Seippel, Ø., Dalen, H. B., Sandvik, M. R., Solstad, G. M. (2018). From political sports to sports politics: on political mobilization of sports issues. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 10*, 669-686.

Title: **From Political Sports to Sports Politics: On Political Mobilization of Sports Issues**

Authors: Professor Ørnulf Seippel (ornulf.seippel@nih.no)
Ph.D candidate Håvard B. Dalen
Ph.D candidate Morten R. Sandvik
Ph.D candidate Gerd Marie Solstad

Address: NIH: Norwegian School of Sport Science
PB 4014 Ullevål Stadion
0806 Oslo
Norway

Abstract

How and why do sports issues turn into politics? The aim of this paper is to explore how politicization of sports might happen, to show how social movement theory might contribute to such understandings and to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the political mobilization of sports issues. To achieve this aim, we outline a three-dimensional theoretical framework based on social movement theory. Thereafter we present six cases of more-or-less contested sports issues: gender, sexuality, doping, extreme wages, boxing/violence and failed talent development. Finally, we discuss the main features of our theoretical framework in light of these cases. How do political opportunity structures contribute to political mobilization of sports issues? How do cultural factors make a difference in political processes concerning sports? Which actors are involved when contested sports issues occur? The aim of this exploration is to discover how various societal factors addressed in our theoretical framework matter relative to how and why sports issues might turn into politics.

From Political Sports to Sports Politics: On Political Mobilization of Sports Issues

Introduction

Power is everywhere, and our everyday lives are full of potential problems and conflicts – seen or unseen, articulated or muted – emerging from power differences. For sports, these could be questions of how the opportunities for girls and boys to participate in grassroots sports differ.

Yet, most such sports-related issues will never catch wider attention and engage people outside a smaller circle of local interest. This could, however, happen when more people claim that the differences in opportunities to participate in sports for girls and boys are unreasonable and agree that something should be done about it. In such instances, power and conflicts are made visible; sports issues turn out to be contested and become *political*.

Making sports issues political is, however, still not enough to turn them into issues for conventional political actors in established political processes: *politics*. For sports issues to develop into politics, someone must articulate an issue and mobilize some interest, the claims made must have ideological resonance in the public sphere, and someone must respond to the mobilization. An interest organization working for gender equality could make the case that significantly fewer resources are put into girls' sports compared to boys' sports; these claims would resonate with ideologies in favour of human rights and gender equality, and the ministry responsible for sports could take some measures to improve the opportunities for girls to take part in sports.

In this article, we are curious about why and how sports are politicized: how sports find their places within political processes and how they eventually travel from potential conflicts via political issues to sports politics.[1] To answer these questions, we first sketch a theoretical

---

[1] The framework we build upon in this study assumes that politics are processual, and we claim that political mobilization is the least studied part of the political process in studies of sports politics. This is not the place to classify the whole scientific discourse on sports politics thoroughly, but we suggest that five approaches have been dominant.

framework consisting of the main tenets of social movement theory useful for the issue of political mobilization. This framework will help us analyse how sports issues might develop from small (non)conflicts to larger political issues and politics. Second, we analyze six issues (cases) with the help of this framework, and we do so by answering two questions: To what extent do each issue actually turn into politics? How do each of the three dimensions of our theoretical framework contribute (or not) in these political processes? Third, we discuss the theoretical framework in light of our cases: How do the political opportunity structures, the cultural framings and the mobilizing actors contribute to politicization across our selection of issues? The purpose is to illustrate how this theoretical framework might be useful for studying

---

First, there is a selection of seminal books introducing the topic of sport politics. There is a set of classics, Allison (1986) and Houlihan (1991), which to a large extent set the tone for the topics of studies to follow. Central among more recent contributions are (Grix, 2016) and (Bairner *et al.*, 2017) which both are concerned with the politicization of sports, yet without specifically addressing how this occur (or not) through political mobilization. Second, we find various holistic studies of sport systems, including comparative studies of national sport policies (Chalip *et al.*, 1996, Houlihan, 1997, Bergsgard *et al.*, 2007, Bergsgard and Nordberg, 2010, Henry and Ko, 2014, Ibsen *et al.*, 2016, Scheerder *et al.*, 2017). A third group of studies are restricted to sport policies in certain fields, as e.g. youths sports (Kristiansen *et al.*, 2017), elite sports (Houlihan and Green, 2008) and doping (Houlihan, 2002) or single nations e.g. (Houlihan, 1991, Stewart and Stewart, 2004, Bergsgard and Rommetvedt, 2006, Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013, Schut and Collinet, 2016) or more theoretical perspectives (Houlihan, 2005, Houlihan, 2012). A fourth set of studies goes more in detail with respect to sports organizations working towards political systems. Here, recurring topics are volunteering (Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006, Seippel, 2008, Wicker, 2017) and state-organization relations, often discussed as corporatism (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2007, Bergsgard and Nordberg, 2010). The topic of sports organizations is also massively covered within the field of sports management (Hoye *et al.*, 2012). Fifth, recent studies focus on the output side of the political process. Two concepts are central: Governance, both in a conventional meaning of the term as (political) management (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007, Groeneveld *et al.*, 2011) and in a newer meaning pointing to more "decentered" political processes (Grix, 2010), and implementation (Skille, 2008, Fahlen *et al.*, 2014). What this admittedly brief overview of the field of sport politics studies indicate is a vibrant field covering most topics of relevance for political processes – except political mobilization.

If we look at studies of political mobilization in the mother disciplines, this is a tradition thriving – mostly as social movement studies – at the intersection of political science and sociology, but probably more within sociology than political science. Accordingly, it could be that the topic of interest for our study is better taken care of within the sociology of sports. Even though there are a few concrete and interesting applications of social movement theory to sports (Sage, 1999, Wilson and White, 2002), recent content analyses of the field of sociology of sports do not indicate that political mobilization is a central theme (Dart, 2014, Seippel, 2018). This is confirmed in the few studies that explicitly discuss sports, political mobilization and social movements, which find that it has been only a "limited attention to social movement theory in research on sport..." (Davis-Delano and Crosset, 2008, 116) and "The relationship between sport and social movement is not one of the main topics covered by the literature on collective action" (Valiente, 2017, 3). In what appears as the most systematic attempt to link sports and social movement theory so far, the emphasis is more on how sports are relevant to other social movements (gender etc.) (Harvey *et al.*, 2014) than, as in our study, how sports are the stuff of political mobilization. At the intersection of sociology and political science, we also find an interesting introduction to the field of "The Political Sociologies of Sport" (Gilchrist *et al.*, 2015) which addresses several timely questions, yet do not address the topic of political mobilization in sports or sports as social movements. All in all, we think an attempt to approach the topics of sports as a question of political mobilization through the lenses of social movement theory is warranted.

politicization of sports. We wind up the article with a summary and some reflections on further studies along the lines explored in this study.

The cases are chosen to secure a certain diversity in the issues we discuss (Gerring, 2008). First, we select cases politicized to various degrees, i.e. they vary on the dependent variable: some are not politicized, some are partly politicized and some are fully politicized. Second, we study cases where our three theoretical dimensions – political opportunity structures, cultural frames and political mobilizers – play various roles, i.e. we look for variation on the predictors for the outcome of our political processes. The cases should be of general interest, most of them address issues that are pertinent in most Western nations' sports, and, given the explorative character of the study, we expect the discussions to be of interest for many nations.

