

Johanna Sveen Belbo

---

## Networks in the local sport sector: Who is linked to whom, and what does it mean?

A social network analysis of one Norwegian municipality

---

Master thesis in Sport Sciences  
Department of Social and Cultural Studies  
Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, 2018



## Abstract

Inter-organizational relationships are one way for sport organizations to gain resources, increase organizational capacity, and potentially have influence on others. As such, investigating how stakeholders in the local sport sector are connected is one way to understand actions, challenges, and possibilities in the Norwegian sport delivery system. The present study identifies stakeholder networks in the local sport sector and contribute to the understanding of how network structure has significance on the actors involved in terms of capacity, and power and influence.

The study has a quantitative design, using one Norwegian municipality as the point of departure. Data was generated from 30 questionnaires (conducted as structured telephone interviews), including participants from clubs and subgroups, the local sport council, and the public authorities within the municipality, as well as the regional sport body in the current county. This data served as basis for doing a social network analysis.

By identifying stakeholders and networks, and capturing the participants' experience of what connects their organization to its stakeholders, this study found that the institutionalized actors in the local sport sector have severe contact with actors from all levels of society and from both the voluntary, public, and private sector. Relationships are established based on institutionalized rules in the sport system and as a means to secure both tangible and intangible resources. Central actors were found to be the local public authorities, the local sport council, and the regional sport body. They have powerful positions in the network and great potential for influencing the other stakeholders. However, contradicting previous research, this study also shows the distinctive position of local sport clubs and the importance they play in field. Finally, while inter-organizational relationships seem to have positive impact on organizational capacity, there is no secret that they depend greatly on human resources in order to be sufficient. As such, this study contributes greatly to the field of research. Especially, it provides a thorough overview of network structures, a better understanding of issues connecting the actors, as well as a comprehensive interpretation of these.

**KEY WORDS:** *Local sport, stakeholders, inter-organizational relationships, network, social network analysis, power, capacity, resources.*

# Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Purpose of the project and background for research question .....	8
1.2 Research questions.....	9
1.3 Organizational capacity and power .....	9
1.4 The thesis' structure .....	11
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Stakeholder theory: Identifying the network partners .....	12
2.2 Network theory .....	13
2.2.1 Social network analysis .....	14
2.2.2 The value of network structure .....	15
2.2.3 Homophily: Similarity as a source for connections? .....	16
2.3 Resource dependence theory: Do possessing resources equal power? .....	18
2.4 Neo-institutional theory: Institutional fields and pressures within them .....	19
<b>3. Context and literature review</b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1 The local sport sector in Norway .....	21
3.2 The field of social network research.....	23
3.3 Literature review: Networks and inter-organizational relationships in (local) sport.....	25
3.4 Gaps in literature and contribution to the field .....	31
<b>4. Methods</b> .....	<b>32</b>
4.1 Epistemology .....	32
4.2 Research design.....	33
4.3 Methodology: The case of a Norwegian municipality.....	34
4.3.1 Selecting the case.....	36
4.4 Data collection: Questionnaires .....	36
4.4.1 Sample .....	39
4.5 Data management and analysis .....	40

<b>4.6</b>	<b>Quality assessments: Validity and reliability .....</b>	<b>43</b>
4.6.1	Validity .....	43
4.6.2	Reliability .....	45
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Ethical considerations.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Results and discussion .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Sport clubs within the case: Who is linked to whom? .....</b>	<b>49</b>
5.1.1	Birds of a feather flock together: Does similarity explain connections? .....	55
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Crossing sectors and municipal boarders: Who are the stakeholders? .....</b>	<b>59</b>
5.2.1	The number of ties: Popularity or power? .....	63
5.2.2	Brokers and key players: Who ties the network together? .....	67
<b>5.3</b>	<b>The actors are connected, but about what? .....</b>	<b>71</b>
5.3.1	Defining the different types of ties .....	71
5.3.2	Financial resources .....	73
5.3.3	Human resources .....	78
5.3.4	Building and developing facilities .....	83
5.3.5	Marketing, recruitment, and club development .....	87
<b>6.</b>	<b>Final discussion and concluding remarks .....</b>	<b>91</b>
6.1	Practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research .....	95
	<b>References .....</b>	<b>97</b>
	<b>Table of tables .....</b>	<b>105</b>
	<b>Table of figures.....</b>	<b>106</b>
	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>107</b>
	<b>Appendix A: Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>107</b>
	<b>Appendix B: Written informed consent form.....</b>	<b>110</b>
	<b>Appendix C: Norwegian Centre for Research Data’s letter of approval for collecting and keeping data .....</b>	<b>112</b>

# Acknowledgements

I guess this is it! It is with mixed feelings I am finally submitting my master thesis, a proof that the last year's work has come to an end, and that life as a student (at least for now) is over. It is no secret that the last year has been challenging, frustrating, and boring at times. At the same time, this process has been extremely interesting, fun, and educational. All in all, a great ending to my NIH-career and a process I am proud to say I have completed.

There is no doubt that this research project would not have been realized without help and support. First, thank you to all my participants for eagerly answering my questions and sharing your thoughts and experiences. I hope you found the topic interesting.

Thanks to my supervisor, Professor Ørnulf Seippel, for all your help throughout this project. I am sure I have annoyed you at times, but it has been great knowing that your door is always open and that I can rely on your solid and honest feedback, although I do not always understand your handwriting.

This project also depended on family, friends, my Kringsjå squad, and particularly Linn, Ane, and Heidi. Whenever I need serious conversations, proof reading, homemade bread, waffles, work-out sessions, or simply to hang-out, I know I can rely on all of you. In addition, classmates: thank you for great academic discussions, moral support, and both necessary and unnecessary study breaks. My trivia skills would have been much lower if it were not for you guys!

Finally, I never thought a school would feel so at home. So, thank you NIH and the Department of Cultural and Social studies! Thank you for the opportunity to study abroad twice, volunteer at international events, and in general giving me five years of #superawesomefun. Life as a student has definitely been a blast, but I now look forward to take on new adventures and challenges.

Johanna Sveen Belbo  
Oslo, May 2018

# 1. Introduction

Norwegian sport politics are in great extent decided on the national level (Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nødland, & Rommetvedt, 2007). Both the sport organization's policy measures and the governments policies and guidelines are firmly located on this level. Bergsgard et al. (2007) explained that the power of Norwegian sport is without doubt found within the central, national organization. Further, they described "this concentration of power is matched by the government system" (p. 102), where the Ministry of Culture has the major responsibility for policies, funding, and facilitation of all types of sport.

Despite these national guidelines, and the fact that research tend to focus on this level, Berg and Rommetvedt (2002) argued that municipalities often have their own explicit, and prioritized sport policies. In Norway, almost all sport related activity happens on the local level (Seippel, 2003), where sport clubs are the actors in charge of facilitating sport and continuously be the implementing actors of national, as well as local, sport policies. Skille (2015) found that local sport clubs' impression of their own role "is simply to provide sports activities for the local community" (p. 511). As such, questions arise whether clubs care about others' goals and objectives, rather than simply their own and how they manage these potential contradictions. Along the same line, curiosity regarding clubs' ability to take part in policy making processes occur: What is actually going on at the local level? There is a need for understanding power-balances and organizations' ability to influence others on the local level of Norwegian sport.

Organizations are dependent on others to achieve their goals (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Due to the structure of Norwegian sport and the institutionalized processes of applying for grants and building facilities, sport is tied with actors from the public sector on each level. Further, an increasing number of actors concerned about physical activity operate within the private sector, giving organized sports potential partners within every sector. It is evident that actors are connected. Engagement in inter-organizational relationships with actors from various sectors can be critical for non-profit organizations, such as local sport clubs. Among others, MacLean, Cousens, and Barnes (2011) acknowledged that linkages between sport organizations are means to access both tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources, such as facilities, finances, and technology,

and intangible resources such as accessing political power, expertise, and knowledge are examples of necessities and potential beneficial capacities that sport clubs can gain through their partnerships. Therefore, investigating how stakeholders in the local sport sector are connected is one way to understand actions, power, influence, and dependence in the Norwegian sport delivery system.

For this reason, the current research project investigates networks between central stakeholders in the local sport sector. It is a survey-based study, using social network analysis to describe the case of one Norwegian municipality. I use local sport clubs as the point of departure.

### **1.1 Purpose of the project and background for research question**

Investigating connections between the local sport clubs, the local sport council, the public authorities, and others in the local sport sector can help us understand the role and the importance of each actor in the system and the field as a whole, and potentially uncover areas in the system where there is room for improvement. Little is known about social networks in the context of Norwegian sport politics. Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to explore issues related to between the actors involved in the delivery of Norwegian sport, particularly grassroots sports.

The structure of Norwegian sport suggests that local sport clubs have relations to actors in both the voluntary, public, and private sector. Based on network theories, as well as former research and knowledge about Norwegian sport, I assume that “the local sport club has relations to clubs delivering the same activity”, “sport clubs located within the same area are connected”, and “bigger sport clubs have more relational ties than small ones”. By considering other attributes, such as individual characteristics, I suggest that “the sport club’s individual members influence which actors are in the network” and that “sport clubs with hired professionals more frequently communicate with actors in their network than clubs without”. Finally, in order to understand why relational ties are established, one should consider which issues connect the actors within the local sport sector. I suggest “facilities (both building and using) are the most common issue for establishing ties, regardless of sector”.



Research is necessary in order to confirm or disprove these assumptions. Exploring links between central actors within the field of Norwegian sport will allow us to understand the Norwegian sport delivery system better. The interdependency across sectors is evident, as well as partnerships among sport organizations can help them to overcome collective problems (Seippel, 2008). Seippel (2008) argued that organizations create and maintain networks to gain political capital. Network research can therefore uncover issues related to power and dependency among the actors, as well as the processes regarding funding, developing facilities, hosting events, and trying to reach the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sport's (NIF) overall vision; "Sports for all".

## **1.2 Research questions**

In this study, I want to describe the structure of the local sport sector, and to contribute to an understanding of how local sport politics come into play and develop through connections among the actors involved.

First, I ask (1) *Who are the central stakeholders in the local sport sector and how are they part of networks?* and (2) *What are these networks concerned about?*

Then, in order understand the networks' effect on the actors involved, I ask: (3) *How do these networks have significance for sport clubs' organizational capacity?* and (4) *How do the stakeholders' positions in these networks have significance for power and influence?*

By asking these questions, the project will map out networks and inter-organizational relationships in the local sport sector, and expand the understanding of challenges, issues, and possibilities that surround the development and maintenance of these relationships. Moreover, this expanded knowledge serves as a basis for further interpretations and understanding of how local sport politics take place and how this affects the actors involved. Capacity and power-balances will be emphasized.

## **1.3 Organizational capacity and power**

Organizational capacity and power are terms I believe should be explained before moving on in this thesis. Misener and Doherty (2013) explained that organizational

capacity “refers to the ability of an organization to harness its internal and external resources to achieve its goals” (p. 136). Further, they described that these resources represent multiple capacity dimensions. Those often include “human resources, strategic planning, infrastructure, finances, and inter-organizational relationships” (Misener & Doherty, 2013, p. 136), and contribute to an organizations goal achievement. Scholars argue that understanding key elements of one or several of these dimensions can help organizations to develop capacity-building efforts (Hall et al., 2003). As securing resources is an important part of organizational capacity, it is critical to understand an organization’s resource structure (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). In this project, the focus is on the relationships when considering organizational capacity, but considered in light of the exchange of resources. Doherty, Misener, and Cuskelly (2014) found five critical elements of capacity regarding relationships with external organizations: “personal connections, relationships that are engaged, balanced relationships, dependable relationship, and bureaucratic partners” ( p. 137S).

“Power” relates to the ability to direct or influence the behavior if others and affect decision making processes (Hanssen, Helgesen, & Vabo, 2011). There are three different types of power: visible power, agenda power, and structural power. Early research on power concerned visible power: an understanding of power as the ability to reach one’s goals while experiencing opposition from others (Weber, 1971). As such power means control of the resources required to determine an outcome of interest for the power practitioner.

Agenda-setting power relates to the issue of non-decisions – keeping issues away from the political agenda. The person or organization who set the agenda control what will and will not be decided, and everyone else may or may not be aware that power is being exercised over them. Finally, structural power concerns the power deriving from structures that constitute the framework in which the actors act. Consequently, the positions of actors can be manipulated through a modification of either the environment or the structures respectively – it is institutionalized. Such established power relations thus limit the scope for the actors’ actions. In this regard, there might exist structural – or institutionalized – barriers for some to realize their interests (Hanssen et al., 2011).

Power can be both formal and informal. Formal power comes with position, and is the politicians' ability to adopt laws, budgets, and plans. Informal power relates to influencing the decision makers. In local politics, sport organizations are interest groups with the opportunity to exert this type of informal power.

#### **1.4 *The thesis' structure***

The thesis consists of six chapters. First, as understanding the theoretical framework guiding this study is beneficial, it is presented in Chapter 2. Second, in Chapter 3 I elaborate on the study's context, followed by the literature review. Chapter 4 consists of a comprehensive description of the project's methodological aspects. Then, Chapter 5, the thesis' main part, includes the results and discussion. Finally, in the last chapter, I present the conclusion where the research questions are answered, alongside remarks on implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will present and describe the theoretical perspectives guiding this study, and elaborate on their contributions. In order to answer the research questions, network theory is applicable. However, network evolution, as well as network structure, is affected by the environments in which the network is embedded and should be taken into considerations (Rhee & Kim, 2014). Therefore, I also employ stakeholder theory, resource dependence theory, and institutional theory– particularly the concept of institutional fields. Together, these theories make up the project’s theoretical framework.

Through stakeholder theory and network theory, I identify important actors within the field, the links between them, and their location in the network. Resource dependence theory and institutional theory will further help explain these networks, particularly in terms of power-balances and possibilities to influence the field. Finally, as both the perspective of resources and institutional theory seek to understand organizations’ ability to survive in their respective environments, the outcomes of engaging in networks can be seen alongside organizations’ capacity to reach their objectives.

### **2.1 Stakeholder theory: Identifying the network partners**

In order to understand the field of local sport, we need to know who the actors involved are. Thibault and Harvey (1997) explained that the creation of networks implies the identification of key organizations in the environment. Correspondingly, stakeholder theory is applied as a point of departure when identifying the actors that play a role for local sport. A stakeholder is “any groups or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). The concept of stakeholder has been addressed by various definitions. Regardless of the definition, organizations must address a set of stakeholder expectations. Therefore, as Rowley (1997) explained, the main objectives in stakeholder research have been to identify who an organization’s stakeholders are and to determine what types of influences they have on the focal organization.

The stakeholder framework includes every group or individual who have interest in the focal organization. Theoretically, the term stakeholder must capture a broad range of

actors, even though some groups might be ignored when the concept is employed (Freeman, 1984). When considering local sport clubs' stakeholders, the present research is open to include a variety of actors from both the voluntary, public, and private sector, and to distinguish through what type of resources and/or flow of information the stakeholders can influence the sport clubs and subgroups.

Traditionally, stakeholder theory focuses on dyadic ties. However, it is the interaction between stakeholders that provides the most complete picture of the system in which an organization is embedded. Organizations do not respond to each stakeholder individually, and "explanations of how organizations respond to their stakeholders require an analysis of the complex array of multiple and interdependent relationships existing in the stakeholder environment" (Rowley, 1997, p. 890).

In this study, I employ stakeholder theory to identify stakeholders within local sport politics and the influences that these actors exert on each other. A local sport club is more than just a focal organization, but also a stakeholder of many others in its social system. As I use several sport clubs as starting points, the present study follows Rowley's (1997) argument that stakeholder research should move beyond dyadic ties towards analyzing the whole stakeholder network.

## **2.2 Network theory**

Exploring the field of local sports using a network approach can help explain and understand the interconnectedness between various stakeholders and how they execute pressures on each other. Further, employing network analysis and theory allows for determining who communicates with whom, who turns to others for information and resources, and who provides this information. In addition, it allows for understanding why actors are connected. Finally, based on an actor's location in a network (visualized in network graphs), the theory allows for determining who is more central and describing an actor's relative importance in a network. In this study, network theory serves to both describe the structure of the local sport clubs' networks and to explain the effects this structure has on the actors involved.

### **2.2.1 Social network analysis**

A distinctive part of network theory is the various analyses one can employ: social network analyses. Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) explained that all network measurements have “behavioral, perceptual, and attitudinal consequences both for the individual units and for the system as a whole” (p. 1418). In this study, analyses of interest are cohesion (through density, average degree, and cohesive subgroups), degree centrality, eigenvector centrality, betweenness centrality, reciprocity, and fragmentation. Several scholars have contributed to the field of social network analyses. I have chosen to mainly follow the works of Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson (2013), Prell (2012), Robins (2015), J. Scott (2017), and Wasserman and Faust (1994).

Centrality refers to a node’s importance in the network, and direct attention towards nodes with many network partners (Robins, 2015). Degree centrality is a measure for “the number of immediate contacts an actor has in a network” (Prell, 2012, p. 96), and can be interpreted as a node’s involvement, activity, or popularity in the network (Prell, 2012; Robins, 2015). Eigenvector centrality expands on this notion. “It is the sum of an actor’s connections to other actors, weighted by their degree centrality” (Prell, 2012, p. 101). Forming a tie with an actor with high degree centrality, one increases its possibilities to access new ties, and thus one’s eigenvector centrality. Betweenness centrality looks at how often an actor rests between two other actors, and is a measure for a node’s importance in connecting the network through short paths (Prell, 2012; Robins, 2015).

Cohesion concerns the network’s connectedness. One of the measures for cohesion is density. Density “refers to the proportion of ties in a network that are actually present” (Prell, 2012, p. 166). The measure explains the degree to which all actors in a network are linked together, while average degree is a number for the average amount of links each node in the network has. It is a description of how much social activity is occurring in the system. Along these lines, average degree indicates the average number of ties each actor in the network has (Prell, 2012).

Another aspect of cohesion is cohesive subgroups. “Cohesive subgroups are subsets of actors among whom there are relatively strong, direct, intense, frequent, or positive ties” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 249). Scholars distinguish between various types of

cohesive subgroups. In the current study, I employ clique, which following J. Scott (2017) "is a subset of points in which every possible pair of points is directly connected by a line and the clique is not contained in any other clique" (p. 127). In other words, it is important to underline that a clique is maximal and complete.

Closely connected to cohesion is fragmentation, which looks at the extent to which a network can remain connected even when various nodes are removed. Finally, reciprocity takes into account the number of reciprocated ties in the network, indicating whether the actors mutually rely on each other.

### **2.2.2 The value of network structure**

Within the field of network theory, there are two well-known contributions:

Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties and Burt's (1992) structural holes. These contributions are closely linked to the analysis for betweenness centrality. The strength of weak ties theory is based on several premises. First, the stronger the tie between two actors, the more likely their social worlds will overlap, and as a result, they will have (at least weak) ties with the same third parties. Second, bridging ties are sources for new ideas and new knowledge. A bridge is "a line in the network which provides the only path between two points" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1364), and if removed would leave a very long path (if any at all) connecting the two points (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

The concept of structural holes is based on the notion that certain network structures can give individuals a strategic advantage over others (Burt, 1992). Burt (1992) described a structural hole as "a relationship of non-redundancy between two contacts" (p. 18). As such, the structural holes are the empty spaces in social structure, resulting from actors not having a tie between them. The hole is however a buffer, and provide network benefits for the two actors that are additive rather than overlapping (Burt, 1992). Along the same line as Granovetter's (1973) bridges, brokers are important within the concept of structural holes. A broker is someone who rests between disconnected actors and attention is given to the benefits an actor can gain from brokering between two alters (Prell, 2012).

Flow of information and how to obtain most novel information are key elements in both concepts. Granovetter (1973) described that in order to achieve this, indirect contacts

are important. Both in terms of an ego's manipulation of networks and because they are the channels for ideas, influences, and information that originally are socially distant from the ego (Granovetter, 1973). The fewer indirect contacts one has, the more limited he will be in terms of knowledge of the world beyond his own friendship circle. Therefore, bridging weak ties is important. "Whatever it is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1366).

Outcomes can be predicted as consequences of the network structure (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). As Burt (1992) explained: "something about the structure of the player's network and the location of the player's contacts in the social structure of the arena defines the player's chances of getting higher rates of return on investment" (p. 45). In network theory, a node's structural position in the network determine its potential to have power and be influential (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). An actor can either possess a central position in the network, or be the one who covers a structural hole.

### **2.2.3 Homophily: Similarity as a source for connections?**

When investigating networks, it is of interest to try to understand the patterns of connectedness. Burt (1992) argued that people establish and develop relationships with people like themselves. I employ the concept of homophily as it seeks to explain this.

Within network theory, homophily is a concept that seeks to describe similar actors' connectedness, as similarity breeds connection (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). "Homophily refers to the social situation of actors preferring to have social relations with others who are similar to themselves" (Prell, 2012, p. 129), and that such relations "occur at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 416). This underpins the assumptions previously made about the case in this thesis that "the local sport club has relations to clubs delivering the same activity" and that "sport clubs located within the same area are connected".

The concept of homophily implies that distance in terms social characteristics translates into network distance. In this way, it is reasonable to assume local sport clubs that provide very dissimilar activities, that have members from various age groups, and different organizational structure are distant from each other in the network.



There are various sources of homophily. First, space is crucial. One is more likely to have contact with those who are geographically close than those who are distant. However, this source tend to become less important over time as other types of homophily trump mere geographical closeness (McPherson et al., 2001). Second, family connections are the biosocial ties that connect people with those who are simultaneously similar or different. Third, organizational foci, through school, work, and voluntary organizations, provide the majority of ties not related to family. Finally, processes can influence homophily. Perceived similarity affect attraction, and people who share knowledge with another are more likely to interact. McPherson et al. (2001) argued that if shared knowledge is a result of demographic similarity, one can expect people to associate with similar others for features that smooth and ease communication and coordination of activities.

Similarity among actors is based on common attributes. In the case of local sport clubs, geographical location, organizational structure, types of sports, and membership in councils are examples of attributes that come into play, and that will be taken into account in this thesis.

Within the concept of homophily it is difficult to determine whether organizations come together and become more similar over time or if they are attracted to similar others and form ties accordingly (Prell, 2012). As such, it is beneficial to briefly touch upon the ideas of social selection and social influence. Homophily through the idea of social selection is based on the assumption that relational ties depend on the attributes of the actors who are members of the network (Robins, Elliott, & Pattison, 2001). Robins and colleagues (2001) explained: “the characteristics of actors are assumed to influence them to select, and be selected by, others as social partners” (p. 1). The selection process is a process where actors consciously or unconsciously structure their networks based on other’s attributes. As such, they form ties with some, but not all actors, and ties are likely to arise because the actors come to recognize shared qualities that stimulate the formation of a relation (Robins et al., 2001). In contrast to social selection, social influence processes entails that actors change some attributes due to some influence of network partners (Robins, 2015; Robins et al., 2001). This means that actors with already existing linkages, through interaction, influence one another and thus become more similar over time (Prell, 2012; Robins et al., 2001).

### **2.3 Resource dependence theory: Do possessing resources equal power?**

Resource dependence theory is a perspective within the field of strategic management and builds on the idea that an organization's survival depends on its effectiveness. Its effectiveness derives on the demands of interest groups upon which the organization depend for resources and support. As such, “the key to survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources” (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 2).

Resource dependence theory builds on the assumption that no organization is completely self-contained. They are embedded in an environment, comprised of other organizations, and depend on them in order to acquire the resources they need. As such, an important part of this theory is to understand the organization’s relations to the environment, and to what extent it has control of its resources. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argued organizations seek to avoid being controlled, and aim at stability and predictability in terms of their resources.

That organizations are dependent on their environment for success is in itself not an issue. If necessary resources are stable and predictable, despite being out of the organization’s control, there will be no challenges. However, hence the environment not necessarily is dependent on the organization, challenges occur. Environments can change, new organizations enter and others exit, as well as access to resources becomes easier or harder. When the environment changes, Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) described organizations can choose to either not survive or to change their activities in respect to what happens around them.

