



STRUCTURES BEYOND THE FRAMEWORKS OF THE RINK

On organization in Swedish ice hockey

JOSEF FAHLÉN

Department of Education

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This is a dissertation on organization in Swedish ice hockey based on four articles. The purpose of the thesis is to contribute knowledge on the direction, management and practice of sport using Swedish elite ice hockey as an example. Knowledge is created by examining four separate but mutually contingent aspects of organizations. Article I contributes to the overall purpose with knowledge on the professionalization of Swedish ice hockey, the reasons behind and the consequences of it. Focusing on the timeframe 1967-2000 the article highlights how norms, values and ideals changed over time and contributed to a change from ice hockey as an amateur sport based on idealistic motives and volunteer efforts to a professional sport based on entertainment and commercial forces. Article II contributes knowledge on the structural organization of Swedish elite ice hockey clubs and contributing factors. The article compares eleven elite ice hockey clubs and shows how they vary in relation to each other from low to high specialization, standardization and centralization but also how they present many similar characteristics such as organizational form, subsidiary businesses, cooperation with farm clubs and upper secondary schools, types of employments and division of workload. Article III contributes with knowledge on how organizational structures are experienced by individuals working or volunteering in the clubs. Comparing experiences in two structurally different clubs, the article shows how more developed structures are experienced more positively than less developed structures are. However, both groups agree that more developed structures are desirable and they also have similar opinions on issues concerning formal education and training, the elite program vs. the youth program, strategic vs. operative tasks and personal freedom. Article IV contributes knowledge on how experiences of mentioned structures are affected by remuneration, authority and centrality. Exploring four positions differing from each other with regard to hierarchical position, distance to the club's core activities and payment, the article shows that individual experiences of organizational structure vary depending on where in the club the individual works. This variation is shown to result in tensions between the different positions. The knowledge offered in the thesis is based on three data collections. Data have been gathered from official and unofficial documentation from and on the Swedish sports confederation, the Swedish ice hockey association and 11 clubs represented in the highest division 2000/2001, and from individuals working or volunteering in these clubs as board members, general managers, marketing assistants, coaches, volunteers in the youth programs and arena personnel. The studies are carried out within an institutional theory framework and the analysis of the results taken together shows how the structures in elite ice hockey clubs are affected by surrounding environment and societal environments. Norms and ideals concerning legitimate ways of organizing are mediated by authorities, educational establishments, trade organizations and successful models in neighbouring industries. These norms and ideals have changed as new actors such as television networks, commercial sponsors and employed staff have entered ice hockey and as the roles of the government, the associations, the coaches and the players have changed. These ongoing changes are combining to a new context and new circumstances for the direction, management and practice of Swedish ice hockey.

Key words: Sport organizations; sport management; organizational structure; institutional theory; ice hockey clubs; professionalization; volunteers; amateurism; non-profit

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Umeå, on my birthday, the 15th of March 2006
Josef Fahlén

INCLUDED ARTICLES

This thesis consists of four articles and an introductory section. The articles were reprinted with the kind permission of each publisher as listed below.

Article I

Fahlen, J. (submitted). Going Professional - An Analysis of Change in Swedish Ice Hockey.

Article II

Fahlen, J. (2006). Organizational Structures of Swedish Elite Ice Hockey Clubs. *Sport und Gesellschaft - Sport and Society*, 3(1), 57-80.

Published by Lucius & Lucius Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, <http://www.luciusverlag.com>

Article III

Fahlén, J. (2005). Organizational Structure – Perceived Consequences for Professionals and Volunteers: A comparative study of two Swedish elite ice hockey clubs. In Patriksson, G. (Eds.). *Aktuell beteendevetenskaplig idrottsforskning – SVEBI:S årsbok 2005*. Lund: Lunds universitet.

Published by Svensk förening för beteende- och samhällsvetenskaplig idrottsforskning [Swedish association for behavioural- and social science research in sport].

Article IV

Fahlén, J. (2005). Organizational Structures in Sport Clubs – Exploring the Relationship between Individual Perceptions and Organizational Positions, *The Sport Journal*, 8(3).

Published by the United States Sports Academy, <http://www.thesportjournal.org/>

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THE ARTICLES

I. INTRODUCTION

Swedish sport faces new and changing circumstances. Traditional non-profit ideals are confronted with commercial interests and public-utility organizations evolve towards profit-making enterprises. Subsidy rules change and rationalization becomes vital in surviving. Swedish sport is expected to deliver success and spectacle to spectators and sponsors and is demanded to offer responsible spare time activities for recreation and exercise. Large amounts of both public and private funds are invested in Swedish sport which adds further weight to these expectations and demands.

Despite these expectations and demands put on Swedish sport organizations little scientific knowledge about them exists. Little is also known about if and how recent changes in sport affect these organizations. What happens when commercial interests enter sport? What happens with the distribution of power? What happens with the relationships to and between the state, the members, the volunteers and the access to their benevolence? What happens with the traditional amateur values and sport for fun, exercise and camaraderie? Are Swedish sport organizations, as non-profit and amateur associations, suited for these new and changing circumstances?

Regardless of whether these premonitions are anticipated with positive or negative expectations, studying Swedish sport organizations becomes necessary and interesting. It becomes especially interesting to study what happens to the direction, management and practice of elite sport when the ideas of achievement and entertainment, credibility and competitiveness, winning and profiting, idealistic and commercial, intersect.

The purpose of the study

This thesis is a study of the management of Swedish male elite ice hockey. The overall objective is to investigate how, why and with what consequences Swedish ice hockey has changed. The consequences in focus are how Swedish ice hockey has come to be organized and how this is experienced by individuals working and volunteering in Swedish ice hockey clubs. The purpose of the thesis is to contribute knowledge on the direction, management and practice of sport using elite ice hockey as an example.

The organizations in this text are described in terms of high, flat, flexible and rigid. These terms may give the impression that the organizations are acting and thinking entities but this is not how the text should be read. Organizations are groups of people gathered for one or many reasons. These

people together can express abilities and behaviours. Within sport terms such as Swedish success, a club's dominant position, the responsibilities of the federation etc., are used. This also implies agency in organizations. But, when terms such as decentralized organizational structures are used in this thesis it is the relationship between individuals in an organization that is referred. This level of attention is used to study and compare how, why and with what consequences organizational patterns appear.

Some concepts are used throughout the thesis which are central to the understanding of its results. The term professional refers in the first place to the association with payment but also in some cases to an attitude or behaviour. Professionalization refers to the process which increases the gap between professionals and the laity where professionals strive for authority and payment based on their specialized body of knowledge, formal education and community sanction (Chelladurai, 1999). Professionalism refers to a mode of organizational behaviour characterized by extensive training, hierarchical management, complex procedures and division of labour, excessive use of scientific methods and standardization (Ilseley, 1990). Commercialization refers to the process of which goods and services become profitable and are sold to a market as opposed to being produced for own use (Peterson, 1989). The terms development and change are also used throughout the thesis to describe the processes observed, but neither of them are used in the negative or positive sense they might imply.

