

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

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2.1 Introduction

To understand the current situation of sport clubs in Europe, one has to consider the history and development of sport clubs within European society. In this chapter we briefly outline the historical roots and basic characteristics of sport clubs, as well as their development through time. We then give an overview of current research topics, presenting different theoretical approaches to form the basis for a multilevel framework of comparison for sport clubs across different European countries.

2.2 Historical Roots: Characteristics of Sport Clubs as Voluntary Organisations

The rise of sport clubs in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is closely connected to the emergence of a civic culture and the introduction of legal rights for civilians, especially the right to organise associations or

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clubs. Voluntary organisations, like sport clubs, have deep roots and are embedded in the social structures of their society. In this context, one can assume that there are different characteristics of the voluntary sector from country to country (Salamon and Anheier 1996).

There are three different social movements that form the basis of sport clubs in European countries: (1) sports from the UK, with the concept of competition and comparison of achievement; (2) Turnen from Germany, with the idea of promoting body, health and mind and (3) gymnastics—training the human body with specific exercises—from Sweden (in detail in Heinemann 1999). The underlying ideas of these social movements influenced the creation and development of sport clubs across Europe, and these concepts still play a role in modern sports. National models of sports and sport clubs are often a mixture of these three basic notions. The specific historical context as well as the roots and development of sport clubs are described in more detail in the chapters on each country.

In contrast to other forms of organisations (especially business companies), sport clubs are voluntary organisations that are characterised by their historical base as well as the following constitutive features (Heinemann 2004; Horch 1992; Ibsen 1992):

1. *Voluntary membership*: The members can decide individually on their entry and exit. Membership is not a birth right or subject to political, legal or social constraints.
2. *Orientation towards the interests of members*: Due to the voluntary nature of the membership, the clubs only retain their members through direct incentives and joint club goals and not through monetary means. Therefore, voluntary sport clubs are characterised by the effort to realise the common interests of the members (e.g. in the form of collectively organised sport activities).
3. *Democratic decision-making structure*: To realise the members' interests, democratic decision-making structures are needed that allow the members to influence the club's goals. The individual right to vote in the general assembly creates a formal power base for members, which is then regulated by the statutes of the club.
4. *Voluntary work*: The services provided by sport clubs are mainly produced by the voluntary work of club members. Although over the last years paid jobs have increasingly been instigated in sport clubs, they still play a minor role. Without payment means that there is no contractually regulated flow of money (or the wages are below a certain threshold), and voluntarily means that the voluntary engagement is not mandatory.
5. *Autonomy*: Voluntary associations pursue their goals independently of others. Accordingly, they finance themselves primarily through internal sources of funds, mainly through membership fees. Their autonomy still allows for subsidiary promotions through public funding and the acquisition of other external resources.
6. *Not-for-profit orientation*: In contrast to companies, sport clubs do not pursue profit targets. This would work against their charitable status. Any financial surplus from a club's activities is not distributed among the members and must be reinvested to realise the purposes of the club.

7. *Solidarity*: For sport clubs, the principle of solidarity counts. This means no direct consideration in the form of rates and charges should be paid for efforts received. A flat-rate membership fee is collected. The membership fee allows for the use of all the services of the club. Membership fees also partially finance various areas of the club's work through cross-subsidisation (e.g. youth work in the club), where the paying member only indirectly benefits.

Research on sport clubs in the twentieth century has partly been focussed on the analysis of this specific type of voluntary association, sometimes in comparison with other associations for labour, religion or culture (Collins 1999; Jolles 1972; Lenk 1972; Manders and Kropman 1979; Schlagenhauf 1977; Timm 1979; Van Meerbeek 1977). In many countries over the last decades, the focus of this research has shifted along with the position of sports. Current studies often focus on the development of sport clubs in modern society and investigate to what extent these basic characteristics are still typical for sport clubs. The next section gives an overview and provides comments on these studies.

2.3 Sports and Sport Clubs in Transition

Sport clubs face many new challenges due to changes in society and modern sports. In this section we discuss the increasing expectations of sport policy to work towards social integration, and then present current research topics that reveal the diverse directions of sport club development.

2.3.1 *A Changing Social Role for Sports: Increasing Expectations of Sport Clubs*

From the 1960s onward sports has become a leisure activity for an increasing number of people in many European countries, and is often promoted by governments and umbrella organisations through Sport for All campaigns. Sport clubs are encouraged to take a role in improving the accessibility of sports for additional groups of the population: youth, women, immigrants, handicapped and elderly (Baur and Braun 2003; Collins 1999). Several developments and trends can be observed in sport clubs in response to these challenges: Sport activities offered by the clubs are increasingly differentiated and opened to new groups of members. With this the number of members in sport clubs has increased considerably during the last decades. As a result, the sport clubs require staff with specific qualifications as well as extra and alternative sport facilities to meet the needs of their members.

