify local level priorities; NGB whole sport plan process fails to involve CSPs; the legitimacy of the CSP varies considerably, according to perceptions of its status as the strategic lead agency for sport in the sub-region; interaction is made more difficult due to the diverse priorities and the differing network with which CSPs and NGBs are part; new public management techniques stifle the relationship, not enough time/resource is given over the developing the softer skills required to make the relationship work; very often the complexity of the system, in particular the inconsistencies of CSPs and NGBs is used to rationalise the problems associated with community sport.
Barriers to implementation	CSPs emphasise an over-reliance on volunteers, financial cuts, skills deficit, a lack of sports participation culture; a lack of time to implement policy and a lack of clarity regarding NGB priorities; NGBs highlight a lack of good quality facilities, the impact of school sport on community sport, insufficient capacity at the local level, difficulties identifying the audience, and trust within the NGB.

Assessing the explanatory value of meso-level frameworks in relation to community sport

Chapter 2 included a review of four prominent meso-level frameworks for analysing the policy process, specifically the institutional analysis framework, the multiple streams framework, the advocacy coalition framework, and the policy network approach. To date, none of these frameworks have been applied to an examination of community sport policy. This section, therefore, considers their value in illuminating the community sport policy process. The purpose here is not to repeat the detail of Chapter 2; instead, it will briefly evaluate the utility and limitations of each framework, including its potential in addressing important aspects of the community sport policy process such as exogenous factors, institutional rules, agents' beliefs and values, agent interaction, power, and implementation.

The Institutional Analysis and Development Framework

The use of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD) is particularly apposite for community sport as it focuses on the way in which institutional rules shape the behaviour of rational individuals motivated by self-interest. The IAD takes the broader context of the action arena as its unit of analysis. This arena is critical in community sport as it represents the social space where CSPs and NGBs interact, exchange ideas, agree actions and review progress. Attention to

these variables extends our understanding of CSP-NGB interactions. It would, for example, be useful to examine the rules and norms that CSPs and NGBs use to shape individual behaviour. Similarly, it would be helpful to develop a more sophisticated understanding (beyond the limitations of the rational actor model) of individual motivation and responses to these institutional pressures. The framework highlights a number of additional variables in the action arena that would prove useful for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in the community sport policy field, including: participants, positions, outcomes, action-outcome linkages, the control that participants exercise, information and the cost/benefits of outcomes (Ostrom, 2007). In the context of this study, the IAD has the potential to illuminate CSP-NGB interactions and the way in which they are shaped by institutions (organisations and cultural norms). The multi-dimensional nature of the framework makes it particularly useful, especially its emphasis on three levels of action: (i) the operational tier (e.g. CSPs interact with NGBs in order to receive core funding; CSPs strive to perform in order to receive additional funding); (ii) the collective choice tier (e.g. national policy rules as determined by the political leaders of the DCMS and senior management of Sport England); and (iii) the constitutional tier (e.g. decisions made about who can participate in policymaking and the systems that will be used to guide the process). The attention that the IAD pays to institutions challenges the pluralist doctrine that views organisations as contexts in which politics occur, 'rather than independent or intervening variables in the process' (Houlihan, 2005: 170). Furthermore, it brings to policy analysis an institutional perspective which tends to be weak or lacking in other frameworks (Sabatier, 2007).

The framework also examines the influence of three exogenous variables on processes and outcomes, namely physical and material conditions, attributes of the community, and rules in use. Whilst the terminology may cause confusion (Howlett, 1998), the breadth of the three exogenous variables provide scope to address the factors that significantly influence behaviour within the action arena. For example, it provides the basis for a fuller examination of power in community sport and its relation to the policy making process. The focus on these variables is particularly relevant for a policy field such as community sport characterised by fragmentation, resource dependence and a multiplicity of formal and informal rules that create incentives and constraints for action (Ostrom, 1999). In sum, the framework is one of

the more logically coherent and denser theoretical frameworks that draws attention to highly relevant concepts and propositions and has undergone considerable empirical testing (Sabatier, 2007). Despite its utility, the findings from this research reinforce previous criticisms. For example, the framework does not fully consider internal and strategic factors when considering a change in Sport England structure or strategy, relying instead on an explanation based solely on exogenous factors. This supports Campbell's (2005) view of the framework as lacking a theoretical foundation in institutional change and failing to clarify the underlying causal factors behind change. Second, the evidence in this study demonstrates that whilst Sport England, CSPs and NGBs all play a role in shaping the beliefs, interests and actions of individuals involved in policy, it is ultimately the individual who constructs the nature of the arena in which he interacts. Thus, the failure of the IAD to give agency more direct attention is a significant weakness, specifically when viewed against objectives which seek to analyse the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in the community sport policy process. This adds weight to Houlihan's view that the framework reverts to 'a vague ideational formulation, [...] and collapses into a crude form of institutional determinism' (2005: 170). Third, it fails to consider the various ways in which CSPs and NGBs impact the policy process or the circumstances that create asymmetrical relations between CSPs, NGBs and other partners within the action arena, and circumstances in which institutions may be more or less important (Houlihan, 2005). The final weakness of the approach lies in its complexity; it is difficult to apply to real-life situations (Schlager, 2007). Whilst complexity can slowly be overcome, adding this to a complex subsystem, where there is a long and turbulent past with diverse characteristics, norms and rules and where boundaries with other policy areas, particularly education, health and community cohesion are blurred (Houlihan & White, 2002), is far from ideal.

The Multiple Streams Framework

The Multiple Streams Framework offers a persuasive critique of the assumption of rational decision-making seen in other policy analysis frameworks. It offers a more reasonable insight into the sometimes irrational and often ambiguous policy-making process (Zahariadis, 2007). In addition, the framework offers escape from the simple focus on institutional interests that distort the political system (Houlihan, 2005: 172). It is particularly useful in understanding how policies are made under

conditions of ambiguity (Zahariadis, 2007). In the Multiple Streams Framework policy choices regarding the nature of community sport policy can be understood by analysing the coupling of two or more streams, which includes problems, policy and politics. The coupling process is normally facilitated, or in the case of coupling occurring without intervention, responded to by a policy entrepreneur. This latter process is of some relevance to the sport policy community as it and its sub-sectors (i.e. school, community, elite sport) have had a fairly transparent association with entrepreneurs (e.g. schools: Sue Campbell, community: Jennie Price, elite: Sebastian Coe/Sue Campbell) who have played a significant role in mobilising institutions and opinions, proposing solutions to problems, and generally ensuring the place of sport on the political agenda (Green, 2003). The change in community sport policy from 2013 onwards demonstrates the framework's utility in examining policy change as a result of streams coupling, with the policy entrepreneur playing a facilitative role to ensure that windows are appropriately coupled and the positive sum opportunities clearly promoted. For example, Jennie Price can be viewed as a policy entrepreneur insomuch as she coupled the problems, politics and policy windows to renegotiate a more realistic policy target for community sport, changed the new Minister of Sport's perception of Sport England, and created a new DCMS strategy for sport with the close involvement of Sport England personnel (see Figure 8.5). Price can be viewed as being more than a mere advocate of policy; she is a power broker who is able to use her position and skills to manipulate particular situations for the benefit of community sport and Sport England.

Finally, the notion of spill-over and the attention that the framework gives to non-sport issues such as health, community safety, and community development is useful as these are highly relevant, particularly with regard to local policy concerns.

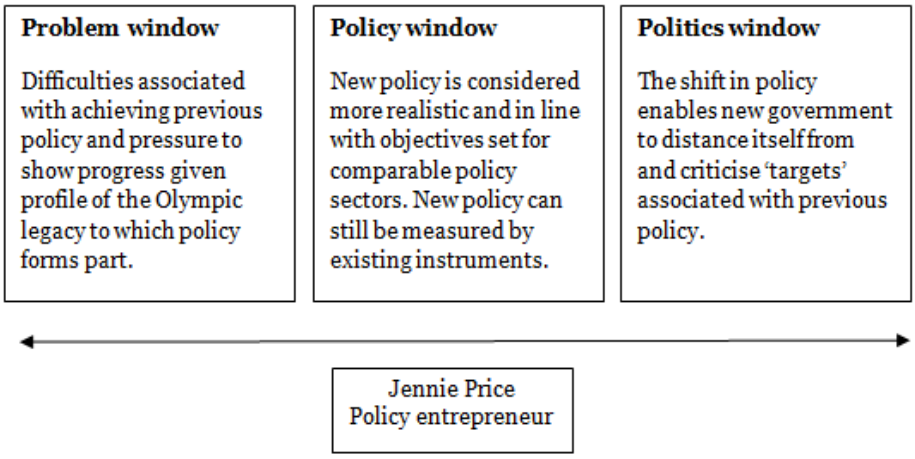

Figure 8.5 Window of opportunity - community sport policy change - 2011

Whilst the study found that the framework was useful in considering agency this was limited and secondary to the focus on structure. In particular, the framework was useful in drawing attention to the institutional power of NGBs, but weak in underlining the agency of CSPs. In short, an approach that combined structural and agential factors across all three streams would have greater applicability to the community sport policy field. More specifically, whilst the framework provides broad, open streams where certain variables may be located, its lack of specificity regarding concerns such as individual beliefs, interests, and action was generally unhelpful in analysing policy. It was useful in illuminating agenda-setting for example, but less helpful as a tool offering analysis of the entire policy process or other discrete aspects, such as implementation. This echoes previous criticisms of the framework presented by Houlihan (2005), Sabatier (2007), and Schlager, (2007). The explanation of the three streams also raises concerns about the reliability of the framework. This research found that rather than being independent, they overlapped, with a change in one stream triggering a change in another. For example, using the illustration of community sport above, it is possible to develop an alternate perspective, where the window of opportunity was created by the new government and new Minister of Sport and that this change alone brought about issues in the policy and problem windows. The framework would also be enhanced by examining strategy and the ensuing action that undoubtedly plays a role in opening policy windows. This supports Mucciaroni's (1992) challenge regarding the spontaneity of coupling or the notion that it is in some way a chance event.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is seen to have value in analysing sport policy primarily due to its consideration of three internal mechanisms that drive policy stability and change: (i) the hierarchy of beliefs that underpin the decisions and actions of key policy agents, (ii) how these beliefs, in turn, organise agents into competing coalitions, and (iii) the role of the policy brokers in mediating across the policy community (Green, 2004, Houlihan, 2005; Parrish, 2003). This distinguishes the framework as a sharper, more coherent tool of analysis for the community sport sub-sector. The consideration of beliefs sensitises the researcher to the deep philosophical differences in the community sport sub-sector regarding the purpose of sport and the use of public funding in supporting community sport. The ACF's tripartite belief system pinpoints the different ideas and priorities in the sub-system and how these group actors into two coalitions—those who primarily believe in community sport for the purpose of addressing broader social problems (health, crime, education, and so on) and those who remain fixed on investment in sport for its own sake. This proved an important analytical point for the study. For example, it revealed the divergent beliefs of CSPs, NGBs and local authorities and the way in which these beliefs direct different priorities and the practical implications for collaboration. It illuminated the changing dynamic regarding the dominant coalition when considering national and local policy contexts. It also looks at the complexities that flow from the interconnected (as opposed to nested) nature of multi-tiered policy in England, for example the need for CSPs to advocate for pure sport whilst retaining a credible voice in the sport for development coalition at the local level. Here, the ACF is particularly useful in illuminating the importance of policy brokers to mediate differences and reduce conflict across coalitions. Such brokers were clearly present in the form of CSP Directors and NGB Lead Officers in cases 2 and 3. These individuals were able to more effectively broker positive relations, reduce conflict and focus actions due to their democratic leadership style and their inclusive approach, which was largely driven by their experience of working in and therefore being sensitive to the needs of the public sector.