Outlining the thesis

In order to answer the questions outlined above this thesis is arranged in the following manner: First some background information about the development and organization of Swedish ice hockey is given in the shape of an overall description of Swedish sport. Subsequently the overall purpose is discussed in relation to an Educational field of research both nationally and internationally, which results in a description of the theoretical points of departure and the decisions which form the basis of the thesis. These points of departure and decisions are later discussed in relation to the purpose of the thesis and the four related research questions. After that the hows and whys of gathering, processing, and analyzing of data are described. Next the four articles are summarized which in detail answers each one research question. Emphasis is given to descriptions of how these four articles relate to the overall purpose, the theoretical framework and the methodological standpoints. Before the four articles are presented in their entirety they are discussed in relation to each other and to the overall results and conclusions. Finally the results are problemized in relation to the practical setting where ice hockey is played and managed. The question is also raised whether these results can enrich settings other than Swedish ice hockey.

II. SWEDISH SPORT – BACKGROUND AND STATUS

On the context

In a short period of time sport has evolved from play and recreation for a fortunate few to the main leisure activity for many Swedes and a billion SEK business. The rapid development in society during the 20th century has included sport which is something completely different today from what it was 100 years ago. Sport today means a lot to many people and Sweden alone has approximately 3 million participants (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b).

Few other phenomena in society can muster a similar level of interest. The Olympics, the Wimbledon tennis tournament and the World Cup in soccer are followed by billions of people and cabled to viewers in over 200 countries (Coakley, 2001). Sport also provides a living for an increasing number of athletes and for the approximately 7500 people who work in the Swedish sports movement, as well as the commitment of approximately 610 000 volunteers (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b).

Since 1912 sport has also been considered important to the Swedish state. An annual grant which has grown every year since then has been motivated by the contributions sport makes to society. The motives have varied from sport seen as a trainer of capable and employable citizens, to sport as a meaningful form of recreation for young people and sport as a promotor of health (SOU 1969:29).

As a part of the so-called third sector, between the public and the private sectors, sport as a popular movement has also been considered a part of the education of Swedish citizens in the democratic values and collective activities the Swedish society is said to be built upon (Wijkström, 1999). In these club activities the equivalent of 60 000 people are employed full time, performing services to a net value of SEK 15 billion annually (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b).

The government grant to sport was SEK 612 million in 2000 (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b). To this direct support is added beneficial taxation, various subsidies and some employment measures. In addition to this Swedish sport enjoys a support from local authorities to a net value of approximately SEK 3 billion annually. Taken together this financial support constitutes approximately 30 percent of the resources in Swedish sport (Wijkström & Lundström, 2002).

The Swedish sport confederation (RF) is at the receiving end of the government grant and is responsible for its distribution. Most athletes, volunteers and employees in organized sport in Sweden are active within RF. Organized sport through RF comprises approximately 22 000 clubs (ranging from clubs with one event on the program such as e.g. Skulebergets Alpine Skiing Club organizing slalom activities, to clubs with several events on the program such as e.g. Docksta BTK organizing soccer, table tennis, etc.), approximately 750 regional sport associations (SDF) (with regional authority over one specific sport such as e.g. Stockholm Ice Hockey Association), 21 regional sports associations (DF) (with regional authority over all organized sport such as e.g. Stockholm Sports Association) and 68 national sport associations (SF) (with national authority over one specific sport such as e.g. Swedish Ice Hockey Association) and constitute the framework through which the Swedish sports movement operates. All these organizations are non-profit and for the public good which means that they should be run without any interest in financial profit and for the benefit of everyone in order to be eligible for financial support from the government.

Such an organizational framework is similar in large parts of the world (Slack, 1997). The sporting individual is a member of a sports club, which in turn belongs to a district or a regional association. These are affiliated to a national association according to the branch of sport which in turn answers to a national sports confederation, in this case RF. Many clubs have teams competing against teams from other clubs in local, regional or national leagues in Sweden. These leagues are hierarchical and based on sporting merit, thus differing in many respects from the professional leagues found in e.g. the U.S.A. where instead profitability and competitive balance determine both league structures and the geographical locations of the teams (Coakley, 2001).

On the development

There are no signs that the development in Swedish sport seen so far has come to an end or is slowing down (Sund, 2003). This development popularly ascribed to processes such as professionalization and commercialization has so far transformed large parts of Swedish sport into something concerned with more than just winning games and competitions. The amateur ideals which served as guides during most of the 20th century and emphasized team spirit, sportmanship and glory, were in the later decades, replaced in many aspects by efficiency, profit margins and contracts. This development has in Sweden so far been limited to the top level of a few crowd-drawing male sports but some argue that the effects can be traced down to the grass roots (Peterson, 2002).

The international development of sport according to some researchers (e.g. Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999) is due to increasing international competition in society at large. Decreasing distances, more cultural understanding and dissemination of competence are all increasing the competition. The space available for amateurism and idealism in sport has correspondingly shrunk in the face of streamlining and rationalization. The competition is penetrating most sectors of society and has in sport resulted in a struggle for players, volunteers, spectators, sponsors, subsidies and media exposure. One example of such a competition is the fact that over 200 ice hockey players left Sweden in 1998 for North America and the rest of Europe (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.c)

Nordic researchers (e.g. Berg et al., 1993; Lindroth, 1998; Pavelka & Puronaho, 2002; Peterson, 1993, 2002; Wijkström & Lundström, 2002) have also suggested that above mentioned processes, but also others, are contributing to the development in sport in the Nordic countries. Processes such as increasing costs for the athlete, increasing individualization, a questioning of the legitimacy of sport, free scope for market forces, privatization of public establishments and downsizing in public welfare are identified as contributors to the development so far.

It is also contended that financial support from the Swedish government contributes to this development. This financial support, which in the 1970s and the 1980s was given as one of the explanations behind the professionalization of many coaches and administrators (Peterson, 2002), has since become smaller and smaller in proportion to the increasing costs. Even if the support was never intended to cover all costs the proportional reduction has forced sports organizations to find resources elsewhere, which in turn has provided further momentum for the commercialization and professionalization processes.

This development has transformed many aspects of Swedish sport which as a result has changed and is continuing to change the conditions for the direction, management and practice of Swedish sport. In order to be able to maintain activities at satisfactory levels more resources have become necessary. The pursuit of more resources has so far been directed towards commercial sponsors in the private sector which in turn has resulted in increasing commercialization (Pettersson, 2002). More resources and increased commerce create a need for businesslike methods of working and professional competence which has resulted in increased professionalization.