Theoretical Framework: Opportunities, Frames, and Mobilizers

In this article, we start from the Foucauldian (1980, 93) idea that 'Power is everywhere,' hence also in sports, which then always contains a potential for conflict (Thiel *et al.*, 2017). Our basic query is how sports issues might develop within political processes, and social movement theory provides a useful theoretical framework to study sports politicization.

The classic story about political mobilization starts with deprivation and assumes that those in a common situation –the wretched of the earth, labourers of the world, girls in sports – will stick together, make claims, and act collectively to improve their situation. The only problem with this story is its lack of truthfulness: Not everyone is able to produce a useful and consequential protest and mobilization will only succeed with sufficient resources and in special situations. Taken together, three requirements stand out as prerequisites for successful political mobilization.

First, mobilization requires a conducive *political opportunity structure* (Kitschelt, 1986, McAdam, 1996, Meyer and Minkoff, 2004, Tarrow, 2012). To get attention and mobilize, people must have an opportunity to raise political claims. This requires that a political system must be open, responsive, or even inviting to those mobilizing politically. Then, there must be someone to receive political claims. Next, those approached with political claims, should also feel a certain responsibility for the issue – a need to legitimize their behaviour with respect to the issue – and have a capacity to do something about it (Stenling and Sam, 2017). Without receptive and able actors to act towards, the opportunity to make political claims into politics wither. When coaches treat boys and girls differently, it should be possible to approach the sport organization or public authorities who should feel committed and be able to take measures to improve girls' opportunities for sports.

Second, to make conflicts relevant for people, they have to be properly *framed culturally* (Gamson and Meyer, 1996, Benford and Snow, 2000, Johnston and Noakes, 2005). When a claim is made and a message is received, a potentially infinite number of interpretative possibilities have to be reduced to more manageable formats: 'By definition, frames select and emphasize certain facets of an issue and must therefore de-select and de-emphasize others' (Hulme, 2009, 227). Since it is not a given how an issue could and should be framed, and there could be many actors with (strong) interests in how issues in the end are framed, it is important to be aware of the struggles behind the political framing of social issues. Benford and Snow (2000) emphasize three tasks as central to successful framing processes. One is to provide a *diagnosis*. In our case, this will often be a question of what actors choose to see as a problem: e.g. unequal opportunities for boys and girls to participate in sports. Diagnosing will often involve identifying causal factors, an attempt which, in turn, often results in some types of 'adversarial' frames pointing out someone to blame (Benford and Snow 2000): e.g. a masculine culture strengthened by commercial interests. A second framing task is to suggest *prognosis* or

solutions. In our case, what should be the aim of policies concerned with sports and which policy tools are appropriate? For example, one could argue that there should be regulations ensuring equal opportunity for girls and boys to participate in sports. The third task discussed by Benford and Snow (2000) is *motivation*, which involves the actors' experience of the severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety of the issues in question: Someone must feel the urge to improve the opportunities for all to participate in sports.

Besides these three facets of cultural framing processes, we draw on two more concepts from the framing literature. A foremost challenge is to grasp how various cultural frames go together and eventually strengthen each other, whether they *resonate*: how some ideological elements from one frame (e.g. sports) go together with, react to, and somehow affect elements from a different frame (e.g. political ideologies). The concept of a *master frame* (Snow and Benford, 1992) has been used to describe how specific frames might find their place subsumed to more general frames; e.g. gender differences in sports could get more attention if they were linked to more general feminist master frames.

The third requirement, *mobilizing actors*, concerns the concrete ways actors work to get attention and raise their claims (McCarthy, 1996): e.g. tactics and strategies, organizational forms and action repertoires. Mobilization could vary from informal small networks, local organizations of various kinds, and more activist networks, to protests and full-blown formal political organizations. We are not used to thinking of sports organizations in contemporary society as outspoken political organizations that engage in rioting or demonstrating in the streets, so politicization of sports mostly comes from smaller networks, which then trigger reactions from sports organizations or conventional political organizations. Which actors are actually willing to do something for girls' sports?

Cases

Exclusion of elite women ski jumpers: Strong frames, reliant actors?

Gender inequality issues in elite sports appear on the political agenda sporadically. Some cases turn political, most do not, yet the cases that do turn political, tend to spark controversy. A telling example is the ongoing elevation of the competitive programme of women's ski jumping to the level of men's (e.g. inclusion in the Olympics, FIS world championships, etc.). What hinders gender inequality issues in elite sports from getting on the political agenda? What characterizes the issues that do turn into politics? In the following, we address these questions through the case of women's ski jumping.

In 2008, the IOC's vote to exclude women's ski-jumping from the 2010 Vancouver Olympics resulted in a Canadian court case. Led by star athlete Anette Sagen, fifteen female ski-jumpers sued the Vancouver National Organizing Committee (VANOC), arguing that not including a ski-jumping event for women constituted gender discrimination and violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the *Sagen v. VANOC* (2009) case, the British Columbia Supreme Court deemed IOC's practice to be discriminatory. Because IOC has full autonomy over which events to include and exclude from the Olympics, however, the VANOC was not breaking Canadian law (Travers, 2011, Vertinsky *et al.*, 2015). Hence, there was no women's ski-jumping event in the 2010 Olympics. Women's ski jumping was first included in the Olympic program in Sochi in 2014, and in 2014 and 2018 there was one women's event compared to three events for men. The case clearly illustrates how challenging it is to raise even concrete issues in international elite sports.

In Western culture at least, equal opportunities for children and youth to participate in sport independent of gender has long been a political issue, both in terms of a widespread awareness and approval of the topic and in terms of policies. In elite sports, however, unequal opportunities are often accepted. Arguably, this difference can partly be explained by differing

political opportunity structures governing grassroots and elite sports. In grassroots sports, the political opportunity structure is clearly defined, with support of a broad cultural consensus that grassroots sports should be open and accessible to everyone (Støckel *et al.*, 2010). Gender inequality clearly breaks with this 'sport for all' ideology and, thus, is likely to raise concerns. Accordingly, such issues can be interpreted as part of a wider societal inequality discourse, and the sport-specific issues can be framed as parts of this discourse. In clearly defined organizational structures, people know how and where to direct their concerns, and relevant organizations can address the issues through policy.

In elite sports, on the other hand, the political opportunity structure is less clearly defined. Most elite sports are segregated by gender (Dworkin and Messner, 2002). Historically, with sports long being 'by men, for men' (Messner, 2011, Kidd, 2013), international sports organizations have often been perceived as having a paternalistic approach to the inclusion of women. Men's sports have traditionally been viewed as more important than women's sports, largely because men's performances are statistically 'superior' to women's (Wellard, 2002). In addition, the market obviously has a say: men's sports usually generate more profit, arguably reducing sports organizations' and commercial stakeholders' motivation for change.

These aspects contribute to gender inequality not necessarily being noticed, regarded or acted upon as a problem. Furthermore, due to the globalized character of most elite sports, it can be difficult for potential mobilizing actors to navigate the organizational structure. Furthermore, in contrast to discriminatory practices in grassroots sports, issues such as the exclusion of women ski jumpers from the Olympics or World Championships affect very few people personally. As Young (2010, 95) points out, 'women ski jumpers, while clearly facing gender discrimination, are not the most indigent equality claimants one can imagine.' Due to the relative lack of urgency of elite sports issues compared to other inequality issues, and the social distance between the public and elite athletes, gaining political traction depends on

someone linking the issue with broader societal inequality discourses. Thus, a gender inequality issue in elite sports can become urgent–and conflictual–when someone points out its resonance with wider gender inequality concerns.