A further mechanism of the ACF that was particularly relevant to the analysis of community sport policy was the concept of policy-oriented learning. The evidence from the three cases underlined the need for information and experience, especially

for NGBs in the 2009-2013 policy cycle as they had to learn how to adapt and work effectively within the new policy world in which they were allocated a lead role. This involved formal learning of the new policy environment (e.g. working with new partner agents, learning the current situation, insight into what works, all of which is ongoing) together with an informal adjustment of norms, beliefs and values from those firmly fixated on youth or performance sport, to an acceptance of a new order that included adult or community sport. This brings into sharp relief the 'enlightenment function', the gradual cumulative effect of changing conventions and goals that come from being part of the practical policy world (Weiss, 1977).

Up to this point the focus has been on the framework's utility in examining internal processes that drive policy stability and change. Like other frameworks (e.g. the IAD and the Policy Networks Approach), the ACF also considers exogenous variables that directly shape the policy subsystem. Here, it divides variables into those that are more stable (e.g. social structure) and those more susceptible to change (e.g. organisational leadership). This was useful for analysing the community sport policy field, especially in identifying external events that have the potential to create change within the policy subsystem. Furthermore, the study found the framework useful in highlighting the interaction between exogenous and endogenous variables and the way in which these shape community sport. For example, the change in government and the resultant change in the Minister of Sport, alongside the policy failure traditionally associated with community sport resulted in a revised policy objective with an emphasis on 14- to 24- year-olds. This revision more clearly aligned with NGBs values pertaining to youth sport and promoted many NGBs to re-focus and base whole sport plans on a more appealing, narrower target group. This supports Green's view of the framework as reflecting the 'interplay between exogenous and endogenous factors … [thus providing] a more dynamic, dialectical approach to the analysis of policy' (2003: 39).

Whilst the ACF has considerable potential in analysing the community sport policy process, if utilised alone there are significant weaknesses which would result in a less than complete analysis of the field. For example, it fails to consider the relative influence of multi-tier policymaking (local, sub-regional, national), which is of direct concern to the community sport policy process. Also, while it does provide a wide-

ranging analysis of the policy process, it fails to offer sufficient insight into the interaction between the state and civil society or the organisational arrangements that affect the policy process, particularly with regard to the implementation of policy. This is a significant omission for two reasons: (i) it fails to give specific attention to the arrangements for the implementation of policy, and (ii) it fails to recognise the power of institutions to affect action.

Of equal concern is the overly rational explanation of belief systems, particularly the normative view of coalitions sharing beliefs (Schlager, 1995). This fails to articulate the complexity or nuance found in a sub-system where, for example, there may be agents who belong as part of their organisational affiliation to one coalition, but hold strong personal views aligned to another. The framework assumes that agent behaviour accords wholly with the institution (Oliver, 1991). Thus, whilst the systems of belief form a valuable part of the framework, the assumptions underpinning them require refinement to allow consideration of the messy, less predictable arrangements which tend to exist within coalitions. Further, the lack of clarity surrounding coalition membership and the extent to which coalition remains open requires clarification, as does the implication that membership of coalitions remains open (Houlihan, 2005). This study found that the membership of the dominant coalition within the national policy subsystem was restricted (i.e. to NGBs). In short, the relatively rational and coherent articulation of the coalition, as presented in the literature, does not reflect the complexity or nuance of the reality in community sport policy terms. Thus, the concept of competing coalitions can be viewed more as an academic exercise that helps to present an outline sketch of the different interests in the policy subsystem and does not include the finer detail relating to individual beliefs and values, past experiences, or primary and secondary beliefs which coalesce to create a more complex and intricate subsystem than portrayed in the framework.

The final concern was the lack of explicit attention given to power within the subsystem. Here, the approach assumes that incongruous behaviour (ignoring evidence or subverting policy for example) is the result of a lack of awareness, understanding, skills or resources rather than a general indifference or resistance to policy. This is a notable limitation in community sport terms as CSP-NGB interactions (and the outputs that flow from it) are directly shaped by the deep

structures of power that underpin it, especially in the context of community sport, the leadership role bestowed upon NGBs, their resource allocation decisions, and the power of CSPs to pursue local interests alongside national policy. Thus, whilst actors may be incongruent, it is possible that this is the result of a deliberate attempt to 'manipulate the policy agenda through the mobilisation of bias' (Houlihan, 2005: 174).

Policy Network Approach

Despite the diversity of Policy Network approaches (Atkinson & Coleman, 1992; Rhodes & Marsh, 1992), there is general agreement regarding their utility as meso-level policy tools that can link micro-level and the macro-level analysis (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). This is highly relevant to this study as it focuses primarily on the meso-level of analysis but is also concerned with the fit between meso-level and macro-level theorising. The major strength of recent developments in the Network Approach is the attention to structure and agency, and the range of highly relevant variables contained therein. Both Adam & Kreisi (2007) and Marsh & Smith (2000) offer models that address both structure and agency. This is of value for community sport as it provides the broader structural context for the actions of actors. For example, consideration of the structural context of local authorities in case 1 revealed that the relative autonomy, size and traditional involvement of these authorities in sport development underpinned tensions in the CSP-local authority relationship, particularly with regard to the CSP's assumed strategic leadership of sport in the sub-region. This consideration of 'agents who interpret structures and take decisions' (Marsh & Smith, 2000: 4) is instructive for community sport as it extends analysis beyond the rational assumptions associated with other approaches.

The range of variables and relationship between variables is also a useful aspect of Marsh & Smith's dialectical model. Whilst some have criticised its lack of theoretical specificity (cf. Dowding, 2001), it contains a pragmatic range of variables and highlights the dialectical relation between them, an element that was helpful in unpacking the evidence. For example, it illustrated the structural elements that 'constrain and facilitate agents' (Marsh & Smith, 2000: 5), particularly with regard to the effectiveness of the CSP-NGB relationship. It also pinpointed where structure directly influences actors' resources (e.g. the funding decisions of key agents) and

network structure (e.g. the traditional/historical relations between agents), and illuminated the reverse relationship, where agents' resources (e.g. changing the social conditions of action) and network structure (e.g. shaping/re-shaping the core set of values) directly influence structural context. It is the interaction of these variables that ultimately directs the shape of the sub-regional network and creates the range of problems and solutions that are considered. In addition, the interaction of structure and agency is helpful in understanding how the culture of the sub-regional network patterns behaviour. This was particularly helpful in case 2 in understanding the cooperative nature of the local network, largely a result of the professional workforce remaining in the same organisations for a prolonged period of time. It is also helpful in drawing attention to the strategies that networks may use to reproduce or change culture, although this was not a particular focus of the study.

The variables included in both models were useful in organising the key concerns of policy agents. In particular, the policy domain-specific context (Adam & Kriesi, 2007) and the actor's learning, skills and resources (Marsh & Smith, 2000, Schofield, 2004) were demonstrated to be important drivers of network interaction, particularly in regard to issues such as network membership, distribution of power, and the establishment of core values. The evidence highlights the bridging role of CSPs in working alongside NGBs in the area of pure sport and local authorities in sport for development/physical activity. This behaviour enables the CSP to retain its position within the community sport policy domain and thus secure continued support from Sport England, whilst at the same time responding to local-level priorities, a strategy that enables it to build local respect and credibility as well as broaden its base of support amongst local health, crime, and community-based agencies.

The Network Approach has much in common with the ACF given its emphasis on the configuration and interaction of actors within networks, (Adam & Kriesi, 2007). The ACF considers belief systems, whereas the policy network approach tends to emphasise institutional arrangements, with the outcomes of network being associated with 'the capabilities of the actors and their mode of interaction' (Schlager, 2007: 298). This is useful in two ways. First, it underscores insights regarding the skills and experience of actors and the differing mechanisms that drive

variation in network interaction. Of particular interest is the dialectical approach and its consideration of actor learning and how this has an interdependent relationship with actors' skills and, in turn, network interaction. In this respect it is assumed that the network resembles an epistemic community where members:

> share intersubjective understandings; have a shared way of knowing; have shared patterns of reasoning; have a policy project drawing on shared values, shared causal beliefs, and the use of shared discursive practices; and have a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge (Hass, 1992: 3).

This perspective was useful in shedding a contrasting light on the nature of the policy process. In particular, it underlines the silo-mentality of the sub-system, where policy learning and skills are not addressed holistically across the sub-system but individually by CSPs and NGBs. Whilst Sport England occasionally coordinates seminars or conferences on issues such as the Active People diagnostic tool or the NGB whole sport plan process, the evidence does not reveal a sub-system that actively pursues 'a shared way of knowing [or] ... a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge (Haas, 1992: 3). Instead, policy learning and actors' skills are viewed as institutional assets; knowledge and resources are viewed as power that aids the institution in pursuing its goals and, perhaps, a more prestigious public profile (Rose & Miller, 1992). Second, it indicates the value of multiple perspectives in yielding a fuller, more coherent account of what is a complex, messy and unpredictable policy process (Cairney, 2011). These perspectives could be developed through a combination of policy tools, for example using aspects such as policy network theory and the ACF or meso- and micro-level theories. In this respect, the policy network toolkit has an advantage as it was conceived to utilise theory at the micro level to consider issues such as implementation or the beliefs and values of individual agents.

The final aspect in which the Network Approach offered value was the provision of typologies. This work started with Marsh & Rhodes' typology of network types (1992), which identified network types and illuminated their membership, resources and power. This was useful in distinguishing larger, more fragmented issue networks from narrower, more cooperative policy communities. However, the extent to which

the detail of this typology, particularly the characteristics of policy communities and issue networks, was helpful in understanding what are essentially government-imposed sub-regional sport networks is open to question. In particular, whilst group membership may be viewed as relatively narrow (a policy community trait), interests, resources, power and consensus are all issues that can be seen to align more clearly with issue networks. The more recent typology introduced by Adam & Kriesi (2007) was particularly useful in examining the fundamental aspects of networks, specifically actors' capabilities and type of interaction. This helped categorise the type of interaction in the three cases and provided useful characteristics to check and challenge against the nature of the network in the evidence.