Thus, new resources entail adjustments; adjusting to the actors sport is financially dependent on. As previously mentioned competition is getting tougher and the competition for resources has made it possible for stakeholders to increase their demands for return of investments. Sponsors and public authorities are demanding service in return for sponsoring and funding activities, spectators and the media are demanding more

entertainment value and both athletes and volunteers are asking for reasonable remuneration.

It has become evident in studies on the development in more commercialized and professionalized sport internationally that the processes of commercialization and professionalization lead to shifts in both tasks and power from volunteers to paid administrators (e.g. Auld & Godbey, 1998). As a result, members of sports clubs are further distanced from the decisions concerning the club. Such a development would in Sweden entail a weakening of the democratic foundation that Swedish sport is supposedly built on. It has been suggested that this shift also reduces the need for volunteers in favour of paid personnel. With the reduced demand for and authority of volunteers the interest in volunteering decreases (O'Brien & Slack, 1999). This does not only imply a loss of working hours but also a loss of credibility as e.g. Chelladurai (1999) has pointed out. A credibility which stems from sport as a promoter of democratic values and the importance of communal activities which is one of the primary motives for government support and thus in some respect needs to be defended.

As previously hinted, these changes involve new circumstances for the organizations involved in Swedish sport, with one foot in traditional amateur sport and the other in professional sport. Such circumstances are not entirely easy to relate to. These organizations are expected to stay true to the traditional ideals and at the same time be competitive in both the league table and financially. Organizational form, working practices and goals seem unable to incorporate the disparate needs of these two worlds simultaneously. Balancing between the two has resulted in financial difficulties for many clubs and in a few cases in shady transactions which in the long run are harmful to the credibility of sport.

Similar to the changes in sport are the changes within the academic community that studies sport. Both what to study and why to study it have changed. In the next section sport as an object of study will be discussed from a number of perspectives.

Sport as a field of research

Sport as an object of study is, in tune with developments in society, also developing. While sport has mainly been studied as a physiological phenomenon by researchers in physiology, sports medicine and biomechanics, scholars in Education and other social scientists have considered sport as a social and cultural phenomenon. This distinction is the basis for the most obvious classification of research on sport, even if the classification is simplified. Where physiologists and other natural scientists are interested in injuries, metabolism and the absorption of oxygen, scholars in Education and other social scientists focus on the social, cultural and

historical significance of sport, focusing on issues such as lifestyles, living conditions, forms of culture and societal development. Apart from scholars in Education and Physiology, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, economists, legal scholars and historians have contributed to the understanding of Swedish sport.

Research on sport within the social sciences has traditionally focused on physical education, leadership, norms and values (Centrum för idrottsforskning, 1993-2002; Fasting & Sisfjord, 2000; Idrottens forskningsråd, 1975-1992). A few studies have been made on processes such as the professionalization and commercialization of sport (e.g. Annerstedt, 1994; Hagstedt, 1983; Peterson, 2002; Sund, 2003a; 2003b; Wikberg, 2002). Research on the third sector has also contributed to knowledge about the context of sport (e.g. Alsén, 1983; Amnå, 1995; Klausen, 1989b; Klausen & Selle, 1995; Wijkström, 1994; 1999; Wijkström och Lundström, 2002). When it comes to knowledge about sport organizations contributions are sparse but nevertheless important (e.g. Falck, 1999; Gustavsson, 1994; Klausen, 1989a; 1992; Lindroth, 1998; Lundström and Malmer, 1978; Peterson, 1989).

Sport as an object of study in Education

”Education is an academic discipline where knowledge is created about the processes in which people are formed and about the changes in social, cultural and historical circumstances in which these processes are embedded. The Educational field deals, for example, with various aspects of upbringing, education, learning, teaching and other processes which affect humans. Questions such as how and why certain values, knowledge and skills arise, are maintained and vary among generations, groups and individuals can be raised” (Pedagogiska institutionen, n.d.).

This quotation defines both the object of study and a number of starting points for research in Education. Applied to the context in this thesis, Educational research could create knowledge about processes such as commercialization and professionalization, how these processes form and change the social, cultural and historical context of sport and how this context in turn affects individuals such as athletes, coaches, employees and volunteers. Questions that can be raised are, for example, how and why values such as amateurism, idealism and democracy arise, are maintained and change over time between individuals and organizations.

With sport being mainly associated with competitions in arenas, and Education with teaching (Engström & Redelius, 2002), Education in the sport setting is regarded by many as a discipline concerned with teaching skills to athletes. But using the definition stated above there is more to Education as a field of knowledge. Education in the sport setting like Education in other settings is also concerned with knowledge about

upbringing, learning and other forms of influencing processes but with a special focus on the specific cultural and social context of sport. In order to create knowledge about such processes knowledge about the surrounding social, cultural and historical context is needed.

Concurrently with development in society at large, Education as an academic discipline has become the home for many objects of study such as working life, ICT, social justice, governance and evaluation, etc. Sport studies in the Educational discipline developed as a niche in Education during the 1970s. Research on sport from an Educational point of view had indeed been done before that but the government report "Sport for all" (SOU 1969: 29) set conditions and reasons for gathering the efforts.

In order to coordinate research and create conditions for results to be applied to practice the Sport Research Council was established in 1970 (Centrum för idrottsforskning, n.d.). By financing two positions, one in social sciences/Education at the Stockholm Institute of Education and one in medicine/physiology at Stockholm University College of Physical Education and Sport the ambition was to bring academic research and sport closer together. Another motive was to add some academic weight to research on sport and apply the research results to organized sport. The development was further facilitated by reforms in higher education in 1977, where both higher education and research in general was supposed to approach the general public (Dahlström, 1980).

In 1975 the Swedish Association for Social Science Research on Sport was established with the purpose to develop contact areas and to act as a representative towards sport organizations (Svensk förening för beteendevetenskaplig idrottsforskning, n.d.). Similar initiatives were taken by historians in 1976 with the Swedish Association for Sport History (Svenska idrotthistoriska föreningen, n.d.), both preceded by the Sports Medicine established in 1952 (Svensk idrottsmedicinsk förening, n.d.).

After a new report in 1987 (SOU 1987:70) academic research on sport was further strengthened. Four professorships, whereof one was in Education, were inaugurated. In 1988 a national Sport Research Centre (CIF) was established which after a few years managed to engage the government as a co-financer of research on sport.

This development led to the growth of scientific research on sport in Sweden and it became part of the academic discipline Education. This research was initiated according to needs in practice, financed by the sports movement primarily and later on by the government, and developed and made permanent by researchers.

Sport Management

In combination with a more professionalized and commercialized sport the type of research about sport is changing. With this change both research and

the context of Swedish sport are becoming more similar to international counterparts. This has made both empirical comparisons and transference of theory more tenable. In the field of international research on sport a branch of research concerned with the direction and management of sport has emerged over a longer period of time. Even if similar research has been conducted in Sweden it is, for the reasons mentioned above, not until recently that this type of research has made an impact.