While the emphasis in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in sport policy was on the enhancement of sport participation and elite sports, after the turn of the century the social role of sports has been broadened (Braun 2003; Coalter 2007a; Digel 1986;

Steenbergen et al. 2001). Sports is now expected to make a contribution to the solution of several societal problems. Major national organisations for sports, like NOCs, appear eager to embrace these opportunities for sports. UK Sport and Sport England were intensely involved in the *Game Plan* developed with the UK Government to enhance the impact of the Olympics in London 2012 (Houlihan and Green 2009). In a comparable way the Dutch Nederlands Olympisch Comité * Nederlandse Sport Federatie (NOC*NSF 2009) state in the Olympic Plan 2028:

Our mission: with sport we want to bring the Netherlands in all respects to an Olympic level. We will all benefit from this, now and in the future, in many ways: social, economic, spatial planning and well-being. With having the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the Netherlands in 2028 as a possible result. (NOC*NSF 2009, p. 8)

As sport clubs are an important resource for sport provision, they are considered as one of the main actors in implementing this broader role of sports (Houlihan and White 2002; Skille 2008). National governing bodies for sports are stimulated by government or umbrella organisations to participate in national programs related to functions of sports for health, education, social cohesion, neighbourhood climate, labour, etc. (Houlihan and Green 2009), and they expect their member clubs to become involved. As a consequence of the economic crisis in Europe, local authorities are also changing their policy towards sport clubs and are not only demanding a contribution to public duties, but also assigning other tasks to clubs such as management of local sport facilities (Hoekman et al. 2011). For sport clubs these new tasks are quite different from their traditional undertakings and as volunteer organisations many clubs may not be equipped to fulfil such expectations.

The following developments are associated with challenges and problems for many sport clubs (e.g. Nagel and Schlesinger 2012): new tasks and increasing expectations require specific expertise and management. The clubs' services can no longer only be provided by volunteer club members, and to a certain degree, paid staff is required. Increasingly sport clubs need to cooperate with various partners (e.g. municipalities, schools; Wicker, Vos et al. 2013). Sport clubs are also in competition with other sports providers to a greater extent, and members expect the quality of the sport services to be commensurate with modern standards (Lucassen and Van Kalmthout 2011; Sport England 2009), and yet at the same time the willingness of members to volunteer has declined. Finally the number of members in sport clubs is not always increasing and sport clubs have challenges in activating the required financial resources (Breuer and Wicker 2011).

2.3.2 Sport Clubs Between Tradition and Ambition: Research Topics

The connection between the growing ambition for sports and the potential of sport clubs as voluntary associations has been at the centre of many research projects conducted in several European countries over the last decades. Many scholars in

Europe from different scientific disciplines (e.g. sport sociology, sport economics, sport management) have made sport clubs their object of research and have provided valuable insights into numerous facets of sport clubs' development. Current research topics reveal that sport clubs are at a crossroad between tradition and modernisation.

- *Development of sport clubs*: In various countries, an analysis of structure is carried out at regular intervals (often through a system of monitoring the clubs). Panel data can provide a differentiated picture of the current situation of sport clubs, and enables changes and developments over the course of time to be observed (e.g. Breuer and Feiler 2013; Breuer and Wicker 2011). This provides a greater understanding of sport clubs' problems and challenges and is essential for initiating strategic decisions or specific measures by sport political actors (e.g. sport governing bodies, sport federations).
- *Change in sport clubs*: Organisational change—an inevitable feature of all organisations—has become another major area of sport club research. The need for sport clubs to change is caused externally by the dynamics and uncertainties of the environment in which sport clubs are embedded, or from inside the organisation itself (e.g. changing interests of members). In the context of such pressures for change, structural barriers that explain the resistances to modify sport clubs are also investigated (e.g. Slack and Parent 2005; Thiel and Meier 2004). Consequently, a number of different approaches for studying change processes in sport clubs have been used and developed. It is argued that societal changes (e.g. Bette 1993; Digel 1986, 1992; Flatau 2007) and the differentiation of society (e.g. Schimank 2005) have influenced the values of the club members, and as a consequence also the structure and culture of sport clubs. Furthermore, several organisational theories have been adapted to sport clubs: for example, contingency theory (e.g. Fahlén 2006; Horch and Schütte 2009), resource dependence theory (e.g. Vos et al. 2011; Wicker and Breuer 2011; Wicker, Vos et al. 2013), new institutionalism (e.g. Fahlén et al. 2008; Skille 2009) or population ecology approach (e.g. Flatau et al. 2012). Nagel (2007) has proposed the integration of the different perspectives of exogenously and endogenously determined changes into a multi-level model for the analysis of sport club development (see Sect. 2.4.1).
- *Decision-making processes*: Management practices within sport clubs are associated with decision-making processes. Various studies focus on decision-making processes in sport clubs in relation to different topics (e.g. recruitment processes, gender inequalities). Their purpose is to develop a better understanding of the (complex) decision-making processes in sport clubs by examining underlying structural conditions, mechanisms and factors of these decisions in more detail (e.g. Nagel 2006; Schlesinger et al. 2015; Thiel et al. 2006). Knowledge about club-specific decision-making processes is crucial for developing both sustainable advisory concepts and appropriate management tools for sport clubs, particularly by sport policymakers and sport associations.
- *Resources and capacities of sport clubs*: The performance of an organisation largely depends on whether it succeeds in securing a continuous flow of resources.