In the case of women's ski jumping, paternalistic argumentation from FIS officials– based on perceivably outdated concerns for women's health and safety–arouse disgust from various interest organizations, ensuring that efforts to elevate women's competition program was framed as part of a broader feminist discourse. In this process, individuals such as leading athlete and front figure in the fight for women's participation, Anette Sagen, played an important role. As she eventually, partly through the communication of key interest organizations, was seen to fight not only for women's rights in ski jumping, but also more generally for women's rights in society, the former issue gained political traction.

Homosexuality in men's professional football: Strong frames, stigmatized actors?

In Western culture, sexual minority rights are a salient political issue, and the LGBT movement has gained political momentum over recent decades (Barclay *et al.*, 2009, Gibson *et al.*, 2013). From a cultural perspective, then, it could be expected that the issue of homosexuality would be present in the sports political agenda as well. Within the heteronormative culture of professional soccer, however, male players do not 'come out' as gay. Despite signs of increased tolerance (Cashmore and Cleland, 2012, Magrath and Anderson, 2016), homophobic chants are common and reports about locker room behaviour points to stigmatization of sexual minorities (Collinson, 2009, Jones and McCarthy, 2010, Caudwell, 2011). Why does homosexuality remain a repressed issue in men's professional football?

In recent years, corruptive practices have been widely discussed as political issues in professional football (Hill, 2008). A common denominator of phenomena such as match fixing and doping is that they appear to threaten the integrity of the sport, potentially affecting the

entire football industry, from fans and spectators to clubs and players at various levels. Sexual minority issues lack this resonance stemming from an explicit sense of urgency. Failure to acknowledge sexual minorities is not perceived as a direct threat to football as a game, but as a problem for the persons concerned. Thus, fewer people are likely to recognize this as a problem, and those who do are for the most part active players in a culture of heterosexual masculinity. The social distance between elite sports and the public, as well as the 'invisibility' of sexual orientation (compared to gender and race), imply that most people do not relate to gay football players' predicaments at an emotional level. Like the gender inequality case, this social distance means that sexual minority issues are not automatically seen as a part of the wider sexual minority discourse. Political mobilization depends on someone explicitly causing this resonance and, thus, making it relevant to a larger audience.

In men's professional football, a player who raises sexual minority issues publicly might be perceived as jeopardizing his professional career and identity as a football player (Anderson, 2010). A professional career is relatively short and perilous, and an athlete's primary focus is to make the most out of it. Being among the first to raise sexual minority issues is likely to draw massive and potentially unwanted attention. Unlike Anette Sagen (gender case), who was personally motivated to confront issues of gender exclusion, homosexual professional football players might lack or suppress such motivation.

Arguably, this hesitation has to do with the role of sexuality in modern professional football culture. Men's football is traditionally framed as a place for masculine, heterosexual displays. In this arena, homosexuality has been articulated as being in opposition with and inferior to a hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity. One example is found in reports from the 'locker room culture' (Fundberg, 2003). In the locker room, communication between players are typically an intimate character: showering, changing, and other activities where the body is at centre stage. Because this intimacy – in a gender-segregated context – contradicts and

challenges aspects of hegemonic masculinity, an oft-used solution is to defuse the situation through joking and verbal objectification of sexual minorities. Reluctance to disturb these social dynamics or potentially place oneself as the 'butt of the jokes' might reduce players' motivation to talk about LGBT rights.

The political opportunity structure in this case is not clearly defined. It is difficult to know precisely who to criticize and who to address with complaints. Professional football clubs have yet to place LGBT rights firmly on the agenda. Moreover, national governments seem reluctant to interfere with the practices of international and national football associations when it comes to sexual minority issues. At the same time, these associations themselves might consider these issues as outside the scope of their core mandate. While concrete regulatory policies are few, more symbolic measures aimed at attitudinal change are becoming more common (Roberts *et al.*, 2017). It remains to be seen whether such measures are efficient, but for now, the lack of widespread political mobilization is still noteworthy.

Liberalization of boxing: A case of successful political mobilization?

In 2016, a historical boxing meet was hosted in Oslo. Its name, 'The Homecoming,' referred to the return of professional boxing to Norway following the lifting of the so-called 'knockout law' of 1981. Finally, the national favourite and current world champion, Cecilia Brækhus, could compete at home; as she said, 'In Norway, I am no longer a criminal!'[2]

The Norwegian knockout law effectively banned professional boxing, yet was annulled in January 2016 after a long political battle led by libertarian political parties. The Homecoming fight was brutally short – hardly a fight at all. Brækhus achieved the victory by knockout in the first round. Norway's Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party and the libertarian coalition government, Erna Solberg, was ringside and celebrated the win. The event was

---

[2] https://www.dagbladet.no/sport/na-kan-jeg-endelig-si-at-jeg-ikke-er-kriminell/60914637

controversial, not least because the political victory was demonstrated by a brutal and bloody display. Furthermore, the issue itself can be described as contrary to contemporary discourses of anti-violence, public health and athlete welfare (Loland *et al.*, 2006, Brackenridge and Rhind, 2014) So, what made legalization of professional boxing gain political attention and turn into politics?

We argue that this high-profile case represented an opportunity for libertarian political parties to demonstrate their ideological basis in practice. In this case, we show how the debate revolved around three common and often divisive themes in Norwegian politics: individualism versus collectivism, public versus private and socio-democratic values.

Political parties, NIF,[3] and health professionals' organizations, who opposed legalization of professional boxing, stressed the serious health hazards to professional boxers (e.g. early-onset Alzheimer's), reflecting concern with sports-related injuries (Den Norske Legeforeningen, 2013; Pfister et al., 2016; Roderick and Waddington, 2000). These arguments were effectively discarded by the libertarian parties as a type of political correctness. They argued that most sports involve a degree of risk, and that it is up to each person to decide whether to accept this risk (Innst. 372 S, 2011-2012).

The right to make decisions about one's own life (without state interference) is at the heart of libertarian politics. As such, legalized professional boxing hit the bull's eye as far as symbolic battles go. Arguably, Brækhus' personal story as a successful female athlete with a minority background[4] in a sport dominated by men plays off the classic 'underdog' storyline. Through extensive media coverage, in fighting for the right to pursue her dream, the popular boxer is positioned as a symbol of female strength and individual empowerment. Her centrality in the political debate creates neo-liberal resonance.

---

[3] Unlike professional boxing, amateur boxing is governed by The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), see https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/english/.
[4] Cecilia Brækhus was adopted from Colombia and grew up in Norway.

Furthermore, professional boxing's business model appeals to the libertarian parties. Professional boxers can be likened to private businesses, springing from the individual boxer's own initiative. The better the boxer (i.e. business) performs, the more profit is made. Personal entrepreneurship and performance is awarded, in perfect accordance with neo-liberal ideology. Indeed, in the proposal to annul the knockout law, the 'injustice' of placing restrictions upon talented athletes' career opportunities was stressed. While this business model might sit well with the libertarians, to the opposing parties it raised questions of whether this might legitimize violence for entertainment and profit.