In general, organizations tend to be affected by those who control necessary resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). An organization must respond to society’s expectations, but to what extent it emphasizes doing so, reflect how dependent it is on the resource the stakeholder control compared to other resources. Following Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), three factors are important in order to determine how dependent an organization is of another. First, how important the resource is for the organization’s survival. Second, the degree to which the organization can decide how the resources are distributed and used. Finally, whether there exist few alternatives to the resource, or the degree of control of the resource.

Several types of resources can affect an organization's success and ability to survive. Barney (1991) distinguished between physical, human, organizational, and financial resources. Further, in order for a resource to hold the potential of sustained competitive advantage it depends on various factors. Barney (1991) emphasized attributes such as: value, uniqueness, imperfectly imitability, and substitutability.

In the present study, the perspective of resources is used as a basis for determining what connects the actors within the local sport sector. By looking at networks in light of this perspective, I seek to construct knowledge on what type of resources are crucial for the survival of actors in the local sport sector and on what type of actors they are dependent to secure their survival. Further, this facilitate for creating an understanding of issues related to power and influence within the field. I distinguish between financial, physical, and human resources. Financial resources include lottery funds, sponsorships, gifts, and operational support. Physical resources refer to facilities and equipment, while human resources concern voluntary work, coaches, knowledge, and information (Chelladurai, 2012).

#### **2.4 *Neo-institutional theory: Institutional fields and pressures within them***

Washington and Patterson (2011) described that institutional theory “focuses on understanding why there are striking similarity among very diverse organizations and how organizations buffer themselves from the demands of their environment” (p. 1). “Institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take rule like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). Institutions affect political interests, resources, and rules, and the actors' actions are based on the institutionalized values and norms (Eriksson-Zetterquist, Kalling, Styhre, & Woll, 2014). Organizations adapt these values and norms to gain legitimacy, and as a result strengthen their ability to survive.

A central part of neo-institutional theory is the organizational field. This concept is central to explain patterns of “inter-organizational competition, influence, coordination, and flow of information because it defines the boundaries within which these processes operate” (DiMaggio, 1991, p. 267). Greenwood et al., (2008) cited Scott (2001) when they defined an organizational field as “a community of organizations that partake in a

common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field” (p. 131). The concept of the organizational field includes “all parties who are meaningfully involved in some collective enterprise” (W. R. Scott, 2008, p. 208). Following these definitions, one can argue Norwegian sport to be an institutional field, with all organizational units in the system as parties within it. They are all, in some way, collectively working towards the mission of "sport for all". As such, it is reasonable to assume that they, due to the structure of Norwegian sport, communicate more often than they do with others. Further, Greenwood et al. (2008) argued that institutional theorists describe this kind of field as the domain where an organization’s actions are structured by the network of the relationships within which it is embedded. Building on this argument, a broader set of actors, rather than just sport organizations, can be part of the institutional field that Norwegian sport is. The current study can identify such organizations.

In an institutional field, “action is not a choice among unlimited possibilities, but rather among narrowly defined set of legitimate options” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 130). It is the institutionalized rules and norms guiding the actors’ actions. In light of network in the local sport sector, this results in the establishment of some relationships being expected in society as norms or as results of pressure.

Even though all organizations within the same field are subject to the effects of institutional processes within the context, all do not experience them and respond to them in the same manner (W. R. Scott, 2008). In light of networks, the organizations’ response to pressure depend on their linkages to others within the field. One can assume that less linkages result in less pressure, and further less similar behavior and less shared values and norms compared to others within the field.

In Chapter 3.1, I describe the structure of Norwegian sport and how sport as a voluntary actor is connected to actors within the private, and in particular the public sector. Further, I elaborate on the local sport sector and position the clubs within an organizational context. This context, I argue, is the institutional field in which the local sport clubs perform.

### **3. Context and literature review**

In order to investigate power, influence, and dependency in the local sport sector, and to describe how this appears through inter-organizational relationships and networks, it is necessary to have an understanding of the context and an overview of former research within the field. Building on the theoretical framework employed in the current study, this chapter includes a brief description of the structure of Norwegian sport and positions local sport clubs in the context in which they operate. In addition, I introduce the concept of social network research and explain relevant terms and definitions. In total, the chapter serves as a sufficient basis for the following parts of this thesis.

#### **3.1 *The local sport sector in Norway***

To use sport clubs as a point of departure for investigating the local sport sector, it is necessary to position the clubs within the Norwegian sport delivery system. In addition, a brief overview of important actors from other sectors is beneficial in order to get an understanding of the sport clubs' environment. This section will provide these aspects.

Norwegian sport is organized in a separate and politically independent organization (Enjolras, Waldahl, & Seippel, 2011). NIF was established in 1861 (NIF, 2009a). Today, the organization consists of more than 2.2 million memberships, and is the largest voluntary organization in Norway. NIF consists of 11 338 sport clubs, which are organized within 19 regional sport bodies (RSBs) and 54 national sport organizations (NSOs) (NIF, n.d.-a).

Like other Norwegian federations, NIF is an organization with a representative democratic structure (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2009). NIF functions as an umbrella organization with the different suborganizations tied together hierarchically through local, regional, and national bodies. NIF's central administration (NIF-central) is on top and local sport clubs at the bottom (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2009). Further, the division between the NIF-line and the NSO-line characterizes the organizational structure. The NIF-line is responsible for sport politics and is supposed to have a strategic role towards society. The line consists of NIF's central administration on the national level, RSBs on the regional level, and local sport councils on the municipal level. On the other side, the NSOs on the national level and their subunits, regional sport organizations (RSOs), on

the regional level constitutes the NSO-line. This part of NIF is responsible for the actual sport and reports to NIF-central. It is important to remember that, on the local level, the sport clubs are members of both lines (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2009), giving them a large variety of stakeholders and numerous potential partners within the NIF-system, as well as being the final implementing organs for a variety of units' policies.

Hence, the local sport council operates on the municipal level, they should be given some attention. In its strategy document, NIF presented the local sport council as the sport movement's most important political body (NIF, 2009b). It is stated in NIF's law that a local sport council shall be established in every municipality with more than three sport clubs (NIF, 2009b). Today, there exist approximately 370 local sport councils. The purpose of this organizational unit is to function as a coordinating actor, and represent the local sport clubs in relation to municipal authorities and the RSB. In addition, these councils are responsible for the allocation of local activity funds (LAM), a subsidy to clubs who provide sport activities for children and/or youth (Bergsgard & Opedal, 2002). However, as Skille and Säfvenbom (2011) argued, "there are huge variations regarding how the local sport councils work" (p. 294), meaning that the degree to which this actor is central can vary distinctively from municipality to municipality.

All levels of NIF's organizational structure have close relationships with the different levels of the public sector, particularly the public administration (Skille & Säfvenbom, 2011). The public administration includes everyone hired to manage or realize the goals and decisions made by the politicians. Today, there are three political levels of government in Norway, and each of these has its public administration (Hanssen et al., 2011). By empowering the local sport councils, the sport sector has developed an organization that largely correspond to the various levels of public administration (Enjolras et al., 2011).

Due to mutual dependency, Norwegian sport, although being a voluntary actor, is closely connected to the public sector. After the Second World War, there has been a division of labor between sport and the public. The national sport policy aim at facilitating for everyone to have the opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity at all levels (Meld.St. 26, 2012). The public should facilitate for sport, while the

sport sector has the operational responsibility (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009). NIF needs financial support from the state, while the state needs the NIF-system for implementation of sport (Skille & Säfvenbom, 2011). The national lottery funds make up the most important financial source for organized sport at all levels. These funds are particularly important in terms of developing facilities, and clubs (and municipalities) can apply for financial support to their projects. However, in order to apply, clubs must be in contact with their respective municipal authorities. Further, Skille and Säfvenbom (2011) explained that while counties have a marginal role in sport policy, municipal authorities subsidize sport through capital for facilities and through supporting expenses of sport clubs. In this case, the municipality is an actor one should expect to be central in the local sport sector. However, municipalities are not legally required to facilitate for sport, and their subsidies to sport are therefore greatly affected by each municipality's economy (Meld.St. 26, 2012).

By being organized in one common organization, Norwegian sport is, a complex system with many units and potential stakeholders at all levels of society. This system is the institutional field and the environment in which local sport clubs operate, and the field the current study explores through a social network research approach.

There are broad variations in the structure, administration, number of members, economy, and staffing (professionals/voluntary), throughout the country (Skille, 2015). Similar, Norwegian municipalities are structured in many ways and their focus on sport vary considerably. However, in terms of sport, there are certain features that are common to most Norwegian clubs. "Sport is conventionally a competitive and organized activity, taking place during leisure time on a voluntary basis. Voluntary refers to both the fact that participation is based on an individual and voluntary membership in the club, and the fact that the provision and facilitation of activity is based on voluntary work" (Skille, 2015, p. 509). Typically, members in Norwegian sport clubs are characterized by youth athletes and adult volunteers and coaches (Enjolras et al., 2011).

### **3.2 *The field of social network research***

Thibault and Harvey (1997) argued that the necessity for organizations to work with others in order to fulfill their objectives has been documented by several scholars within

organizational theory. Organizations are situated in an environment. In this environment there are other organizations, with whom transactions have to take place (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Along the same lines, resource dependence theory claims that no organizations are self-sufficient or have control over all the necessary resources to survive. Therefore, as Oliver (1990) argued, there is an increased acknowledgment that organizations are critically dependent on linkages to others.

Linkages are defined by Thibault and Harvey (1997) as “complex arrays of relationships between firms” (p. 46). Further, they describe that firms interact with each other, and that this interaction establishes these relationships. The interactions imply investments to build the relationships, which gives consistency to the linkage. Linkages can also be referred to as networks.

A social network can be defined as “a set of relations that apply to a set of actors, as well as any additional information on those actors and relations” (Prell, 2012, p. 9). Formally, scholars define social networks as a set of socially relevant nodes tied together by one or several relations. The nodes are the actors that are connected by the relations whose patterns researchers study (Marin & Wellman, 2011). Network patterns may reflect the underlying structural processes present in the network, for instance, how much the actors cooperate.

When researching networks, the relevant unit of analysis does not have to be an individual person, but can also be “a group, an organization, or an entire society” (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1417). Like this, network analysis makes it possible to relate micro-level interactions to macro-level interaction, that is the interaction of individuals and the interaction of groups, institutions, or organizations (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994). In addition, it does more than just identifying how actors are connected. Knoke and Kuklinski (1982, cited in Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994) argued that the paradigm provides other aspects of great value, such as the structure of relations and the location of individual actors in the network.

While traditional social science research uses independent and autonomous actors as the unit of observation, “network analysis includes the relationships between social actors or other interdependent social entities” (Wäsche, Dickson, Woll, & Brandes, 2017, p.



139). Like this, network analysis brings new perspectives and can contribute greatly to social research. As a framework, the network perspective requires an appreciation of the ability to move beyond the identification of which actors are connected to each other, and emphasize the type of connections between actors. This comes in addition to the benefits, opportunities, and challenges evolving from a network structure (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). My research project builds on this argument, which is reflected in the research questions and the theories guiding this study.

### **3.3 Literature review: Networks and inter-organizational relationships in (local) sport**

Research on networks and relations between stakeholders in sport have been conducted in various contexts. For instance, social network analysis has been employed to investigate sport events (Parent, Kristiansen, Skille, & Hanstad, 2015; Parent, Rouillard, & Naraine, 2017), sport marketing (Lee, Oh, & Juravich, 2016), and sport tourism (Wäsche, 2015). In the current project, I chose to emphasize relevant literature focusing on community sports when getting familiar with previous research. However, studies on national sport organizations also provide beneficial insight to communication patterns and characteristics of inter-organizational relationships.

Engaging in relationships with other organizations is one way for (local) sports organizations to acquire needed resources, knowledge, and other social benefits, as well as potentially achieving important public purposes and fostering a sense of cohesion in the community (Misener & Doherty, 2013). Like this, inter-organizational relationships can be of particular interest to small non-profit organizations that might not have the necessary resources and lack required staff competencies, and as a result, struggle to reach their objectives or deliver their missions. However, Light (2004, cited in Misener & Doherty, 2013) argued that these types of organizations are less likely to take advantage of partnership opportunities because of their limited resources that are needed to connect and work with external actors.

Misener and Doherty (2013) investigated the process and outcomes of inter-organizational relationships in Canadian community sport organizations (CSOs). They identified between three and eleven partners of the participating CSOs, representing 13 different types of organizations. These partners came from both the public, private, and

voluntary sector. In this study, the main reasons for engaging in partnerships were acquiring physical, financial, and human resources. In addition, acquiring information through connections with a partner was a reason for developing relationships. The authors found that relationships were described by characteristics that were either “good” or “bad”. In terms of relationship quality, several attributes were found that represent functioning relationships. These were engagement, balance, trust, and consistency.

Trust and consistency have also been emerging themes in other studies on relationships. For example, research on the relationships between the voluntary board and paid executives within voluntary sport organizations in Australia show that trust, transparency, and flow of information are keys to success (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003). In terms of consistency, it involves more than just having the same organizations as partners long term. In order to secure high quality of the relationships, it is equally important that the person managing the relationships remains constant (Misener & Doherty, 2013).

Relationships among sport organizations have been investigated regarding strategic capability by Ferkins and Shilbury (2010). When investigating the case of Tennis New Zealand, they found that inter-organizational relationships between the national and regional entities affect the board’s strategic role. Further, they emphasized that an organization’s ability to act strategically could be improved by “creating a more collaborative partnership with its regional entities” (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010, p. 252).

Since non-profit sport organizations must manage numerous and perhaps complex inter-organizational relationships, it is important to consider how these relationships might complicate the governance function (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). Organizational governance is the “system by which the elements of an organization are directed, controlled, and regulated” (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007, p. 3). Further, collaborative governance is a term that is argued relevant to sport organizations “embedded in systems where sport is supported by government policy and funding” (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 380), which is the case in Norway. The scholars cited Robertson and Choi (2012) when they described collaborative governance as “a group of interdependent stakeholders who work together to develop and/or implement policies to

address a complex multi-faceted problem or situation” (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 381).

Further, Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) used collaborative governance theory when they investigated the governance capability to an Australian NSO. While organizational governance is the “system by which the elements of an organization are directed, controlled, and regulated” (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007, p. 3), the scholars cited Robertson and Choi (2012) when they described collaborative governance as “a group of interdependent stakeholders who work together to develop and/or implement policies to address a complex multi-faceted problem or situation” (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 381). Further, collaborative governance is a term that is argued relevant to sport organizations “embedded in systems where sport is supported by government policy and funding” (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015, p. 380). In a Norwegian context, NIF and the government are interdependent stakeholders. That counts for the different organizations within the NIF-system as well. Collaboration between the different organizational levels within NIF, and NIF and the government is an objective and a necessity for the Norwegian sport system. However, due to various reasons this might not always be the case. As Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) noted, despite logic that signals the importance of “collaboration and cooperation in the governance, management, and delivery of sport, there is evidence that genuine cooperation is often absent” (p. 382).

In order to collaborate, communication is necessary. Hoye and Cuskelly (2003) described frequency and communication patterns as factors that can characterize the relationships. When Shaw and Allen (2006) investigated inter-organizational partnerships in the non-profit sector in New Zealand, they also discussed how communication takes place. Even though a formal partnership structure and formal communication were suggested to secure clear communication and collaboration among the partners in their study, informal ways of communicating were popular between the actors involved. This way of communicating was considered to be a key dynamic within the partnership (Shaw & Allen, 2006).

Bergsgard and Nødland (2009) also described the communication patterns in their research concerning the local sport sector in Norway. They emphasized cross-sector relationships in a Norwegian context. Their results indicate that the cooperation between

the municipality and sport is recognized by both ad hoc and long term, as well as informal and formal characteristics. The municipality, especially the public administration, and local sport cooperate on matters relating to, among other things, planning, development, operational tasks, committee work, and the implementation of administrative tasks (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009). Those in charge of sport within the local public administration have most interaction with the sport sector. According to Bergsgard and Nødland (2009), this applies to sports clubs in particular, but increasingly also to the municipality's sport council. In addition, the municipalities' sports administrators argued that their administrative connection to sports is the greatest significance for the local sports politics (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009).

Bergsgard and Nødland's (2009) research also showed that voluntary sports have valuable contact to the Mayor and other local politicians. In addition to administrative and formal lines of communication, these types of informal- and network-orientated relations with politicians are of great value to the voluntary sports sector, particularly as a complementary communication tool, and especially in matters related to construction of facilities. Even though the administration was found to be crucial, the politicians are the decision makers after all (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009).

In addition to exploring who is linked with whom, scholars have discussed the challenges in such inter-organizational relationships. Even though she recognized the numerous benefits of collaborative activity, Gazley (2010) emphasized that attention should be paid to the multiple potential disadvantages. Research has shown that there are challenges connected to multiple relationships across sectors. Babiak and Thibault (2009) argued that such a complex environment facilitates a range of challenges for non-profit organizations. They presented two categories of challenges, structural and strategic. The structural challenges encompasses "governance, roles, and responsibilities and the complexity of partnership forms and structures" (Babiak & Thibault, 2009, p. 125), while "focus on competition versus collaboration and changing missions and objectives" were the issues raised under strategic challenges (Babiak & Thibault, 2009, pp. 134–135).

When MacLean, Cousens, and Barnes (2011) investigated who is linked with whom in a Canadian community basketball network, they also found challenges that influence the

establishment of linkages and the maintenance of them. Internal issues, such as the need for control over decision-making and the lack of specialized staff to manage links, as well as external issues such as club rivalry and environmental uncertainty, were emerging themes in their results. These themes correspond with other scholars' findings.

It is evident that, in addition to issues regarding formalization of partnerships, the management of partnerships is a challenge that might result in insufficient cooperation. Further, one can assume that this might affect the organization's capacity to reach its mission as well as the governance of the organization. Misener and Doherty (2013) argued that shared responsibility for partnership management rather than fully relying on the president or person in charge, based on this person's formal leadership position and knowledge about the organization, would secure the necessary expertise and personal connections needed for a successful partnership. Facilitating this can be difficult. Especially within the sport sector, where the small non-profit organizations often have scarce resources and rely on volunteers to function. The volunteers might not have enough time to prioritize the relationships to the actors in their organization's network.

In addition, Hoye and Cuskelly (2003) argued that volunteers often wear several hats and have multiple roles that might affect their interest in partnership management. This issue seemed to arise in relationships between volunteers and professionals. Babiak and Thibault (2009) found this particularly valid in cross-sector relationships. In a Norwegian context, one can assume similar issues within the local sport sector, based on the interdependency between the public sector and sports. Moreover, many clubs have representatives in various councils and regional boards, creating opportunities for strong partnerships and informal ways for influence, as well as being time-consuming for the individuals involved.

Within the field of sports, few studies have employed social network analysis. Especially in terms of community sports, with non-profit sport organizations as the point of departure. However, in their recent studies on cross-sector partnerships and the role of inter-organizational partnerships for non-profit organizations, Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, and Smith (2017a, 2017b) investigated a youth sport network in one

municipality in the United States. They looked at partnerships related to resources and capacity dimensions. By doing interviews with 32 non-profit youth sport organizations, the authors found few ties between these actors. In total they identified 30 ties, distinguished by being related to human resource capacities, financial resource capacities, infrastructural capacities, and strategic capacities. Their analysis showed that as much as 19 of the participating organizations were isolates, which indicates that they operate independently of the other youth sport organizations within the municipality. On average, “youth sport non-profit organizations in this network had less than one tie with other youth sport organizations” (Jones et al., 2017b, p. 154). That the atmosphere among these organizations are more competitive than collaborative, that the youth sport organizations simply are unaware of each other’s existence, and that the organizations are volunteer-operated with higher concerns about day-to-day operations rather than long term partnerships, were suggested reasons for the lack of partnerships within the network investigated (Jones et al., 2017b).

When analyzing for cross-sector partnerships among the same non-profit youth sport organization, Jones et al. (2017a) identified a total of 1227 ties between youth non-profit sport organizations and other organizations. The number of partnerships utilized by each organization ranged from three to 225, showing that non-profit sport organizations are connected considerably more to actors from other sectors than their own. Their research showed that youth sport non-profit organizations engage in more cross-sector relationships to gain necessary resources, and as such underlines the importance of acknowledging the potential of these linkages when investigating networks.

Misener and Doherty's (2013) and Jones et al.'s (2017a, 2017b) research showed that Canadian CSOs and youth sport organizations in the United States can have a network consisting of numerous actors. When investigating networks within the Norwegian sport system, there are several links to take under consideration. In their article, Bergsgard and Nødland (2009) described local sport clubs, local sport councils, local government, and local politicians as the most important actors within the local sector. However, considering the development of sport on the local level in Norway, one should pay attention to others as well when researching crucial actors within the sector. For example, informal sports and actors from the private sector.

### **3.4 Gaps in literature and contribution to the field**

This literature review shows that there has been conducted research on governance, collaborations, networks, and inter-organizational relationships in sport in various contexts. Still, to this date, very few of these studies employ social network analysis, particularly regarding the local sport sector. Wäsche et al. (2017) systematically reviewed the use of network analysis to analyze sport phenomena. Among the 26 articles they identified, they found four major domains (“sport-related scientific literature”, “social structure of sport organization”, “sport management”, “and sport performance”), but concluded that the application of social network analysis in sport research is a “young and emergent phenomenon” (p. 155). However, the authors argued that “given the plethora of connected actors in sport, a cross-disciplinary and theoretically informed approach based on a relational perspective such as network analysis holds great promise” (p. 139).

The current research contributes to the field by investigating relations between actors in the local sport sector and employing social network analysis in a Norwegian context. Jones et al. (2017a) underlined that since sport systems vary severely from country to country it is hard to generalize findings and emphasis should be given to conducting research within other contexts rather than the U.S. and Canada. By acknowledging the structure of Norwegian sport, the study includes relations between local sport clubs as well as cross-sector relationships that local sport clubs engage in. As such, this research project provides a comprehensive picture of the stakeholders operating in the institutional field that the local sport sector is. Following Wäsche et al.'s (2017) suggestion, this study considers the condition and effects of networks on sport organizations and other actors, and critically appraise them in light of capacity as well as power-balances and influence in the local sport sector.

## 4. Methods

In this chapter, I will present the study's design and explain my choice of research inquiry. Further, I will present the case study as my methodological approach and questionnaires as my method for data collection, as well as a justification for its selection. In addition, sampling and data analysis will be discussed, followed by quality assessments and ethical considerations. First, a presentation of my epistemological standpoint is necessary as this guides the study.

### 4.1 *Epistemology*

An epistemology is “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Further, it is “concerned with providing a grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). This research project is based on constructionism. Crotty (1998) explained: “constructionism claims that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world” (p. 43). In the current case, this is natural as local sport politics are decided and evolve due to connections between the actors within the field.

Crotty (1998) argued that research within this approach require the researcher to be open minded to what he or she already has been taught. When researching the inter-organizational relationships among the actors within the local sport sector, there are not correct or wrong answers to the questions I ask. How the actors within a municipality describe their relationships, and how they cooperate vary. It is their own experiences, not mine. The way organizations work and function in the same environment, is in my opinion a result of social relations that has been developed over time, by the people working within the field. Therefore, knowledge will never be complete and purely objective, but how it is constructed still matter. By employing appropriate methods, systematically collecting data, and reviewing information in light of theory it is possible to argue that what I describe and explain in this thesis is relevant and useful explanations of the phenomenon being investigated.

The study provides a comprehensive investigation on how a network of local sport stakeholders can look and insight into what ties these actors together. Simultaneously,



an understanding of what this means for power and influence in the local sport sector and the effects engagement in inter-organizational relationships have on actors' organizational capacity. As Crotty (1998) wrote, this type of research is an invitation to "approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning" (p. 51). In light of the lack of knowledge on networks in the Norwegian local sport sector, I argue this kind of approach to the research project is beneficial.