Based on the concept of organisational capacity (Hall et al. 2003; Misener and Doherty 2009), studies have analysed clubs' resource structures and their ability to deploy resources. Results indicate that sport clubs seem to have different types of resources at their disposal that can be ascribed to four capacity dimensions: human resources, financial resources, networks and infrastructure resources (Wicker and Breuer 2011). Furthermore, research emphasises that sport clubs are often characterised by problems in securing resources (Wicker and Breuer 2013). Much of the current research focuses on voluntary engagement as the most critical resource of sport clubs (e.g. Cuskelly 2004; Emrich et al. 2014; Østerlund 2012; Schlesinger and Nagel 2013).

- *Efforts and outcomes of sport clubs:* Along with discussions about the social significance of sport clubs, contributions of sport clubs to public welfare are analysed and evaluated (to secure and stabilise public funding). Differing social effects and benefits of sport clubs have been well documented in various studies: Sport clubs are purported to generate individual and social benefits, such as social integration of various target groups and specific groups, such as migrants and people with a disability (e.g. Reid 2012; Ulseth 2004; Wicker and Breuer 2014). Sport clubs promote the development and stabilisation of identity, values and norms, especially for children and adolescents. Through the engagement of individuals as sport club members, social capital can be accumulated (e.g. Auld 2008; Coalter 2007b; Østerlund 2013; Seippel 2006). Sport clubs are a mediator for political socialisation as they provide the conditions for participation in decision-making as well as the circumstances for civic engagement (e.g. Braun 2003). Furthermore, sport clubs facilitate physical activity and well-being for individual sport participants and, through this, also contribute to public health (e.g. Breuer and Wicker 2011).
- *Performance and effectiveness in sport clubs:* As a consequence of the broader role of sports and sport clubs in society, the provision of services by sport clubs is more heavily scrutinised. The club is now required to adhere to general quality standards in health, youth care, equality and moral conduct (Lucassen and Van Kalmthout 2009). In order to optimise the quality of service provision and to strengthen the club's position in a more competitive sport market, some studies focus on performance and service quality in sport clubs by improved (efficiency-based) managerial practices and instruments (e.g. Lucassen 2007; Van Hoecke and De Knop 2006; Van Hoecke et al. 2009). Furthermore, the professionalisation of sport clubs' structures and processes for improved rationalisation and efficiency are taken into account (Chantelat 2001). Against this background, there is critical reflection on the consequences of more formalised practices within sport clubs (e.g. social climate, interest divergences and voluntary engagement).
- *Policy interventions in sport clubs:* Sport clubs are increasingly on the political agenda and have become systematically involved in achieving desired outcomes in sport supply, health and welfare within the community, region or society. With the need for achievement of policy objectives, the relationship between the state and third-sector organisations such as sport clubs is considered one of the

major challenges facing the development of sport governance (e.g. Groeneveld 2009). A number of studies examined the relationship between political authorities (including sports) and sport clubs as policy implementers, particularly the conditions and problems of (top-down) implementation or interventions in sport clubs (e.g. Donaldson et al. 2011; May et al. 2014; Nichols et al. 2005; Skille 2008, 2009).