Critics of legalization regretted the missed opportunity for Norway to take a stance against violence. For them, the Homecoming revealed professional boxing's true nature as a brutal and contemptible activity. They were concerned that public acceptance of violence would have a negative influence on children. Further, the hand-picking of competitors for professional boxing matches was criticized. In a particularly critical headline about the Homecoming, this practice was tied to nationalism: 'the boxing meet was a continuous debasement, where untrained foreigners were brought in to be bullied by Norwegian boxers'.[5] To many, Norwegian professional boxing's success ran counter to socio-democratic values that have traditionally been prominent in Norway.

Supporters of legalization pushed another 'national identity' angle. They provocatively argued that North Korea and Iraq were the only other nations to outlaw professional boxing. Thus, Norway was accused of exerting an excessive level of state control over its citizens. The libertarian parties framed the knockout law as unreasonable, and pointed to the discrimination of Norwegian professional boxers in an international perspective. This illustrates how several elements in this case resonated with libertarian ideology, and perhaps contributed to their motivation to pursue legalization.

---

[5] http://www.adressa.no/100Sport/kampsport/Stevnet-var-en-sammenhengende-fornedrelse_-der-utrente-utlendinger-var-hentet-inn-for-a-bli-rundjult-av-norske-boksere-6381b.html. Our translation.

The Homecoming is an example of the coming together of sports issues and politics. In this case, libertarian political parties themselves proposed the diagnosis, mobilized around the issue, *and* secured the change of legislation (i.e. the solution). Arguably, the resonance between professional boxing and neo-liberal ideology facilitated political mobilization in this case. Brækhus' story is framed as a fight for individual freedom and women's rights, and connected to ideals of privatization and globalization. From the libertarian parties' perspective, the knockout law is something to criticize, the Norwegian court is the obvious receiver of the criticism, and annulling the knockout law is articulated as a reasonable and possible solution. Our review has helped us understand the political potential of the Homecoming. Of course, it was a personal victory for Cecilia Brækhus, but – beyond that – it was a symbolic victory for libertarian politicians.

Doping as politics: Strong institutions, weak contestants?

In many Western countries, doping in sports can be considered a "politically completed" issue: A legal institutional system is in place and (infrequent) discussions happen mainly on the level of implementation. This situation is not inevitable, as the issue abounds in potential conflict: First, research show prevalence estimates of doping in elite sports indicative of considerable reluctance towards anti-doping policy and regulations (de Hon *et al.*, 2015, Ulrich *et al.*, 2017). Second, several scholars have criticized specific aspects of anti-doping policy, often pointing to potential infringements of human rights (Dimeo and Møller, 2018). Third, congenial issues– notably drug use in society in general–are certainly political matters with an ongoing proliferation of policy liberalization. Why, then, do potential conflicts surrounding doping and anti-doping seldom turn into national politics?

The doping issue saw a phase of political mobilization in many countries accelerating in the 1960s and eventually leading to the establishment of WADA in 1999 and several national

anti-doping organizations in the early 2000s. This mobilization face seems bolstered by two sentiments that have come to mark public and political perceptions of doping: that the practice is (seriously) unhealthy and (seriously) unsporting. Considering health, anti-doping policies developed in the 1960s, at least partly, as a response to (possibly) doping-related fatalities such as the death of cyclists Knud Endemark Jensen in the 1960 Rome Olympics. Thus, since the 1960s, the relation between doping and serious health risk and even death has marked the political   discourse.

Moreover, as Waddington and Smith (2009) (p. 43) observes, anti-doping policies developed in Britain, the United States and other Western countries, in the context of growing public and political "concern about the [...] 'abuse' of controlled drugs in society more generally". As such, doping not only connects with the health of athletes, but also fits within master frames of public health generally and anti-drugs more specifically. Arguably, this framing of the doping issue within master frames of public health and anti-drugs functions as a de-mobilizing frame for liberalizing initiatives or initiatives in other ways critical of current anti-doping   policy.

Besides the health focus, anti-doping relates to an entrenched idea of sport as a moral sphere. The idea that doping represents a break with fair play and 'the spirit of sport' has come to play an important role in Western anti-doping discourse. Arguably, the emotional intensity by which the idea that doping breaks with 'the spirit of sport' is presented in the public domain, points to the importance of sports ideology in anti-doping politics (Gleaves and Llewellyn, 2014, Ritchie, 2014). Within dominating sports ideology, doping seems to be conceived as a particular threat to the integrity of sports. In this context, it seems as if articulating liberalizing or otherwise critical standpoints to current anti-doping policies, comes up against established cultural frames powerfully defining why doping is an urgent problem and (perhaps less

powerfully) how to solve this problem. As such, the cultural framing of doping as seriously problematic can be seen as *de*-mobilizing to individuals or groups motivated for change.

Furthermore, with the establishment of WADA and the ratification of WADC by, as per 2018, 204 national Olympic committees, the political opportunity structure present potential mobilizing actors with an apparent hurdle: The WADC harmonizes anti-doping policies, rules and regulations within sports organizations and public authorities globally and, as such, aspires to universal status. Arguably, this adds to the de-mobilizing effects. From the perspective of actors situated in local or national contexts–or, for that sake, sport-specific contexts–initiating and affecting change to 'global policy' may seem rather unfeasible. Moreover, as noted in previous cases, to most people, international organizations such as IOC and WADA can seem distant bodies with vaguely understood political procedures.

Lastly, the doping issue has no obvious mobilizing actors to bring potential conflicts to the political agenda. The primary group affected by problematic aspects of anti-doping rules or legal issues such as unreasonable verdicts, is elite athletes. Due to immense public support for anti-doping and reasonable fear of rendering oneself suspect, however, athletes seemingly stand more to lose than to gain from mobilization.

Capitalism in professional European football: Weak frames, low motivation?

Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior is one of the world's most entertaining football players. His latest transfer from Barcelona to Paris St. Germain for £199 mill. also made him the most expensive player in the world. He now earns £550 000 per week: 1,200 times more than the average worker in France and 28 times more than the French Prime Minister. There is a fundamental absurdity to this picture. Even so, the salaries in football are rarely articulated as a public concern that requires political action. Why not? The astonishing salary levels in professional football today could have been framed as a problem in light of the massive

attention paid to social and financial inequality in society (Piketty and Goldhammer, 2014). There is, however, limited public and political involvement on this particular issue. In this case, we argue that the framing of professional football as entertainment and aspiration affects various actors' motivations to address salary levels as a problem.

Primarily, elite football is framed as entertainment. In this sphere, the spotlight is on 'Neymar as an entertaining player' rather than 'Neymar as a labourer.' It might not be too surprising, then, if professional football is more readily associated with the entertainment industry than the labour market. Salaries paid according to profitability harmonize with the competitive logic of sport as well as both classic neoliberal market thinking and more recent winner-takes-all capitalism (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2012). This mindset is discernible from the fully normalized rhetoric regarding football players as products, manufactured by football clubs, and sold to the highest bidder on an increasingly international market. That the entertainment industry has already paved the way for normalizing dramatic salary levels could serve to inhibit critical reactions to a similar situation in football.

Further, football is framed as aspiration. Through his remarkable social mobility journey, Neymar is a symbol of hope for countless footballers across the globe. He demonstrates that 'anyone can make it' if only they try hard enough. By drawing on the false premise of 'fair competition,' the power to succeed is placed in the hands (and feet) of each individual player – the 'football edition' of the American Dream. Celebrating and rewarding winners is thus integral to the aspirational aspect of football. This, coupled with a lack of regulations to restrict upper wage limits in European professional football[6], effectively legitimizes performance-based salaries of immense proportions. Thus, footballers' salary levels might not be regarded as a problem.