## **4.2 Research design**

In order to answer the research questions, it was necessary to design a study that could include numerous actors and provide sufficient network data on a wide variety of issues. Robins (2015) and Scott (2017) argued that both quantitative and qualitative approaches are applicable within network research. These types of research approaches should not be viewed as polar opposites, but rather be seen as representatives of different parts of a continuum (Creswell, 2009; Haig, 2013). The inquiries are applicable for understanding different segments of a phenomenon. Even though scholars describe that qualitative elements are also beneficial when conducting network research, I argue that applying a quantitative approach was appropriate in the current study. Quantitative inquiry is often explained as a "means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). This approach opens for including many actors, and if done properly, increases the possibility for generalizing the findings to a larger population. Further, in cases where social relations are not already identified, a quantitative approach is suitable.

This study is conducted within the field of social network research and employ social network analysis. As such, numeric and graphical results make up the main part of the results, and form the basis for further discussion and interpretation. Still, from a constructionist's point of view, applying such analyses, does not mean that the knowledge constructed in this study is purely objective and generalizable. On the other hand, the information gained provide a basis for understanding how networks in the local sport sector can be structured and what effect such structures can have, which can be highly relevant for other similar cases.

This study seeks to uncover links between stakeholders in local sport, and uses these networks to explain capacity and power within the field these actors operate. It is a

cross-sectional, survey-based study, employing questionnaires for data collection, and applying social network analysis. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the different parts of the project's design, starting with the case study as the methodology.

### **4.3 Methodology: The case of a Norwegian municipality**

Crotty (1998) defined methodology as “the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (p. 3). According to Yin (1994), the choice of methodology depends upon three conditions: the “type of research question, the control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena” (p. 4).

There are several methodologies within social science research, and the case study is one of them. The case study is a methodology that contributes to our “knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena” (Yin, 1994, p. 2). Yin (1994) argued that case studies are the preferred methodology when the research focuses on “how” and “why” questions, when the researcher has little control over events, and when there is a real-life context and focus on contemporary phenomenon. Further, Gratton and Jones (2010) claimed that one may consider the use of the case study “when your theory suggests particular outcomes in a particular context”, “to be able to describe and explain a unique or rare situation,” and “to describe and explain a case that has yet to be studied in any detail” (p. 108). Based on this, the lack of research on the topic, and the questions I am asking, I conducted the present research by using the case study as the methodological framework. The case is one Norwegian municipality.

Every methodology has its strengths and weaknesses. According to Yin (1994), the case study's unique strength “is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence” (p. 8), for example documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations. This ability makes it possible to research a phenomenon in depth and gain rich knowledge. Gall et al. (1996, cited in Gratton & Jones, 2010) argued that case study research takes the perspective of those within the case, rather than the researcher's perspective. As a constructionist, I consider this a strength, hence it assures that the information provided is based on the experiences of those familiar with the phenomenon that is being investigated.

The researcher's ability to choose the case is another strength. Stake (2005) explained that cases "will be chosen differently depending on the purpose of the study" (p. 449) and from which the researcher feels it is possible to "learn the most" (p. 451). This aspect of the methodology ensures that the research is conducted within a case that is suitable for the research question. A final reminder that can be considered a strength is that the design can be altered and changed during the research process (Yin, 1994). However, this must be done carefully.

The case study is frequently critiqued (Yin, 1994). The main weakness is that it provides little basis for generalization. Second, it is argued that a case study is time-consuming and results in massive, unreadable documents (Yin, 1994). At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that case studies can be conducted in various ways, which will affect these aspects of the research process. The possibility for the researcher's biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions is another weakness (Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994). However, from a constructionist's point of view, the researcher should be open to new perspectives on what he or she already knows, which makes this limitation less applicable.

In light of my epistemological view, a case study approach was appropriate because the aim was to construct and provide new knowledge to the field of research, instead of confirming already existing facts. Further, based on Yin's (1994) three conditions when determining the appropriate methodology, the case study was the most suitable for this project. First, the research questions focus on how the networks look – the descriptive part, why the actors are connected – the content of each link, and how this come to show through capacity and power. Second, as a researcher I would not have any control over the events that would be investigated. Finally, the research focuses on a contemporary phenomenon, that being how the networks are structured and function right now.

A primary distinction in designing case studies is between single- and multiple-case designs (Yin, 1994). A single case study means that only one case is researched, while multiple case studies includes several cases. Both single- and multiple-case studies can be holistic and embedded, depending on the unit(s) of analysis. A holistic case study investigates one unit of analysis, while an embedded study gives attention to several

subunits (Yin, 1994). This study is as a single-embedded case study. I have investigated one municipality and had multiple units of analysis, hence different actors within the municipality provided the data and participated in constructing knowledge.

#### **4.3.1 Selecting the case**

There are 422 municipalities in Norway (Kartverket, 2018). Within these, there exist 11 338 sport clubs (NIF, n.d.-a). Due to limited time and resources, it was not possible to conduct research within every municipality in Norway and to investigate the networks of every sport club. However, that was neither the goal of this project. The aim was to get an understanding of how networks within the local sport sector can look and function. This affected the case selection, and I argue a case that represents a typical Norwegian municipality provides sufficient data for this type of research.

The municipality, the case, was chosen based on purposive sampling. Patton (1990, cited in Coyne, 1997) described purposive sampling as a way of selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. This type of sampling is valuable and often used in exploratory research (Neuman, 2014). Firstly, I selected my case based on geographical and demographical criteria, seeking to choose a municipality several can relate to and that have inhabitants in age groups one expects to be active in sports. The second criterion, based on knowledge of institutionalized actors in Norwegian sport, was that the municipality has a functioning local sport council. Finally, the number of registered sport clubs, including variations in the sports they facilitate, affected the selection.

I argue the case in this study is an average Norwegian municipality. Geographically, it is located in the east of Norway, in what can be considered the “districts”, but still relatively close to (large) cities. Regarding demography, the inhabitants are relatively even spread among different age groups, naturally with most in the age of zero to 75. The number of inhabitants just passes Langørgen and Aaberge's (2011) limit to be categorized as large (at least 20 000 inhabitants). Concerning the participants in this study, the municipality's name is anonymized.

#### **4.4 Data collection: Questionnaires**

Crotty (1998) explained research methods as “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis” (p. 3). I

employed questionnaires for data collection. This method was found suitable for identifying the stakeholders within the local sport sector, uncover the networks between them, and categorize which resources and information flow in these links.

Gratton and Jones (2010) defined questionnaires as “a standardised set of questions to gain information from a subject” (p. 115). There are three types of questionnaires: postal, telephone, or face to face questionnaire. In addition, they can be designed for interviewer completion or respondent completion (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Due to limited time and resources and the questions I wanted to ask, I conducted telephone, interviewer completion questionnaires. This approach can also be regarded as a structured telephone interview. The chosen approach was considered suitable since it facilitates for customizing the next questions to previous answers (e.g. what resources and information flow through each link), which was crucial in this study. I argue, it would be difficult to employ questionnaires in another form and still secure that the method served its purpose.

The questionnaire has both strengths and weaknesses. First, the method allows for accessibility to a geographically dispersed and bigger sample group at a lower cost than by using face-to face interviews (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Second, a well-designed questionnaire reduces the potential bias in the results. Further, this method tends to provide structured data that is easily comparable and analysable.

Regardless of the benefits of this method, there exist disadvantages. Gratton and Jones (2010) listed “potential problems over complex questions, no control over who completes the questionnaire, no opportunity to probe, and potentially low response rate” (p. 118) as limitations. Despite the potential weaknesses, I believe this method was the most suitable in order to answer the research questions. I do not believe either aspect limited my data in a critical manner. Still, a well-developed questionnaire that covers the topics sufficiently was crucial to successfully map out the networks.

In cooperation with my supervisor, I designed the questionnaire. When designing a questionnaire, there are several question formats one can adopt. The format affects the answers the respondents can provide. Therefore, I considered this carefully. Scholars distinguish between open-ended versus closed-ended questions (De Vaus, 2002; Gratton

& Jones, 2010; Neuman, 2014). An open question asks something to which respondents can give any answer, while a closed question offers a fixed set of responses from which a respondent can choose (Neuman, 2014). Closed questions are often easier for respondents to answer, the answers are easy to compare and analyze, and there are fewer irrelevant or confused answers compared to open questions. However, they can suggest ideas that the respondents would not otherwise have, the respondents' desired answers might not be an option, and giving the wrong response is possible. On the other hand, open questions can help us discover unanticipated findings and permit an unlimited number of possible answers. Opposite to closed questions, this format makes it hard to conduct statistical analyses and respondents might answer with various degree of detail (Neuman, 2014). In light of my purpose for using this method, I believe mixing formats was beneficial to my research, and helped reduce the disadvantage of each format.

My questionnaire covered relatively simple questions (Appendix A). I used open-ended questions and name generators to identify stakeholders. A name generator is a "survey item that asks respondents to nominate network partners" (Robins, 2015, p. 96). The participants were asked to identify local sport clubs within the municipality, as well as other actors and clubs from other municipalities with whom they have had contact the last 12 months. I did not want to put restrictions on the name generator, as the third can be just as important as the fourth. Therefore, the participants could name as many or as few as they felt appropriate. Once network partners were identified, I used name interpreters to obtain more information on the relationships. These closed questions concerned how often the actors are in contact and what types of resources and issues connect them (types of relational ties). I distinguished between seven types of ties (financial, physical, and human resources, as well as facilities, training, competitions, and marketing, recruitment, and club development). Concerning resources and issues, participants were asked about the direction of exchanges and flow of information (e.g. send, receive, or send and receive). Finally, to cover potential negative ties or tense areas, I asked if there are any actors with whom the sport club does not want to have contact and if there are any links it misses in its network.

While developing the questionnaire, I was cautious of doubled barrelled items and vague wordings. To ensure proper quality, as well as practicing to collect data by

telephone questionnaires, a pilot was conducted. After, I made necessary improvements in consultation with the participant and my supervisor. No major adjustments were made. The wording of questions seemed appropriate, and the pilot gave me confidence in moving forward with data collection.

As a researcher, I am dependent on my participants. This made me emphasize making participating as easy as possible. As a rule, the interviews were conducted at the participants' preferred time. I made sure to start each interview with a short brief about the project, and clarified any uncertainties that had occurred. Further, I tried to maintain a neutral role, never interject my opinion of a respondent's answer, and to be casual and friendly, but on the other hand directive and impersonal. Answers were registered manually. In the open-ended questions, I repeated the answers to ensure that they were correctly registered. The closed questions were registered by using the scheme in the questionnaire (Appendix A).

Throughout the process, I experienced that the participants eagerly shared their thoughts and experiences. Often, they explained their organizations' relationships thoroughly, even though my questions did not ask them to. In these cases, I let the participants finish their reasoning and noted interesting examples and information, before moving on.

#### **4.4.1 Sample**

In network research, population and sampling are linked with the notion of "network boundary" (Prell, 2012). Prell (2012) defined network boundary as the "boundary around a set of actors that the researcher deems to be the complete set of actors" (p. 66). As I through the questionnaire would open for actors from other municipalities and other levels of society to be identified, I could not know the complete set of actors in the network in advance. Still, when mapping out the local sport clubs' networks, I know that all the clubs in my chosen municipality are part of the population under investigation. These would be my starting sample. In order to find the sample, I had a criterion: the sport clubs had to be members of NIF. Through NIFs registers, I identified 22 sport clubs and an additional 24 subgroups within the municipality.

In order to get the best understanding of the networks, every sport club was included in the sample. The organizations were contacted by e-mail. The e-mail included

information about the project (Appendix B) and asked for an appropriate contact person if the one contacted did not feel comfortable participating. If someone did not respond, telephone was used to establish contact. I contacted the subgroups the same way.

However, I did not emphasize including every subgroup of every club in the sample. I relied on information gained online and from contact persons in the main sport clubs when deciding which subgroups to include. Some sport clubs are small, the various activities do not operate separately, and I would be talking to the same people, making it unnecessary to conduct the questionnaire for every subgroup. Others informed that some subgroups were not in operation.

In addition to the clubs and subgroups, I was willing to include several actors if it seemed appropriate throughout the process of data collection. The main selection criterion was that the actors are central in the network. As snowball sampling is a method for selecting the cases within a network (Neuman, 2014; Robins, 2015), this was employed in combination with purposive sampling. I decided to include three additional actors in the final sample: the local sport council, the regional sport body, and the municipality's public administration.

Among the ones contacted (22 clubs + 15 subgroups), two clubs did not want to participate and, in total, six clubs and subgroups never responded. One club informed that it would end its operations in October 2017 and it was therefore decided to exclude this actor from the sample. The final sample consisted of 17 sport clubs, nine subgroups, and the three additional organizations mentioned above. It is worth mentioning that one club is represented by both the CEO and the voluntary leader of the board (two interviews) due to the participants' wishes.

#### **4.5 Data management and analysis**

The data management and analysis in this research project mainly followed Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson's (2013) suggestions for doing social network analysis. I entered data into Microsoft Excel 2013 continuously throughout the collection process. First, I organized the data in separate spreadsheets for each sport club, which made it possible to add notes and comments that the informants had provided through the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Second, I made one-mode, directed sociograms for each participating sport club and its connections according to the resources and issues



addressed in the questionnaire. One-mode sociograms means that “both the rows and the columns represent the actors, and the individual cells show if the particular pairs of organizations are related” (Scott, 2017 p. 61). That it is directed means that who sends the particular resource or information can be seen in the sociogram. As many of the sport clubs did not have many relational ties, these sociograms made it easy for me to get an impression of what connects the various actors. Then, I gathered all data in three main matrices. Information was organized according to links between the sport clubs in the case (one-mode, directed, binary matrix), between the sport clubs and other actors (one-mode, directed, binary matrix), and both sport clubs and other actors (one-mode, directed, binary matrix). Finally, I organized data for each type of the relational tie in separate sociograms (one-mode, undirected, binary matrix). The actors’ attributes (single/multiple sports, main club/subgroup, type of actor) were organized in a separate matrix.

Missing data can be a problem in network research (Borgatti et al., 2013). Borgatti et al. (2013) explained that “the most common kind of missing data is where a respondent has chosen not to fill out the survey” (p. 73), which creates a row of missing values in the network matrix. In light of the current research, this is evident for the clubs and subgroups who have chosen not to participate. One solution to this problem is to eliminate that node from the analysis altogether. However, if the node is mentioned by others, the remaining network will be a little misleading and I would be wasting good data. Therefore, I chose to follow Borgatti et al.'s (2013) second solution, hence the case is undirected relations: “to fill in any missing rows with the data found in the corresponding column” (p. 76). The assumption is: A mentioned B, but B did not participate. If B participated, it would have considered A as an actor in its network. Although this might not be completely right, I argue it is more accurate than treating the missing values as zeros. It is important to underline, that “missing data” in this regard, only counts for the actors I tried to recruit to the study: sport clubs and subgroups.

When finished, the sociograms were imported into UCINET6 for analysis (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). While conducting social network analyses, I paid close attention to whether the data was entered into matrices correctly. Networks can be analyzed both visually and in terms of quantification. Following Borgatti et al.'s (2013) guidelines, I employed the visualization function in UCINET6 (NetDraw) before doing

other analyzes. By visualizing the networks, I could discover potential mistakes and correct the matrices before further analysis. In order to distinguish between the different nodes when visualizing the network, the actors were sorted into five categories: “sport club and subgroup” (the focal organizations in this study), “public” (public authorities/state governed actors), “other sport organizations” (other organizational units of the NIF-system on the local, regional, and national level), “other local sport clubs” (clubs from other municipalities), “private/commercial”, and “other voluntary organizations”. These categories were also used when summarizing the types of ties local sport clubs and subgroups have with actors in their networks.

As explained in Chapter 2.2.1, I conducted eight social network analyses using UCINET6: density, cohesive subgroups, average degree, degree centrality, eigenvector centrality, betweenness centrality, reciprocity, and fragmentation. Network data was analyzed on two levels: the links between the local sport clubs and subgroups within the case and the total network including all actors identified through the questionnaires. As data was collected from the clubs within the case and the public administration, the RSB, and the local sport council, relations between the other actors identified are not part of the results. This counts for information about the links between the participating nodes and other actors’ degree of reciprocity as well. However, the actors participating in this study described whether they give, receive, or give and receive resources and information from other organizations within the network. This provides an understanding of the links’ direction, but does not guarantee that all relations and their direction would be the same if every actor in the network was asked the same questions. Still, as this study focuses on the perspectives of local sport clubs, I argue the data collected are sufficient for conducting social network analyses and contribute well in constructing knowledge on the local sport sector. In addition, this approach serves well as a point of departure for new ways of studying inter-organizational relationships in the Norwegian local sport sector.

As described in section 4.4, many interviews also provided more thorough descriptions of the relationships in addition to the concrete network data. Material of a more qualitative genre, which I chose to manage in ways related to this type of inquiry. Thus, all descriptions and information gained were of various length and connected to a big variety of issues, I chose to process this material manually. First, I carefully went

through all the data to get familiar with the material. Then, the notes were coded and sorted regarding what question they belonged to and the topic they elaborated on. This corresponds with scholars' description of thematic coding, an inductive approach to data analysis (Thagaard, 2009). Further, the data was coded deductively according to the theories employed in this study. Like this, I both developed an understanding of the topic I investigated and linked them to concepts of theories and previous research (Thagaard, 2009).

Considering the method used for data collection in this research project, I argue it is not appropriate to present the information gained as citations. Hence, I took notes on the participants' answers I cannot guarantee that citations would be correct. However, this type of data was valuable and helpful for understanding the networks, and will be used to provide thicker descriptions of the cases and give examples of issues that link actors to each other or make cooperation easy or difficult.

#### **4.6 Quality assessments: Validity and reliability**

The quality and trustworthiness of a research project are essential aspects that need to be evaluated. When considering quality of research, there are requirements to "validity" and "reliability". Therefore, I will describe and reflect upon these terms.

##### **4.6.1 Validity**

Validity concerns the interpretation of data (Thagaard, 2009). That data is valid means that it is applicable and relevant. Further, it means that the research succeeds on exploring the phenomenon of interest, that the conclusions are valid in light of the reality being studied (internal validity), and that the results are transferable/generalizable to other similar situations (external validity) (Hassmén & Hassmén, 2008; Thagaard, 2009)

Internal validity refers to a study's quality and whether the knowledge generated actually answers the questions asked. As such, validity in social research depends on the choice of methods. As a researcher, one should continuously consider one's results and interpretations critically. In terms of questionnaires, De Vaus (2002) argued that an issue regarding validity is interpreting the meaning of people's responses. The questions asked and the issues they had to reflect upon, might mean or indicate various things for

different people. This is difficult to eliminate, and will affect the analysis. However, I believe how questionnaires were employed in this study was sufficient in order to reduce such risks. Through telephone questionnaires, the participants were able to ask for examples or explanations if questions were confusing. At the same time, to ensure that I did not influence the answers I did not explain more than planned unless requested.

Within network research, types and forms of relational questions can challenge a study's validity. Borgatti et al. (2013) and Robins (2015) explained that care should be given to the fact that the informants do not remember accurately, especially in terms of social interactions. In this study the participants were asked to name all organizations with whom they have had contact the last 12 months. When asking such questions, retrospective errors can occur. A year is a long time, and it is difficult to guarantee that all interactions are mentioned. Nevertheless, the scholars argued that informants tend to report on what usually happens, rather than what happened on a specific time. "Long-term patterns of behavior are much less prone to error" (Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 39), and therefore I argue that my wording of name generators did not hinder the study's validity in any great extent.

External validity concerns the research's generalizability and to what extent the constructed knowledge is transferable to similar situations (Hassmén & Hassmén, 2008). The sample in this study includes every sport club within the case, in addition to the RSB, the local sport council, and the municipality's public administration. Even though, organizational structure, regarding all actors, can vary from case to case, I argue that the results in this study provides a thorough grasp of a municipality's situation. A situation one can imagine is quite similar elsewhere. As such, the indications the network structure gives in relation to capacity and power, I believe are applicable in many other settings.

Furthermore, if the objective is to create an understanding of social phenomena, it is more likely to be achieved if the data is anonymized (Thagaard, 2009). Like this, there is greater potential for both the researcher and the reader to see patterns in the text that can be applicable to several contexts and situations. The data in this study is anonymized, which increases this research's external validity.

#### **4.6.2 Reliability**

Reliability concerns the observation's stability and trustworthiness (Hassmén & Hassmén, 2008). High reliability is achieved when other researchers find the same answers by employing the same methods and theoretical frameworks. By conducting structured interviews asking the same questions, to the same participants, and then employ the same social network analyses, other researchers would most likely get similar results as those presented in this study. At the same time, it is difficult to guarantee high reliability for network studies, as it depends on the variable of interest remains fairly stable over time (Prell, 2012).

As Robins (2015) argued: "assuming a stable network, how sure can we be that network actors will nominate the same people if asked to do so on two separate occasions?" (p. 109). One need to keep in mind that inter-organizational relationships can both be established and terminated within a relatively short period of time. Along the same lines, the current study is cross-sectional, meaning that data is based on the participants' experience of the relationships at the time of investigation and future results based on the same case, might vary from the ones presented in this thesis. For this reason, Prell (2012) explained that "social network analysts think about reliability slightly different" (p. 77). Measurement is seen more reliable if it tends to generate reciprocal choices, meaning that two actors have commented on the same tie in the same way. As data was not collected from every actor mentioned throughout this research project, this is hard to uphold. However, among the sample, as will be shown in Chapter 5, there is a relatively high level of reciprocity. This helps for arguing that the name generator and name interpreter in the questionnaire are sufficient and reliable.

The current study's reliability also depends on whether future research would give the same results regarding the networks' effect on capacity and power. Naturally, if the network structure varies considerably, each actors' ability to influence, and be influenced by, others will be different. Further, capacity and power also relates to the stakeholders' degree of formal obligations, institutionalized positions, and what resources they possess. As such, this research reliability does not just depend on pure structural characteristics, but also on the content of each relation and on the development of the environment where the stakeholders operate. As described in Chapter 3.1, Norwegian sport is institutionalized, and one can expect some actors to be

central and powerful in the networks. Although one cannot anticipate all environmental changes, it is reasonable to assume that these actors' positions and roles will continue, and that similar results would emanate from future research.

In social research, one should consider the researcher's understanding of, and position in relation to, the subject being investigated. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the researcher influences the text, for example by its connection to the environment or society under investigation. Paulgaard (1997) argued: "someone who comes from the "inside" will have trouble obtaining analytical distance" (p. 71). Opposite, someone from the "outside" will face challenges in terms of fully understanding the situation. In order to make it harder to criticize the research, I have to position myself within the present study.

As a researcher, I am familiar with the case in this study since my hometown is within the area. Paulgaard (1997) described that preconception is a source of error that should be eliminated. At the same time, it is also argued that such preconceptions are required to get an understanding of environments. I know the local society and I am familiar with several sport clubs, which makes it easy to connect data to personal experiences and other familiar aspects, as well as assuming links in the network. However, I do not have any personal relations to the actors participating. On the other hand, I have an understanding for local jargons and various places, which was helpful when conducting telephone interviews.

Finally, it is easy to bring your own prejudice into the data collection and further make it play an important role in the analysis. To prevent this from happening I emphasized not letting my own assumptions and beliefs affect the data collection. When conducting telephone questionnaires, the settings easily facilitate for me to express my thoughts, but I tried to behave as neutral as possible. Like this, the participants could answer without feeling that their responses were neither right nor wrong. Hence, I followed a structured set of questions, and the method I employed does not facilitate for probing, this was relatively easy to uphold. As this study is network research, conducting social network analysis, I argue prejudice did not affect these results. Still, the additional information gained through the participants' explanations make room for my

assumptions. Even though I stressed this aspect, I cannot guarantee that my former knowledge did not affect my interpretation of the results.

#### **4.7 Ethical considerations**

When researching people, communities, and organizations several ethical issues need to be taken into consideration (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Markula & Silk, 2011; Thagaard, 2009). Further, network scholars argue distinctive ethical issues arise in network data collection and in reporting network results (Borgatti et al., 2013; Robins, 2015).

Throughout the research process, I followed the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's (NSDs) guidelines. Since the project would include some processing of personal information, I was dependent on ethical approval to do research from NSD. I applied for ethics in early September 2017. The project was approved 2 weeks later (Appendix C).