2.4 Sport Clubs and Society: Research Approaches

Within social research there are different ways of conceptualising clubs as a form of organisation with specific characteristics. Several general approaches have been advanced by various groups of researchers: some start from a disciplinary framework (sociological, economical), and some aim at integrative analysis. In the following section, different conceptual frameworks to describe sport clubs are presented in order to provide a theoretical basis for the comparison of sport clubs in different countries. In line with the framework of the previous section, we will focus on the position of sport clubs within the social and economic environment and the changes of the sport clubs within these contexts, providing sociological (Sect. 2.4.1) and economical approaches (Sect. 2.4.2) to better understand the position and logic of sport clubs.

2.4.1 Sociological Approaches

2.4.1.1 Sport Clubs as Social Systems

According to Luhmann's (2000) organisational sociological considerations, organisations (in this case, sport clubs) are treated as social systems consisting of (communicated) decisions. This means that organisations are continually reproduced if decisions are communicated. All other factors such as strategies and hierarchy can be seen as a result of the operation of preceding organisational decisions (Luhmann 2000). Hence, the structures of any organisation are built on a variety of principles about decisions, in other words, decisions about decision-making (Luhmann 2000; applied to sport clubs see Thiel and Meier 2004; Thiel and Mayer 2009). These principles can be initially found at the level of the programmes for decisions that define the objectives of the organisation and the methods used to achieve these objectives. They can then be found at the level of communication channels and the distribution of tasks in the club. And, finally, they can be seen in the principles that deal with human resources, for example, decisions of how positions are filled (Luhmann 2000).

If sport clubs are to be understood as self-referential, operationally closed and autonomous social systems, then the usual assumptions about change, adjustment or

influence need to be revised and redefined based on an understanding of the dynamics of non-trivial systems. The consequence of this is that as social systems, sport clubs cannot be directly determined by their environment. Through the development of their individual institutional complexity and logic, sport clubs as social systems react to themselves and only deal with their environment in a selective way. Thus, environmental expectations can only lead to discussions within an organisation that might stimulate intra-organisational changes. Due to their structural specifics, voluntary sport clubs in particular are able to successfully reject expectations from their environment and intended (top-down) interventions by other institutions (Slack and Parent 2005; Thiel and Meier 2004).

Breuer (2005) describes sport clubs as organisations with a public purpose from a stakeholder perspective. These organisations can only survive when they are able to adapt to their system environment (contingency theory, Lawrence and Lorsch 1967). In this way, sport organisations can ensure that they have the resources they need. We should keep in mind that almost without exception sport clubs combine resources from internal sources with those from external sources. Internal resources provided by members and workers consist of voluntary labour, social contacts and networks and moral support and financial support, e.g. membership fees. The resources provided by external resource givers (e.g. state, community and sponsors) are mainly financial or indirectly financial such as tax reductions, reduced fares for sport facilities and subsidies. Vital sport clubs are able to keep the development of resources in balance with their ambitions, and to weigh up their dependence on internal and external resources. These relations are presented in Fig. 2.1.

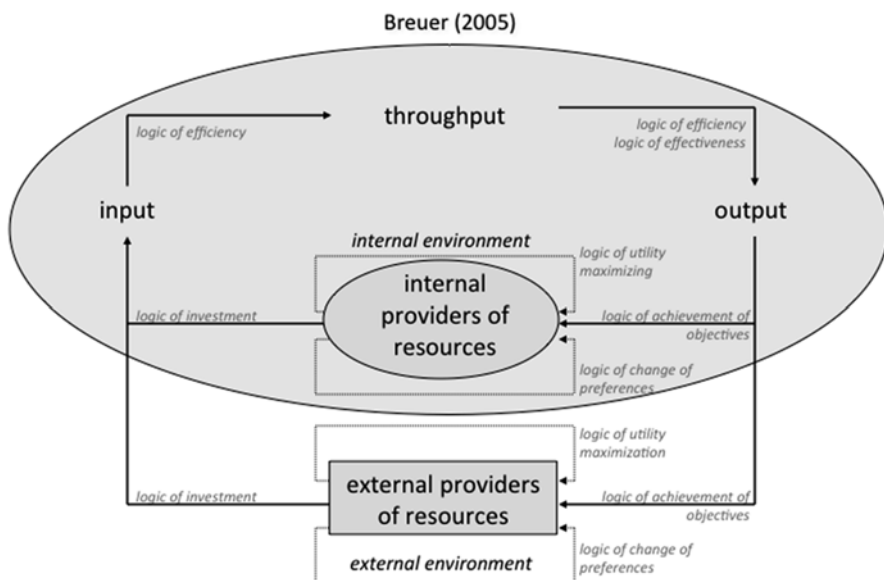


Fig. 2.1 Model of viable sport clubs (Breuer 2005)

2.4.1.2 Sport Clubs as Corporative Actors and a Multilevel Framework

To clarify a framework that can combine the different levels of sport club research (society, organisation, member), it is appropriate to analyse sport clubs using the social theory of action (Coleman 1974, 1986; Giddens 1984). The basis for actor-theoretical thinking is—according to Giddens and his structuration theory—the presumption that social acting and social structures are in a constant reciprocal connection throughout time (Giddens 1984). Each social structure is the result of the interaction of actors, and at the same time, social acting always depends on social structures.