Yet even if this international line of research can be helpful in understanding Swedish sport, more specific knowledge is needed about Swedish sport organizations; how and why they are established and change over time, what mechanisms and processes are active and what consequences there may be for the people involved in sport. Despite the fact that Sweden shares many social, cultural and historical structures and processes with the rest of the world there are many characteristics that need specific attention. Theories created in other parts of the world are based on data and experiences from other social, cultural and historical settings and transference is not unproblematic.

The Anglo-American tradition of thought, which tends to dominate large parts of both organizational theory in general and more specifically research on sport organizations, is naturally based on data from organizations and individuals operating in the English-speaking parts of the world. These parts differ from Sweden and the Scandinavian setting in many ways. Sport as a phenomenon stems from different traditions and has thus also developed in different ways. Even if Swedish sport to a large extent is imported from other countries it has been situated in a different part of society and thus vested with a different role and significance than in, for instance, England and the U.S.A..

The modern, institutionalized and organized competitive sport of today stems from the English school system during the first half of the 19th century where physical exercise was used as a method of inculcating discipline (Mangan, 1998). Character-building and moral standards were vital in this upbringing where qualities such as leadership, cooperation, will-power and courage were desirable. When sport was later spread to the broad masses it developed into a sweeping societal phenomenon during the latter half of the 19th century and up to WW I. It was during this time that sport became part of people's leisure time in England and the first clubs were established (McDevitt, 2004). This phenomenon diffused throughout the British Empire and other countries and could be said to have entered Swedish consciousness during the 1890s. Games and physical activities had certainly existed before that but not as sports with competition in leagues, associations and clubs, titles and records (Blom & Lindroth, 1995).

During this period competitive sport also broke ground in America. As in England sport gained a foothold in the school system but was also almost

simultaneously commercialized and professionalized through the big crowd-drawing sports of baseball and football (Schaaf, 2004).

In Sweden on the other hand, where club activities had begun to germinate, competitive sport gained a foothold in non-profit clubs. Similar, for example, to the Free Church movement and the temperance movement, where citizens joined together to pursue a common interest. The sports movement had its breakthrough at the beginning of the 20th century when it gained momentum from the increasingly widespread model of popular movements and from the international developments in sport (Wikberg, 2005).

In this short historical description many of the differences between Swedish and Anglo-American sport can be found and from that the differences between Swedish and Anglo-American research on sport can be understood. Research in these countries is based on data from sport organizations based on different grounds, for other reasons and with other consequences for the people involved. This has resulted in other theories. With the early commercialization and professionalization of North American sport and its location in a private and commercial sphere, interest in how these organizations were to be managed to maximize profit and success was awakened at an early stage. An educated and skilled workforce was recruited from colleges and universities which in turn aroused the interest of researchers (Parks, Zanger, & Quarterman, 1998).

During the 1960s and 1970s a new field of research emerged. Sport management developed as a branch of traditional management research even if many of the early texts were sometimes non-theoretical and sometimes rooted in other traditions (Slack, 1997). However, borrowing ideas from traditional management research proved to be somewhat problematic. The context of sport proved to differ from conventional industry and thus needed theories of its own (Henry & Theodoraki, 2000).

The sport management research that developed during the 1980s and 1990s was principally concerned with studies of sport in a school, college and university context and to some extent with professional sport (Pitts, 2001). Aspects such as leadership and leadership styles received most attention (Paton, 1987) with studies which drew on mostly quantitative data on a descriptive level.

During this period the field became more formalized with the production of journals (*Journal of Sport Management*, 1987; *European Journal of Sport Management*, 1994; *Sport Management Quarterly*, 1998), associations (North American Society for Sport Management, 1985; European Association for Sport Management, 1993; Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand, 1995; Asian Association for Sport Management, 2002), and conferences. The research published in these journals and disseminated at these conferences is conducted by researchers

from many different academic disciplines, with many different approaches and with many different objects of study (Chelladurai, 1994).

Research on sport organizations has, with few exceptions, been underrepresented in sport management research. But with Canadian amateur sport organizations as the object, a number of studies have been made focusing on organizational structure and environments, and their relationship to each other and to efficiency (e.g. Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Frisby, 1982; 1985; 1986; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992; Kikulis & Slack, 1995; Kikulis, Slack, Hinings & Zimmerman, 1989; Slack, 1985; Slack & Hinings, 1987; Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991).

Above mentioned Swedish and international research have made significant contributions to the understanding of sport organizations but, as previously mentioned, in a limited social, cultural and historical context. In order to benefit from established knowledge about sport organizations, an awareness of these social, cultural and historical differences must be in place. But because of these differences studies of Swedish sport organizations could at the same time contribute to the knowledge of sport organizations and to more general organization theory with knowledge:

- about the change from amateur to a more professionalized sport and how it can affect the direction, management and practice of sport
- about how and why norms and values are established, maintained and changed over time, between individuals and organizations and how that in turn can affect the direction, management and practice of sport
- about different forms of organizations and how they can affect the direction, management and practice of sport
- about the dependence of sport on the state, the market and volunteers and how this can affect the direction, management and practice of sport
- about how the balance of power within sport changes and how that can affect the direction, management and practice of sport
- based on data from a context different from that which tends to be overrepresented in research in international journals
- based on qualitative data which can bring more nuances to existing understanding

In order to further specify the nature of my contributions to the understanding of sport organizations with a special focus on Swedish sport as a specific social, cultural and historical context the next chapter will be used to clarify some points of departure.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Basic assumptions

The empirical studies which are the foundation of this thesis have examined four separate but mutually contingent aspects of organizations. These studies are based on four assumptions about how organizations appear and behave, the reasons behind this and the possible consequences. This chapter will be devoted to presenting the background to these four assumptions. The background will show how the assumptions are grounded in theory and relate to other research. It will also describe the choices made and how they relate to the research I have conducted, the results presented, the conclusions drawn and ultimately the understanding offered. The chapter may also provide an understanding of how data are interpreted later and why. The purpose is to explicate the route from theoretical points of departure to conclusions and thus to offer the possibility of critically scrutinizing my procedure.

1. **Organizations are affected by the surrounding environment.** In opposition to the idea of organizations as solely managed by individuals, organizations are dependent of the surrounding environment to supply resources and a market. Organizations are also dependent on legitimacy. In order to be competitive organizations need to be recognized as legitimate and valuable. This legitimacy is based on the signals organizations send to their environments. Without legitimacy access to resources and customers is constrained. This first aspect of study is concerned with the surrounding environment, its development and how it may have affected organizational structure and behaviour. That is, the environment in which Swedish elite ice hockey clubs operate, how this context has developed and how this context and its development affect the way these clubs appear and behave.
2. **Organizations can be described in terms of organizational structure.** Organizational structure is traditionally described as the formal characteristics of an organization and has been used in numerous studies from many different perspectives (e.g. resource dependence, institutionalism, strategic choice). This second aspect of study describes how the organizations in question appear in terms of organizational structure as opposed to, for example, organizational culture and intra-

organizational relationships. That is, what Swedish elite ice hockey clubs are like in terms of division of workload, coordination of tasks and decision-making.