According to Markula and Silk (2011), research ethics are guidelines developed to secure that participants are treated with dignity and respect. As other scholars, they highlighted the principles of informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and information about potential consequences for the participants. Informed consent is concerned about the participants being informed about the purpose of the study, how the data will be treated, and potential risks and benefits of participating. Every participant in my project was given proper information about the study, the method for data collection, how the data would be treated, that it was voluntarily to participate, and that they were entitled to withdraw from the project at any time. I provided a consent form that the participants either signed or orally confirmed over the phone (Appendix B).

In terms of privacy, the participants have the right to protection of personal information. As a researcher, one should not look for information about the participants' private life, especially regarding sensitive topics. My research did not require this kind of information about the individual participants, making this criterion easy to uphold. Still, based on the method I employed, I knew who all my participants were. In order to secure their privacy, I used a scrambling key to keep names and contact information separated from the data. Data and scrambling key were stored on separate memory sticks, kept in a locked locker, inside an office secured by access card. I was the only one with access to the material.

The participants in a research project are entitled to the information they provide being accurately reproduced and cited, confidential and that no information can be traced back to them (Gratton & Jones, 2010). It was therefore necessary to anonymize the participants. Both individuals, organizations, and the municipality is anonymized in this study. Within social network research, the participants need to be identified as senders of the relational tie and their partners need to be recognized as the receivers of these ties. Therefore, Robins (2015) argued that complete anonymity is difficult in a network study. The researcher needs to be able to match the actors in order to complete the analysis. However, as a researcher I could guarantee the participants that the data would be de-identified once entered the forms used for doing the analysis. Hence my research focus on inter-organizational linkages, individuals are not directly a part of the analysis. This makes it easier to fulfill the ethical guidelines regarding anonymity. Still, I stressed that the participants might be able to recognize their organization in the findings and understand which actors are being discussed.

A related issue, differentiating network research from other types of social research, is that “non-participation by a respondent in a network study does not necessarily mean that they are not included in the study” (Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 40). As described above, clubs within the case were kept in the network even though they did not want to participate. On the other hand, they have received information about the study, and are familiar with the possibilities of being discussed by others. Other types of actors, on the contrary, have not. Borgatti et al. (2013) and Robins (2015) argued, as a matter of general principle, this is not unethical as the respondents own their own perceptions. Still, the scholars emphasized that this issue needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. In the current study, hence it is conducted on the organizational level and considering the types of ties I ask about, I argue it is acceptable to include all actors mentioned.

In my opinion, there were no great consequences by participating in this research project. Instead, I hope the topic is interesting to participants and that they see the potential learning outcome as a benefit.



## 5. Results and discussion

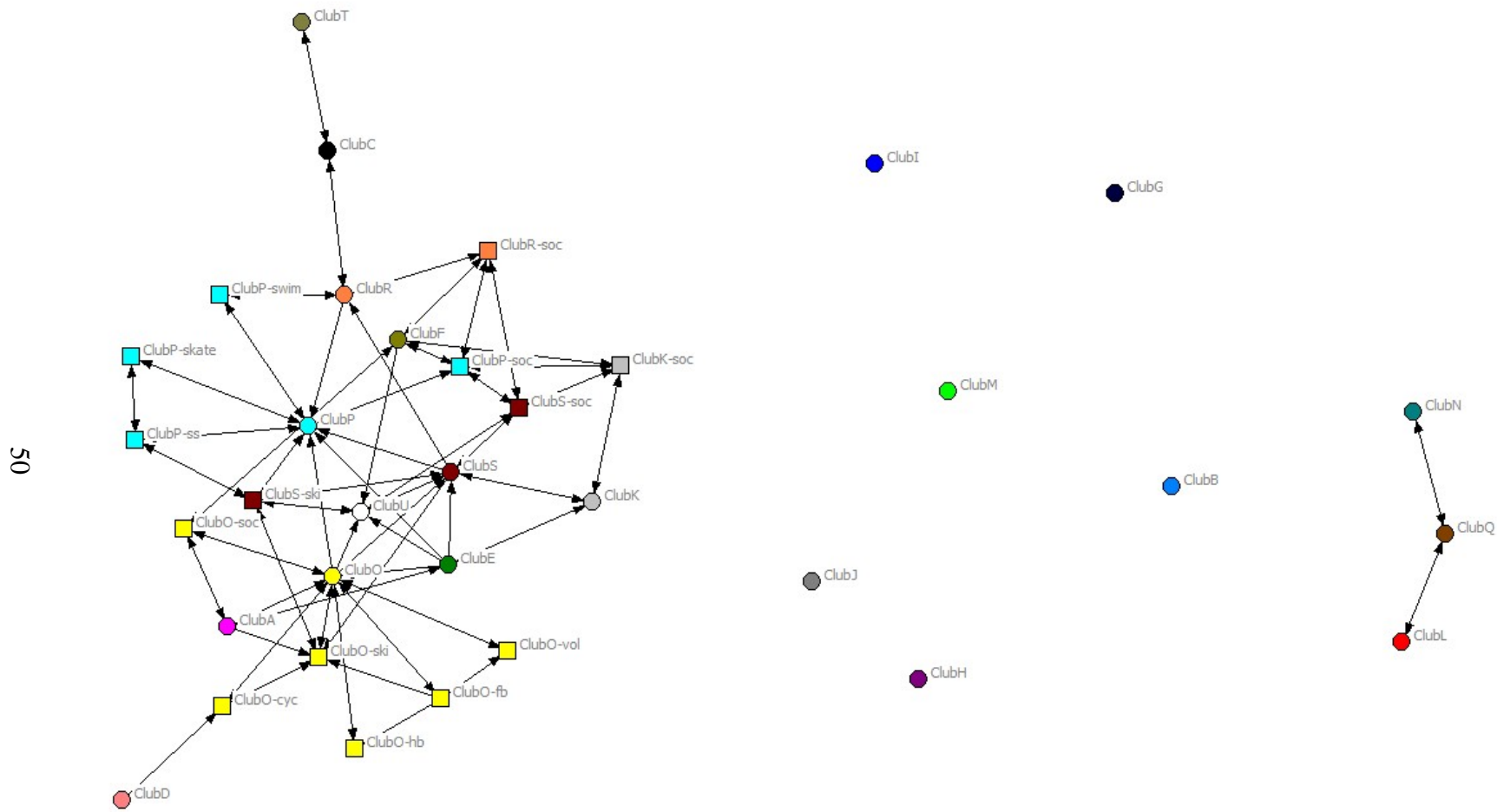
In this chapter, I will present the results and findings emanating from the present research project. In order to provide a sufficient presentation of the case investigated and to avoid unnecessary repetition, I will discuss the results in light of theory and already existing literature continuously throughout the chapter. The results and discussion will be presented in a suitable manner for answering the study's research questions: (1) *Who are the central stakeholders in the local sport sector and how are they part of networks?*, (2) *What are these networks concerned about?*, (3) *How do these networks have significance for sport clubs' organizational capacity?* and (4) *How do the stakeholders' positions in these networks have significance for power and influence?*

The chapter comprises of several sections. First, I present the stakeholders identified and the structure of both the clubs and subgroups' network and the whole network. This provide the basis for moving on to the last part, which comprise what the networks are concerned about (the content of each link).

### 5.1 Sport clubs within the case: Who is linked to whom?

When analyzing the local sport clubs' networks, one can distinguish between a network made up of just sport clubs and subgroups within the case and the network of all actors identified during data collection. Looking at just sport clubs and subgroups within the case, the results show a network consisting of 35 actors (21 clubs and 14 subgroups) and 95 ties. The network density of 0,080 indicates that only 8 % of the possible ties are used between the sport clubs. Still, among all clubs in the municipality, the data collected in this project showed that only six clubs were isolates (Figure 1). Being an isolate indicate that they operate independently of other sport clubs within the municipality.

Figure 1 provides a graphical presentation of the local sport club and subgroup network. Nodes are distinguished by two attributes: what club they belong to (color) and whether they are a main organization (circle) or a subgroup (square). The ties are directed, meaning that the arrows indicate what actor has identified the other. In addition, it visualizes the number of reciprocated ties in the network.



50

**Figure 1:** Local sport club and subgroup network. Nodes distinguished by color (club) and shape (circle (main organization) or square (subgroup)).

The average degree of the club and subgroup network was 2.7, informing, that on average, local sport clubs and subgroups have approximately three ties with other organizations of the same type as themselves. Looking at degree scores among all nodes in this network, caution should be given to the fact that main organizations and their respective subgroups are tied together, even though the subgroups might not have reciprocal links – or links at all - between them. As such, nodes representing the main board/focal organization of clubs with many subgroups automatically have a certain number of ties.

One can distinguish between outdegree and indegree ties. Outdegree ties are the links an actor sends, while indegree ties are the links it receives (Borgatti et al., 2013). In this study, the maximum number of outdegree ties identified between the clubs are nine. This count for one node: ClubO, the focal organization of a large multi-sport club. Six of these ties represent connections to subgroups within the club. Further, one actor has seven ties (node ClubS), but this club has only two subgroups. As such, the club with seven outdegree ties have more links to actors outside its own organization. In general, multi-sports clubs have several outdegree-links than special-sport clubs. Hence, multi-sport clubs have a broader spectrum of activities than special-sport clubs do, it makes sense that these clubs identify higher numbers of actors as their stakeholders.

The same nodes as those who have the most outdegree ties, are among the ones with the most indegree ties. With eight and six indegree ties respectively, these clubs have the second and third most indegree ties. On the other hand, another node representing the main board of a multi-sports club (ClubP), have nine indegree ties, but only four outdegree ties which are all connections to its own subgroups.

Prell (2012) described degree centrality as an indication of popularity as well as a measurement for how active an actor is in the network. Popularity is best reflected in indegree ties, as this score is the number of times an actor is mentioned by others. Outdegree ties, on the contrary, one can argue describes an actor's activity in the network. At the same time, I believe looking at these degree centrality measures together is beneficial and provide a better picture of a phenomenon than looking at them separately. It is difficult to argue a node is active when it only sends four links. Still, ClubP is the club mentioned by most others. Following Prell's (2012) description, this

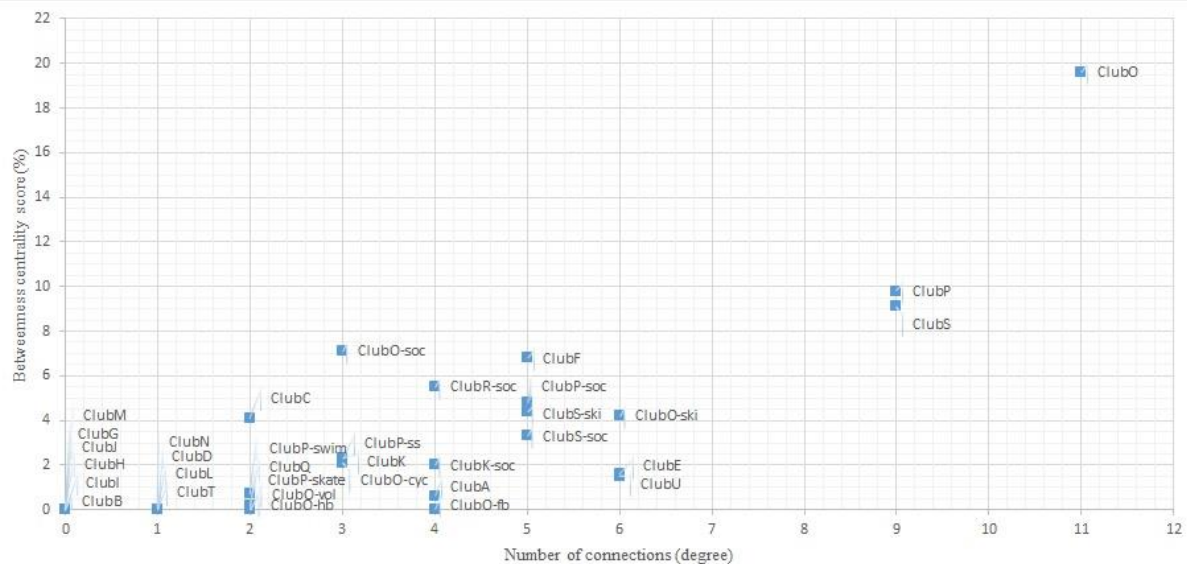
node is popular, a sign that it has to play a certain role among the clubs in the municipality. Such differences in indegree and outdegree scores means that an actor not necessarily consider and value another to be someone with whom it has contact, even though the other party does. Reciprocity is a term that describes this. In this network, the arc reciprocity score is 0.779, which equals that 77.9 % of the links between the actors are reciprocated.

Looking at the graph in Figure 1, there is not one node occupying a particularly central role compared to the others, as there are three nodes with quite similar centrality scores. First, node ClubO has a normalized in- and outdegree centrality of 0.235 and 0.265 respectively. This indicates that ClubO sends 23.5 % of the ties and receives 26.5% of the ties in the network, which in total makes this node the most involved. Second, node ClubP's normalized scores are 0.265 and 0.118, indicating that this club has the highest percentage of indegree links in the network (26.5%), but a distinct lower score in terms of outdegree centralization (11.8%). Third, node ClubS has a normalized in- and outdegree centrality of 0.176 and 0.206. As described above, high centrality scores indicate that the nodes are among the most popular, involved, or active in the network (Prell, 2012). The three nodes presented are all main organization of multi-sports clubs. This makes them automatically having links to their respective subgroups. In addition, being an actor facilitating several sports might easily make it necessary to have connections with several other clubs than the ones who only focus on one.

When trying to make sense of inter-organizational relationships among sport clubs, it is not just about the number of connections an actor has, but to whom it is connected. In other words, the structural characteristics of a network matter for determining power-balances and potential influence (Burt, 1992). Eigenvector centrality and betweenness centrality are analyses that considers this. While eigenvector scores expand on a node's degree centrality and consider the scores of its connections, betweenness centrality look at how often a node rests between others. As such, a node's location compared to others help explain an actor's importance in the network (Burt, 1992; Prell, 2012).

Even though no actor distinctively stood out in terms of degree centrality, there are differences when analyzing for betweenness centrality. Node ClubO has a normalized betweenness centrality score of 0.196, meaning that 19.6 % of all possible geodesic

(shortest) paths in the network pass through this node. Further, node ClubP occupies 9.8 % of the geodesic paths, followed by node ClubR and ClubS occupying 9.17 % and 9.1 % respectively. Among the 35 actors in this network, the four nodes with the highest betweenness centrality scores all represent main organizations in multi-sports clubs. Considering these nodes are focal organizations for many other nodes, and are the common coordinating body for these subgroups, this result is not surprising. Node ClubO's high betweenness centrality score compared to the other's suggests that this sport club has considerable potential for control of flow of information throughout the network (Prell, 2012; Robins, 2015; J. Scott, 2017), and as a result can be a powerful actor.



**Figure 2:** Correlation between degree and betweenness centrality for clubs and subgroups.

Figure 2 shows that the correlation between clubs' and subgroups' number of ties and their betweenness centrality scores are not completely linear. Although some nodes do not have many links, they still have higher betweenness centrality scores than many others. For instance, node ClubO-soc only has three links, but still seem to function as a bridge between other clubs in the network, and may therefore have important control of the flow of information between these actors. Further, the findings in Figure 2 correlates well with scholars' description of network structure as an important feature to emphasize when interpreting networks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Burt, 1992)

Eigenvector centrality expands on the notion of degree centrality. Like betweenness centrality, analyzing for eigenvector centrality takes the whole network into consideration when computing a score for each actor (Borgatti et al., 2013). Similar to the results from the other centrality measures, node ClubO has the highest eigenvector with a normalized score of 40.4 %. Following are node ClubS (39.7%) and node ClubP (33.3%). It makes sense that these main organizations have high eigenvector scores. As the degree centrality measures showed, these actors have the most ties, in addition to the ties being between each other. However, no actor has significantly higher score than the rest. Instead, five nodes have scores above or close to 30 %. In addition to the three clubs mentioned, node ClubE's score is 30.1 % and node ClubU's score 28.6 %. Compared to the other measures, these clubs have not been among the ones with the highest scores. This indicates that even though these clubs do not have the most connections to other clubs and subgroups within the municipality, the links they have established are with those who have many ties, which provides opportunities for influence in the network and again underlines the argument that network structure matters. Furthermore, as Figure 1 shows, neither ClubE or ClubU have subgroups belonging to their organization. Node ClubE is a special-sport club, while node ClubU facilitate several activities, but the club is small and the main board runs all operations.

Figure 1 shows six isolates in the network. In addition, a separate component consisting of three nodes exists. The links in this triad are reciprocated. However, not all three nodes are connected to each other, meaning that the triad is intransitive and not a clique. In light of Burt's (1992) structural holes, node ClubQ is a broker. Being a broker might empower the club, as this node can control the flow of information and obtain most novel information. Opposite, it is arguable that it exists a weak tie between the two other clubs. They have indirect contact through their links to node ClubQ, meaning that they are in position to get valuable information without using resources on establishing their own links.

This study shows few links between subgroups in the same organization, especially regarding the bigger clubs. All groups are represented in the main board of their respective organization, but they rarely have contact in any other significant way. If they do, the ties are often not reciprocated and characterized by being sent from smaller subgroups. Through the structured interviews conducted, it is clear that just like more,

better, and stronger connections between clubs are wanted, some strive for increased dialogue and cooperation within multi-sports clubs. On one hand, these interviewees argue different sports can learn from each other and should be better at utilizing each other's knowledge in terms of training. Clubs want to do sport, and be good at it. Such relationships could help them achieve their goals, and be beneficial for their organizational capacity. On the other hand, there are those who are of the opposite opinion, and argue activities are too distinct and that even trying to cooperate on operative tasks such as training would be a complete waste of time.

Compared to Jones et al.'s (2017b) suggestion that the low level of cohesiveness in their results were attributable to the competitive rather than collaborative atmosphere among youth sport organizations, I argue that the low level of connections among some clubs within the current case are due to other factors. Throughout data collection there was no indication towards clubs not seeking partnerships because other clubs are direct competitors. In fact, I argue that most clubs in this case could contribute to a collaborative environment that is suitable for harnessing external resources (Doherty et al., 2014). Many representatives are well aware of possible benefits by cooperating, in terms of both sport-specific and practical issues, and potentially regarding management of sport clubs. At the same time, one should not take for granted the possible development of the sport sector. Even though the atmosphere within the investigated case is not significantly competitive now, one cannot guarantee that this will not change in the future.

So far, the results have confirmed connections between clubs in the municipality. Moving forward, it is of interest to try to describe and understand the patterns of connectedness.

### **5.1.1 Birds of a feather flock together: Does similarity explain connections?**

Previous literature state that people and organizations develop relationships with others similar to themselves: homophily (Burt, 1992; McPherson et al., 2001). Keeping this in mind, adding an attribute to the network can help understand why certain actors are connected.

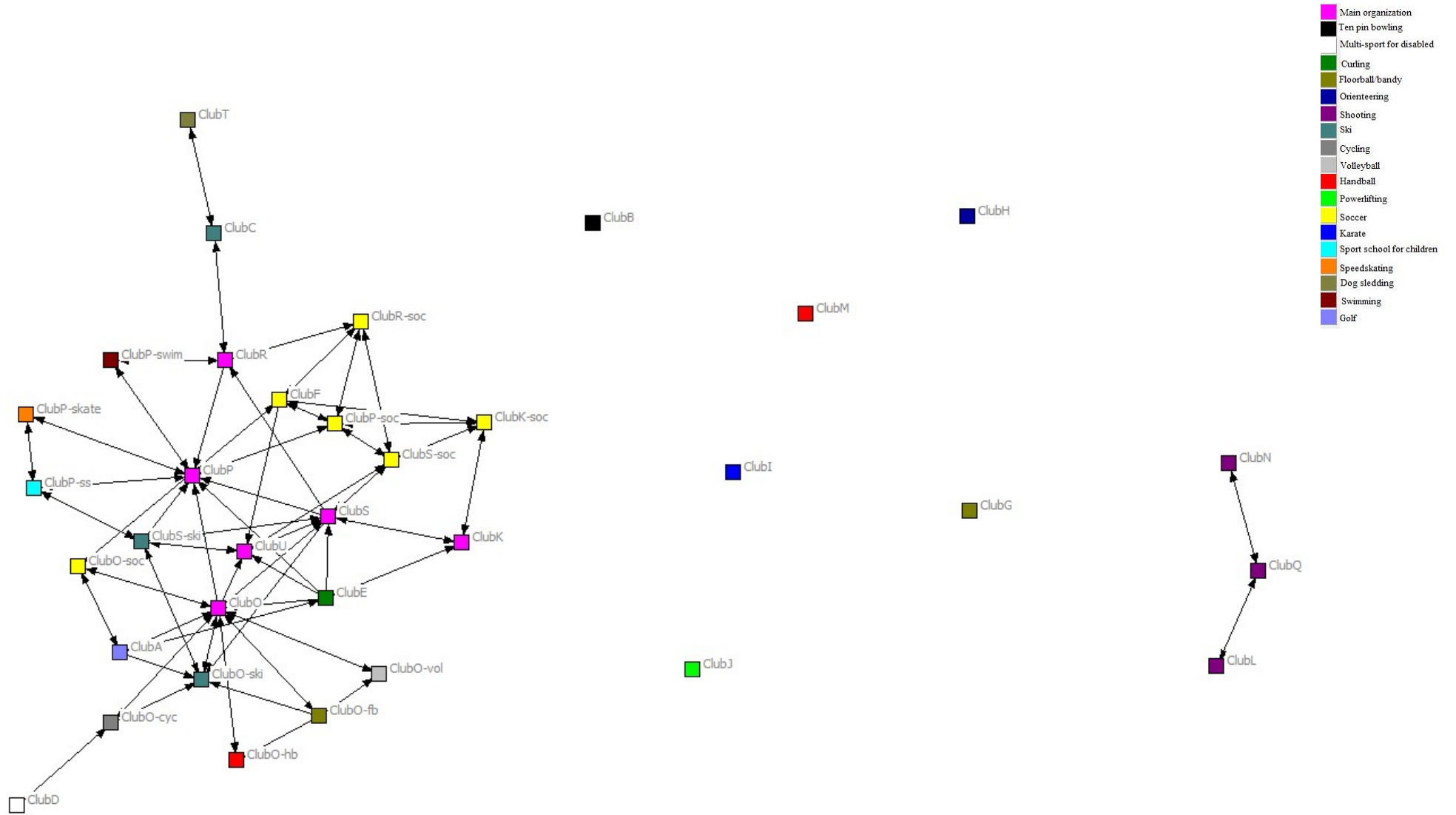


Figure 3: Local sport club and subgroup network. Nodes distinguished by type of sport provided.



Within the municipality, the clubs and their respective subgroups provide 18 different sports. In Figure 3, I visualize this by giving each sport a specific color. In addition, main organizations of multi-sports clubs have the same color. Adding this attribute to the visualization of the network provides an expanded understanding of the sport providers in the municipality and, in particular, of the patterns of connections between them.

Figure 3 shows that soccer is the sport provided by most actors (yellow nodes). Five subgroups and one club have soccer as their specialty. This is the densest part of the network. Further, by adding the “type of sport”-attribute, the graph shows that the separated triad consists of three clubs facilitating the same sport: shooting. Compared to other clubs, shooting is often organized in cooperation with hunting organizations, with no further sport specific interests. Being a registered sport club within the NIF-system might also just be to secure allocation of LAM-funds. In addition, Bergsgard (2017) mentioned that shooting clubs usually build facilities independently, and not as venues adapted for several sports. The three clubs making up the intransitive triad are the only ones providing shooting within the present case. As such, the homophilous characteristic that “type of sport” is, as well as features emanating from this, might help explain why the triad is separate from the rest of the network.

Finally, the figure shows that among the six isolates in the network, two nodes provide the same sport as other nodes, and that these nodes have links to other actors. Considering the concept of homophily, one would assume that clubs and subgroups providing the same sport are connected. This is most often the case in this network, however with the exception described above. It is reasonable to assume that the connections are established due to social selection. They choose to establish relations to those who are similar because of shared qualities (Robins et al., 2001). At the same time, Figure 3 shows that clubs with different operations are connected and that some clubs providing the same sport do not have ties between them. Questions therefore arise whether other attributes, such as values, organizational structure, degree of professionalization, and geographic locations have stronger influence on the selection process than simply providing the same sport.