---

[6] As different from American Soccer which operates salary caps (www.mlssoccer.com).

For an issue to become political, we depend on motivated actors to mobilize. In professional football, who should care? Perhaps the most obvious actors to confront this issue are *football players* that spend a comparable amount of time and energy in the profession, but are losing out in the competition for high wages (e.g. fulltime semi-professionals in lower divisions). While they constitute a significant number of active players, it is perhaps unlikely for them to draw together in collective action. As we have shown, the framing of football as aspiration makes players likely to blame themselves for their 'failure' to progress into the world of elite football. Being excluded from the privileged world of top-level football and the salaries that go with it is probably experienced as a problem at the individual level rather than as a collective concern at a structural or societal level. In addition, the immense social distance between elite football players and others (grassroots players and fans) gives the impression that any comparison between the two is irrelevant.

Because football players' contracts cost a lot of money, both in transfer fees and wages, *professional football clubs* might be inclined to act. We reason, however, that they have more to lose than to gain from challenging the current system because of the colossal profits generated by star players like Neymar (e.g. through promotional material and football gear).

Financial inequality is a burning political issue, especially for social-democratic and leftist parties (Judt, 2009). We, therefore, could expect that *politicians* would be somewhat motivated to address the salary levels in professional football. On the other hand, their political power to change the system might be limited due to the transnational dimension of professional football. As political parties have an interest in winning votes, challenging football can be viewed as risky business.

Professional football appears to be successfully framed as entertainment and aspiration, both of which resonate well with the internal logic of sport (e.g. competition and meritocracy).

Because differentiation is a key element of sport, and a premise for its entertainment and opportunity values, inequality is not necessarily seen as a problem. That is, players are presumed to get the salaries they deserve based on their performance and their entertainment value, which also resonates with neo-liberal market thinking and winner-takes-all capitalism. We further argue that a lack of actors motivated to articulate footballers' salaries as a social and financial inequality issue contributes to silencing the political potential inherent in this case.

The politics of failed talent development: A non-political case?

A large collection of literature on talent development and identification has come up with one rock-hard finding: It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify the next superstars – Williams or Federer, Marta or Messi – until they appear (Goncalves *et al.*, 2012). How to proceed? Keep trying; take the children out of their local clubs and organize as many professional sport academies as possible to ensure that at least some of the unidentified future stars are included. The problem? The organizers know that almost all the athletes included in such sports academies will fail. They know that while the kids (and their families) spend all their time and resources on sports, they forsake friends, family, and education preparing for something that is likely not going to happen. Leaving sports academies and being denied the opportunity they were all dreaming of, many youths are leaving sports humbled, frustrated, and disappointed (Helle-Valle, 2008, Calvin, 2013, Calvin, 2017). Outcome? A large group of young people are exploited in something akin to children's labour, especially in a global perspective where trafficking adds seriously to the problem. This exploitation occurs in a way that makes many young athletes' chances of success later in life – both in working life and in their own personal welfare – significantly smaller than had they not taken part in these activities. What happens is that sports' competitive dimension is paired with professional and commercial

interests in a 'pay to play pipeline' (Eckstein, 2017). What impedes further mobilization of this issue?

How to organize competitions for young athletes is often contested, but being victims of this over-investment in talent development makes it difficult for actors to step forward and mobilize against their 'lost youth.' First, the academy losers are seen as unworthy because they have chosen their destiny by free will, and failed. Second, there is an obvious lack of unity among the 'failed' talents: for as they drop out from a host of academies and clubs one by one, there is no communicative infrastructure to help them mobilize. Third, since the athletes' humiliation occurs as they depart a system, they are probably keener on getting away than on remaining committed to the issue and politicize it; the departing athletes value exit over voice or loyalty (Hirschman, 1970) in a way that causes lack of improvement in a system they are excluded from. Fourth, since most youth failing as elite athletes will still be fascinated by their respective sports, they might have difficulties in approaching the sports organizations critically.

Furthermore, even if former athletes should be politically motivated, it is not obvious whom they should address. Sports organizations are mainly concerned with organizing sports and providing sports (the good) for as many members as possible, not restricting access to sports. The dilemma for sports becoming too serious too early in children's lives is on the political agenda in several nations (Støckel *et al.*, 2010), but the initiatives are more reactive than proactive. The challenge is difficult because the problems stem from sports, but emerge when the athlete leaves sports. Those organizing academies are also often commercial actors, and are not too eager to care about their failed potential stars. The combination of weak and fragmented groups of actors and a vague, indifferent opportunity structure makes political mobilization unlikely.

Given a lack of politicization from within, a pressing question is what we see from afield: Which stories are chosen, and how are they framed culturally? For sports, there is no

doubt; success stories focus on the new star, the new talent (such as Neymar). These all-too-rare success stories nevertheless resonate with the dominant ideology within modern societies and, even more, within sports – If you are determined enough, you will make it; if you do not make it, it is your fault. This perspective reflects an individualized liberal ideology: We do things as free, responsible individuals, and if we fail, no one else is to blame. Those suffering are not worthy of our compassion; they did it all by their own choices and at their own risks. Even though there is a widespread scepticism towards elite sports (Haut *et al.*, 2016, Seippel *et al.*, 2016), the cultural situation makes it difficult to recognize the failed talents as a worthy problem and to find solutions to the problem: How do we secure a respectful exit for those leaving sports (Helle-Valle, 2008)? The cultural justifications of their destinies resonate with a strong and coherent dominant individualist ideology, and no one is either able or motivated to do very much about it.

Sports and political mobilization: Opportunities, cultures or mobilizing actors?

Our starting point was the omnipresence of power and potential conflicts in sports and the question of if and how sports issues turn into politics. From this, our aim was not empirical generalizations or conclusive theoretical answers, but rather to suggest a useful theoretical framework (social movement theory), to see how this framework might help explain the (lack of) politicization of sports in six cases and, finally, to discuss how our theoretical framework contribute to the task of understanding how sports are made into politics (or not). To achieve this final aim, we will discuss how each of the dimensions of this theoretical framework matter for each of the cases.

A prerequisite for political mobilization is a favourable *political opportunity structure:* An actor that could be addressed when something is experienced as unfair or unreasonable, and

that should, when faced with political claims, feel a responsibility and have a capacity to try to sort out a solution to the problem addressed.

Some of the issues we have discussed – gender equality and sexual rights – have broad public support in many Western nations and many sport organizations and public authorities could both articulate such issues and feel responsible for defending them and implementing policies to support them: Women should be able to take part in sports, and we should respect sexual rights. Whereas mobilization around these issues could be relatively straight-forward in some nations, our analyses show, however, that the opportunity structure for these issues is less clear-cut in international elite sports where liberalizing or otherwise critical views face the hurdle of approaching international bodies with vaguely understood political procedures. Doping represents an ambiguous case with a relatively strong institution in place, but this makes it difficult to bring up new and more critical points. Extreme wages and failed academy-talents represent situations where the opportunities to make issues political are less clear. It is difficult to find actors to address with claims, either because they are numerous and the field fragmented, or because they are commercial actors who do not depend on political legitimacy and, sometimes, lack the capacity to respond to political claims. The boxing case shows a somewhat peculiar situation. It was initiated by rather marginal sports groups and commercial interests and supported by established political interests. In the end, this made those initiating the issue and those responsible for solving it more or less identical actors. There was only a minimal politicization in the social movement meaning of the term, and the issue was instead used by politicians to promote an issue that could communicate an ideological point: We are liberalizing society through sports.