3. **Organizational structure affects the individuals working in the organization and with variation in organizational structure follows variations in individual experiences.** Organizational structure constrains and enables individual freedom and authority, and defines the individual positions in organizations. This third aspect of study is how organizational structure is experienced by the individuals working in an organization. That is, how employees and volunteers experience their clubs when it comes, for example, to division of workload, coordination of tasks and decision-making.
4. **Individual relationships to, experiences of and opinions on organizational structure vary depending on where in the organization they work.** Factors such as hierarchical position, distance from the core activities and the distinction between paid and volunteer are of significance when it comes to the relationship to the organization in question, as opposed to individual factors such as age, education, social background etc. This fourth aspect of study is how individual experiences of organizational structure are affected by position in the organization. That is, how employees' and volunteers' experiences of organizational structure are affected by where in the club they work.

Structures and actors – constraints and possibilities

These four basic assumptions may seem to be reducing individuals to pawns without any will, goals, power or interest. But despite the focus on contextual factors, organizational structure and organizational position, individuals are recognized as having both the possibility and the will to affect both the surrounding context and the organizational structure. The traditional dichotomy context/actor or structure/individual is viewed by most researchers as obsolete, which Tolbert (1985) already suggested in 1985. In order to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of the behaviour of organizations and of individuals an awareness of both surrounding structures, individual intentions and unintended consequences is needed (cf. Stevens & Slack, 1998).

However, individual freedom is not unlimited. The responses or resistance the individual can exert are assumed to be limited by a few factors. The interest and/or the values behind decisions and other volitions are restricted by capacity, power and a collective rationality. This collective rationality, as Scott (1995) and others refer to it as, is shared by actors, both

organizational and individual, operating within the same field or niche. It is suggested that this rationality is the foundation for how the surrounding environment is conceived and the behaviours available to interact with it. In a similar way Scott (1991) points out that organizational actions are not results of the management's unlimited choice but rather of a choice among a number of closely limited possibilities defined by the group of actors operating in the same field.

Scope for individual action is created when actors from other fields are embraced by the collective rationality. Since social groups and groups based on a type of business are dynamic, collective rationalities change over time. As Hoffman (1999) has shown, actors are introduced, changed and disengaged over time.

A similar way of understanding organizational action, as not only determined by contextual factors, is through recognizing that there is more than one collective rationality in play at the same time. Several sets of norms, values and convictions can be operating simultaneously in a field or in an organization, which can lead to struggle or negotiation over legitimate, efficient or optimal behaviours. The individual is thus not passive but has the final say over decisions. The individual can, as Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue, act directly opposite to behaviours prescribed by the group, the organization or the society or chose not to act at all. However, actions are affected by certain frame factors making some choices more common than others. The scope for individual action is also affected by the level of detail in surrounding conventions and structures. With few social, cultural and historical structures restricting behaviour in detail, space for individual manoeuvring is created without breaking any conventions.

This interaction between structure and actor, which has inspired this thesis, implies an understanding of the individual formed and affected by some social, cultural and historical structures and an individual capable of actively reproducing and/or changing same structures. This reciprocal action is important in understanding the organizations in this thesis. In order to understand organizational structures and behaviours, as Stevens and Slack (1998) have noted, attention needs to be directed both towards surrounding structures forming and affecting these organizations and towards the organizations as actors in which individuals within operate. The actors in this case are thus not only passive interpreters of the reality they experience but actively produce and reproduce that same reality.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have suggested, in a similar way, that actors make decisions which in turn create an environment that affects future decisions. The environment in this sense is regarded as both a constraint and a facilitating factor. The interpretation of the environment is in the hands of the actor which may imply a constraint for one actor but a possibility for another. Interpretations, however, are dependent on the social

context the actor participates in which often leads to interpretations similar to those of other actors.

Many authors during the last 25-30 years have tried to open the way for an integration of a structural/deterministic approach and an actor-based/voluntary approach. Discussions have been heated, especially within research on organizations, about whether integration is possible (e.g. Schreyogg, 1980; Miller & Droge, 1986; Oliver, 1991). In a deterministic approach, to slightly caricature it, actors are restricted to deciding between participation or non-participation (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In a voluntary approach, also slightly caricatured, actors are free to independently choose a route and make decisions regardless of surrounding structures (c.f. Thompson, 1967). To advocates of integration such as Tolbert and Zucker (1983) the first type of explanation is no more valid than the second but is rather a postulation in a cyclic process.

Authors such as Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood (1980) and Whittington (1988) and others, have taken integration one step further, believing that actorship enables and structures constrain. Structures define the limits of options but not the content. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) also emphasize the importance of both structures and strategic choice but suggest that the perceived voluntariness is defined by underlying structures. Decisions are based on assumptions even if they are perceived as strategic and rational. Structures, in this case, define which decisions and choices are perceived as rational. In this thesis I have used this integrative approach to enable an understanding of both structures and actors, constraints and possibilities.

Organizations – adapted to the environment or strategically managed?

In research on organizations there have been many competing explanations about why organizations are established, developed and why they die, about how and why organizations appear and behave in the way they do, and about how and why organizations affect individuals.

For early authors, such as Weber (1930; 1946; 1949), distribution of workload and coordination of tasks were both focus and explanation of many of the questions raised above. Organizational structures arise because of these two operations. Rational decisions are made about how the workload is to be distributed and coordinated in order to achieve the organizational goals. Societal development such as growth in markets and increased competition create complex environments and organizations, which in turn increases the demands on distribution and coordination of tasks and efficiency. This process, popularly referred to as bureaucratization, was seen as the reason organizations appear and behave the way they do.

During the 1960s researchers began interesting themselves in organizational environments. In a more turbulent society, the interest in the consequences for organizations increased. Instead of focusing on internal problems and their impact on organizational structures and behaviours, interest was directed towards external problems and their impact. Thompson's (1967) contribution to this understanding is considered to be one of the principal contributions of contingency theory where the focus was on finding a fit between organizational structures and behaviours and the organizational environment.

The interest in organizational environments developed in many directions focusing on adaptation as in population-ecology (cf. Hannan & Freeman, 1977 for detailed description), on dependence as in resource dependence theory (cf. Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978 for detailed description) and on legitimacy as in institutional theory (described below). With the common denominator environmental impact on organizations, both conceptions of the relative impact of environments and conceptions of organizational action varied between the three. Explanations were found in market competition, positions of dependence and social norms and values respectively. Reacting to bureaucratization as the universally prevailing explanation for both changes in society and changes in organizations, explanations were sought elsewhere.