Whilst the Policy Network approach like the previous frameworks has considerable potential, it is not without its weaknesses. The empirical exercise identified four weaknesses. First, Atkinson & Coleman (1992) argue that by emphasising institutional influence, the approach does not pay enough attention to individual beliefs and values. Whilst both Adam & Kriesi and Marsh & Smith give attention to network structures and interactions, they do not explicitly detail how beliefs and values affect structure or interactions. Second, community sport is multi-tiered; distinct policy processes exist at national and local levels. The Policy Network does not easily allow for analysis of policy at different levels, focusing instead on a single system. Thus, to study multi-tiered systems, the analyst must adapt the framework or utilise other frameworks alongside the networks approach. Third, the network approach is ambiguous. The literature is diverse, and the numerous approaches and concepts that have been developed under the banner of policy networks lack consistency in terminology. This supports Peterson who stated that the literature is often focussed on 'trivial questions of terminology and can be embarrassingly self-absorbed' (2003: 15). This brings us to the final criticism of the approach—its lack of a theoretical basis. This, however, is more of a general problem for positivist research, which seeks to demonstrate truth, than for the critical realist perspective underpinning this study, which understands knowledge as a social construct and is less concerned with testing variables in order to assess the validity of particular hypotheses. Thus, it represents a limitation that is more relevant to research underpinned by the foundationalist tradition.

Policy analysis frameworks – concluding thoughts

This sub-section aimed to sensitively draw attention to the value and limitations of the four policy analysis tools evaluated above. It also discusses the framework that offers the greatest potential in analysing the community sport policy process.

The evaluation presented above largely confirms the existing assessment of meso-level frameworks. All four frameworks have deficiencies, so none is wholly satisfactory in analysing the policy process. However, the concepts do illuminate a range of variables (and the interplay between them) that directly and indirectly shape the policy process. These sensitise the researcher, not only providing a lens, but also a structure which supports analysis (van der Heijden, 2012). Thus, whilst there are significant weaknesses in the four frameworks, they offer a richer understanding of the policy process. Still, one must resist the temptation to add to the range of tools (Houlihan, 2005). This would continue the spiralling development of policy frameworks, add to the complexity of the policy analysis literature and have limited benefit for policy environs outside of community sport. A more productive strategy is either to apply the most relevant of the existing concepts with explicit recognition of their limitations or pursue a path of theoretical pluralism (van der Heijden, 2012).

With regards to singular frameworks, the policy networks approach is argued to hold the greatest utility in providing a structured analysis of community sport, in particular Marsh & Smith's dialectical network approach. This approach meets the majority of Houlihan's (2005) criteria for an adequate analytic framework of sport policy. For example, it examines structure and agency and the interplay between the two, the administrative infrastructure of the state, the norms and values of society, the pattern of interests that represent sport, and the beliefs and values of groups. The policy networks approach is particularly relevant for community sport policy as it is directly concerned with understanding the ability of groups to interact and work alongside government departments. Whilst policy networks have generally been criticised for the lack of explicit attention to policy stability and change, the dialectical model does give this direct attention by looking at the effect of numerous variables on policy outcomes, allowing for a medium-term (five-to 10-year) analysis of stability and change. However, the approach is limited in the explicit attention it gives to individual agents and how their beliefs and values shape network structure,

interaction and policy outcomes. To remedy this shortfall, Adam & Kriesi's typology could be utilised to analyse the type of network interaction flowing from such beliefs and values. In addition, micro-level theory could be used alongside the policy network approach to further explicate the nature and implications of agent beliefs and values. This synthesis of theory fits neatly with the initial conception of policy networks as a meso-level tool that can act as the link between macro-level concerns (e.g. distribution of power in society) and micro-level theory (e.g. agent beliefs and values, Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Finally, the policy networks approach assumes that 'the state is fragmented rather than unified' (Smith, 1993: 7). This is important insofar as it fits with the pluralist view of society which accepts that the state is not unified; rather, it is a collection of institutions that are required to cooperate and overcome conflict (Rhodes, 1994). Power, then, is based on a dependent rather than a zero-sum relationship (Green, 2003).

Theoretical pluralism could provide a more complete and coherent analysis of the policy process. It offers complementary analyses of the policy process, which helps to overcome the pitfalls associated with single frameworks (van der Heijden, 2012). It also guards against a *Rashomon* effect, where accounts of the same event are different, depending upon the framework used (*ibid*, 2012). The application of multiple tools enables complementary analyses where different tools address different aspects of the policy process (Cairney, 2011). This allows a broader, more sensitive analysis of the policy process, which will undoubtedly produce insights that a single lens might not uncover. Table 8.4 provides a brief example of the dominant perspective of each of the four frameworks in relation to the 2008 change in the community sport policy process.

Table 8.4 The dominant perspective seen through four different lenses

	IAD	Multiple Stages Framework	ACF	Policy Network Approach
One-line narrative	Change as a result of new ministerial appointment and desire of Minister to focus on pure sport.	Window of opportunity created by coupling of policy, politics and problem windows.	Change as a result of increasing pressure and dominance of NGB-led coalition.	Change as a result of increasing pressure from NGB network together with favourable structural conditions.
Dependent variable	English community sport policy	English community sport policy	English community sport policy	English community sport policy
Type of transformation	Incremental	Significant	Incremental	Incremental
Explanatory variable(s)	Appointment of new Minister and interaction with various actors involved.	The nature of the problem; the political opportunity; the proposals for change.	Interaction between advocacy coalitions, DCMS and Sport England.	Actors' skills; actors' resources; network structure; and network interaction.

Source: Adapted based on van der Heijden, 2012

Theoretical pluralism can also be applied to combine theoretical perspectives at the macro, meso and micro levels. While the combined use of macro-micro theory may be more common than the use of multiple meso-level frameworks, there are very few sport-policy related studies that have utilised macro-, meso- and micro-level theory. This approach requires attention as it illuminates the broader context that shapes policy agents' actions (Hay, 1997). As the empirical findings demonstrate, it is individual attitude and behaviour that is most critical in influencing the nature of the CSP-NGB relationship. However, these factors are highly variable, framed by the meso-level environment to which they are inextricably bound. Thus, the dialectical relationship between structure and agency extends beyond the meso-level. It is also necessary to consider the implications of individual action (micro-level) on actors' behaviour and attitudes towards collaboration and network interaction (meso-level) and vice versa. Moreover, these meso- and micro-level attributes are framed by macro-level structures that are critical as they 'exert a causal influence because the course of action that people choose to pursue is conditioned by the distribution of vested interests and resources embodied in antecedent social structure' (Lewis, 2000: 265). Thus, whilst it is argued that one can undertake an adequate analysis of the community sport policy process using Marsh & Smith's dialectical model, a more coherent analysis can be achieved by understanding the macro- and micro-level environment and how this interacts with the meso-level policy process. This requires

the dialectical networks approach to be set within a broader, neo-pluralist perspective of the state and utilise relevant micro-level literature concerning implementation and collaboration, for example. Such a framework is highly instructive for community sport policy as it illustrates the nature of relations between specific interests and the state and thus the privileged position of some interests; the rhetoric of decentralised power as compared to the reality of state control—albeit through different means; the interplay of structure and agency at the meso-level; and how network interactions, resources, skills, learning and the social conditions that permeate it all affect the beliefs and values of individuals at the micro-level. In this way, macro-level structures and micro-level attributes shape the meso-level policy field, and to ignore it is to accept a partial or incomplete analysis of the policy process.

Reflections on the research process

These following observations, regarding the theoretical, methodological, and empirical parts of the study, represent the major challenges and concerns that I encountered as a researcher. They also serve to illustrate the learning from the research exercise and the aspects that I would change if I were to undertake a similar research project in the future.

Theoretical considerations

Working on this study over the past four years has helped to further demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of sport policy analysis. In particular, the study included aspects that were closely related to political science, sociology, organisational behaviour, and economics. On reflection, I struggled as a researcher to discipline myself to remain pragmatic and focused on one field of study. Whilst I resisted the temptation to stray too far into other theoretical fields (sociological, psychological, economics), I did spend considerable time contemplating such approaches. I recall many moments sitting at the junction of political science and organisational behaviour, knowing that I needed to pursue the former, but seeing so much value and relevance in the latter. In no way do I consider this wasted time, but the conflicting views I experienced did at times create a foggy mind which was far from helpful in developing a free and flowing form of writing. This concern for differing perspectives was likely brought about by the combination of my varied teaching

practice, my experience in the community sport field and my inability to remain disciplined and focussed. However, despite the slower than expected transition from reading to writing, I have attempted to provide a theoretical review that focuses on the political science family of theory. This was largely a pragmatic decision in light of the breadth of the theory, its relevance to community sport yet its sparse application, and the ability to illuminate sport through a range of interconnecting macro-, meso- and micro-lenses.

Early on in the process of developing my theoretical framework, the focus was on developing a comprehensive review of meso-level tools. Familiarising myself with the key tenets of each framework, their area of focus, range of and relationship between variables, and limitations was a cognitive challenge. This was primarily due to my relative inexperience with the policy analysis literature, the extensive, and sometimes, vague or ambiguous conceptualisation of analytic tools and their rare application to the sport policy field. Once complete, and after discussion with Professors Henry and Houlihan, a sub-section focusing on macro-level theory was added to the theoretical framework. The preparation work that preceded the macro-level section was helpful in developing a broader understanding of the policy analysis literature and how this can be applied alongside macro- and micro- level theories. The lesson from this experience was the need to resist diving straight into the policy analysis literature (Sabatier, in particular, as it does little to demonstrate the broader view of policy analysis) and to invest more time in reviewing the political science literature, particularly macro-level theory and the way in which this sets the broader context for meso-level insights. Whilst this may have taken more time and patience at the outset, it would have provided a more reliable foundation of knowledge on which policy analysis and implementation could be added.

Methodological considerations

There are three fundamental methodological issues that proved particularly challenging in completing the research project. The first of these related to the issue of pragmatism. I took the decision to develop a two-phase research design utilising quantitative and qualitative methods. On reflection, I would have been wise to follow the advice of my supervisor, which was to go straight to the qualitative phase of the research, as it would have had limited difference in the overall outcome of the

project. Whilst the quantitative phase received a good response from both CSPs and NGBs, it revealed no significant differences between CSPs. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of the data did not provide a useful base upon which to compare and contrast deeper qualitative findings. That said, the findings demonstrated no discernible difference in perspectives by CSP type and provided a more detailed database from which CSP cases could be selected. However, given the time and effort invested in the first phase of research, I feel that I should have stepped back to consider why I wished to take the path I did rather than listening to the advice of my supervisor. Also, it might have been more productive to pursue a strategy where the phases of research were reversed so that the qualitative phase was followed by a quantitative phase of research. This would have allowed for specific ideas or hypotheses to be tested against a wider group of agents.