As we specify these basic assumptions for sport organisations, we need to conceptualise sport clubs as corporative actors (Nagel 2008; Schimank 2005). The organisational logic of sport clubs is based on self-organisation and pooling resources (Coleman 1974). This means that social acting within a sport club is marked by members combining their resources in order to realise their shared interests. Their aim is to produce certain club goods (e.g. sports and social services) at a reasonable price and to provide these goods exclusively for the utility and interests of their members (Heinemann 2004). By doing so, shared interests and preferences of the members form the goals of the organisation (Coleman 1986; Schimank 2000). In order to collectively produce the club goods, club members are prepared to deliver not only financial resources (membership fees), but also temporal resources (work donations) to their club (e.g. Sandler and Tschirhart 1980). Hence, the production of club goods depends on actions based on reciprocity, and relations based on solidarity among club members (the club members are consumers and producers at the same time; Horch 1992). This assumes that club members are prepared to deliver not only financial (membership fees) but also and above all temporal resources (work donations) in order to collectively produce the club goods. Such norms and values could be defined as an unwritten contract involving individual beliefs in reciprocal or solidarity-based obligations between sport clubs and their members (e.g. Heinemann 2004).

However, sport clubs are more than just pooling of resources of their members. The sport club as a corporate actor in a supra-individual sense is characterised by the specific purpose of the association, the articles of association, the membership conditions and the internal decision-making structures. Everything that is informally anchored, such as cultural self-understanding, tradition or club history, provides the club with social stability (internally) and distinctive identity (externally). This in turn ensures the continued existence of a club, independent of its members. The specific structural conditions of a sport club are still subject to change by the corresponding impulses of the members. Nonetheless, these specific structural conditions, not the people, predominantly characterise the sport club as a corporate actor.

Based on the actor-theoretical concept of sport clubs as corporative actors and the ideas of Coleman (1986) and Esser (1999) a multilevel framework has been developed. This framework integrates the macro and meso perspective (Nagel 2006,

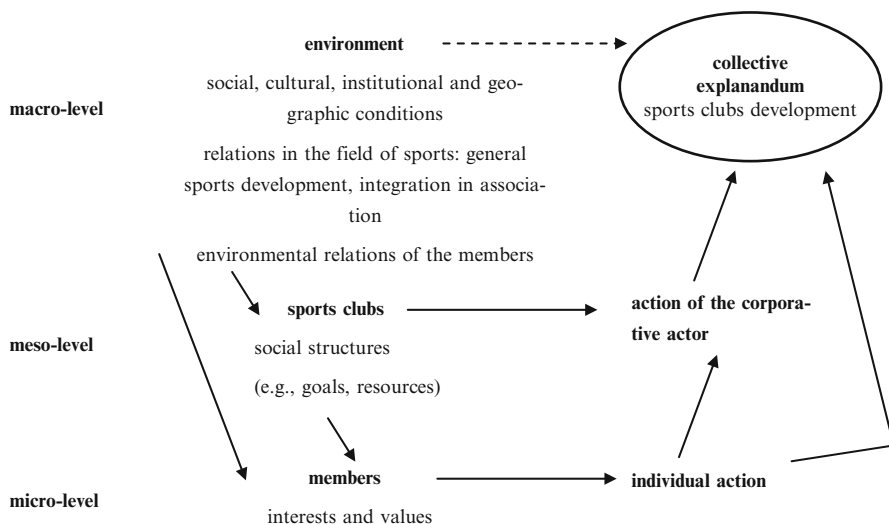


Fig. 2.2 Multilevel model for the analysis of the development of sport clubs (Nagel 2006, 2007; Esser 1993)

2007). Three levels have been distinguished (see Fig. 2.2; conceptually the micro-level is included, but is not a focus of this book):

Macro-level: Sport club development has to be understood in the context of the broader development in society and modern sports. Sport clubs are embedded in several fields of society (e.g. politics, economics, the media, health system) and in specific structures of the national sport system (especially umbrella organisations), and this needs to be taken into account. For example, individualisation, commercialisation, globalisation or political changes generate so-called field-level pressures (O’Brien and Slack 2004, p. 36) and may have a strong influence on the development of sport clubs. Therefore, it is necessary to regard the societal, cultural, geographical and political embedding of sport clubs as well as their historical origins. In addition, it is interesting to note the role sport clubs play in the national and regional sport context as well as in national sport policy (e.g. Sport for All).