Two interesting cross-case findings show how the political opportunity structure shifts when we move from grassroots sports to elite sports, and how the structure shifts when moving from the national level to the international level. For example, on the elite international level,

it becomes less obvious where to direct claims, the fields get more fragmented, actors seem less indebted to liberal human rights values, are often less dependent on political legitimacy (because they are commercial or operate at an international level), and have a weaker capacity to implement policies. Political opportunity structures are pivotal for successful political mobilization, and we see very clearly how they vary from case to case and between contexts.

For political claims to be made and have influence, there must be one or more *mobilizing actor(s)* to articulate and carry a message forward, and some type of social network along which to carry the message. Even though the cases of gender and sexuality both have open and strong political opportunity structures, supporting gender issues today is mostly without social costs, whereas promoting sexual equality within sports seems to carry a risk for stigmatization. Accordingly, actors – in our examples elite athletes – seem more prepared for mobilizing for gender than sexual rights within sports. For both extreme wages and failed talents in football it seems difficult to find actors sufficiently concerned and motivated to really articulate the topic as a public or political concern. Especially for the failed young talents, the picture is gloomy, and mobilization depends upon an individualized and fragmented set of actors without resources fit for political struggles. The boxing case illustrates how political initiatives can be enthusiastically taken up by established politicians and used for political communication, turning the issue into politics immediately and directly. Doping has a certain ambiguity to it: Highly institutionalized yet no apparent mobilizing actors to bring new contested issues to the political agenda.

Similar to the opportunity structures, the potential for political mobilization varies greatly between our cases. In some cases (e.g. gender), there are actors who could easily mobilize politically, whereas other issues are more costly to front (sexuality) and some simply have a much more precarious foundation for political mobilization.

Our cases have shown how political mobilization depends very much upon the way issues are *culturally framed*: Which sports issues are identified as worthy problems in the public sphere? What do these problems consist of, how could they be solved, and how do they motivate for action? It is also apparent that sports issues depend on the resonance between the ideologies they themselves represent and a larger ideological landscape where other ideological frames are hegemonic: stronger resonance implies more vibrant political mobilization.

The prominence of gender and sexuality as political issues reflects a culture shift (Inglehart, 1990) from traditional value systems (conventional gender roles, sexual heteronormativity) to more liberal ideologies emphasizing individual rights. This makes both gender and sexuality resonate with the overall modern culture, and provides space for articulating both issues as political problems within sports. However, even though there is a societal willingness to support gender and sexual rights, these societal aims also come up against more sports-specific value systems, such as masculinity and hetero-normativity, making eradication of gender inequality and promotion of sexual openness difficult. As we have already seen for gender and sexuality, cultural resonance does not guarantee political mobilization. Successful mobilization requires both conducive opportunity structures and able mobilizers.

Sports are mostly seen as positive for health and, accordingly, doping appears as an obvious danger because it is framed as the opposite: a threat to health. Thus, the issue resonates with societal master frames of public health and anti-drugs. Moreover, doping is widely seen as undermining fair competition and 'the spirit of sport', and, thus, to threaten the integrity of sports. Therefore, we should expect sports organizations, in particular, to take doping seriously. Again, we see how a situation very conducive for mobilization provides a climate that makes it easy to communicate the issue within the dominant cultural frame, but difficult to raise opinions challenging this dominant frame.

Extreme wages and failed academy talents both result from actions that express the core of modern liberal individualism: By free will and with open eyes, young athletes aimed for their dreams – won and lost. The lack of concern, for both winners and losers, probably reflects that sports, for many, are just leisure and trivial and superficial activities. Hence, it is not obvious that these issues should be seen as worthy political issues. Yet, there are salient cultural elements that could be used to frame this issue differently: a general concern for social inclusion and equality, a certain mistrust in elite sports, and a left-liberal scepticism of excessive professionalization and commercialization. To make these issues more urgent and to communicate the ideological resonance, however, these issues need strong mobilizing actors who are, at present, absent. As such, there are neither clear diagnoses nor prognoses, and there are few actors motivated to do something about these issues. Marginal groups within sports and some commercial actors made the boxing case political, after which it was taken up and implemented by established liberally minded politicians. In this way, politicians are able to create an ideological resonance for their own cultural frames (i.e. professional boxing represents individualism and commercialism), where the actual issue initially were marginal to sports political discourses.

Overall, we see very clearly that the cultural framing of sports issues could be decisive in how they might develop as political issues. We see, more specifically, how our sports cases live and develop differently within various cultures. Gender and sexuality operates in and resonates with well-established ideological landscapes; talent development is not able to get off the ground because it is difficult to find ideological allies and resonance; professional boxing thrives within politicians' ideological discourses; and extreme wages is not able to break through as a problem in capitalist rhetoric. Even though this has not been central to our analyses, we also glimpse what is needed to strengthen the politicization of some of these issues: how 'failed talents' have a potential for a forceful cultural articulation but lack strong actors, whereas

a marginal and culturally weak issue (e.g. promoting violent sports) succeeds because strong actors choose to apply it to communicate their political trustworthiness.

– Table 1 –

Conclusion

In this study, we asked how sports – always containing a potential for political action – might turn into politics. We presented a framework consisting of three theoretical dimensions central to social movement theories and discussed six cases based on this framework. Table 1 sums up the findings from our discussions.

As a start, we find significant differences for the outcomes of our six cases: Some are successfully politicized (boxing), whereas others show no sign of or potential for mobilization at all (failed talents). Next, the variation for how each of the dimensions we discussed operates is striking. Some *cultural frames* provide distinct diagnoses and prognosis (boxing), while other cases lack clear cut cultural frames (extreme wages). Some frames provide a certain motivation for action (gender), though most frames seem less helpful in these regards. Master frames could lead to mobilization of some issues (boxing), while obstructing the mobilization for others. *Political opportunity structures* differ and are conducive for mobilization for gender inequality, but it remains less obvious where to direct political claims when working for sexual rights. *Mobilizing actors* are well organized and motivated when promoting professional boxing, whereas actors ready to challenge the status quo of doping politics are far between.

Finally, when analysing the interaction between our three dimensions, two findings stand out. When "high" values go together (conducive opportunity structures; clear, distinct and resonant frames and visible, united and motivated actors), the chance for political mobilization increases. We are, however, also struck by the complexity of the cases we discuss. The many possible constellations and intricacies of positions on the factors decisive for political

mobilization makes it tempting to invoke the idea of path dependencies (Bednar and Page, 2018): All cases are unique, small details might easily decide the final outcome of politicization and there are obviously no blueprints for political mobilization of sports issues.

In the above discussion, we have only touched upon the surface of broader and deeper questions. For broader inquiries, we think it is interesting to include more cases and look for both more general and unique patterns of politicization of sports. Sports issues could also be compared to other political issues. For deeper inquiry, we think someone should research how each of the theoretical factors we have discussed matter for politicization in more detail. Finally, we have only addressed the hegemonic dimensions of the social movement literature, which is large and contains an abundance of approaches – new technologies, social media, globalization, emotions – for understanding the interaction between social and political factors and sports issues.

References:

Allison, L. (ed.) (1986) *The Politics of Sport,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Anderson, E., 2010. *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity* New York: State University of New York Press.