The second challenge concerned the structure and nature of the interview questions and the possibility that they steered agents' responses toward specific codes and themes. A number of strategies were used to guard against this. First, the study only included actors responsible for strategic-level decision making at the sub-regional level, where I expected a greater diversity of perspectives due to the heterogeneity of local context and the role this plays in shaping actor beliefs and perspectives (Lewis, 2002). Second, I took the semi-structured approach, as this offers the openness required to facilitate discussion without compromising structure, thus aiding comparison of responses and analysis (Oppenheim, 1992). The questions were designed in such a way as to create an open dialogue without leading the interviewee to certain ideas or specifying particular characteristics that might then generate a particular opinion (Bryman, 2008). Third, attention was given to the interviewees' response with follow-up probing questions used to unpack points of particular interest. This was useful in centring the detail of the discussion on the agents' perspective rather than the question (May, 2001), and gave each interviewee the freedom to explore issues that were particularly pertinent to their context, rather than being constrained by a very narrow series of questions.

The third challenge was the data analysis and coding exercise. Whilst as a researcher I have developed some experience of coding qualitative data, it was the range and density of the data that proved particularly difficult to organise. One concern related

to the number of themes that were duplicated in different parts of the study. For example, the lack of clarity of NGB whole sport plans was an issue that adversely affected the CSP-NGB relationship, limited the potential role of CSPs and others in policy making and policy implementation, and was cited as a barrier in realising community sport policy goals. However, such data actually proved helpful as they reinforced the key issues arising from each of the cases. More problematic were the unique or very specific themes that could belong to one of three or four different sub sections. For example, the lack of consensus amongst implementation agents is a code that relates to factors that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship, the role of the CSP/NGB in policy implementation, the nature of the community sport policy process, the extent to which agents believe they are part of a collective system and barriers to effective policy implementation. Organising data of this type, particularly in the first few days, proved to be a messy exercise. However, the development of a coding framework and a layered approach to coding where the data were organised and reorganised into different layers relating to the specific research objectives helped in developing a more efficient approach to the data coding exercise. Furthermore, the experience of immersing oneself in the data is useful in developing a clearer judgement of what belongs where. Nevertheless, the experience demonstrated to me that less is more; it is key to have a minimal set of questions that are suitably open-ended to allow the interviewee to reveal his experiences and perspectives in relation to the research objects being explored.

Empirical considerations

Throughout the process of writing up my cases and discussion chapters I have witnessed many epiphanies of new policy analysis models that would have undoubtedly changed the face of the policy analysis process! My empirical findings triggered ideas for frameworks that would combine the coalition and belief-based insights of the ACF with the dialectical capabilities of Marsh & Smith's Policy Networks Approach. Fortunately, I heeded my supervisor's advice and resisted the temptation to create a new model. Whilst I was initially baffled by the complexity that lay across the range of frameworks—part of the rationale behind wanting to create a new model—I have become more aware of how such frameworks can be used, particularly when used in tandem, to sensitise the researcher and develop a richer, more coherent insight into the policy process. I have also come to recognise

that complex policy processes require complex theories in order to illuminate the mechanisms behind the policy process.

Another reflection relates to the nature of the sport-policy literature and a hope for evidence that speaks more positively about agents' experiences. Unfortunately, this was not achieved. There were some encouraging perspectives regarding CSP-NGB relations and evidence which infers that the subsystem is generally, albeit slowly, moving in the right direction; however, clearly more dominant are the range of criticisms and challenges that affect the policy community. The reasons for this have not been explored, but plausible explanations can be found in the recent history of community sport, in particular its fragmented and divisive nature as well as understanding the cynicism and apathy that is cultivated within a system where top-down control and limited grassroots consent are the norms.

The overriding concern of this study was to provide new insights into the significance of the CSP-NGB relationship in the community sport policy process. There were times, particularly in the data collection and analysis phases of the study, where I felt that this aspiration was perhaps too broad. I felt torn between examining the nature of the relationship on the one hand and analysing the policy process on the other. In retrospect it was likely this dualism that sparked an interest in other disciplines (sociology, organisational behaviour and organisational psychology, for example), particularly in relation to explicating the CSP-NGB relationship. However, as time passed I learned to focus on the significance of the relationship in the community sport policy process. This transition helped me to move away from viewing the research objects as two discrete parts and toward a position where I analysed the significance of the CSP-NGB collaboration within the community sport policy process. In other words, I recognised through my study that antecedent social structures constitute the context in which interaction exists and evolves and at the same time the way in which interaction affects, albeit slowly and incrementally, social structure. This provided fresh insight into the relatively uncharted territory of the community sport policy process. Only by using methodological approaches that give policy agents a voice will we come to know a different reality of the policy process than that proffered by its creators.

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Appendix 1
NGB Whole Sport Plan Funding, 2013-17 (source: Sport England, 2013)

Sport	Participation (m)	Talent (m)	Total investment (m)
Angling	1.7	0.1	1.0
Archery	1.2	0.8	2.0
Athletics	17.0	5.0	22.0
Badminton	15.0	3.0	18.0
Baseball/Softball	2.9	0.1	3.0
Basketball	2.1	1.5	3.6
Boccia	1.0	0.3	1.3
Bowls	2.0	0.0	2.0
Boxing	4.6	1.2	5.8
Canoeing	7.0	3.2	10.2
Cricket	25.9	1.6	27.5
Cycling	25.6	6.4	32.0
Equestrian	4.9	1.1	6.0
Fencing	0.4	0.1	0.5
Football	0.4	0.1	0.5
Goal ball	0.6	0.2	0.8
Golf	9.7	3.3	13.0
Gymnastics	10.8	1.0	11.8
Handball	1.1	0.1	1.2
Hockey	9.9	2.1	12.0
Judo	4.6	1.5	6.1
Lacrosse	3.0	0.4	3.4
Pentathlon	0.3	0.6	0.9
Mountaineering	2.7	0.3	3.0
Movement/Dance	1.9	0.0	1.9
Netball	16.8	8.5	25.3
Orienteering	1.6	0.7	2.3
Rounders	2.2	0.0	2.2
Rowing	6.3	1.9	8.2
Rugby League	13.0	4.5	17.5
Rugby Union	15.2	4.8	20.0
Sailing	5.8	3.5	9.3
Shooting	0.9	0.2	1.1
Snowsport	1.3	0.2	1.5
Squash	2.5	5.0	7.5
Swimming	3.5	6.0	9.5
Table Tennis	2.2	0.3	2.5
Taekwondo	0	1.2	1.2
Tennis	3.3	3.8	7.1
Triathlon	5.3	2.2	7.5
Volleyball	4.3	0.8	5.1
Waterskiing	1.2	0.5	1.7
Weightlifting	0.8	0.2	1.0
Wheelchair Basketball	1.8	0.2	2.0
Wheelchair Rugby	0.9	0.3	1.2
Wrestling	0.7	0.2	0.9

Appendix 2

Phase one questionnaire

CSP Survey 2011/12

Loughborough University

Introduction

This questionnaire forms part of a study being undertaken at Loughborough University. This research aims to help identify and share good practice in the community sport policy area and thus improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future community sport policy implementation. A summary of the research will be prepared and distributed to all CSPs that take part in the research.

The questionnaire contains 34 questions. The questions are a combination of tick box and open response. All 34 questions are presented on page 2 (page 3 contains no questions).

All data collected in this survey will be held anonymously and securely. No personal data is asked for or retained. Cookies, personal data stored by your Web browser, are not used in this survey.

The deadline for submission of responses is January 20, 2012.

If you have any questions regarding this study please email s.harris@lboro.ac.uk.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.
Spencer Harris
November 2011

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CSP Survey 2011/12

Section 1: Background Information

1. CSP Name

Select an answer

If you selected Other, please specify:

2. Name and position of the person completing the survey

3. Is the CSP hosted by another organisation?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, what is the name of the host organisation?

4. What term best describes the status or legal structure of the CSP?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Company limited by guarantee
- ☐ Community interest company (CIC)
- ☐ Charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- ☐ Charitable Industrial and provident society (CIPS)
- ☐ Unincorporated
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*:

5. How many members of staff does the CSP employ as part of the CSP core team (FTE)?

6. What was the CSP's turnover in the last financial year?

7. How would you describe the area served by the CSP?

- ○ Mainly urban
- ○ Mainly rural
- ○ Mixed urban/rural
- ○ Other *(please specify)*:

8. What is the approx. population of the area served by the CSP?

Section 2: Strategy and strategic issues

9. Does the CSP have a current, published strategic document (i.e. the strategy covers 2011/12)?

- Yes
- No

10. What are the 3 top priorities detailed within the strategic document?

11. Are the priorities in the strategic document the same as the current operational priorites of the CSP?

- Yes
- No

If no, how do the priorities differ?

12. Identify the extent to which different organisations or sectors have influenced these priorities?

	N/A	No influence	Some influence	Significant influence
a. Department for Culture, Media and Sport	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Department for Transport	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Department of Health	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. The Departmnent for Education	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Department for Communities and Local Government	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. The CSP Network	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Sport England	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. National Governing Bodies of Sport--Major sports (e.g. FA, LTA, RFU, ECB)	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. National Governing Bodies of Sport--Minor Sports (all others)	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. County Sport Associations	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Upper tier local authorities (Mets, Counties, Unitaries)	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Lower tier local authorities (Borough, District)	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Community Sport Networks	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Voluntary Sports Clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. School Sport Partnerships	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Primary Care Trust (or replacement organisation)	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. Please detail any other organisations (not detailed above) that have significantly influenced the CSP's priorities.

14. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	N/A	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. The strategic priorities of the CSP are primarily determined by partners at the local level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The CSP board has complete autonomy in approving the strategic priorities of the partnership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. The CSPs strategy provides sustained direction for the CSP for the duration of the strategy period.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. The CSP primarily works at the strategic level and does not get involved in the delivery of community sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3: Partnerships

15. How many people are on the CSP board (number of people)?

16. Which sports are represented on the CSP board and at what level (i.e. national NGB, regional NGB, county association, local club)?

17. What other organisations/individuals make up the CSP board?

18. Which organisations are the three most influential organisations involved in the CSP?

19. What is it that makes these partners so influential?

20. Which three partnerships are most important to the CSP? (partnerships--an association of organisations/people with which the CSP are part)

21. What is it that makes these partnerships so important?

22. Which three organisations/sectors make the most significant financial contribution to the CSP

23. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	N/A	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
a. It is important for CSPs to play an active role in shaping national sports-related policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The CSP plays an active role in shaping national sports-related policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. The CSP's ability to influence national policy discussions has improved since the formalisation of the CSP Network in 2009.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. It is important for CSPs to play an active role in shaping local sports-related policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The CSP plays an active role in shaping local level sports-related policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. The CSP is seen by the majority of local partners as the strategic lead for sport in the county/area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. The CSP remain actively involved in wider physical activity-related work in the area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section4: CSP-NGB Relations

24. Which sports, and at what level (national, regional, county, local) does the CSP have most effective working relations with in terms of working together to increase adult participation in sport?