Other scholars have drawn attention to the way in which sport clubs as institutions cohere to the expectations of national organisations or the state (Skille 2008). Many authors have stressed the institutional volatilisation of modern societies, which would also have an effect for sport clubs (Bauman 2000; Giddens 1991; Zijderveld 2000). In particular this could threaten the traditional solidarity in associations (Schlesinger et al. 2013; Van der Roest et al. 2015).

Meso-level: However, not all sport clubs in certain countries reveal the same structures and changes. According to Esser (1999), to understand the cause of specific developments (such as professionalisation), it is necessary to have a closer look at the meso-level and to consider sport clubs as corporative actors. Here we can assume that the specific organisational context influences the actions and decisions of the club. For example, the number of members, the financial resources, the clubs' goals or the importance of traditions and cultures in different kinds of sports may play a crucial role for the specific activities.

(a) Furthermore, it also seems appropriate to look at the reciprocal correlations between sport clubs and their members. The specific interests of the members and their values in the context of the club could be particularly relevant to regulating action and engagement within their club (Penner 2002; Schlesinger and Nagel 2013). And with their collective actions the members constitute and change the social structure of their sport clubs (e.g. club goals, sport activities).

This multilevel framework facilitates in a broader sense the analysis of the origins and determinants of the sport clubs' development, as well as the effects and consequences of structural changes. It allows the integration of the different approaches existing in the literature in order to understand organisational change in sport clubs. In this handbook we focus mainly on a descriptive view of the macro- and meso-level and in Sect. 2.5 identify the most relevant aspects for the comparison of sport clubs in the European context.

2.4.1.3 Sport Clubs as Organisations of the Third Sector

As a multidisciplinary project, third sector research attempts to analyse the structure, logic of action and social function of those organisations that in modern societies locate themselves between the different sectors of state, market and informal sphere (see also the model of four performance systems conceptualised by Jütting et al. 2003). Associations or clubs are often considered as a hybrid of the three social action logics of the market, state and private sphere. These three action logics can be seen in a simplified way as follows: the market coordinates supply and demand through price-related exchange and is dominated by the action logic of profit maximisation for individual use. The state organises the production of public services by hierarchical coordination, guided by the action logic of the right to equal treatment in the public interest; the private sphere controls the satisfaction of individual needs based on affective relations and mutual aid and follows the action logic of selfless love.

Recently, various authors have stated that voluntary associations have their own typical logic. Strob (as cited in Braun 2003, p. 50) describes this logic as "a joint action aimed at mutual, targeted benefits". Voluntary associations can be seen as communities in which individuals voluntarily unite to achieve realisation of a particular shared interest through shared commitment. Thus, sport clubs like voluntary clubs are *intermediate organisations* (Streeck 1987). In manifold ways they produce

connections between individuals and complex interrelations and societal structures (Siewert 1984). Moreover, Putnam (2000) has shown that the interrelations of members within a club produce social capital, networks and trust between them. It should be noted that not only the members benefit from this interrelation. Non-members benefit from a higher level of trust in society, which means sport clubs can also produce positive externalities. With these inputs from the third sector, the public sector (policy) supports voluntary organisations, such as sport clubs, to provide sport facilities and finances.

When we consider that sport clubs belong to a specific type of institution—voluntary associations in the third sector—the development of this type of institutions can be a focal point for interest. Kikulis et al. (1992) introduce a useful categorisation of archetypes to describe specific features and developments in sport organisations. They claim that changes in sport organisations should not simply be explained as system-wide trends towards increased marketisation, professionalisation and bureaucratisation. Rather the variety in organisational design can be understood by identifying common design archetypes that exist within this institutionally specific set of organisations.

2.4.2 Economic Approaches

2.4.2.1 Sport Clubs from an Economic Perspective

From an economic perspective, sport clubs as third-sector organisations exist because of the failure of state and market (Weisbrod 1986). Therefore, sport clubs provide services and programmes that are not covered by the state or the market (Anheier 2010; Weisbrod 1988). Typically, the state or politicians only address the interests of the mainstream to capture as many votes as possible, and the market only addresses those target groups that are sufficiently large and profitable (Anheier 2010; Weisbrod 1988).