It is evident that the size, number of sports provided, and objectives vary among the clubs and subgroups in this case. In most clubs, the majority of members are children. This counts especially for the organizations providing team sports. In addition, the smallest clubs tend to focus on the youngest people, and that the members transfer to other clubs when they reach a certain age (usually around upper secondary school). On the other hand, there are clubs who have a great variety of members, both in terms of age and level. Considering the amount of transfers between clubs in the municipality and that parents have children in several clubs, particularly regarding soccer, some informants expressed during interviews that they are surprised by the lack of cooperation among them. Even though they are linked, the frequency of communication is low.

Collaboration demands communication. To secure clear communication and collaboration, formal partnerships have been suggested as a possible solution for organizations in the non-profit sector (Shaw & Allen, 2006). Among the clubs within the case investigated in this study, no formal agreements seem to exist. Neither clubs nor subgroups express that they have signed contracts defining the extent of cooperation between them. If such agreements exist, the participating parties doubtfully value them or the informants in this study are not aware of them. If that is the case, I argue the agreements hardly serve their purpose.

The clubs participating in this study expressed that they are mainly satisfied by the amount of relations to other actors, but admit that the contact could have been better and more frequent. Especially between clubs who provide the same sport there is great potential and need for better cooperation in order to provide what the inhabitants in the municipality demand; the ability to do the sports they want. Networks can, among other things, serve as problem-solving arenas and as a tool for mobilizing others for goal-achievement (MacLean et al., 2011). Based on their findings, MacLean et al. (2011) suggested “coalitions among same-sport clubs or among clubs from different sports would enhance their power to bargain with key suppliers such as school boards, the city, or corporate sponsors” (p. 574). In this study, many clubs are aware of the possibilities for extended collaboration and that it would be beneficial to have certain actors in their network. However, the participants explained that such thoughts are rarely set to life. The issue seems to be lack of internal human resources to establish, and even more

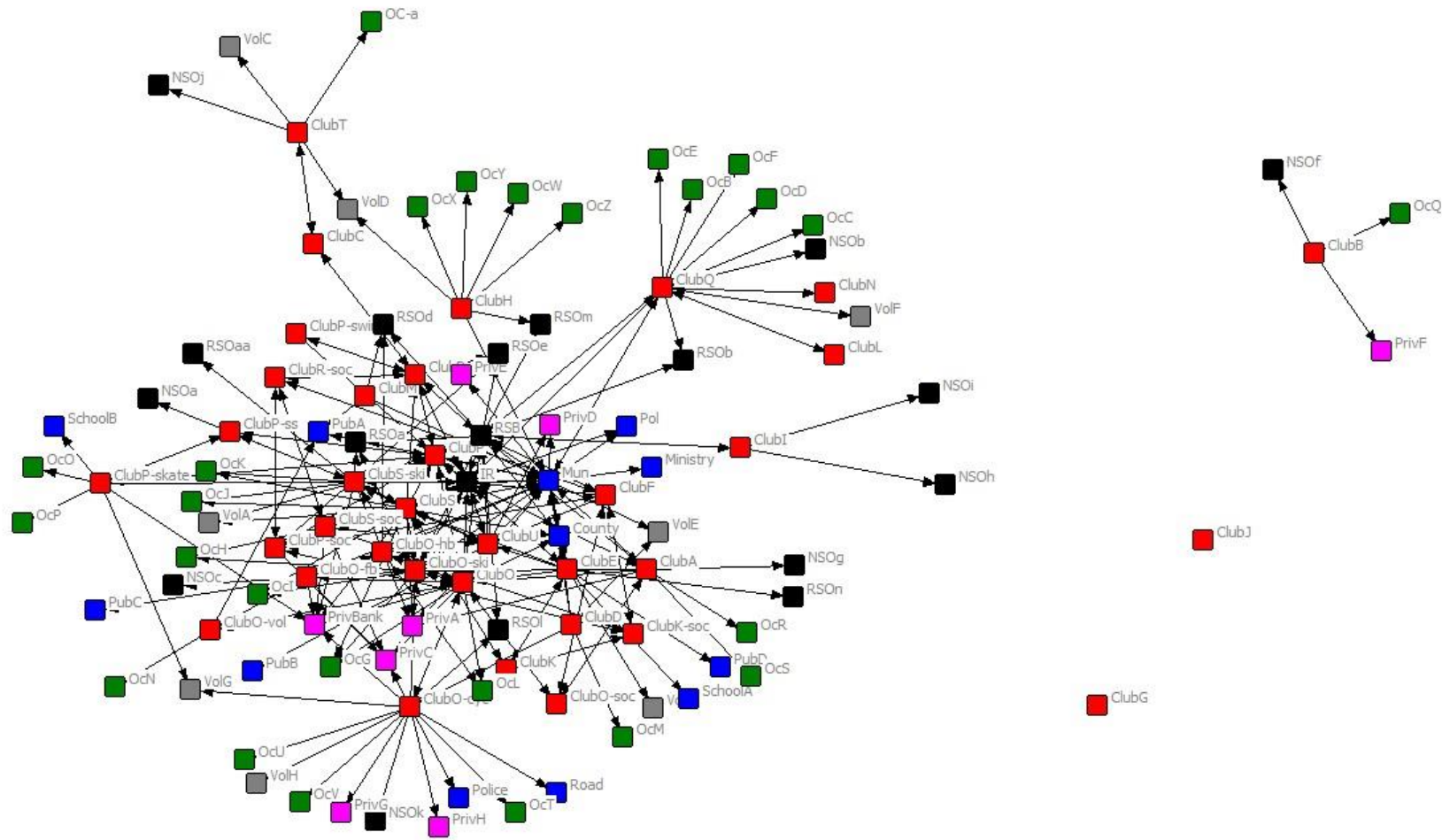
importantly, maintain such inter-organizational relationships. It is evident that someone must be willing to manage and maintain the connections if they are to be beneficial for the organizations.

## **5.2 Crossing sectors and municipal borders: Who are the stakeholders?**

In addition to identifying links between the local sport clubs and subgroups within the case, this study maps out other stakeholders with whom these clubs have contact. Just as Misener and Doherty (2012) and Thibault and Harvey (1997) found in a Canadian context, actors from the public and private sector, as well as numerous others within the voluntary sector were identified when the participants were asked with whom they have had contact the last 12 months. This makes the total network in the current study consist of 108 actors. The results also show that sport clubs have contact with actors that operate on various levels in society. Both the local, regional, and national level are represented in the sport clubs' networks. Further, considering the local actors, some geographically belong within the chosen municipality while others are located in municipalities within the same region.

Figure 4 visually shows the whole network of actors identified in this study. The nodes are distinguished by what type of actor they represent. I distinguish between clubs and subgroups located within the case (the same 35 nodes as in Figure 1 and 3), actors from the public sector, actors in the private sector, other sport organizations in the NIF-system, other voluntary organizations, and clubs from other municipalities.

Jones et al. (2017a) found that youth sport non-profit organizations have considerably more contact to other actors than those operating in the same sector, particularly in terms of for-profit business in the private sector. Such cross-sector relationships are evident in the present study as well. However, the proportion of actors from the different sectors are somewhat different, underbuilding the scholars' argument of need for research in different contexts.



**Figure 4:** The whole network. Nodes distinguished by type of actor. Red: Clubs and subgroups. Blue: Public actor. Black: other voluntary sport organization (i.e. RSB/NSO). Pink: Private/commercial actor. Grey: Other voluntary actor. Green: Club from other municipality.

Among the 73 actors mentioned throughout data collection, 12 belong in the public sector: the public authorities (on local, regional, and national level), schools, police, road authorities, and projects/groups within the local public authorities. Eight actors represent the private sector, while most stakeholders belong to the voluntary sector. Nineteen nodes represent other voluntary sport organizations, mainly the national and regional bodies of the various sports (NSOs and RSOs), but also the common regional sport body (RSB) for all clubs operating in the county in which the case is located. In addition, 26 sport clubs from other municipalities were identified as stakeholders of the participating clubs.

The red, black, and green nodes in Figure 4 are all members of the NIF-system. The, in total, 45 actors are all members of the same collective enterprise that organized sport is, and further exposed for the same institutional pressure. It is important to keep this feature in mind. Institutional pressures facilitate similarity among actors. The actions of actors within the same institutions are based on shared values and norms, which can help explain their connectedness in the network. No club in this study has direct contact with NIF-central, the top organizational unit in the Norwegian sport federation. Although NIF-central was not mentioned in this study, one can expect regional units of the organization to have more contact with the national level. Further, as this study shows, the organizational units on the regional and local level have severe contact. Like this, one expects every level to be affected by the central administration.

When it comes to private and commercial actors, these are usually associated with sponsorships and financial resources. Compared to research in another context (Jones et al., 2017a), there are not as many private actors in this network. In total, eight were identified. However, some informants mentioned sponsors in general, but were not able to, or did not want to, be more specific. Still, as Figure 4 shows, three of the private actors have links with several clubs and subgroups, indicating that these might be local, popular, and sport-interested businesses, who wants to contribute to the local community. At the same time, some clubs emphasize that the relationships with sponsors gain both parties, hence the clubs must follow the businesses wishes for marketing. One can argue the connected actors are, to some extent, interdependent.

Finally, the results show eight nodes categorized as other voluntary organizations. The relations to these nodes, except for one (node VolA), are related to human resources. The stakeholders have knowledge about and contribute on various topics, for instance medical staff at events and making paths in the forest. The final actor is linked to clubs through financial grants. Four of the voluntary organizations are linked to one club or to the municipality, indicating sport-specific and/or geographical interests. The other half had several relations. In light of human resources being the most common type of tie for these actors, it is evident that they possess valuable knowledge for the local sport sector, and vice versa.

As described in Chapter 4, the municipality's public administration, the RSB and the local sport council were included in the final sample. While the RSB did not name any actor who was not already included in the network, the public administration and the local sport council added in total three nodes. This can be a sign that clubs themselves have contact with many crucial stakeholders, and that other types of actors, who in former literature are described as powerful within the field (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009) do not acknowledge many others as important in the local sport sector. Both the public administration and the local sport council mentioned the case's elected politicians. In addition, the municipality mentioned one national public actor (the Ministry of Culture) and one local private actor.

Previous research on communication in the Norwegian local sport sector found that, even though the public administration was most valuable to clubs, informal contact with mayors and politicians were evident. Even though the person in charge of sport in the administration was argued to be the most important by both the administration itself and the clubs, the politicians were highly valued by both parties (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009). Bergsgard and Nødland (2009) argued contact with politicians can supplement ordinary communication processes and function as a tool to gain influence on critical issues, particularly regarding building and developing facilities. In contrast, the politicians were - surprisingly - not mentioned by any club in the current study. This can signalize two things. First, the local sport council and the public authority do a solid job as coordinators and communicate well to the decision makers on behalf of the sport organizations. Second, the politicians do not respond to attempts of informal communication.

In total, 270 ties exist between 108 nodes in this case's total network. The network's density score is 0.023, indicating that only 2.3 % of all possible ties exist. In this study, data was not collected from all actors in the network. Therefore, potential links between these actors are missing, which affect the results of some social network analyses, particularly density measures. However, as actors' potential power and influence are of interest in this study, I argue it is more important and sufficient to describe the actors' positions and potential importance in the network by employing centrality measures.

### **5.2.1 The number of ties: Popularity or power?**

Naturally, the results do not vary considerably in terms of clubs' and subgroups' indegree ties when measuring the whole network compared to the club network. By including data from the municipality, the local sport council, and the RSB, three additional ties were the maximum number each club could gain. The local sport council and the RSB mentioned every club that had valued them to be part of their network, making these ties reciprocated. The municipality, however, did not do so. This actor focused on the larger clubs, located close to where the public administration has its offices.

The municipality, the local sport council, and the RSB are institutionalized actors within the field of sport, and each have their respective mandate within this environment (Seippel, 2003, 2008). Hence, these three actors are available partners to every club and subgroup investigated in this study, and that their purpose and objective is to help facilitate sport and recreational activities, it is not surprising that they are central in the network. In addition, they all consider each other as important stakeholders in their own networks, indicating that even though they might partly have the same objectives, they have different fields of expertise. The nodes make up a transitive triad, a clique. Cliques indicate that the actors are close. The local sport council, as a coordinating body for the local sport clubs, also serve as a valuable conversational partner for the authorities. It is further interesting to see the mutual recognition between the RSB and the other actors. Such vertical connections across different levels of society mean that the local actors care about sport on a broader specter, as well as the RSB not just is in contact with clubs, but emphasize the other institutional actors on the local level as well.

Previous research have stated that sport and culture, in correlation with children and youth, are the parts of the voluntary sector that municipalities interact most with (Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009; Eimhjellen & Loga 2017). Along the same line, the highest indegree score in the current network belongs to the municipality - specifically the section for culture within the public authority. This actor has a normalized indegree centrality score of 0.159, indicating that this node receives 15.9% of all indegree links in the network (17 links). In fact, 15 of the clubs and subgroups participating in this study mention the public administration as an actor with whom they have contact. Following network theory, the municipality is the most popular actor in the local sport sector (Prell, 2012; Robins, 2015; J. Scott, 2017). To put it differently, this actor is a stakeholder for many clubs, which provides severe possibilities for influencing others in the network. Considering the structure of Norwegian sport and how local sport is connected to the public sector, particularly regarding applying for financial grants and building facilities, this result might not be surprising. Moreover, this actor also possesses the total network's highest eigenvector score (0.346), meaning that it is the stakeholder within the local sport sector who can influence the greatest parts of the whole network.

In general, the main organization of a club seem to have the most contact with the municipality. However, some subgroups do as well, while other acknowledge the municipality's position in the local sport sector, but describe that it is the focal organization's responsibility to connect them. The informants' descriptions of their relation to the public administration vary. Relations mostly relate to financial resources, but exchange of human resources, both ways, is also evident. Several clubs emphasize that they contribute with sport-specific knowledge to the authorities, while they get help applying for grants in return. At the same time, some express that they are obliged to establish a link to the municipality when building facilities and applying for grants, but that maintaining this relation not necessarily is a priority. As such, the amount of communication between clubs and the public administration depends on what projects the actors are focusing on at the time.

Next, the local sport council and the RSB both possess 11.2 % of the indegree links in the network. While Bergsgard and Nødland (2009) found that clubs' contact with the local sport council is distinctively less than with the authorities, and on average slightly



less than with the RSB, the results from this study are different. Twelve actors consider each of them as stakeholders in their network. All clubs and subgroups included in this study are members of the local sport council and have the RSB as subordinated organization. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect these common coordinating bodies to be central in the network. Even though 10 out of 35 clubs and subgroups are not many, one cannot expect both main organizations and all their subgroups to have links to these actors. At the same time, the results show some subgroups who do. However, subgroups seem to emphasize relations with the regional organization for their respective sport. Such sport-specific links correlates well with many clubs' stated objectives and priorities, as their aim is to facilitate activities. Furthermore, it is also an example of homophilous connection.

Along these lines, the RSB, although in general being pleased with its connections, admit that it would be beneficial if multi-sport clubs are more involved. The issue seems to be that the interface between the RSB and the different RSOs is unclear. The representative of the local sport council, however, expressed that it would be great to have even more contact with clubs and subgroups. The council see itself as an open forum for everyone who seeks contact. It is an arena for stating one's opinion and increasing one's respective organization's potential for influencing sport politics. As such, the council is not completely content with the number of clubs that take advantage of this opportunity. From the council's point of view: the environment has great possibilities for organizations to engage in relationships that will increase their capacity.

Looking at actors from the private sector, one has a significantly higher indegree score than the others. The actor represents the local bank and have seven links which is the fourth highest amount in this network. These links are related to financial resources as a sport club can apply for grants from this actor. At the same time, the bank function as a sponsor for many clubs within the case. Formal sponsorships can be a source for more stable, predictable, and perhaps long-term resources, compared to depending on grants, and therefore seem beneficial.

There are greater differences among the clubs regarding outdegree scores. ClubS sends 18 links and possessed 16.8% of the outdegree links in the whole network. This means that the club mentioned 11 actors in addition to clubs and subgroups within the

municipality. ClubO sends second most links (17), but as this club have many ties with local actors, it “only” added eight when asked which other actors it has contact to. The two other nodes with the most outdegree links are subgroups of the two main organizations mentioned. Node ClubS-ski and node ClubO-cyc have 16 and 15 outgoing ties respectively. They mentioned 11 and 13 additional partners, making ClubO-cyc the organizational unit who has the most links with actors other than clubs and subgroups within the case. As these nodes are subgroups of the clubs with the most outdegree ties, there might be a tradition and a norm in certain clubs to seek cooperation with others, as well as a necessity in order to survive and reach its objectives.

The main organization of a sport club, represented by the board, is in charge of the overall survival of the club. Still, in their study on characteristics of European sport clubs, Breuer, Feiler, Llopis-Goig, and Elmoose-Østerlund (2017) found that Norwegian clubs tend to delegate decision making from the board to committees. Along the same line, it is worth noticing that some special-sport clubs and (smaller) subgroups have distinctively more outdegree ties when analyzing the whole network. There are various explanations and reasons for an actor to have links with many others. In this study, it is reasonable to explain this by a combination of attributes such as what sport they provide, if they host many events, and to what extent the clubs’ members engage in sport on a broader level.

As shown, there are tendencies in the current research that clubs are connected to homophilous clubs. Providing a peculiar sport, means few similar clubs within the municipality, which might lead to establishing links with clubs from other places, as well as depending more on regional organizations, businesses, and so forth. An example is node ClubH, one of the isolates in the club and subgroup network, who now has seven outdegree links. Four of these are directed to orienteering clubs from other municipalities. As Figure 2 shows, this club is the only provider of orienteering in the case, and as such underlines the argument that clubs seek partnerships with more geographically diverse actors when their closest options focus on other activities. This stresses the arguments of homophily as crucial among clubs, even though geography in itself can be a source of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001).

Further, clubs hosting events seem to have more cross-sector relations. Node ClubO-cyc is the only subgroup providing biking, as well as being a regular host of several races attracting both local and national athletes. Whether a club has employees in the administration could also affect its number and type of relations. Finally, attention should be given to the fact that clubs with members who take part in councils, committees, and regional boards, as well as being members of other clubs, might influence their considerations and experiences of relations to other actors. This study did not specifically consider such two-level links, but it was evident in some interviews that the informant, or other central members of the club, have several roles. Questions arise on whether clubs who have engaged and committed members utilize their stakeholders more and better than clubs who do not.

Just as Doherty et al. (2014) underlined the importance of personal connections for sport clubs' partnership in terms of organizational capacity, memberships in councils and other sport organizations might make people familiar with possible resources that others possess. Even though such memberships usually are independent of the club people belong to, one still has the ability to influence in a way that gain oneself and one's respective club. For instance, one of the subgroups in this case described that the unit is well represented in various boards and councils. Having a foot in several camps are expressed to be very beneficial. At the same time, hence two-level memberships can facilitate knowledge on other actors, ways to provide necessary resources, and possibilities to influence others in the network, engaged members are a great resource in itself. In fact, regarding human resources, such enthusiasm has been found to be one of the critical elements that influence goal achievement (Doherty et al., 2014). Their gained knowledge and interest in sport on a broader level than just their respective club can be regarded as a valuable human resource for their clubs.

### **5.2.2 Brokers and key players: Who ties the network together?**

Among the 108 actors in the local sport clubs network, node ClubO has the highest betweenness centrality score. Of all geodesic paths, 7.23 % runs through this node. As the main organization of the largest club in the municipality (in terms of both members and number of subgroups), it is evident that this actor plays an important role in the network. However, compared to the analysis of the local sport club and subgroup network, the score is not as distinctive. Considering their degree centrality scores, it is

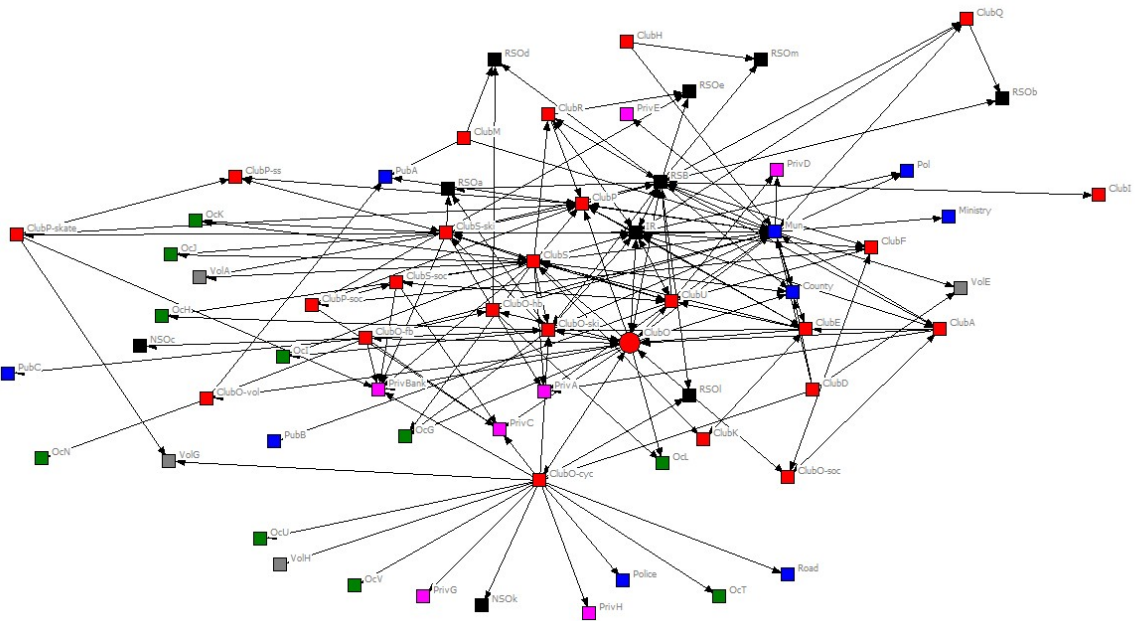
not surprising that the RSB, the public administration, and the local sport council follow with scores of approximately 6.89%, 6.54%, and 4.48% respectively. Based on their position in the network, one can argue these four nodes are in control of the flow of information in the field. Further, in the more peripheral part of the network, node ClubC plays an important role connecting its partners to the main component, especially regarding node ClubT. The same counts for node ClubQ. Both clubs serve as bridges, strengthening their control of flow of information in the network.

Figure 4 shows that the whole network has two isolates, indicating that two sport clubs in the municipality do not have contact with any actors. The additional four nodes who were isolates in Figure 1 and 3 are connected to other actors than clubs and subgroups, meaning that they are not completely independent. Node ClubB now has three stakeholders, representing three different types of actors. This indicates that the club does not operate completely independently, but that its relations are with actors to whom no one else is connected. Even though the node might possess a valuable position among its immediate stakeholders, it would be difficult to get in touch with the actors that seem to occupy the most central positions in the network. This does not seem beneficial in terms of generating resources that other actors can from their connections. On the other hand, Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) explained that organizations seek to avoid being controlled, and rather aim at stability and predictability in terms of its resources. Operating with connections to few others that no one else in the network is connected to, might secure just this.

Node ClubH and node ClubM are connected to the main component. This counts for the shooting triad in Figure 3 as well. In Chapter 5.1, I argued node ClubQ might benefit from being in the middle of this triad. When analyzing the whole network, it is evident that this club is also responsible for connecting the triad to the main component. In fact, this club seems relatively active, having connections to numerous and varying types of actors. Opposite, one should keep in mind that even though the two other shooting clubs in this case have few links, their distance from central actors is short. Depending on how wisely they use their connections, these actors have potential for gaining crucial information and ideas, that are originally distant from them, without using resources on establishing and maintaining many links. They have indirect contact with many others, and, and as such benefit from the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973).