25. What factors have influenced these relationships?

More Info

26. How are these relationships managed and sustained?

27. With which sports do the CSP have a problematic or challenging relationship?

28. Are these challenges primarily at national, regional, county or local level?

29. Briefly summarise the nature of the problem/challenge.

30. How is the CSP managing this situation?

31. Is there any specific support and/or resource that would help you to address these problematic relationships?

32. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	N/A	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Funding or the potential for funding is the primary factor that influences positive NGB-CSP relations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The regional NGB forum is a positive network and helps to galvanise NGB-CSP relations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Amognst NGBs you work with, most are clear about how national plans will be implemented locally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Amongst NGBs you work with, most have a well developed infrastructure, extending to implementation at the local level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The responsibility for local level implementation in the majority of sports falls on the shoulders of voluntary sports clubs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. There are frequent differences of opinion between the CSP and NGBs regarding the priorities for local level community sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Amongst NGBs you work with, most continue to prioritise performance sport over strategies to increase adult participation in sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Amongst NGBs you work with, most continue to prioritise traditional club development work over strategies to increase adult participation in sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 5: Community Sport Policy Process

33. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree	Additional comments? (Optional)
a. The overall national policy for community sport is clearly defined.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
b. There is a robust evidence base in place to support the design and delivery of interventions to increase adult participation in sport (3x30).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
c. There is a clear delivery system in place for community sport, from national to local level, with commitment to the policy objectives from all levels of the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
d. There is sufficient capacity across NGBs, CSPs, and others to achieve the policy objective for community sport (1 million more adults playing 3x30).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
e. Adequate funding has been allocated across NGBs, CSPs, and others to support the delivery of 1 million more adults playing sport (3x30).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
f. There are clearly coordinated plans for community sport, detailing how and what will be delivered in order to meet the 1 million increase in community sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
g. NGBs, CSPs, and others involved in community sport communicate on a regular basis to ensure coordinated delivery of activities designed to grow participation in sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
h. The levers and incentives (i.e. those things that influence delivery, targets, performance management, legislation, funding, inspection, public pressure, etc.) used in community sport are fit for purpose.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
i. Your CSP has appropriate plans in place to address the risks associated with the delivery of the community sport policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
j. Your CSP utilises recommended systems of performance management to ensure that it monitors and understands progress against the participation targets for community sport.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
k. There is strong leadership for community sport within Sport England.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
l. There is strong leadership for community sport across the 46 whole sport plan (WSP) sports.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
m. There is strong leadership for community sport within your CSP.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
n. There are recognised mechanisms in place for regular feedback and review between NGBs and CSPs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
o. SE, NGBs, CSPs, and others work together to develop systems to ensure improved efficiency across the community sport policy system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
p. The core specification is an effective framework to direct NGB/CSP partnership discussions locally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
q. The NGB/CSP tracker is an effective tool to communicate issues relating to NGB/CSP relations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

34. Please feel free to add any other comments that you feel are relevant to this study.

Continue >

Survey testing only
Check Answers & Continue >

Appendix 3
Results from Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability

[DataSet2] J:\Phd\2. Phase 1 data\Phase 1 CSP File - Chronbachs Alpha file.sav

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	47	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	47	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.702	23

Appendix 4
Summary of quantitative results

Introduction

This appendix summarises the quantitative phase of the research. This was primarily undertaken to aid the selection of CSP cases. However, the data also provide insight into the structure, strategy and partnership relations of CSPs and NGBs, and their attitudes toward the community sport policy process.

The structure, organisation and priorities of CSPs and NGBs

Table A4.1 below presents a range of structural and organisational data relating to CSPs. A total of 47 CSPs participated in the first phase of the study (96% response). In sum, 33 CSPs (70%) were hosted, meaning that they were based within (hosted by) another organisation, usually local government or a University. The remaining 14 CSPs (30%) were non-hosted, the majority having 'company' status. Two CSPs refused to take part in the study, one citing time as a key factor preventing their participation, the other citing research overload. In geographical terms, 19 CSPs (40.0%) are located in urban areas, 12 (26.0%) are located in a rural area, and 16 CSPs (34.0%) serve both urban and rural areas.

The mean number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff employed by CSPs was 10, with a range between five and 22 FTE employees (σ=4.8) and no discernible difference in the number of staff by organisational status (hosted or non-hosted). The mean number of staff did vary by turnover with CSPs with an annual turnover <£1,000,000 employing nine FTE employees (σ=4.2) compared to CSPs with an annual turnover of £1,000,000-£2,000,000 employing 12 FTE employees (σ=6.7). CSPs with an annual turnover of <£2,000,000 also employed an average of 12 FTE employees (σ=4.2). Turnover varied across CSPs from £450,000 to £2,700,000, with a mean of £1,114,000 (σ=653,383). Whilst there was considerable variation across CSPs, there was limited variation by organisational status, with hosted CSPs mean turnover being £1,135,000 compared to £1,053,000 of non-hosted CSPs. Finally, mean turnover per capita was calculated using population totals provided by each CSP. The mean turnover per capita for CSPs was £1.24, with a range between £3.20 and £0.41 (σ=0.78). The mean turnover per capita for hosted CSPs was £1.32 (σ=0.81) compared to a mean of £1.05 (σ=0.68) for non-hosted CSPs.

Table A4.1: CSP Area, Population and Organisational Resources

CSP Name	Area	No. of staff	Population ,000	Turnover £,000	Turnover per capita
Active Devon (H)	Rural	15	1,100	1,100	1.00
Active Dorset (NH)	Mixed	7	460	650	1.41
Active Gloucestershire (NH)	Mixed	7	610	709	1.16
Active Norfolk (H)	Rural	5	830	1,400	1.69
Active Surrey (H)	Mixed	8	1,100	770	0.70
Active Sussex (NH)	Mixed	9	935	700	0.75
Berkshire Sport (NH)	Mixed	7	900	n/d	n/d
Birmingham Sport (H)	Urban	7	1,000	600	0.60
Black Country Be Active (NH)	Urban	8	1,100	n/d	n/d
Bucks Sport (H)	Mixed	5	475	1,500	3.16
Cheshire & Warrington CSP (NH)	Mixed	13	1,100	860	0.78
Cornwall Sports Partnership (H)	Rural	5	500	730	1.46
County Durham Sport (H)	Rural	6	500	1,600	3.20
Derbyshire Sport (H)	Mixed	12	1,000	2,500	2.50
Energize (Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin) (H)	Mixed	4	465	813	1.75
Greater Manchester Sport Partnership (NH)	Urban	7	2,200	1,600	0.73
Hereford & Worcestershire S.P. (H)	Mixed	8	750	750	1.00
Herts Sports Partnership (H)	Mixed	5	1,100	1,400	1.27
Humber Sports Partnership (H)	Mixed	8	750	595	0.79
Kent Sport (H)	Mixed	9	1,600	2,700	1.69
Lancashire Sport Partnership (NH)	Mixed	14	1,400	1,600	1.14
Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport (H)	Mixed	18	1,100	3,200	2.91
Lincolnshire Sports Partnership (NH)	Mixed	21	650	1,900	2.92
Living Sport (NH)	Mixed	9	900	750	0.83
Merseyside Sport Partnership (H)	Urban	10	1,300	900	0.69
North Yorkshire Sport (H)	Rural	8	760	n/d	n/d
Northamptonshire Sport (H)	Mixed	14	630	500	0.79
Northumberland Sport (H)	Rural	9	310	755	2.44
Nottinghamshire Sport (H)	Mixed	4	1,000	550	0.55
Oxford Sports Partnership (H)	Mixed	10	600	969	1.62
Pro-Active Central London (H)	Urban	6	1,500	800	0.53
Pro-Active East London (H)	Urban	5	2,200	900	0.41
Pro-Active North London (H)	Urban	6	1,000	825	0.83
Pro-Active South London (H)	Urban	3	1,300	900	0.69
Pro-Active West London (H)	Urban	6	1,500	900	0.60
Somerset Activity & Sport Partnership (NH)	Rural	9	526	n/d	n/d
South Yorkshire Sport (H)	Urban	8	1,300	700	0.54
Sport Across Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent (H)	Mixed	9	1,200	1,000	0.83
Sport Hampshire & IOW (H)	Mixed	9	1,900	2,750	1.45
Sportessex (H)	Mixed	7	1,400	850	0.61
Suffolk Sport (H)	Rural	6	700	1,200	1.71
Team Beds & Luton (H)	Mixed	7	500	720	1.44
Tees Valley Sport (H)	Rural	6	500	695	1.39
Tyne and Wear Sport (NH)	Urban	5	1,200	710	0.59
Wesport - West of England Sport Trust (NH)	Urban	15	1,500	900	0.60
West Yorkshire Sport (NH)	Mixed	10	2,100	1,200	0.57
Wiltshire and Swindon Activity & S.P. (H)	Mixed	9	645	450	0.70

H: hosted; NH: Not hosted

Table A4.2 below presents a categorisation of NGBs into small, medium and large NGBs based of organisational resources. This method of categorisation was developed as turnover and staffing infrastructure are deemed to be important in terms of the NGB's ability to grow and sustain participation. Whilst it would have been useful to also include an analysis of affiliated members in the classification methodology, there was no reliable or consistent data available from all NGBs regarding affiliated members. A total of 27 NGBs participated in the first phase of the study (64% response). This method identified four NGBs (15.0%) as large with a mean annual turnover[24] of £97,500,000 (σ=46,000,000) and an average of 449

[24] The mean turnover was based on the turnover for the 2011-12 financial year.

FTE employees (σ=228). Eleven NGBs (41.0%) were categorised as medium with a mean annual turnover of £13,300,000 (σ=8,500,000) and an average of 141 FTE employees (σ=118). Twelve NGBs (44.0%) were identified as small associations with a mean annual turnover of £1,190,000 (σ=670,000) and an average of 29 FTE employees (σ=21).