Institutional theory offer an understanding of organizations which has proved to be particularly useful in studying the type of organizations which is of interest in this thesis for three reasons. 1) The interest in the significance of social, cultural and historical contexts is very similar to the field of knowledge in Education. Questions such as how values and norms are established, maintained and changed within and between organizations interest both scholars in Education and institutional theorists. 2) The assumptions concerning the individual and the context that institutional theory is based on are similar to the four basic assumptions on which this thesis is based. 3) The object of study, Swedish elite ice hockey clubs, is of a nature that fits institutional theory, as is shown below through the arguments of Oliver (1988) and Powell and Friedkin (1983).

Oliver (1988) suggests that the understanding of organizational structure and behaviour should vary depending on the type of organization and the type of field studied. The principal argument is that the explanation should be related to the degree of competition and interaction in a field. Based on the arguments within each theory, institutional theory should be used when the organizations being studied compete and interact. Just as the articles will show, the organizations in this thesis are doing both. There is a high level of both competition and interaction between these organizations which, in this thesis, is assumed to be important in understanding them and an argument for the use of institutional theory.

That these organizations are non-profit further strengthens the explanatory power of the institutional arguments. Powell and Friedkin (1983) argue that the institutional environment becomes more influential when organizational goals are ambiguous, when efficiency is hard to measure and when the environment is highly structured. Just as the articles will show, the organizations in this thesis are struggling with the ambiguous goals of success on ice and financial stability, which also weakens the possibility of estimating organizational effectiveness.

Thus, the use of institutional theory implies a focus on the effect of the institutional environment on organizations indirectly through culture, traditions, assumptions and values. Below and in articles I and II there is a more detailed description of how institutional theory in relationship to other similar theories can serve as a scaffold for an understanding of the clubs dealt with in the thesis.

Institutional theory

Efficiency versus legitimacy

The traditional view of organizations with clear goals, striving for efficiency with a management in command is replaced in institutional theory by a view of organizations with ambiguous goals, adapting to the environment in a striving for legitimacy (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Institutional theorists argue that organizational goals do not necessarily reflect managerial intentions but rather the expectations of others. In a similar manner it is argued that organizations are not run according to rational decisions, with efficiency as the objective, but rather through adaptation to prevailing and modern principals for organization, management and administration, in order to be perceived as up-to-date, energetic and legitimate (Scott & Meyer, 1994). The aspiration to efficiency as an explanation for organizational structures and behaviour is replaced by adaptation to the environment in order to gain legitimacy.

The environment referred to is the cultural and social environment which, through traditions, trends, norms, values and ideals, exerts expectations on organizations. These expectations govern appropriate, expected and legitimate structures and behaviours (Johansson, 2001). This legitimacy is in turn tied to access to resources, markets and ultimately survival. In other words, organizations which appear and behave in an expected way have a greater chance of survival than the organizations which deviate. The clubs in this thesis can be understood in the light of this idea.

Institutional fields

Vital in institutional theory is the field organizations in question constitute,

prevailing norms and values, and the forces mediating these norms and values (Johansson, 2001). An organizational field is constituted by suppliers, consumers, authorities, and the organizations which together produce a similar product or service (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Scott (1995:56) has expanded the concept and argues that a field is "a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field". This includes interest groups and trade organizations but also the general public. In short, all organizations exerting influence on the organization or group of organization of interest. In this way organizational fields are dynamic and not static over time. Their constitution changes over time with changing issues, both in numbers and in type (Hoffman, 1999). As shown in article I the field which the clubs in the thesis constitute also changes regarding number and type.

The norms and values, according to Scott (1995), operating in a field comprise three aspects: legal, social, and cultural. Legal aspects are comprised of laws, decrees and regulations; social aspects of rules of thumb, standardized procedures, working methods and educational curricula; cultural aspects of symbols, expressions and technical language.

The forces mediating these aspects, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), are 1) coercive isomorphism, 2) mimetic isomorphism and 3) normative isomorphism. 1) Coercive isomorphism emanates from the government, the political system and other authorities. The pressure is experienced as being forced since the organization is bound by dependency on another organization or by laws and regulations. Organizational structures and working methods are not seldom imposed from a dominant organization to the organizations below or those which are dependent (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). 2) Mimetic isomorphism emanates from uncertainty. To handle an uncertain environment, uncertain objectives or uncertain situations apparently successful organizations are used as models. Not necessarily because of any proven efficiency or success but because it seems the right thing to do. 3) Normative isomorphism emanates from professionalization. Educational programs and sector developments create norms for good and efficient behaviour. In articles I and II, these norms and their vehicles are studied in detail together with how they affect and are affected by the clubs included in the thesis.

Homogenization and stability

Also vital in institutional theory is that organizational structures and behaviour are not necessarily formed by internal problems such as distribution and coordination of workload but rather by external pressures such as social and cultural norms. This difference is important in an understanding of the central aspect of institutional theory: homogenization.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that if strategic choice alone were to determine organizational structures and behaviour, variation would be greater. They found instead that organizations seemed to grow increasingly similar to each other, within sectors, nations and in the world. Hawley (1968) labels this homogenization isomorphism and defines it as a process which pressures one unit in a population to become similar to other units facing similar conditions.

The forces described above pressure organizations with varying amount of force to resemble one another without any proven increase in efficiency being achieved. In those cases where efficiency, success or survival has increased it has occurred when organizations have been rewarded for complying with prevailing practice. In research that rests on institutional theory this adaptation has resulted in an increase in prestige, stability, legitimacy, social acceptance, organizational commitment, access to resources and personnel, professional reputation and defence against questioning (DiMaggio, 1988; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Mayer & Rowan, 1977; 1983; Zucker, 1988 and others). In articles I and II homogenization and its effect on the clubs is studied in detail.

Variation and change

How then, can deviation and variation be understood within institutional theory? Almost as heterogeneous and varied as is the general understanding of organizations is the understanding of variation in organizational structures and behaviours within institutional theory. Oliver (1991) and others suggest that variation, despite a similar institutional environment, can be understood as a result of organizational responses to institutional pressures. Powell (1999) and others have instead highlighted the importance of the maturity of the field of which an organization is a part. In less developed fields isomorphism is weaker than in fields which are more developed. Child and Smith (1987) and others posit that variation can be understood as a result of the insulation of a field. A field which interacts with other fields is more permeable to new ideas and thus allows more variation than a field which does not interact with others. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) and others have borrowed ideas from the strategic-choice perspective and offer other explanations of variation such as resistance towards institutional pressure and a lack of capacity to adapt to institutional norms. Kondra and Hinings (1998) and others have emphasized variation from a more actor-based perspective with the focus on concepts such as power, interest and values. Hinings and Greenwood (1988) and others have questioned the assumption that institutional pressures have the same impact throughout an organization. They contend that some parts of an organization are more resistant to external pressures than others, which would in turn allow for variation. Slack and Hinings (1994) and others suggest that variation can be

traced to the organizational life cycle. Both its age and time in the field is of importance regarding how long an organization has been exposed to institutional pressures and hence how long it has been adjusting or resisting.