All organizations within the same field are subject to the effects of institutional processes within the context (Greenwood et al., 2008). Still, the response to such pressure depend on their links to others within the field. One can therefore expect little pressure on isolates and small components, compared to other actors in a well-connected network. Less pressure can lead to less similar behavior and less shared values and norms, which further, following neo-institutional theory, will prevent legitimacy. On one hand, being able to control oneself seem beneficial. On the other note, legitimacy is necessary in order to survive. Following resource dependence theory, no actor is completely self-contained and needs to gain resources from others in order to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Through this lens, the isolates in the present study should have a hard time keeping their operations running.

Even though the network in this study is not fully connected, the fragmentation centrality scores indicate that removing a node would have little effect. Fragmentation is a measure for how well the network stays connected when removing a node. Looking at the main component in the whole network, node ClubO has the highest centrality scores. Yet, deleting this node has relatively little effect on the network. Yes, distances between certain pairs of nodes would increase, but communication among the majority of its connections would remain possible. On the other hand, when looking at the connections only between the local sport clubs and subgroups within the case, removing this node results in the highest fragmentation score. It is therefore evident that such main organizations can play a crucial role in connecting its respective subgroups, in addition to having contact with the public authorities and local sport council. However, these subgroups, when given the option to identify other actors, still value connections to other clubs and/or subgroups that specialize in the same activity as them, that they share facilities with, or actors they can benefit from cooperating with. The findings in this study show that the subgroups of such big sport clubs, more often have contact with others than their focal organization as their focus usually is operative, that being actually doing sports. Still, their connectedness ensures that the main organizations network is large. This is visualized in Figure 5, which shows ClubO's ego-network (path distance: 2). An ego network is the immediate network surrounding an actor (Prell, 2012).



**Figure 5:** Ego network (node ClubO), path distance is two.

As argued, it is clear that this main organization of a multi-sports club plays an important role in the network. Its position provides opportunities for the organization to influence the others and can as such be a powerful actor. In fact, ClubO's ego-network, when setting the distance to two, comprises 73 nodes. That equals 67.6 % of all nodes identified in this study, and including representatives from both the voluntary, public, and private sector, as well as actors operating on the local, regional, and national level. At the same time, the network as a whole does not depend on this actor to stay connected. Following Borgatti's (2006), there are no negative key player bridging a significant structural hole within the network. Even though I argue node ClubO has a large ego-network, the other actors will still, mostly, be connected if this organization are removed or decides to discontinue its partnerships. One can argue the environment not depend on this club, which is not a sign of power. Still the club might be connected to its stakeholders due to its possession of important resources. It is therefore necessary to take the content of the networks into consideration.

Along the same line, several main organizations are central in this study, but the subgroups' degree scores are signs that these organizational units have autonomy. In fact, even though the focal organizations function as coordinators and have high betweenness centrality scores, the subgroups possess severe amounts of information and

are often in positions to affect the flow of this knowledge. As such, I argue it is not just about who has the highest centrality scores in a network that determines who has the most power. Undoubtedly, centrality measures and network structure are great indications, but one should also pay attention to what each organization actually do, what resources each possess, and how they manage these. Thus, the content of inter-organizational relationships is important.

### **5.3 *The actors are connected, but about what?***

So far, this chapter has provided a comprehensive presentation of the networks identified in the study and emphasized the structure of the connections. I have briefly touched upon the issue of types of ties, and employed them as examples when presenting results. Moving forward, I focus on the second research question: *What are these networks concerned about?* One can discuss whether certain resources and topics of discussion are more crucial for stakeholders in the local sport sector, and whether being in control of these resources or active in various discussions empower the actors involved. Correspondingly, as cohesive subgroups indicate strong and frequent relationships, I analyze for cliques in this section. I start by introducing the different types of ties.

#### **5.3.1 Defining the different types of ties**

Following resource dependence theory (Barney, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) and previous research within the field I distinguish between seven types of ties. In terms of resources; financial, physical, and human resources connect the actors in the local sport clubs' network. As described in Chapter 2.3, financial resources include lottery funds, sponsorships, gifts, and operational support. Physical resources refer to facilities and equipment, while human resources concern voluntary work, coaches, and knowledge and information. Further, four topics are presented to which the actors discuss and/or exchange information. "Facilities" include information about developing, building, and rehabilitating facilities. "Training" concerns coordinating training schedules, while "competition" comprises matches, tournaments, and competition schedules. Finally, the last type of tie involves marketing, recruiting members, and club development.

**Table 1:** Types and amount of ties identified between different types of stakeholders – Presented as percentage of total number of the specific tie (number in parenthesis).

	<b>Club and subgroup</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Other sport org.</b>	<b>Private/commercial</b>	<b>Other voluntary org.</b>	<b>Other club</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Financial	28.6 (18)	23.8 (15)	17.5 (11)	23.8 (15)	4.8 (3)	1.6 (1)	<b>100 (63)</b>
Physical	42.6 (23)	16.7 (9)	1.9 (1)	7.4 (4)	5.6 (3)	25.9 (14)	<b>100 (54)</b>
Human	36.2 (47)	11.5 (15)	30 (39)	4.6 (6)	3.1 (4)	14.6 (19)	<b>100 (130)</b>
Facilities	41.7 (30)	25 (18)	12.5 (9)	5.6 (4)	4.2 (3)	11.1 (8)	<b>100 (72)</b>
Training	38.5 (10)	11.5 (3)	0 (0)	3.8 (1)	0 (0)	46.2 (12)	<b>100 (26)</b>
Competition	26.3 (16)	4.9 (3)	36.1 (22)	8.2 (5)	4.9 (3)	19.2 (12)	<b>100 (61)</b>
Marketing	44.4 (20)	8.9 (4)	37.8 (17)	6.7 (3)	2.2 (1)	0 (0)	<b>100 (45)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>451 links</b>

Table 1 shows the number of existing ties established between various types of actors. The ties represent contact between the actors related to exchanges of one or more resources or one or more topics, meaning that one partnership could comprise multiple ties. Overall, the total number of ties is made up of 63 financial ties, 54 physical ties, 130 human ties, 72 ties related to facilities, 26 ties related to training (schedules), 61 ties related to competition, and 45 ties related to marketing, recruitment, and club development.

**Table 2:** Density measures of club and total network for all types of ties.

	<b><u>Club network</u></b>			<b><u>Total network</u></b>		
	No. of ties	Average degree	Density	No. of ties	Average degree	Density
Financial resources	3	0.086	0.003	64	0.593	0.016
Physical resources	23	0.657	0.019	58	0.537	0.014
Human resources	26	0.743	0.022	132	1.222	0.032
Facilities	16	0.457	0.013	73	0.676	0.018
Training	10	0.286	0.008	25	0.231	0.006
Competition	16	0.457	0.013	61	0.565	0.015
Market	16	0.457	0.013	53	0.491	0.013



Table 1 shows that human resources is what connects most actors in the local sport sector, while building and developing facilities is the issue most inter-organizational relationships are concerned about. Table 2 is an overview of some descriptive network measures for each network, including number of ties, average degree, and density. It is important not to compare the scores of the club networks and the total networks in Table 2, as these do not consist of the same number of nodes. The various types of networks, however, can be compared.

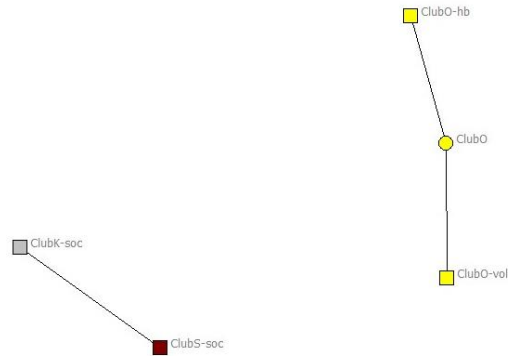
Looking at Table 2, it is natural that the network's average degree and density scores corresponds with the number of ties. The density scores are low for all networks, and lower than when analyzing the club network and the total network in general. This can be explained by the many isolates identified when investigating types of ties. One cannot expect all actors to be stakeholders in terms of every resource or every topic of discussion. The actors are simply not depending on, or able to provide, all resources, or concerned with every topic. Rather, these results show that clubs in particular, but also the public administration, the local sport council, and the RSB have many specific connections, and that it is a necessity and also a willingness to establish relationships with many different actors in order to secure needed resources and information.

Together, tables 1 and 2 provide a sufficient basis for moving forward and looking closer at the different types of links. I have chosen to focus on financial resources, human resources, facilities, and issues related to marketing, recruitment, and club development as these are issues that connects many, and a variety of, stakeholders. When appropriate I draw some lines to the other types of ties, as resources and issues are connected.

### **5.3.2 Financial resources**

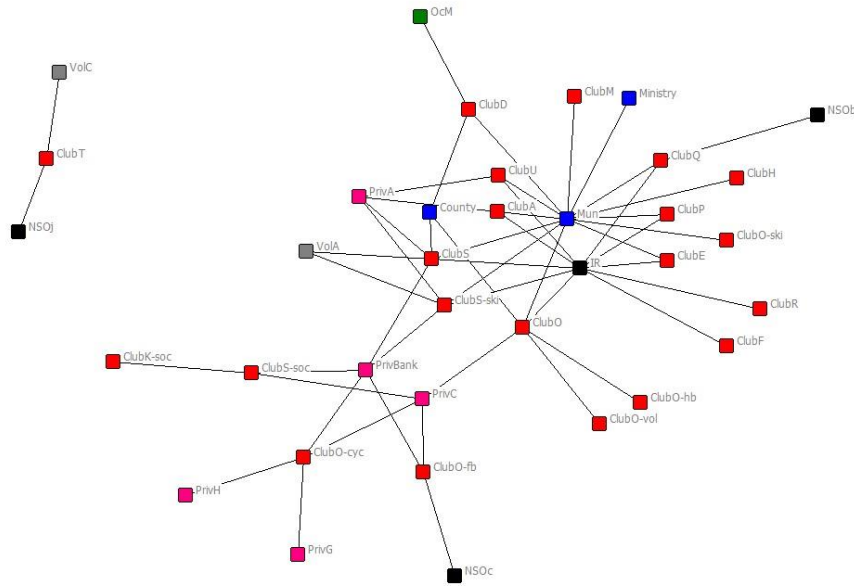
Issues and questions related to financial resources are central in many voluntary organizations (Seippel, 2003). Seippel (2003) found that the single task boards of Norwegian sport clubs spend most time on securing revenues. Put differently, Breuer et al.'s (2017) results show 39 % of Norwegian sport clubs report that the financial situation of the club is no problem at all, while 26 % report it is a small problem. In the current study, even though operative tasks are the clubs' expressed main priority, most participants mention financial management as one of the common topics of discussion

at board meetings. When comparing these findings, it is possible to argue that financial issues are not reported as big problems because it is what clubs spend their time focusing on.



**Figure 6:** *Financial resources – Club network.*

The importance and necessity of financial resources is clear. Still, as Table 2 and Figure 6 show, only three links between clubs within the case are related to this resource. Clubs do not exchange finances in any great extent, it is therefore natural that they depend on other actors. When including all links sent in this study's whole network, 63 links are related to exchange of financial resources. In light of resource dependence theory, one can assume that clubs who have many links related to financial resources, have good prospects for survival. At the same time, depending on many actors for generating the same resource can be an indication of instability and unpredictability, making clubs having to rely on many actors in order to secure a satisfactory level of the resource.



**Figure 7:** Financial resources – Whole network.

Table 3 shows the top three nodes for each financial network in terms of degree scores. Scores are based on how many actors each node mention as part of their “financial network” (outdegree), and how many times each node is mentioned by others (indegree). Every active node in the club network is part of this ranking as only five clubs and subgroups exchange financial resources. In the total network, however, it is evident that other actors than clubs are active, particularly the municipality and the local sport council.

**Table 3:** Financial resources - Degree centrality

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	Actor	Outdegree	Actor	Indegree	Actor	Outdegree	Actor	Indegree
1	ClubS-soc	0.029*	ClubO	0.059	IR	0.093	Mun	0.112
2	ClubO-vol	0.029*	ClubK-soc	0.029	Mun	0.056*	IR	0.075
3	ClubO-hb	0.029*	-	-	ClubS	0.056*	PrivBank	0.047

*Note.* Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.

No clique exists when analyzing the network related to exchange of financial resources, indicating that there are no particularly strong subgroups because of this resource. Still, as visualized in Figure 7 and shown in tables 3 and 4, certain nodes are central. Node

Mun, node IR, and node PrivBank are mentioned by most clubs. In addition, node PrivA has several links. These nodes represent the public, voluntary, and private sector, and offer clubs the option of applying for grants. Enjolras and Seippel (2001) and Seippel (2003) found that most of Norwegian sports clubs' income is related to sponsorships. In the current study, only 23.8 % of the exchanges related to financial resources are with commercial actors (pink nodes in Figure 7), indicating that income is gained in other ways: especially through public grants, reflected by the municipality's high degree scores.

**Table 4:** *Financial resources - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores.*

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>		<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>	
	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score
1	ClubO	-0.707	-	-	Mun	0.475	Mun	1.278
2	ClubO-vol	-0.5*	-	-	IR	0.403	IR	1.261
3	ClubO-hb	-0.5*	-	-	ClubS	0.304	ClubO	0.604

*Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.*

The most important public grant is the lottery fund. Lottery funds are related to developing facilities. How the process of applying for and receiving national lottery funds follows institutionalized rules, puts a municipality's public authorities in a powerful position. Seippel (2008) argued that even though these rules open for many ways to apply for lottery funds, "there is a more or less clear expectation, and tradition, that the initiatives should be local or at least include local actors" (p. 239). Further, there is also an expectation that the facilities should be funded by one-third voluntary work, one-third from the municipality, and one-third applied for (Seippel, 2008). In light of former research, that the results in the present study rank the municipality among the three most central in terms of all centrality measures for financial resources, can help confirm the important role this actor plays in the local sport sector – particularly regarding lottery funds. When describing financial resources as something that connects them to the public authorities, clubs most often mention this grant. However, the authorities also offer some operational subsidies to clubs in the municipality. As such, the clubs and the

authorities can be connected without working on a specific project that requires lottery funds.

Research has shown that the role of local sport councils vary (Berg & Rommetvedt, 2002; Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009). In the case investigated in this study, the council is well-established, and consider itself as an actor who possesses a position that provides opportunities for influencing other actors. The stakeholder is in charge of providing the public authorities with a prioritized list of the applications for lottery funds. In terms of this grant, although not being the direct sender of the resource, the local sport council have great potential for influencing which projects are set to life. Regarding direct exchange of financial resources, the council is responsible for the allocation LAM-funds and is as such the sender of valuable finances for many clubs. Most clubs and subgroups mentioning this type of subsidy during the interviews are grateful. However, clubs and subgroups express their discontent: The various clubs within the municipality are compared based on number of memberships, and the LAM-funds are allocated in light of this ranking. Especially for small clubs and subgroups, informants explain this as challenging. These clubs might just be the actors in the field who depend on this type of financial resource the most.

ClubS represents the organization with the most outdegree ties, but this node is not connected to any clubs or subgroups within the municipality. Instead, it is linked to six other actors. This can be a sign that the club knows who possess financial resources and knows how to make the most of grant programs and sponsorships, as well as an indication that it might need financial resources more than other clubs do. As eigenvector centrality expands on the notion of degree centrality, it is interesting to see that node ClubS is ranked top three on this measure as well. This means that even though this node is the club with most relations regarding financial resources, the exchanges are with the same actors as others are connected to. Usually, high eigenvector scores indicate being well-situated for establishing new links, and is as such a positive sign. However, in light of financial resources and the potential to hold sustained competitive advantage, receiving funds from the same organizations as competing actors, reduces the uniqueness of the resource (Barney, 1991). At the same time, based on resource dependence theory's three factors determining how dependent an organization is on another, it is reasonable to argue lottery funds and LAM-funds are

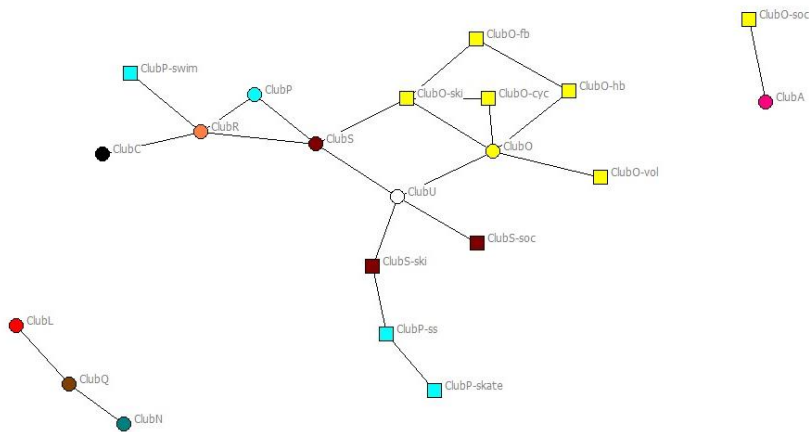
important for the survival of clubs, in addition to the fact there exists few alternatives that can compare to these types of financial resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). As such, the alternative of not receiving these funds would neither be beneficial.

Finally, the clubs' members provide a great part of the organizations' finances. Membership fees and income generating activities are types of financial resources the organization itself generates. They are internal and are as such not part of the analyses in this study.

### **5.3.3 Human resources**

Human resources comprise voluntary work, coaches, knowledge and information. "One perspective on organizations would hold that the human resource at the disposal of the organization is the most important resource because it is the human resource that puts into use all the other resources of the organization" (Chelladurai, 2012, p. 137). As such, it is not surprising that there exists problems and challenges regarding this resource.

Norwegian sport is based on volunteerism (Meld.St. 26, 2012), and one could therefore expect this resource to be an important reason for establishing links in the local sport sector. In fact, just as Chelladurai (2012) stated, Seippel, (2003) claimed voluntary work is the absolute most important resource for sports clubs. The results presented in this thesis correspond well with this statement as the majority of ties in the network are related to this resource. Between the clubs, 26 links exist, while in total, 132 links in the whole network relate to exchange of human resources. Consequently, Table 2 shows that, compared to the other types of links, the human resource networks have the highest scores for all density analyses conducted.



**Figure 8: Human resources – Club network**

Figure 8 shows exchanges of human resources between the clubs and subgroups. For the yellow club, apart from one subgroup, the focal organization and all subgroups are closely connected. The maximum distance between them is three, giving them relatively high ranks in terms of degree centrality (Table 5). Compared to the other clubs, which units are more fragmented, one can assume exchange of knowledge, general information, and volunteers is highly valued within the club as a whole. Through the analyses conducted, ClubO and its subgroups seem central and active in this municipality’s sport sector. However, when looking at human resources, there are few links to other clubs. In light of what human resources include, and Chelladurai’s (2012) argument that human resources puts into use all other resources, one can argue this type of resource to be crucial. Further, it is reasonable to assume that clubs depend more on human resources than financial, which is also reflected in the number of ties for each resource. For instance, there exists few alternatives to what volunteers contribute to sport clubs.

**Table 5: Human resources - Degree centrality ranks and scores.**

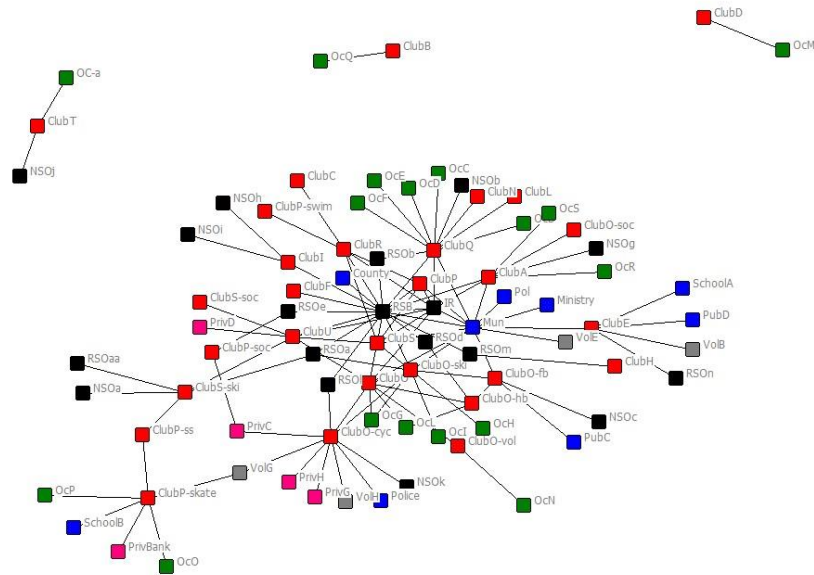
Rank	Club network				Total network			
	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score
1	ClubR	0.118*	ClubO	0.118*	RSB	0.168	RSB	0.084
2	ClubS	0.118*	ClubU	0.118*	ClubQ	0.112	Mun	0.075
3	ClubO-ski	0.059**	ClubO-ski	0.088	ClubO-cyc	0.093	IR	0.065*
	ClubO-cyc	0.059**					ClubO	0.065*
	ClubO-fb	0.059**						
	ClubS-ski	0.059**						
	ClubQ	0.059**						

*Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.*

There are several possible reasons for clubs not to be connected. First, the club (node ClubO) might possess the amount of human resources it needs internally, and therefore it does not depend on others. If this is the case, the organization is strong and independent. Another interpretation is that the clubs within the municipality cannot offer the type of human resources that this organization needs, and therefore it depends on other types of actors and clubs from other municipalities. As discussed earlier in this chapter, establishing and maintaining inter-organizational relationships require human resources, and it is clear that clubs do not prioritize connections to clubs from whom they cannot get anything in return.

When looking at the clubs, there are only two cliques. One contains a main organization and two of its subgroups (node ClubO, ClubO-ski, and ClubO-cyc), while three different main organizations (node ClubP, ClubR, and ClubS) make up the second. There are no overlaps between the cliques. However, node ClubS and node ClubO-ski do exchange human resources, particularly in terms of knowledge about skiing, which is the sport they have in common. Further, these nodes play an important role in connecting the network, as their betweenness centrality scores are distinctively higher than the others are (Table 6).





**Figure 9:** Human resources – Whole network

Figure 9 shows the total human resource network. In large networks, there might be numerous but largely overlapping, cliques (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). This is the case in this network too. Among the 132 links related to human resources, 17 cliques exist. Nine of these consist of four actors. Wasserman and Faust (1994) argued that in such cases the cliques themselves might not necessarily be very informative. Instead, the overlaps provide information on the differentiation or internal structure of subgroups within the network. In the present study, no clique is completely separate from the rest. Therefore, a closer look at betweenness centrality scores is beneficial (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Human resources - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores.

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	Actor	Eigenvector centrality Score	Actor	Betweenness centrality Score	Actor	Eigenvector centrality Score	Actor	Betweenness centrality Score
1	ClubO	0.456	ClubS	1.575	RSB	0.436	RSB	4.148
2	ClubO-ski	0.430	ClubO-ski	1.233	Mun	0.370	Mun	1.805
3	ClubU	0.349	ClubU	0.802	IR	0.345	ClubQ	1.765

Scholars argued the local sport council is the closest pure sport organization to the clubs on the local sector and one would expect this actor to be frequently mentioned in terms

of human resources (Berg & Rommetvedt, 2002; Bergsgard & Nødland, 2009). This counts for the present study as well, but more actors value the RSB. Among the active nodes in the human resource network, node RSB is the one participating in most cliques. In total, this node is part of nine out of 17 cliques. Since all cliques in this network are connected, this is reflected in the node's betweenness centrality score. The RSB is part of approximately 4.15 % of all geodesic paths in the network, and clearly has a valuable position with great potential for influencing the other stakeholders. Considering what the RSB express is its main task and what this organizational unit's mandate in the Norwegian sport system is, actively exchanging human resources is natural. This counts especially for general knowledge about sport in the area and administrative and legal support (NIF, n.d.-b).

Even though the RSB concerns the whole region, this organizational unit of the NIF-system has several full-time employees which provide greater capacity to serve the clubs in the area. Furthermore, a note to keep in mind is the RSB's position as a coordinating body for both clubs and regional special sport organizations, as well as being closely connected to the sport organization's central administration on the national level (NIF-central). As such, one can understand this actor's position in the network in light of both the valuable resources it exchanges with others and the formal position it has in the institutional field within which it operates.