Table A4.2: NGB categorisation by organisational resources

NGB Name	No. of staff	WSP Grant 13-17 (participation)	Turnover £,000 pa	13-17 WSP Grant as % of turnover	Size *
The Football Association	750	25,000	300,000	1.7	Large
Rugby Football Union	500	15,200	130,000	2.3	Large
English & Wales Cricket Board	250	25,900*	100,000	5.2	Large
Lawn Tennis Association	295	13,600*	65,000	4.2	Large
Amateur Swimming Association	450	14,000*	29,000	9.6	Medium
British Cycling	250	25,600	20,000	25.6	Medium
Rugby Football League	185	13,000	22,800	11.4	Medium
Badminton England	109	15,000	11,000	27.3	Medium
British Gymnastics	100	10,800	10,080	21.4	Medium
England Hockey	60	9,900	9,000	22.0	Medium
England Athletics	70	17,000	8,500	40.0	Medium
England Netball	100	16,800	8,000	42.0	Medium
British Judo	86	4,600	6,800	13.5	Medium
England Golf	57	9,700	6,205	31.3	Medium
English Table Tennis Association	80	2,200	4,500	9.8	Medium
England Squash & Racketball	60	8,500*	2,394	71.0	Small
Volleyball England	42	4,300	2,000	43.0	Small
Amateur Boxing Association of England	26	4,600	2,000	46.0	Small
England Basketball	25	5,300	2,000	53.0	Small
Angling Development Board	35	1,700	1,500	22.7	Small
Bowls England	7	2,000	1,200	33.3	Small
British Orienteering	50	1,600	1,000	32.0	Small
British Waterski and Wakeboard	6	1,200	1,000	24.0	Small
British Wrestling Association	9	700	930	15.1	Small
Rounders England	60	2,200	720	61.1	Small
Baseball & Softball UK	17	2,900	675	85.9	Small
Snowsport England	6	1,300	650	40.0	Small

*funding is allocated differently to other sports, typically through a year one award and ring-fenced funding for years two, three and four.

Tables A4.3 and A4.4 refer to the organisational priorities of CSPs and NGBs. In short, there was a notable difference in the organisational priorities of CSPs and NGBs, with 77% of CSPs citing increased participation in physical activity as the highest priority and 89% of NGBs identifying increased participation in sport as the highest priority. Further, whilst 40% of CSPs identified increased participation in sport as the second highest ranking priority across CSPs, 59% of NGBs identified elite development as the second highest ranking priority. Other priorities across CSPs included workforce development (21%), facility development (21%), and widening access to sport/physical activity (17%). This latter point was as a relatively high priority for hosted CSPs (24%) but was not identified as a priority by any non-hosted CSPs. Conversely, other priorities identified by NGBs included talent development (41%), improved governance (19%), and coach development (19%).

Table A4.3: Organisational priorities by CSP

Top three priorities	All CSPs (47)	Hosted CSPs (33)	Non Hosted CSPs (14)	% CSPs <£1M (29)	CSPs £1-2M (14)	CSPs £2M< (4)
Increased participation in physical activity	77.0	79.0	71.0	76.0	86.0	50.0
Increased participation in sport	40.0	39.0	43.0	41.0	36.0	50.0
Workforce development	21.0	15.0	36.0	24.0	21.0	0.0
Facility development	21.0	21.0	21.0	21.0	14.0	50.0
Widen access to sport/physical activity	17.0	24.0	0.0	17.0	21.0	0.0
Making sure CSP is a sustainable organisation	15.0	6.0	36.0	21.0	7.0	0.0
Support elite development	13.0	18.0	0.0	14.0	0.0	50.0
Volunteer recruitment, development & support	13.0	15.0	7.0	14.0	7.0	25.0
Advocate and influence for sport/physical activity	9.0	6.0	14.0	10.0	7.0	0.0
Marketing and information dissemination	9.0	6.0	14.0	10.0	7.0	0.0
Partnerships	9.0	9.0	7.0	10.0	7.0	0.0
Drop-out in sport`	6.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	14.0	0.0
Using sport to address community safety issues	6.0	9.0	0.0	7.0	7.0	0.0
Major sports events	4.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	7.0	0.0

Table A4.4: Organisational priorities by NGB

Top three priorities	% NGBs (27)	% Small NGBs (12)	% Medium NGBs (11)	% Large NGBs (4)
Increased participation in sport	89.0	75.0	91.0	100.0
Elite performance	59.0	42.0	64.0	100.0
Develop talent/performance	41.0	25.0	27.0	75.0
Improve governance of sport	19.0	8.0	27.0	0.0
Coach development	19.0	8.0	18.0	0.0
Increase income/investment	11.0	8.0	18.0	0.0
Increase visibility	15.0	17.0	18.0	0.0
Retain and grow membership	15.0	25.0	9.0	0.0
Improve facilities	11.0	17.0	0.0	25.0
Club support	4.0	0.0	9.0	0.0
Enhance quality of experience	4.0	0.0	9.0	0.0
Partnerships	4.0	8.0	0.0	0.0
Develop leagues and competitions	4.0	8.0	0.0	0.0

Attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship

Table A4.5 refers to the range of factors that were identified by CSPs and NGBs as positively influencing the CSP-NGB relationship. The three most highly ranked factors that were cited as positively influencing the CSP-NGB relationship were (i) the skills and attitude of the personnel involved (59%); (ii) the translation of whole sport plan priorities down to sub-regional and local level (50%), and task clarity and commitment (46%). The latter issue relates primarily to the clarity of agreed actions, and more importantly the actions being followed and appropriately addressed by the responsible agent. Interestingly, 78% of NGBs identified the skills and attitude of the personnel involved as the most important factor that positively influences CSP-NGB relations, whereas 49% of CSPs noted this as an influential factor. Whilst this was still one of the three most influential factors for CSPs, the 51% of CSPs identified task clarity and commitment, and the translation of the whole sport plan priorities down to the local level as the most influential factors.

Table A4.5: Key factors that have positively influenced CSP-NGB relations

Key themes arising from the data	All (74)	CSPs (47)	NGBs (27)
The skills and attitude of personnel involved (CSPs and NGBs)	59.0	49.0	78.0
Translation of Whole Sport Plan priorities down to the sub-regional and local levels	50.0	51.0	48.0
Task clarity and commitment	46.0	51.0	37.0
Funding for programme development and/or local delivery	19.0	21.0	15.0
NGB staff based at local level/hosted by CSP	22.0	19.0	24.0
Effective relations with local level sports club infrastructure	20.0	21.0	19.0
Other factors identified by <10% Perception of growth potential of sport Traditionally strong links between county and sport NGB-led products and programmes CSP-driven programmes			

Table A4.6 and A4.7 refer to the range of problems and challenges that CSPs and NGBs identified as affecting the CSP-NGB relationships. CSPs most commonly identified a lack of clarity of whole sport plan priorities (60%) and a lack of voluntary infrastructure within sport (45%). Notably, 22% of NGBs also highlighted a lack of clarity regarding NGB whole sport plan priorities as a problem. No NGBs identified a lack of voluntary infrastructure within sport as a problem or challenge in relation to the NGB/CSP relationship. From an NGB perspective, the most frequently reported problems and challenges affecting the CSP-NGB relationship were a lack of consistency across the organisation and priorities of CSPs (44%), a lack of consistency in terms of the CSPs local links and its intelligence and understanding of the local area (30%), and a lack of task clarity and commitment (26%).

Table A4.6: CSP perspective of problems and challenges affecting the CSP-NGB relationship

Key themes arising from the data	% All CSPs (47)	NGBs identified
Lack of clarity re: WSP priorities at local level	60.0	Basketball, Rugby, Swimming, Rowing, Athletics, Badminton, Canoeing, Squash, Table Tennis, Dance, Hockey
Lack of voluntary infrastructure	45.0	Basketball, Volleyball, Angling, Archery, Sailing, Handball, Netball, Equestrian
Difficulties coordinating delivery work at local level	23.0	Basketball, Swimming, Angling, Athletics, Bowls, Boxing, Cricket, Gymnastics, Equestrian
Lack of task clarity and commitment	21.0	Basketball, Swimming, Dance
Officers do not have the skills or experience	13.0	Basketball, Volleyball
NGB is either not interested in working with CSP or not sure what they want from CSP	15.0	Tennis, Football, Rugby
Cost of NGB programmes/products	2.0	Cycling

Table A4.7: NGB perspective of problems and challenges affecting the CSP-NGB relationship

Key themes arising from the data	% All NGBs (47)
Variation across CSPs – organisation and priorities	44.0
Variation across CSPs in terms of local links/local understanding	30.0
Lack of task clarity and commitment	26.0
Lack understanding of NGBs/NGB priorities	22.0
Not enough time spent on relationship building, too much emphasis on agreements and work programmes	15.0
Lack of engagement from NGB to CSP	2.0

Table A4.8 presents CSP and NGB responses to five specific questions about the CSP-NGB relationship. In keeping with the principles of critical realism, these views represent actor's interpretations of experience and behaviour concerning the community sport policy process. An interesting, normative variation in CSP and NGB opinions can be observed with the majority of NGBs generally agreeing that they have a well-developed infrastructure extending to implementation at the local level and disagreeing that they prioritised traditional club development work over community sport policy. In contrast, the majority of CSPs disagreed with the statement about NGB infrastructure extending to the local level and agreed that most NGBs continue to prioritise traditional club development work over community sport policy.

Table A4.8 CSP and NGB Attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship

Question	CSPs (47) Median rank *(Mean score)*	NGBs (27) Median rank *(Mean score)*
Funding is the primary factor that influences positive CSP-NGB relations.	Disagree (2.8)	Neither (3.1)
Amongst NGBs you work with, most are clear about how national plans will be implemented locally (CSPs) or your NGBs is clear about how national plans will be implemented locally (NGBs).	Neither (3.1)	Agree (1.9)
Amongst NGBs you work with, most have a well-developed infrastructure extending to implementation at the local level (CSPs), or your NGB has a well-developed infrastructure extending to implementation at the local level (NGBs),	Disagree (3.6)	Agree (2.3)
There are frequent differences of opinion between the CSP and NGBs regarding the priorities for local level community sport.	Disagree (2.2)	Neither (2.7)
Amongst the NGBs you work with most continue to prioritise traditional club development work over strategies to increase adult participation in sport (CSPs) or your NGB prioritises traditional club development work over strategies to increase adult participation in sport.	Agree (3.4)	Disagree (2.4)

Coding: 1 = strongly agree; 5=strongly disagree.

The data in Table A4.9 were analysed further to test two non-directional hypotheses: (hypothesis 1, H1) that there will be a difference between hosted and non-hosted CSPs in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship; and (Hypothesis 2, H2) that there will be a difference between CSPs by turnover in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship. With regard to H1, there was no statistically significant difference by hosted and non-hosted CSPs in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship, therefore is it possible to accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

Table A4.9 CSP attitudes towards CSP-NGB relations by CSP hosting

TOTAL_NGB RELATION	N	Mean Rank
Hosted	33	24.43
Not Hosted	14	22.88
Sig.		.729

Similarly, with reference to H2 there was no statistically significant difference by turnover in attitudes toward the CSP-NGB relationship, therefore is it possible to accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis (see Table A4.10).