Apart from these views there are other opinions about how variation in a population despite a similar institutional environment can be understood. In this thesis the above-mentioned arguments for variation and change are used alternately in order to understand how and why the clubs in question vary regarding structures and behaviours among each other and over time. In articles I and II variation and non-variation in the population and over time are studied.

Organizational structure and behaviour

According to the four basic assumptions presented earlier organizations can be described using the concept of organizational structure. Organizational structure describes and defines basically how an organization deals with its long-term mission. This definition describes who is part of the organization, how they are divided into groups and departments, who does what, who is in charge and how the work is coordinated. The concept has been loaded with different meanings over time and, depending on academic discipline and approach, with some principal concordance regarding the aspects and dimensions included.

Organizational structure has been used to describe organizations both in research on traditional organizations (cf. Pugh, Hickson, Hinings & Turner, 1967) and in research on sport organizations (cf. Slack & Hinings, 1987). The concept of 1) specialization describes the division of the work load both horizontally and vertically. The concept of 2) standardization describes routines and procedures governing individual freedom versus coordination and control. The concept of 3) centralization describes where formal power over decisions is located and the degree of participation and insight that exist in the other parts of the organization. It is argued that these three dimensions, depending on perspective, vary as a result of external circumstances such as dependency, uncertainty and pressures, and of internal circumstances such as task, technology, size and employees. In article II the clubs in the thesis are described in more detail assisted by the concepts of specialization, standardization and centralization.

Organizations and the individual

Organizational structure has also been used in several studies as a source of variation in other phenomena. During the 1950s and the 1960s both managers and researchers became interested in how organizations affected the individuals within them. One of the focal points was how to promote efficiency but not at the expense of the employees. That is, how

organizations and tasks can be designed to accommodate both production efficiency and human well-being (cf. the development sketched in Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2002).

This so-called human relations approach, with contributions from sociologists and psychologists such as Chris Argyris and Abraham Maslow, was concerned with factors conducive to motivation, satisfaction, commitment and ultimately production (cf. Abrahamsson & Andersen, 2000). The focus has varied depending on the academic discipline and approach from individual factors such as background, needs, preferences, expectations, knowledge and skills, to organizational factors such as tasks, autonomy and authority, social groupings and dependencies, reviews and feed-back.

Central aspects of the research on the relationship between organizations and employees are job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These two concepts have been studied both in relation to organizational characteristics and in relation to individual behaviour and performance. In research into job satisfaction and organizational commitment many factors are related to the structural aspects this thesis deals with. Many studies also emphasize the importance of individual characteristics (c.f. Barrick & Mount, 1991) but in the understanding of Swedish ice hockey clubs in this thesis the focus is on organizational factors. For that reason individual characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economical background come to be of secondary importance.

The organizational characteristics studied are tied both to the individual role and task and to the more general characteristics of an organization. Those factors considered conducive to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and at the same time related to the structural characteristics of an organization are, for example variation in tasks (Brass, 1981), responsibility for and control over work situation (cf. Hackman & Lawler, 1971), insight and participation in decision-making (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1995; Inglis, 1994), power and dependencies (cf. Wagner, 1994), hierarchical position (Ebeling, King & Rogers, 1979), size and shape of the organization and/or the group or department (Porter & Lawler, 1964; Rousseau, 1978), and distance from core activities (Cumming & Berger, 1976). In organizations based on volunteer work the distinction paid or volunteer position has also been found to be important (Auld & Godbey, 1998; Chang & Chelladurai, 2003; Cuskelly, Boag & McIntyre, 1999). In articles III and IV organizational structure and its significance in individuals' perceptions of their clubs is studied.

On the applicability of the thesis

In this theoretical chapter I have tried to explicate how organizational theory

can be used to gain an understanding of the ice hockey clubs dealt with in this thesis. With analytical concepts such as freedom of action, constraining structures, environmental factors, legitimacy, institutional fields institutional pressures, homogenization, stability, organizational structure, organizational position, job satisfaction and organizational commitment it becomes apparent later on in the articles how and why the clubs appear and behave the way they do and what consequences this can have.

According to the four basic assumptions presented in the introduction to this chapter it is assumed in this thesis that individuals are affected by the organizational structure they are surrounded by and are part of. That is, administrators, functionaries, board members and coaches are affected by the way their club acts.

In accordance with the previously outlined notion of agent and context, the understanding of individual perceptions of and opinions about their organization is sought in the organization itself. That is, an understanding of the perceptions and opinions of administrators, functionaries, board members and coaches is sought in the characteristics of their club.

The organizational characteristics are studied along the three structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization. That is, the distribution and coordination of workload and the distribution and location of authority.

Individual roles and functions in an organization are defined by hierarchical position, type of tasks and terms of employment. That is, where vertically in the club a person is working, how close he or she is to the core activities of the club (playing ice hockey), and whether he or she is employed or is a volunteer.

As the summary above implies, the research question this thesis is aiming to answer is complex. This calls for a multidimensional theoretical framework and understandings on several levels which this exposition hopefully can facilitate.

IV. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The state of affairs, motives for study, contributions to existing research and theoretical standpoints presented up to this point have resulted in the formulation of objectives and a number of questions presented below.

Based on the interest in the role of sport plays and its development as sketched by way of introduction the purpose of this thesis is to contribute knowledge on the direction, management and practice of sport in Sweden using Swedish elite ice hockey as an example. With sport in an increasingly professionalized and commercialized society as a background the focus is on studying how, why and with what consequences sport is organized. In order to do this the following research questions are raised:

1. How has Swedish ice hockey developed and what has contributed to this development?
2. How are Swedish elite ice hockey clubs organized and what have contributed to this?
3. How are these organizations perceived by the individuals who work and volunteer in these clubs?
4. How are these individuals' experiences affected by factors such as remuneration, authority and centrality?

V. CONDUCTING THE STUDIES

This thesis is based on four articles which in turn are based on three data collections. Data have been gathered from official and unofficial documentation from and on RF and SIF, from and on the clubs represented in the Swedish ice hockey elite league 2000/2001, and from interviews with individuals operating in these clubs. The possibility of constructing knowledge from these data depends mainly on the approach to knowledge and ultimately on trustworthiness (Nylén, 2005).

This chapter will be used to present an account of the approach to knowledge employed in this thesis and its consequences for the selection of data sources, the gathering and the processing of data and the presentation of results. The approach will be discussed in relationship to credibility and the efforts made to strengthen that credibility.

Conceptions of reality and approach to knowledge

Similar to the connection between credibility and the approach to knowledge is the connection between the approach to knowledge (epistemology) and the conception of reality (ontology) (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). The possibility of saying anything about an object of study is thus related to suppositions about the construction of the reality, the world and its content, and how they exist and relate to each other, as Merleau-Ponty (2004) and others have suggested.