The following actors, in terms of high scores are the municipality (node Mun) and node ClubQ. While the municipality continually seem central in this study, node ClubQ have not stood out as one of the most active or central clubs until now. Tables 5 and 6 have this club on the rankings, and Figure 9 shows that this node have connections to actors on both the local, regional, and national level. Clubs who not necessarily are the biggest in terms of members and finances, or who are one of few actors providing a certain sport, can definitely possess great amounts of knowledge, engagement, and volunteers. Human resources are therefore great contributions to the field of local sport and, if shared, have potential to be very beneficial for the actors involved. Both for public, private, and voluntary actors.

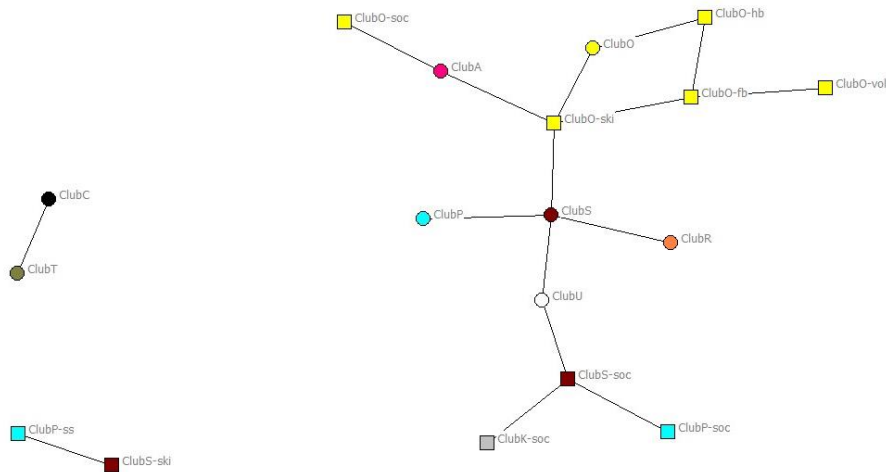
When discussing human resources, I argue one should acknowledge the importance of employed sport consultants in municipalities. Particularly as node Mun are central in

this network. The case investigated in this project, has had a consultant of this kind for approximately one year. In particular, the local sport council expressed that it has been stating the need for this type of contact person for a long time. Several clubs also emphasized this transition, and described it as positive. Although every club had not been in contact with the consultant at the time of data collection, they underlined their satisfactory on this organizational development. One can argue the public authority has been subject to cultural expectations from other organizations within their environment. Moreover, the continuously increasing professionalization of sport also puts expectations on the authorities. In order to utilize grant schemes sufficiently and keep up to date on all policies, professionals in the administration seem necessary. The development of the municipality's organizational structure makes the clubs feel that the authority acknowledges the importance of sport. Furthermore, the RSB argued municipalities with professional sport consultants function better than those without.

Despite the fact that it is hard to predict the results of this change, I argue the municipality's increased dedication to sports has potential benefits for its position in the network. Although spending more of its resources on sport, the organization might gain legitimacy among the other actors which in turn can increase its power, and especially its potential to influence others within the field.

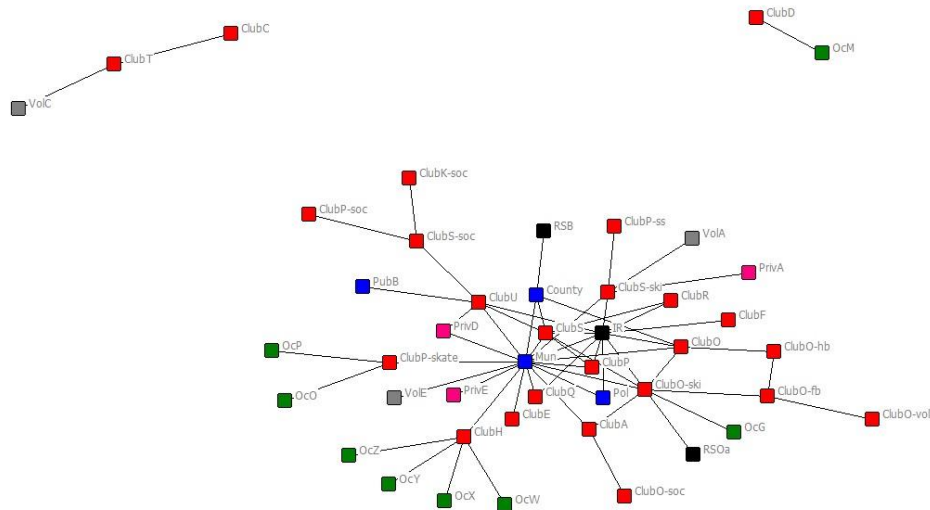
#### **5.3.4 Building and developing facilities**

For many clubs, building new or rehabilitating old facilities are continuous topics for discussion. Facilities is a physical resource. Within the broader topic of infrastructure, Doherty et al. (2014) identified availability and quality of facilities as critical elements for community sport club's capacity. Along the lines of clubs' need for physical resources, these scholars' results showed that "suitable and sufficient access to facilities that are in good condition and safe for sport participants" (Doherty et al., 2014, p. 136) are either a strength for clubs or a challenge when such conditions are not met.



**Figure 10:** Facilities – Club network

The participating clubs in the current study mentioned several common projects that are just finished, ongoing, or which they are dreaming of realizing soon. It is evident that some clubs in the municipality cooperate on this issue (16 ties, see Table 2). At the same time, it seems like the actor most eager to set a mutual project to life is the one to mention the project when asked about this topic. As such, the ties identified in this study are rarely reciprocated. Similar to human resources, the yellow club (Figure 10) is tightly connected when looking at communication about facilities, and particularly closer than other multi-sport clubs is. Especially the subgroups seem to cooperate. Some sports, such as floorball, volleyball, and handball, can naturally use the same facilities, and the established connections due to this issue therefore seem beneficial. Moreover, there is a tendency among the nodes in the case that subgroups are connected (squares in Figure 10) and main organizations are connected (circles in Figure 10). Reasons for this pattern can be sport-specific. The representatives of subgroups in this study expressed that they care about issues directly related to their activity, while main organizations' focus is overall management. This correlates well with Breuer et al.'s (2017) findings that Norwegian sport clubs delegate decision making from the board to committees.



**Figure 11:** *Facilities – Whole network.*

Developing a facility is a great project, depending on certain resources and amount of information. This is reflected in the total number of ties established due to this topic. There exist 73 links (visualized in Figure 11), the highest amount in terms of topics of discussion. In this study, it is clear that the actors pursuing projects on facilities communicate with the same actors as they exchange financial (and human) resources. As such, the public administration is central. To build facilities, clubs usually need support from the lottery funds, as well as they simply should take advantage of the arrangement. In order to have a proper application for such grants, the project must be approved by the authorities and be part of the municipality's sector plan (Kulturdepartementet, 2017). Further, the local sport council's opinion matter in terms of prioritizing the applications. Therefore, based on the way applying for lottery funds is institutionalized in Norwegian sport, certain actors are expected to be central when looking at this issue. Table 7 shows both the municipality and the local sport council as actors who send and receive most links. In addition, node County (the regional public authority) is ranked three, showing that vertical communication between the local and regional level of society also is acknowledged when it comes to facilities.

**Table 7: Facilities - Degree centrality ranks and scores.**

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	<u>Outdegree</u>		<u>Indegree</u>		<u>Outdegree</u>		<u>Indegree</u>	
	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score
1	ClubS	0.088*	ClubO	0.059*	Mun	0.103*	Mun	0.112
2	ClubS-soc	0.088*	ClubO-ski	0.059*	IR	0.103*	IR	0.075
3	ClubO-fb	0.088*	ClubU	0.059*	ClubS	0.056**	County	0.037
					ClubO-ski	0.056**		

*Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.*

Both the public administration, the local sport council, and the municipality’s elected politicians are stakeholders in the network discussing facilities. These three actors make up a cohesive subgroup, indicating that they are closely connected. Further, among the 12 cliques in this network, the municipality is part of 11 and the local sport council is part of eight. Clearly, these nodes possess distinctive positions in the network, and have the ability to control the flow of information on this topic. They are actors to whom clubs turn when facing the issue of facilities. At the same time, they are dependent on the clubs for sport-specific knowledge, indicated by these actors having high scores for both out- and indegree centrality (Table 7) and high eigenvector and betweenness centrality scores (Table 8).

**Table 8: Facilities - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores.**

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>		<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>	
	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score
1	ClubO	0.456	ClubS	1.575	RSB	0.436	RSB	4.148
2	ClubO-ski	0.430	ClubO-ski	1.233	Mun	0.370	Mun	1.805
3	ClubU	0.349	ClubU	0.802	IR	0.345	ClubQ	1.765

There are no direct links between clubs and the politicians. As the politicians make up the unit that approves the municipality’s sector plan, I argue one could expect examples of informal communication and lobbying activities. Such communication was also evident in Bergsgard and Nødland's (2009) results. However, this is clearly not the case

among the clubs investigated in this study, or else it happens in ways that the participants are not familiar with. In the present case, one can therefore argue the public administration and the local sport council truly function as coordinating bodies in terms of discussing facilities. Being this type of actor is local sport councils' supposed function in the NIF-system (Enjolras & Waldahl, 2009). Furthermore, hence betweenness centrality scores indicate whether an actor rests between others, I argue the local sport council in this case serves its mandate well.

Building facilities is a topic where mutual dependency between the actors are obvious. Firstly, this is due to national guidelines and requirements in terms of subsidies to build venues. Secondly, it seems like the authority actively seeks towards the sport sector for cooperation on this area. The relationships are closer and more frequent here compared to other topics. Without dialogue with the sport organizations, it would be impossible for the authority to know which facilities are wanted and needed. Therefore, in the present case, the topic of facilities is an example of collaborative governance. Still, one should not take for granted that environments are continuously subject to change: new sports can come to play and new types of projects can be prioritized at the expense of sport facilities. For instance, as Wicker and Breuer (2015), found: "communities that are in a good financial position can afford to invest money in building facilities which can then be provided to sport clubs" (p. 42), while communities in opposite situations rather spend their money on education and health care.

### **5.3.5 Marketing, recruitment, and club development**

The final type of tie identified in this study revolves around marketing, recruitment, and club development. This link captures a variety of aspects, but at the same time, the topics are related. Just as financial resources and the issue of facilities are connected, lines can be drawn between human resources and this final topic of discussion.

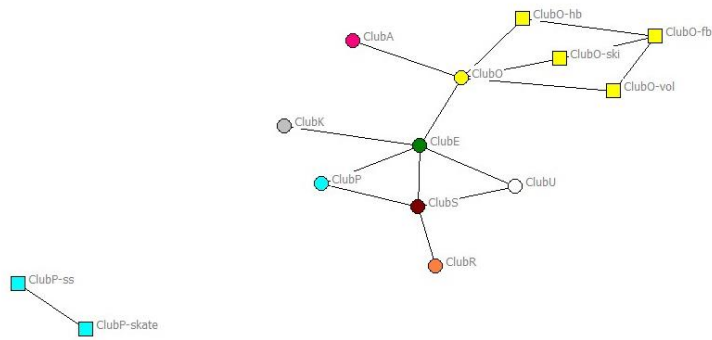
**Table 9: Marketing, recruitment, and club development - Degree centrality.**

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	Actor	Outdegree	Actor	Indegree	Actor	Outdegree	Actor	Indegree
1	ClubE	0.147	ClubO	0.147	RSB	0.103	RSB	0.056
2	ClubS	0.088*	ClubP	0.059*	ClubE	0.056*	ClubO	0.047
3	ClubO-fb	0.088*	ClubU	0.059*	ClubO-ski	0.056*	ClubP	0.028*
					ClubO-fb	0.056*	RSOa	0.028*

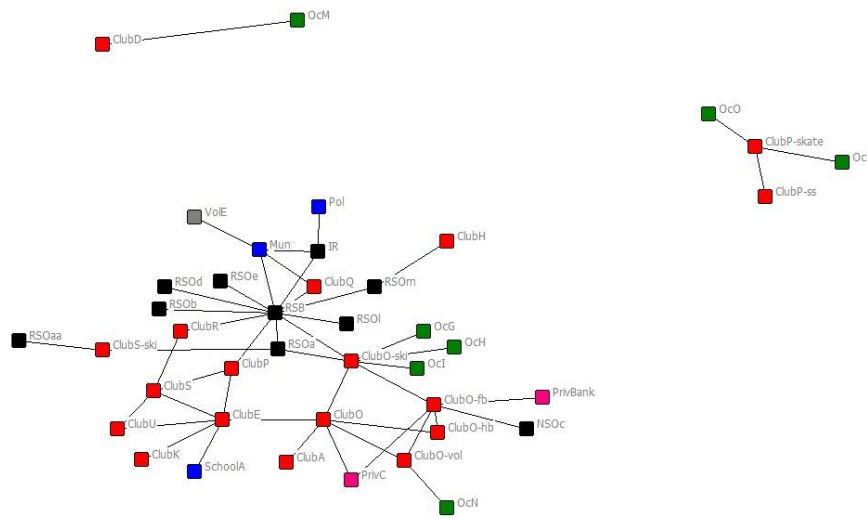
*Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.*

Seippel (2003) described that development and competency building measures are not among the topics that sport clubs prioritize. My findings show similar tendencies. Few clubs express that they discuss marketing with other actors, and this topic is neither a priority within the organizations. It is reasonable to assume that some marketing tools are employed by local sport clubs to recruit new members. However, as purposeful marketing is rare in this case, it is interesting that several clubs emphasize that they try to recruit members by being open for visitors at their arenas. This counts for both sport schools for kids, high schools, as well as adults. As networks of other types of ties in this study have shown, clubs who provide a peculiar sport seem to value such connections more than those who focus on a common sport. For instance, ClubE is among the ones who share its physical resources most. Table 9 shows that node ClubE and node ClubO-fb are among the ones with most links regarding the issue of marketing, recruiting, and club development. While ClubE is a special sport club and ClubO-fb is a subgroup, they have in common that they provide a sport that no one else or few others within the municipality provide. Further, ClubE was central in the human resource network whereas ClubO-fb has never been among the nodes with highest centrality scores.





**Figure 12:** Market, recruitment, and club development – Club network.



**Figure 13:** Market, recruitment, and club development – Whole network.

Figures 12 and 13 visualize the networks. It is evident that the various units of the yellow club are relatively closely connected. This club consists of the most subgroups and are also well-connected in terms of human resources and training, which make these nodes have high scores without being connected to other clubs. In fact, the main organization connects the whole organization to the other clubs and subgroups. On the other hand, this might just be the point of main organizations and a sign that resources within the club are well disposed.

**Table 10: Marketing, recruitment, and club development - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores.**

Rank	Club network				Total network			
	<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>		<u>Eigenvector centrality</u>		<u>Betweenness centrality</u>	
Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	Actor	Score	
1	ClubE	0.521	ClubS	0.089	RSB	0.556	RSB	1.234
2	ClubS	0.413	ClubO-ski	0.030*	ClubO-ski	0.343	ClubO-ski	0.488
3	ClubO	0.402	ClubO-hb	0.030*	Mun	0.246	ClubP	0.220
			ClubO-vb	0.030*				

*Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank.*

In the same way as the RSB was central when analyzing the human resource network, this actor has distinctively higher scores than all other nodes in this network (tables 9 and 10). Along the same lines as human resources, issues related to club development is among the RSB's tasks. The actor offers free, relevant courses for the clubs, as well as clubs can turn to them for advice if necessary. At the same time there are certain programs the clubs need to follow, and the RSB's role in the institutionalized field secure some links to clubs because of this. In addition, this actor expressed that it cooperates closely with the regional bodies of each specific sport within the area on issues related to recruitment and club development. As such, several actors representing sport organizations are part of this network.

## 6. Final discussion and concluding remarks

This thesis examined inter-organizational relationships between central actors in the field of local sport politics. I asked four research questions: (1) *Who are the central stakeholders in the local sport sector and how are they part of networks?* and (2) *What are these networks concerned about?* Then, in order to understand the networks' effect on the actors involved, I asked: (3) *How do these networks have significance for sport clubs' organizational capacity?* and (4) *How do the stakeholders' positions in these networks have significance for power and influence?*

By investigating one Norwegian municipality, the study found that the institutionalized actors in the local sport sector have numerous stakeholders, whom together make up a network consisting of 108 different actors. Stakeholders from both the local, regional, and national level, as well as the voluntary, public, and private sector, are embedded in the network. Following network theory, I overall, conclude the central stakeholders are large multi-sport clubs (particularly ClubO, ClubP, and ClubS), the municipality's public authority, and the local sport council. These actors both have high degree centrality, betweenness centrality, and eigenvector centrality scores, in addition to having reciprocated ties between themselves, and being active in most networks.

Through social selection, the actors consciously or unconsciously structure their network based on others' attributes, such as location, sport provided, and areas of expertise. Sport clubs emphasize establishing connections to actors similar to themselves, both within one and across several municipalities. Along these lines, and in light of research question 2, the study found that the actors are connected due to various reasons, both exchange of resources and in terms of dialogue about different contemporary topics. In total, 451 different ties exist in the network. Among these, most are related to exchange of human resources and the issue of developing, building, and rehabilitating facilities. It was evident that certain resources and issues were strongly connected, for instance, financial resources and facilities, and physical resources and training and competition. Clearly, sport clubs' relations are mainly related to operative tasks, which correspond with their stated objectives and the boards' focus areas.

This study found that a combination of each actors' resources, and the opportunity structure that their environment is, affect which inter-organizational relationships are established and further the network structure. The ability to harness financial, physical, and human resources affects an organization's capacity (Hall et al., 2003). Although some clubs are determined that they manage their most sport-related and specific tasks perfectly fine alone, most of the participating organizations see inter-organizational relationships as a benefit and a necessity for their operations. Institutionalized rules and norms, both in terms of specific issues regarding applying for grants, and more generally regarding management of sport clubs, puts expectations on the actors involved. Some connections are therefore more or less forced, and require engagement and resources although they not necessarily are valuable for all parties. In terms of research question 3, I overall conclude that inter-organizational relationships have positive impact on the clubs' goal achievement and overall organizational capacity. Still, it is clear that the actors do not take full advantage of the possibilities to harness external resources through stakeholders in their environment.

Clubs with many links and high betweenness and eigenvector scores have many options in terms of exchange of resources, but at the same time more stakeholders that can influence them and whom they need to deal with. This can be both positive and negative. Being active on all topics provide opportunities to learn and grow as an organization, which further can increase organizational capacity. At the same time, this study opens for acknowledging that some clubs might surprisingly be ranked number one when investigating particular issues, while not being active at all regarding other topics. As such, the study shows that actors who are active in many networks, have more potential areas for influencing stakeholders and controlling resources, whereas others in greater extent consider the uniqueness, importance, and applicability of each resource and topic regarding their involvement. On the other hand, the isolates and the clubs with few connections do not have these possibilities. Following resource dependence theory, these clubs will not survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Opposite, in a network perspective, they are independent. However, based on the expressed advantages of cooperating and the low rate of discontent in conjunction with established links, I conclude it is not beneficial for a club's goal achievement to not be active in the network.

Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) suggested that coalitions have the potential to enhance the power of organizations. Based on somewhat low level of reciprocity in this study, the positive credit from actors engaging in such partnerships, and Doherty et al.'s (2014) critical elements of capacity in terms of relationships, it seems beneficial to formalize inter-organizational relationships. I suggest clear contact points, agreements, and guidelines for what the different actors are responsible for and how they should communicate with each other will work favorably and have potential for providing long-term benefits such as mutual trust, balance, and consistency. At the same time, in light of the results presented in this thesis - particularly revolving human resources - it is clear that such formalization could be challenging. Human resources is what connects most actors in the local sport sector, but the lack of this resource is also what prevent connections. Accordingly, organizations' internal and external utilization of this resource can hinder capacity building efforts and goal achievement. Just as Wicker and Breuer (2013) stressed the importance of intangible resources to the management process of sport clubs, I conclude that challenges and possibilities in terms of networks in the field of local sport politics comes back to the need for human resources.

Following network theory, structural characteristics can indicate power (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). In research question 4, I ask how this come to show in the local sport sector. Unlike former research, I conclude that local sport clubs possess distinctive central positions in the networks, and that this type of actor should not be taken for granted in terms of potential power in the field. The findings show that sport clubs and subgroups play a distinctive role in every network and possess high scores in terms of all centrality analyses conducted. The tendency is that that large, multi-sport clubs are the most central, either represented by the main organization or one of the subgroups. They have the most links, are often part of geodesic paths, and additionally have reciprocal ties with the municipality. These linkages are proof that these organizations can influence and, perhaps more importantly, be influenced by the particular sport club. The ability to influence, on a wide variety of topics and issues, puts the sport club in a valuable position.

Although I cannot claim local sport clubs have formal power in local sport politics, this type of actor possesses resources and qualities that make them indispensable in the field. Particularly in terms of human resources, which is the network with most active

nodes. Further, as the implementing organs of local sport politics and the NIF-systems operative actor on the local level, clubs are important interest groups. Although, the institutionalized structure of local sport on one side limit the scope of the actors' actions by empowering the public sector, it also ensures mutual dependency. Similar to Eimhjellen and Loga's (2017) findings, the sport consultant interviewed in this study argued that the authority's relations to the voluntary sector increase the quality of municipal services.

Along the same line, the present study found that the municipality's employees working with sport highly value the clubs. When asking the municipality's representative, it was clear that even though sport organizations depend on the authorities, one should never take the sport clubs for granted. They have extensive knowledge about doing sports, what is required from a facility, hosting events, recruiting volunteers and so forth. In addition, the authority's representative expressed that sport clubs (and other voluntary organizations) are of great value to the municipality in a health perspective, as well as an arena that can increase the inhabitants' social capital. Nevertheless, no club in this case described themselves or other clubs as great implementing organs of health politics. Rather, they are concerned about doing sport.

Due to norms in the institutionalized field of sport, it was expected that the municipality is central, and especially when it comes to exchange of financial resources and discussing facilities. In light of research question 4, as these are the topics most actors in the current study are concerned about, I conclude the municipality is powerful in the local sport sector. I argue, it exerts visible power through the sector plan and have potential for agenda-setting power by controlling what information is given to the politicians (the final decision makers).

Alongside the authorities, I conclude the local sport council's position in the networks makes it a powerful actor. As local sport's political organ and coordinating body (reflected in high betweenness centrality scores), this actor is in a position that facilitates for influencing numerous others, and particularly exert informal power on the decision makers. Further, based on its mandate in the NIF-system, this actor is in control of a financial resource (LAM) that clubs depend on. The council's capacity to exert power strongly depend on its internal resources, engagement, and legitimacy

within the field. Although Norwegian local sport councils' efficiency varies across the country, the investigated case shows a functioning actor reflected in both its structural position in the networks and how it is described by others.

## **6.1 *Practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research***

Wäsche et al. (2017) argued due to organizations' dependency on resources gained through inter-organizational relationships, it should be of interest for sport managers to have knowledge about structural features of the environment in which they operate. Therefore, in addition to filling gaps in the existing literature, I believe research within this field is useful from a practical perspective and can especially be beneficial to the actors involved. That counts for both the analysis, findings, and conclusion in the thesis, as well as the actual research process. Even though different actors communicate and work together, I assume that they rarely reflect on their ways of cooperation, as well as their own structural position compared to others within the field. This is why the current study can benefit the actors within the sport sector, both volunteers and professionals, by contributing to develop existing, and establish new, relationships in a way that can make their roles more sufficient.

I argue this study explores a relatively unknown part of sport management research, particularly in a Norwegian context. As such, the thesis opens for further investigation within the same field. At the same time, there are limitations to this study. One of the limitations in this study is the sample. Although this study provides a thorough picture of the local sport sector, using only one municipality as the point of departure puts some restrictions on the applicability to local sport in Norway as whole. Future research would therefore benefit from conducting comparative analyses across several cases, alongside expanding the sample's variety. I suggest including several types of municipalities, several political systems, and several types of sport organizations. Further, an interesting approach to future research would be to employ different methods and theoretical frameworks, for instance follow a qualitative or mixed methods approach. Adding more qualitative data provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, and could potentially reveal more critical areas in terms of relationships,

and uncover more challenges and possibilities occurring in local sport clubs' environments.