Table A4.10 CSP attitudes towards CSP-NGB relations by CSP turnover

TOTAL_NGB RELATION	N	Mean Rank
< £1,000,000	29	23.33
£1,000,000 - £2,000,000	14	22.86
£3,000,000 <	4	32.88
Sig.		.393

Attitudes toward the community sport policy process

Table A4.11 presents CSP and NGB responses to 14 questions based on an original set of questions published in the NAO/Audit Commission publication *Delivering Efficiency: Strengthening the links of public service delivery chains*. The questions were adapted to fit the community sport policy context. CSPs and NGBs agreed that the policy objective for community sport was clearly defined, that appropriate systems are in place to manage the risks associated with delivering community sport policy, that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for regular feedback and review across CSPs and NGBs, that partners work together to develop systems to ensure improved efficiency across the community sport policy system, and that there is strong leadership across Sport England. They also share the same view with regards to the lack of capacity to deliver community sport policy with both CSPs and NGBs disagreeing that there is sufficient capacity across CSPs, NGBs and others to achieve the policy objective for community sport. In fact, there was generally very little

variation in the responses of CSPs and NGBs. However, it was possible to observe a minor difference of opinion in the responses to questions 2, 3 and 4. Further, the response to question 6 is consistent with the normative response of NGBs noted above insomuch as NGBs agree that there are clearly coordinated plans for community sport, whereas CSPs disagree. This is consistent with an earlier point concerning the problems and challenges that affect the CSP-NGB relationship, whereby CSPs noted lack of clarity of the whole sport plan priorities as one of the major challenges affecting the relationship.

Table A4.11 Perceptions of the community sport policy process – by CSP and NGB

#	Question	CSPs (47) *Median rank (Mean score)*	NGBs (27) *Median rank (Mean score)*
1.	The overall national policy for community sport is clearly defined.	Agree (2.4)	Agree (2.4)
2.	There is a robust evidence base in place to support the design and delivery of interventions to increase adult participation in sport.	Agree (2.9)	Neither (2.7)
3.	There is a clear delivery system in place for community sport, from national to local level, with commitment to the policy objectives from all levels of the system.	Disagree (3.3)	Neither (2.8)
4.	There is sufficient capacity across NGBs, CSPs, and others to achieve the policy objective for community sport.	Disagree (3.7)	Disagree (3.3)
5.	Adequate funding has been allocated across NGBs, CSPs, and others to support the delivery of increased adult participation in sport.	Disagree (3.3)	Neither (3.0)
6.	There are clearly coordinated plans for community sport, detailing how and what will be delivered in order to meet the policy objectives for community sport.	Disagree (3.4)	Agree (2.3)
7.	NGBs, CSPs, and others involved in community sport communicate on a regular basis to ensure coordinated delivery of activities designed to grow participation in sport.	Agree (2.4)	Agree (2.6)
8.	The levers and incentives used in community sport are fit for purpose	Neither (3.1)	Neither (3.0)
9.	Your CSP has appropriate plans in place to address the risks associated with the delivery of the community sport policy.	Agree (2.4)	Agree (2.3)
10.	Your CSP utilises recommended systems of performance management to monitor and understand progress against the participation targets for community sport.	Agree (2.4)	Agree (2.3)
11.	There is strong leadership for community sport within Sport England.	Agree (2.0)	Agree (2.2)
12.	There is generally strong leadership for community sport across the whole sport plan sports.	Neither (3.0)	Neither (2.7)
13.	There are recognised mechanisms in place for regular feedback and review between NGBs and CSPs.	Agree (2.1)	Agree (2.6)
14.	SE, NGBs, CSPs, and others work together to develop systems to ensure improved efficiency across the community sport policy system.	Agree (2.5)	Agree (2.5)

Coding: 1 = strongly agree; 5=strongly disagree.

It is possible to use these responses alongside the NAO/Audit Commission self-assessment tool to measure the extent to which CSPs and NGBs feel 'ready' to deliver community sport policy (cf. Audit Commission, 2006). Indeed, the NAO/Audit Commission stressed that 'the features referred to in each of the questions apply as much to individuals in the delivery

chain as they do to organisations' (2006: 5).This is important to note as the data presented below is from individual representatives as opposed to agreed organisational perspectives.

The self-assessment tool is based upon 12 of the above questions (it does not include question 3 or 11). For each of the twelve questions a score is given based on the median CSP and NGB data. Thus, a median rank of *disagree/strongly disagree* equals -1; the median rank *neither* equals 0; and the median rank *agree or strongly agree* is awarded +1. The overall score is calculated by adding the score for each question. Table A4.12 shows a total score by CSP of +4, as compared to a total score of +7 by NGB. These scores fall in the same range on the NAO/Audit Commission scorecard (i.e. scores between 3-8). It is argued that this score reflects a policy system where there is scope for improvement, namely in managing the considerable risks to delivery of policy as well as addressing inefficiencies in policy delivery (NAO/Audit Commission, 2006).

Table A4.12 NAO/Audit Commission self-assessment of community sport policy system by CSP and NGB

Organisation	Score	Scale
CSPs	+4	
Hosted CSPs	+4	Scores between 9 & 12 suggest highly efficient and effective policy delivery
Non Hosted CSPs	+4	Scores between 3 & 8 suggest considerable risks to delivery and inefficiency
		Scores between 2 & -2 suggest significant improvement is needed
All NGBs	+7	Scores between -3 & -8 suggest inefficient and ineffective policy delivery
Small NGBs	+5	Scores between -9 & -12 suggest a high degree of failure
Medium NGBs	+7	
Large NGBs	+6	

Table A4.13 and A4.14 present the results of two analyses prepared to test the following non-directional hypotheses: (hypothesis 3, H3) that there will be a difference between hosted and non-hosted CSPs in the perception of the community sport policy process; and (Hypothesis 4, H4) that there will be a difference between CSPs by turnover in the perception of the community sport policy process. With regard to H3, there was no statistically significant difference by hosted and non-hosted CSPs, therefore is it possible to accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis (see Table A4.13).

Table A4.13 Perceptions of community sport policy process by CSP hosting

TOTAL_NGB RELATION	N	Mean Rank
Hosted	33	25.00
Not Hosted	14	21.38
Sig.		.418

Similarly, with reference to H4 there was no statistically significant difference by turnover, therefore is it possible to accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis (see Table A4.14).

Table A4.14 Perceptions of community sport policy process by CSP turnover

TOTAL_NGB RELATION	N	Mean Rank
< £1,000,000	29	23.76
£1,000,000 - £2,000,000	14	22.68
£3,000,000 <	4	30.38
Sig.		.604

The final piece of data to present from the first phase research project is the thematic analysis of open response comments included by CSPs and NGBs. The comments were made in response to the offer of any additional comments. After reading the comments it was possible to organise and re-organise the comments into similar categories or themes. Through this process, it was possible to identify a total of four primary themes. The first of these relates to the top-down nature of the community sport policy system, whereby priorities, resources and processes tend to be determined at the national level, with little attention given to local needs or circumstances. The second relates to the funding bottleneck, in other words the way in which resource tends to be exhausted at national and regional level and fails to make its way down (in sufficient quantity) to grassroots level. The third theme underscores the importance of individuals in the system, in particular the knowledge, skills, and competencies of people working or volunteering within community sport. The final theme relates to stability. In particular, the need for stable political commitment and the sense, from one respondent, that the policy process for community sport is slowly stabilising around the issue of increased participation. Table A4.15 provides a more detailed overview of the themes, presenting the original data alongside each theme.

Table A4.15 Additional comments from CSPs and NGBs

Theme	Additional comments
Traditional top-down policy	NGBs need to shift balance. NGB should not have such top heavy orgs. Local level needs to be a greater priority for NGBs (CSP, Hosted). If answers seem a bit negative in places this is a reflection of the top down, politically demanded project design and delivery which we have to manage and make work (CSP, Hosted). A more collective approach required, a very long way to go....NGBs always thought they could do stuff on their own...they now realise that this is not the case. Many NGBs do not understand the need for local level, informal [sport] interventions (CSP, Hosted). Still far too much top-down, need to be more bottom-up thinking in policy. More confidence to allow local level to come up with solutions to problems/issues. Focus on outcomes; allow local level to develop the solutions. (CSP, Not Hosted) Sport England have defined what they fund clearly, but there is often a disparity between what can be funded and what NGBs may feel is most important for the development of their sport. (Medium sized NGB)
The funding bottleneck	There is adequate funding in this system—but problems with how the funding is allocated. There is too much money invested into the national level of NGBs and not enough funding invested into the local delivery level. (CSP, Hosted) The big issue about capacity and funding is that we need to get more money in to the grass roots. £450M is now being invested into NGBs and the question from many at the local level is "how much of that will be allocated to the actual delivery of sport". It is not a case of community sport not having enough money; it is more a case of thinking about and analysing how the money is allocated and how it is used (CSP, Not Hosted) The separate funding of school sport and community sport makes no sense. This requires closer coordination and greater join-up. Greater investment in school sport will help to sustain higher levels of community sport participation. (Medium NGB) It is important that the next round of WSP funding gets resources down to the grass roots level in order to support and sustain community sport (CSP, Hosted). The CSP-NGB relationship is evolving in a positive way. NGB plans were originally very centrally driven. There is hope within the new SE strategy for locally driven investment. We should therefore be able to work with NGBs at the local level who are willing and able to respond to local opportunities as and when they arise. (CSP, Not Hosted)
The importance of individuals in the system	In some instances the NGBs are great to work with and innovative, very often it is personality driven rather than anything to do with systems or performance management. (CSP, Not Hosted). CSPs are all very different--some are exceptionally good to work with, others are difficult to work with. The best explanation for this is the type of staff, their attitudes, experiences and ability to work hard to develop positive relationships. Some CSP staff are excellent, others do not have the time of day for us (Small NGB). CSPs are exceptionally diverse. Some are very good, some not so good. Leadership is absolutely key (Small NGB). The [NGB] is committed to working with CSPN to make the Delivery system for Sport in England to be more effective - there are many variables and the success is all down to people and relationships making the system work - systems alone don't work - very happy to expand further by phone or face to face. (Large NGB) We have a mature relationship with CSPs over a long period. Where things have worked it has not been down to management intervention or contractual controls but a sense of engagement common purpose and genuine partnership working - we must all recognise this and invest more in bringing this about - less controls/spreadsheets etc more investment in partnership working. (Large NGB)
Stability	The system is still young. I am sure it will grow in confidence and expertise as it develops further - all that is required in my opinion is a long term high level political commitment (CSP, Hosted). Whilst there are lots of ongoing distractions in terms of regular changes in programmes, the overall strategic direction/underlying principle of getting more people active is relatively stable (CSP, Not Hosted).