The organisational arrangement of sport clubs fits the concept of club goods (Wicker et al. 2014). Club goods capture ownership-membership arrangements and are, thus, different from pure public or private goods (Buchanan 1965; Sandler and Tschirhart 1997). The basic idea of club goods is that members pool their resources and benefit from sharing production costs, members' characteristics and excludable benefits (Cornes and Sandler 1986; Sandler and Tschirhart 1997). However, a problem of club size occurs because the relationship between club size and reduced production costs is not linear. In fact the benefits of club production only exist up to a certain point when, for example, the club becomes too congested (Buchanan 1965).

The achievement of cost savings through increasing memberships in sport clubs can be explained by economies of scale (Wicker et al. 2014). Generally speaking, economies of scale imply that the marginal cost of one produced unit decreases with increasing number of products because the fixed costs are shared across more output

units (Anheier 2010). Typically, larger organisations are more likely to benefit from economies of scale (Besanko et al. 2010). Similar to scale economies is the concept of economies of scope (Panzar and Willig 1981), which do not refer to organisational size in terms of members, but in terms of products. Economies of scope are present when production costs are lower if a set of products is produced by only one organisation, instead of each organisation producing one product separately. Such a combined production benefits from synergies (Anheier 2010; Chandler and Takashi 1990). Previous research has found evidence of scope economies in sport clubs, but not scale economies (Wicker et al. 2014).

In the context of pooling members' resources, some resources may be considered as scarce. In sport clubs, typically human resources (e.g. volunteers) and financial resources are perceived as scarce resources (Wicker and Breuer 2011). In order to mitigate resource scarcities, sport clubs tend to substitute these resources with other resources that are more accessible. Thus, substitution effects occur in order to account for such resources. For example, decreasing numbers of core volunteers are compensated by an increased workload of the remaining volunteers in the short term and the employment of paid staff in the long term (Breuer et al. 2012).

2.4.2.2 Sport Clubs from a Financial Perspective

Although sport clubs are non-profit organisations that do not pursue the goal of profit maximisation and are restricted by the non-distribution constraint where profit cannot be distributed to the members (Hansmann 1980), financial health is nevertheless important to their sustenance and longevity (Young 2007). Associated with healthy finances is the concept of revenue diversification and the basic ideas stemming from financial portfolio theory, which has also been applied to non-profit organisations outside the sporting context (Kingma 1993) and within sports (Wicker and Breuer 2013). Generally speaking, sport clubs have to choose a risk/revenue package similar to standard for-profit businesses that choose a risk/return package (Kingma 1993). In doing so, relying on revenues of different risk levels is considered advantageous. For example, revenues from membership fees are considered low-risk revenues because they are projectable and split into smaller units (each member pays a fee), while revenues from government subsidies are more risky because they are typically all-or-nothing in nature and likely to be cut from one year to the next (Wicker et al. 2015). An organisation's level of revenue diversification (or concentration) is typically measured with the *Herfindahl Index* which considers both the number of different income sources and the percentage contribution of each income source to the total revenues (Chang and Tuckman 1994). Research shows that a sport club's mission affects its level of revenue diversification: Clubs that are more commercially oriented have more concentrated revenues than clubs with traditional orientations (Wicker, Feiler et al. 2013). It is assumed that organisations can improve their financial situation by diversifying their income portfolio. Existing research supports this assumption and reports that sport clubs with more diversified revenues were in a better overall financial condition (Wicker and Breuer

2013), had less volatile revenues (Wicker et al. 2015) and were less financially vulnerable (Cordery et al. 2013).

Not only is the total amount of sport clubs' revenue crucial, but also the volatility of revenues, the origin or revenue sources and the composition of the income portfolio play important roles. As opposed to simple changes in the average level of revenues, the concept of revenue volatility takes into consideration year-to-year fluctuations in revenues (Wicker et al. 2015). Large fluctuations can represent a financial threat to sport clubs, even when the average level of revenues has not materially changed over time. A club's total volatility can be split into two portions. The first portion is referred to as systematic volatility, which is subject to broader changes in the national economy, while the second portion is called club-specific (or unsystematic) volatility. While revenue diversification is a way to minimise unsystematic risk, systematic volatility cannot be simply solved through diversification (Wicker et al. 2015).

Several typologies have been advanced in regard to the origin of revenues. The most basic distinction is the one between internal and external revenue sources (Coates et al. 2014). In this context, internal revenues are revenues that stem from club members (e.g. membership fees, admission fees, service fees for members), while external revenues are generated from stakeholders outside of the club (e.g. government subsidies, sponsorship income and credits). Research shows that clubs relying on sponsorship income as one external source experience financial problems (Coates et al. 2014).