Another limitation is the missing data. Due to the scale of this thesis, as well as time-constraints, I could not collect data from all actors that are part of the network. Potential links between nodes are therefore missing, which affect the analysis conducted. Future research could therefore benefit from including the perspective of several organizations. Following the findings in this study, I suggest that including several organizational units of NIF's regional level, the RSOs, would be interesting. Another approach would be to have a stricter network boundary, only including actors within one municipality, but then also investigate the other voluntary organizations and public actors.

This research project studied organizations. As found, it often comes down to the organization's level of internal human resources. Another interesting approach to future studies is therefore to employ network research on inter-personal relationships, and include two-level relationships when participants are engaged in several organizations.



## References

- Babiak, K., & Thibault, L. (2009). Challenges in multiple cross-sector partnerships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(1), 117–143.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120.
- Berg, C., & Rommetvedt, H. (2002). Idrett og politikk i kommunene. In P. Mangset & H. Rommetvedt (Eds.), *Idrett og politikk - kampsport eller lagspill?* (pp. 117–134). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Bergsgard, N. A. (2017). Spillet om idrettsanleggene - hvilke ressurser er virksomme i lokale anleggsprosesser? *Norsk Sosiologisk Tidsskrift*, 1(2), 171–187.  
<https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-2512-2017-02-05>
- Bergsgard, N. A., Houlihan, B., Mangset, P., Nødland, S. I., & Rommetvedt, H. (2007). *Sport policy: A comparative analysis of stability and change*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Bergsgard, N. A., & Nødland, S. I. (2009). Kontaktmønstre og innflytelse i den lokale idrettspolitikken: Nettverk eller hierarki? In B. Enjolras & R. H. Waldahl (Eds.), *Frivillige organisasjoner og offentlig politikk* (pp. 117–145). Oslo, Norway: Novus.
- Bergsgard, N. A., & Opedal, S. (2002). Nasjonal politikk for den lokale idretten. In P. Mangset & H. Rommetvedt (Eds.), *Idrett og politikk - kampsport eller lagspill?* (pp. 87–116). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Borgatti, S. P. (2006). Identifying sets of key players in a social network. *Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory*, 12(1), 21–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10588-006-7084-x>
- Borgatti, S. P., Everett, M. G., & Freeman, L. C. (2002). *Ucinet 6 for windows: Software for social network analysis*. Harvard, MA: Analytic Technologies.
- Borgatti, S. P., Everett, M. G., & Johnson, J. C. (2013). *Analyzing social networks*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

- Borgatti, S. P., & Foster, P. C. (2003). The network theory paradigm in organizational research: A review and typology. *Journal of Management*, 29(6), 991–1013.
- Borgatti, S. P., & Halgin, D. S. (2011). On Network Theory. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1168–1181. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0641>
- Breuer, C., Feiler, S., Llopis-Goig, R., & Elmoose-Østerlund, K. (2017). *Characteristics of European sports clubs: A comparison of the structure, management, voluntary work and social integration among sports clubs across ten European countries*. Odense, Denmark: University of Southern Denmark.
- Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural holes: The social structure of competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chelladurai, P. (2012). Contemporary issues in the management of human resources. In L. Robinson, P. Chelladurai, G. Bodet, & P. Downward (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sport management* (pp. 137–144). London, UK: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. . (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: SAGE.
- De Vaus, D. (2002). *Surveys in social research* (5th ed.). London, UK: Routledge.
- DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). Constructing an organizational field as a professional project: U.S. art museums, 1920-1940. In *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 267–292). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Doherty, A., Misener, K., & Cuskelly, G. (2014). Toward a multidimensional framework of capacity in community sport clubs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2), 124S–142S.
- Eimhjellen, I., & Loga, J. M. (2017). *Nye samarbeidsrelasjoner mellom kommuner og frivillige aktører: Samskaping i nye samarbeidsforhold?* Bergen/Oslo, Norway: Senter for forskning på sivilsamfunn og frivillig sektor.

- Emirbayer, M., & Goodwin, J. (1994). Network analysis, culture, and the problem of agency. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99(6), 1411–1454.
- Enjolras, B., & Seippel, Ø. (2001). *Norske idrettslag 2000: Struktur, økonomi og frivillig innsats* (Vol. 4:2001). Oslo, Norway: Institutt for samfunnsforskning.
- Enjolras, B., & Waldahl, R. H. (2009). *Idrettsdemokratiet: Makt og styring i idretten*. Oslo, Norway: Akilles.
- Enjolras, B., Waldahl, R. H., & Seippel, Ø. (2011). *Norsk idrett: Organisering, fellesskap og politikk* (2nd ed.). Oslo, Norway: Akilles.
- Eriksson-Zetterquist, U., Kalling, T., Styhre, A., & Woll, K. (2014). Institusjonell teori. In *Organisasjonsteori* (pp. 245–264). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Ferkins, L., & Shilbury, D. (2010). Developing board strategic capability in sport organisations: The national–regional governing relationship. *Sport Management Review*, 13(3), 235–254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2010.01.009>
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, MA: Pitman.
- Gazley, B. (2010). Why not partner with local government? Nonprofit managerial perceptions of collaborative disadvantage. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(1), 51–76.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Gratton, C., & Jones, I. (2010). *Research methods for sport studies* (2nd ed.). New York, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.
- Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Suddaby, R., & Sahlin, K. (2008). *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Haig, B. D. (2013). The philosophy of quantitative methods. In T. D. Little (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of quantitative methods: vol. 1 : Foundations* (Vol. 1). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hall, M., Andrukow, A., Barr, C., Brock, K., de Wit, M., Embuldeniya, D., ... Malinsky, E. (2003). *The capacity to serve: A qualitative study of the challenges facing Canada's nonprofit and voluntary organizations*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.
- Hanssen, G. S., Helgesen, M., & Vabo, S. I. (2011). *Politikk og demokrati: En innføring i stats- og kommunalkunnskap* (3rd ed.). Oslo, Norway: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Hassmén, N., & Hassmén, P. (2008). *Idrottsvetenskapliga forskningsmetoder*. Stockholm, Sweden: SISU Idrottsböcker.
- Hoye, R., & Cuskelly, G. (2003). Board–executive relationships within voluntary sport organisations. *Sport Management Review*, 6(1), 53–73.
- Hoye, R., & Cuskelly, G. (2007). *Sport governance*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Jones, G. J., Edwards, M. B., Bocarro, J. N., Bunds, K. S., & Smith, J. W. (2017a). A structural perspective of cross-sector partnerships involving youth sport nonprofit organizations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1322625>
- Jones, G. J., Edwards, M., Bocarro, J. N., Bunds, K. S., & Smith, J. W. (2017b). Collaborative advantages: The role of interorganizational partnerships for youth sport nonprofit organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 31(2), 148–160.
- Kartverket. (2018). Fylkes- og kommuneoversikt. Retrieved May 9, 2018, from <http://kartverket.no/link/6c30f926bd4c47cbba76810da18ecb71.aspx%3Fepslanguage=no>
- Kulturdepartementet. (2017). *Bestemmelser om tilskudd til anlegg for idrett og fysisk aktivitet - 2017*. Oslo, Norway: Kulturdepartementet, Idrettsavdelingen.
- Langørgen, A., & Aaberge, R. (2011). *Gruppering av kommuner etter folkemengde og økonomiske rammebetingelser 2008* (No. 8/2011) (pp. 1–38). Oslo, Norway: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- Lee, S., Oh, N., & Juravich, M. (2016). Examination of formal and informal relationships between service provider and client for ticket sales outsourcing in the United States. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 15(1–2), 62–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2016.1158047>

- MacLean, J., Cousens, L., & Barnes, M. (2011). Look who's linked with whom: A case study of one community basketball network. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25(6), 562–575.
- Marin, A., & Wellman, B. (2011). Social network analysis: An introduction. In J. Scott & P. J. Carrington (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social network analysis* (pp. 11–25). London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Markula, P., & Silk, M. (2011). *Qualitative research for physical culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a Feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415–444.  
<https://doi.org/10.3410/f.725356294.793504070>
- Meld.St. 26. (2012). *Den norske idrettsmodellen*. Kulturdepartementet.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340–363.
- Misener, K., & Doherty, A. (2012). Connecting the community through sport club partnerships. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 4(2), 243–255.
- Misener, K., & Doherty, A. (2013). Understanding capacity through the processes and outcomes of interorganizational relationships in nonprofit community sport organizations. *Sport Management Review*, 16(2), 135–147.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2012.07.003>
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- NIF. (2009a). Historikk. Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/om-nif/historikk/>
- NIF. (2009b). Idrettsråd. Retrieved March 10, 2018, from <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/idrettsrad/>
- NIF. (n.d.-a). Om Norges idrettsforbund. Retrieved May 9, 2018, from <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/om-nif/om-norges-idrettsforbund/>

- NIF. (n.d.-b). Organisering. Retrieved April 17, 2018, from <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/om-nif/organisering/>
- Oliver, C. (1990). Determinants of interorganizational relationships: Integration and future directions. *Academy of Management Review*, *15*(2), 214–265.
- Parent, M. M., Kristiansen, E., Skille, E. Å., & Hanstad, D. V. (2015). The sustainability of the Youth Olympic Games: Stakeholder networks and institutional perspectives. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *50*(3), 326–348.
- Parent, M. M., Rouillard, C., & Naraine, M. L. (2017). Network governance of a multi-level, multi-sectoral sport event: Differences in coordinating ties and actors. *Sport Management Review*, *20*(5), 497–509.
- Paulgaard, G. (1997). Feltarbeid i egen kultur: Innenfra, utenfra eller begge deler? In O. L. Fuglestad, T. H. Aase, & E. Fossåskaret (Eds.), *Metodisk feltarbeid: produksjon og tolkning av kvalitative data* (pp. 70–93). Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget. Retrieved from [http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb\\_digibok\\_2008071400086](http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2008071400086)
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Prell, C. (2012). *Social network analysis: History, theory & methodology*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Rhee, M., & Kim, T. (2014). Identity-based learning and segregation in social networks under different institutional environments. *Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory*, *20*(4), 339–368. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10588-013-9169-7>
- Robins, G. (2015). *Doing social network research: Network-based research design for social scientists*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Robins, G., Elliott, P., & Pattison, P. (2001). Network models for social selection processes. *Social Networks*, *23*(1), 1–30.

- Rowley, T. J. (1997). Moving beyond dyadic ties: A network theory of stakeholder influences. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 887–910.
- Scott, J. (2017). *Social network analysis* (4th ed.). London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Scott, W. R. (2008). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Seippel, Ø. (2003). *Norske idrettslag 2002: Kunnskap, ledelse og styring*. Oslo, Norway: Institutt for samfunnsforskning.
- Seippel, Ø. (2008). Public policies, social capital and voluntary sport. In M. Nicholson & R. Hoye (Eds.), *Sport and social capital* (pp. 233–256). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Shaw, S., & Allen, J. B. (2006). “It basically is a fairly loose arrangement ... and that works out fine, really.” Analysing the dynamics of an interorganisational partnership. *Sport Management Review*, 9(3), 203–228.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(06\)70026-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(06)70026-2)
- Shilbury, D., & Ferkins, L. (2015). Exploring the utility of collaborative governance in a national sport organization. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(4), 380–397.  
<https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2014-0139>
- Skille, E. Å. (2015). Community and sport in Norway: Between state sport policy and local sport clubs. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 505–518.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2014.940998>
- Skille, E. Å., & Säfvenbom, R. (2011). Sport policy in Norway. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 3(2), 289–299.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2010.547867>
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 443–466). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Thagaard, T. (2009). *Systematikk og innlevelse: En innføring i kvalitativ metode* (3rd ed.). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.

- Thibault, L., & Harvey, J. (1997). Fostering interorganizational linkages in the Canadian sport delivery system. *Journal of Sport Management*, *11*(1), 45–68.
- Wäsche, H. (2015). Interorganizational cooperation in sport tourism: A social network analysis. *Sport Management Review*, *18*(4), 542–554.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.01.003>
- Wäsche, H., Dickson, G., Woll, A., & Brandes, U. (2017). Social network analysis in sport research: An emerging paradigm. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, *14*(2), 138–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16138171.2017.1318198>
- Washington, M., & Patterson, K. D. W. (2011). Hostile takeover or joint venture: Connections between institutional theory and sport management research. *Sport Management Review*, *14*(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2010.06.003>
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, M. (1971). *Makt og byråkrati: Essays om politikk og klasse, samfunnsforskning og verdier* (2nd ed.). Oslo, Norway: Gyldendal.
- Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2013). Understanding the importance of organizational resources to explain organizational problems: Evidence from nonprofit sport clubs in Germany. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *24*(2), 461–484. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-012-9272-2>
- Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2015). How the economic and financial situation of the community affects sport clubs' resources: Evidence from multi-level models. *International Journal of Financial Studies*, *3*(1), 31–48.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijfs3010031>
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.



## Table of tables

Table 1: Types and amount of ties identified between different types of stakeholders – Presented as percentage of total number of the specific tie (number in parenthesis).....	72
Table 2: Density measures of club and total network for all types of ties. ....	72
Table 3: Financial resources - Degree centrality .....	75
Table 4: Financial resources - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores. ....	76
Table 5: Human resources - Degree centrality ranks and scores.....	80
Table 6: Human resources - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores.	81
Table 7: Facilities - Degree centrality ranks and scores.....	86
Table 8: Facilities - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores. ....	86
Table 9: Marketing, recruitment, and club development - Degree centrality.....	88
Table 10: Marketing, recruitment, and club development - Eigenvector and betweenness centrality ranks and scores. Note. Asterisk indicate the same score and rank. ....	90

## Table of figures

Figure 1: Local sport club and subgroup network. Nodes distinguished by color (club) and shape (circle (main organization) or square (subgroup)).....	2
Figure 2: Correlation between degree and betweenness centrality for clubs and subgroups.....	53
Figure 3: Local sport club and subgroup network. Nodes distinguished by type of sport provided.....	2
Figure 4: The whole network. Nodes distinguished by type of actor. Red: Clubs and subgroups. Blue: Public actor. Black: other voluntary sport organization (i.e. RSB/NSO). Pink: Private/commercial actor. Grey: Other voluntary actor. Green: Club from other municipality.....	2
Figure 5: Ego network (node ClubO), path distance is two. ....	70
Figure 6: Financial resources – Club network.....	74
Figure 7: Financial resources – Whole network.....	75
Figure 8: Human resources – Club network.....	79
Figure 9: Human resources – Whole network.....	81
Figure 10: Facilities – Club network.....	84
Figure 11: Facilities – Whole network.....	85
Figure 12: Market, recruitment, and club development – Club network.....	89
Figure 13: Market, recruitment, and club development – Whole network.....	89

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Questionnaire

### Spørreundersøkelse

#### Bakgrunnsinformasjon:

1. Har idrettslaget administrativt ansatte? (eks. daglig leder, økonomiansvarlig, anleggsansvarlig osv.)
2. Hvilke saker diskuterer styret mest?

#### Nettverk:

*Et idrettslag samarbeider og kommuniserer med mange aktører. I denne delen vil jeg spørre om hvilke lag, foreninger og andre aktører idrettslaget har kontakt med. Du kan velge så mange eller så få aktører som du mener er korrekt for din situasjon.*

1. Hvilke av idrettslagene i kommunen har ditt idrettslag hatt kontakt med de siste 12 mnd.?

*Dersom svar er idrettslag som har ulike grupper:*

- a. Hvilke av gruppene har du hatt kontakt med de siste 12 mnd.?
2. Hvor ofte har idrettslaget kontakt med X? (*Spørsmålet stilles til hvert av de nevnte lagene og gruppene*).
  3. Blant de valgte idrettslagene og gruppene, hvilket er den viktigste å ha kontakt med?
    - a. Hvilket lag/gruppe er nest viktigste?

*For hvert idrettslag du oppga å ha kontakt med i spørsmålene over, vil du nå bli bedt om å si hva som knytter dere sammen i forhold til utveksling av ressurser, saker og temaer. Du blir bedt om å si om din organisasjon gir, mottar eller gir og mottar ressursen, eller om det ikke er aktuelt. Om saker og temaer, blir du bedt om å oppgi om din organisasjon gir, mottar eller gir og mottar informasjon om sakene/temaene, eller om det ikke er aktuelt. Ett idrettslag blir presentert om gangen.*

4. Hvilke ressurser knytter din organisasjon og X sammen?

	1 Gir	2 Mottar	3 Gir og mottar	Ikke aktuelt
Økonomiske (spillemidler, sponsing, gaver, driftsstøtte)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Fysiske (f.eks anlegg, utstyr)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Menneskelige (frivillig innsats/dugnad, trenere, kunnskap, informasjon)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>

5. I hvilke saker/temaer samhandler din organisasjon og X?

	1 Gir	2 Mottar	3 Gir og mottar	Ikke aktuelt
Anlegg: bygging og utvikling	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Fordeling av treningstid	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Kamper, konkurranser, terminlister	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Markedsføring, rekruttering av medlemmer, klubbutvikling	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>

*I de neste spørsmålene kan du nevne aktører fra både offentlig (kommune, fylkeskommune osv.), privat (f.eks. treningssentre, uavhengige/egenorganiserte aktører, sponsorer) og frivillig sektor (f.eks. idrettsråd, idrettskrets, særforbund osv.). Du kan nevne så mange du vil.*

6. Hvilke andre aktører, organisasjoner og/eller enkeltpersoner har idrettslaget/gruppen hatt kontakt med de siste 12 mnd.?

7. Hvor ofte har idrettslaget kontakt med disse? (*Spørsmålet stilles til hver av de nevnte aktørene*).

*For hver aktør du oppga å ha kontakt med i spørsmålene over, vil du nå, på samme måte som tidligere, bli bedt om å si hva som knytter dere sammen i forhold til utveksling av ressurser, saker og temaer. Én aktør blir presentert om gangen.*

8. Hvilke ressurser knytter din organisasjon og X sammen?

	<b>1 Gir</b>	<b>2 Mottar</b>	<b>3 Gir og mottar</b>	<b>Ikke aktuelt</b>
Økonomiske (spillemidler, sponsing, gaver, driftsstøtte)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Fysiske (f.eks anlegg, utstyr)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Menneskelige (frivillig innsats/dugnad, trenere, kunnskap, informasjon)	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>

**9. I hvilke saker/temaer samhandler din organisasjon og X?**

	<b>1 Gir</b>	<b>2 Mottar</b>	<b>3 Gir og mottar</b>	<b>Ikke aktuelt</b>
Anlegg: bygging og utvikling	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Fordeling av treningstid	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Kamper, konkurranser, terminlister	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>
Markedsføring, rekruttering av medlemmer, klubbutvikling	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>

**Avsluttende spørsmål:**

10. Hvilke idrettslag og/eller andre aktører savner du å ha kontakt med?

11. Er det noen idrettslag eller andre aktører i kommunen som ditt lag helst unngår å ha kontakt med?

## **Appendix B: Written informed consent form**

### **Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet «Nettverk i lokalidretten: et innblikk i en norsk kommune»**

#### **Bakgrunn og formål**

Idrettslag er uunnværlige for norsk idrett. I dette prosjektet ønsker jeg å studere relasjoner, makt og innflytelse i norsk idrett på lokalt nivå. For å få til dette ønsker jeg å intervju samtlige aktører av betydning for idretten i [anonym] kommune: idrettslag, idrettsråd og kommunal forvaltning.

Forskningsprosjektet er en masteroppgave ved Norges Idrettshøgskole.

#### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i prosjektet?**

Deltakelse i studien innebærer at du besvarer en spørreundersøkelse gjennomført over telefon. Spørsmålene handler om hvem deltakerens organisasjon har kontakt med, hyppighet for kontakt, hva kontakten dreier seg om og hva som knytter aktørene sammen. Det vil ikke stilles spørsmål om sensitive personopplysninger.

#### **Hva skjer med informasjonen?**

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun studenten og veileder som vil ha tilgang til innhentet data. Datamaterialet vil oppbevares i låsbart skap på passordbeskyttede minnepinner, adskilt fra navnelister og kontaktinformasjon på deltakerne. Navn på kommune, organisasjoner/aktører og deltakere vil ikke benyttes i oppgaven. Det utelukkes derimot ikke at deltakere i studien vil kunne kjenne seg igjen.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes innen 30. mai 2018. Alle data som kan spores tilbake til deltakere vil da bli slettet.

#### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi årsak. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg og aktøren du representerer bli slettet og fjernet fra studiens resultater.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål om studien, ta kontakt med Johanna Sveen Belbo (tlf.: 95461640, e-post: johannasb@student.nih.no)

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

## **Samtykke til deltakelse i studien**

Jeg har mottatt informasjonen om studien, og er villig til å delta.

---

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Jeg samtykker til deltakelse i spørreundersøkelse.

## Appendix C: Norwegian Centre for Research Data's letter of approval for collecting and keeping data



Ørnulf Nicolay Seippel  
Postboks 4014 Ullevål stadion  
0806 OSLO

Vår dato: 25.09.2017

Vår ref: 55753 / 3 / STM

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### Forenklet vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 07.09.2017.  
Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

55753	<i>Networks in the local sport sector: The case of a Norwegian municipality</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Norges idrettshøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Ørnulf Nicolay Seippel</i>
Student	<i>Johanna Sveen Belbo</i>

### Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg, vurderer vi at prosjektet er omfattet av personopplysningsloven § 31. Personopplysningene som blir samlet inn er ikke sensitive, prosjektet er samtykkebasert og har lav personvernuleppe. Prosjektet har derfor fått en forenklet vurdering. Du kan gå i gang med prosjektet. Du har selvstendig ansvar for å følge vilkårene under og sette deg inn i veiledningen i dette brevet.

### Vilkår for vår vurdering

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet
- krav til informert samtykke
- at du ikke innhenter [sensitive opplysninger](#)
- veiledning i dette brevet
- Norges idrettshøgskole sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet

### Veiledning

Krav til informert samtykke

Utvalget skal få skriftlig og/eller muntlig informasjon om prosjektet og samtykke til deltakelse.

Informasjon må minst omfatte:

- at Norges idrettshøgskole er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon for prosjektet
- daglig ansvarlig (eventuelt student og veileder) sine kontaktopplysninger
- prosjektets formål og hva opplysningene skal brukes til

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*



- hvilke opplysninger som skal innhentes og hva dette innebærer for deltaker
- når prosjektet skal avsluttes og når personopplysningene skal anonymiseres/slettes

På nettsidene våre finner du mer informasjon og en veiledende mal for [informasjonsskriv](#).

Forskningsetiske retningslinjer

Sett deg inn i [forskningsetiske retningslinjer](#).

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 30.06.2019 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

### Gjelder dette ditt prosjekt?

Dersom du skal bruke databehandler

Dersom du skal bruke databehandler (ekstern transkriberingsassistent/spørreskjemaleverandør) må du inngå en databehandleravtale med vedkommende. For råd om hva databehandleravtalen bør inneholde, se [Datatilsynets veileder](#).

Hvis utvalget har taushetsplikt

Vi minner om at noen grupper (f.eks. opplærings- og helsepersonell/forvaltningsansatte) har [taushetsplikt](#). De kan derfor ikke gi deg identifiserende opplysninger om andre, med mindre de får samtykke fra den det gjelder.

Dersom du forsker på egen arbeidsplass

Vi minner om at når du [forsker på egen arbeidsplass](#) må du være bevisst din dobbeltrolle som både forsker og ansatt. Ved rekruttering er det spesielt viktig at forespørsel rettes på en slik måte at frivilligheten ved deltakelse ivaretas.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt med oss dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Vennlig hilsen

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Sri Tenden Myklebust

Kontaktperson: Sri Tenden Myklebust tlf: 55 58 22 68 / [Sri.Myklebust@nsd.no](mailto:Sri.Myklebust@nsd.no)