Appendix 5
Schedule of interview questions

CSP-NGB Relationship

Q1. What do you see as the key ingredients of a successful relationship between CSPs and NGBs?

Q2. What would you say are the major factors that create problems or challenges in partnership work between CSPs and NGBs?

Q3. If you could wave a magic wand and improve any aspect of the NGB-CSP relationship, what would the focus of this improvement be?

Q4. Do you think that the pressure for CSPs and NGBs to work together squeezes out LAs, and if so, does this matter?

The significance of the relationship in local-level policy making and policy implementation

Q5. What are the strategic priorities of your organisation and what process did you through to agree these priorities?

Q6. How do you view the requirement for CSPs to strategically coordinate sport across the county whilst also delivering specific participation projects? How does this work in practice?

Q7. In what ways do you feel that your organisation is able to influence (i) national level sport-related policy, and (ii) local level sport-related policy?

The community sport policy process

Q8. What do you see as the major tensions or challenges in the community sport policy system?

Q9. If money came to you with no strings attached how would you change your strategy?

Q10. Has there been a change in SE expectations of [your organisation] since 2005. If so, how would you say expectations have changed?

Q11. Some people involved in the system suggest that there is not enough resource or capacity at the local level to grow and sustain participation in sport—how do you view this assertion?

Appendix 6
Research timeline

	Oct '09-Sept '10	Oct '10-Sept '11	Oct '11-Sept '12	Oct '12-Sept '13

	Oct-Jan	Feb-May	Jun-Sept	Oct-Jan	Feb-May	Jun-Sept	Oct-Jan	Feb-May	Jun-Sept	Oct-Jan	Feb-May	Jun-Sept
Initial reading	■	■										
Project conceptualisation		■	■									
Draft literature review			■	■	■							
Draft methods chapter				■	■							
Quantitative survey (CSPs)					■	■	■					
Quantitative survey (NGBs)						■	■	■				
Documentary analysis		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Draft context chapter							■					
Identification of cases								■				
Interviews								■	■			
Transcription								■	■			
Coding qualitative data									■	■		
Re-analysis/synthesis with literature										■		
Draft case studies prepared										■	■	
Draft discussion chapter completed											■	
Final paper completed												■

Appendix 7
Extract from interview transcript

The time is 11:15, this is interview #29 with [redacted] [redacted] from [redacted] County Council.

[00:13]
SPENCER: It would be really useful if, just to kick us off you could, in a nutshell, summarize your role with [redacted] County Council.

[00:20]
[redacted] Okay, right, in a nutshell. [LAUGH] I think what my role is, is a strategic commissioner, essentially. I'm head of culture, sport, communities, libraries, informal learning, a few other things that have been shoved my way.

[00:36]
SPENCER: Well, that's grown, hasn't it?

[00:37]
[redacted] Yeah, it's grown significantly, but it is essentially, as a County Council, it's a strategic commissioning role, that's been enhanced, really. In terms of one of the influences on the sport policy over the last few years, we've our preparations for Legacy 2012, so that's been a real stimulus around the county council's commissioning approach toward sport's relationship with partners, around community sport. So with that strategic commissioning role, you obviously have connections with Sport England, it will have connections with County Sports Partnership, it will have our connections with our district and borough council partners, and increasingly, our role is about shaking the market. We're not providers of any sporting facilities, but it's about maximizing the outcomes from community sport, from a strategic commissioning perspective. That's probably it in a nutshell, doing the best we can for [redacted] CSP, and making sure there's a sustainable infrastructure for sport in [redacted].

[01:53]
SPENCER: In a sporting context what is [redacted] County Council's priority for sport within the county? What's the absolute priority?

[02:08]
[redacted] If you go back a few years it would have been connected with the Local Area Agreement, so that there would have been a clear participation priority. I think since the demise of that, it's been very much a not-for-sports-for-sports-sake dimension, but for the outcomes that sport can deliver. So for example, the priority at the moment is the sport and physical activities role in the dimension of better health outcomes, essentially. I suppose if you wanted to, we still probably have that drive to get more people active, to get more people participating in sport. But probably, over the last few years, couple of years, since the LAA specifically, and the national target has dissipated and disappeared. Then that hasn't necessarily broadened into sport and physical activity, and widened the definition of how we want to see

sport developing. Ultimately for us it's about broader outcomes, it's about access and getting people active.

[03:46]
SPENCER: In terms of community sport and the latest DCMS strategy to what extent do you think there's consensus across that policy area? And what I mean by that is, to what extent do you see in [redacted], people pulling in the same direction, on the same page, trying to achieve the same thing in sport?

[04:10]
[redacted] I think there is a level of consensus. I must say, obviously the DCMS's strategy production in general, it was shocking, it's a mission of local government actually, kind of remember the words being stated in there, so I think that's the usual sort of dimension we have in dealing with government departments.

[04:33]
SPENCER: What's was your response to that as Chair of CCLOA?

[04:39]
[redacted] CCLOA was focused on the sharper end of the consultation with Sport England, which we felt initially at least that there actually was some listening. But the strategy itself was rather, the usual type of heads up, I've got to make a political announcement tomorrow. So I think, you know, obviously there were bits and pieces about our losing the targets for participation because locally, that stuff, that APS information data has been like just gold dust really, for any commissioner of the service. So the ability to feed that type of data into JSNA's annual public health reports bring that segment way ahead of a lot of other service areas. I mean, it's been a real plus. In terms of policy direction, it breaks down. It breaks down when you get to that local context and level, because what does it mean, in terms of starting a sports policy at fourteen? Well, who the hell works in that way? What NGB works in that way, let alone provision of a local authority? But of course, money can. The drivers of the money, it means you have to, in local context, you have to work hard to make it work, and CCLOA has been trying to I guess influence that, trying to increase some of the prioritization. Making sure disability was really highly programmed into funding, around the community access for schools. Because if you getting some funding in to developing the community youth centre and schools, you're going to be servicing the whole population, and not from fourteen. But I think there's some good stuff in there, you know, the confirmation of how to build the links, trying to get the NGB more closely built into the network of understanding what their role can be in local community sport provisioning, and not just the … I tend to say there's probably been … I mean, before the recent consultation, I cannot too many NGB's are coming past, knocking on my door. And if I speak to my district colleagues, they're not knocking on their doors either. I think there's been a sort of relation of going straight to the operator rather than the commissioner, which may be because they haven't got a commissioner, I don't know.

[06:23]
SPENCER: How do you see it across [redacted], in terms of, I get the point around the fourteen-plus, and the nature in local communities

and families, it doesn't work in that way. But in terms of the providers and the commissioners, etcetera, do you feel like they're all pointing in the same direction, and on the same page to make that work? Or do you somehow …

[06:57}
[redacted] Well you have to work really hard at that, and that's always been the case of sport, it's really complex and diffuse. It all depends on trust between the different agencies. Ideally, you've got a CSP that has the capacity to try and harness that and bring all that together, to try and get some added value across the pieces of the jigsaw. I don't think anyone's cracked that, totally, maybe more in a unitary area, you may be able to sort of bring that together a little bit more easily but, the political dimensions of working in [redacted] with different sets of councillors, different political persuaders in some areas, and the identity that each district wants, means that for a County Sports Partnership, that's hard, for a county council, that's quite hard. But that's what we do, we try to bring that kind of leadership, to bring people together to point in the right direction, albeit direction is pointed around, we'll achieve buying into the 2012 Legacy in June is the most active county, to drive towards the most active county is really long-term Legacy program that's very much targeted at public health, coming into the county council, and the help of the CSP and the local authorities.

[07:47]
SPENCER: You mentioned about NGB's being built into the network at the local level in particular. When I say local, I'm meaning county down to district into local communities. What do you think are some of the problems there? What prevents that from happening? What do you think the issues are?

[08:03]
[redacted] I guess three or four years ago they got their first real charge of independence, you know the development funding to kind of modernise and reshape themselves. Some are big and established anyway, but for a number, it was quite a significant growth, I guess. The simple thing is, that you have so many differing organisational cultures. You have forty-six sports all with their own organisational culture, then local government and the CSP and that's before you think about clubs, coaches and other local groups.

Appendix 8
Qualitative coding framework

Theme/*sub theme*/(cases)	Sub-section	Section by research objective
Approach to managing relations *-Role of board/core team (1,2,3)* *-Prioritisation of sports (1,2,3)* *-Knowledge (1)* *-Structural arrangements (2,3)*	The CSP leadership of NGB relations	**The CSP-NGB relationship (Objective 1)**
Individuals (1,2,3) Principles *-Mutual respect (1,2)* *-Trust (1,2,3)* *-Engagement (1,2)* *-Clarity of purpose (2,3)* *-Attitude (3)* Institutional resources (1) Culture of sub-regional workforce (2) Structures (2,3)	Factors that positively influence the CSP-NGB relationship	
Lack of engagement *-The CSP-local authority relationship (1,2,3)* *-NGB whole sport plan process (1,2,3)* *-Involvement of NGB in CSPs (1,2)* Diversity of priorities (1,2,3) Process over people (1,2) Complexity of inconsistency (2,3) Lack of empathy (2) Lack of clarity of purpose (3)	The problems that adversely affect the CSP-NGB relationship	
Top down system with a narrow coalition (1,2,3) Differing roles in national policy (1) LAs central role in local policy (1,2,3)	The role of the CSP/NGBs in policy making	**The role of the CSP and NGBs in policy making and implementation (Objective 2)**
Lack of clarity re: WSP priorities (1,2,3) Lack of involvement of CSPs/LAs (1,2,3) Lack of consensus from street-level agents (1,2,3) Enhanced importance of participation (3)	Preparation of the whole sport plan	
Blurred distinction between strategic and delivery role of CSP *-NGB requirements vary (1,2)* *-Resource dependency drives CSP delivery focus (1,2,3)* *-Lack of capacity at local level to implement policy (1,2,3)* *-Depends on local context (2)* *-Changing role of CSP (3)* Changing role of LAs (1,2,3) Lack of local capacity to implement community sport policy (1,2,3)	The role of the CSP/NGB in policy implementation	
A top-down system (1,2,3) Frequent change (1,2) Duplication in the system (1,2) More professional community sport system (2,3) Unintended consequences of policy (1,2,3)	The nature of the community sport policy process	**CSP/NGB beliefs, attitudes and experiences regarding the community sport policy process (Objective 3)**
Lack of community sport system (1,3) Competition over cooperation (1,2) Lack of consensus on priorities (1,2)	The extent to which agents feel part of a collective system	
Financial cuts (2,3) Lack of consensus (2) More investment needed in delivery (1,2,3) Require more intelligence (2) The culture of sport (2,3) Time (1,3) Need more non-traditional routes (3) Facilities (1,2,3) No connection with school sport policy (2,3) Trust within NGBs (1) Assumptions/expectations (3)	Challenges that prevent agents from delivering community sport outcomes	