Another typology suggests a distinction between autonomous and heteronomous revenue categories (Emrich et al. 2001; Wicker, Breuer et al. 2012). In this context, autonomous revenue sources are referred to as those sources where the club has some influence on the prices and yet cannot control the overall amount of money generated from this specific source. For example, the club can set the prices for food and beverages at the club's restaurant, but it cannot ultimately control how much will be sold. Heteronomous revenue categories are characterised by the fact that the club has no control over the prices. For example, the amount of money a sponsor or a donor will give to the club cannot be determined (Wicker, Breuer et al. 2012).

Research also suggests that the composition of the income portfolio is critical because of the interactions between different income sources. Such interactions are referred to as crowd-out and crowd-in effects (Anheier 2010). Crowd-out effects occur when increases in one revenue source lead to decreases in another income source, which is *crowded out*. A typical concern in non-profit research is that public money crowds out private giving (e.g. Andreoni and Payne 2011; Kingma 1989; Payne 1998); however, this concern could not be confirmed for sport clubs (Enjolras 2002; Wicker, Breuer et al. 2012).

As sport clubs are competing for financial resources with other organisations in their environment, research on financing sport clubs has also looked at advantages or disadvantages of sport clubs over competitors such as for-profit companies. Based on property rights theory (e.g. Picot et al. 2008) it can be argued that the diffusion of property rights in sport clubs leads to financial disadvantages, in the sense that sport clubs do not have an incentive to spend their money wisely.

However, from the perspective of potential resource providers, sport clubs also have advantages over for-profit companies. For example, the attention towards a potential sponsor is higher in sport clubs and the sponsor is more protected against the hold-up risk (Wicker, Weingärtner et al. 2012). Moreover, following platform theory, sport clubs provide better platforms for sponsors than for-profit companies because for potential sponsors the networks are seen to be more open (Dietl and Weingärtner 2011). Thus, sponsors were found to be more likely to give their money to non-profit sport clubs than to for-profit companies in the same sport (Wicker, Weingärtner et al. 2012).

2.5 Towards a Multilevel Framework for the Comparison of Sport Clubs in Different Countries

In this theoretical section, sport clubs have been looked at from various perspectives. Historical roots as well as current developments in the context of modern sports were considered and sport clubs were conceptualised using sociological and economical approaches. Each of these theoretical concepts appears to be useful when making a comprehensive analysis of sport clubs and transnational comparisons. By integrating particular theoretical perspectives, the multilevel model for the analysis of the development of sport clubs (Fig. 2.2) can serve as a heuristic framework to assist the comparison of situations of sport clubs across different countries in Europe. For specific research questions that analyse each country covered in the chapters, two perspectives need to be differentiated: the (1) macro- and the (2) meso-level.

1. *Macro perspective:* The historical analysis of sport clubs as well as their current development reveal that they are strongly embedded in the social and political context and the national sport system. Therefore, the questions arise:

- *What are the historical origins of sport clubs?*
- *What is the position of sport clubs within the national sport structure?*

Sport clubs remain the most important organisations for the participation in sports of the whole population, and play an increasingly crucial role in sport policy. Third sector research in particular emphasises the social functions of sport clubs and their contributions in social welfare: e.g. social integration, education and health promotion. In this context the following questions are important:

- *To what extent are sport clubs able to integrate all specific groups of the population as members?*
- *What role do sport clubs play in the context of the (local and national) sport policy?*

2. *Meso perspective:* As sport clubs are autonomous corporate actors, they are enclosed but not determined by their social and political environment. Thus, it is necessary to have a closer look at the structural characteristics of sport clubs.

When considering the different research perspectives presented in this chapter, the following aspects and questions seem relevant to any comparison between different countries.

- According to the concept of club goods, size is a relevant factor to understanding sport clubs. *Therefore, it is useful to analyse the number of members. Furthermore, it is interesting to consider whether sport clubs are organised as a single or multiple club with different sports.*
- Bearing in mind the principle that sport clubs are established to realise the shared interests of the club members, the question arises as to *what sport and non-sport activities are usually provided.*
- Volunteering of the members is a basic characteristic of sport clubs. However, in the context of professionalisation of modern sports the question can be asked *if all club activities are still organised and arranged by volunteers and what role do paid employees undertake.*
- Another important resource for a viable sport club is the finances. *What internal and external sources are relevant for sport clubs to gain revenues and what are the most significant expenses?*
- *What are the main challenges of sport clubs in the context of the current developments in modern sports and society?*

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