Bairner, A., Kelly, J. & Lee, J.W. (eds.) (2017) *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Politics,* Oxon: Routledge.

Barclay, S., Bernstein, M. & Marshall, A.M., 2009. *Queer Mobilizations: LGBT Activists Confront the Law*: NYU Press.

Bednar, J. & Page, S.E., 2018. When Order Affects Performance: Culture, Behavioral Spillovers, and Institutional Path Dependency. . *American Political Science Review,* 112**,** 82-98.

Benford, R.D. & Snow, D.A., 2000. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 26.

Bergsgard, N.A., Mangset, P., Houlihan, B., Nødland, S.I. & Rommetvedt, H., 2007. *Sport Policy: A Comparative Analysis of Stability and Change* Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Bergsgard, N.A. & Nordberg, J.R., 2010. Sports policy and politics – the Scandinavian way. *Sport in Society,* 13**,** 567-582.

Bergsgard, N.A. & Rommetvedt, H., 2006. Sport and Politics. The Case of Norway. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 41**,** 7-27.

Brackenridge, C.H. & Rhind, D., 2014. Child protection in sport: Reflections on thirty years of science and activism. *Social Sciences,* 3**,** 326-340.

Brynjolfsson, E. & Mcafee, A., 2012. *Race against the machine: how the digital revolution is accelerating innovation, driving productivity, and irreversibly transforming employment and the economy* Lexington, Mass.: Digital Frontier Press.

Calvin, M., 2013. *The Nowhere Men. The Unknown Story of Football's True Talent Spotters* London: Century.

Calvin, M., 2017. *No Hunger In Paradise: The Players. The Journey. The Dream* London: Century.

Cashmore, E. & Cleland, J., 2012. Fans, homophobia and masculinities in association football: evidence of a more inclusive environment. *The British Journal of Sociology,* 63**,** 370-387.

Caudwell, J., 2011. 'Does your boyfriend know you're here?' The spatiality of homophobia in men's football culture in the UK. *Leisure Studies,* 30**,** 123-138.

Chalip, L., Johnson, A. & Stachura, L. (eds.) (1996) *National Sport Policies. An International Handbook,* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Collinson, I., 2009. 'Singing Songs, Making Places, Creating Selves:' Football Songs & Fan Identity at Sydney FC. *Transforming Cultures eJournal,* 4.

Cuskelly, G., Hoye, R. & Auld, C., 2006. *Working With Volunteers in Sport* London: Routledge.

Dart, J., 2014. Sports review: A content analysis of the International Review for the Sociology of Sport, the Journal of Sport and Social Issues and the Sociology of Sport Journal across 25 years. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 49**,** 645-668.

Davis-Delano, L.R. & Crosset, T., 2008. Using Social Movement Theory to Study Outcomes in Sport-Related Social Movements. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 43**,** 115-134.

De Hon, O., Kuipers, H. & Van Bottenburg, M., 2015. Prevalence of Doping Use in Elite Sports: A Review of Numbers and Methods. *Sports Medicine,* 45**,** 57-69.

Dimeo, P. & Møller, V., 2018. *The Anti-Doping Crisis in Sport: Causes, Consequences, Solutions* London: Routledge.

Dworkin, S.L. & Messner, M.A., 2002. Just do… what? Sport, bodies, gender. *In* A. Scraton, Flintoff A. (ed.) *Gender and sport: A reader.* London: Routledge, 17-29.

Eckstein, R., 2017. *How College Athletics are Hurting Girls' Sports* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Enjolras, B. & Waldahl, R.H., 2007. Policy-Making in Sport. The Norwegian Case. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 42**,** 201-216.

Fahlen, J., Eliasson, I. & Wickman, K., 2014. Resisting self-regulation: An analysis of sport policy programme making and implementation in Sweden. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*.

Foucault, M., 1980. *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction* New York: Vintage Books.

Fundberg, J., 2003. Kom igen, gubbar! : om pojkfotboll och maskuliniteter. Carlssons förlag.

Gamson, W.A. & Meyer, D.S., 1996. Framing Political Opportunity. *In* D. Mcadam, J. Mccarthy & M. Zald (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gerring, J., 2008. Case Selection for Case-study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques. *In* J.M. Box-Steffensmeier, H.E. Brady & D. Collier (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook on Political Methodology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, M.A., Meem, D.T. & Alexander, J., 2013. *Finding Out: An Introduction to LGBT Studies* London: SAGE Publications.

Gilchrist, P., Holden, R. & Millward, P., 2015. Special Section Introduction: The Political Sociologies of Sport. *Sociological Research Online,* 20**,** 15.

Gleaves, J. & Llewellyn, M., 2014. Sport, Drugs and Amateurism: Tracing the Real Cultural Origins of Anti-Doping Rules in International Sport. *International Journal of the History of Sport,* 31**,** 839-853.

Goncalves, C.E.B., Rama, L.M.L. & Figueiredo, A.B., 2012. Talent Identification and Specialization in Sport: An Overview of Some Unanswered Questions. *International Journal of sport Physiology and Performance,* 7**,** 390-393.

Grix, J., 2010. The 'governance debate' and the study of sport policy. *International Journal of Sport Policy,* 2**,** 159-171.

Grix, J., 2016. *Sport Politics. An Introduction* London: Palgrave.

Groeneveld, M., Houlihan, B. & Ohl, F. (eds.) (2011) *Social Capital and Sport Governance in Europe,* New York: Routledge.

Harvey, J., Horne, J., Safai, P., Darnell, S. & Courchesne-O'neill, S., 2014. *Sport and Social Movements: From the Local to the Global* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Haut, J., Prohl, R. & Emrich, E., 2016. Nothing but medals? Attitudes towards the importance of Olympic success. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 51**,** 332-348.

Helle-Valle, J., 2008. Discourses on Mass Versus Elite Sport and Pre-adult Football in Norway. *International Reveiw for the Sociology of Sport,* 43**,** 365-381.

Henry, I. & Ko, L.-M., 2014. *Routledge handbook of sport policy* London: Routledge.

Hill, D., 2008. *The Fix. Soccer and Organized Crime* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Hirschman, A.O., 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Houlihan, B., 1991. *The Government and Politics of Sport* London: Routledge.

Houlihan, B., 1997. *Sport, Policy and Politics. A Comparative Analysis* London: Routeledge.

Houlihan, B., 2002. *Dying to win: doping in sport and the development of anti-doping policy* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Houlihan, B., 2005. Public Sector Sport Policy. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 40**,** 163-185.

Houlihan, B., 2012. Sport policy convergence: a framework for analysis. *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 12**,** 111-135.

Houlihan, B. & Green, M., 2008. *Comparative elite sport development: systems, structures and public policy* Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Houlihan, B. & Lindsey, I., 2013. *Sport policy in Britain* New York: Routledge.

Hoye, R. & Cuskelly, G., 2007. *Sport Governance* Oxford: Elsevier.

Hoye, R., Smith, A., Nicholson, M., Stewart, B. & Westerbeek, H., 2012. *Sport Management. Principles and Applications* London: Routledge.

Hulme, M., 2009. *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ibsen, B., Nichols, G. & Elmose-Østerlund, K., 2016. *Sport Club Policies in Europe. A comparison of the public policy contex and historical origins of sports clubs across ten European countries* Odense: Centre for Sports, Health and Civil Society, University of Southern Denmark.

Inglehart, R., 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Johnston, H. & Noakes, J.A. (eds.) (2005) *Frames of Protest. Social Movements and the Framing Perspective,* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Jones, L. & Mccarthy, M., 2010. Mapping the landscape of gay men's football. *Leisure Studies,* 29**,** 161-173.

Judt, T., 2009. *Reappraisals* London: Vintage Books.

Kidd, B., 2013. Sports and masculinity†. *Sport in Society,* 16**,** 553-564.

Kitschelt, H., 1986. Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science,* 16**,** 57-85.

Kristiansen, E., Parent, M.M. & Houlihan, B., 2017. *Elite youth sport policy and management : a comparative analysis* Abingdon: Routledge.

Loland, S., Waddington, I. & Skirstad, B. (eds.) (2006) *Pain and injury in sport: Social and ethical analysis,* London: Routledge.

Magrath, R. & Anderson, E., 2016. Homophobia in Men`s Football. *In* J. Hughson, K. Moore, R. Spaaij & J. Maguire (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies.* New York: Taylor & Francis, 314-324.

Mcadam, D., 1996. Conceputal origins, current problems, future directions. *In* D. Mcadam, J. Mccarthy & M. Zald (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political*

Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mccarthy, J.D., 1996. Constraints and Opportunites in Adopting, Adapting and Inventing. *In* D. Mcadam, J. Mccarthy & M. Zald (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Messner, M., 2011. Gender Ideologies, Youth Sports, and the Production of Soft Essentialism. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 28**,** 151-170.

Meyer, D.S. & Minkoff, D.C., 2004. Conceptualizing Political Opportunity. *Social Forces,* 82**,** 1457-1492.

Pfister, T., Pfister, K., Hagel, B., Ghali, W.A. & Ronksley, P.E., 2016. The incidence of concussion in youth sports: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *British Journal of Sports Medicine,* 50**,** 292.

Piketty, T. & Goldhammer, A., 2014. *Capital in the twenty-first century* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.

Ritchie, I., 2014. Pierre de Coubertin, Doped 'Amateurs' and the 'Spirit of Sport': The Role of Mythology in Olympic Anti-Doping Policies. *International Journal of the History of Sport,* 31**,** 820-838.

Roberts, S., Anderson, E. & Magrath, R., 2017. Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British journal of sociology,* 68**,** 336-357.

Sage, G.H., 1999. Justice Do It! The Nike Transnational Advocacy Network: Organization, Collective Actions, and Outcomes. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 16**,** 205-235.

Scheerder, J., Willem, A. & Claes, E., 2017. *Sport Policy Systems and Sport Federations: A Cross-National Perspective*: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schut, P.O. & Collinet, C., 2016. French sports policies for young people: fragmentation and coordination modes. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 8**,** 117-134.

Seippel, Ø., 2008. Public Policies, Social Capital and Voluntary Sport. *In* M. Nicholson & R. Hoye (eds.) *Sport and Social Capital.* Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Seippel, Ø., 2018. Topic and Trends: Thirty Years of Sociology of Sports. *European Journal for Sport and Society*.

Seippel, Ø., Broch, T.B., Kristiansen, E., Skille, E., Wilhelmsen, T., Strandbu, Å. & Thorjussen, I.M., 2016. Political framing of sports: the mediated politicisation of

Oslo's interest in bidding for the 2022 Winter Olympics. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 8**,** 439–453.

Skille, E., 2008. Understanding sport clubs as policiy implementers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 43**,** 181-200.

Snow, D.A. & Benford, R.D., 1992. Master Frames and Cycles of Protest. *In* A. Morris & C. Mueller (eds.) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Stenling, C. & Sam, M., 2017. Tensions and contradictions in sport's quest for legitimace as a political actor: the politics of Swedish public sport policy hearings. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 9**,** 691-705.

Stewart, B.D. & Stewart, B., 2004. *Australian sport--better by design? : the evolution of Australian sport policy*. Routledge.

Støckel, J.T., Strandbu, Å., Solenes, O., Jørgensen, P. & Fransson, K., 2010. Sport for children and youth in the Scandinavian countries. *Sport in Society,* 13**,** 625-642.

Tarrow, S., 2012. *Power in movement : social movements and contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Thiel, A., Soler, A.V., Toms, M., Thing, L.F. & Dolan, P., 2017. Can sport be 'un-political'? *European Journal for Sport and Society,* 13**,** 253-255.

Travers, A., 2011. Women's ski jumping, the 2010 Olympic Games, and the deafening silence of sex segregation, whiteness, and wealth. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 35**,** 126-145.

Ulrich, R., Pope, H.G., Jr., Cleret, L., Petroczi, A., Nepusz, T., Schaffer, J., Kanayama, G., Comstock, R.D. & Simon, P., 2017. Doping in Two Elite Athletics Competitions Assessed by Randomized-Response Surveys. *Sports Med.*

Valiente, C., 2017. Sport and social movements: Lili Alvarez in Franco's Spain.

Vertinsky, P., Jette, S. & Hofmann, A., 2015. Who said girls can't jump. The struggle to make women's ski jumping an Olympic Sport. *In* M.S.H. Nybelius, A. (ed.) *License to jump! A story of women's ski jumping.* Falun: Scandbook, 95-106.

Waddington, I. & Smith, A., 2009. *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport: Addicted to Winning?* Oxford: Taylor & Francis.

Wellard, I., 2002. Men, sport, body performance and the maintenance of 'exclusive masculinity'. *Leisure Studies,* 21**,** 235-247.

Wicker, P., 2017. Volunteerism and volunteer management in sport. *Sport Management Review,* 20**,** 325-337.

Wilson, B. & White, P., 2002. Revive the Pride: Social Process, Political Economy, and a

        Fan-Based Grassroots Movement. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 19**,** 119-148.

Young, M., 2010. The IOC Made Me Do it: Women's Ski Jumping, VANOC, and the 2010

        Winter Olympics. *Constitutional Forum,* 18**,** 95-107.

		Exclusive of elite women ski jumpers	Homosexuality in men's professional football	Liberalization of boxing	Capitalism in professional European football	Doping politics	The politics of failed talent development
Issue		Exclusion of women in Olympic ski jumping	Heteronormativity in professional football	The knock-out law in boxling	Income levels in professional football	Challenging the Anti-doping regulations	False promises in youth sport
Degree of politicization		Medium	Low	High	Low	Low	Low
Cultural framing	**Master frame**	Liberal rights: Gender equality	Liberal rights: LGBT	Liberal individualism	Economic inequality Liberal individualism	Public health, the spirit of sport	Liberal individualism
	- Diagnosis **- Prognosis** **- Motivation**	Clear diagnosis Clear prognosis Medium motivation	Clear diagnosis, Unclear prognosis Low motivation	Clear diagnosis Clear prognosis Low motivation	Unclear diagnosis Unclear prognosis Low motivation	Unclear diagnosis Unclear prognosis Low motivation	Unclear diagnosis Unclear prognosis Low motivation
Mobilizing actors		Highly motivated athletes & interest organizations	None	Highly motivated athletes & politicians	None	None	None
Political opportunity structure	**Somewhere to place criticism**	IOC, FIS	Unclear	Public authorities	Unclear	Public authorities, Wada	Unclear
	Responsible actor	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Unclear

Table 1. Summary of discussions. Rows are the theoretical dimensions. Columns are cases. At the intersection of cases and theoretical dimensions, we point to descriptive and evaluative factors that sum up our discussions.