My understanding of the world, the reality and humanity is based on the idea of a world existing regardless of any observers but which can yet only be understood through the observer. It becomes of less importance whether the world is materialistic or not since the focus is on the perceptions, or with idealistic terms, the experiences of the observer (cf. Åsberg, 2000 for detailed description). Since human beings are involved, through their language, in all reproductions of the world, reproductions are subjective as the phenomenologist would put it, even if the world objectively exists in the terms of the realist (Bjurwill, 1995). The knowledge I create is consequently about reproductions of the world and the reality human beings experience, regardless of the nature of that world and reality.

A focus on human experiences of a world and a reality instead of an actual world and reality does not imply that the latter are rejected but that they are not interesting from my point of view, or as the existentialist Kierkegaard argued, it is not the objective knowledge but the subjective

attitude to this that is interesting (Malantschuk, 2003). Hence that the knowledge created in this thesis is based on my interpretation of the world and reality, and that the data are based on other people's interpretations. Such suppositions about the world and reality mean that both my own and others' interpretations are subjective. Subjective, in this argumentation, should not be understood as the opposite of objective but rather, with my notions of the world and reality, as the only interpretation possible.

The conclusions drawn in this thesis are based on my interpretation of the interpretations others have made of their reality. However, to avoid total relativism and subjectivism (cf. Rosmini, 2001 for detailed description), which in my opinion is not conducive to scientific knowledge, my ambition is to make meaningful interpretations of observed phenomena as close as possible to the interpretations my informants have made, but without implying that objectivity is attainable.

In this concept of the world and reality knowledge is also subjective, as the subjective idealist would concur (cf. Sohlberg & Sohlberg, 2001 for detailed description). Human beings create meaning and knowledge about their world dependent on time, cultural context and their background in a constructionist or constructivist spirit (Molander, 2003). For that reason understandings of phenomena and events vary over time and among people. However, the variation is not without limits since understanding is tied to time and cultural context. This approach to knowledge could, in scientific terms, be labelled critical realism implying that interpretations of the world and reality can afford us indirect perceptions of the world and reality without any one perception being more valid than another.

Thus, knowledge created in this thesis is tied to me as a person, my background and society today in terms of time, space and cultural context. However, this does not imply that the knowledge is useless or beyond belief to others. On the contrary, through my disclosing of my conceptions of reality, the world and knowledge readers can scrutinize, question and criticize the reasonableness of my interpretations. However, absolute veracity can not be a subject of criticism. The questions that can be raised instead concern the reasonableness of my interpretations given my points of departure and my working method.

The knowledge created in this thesis is based on structural and functional analysis alternately and mutually dependent (c.f. Sohlberg & Sohlberg, 2001). Structural analysis focuses primarily on actions, phenomena, events and circumstances, as results of social contexts such as structure and culture, in contrast to intentional explanations where actions and behaviour are interpreted as proceeding consciously and linearly from thought to action (cf. Åsberg, 2000 for detailed review of explanatory models inspired by the thinking of Durkheim). Functional analysis focuses on actions as strategy where functionality and rationality often differ from how the person or the

organization themselves would explain things. Thus I try to make meaningful interpretations of individual and organizational behaviour by looking at the use or necessity of specific actions and behaviours (cf. agentification and reification in Sohlberg & Sohlberg, 2001).

The clubs and the individuals providing the data

The organizations providing data for this thesis were chosen on the basis of two criteria: the scope of operations and the level of operations. The scope of operations was determined partly by an initiative taken by SIF to engage in a research project, partly by an ambition to study organizations operating in a similar institutional environment (Scott, 1995). Ice hockey was also chosen because of its position as one of the sports at the cutting edge of development regarding professionalization and commercialization.

The level of operations was based on a conception of prognostication. Looking at organizations at the top of a hierarchical system makes it possible to study organizations that are leading the development. These organizations then become interesting as precursors, trendsetters and models (cf. the discussion on sample in Stake, 1995),

This is not a statistical sample of all ice hockey clubs and can thus not be regarded as representative for all ice hockey clubs. But my ambitions to generalize are neither high nor dependent on a statistical sample. My ambition is instead, in line with earlier discussions, to argue that it is plausible that that which is observed could be observed at other levels and in other types of organizations (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985 for discussion on probability and transferability).

The ice hockey clubs qualified to play in the elite league (the top division) 2000/2001 were, unintentionally, spread both geographically and demographically. Out of the 12 clubs available in the total population of elite ice hockey clubs, 11 chose to participate. The twelfth club chose not to participate because of internal turbulence at the time. No further explanations are offered here for reasons of confidentiality. The clubs, their activities and constitution are presented in detail in articles II, III and IV as is the individuals chosen to represent each club and the motives for that.

Theorizing and operationalizing

As described in the objectives, the organization of Swedish sport and its reasons and consequences is the main focus in this thesis. In order to study these, concepts such as phenomena, processes, circumstances etc. have been operationalized. Similar to the abstraction of observed phenomena, processes and circumstances into concepts such as organizational fields, isomorphic pressures, organizational structure, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, these concepts have to be operationalized for them to be

studied. Just as abstraction of observed phenomena, processes and circumstances are used to create understanding on a theoretical level, operationalization can be used to exemplify or study theoretical concepts on an empirical level. The definitions and operationalizations of concepts are generated from the literature in contrast to the reality which is also the main argument for their credibility and validity (Sohlberg & Solhlberg, 2001). Operationalizations are further discussed in the articles.

Gathering the data

The data this thesis is based on were gathered from official and unofficial documentation from and on RF and SIF (further described in article I), from and on the clubs represented in the ice hockey elite league 2000/2001 (further described in articles II, III and IV), and from interviews with individuals representing these clubs (further described in articles II, III and IV). The different sources are not used to control triangulation but to offer a more detailed description (Yin, 2003). Written data of an unofficial or confidential nature have been provided by each organization while official and accessible data have been gathered from websites and libraries. Verbal data were gathered through interviews with individuals in the clubs.

Documents used as data sources were, in no order of precedence, official statistics, websites, annals, annual reports, minutes, records, statutes, policy documents, marketing material, investigations and contracts. No data have been rated more reliable than others but, in the cases where there were differences, they were seen as competing views (Yin, 2003).

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide in a semi-structured way (Kvale, 1997). All 23 respondents were encouraged to speak freely and were given space to talk about, what were to them, interesting aspects. All interviews were conducted and recorded by the author personally at the workplace of each club in private. The recordings were transcribed by three outside people. The identities of the respondents were coded at transcription and remained anonymous to all but myself throughout the entire process. This anonymity was a prerequisite stipulated by all clubs and was clearly established during the introductory contacts.

The clubs are therefore identified by numbers or by their characteristics and the respondents by their position in the club. All respondents were given the opportunity to proof-read the transcripts and to make changes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This offer was taken up by two respondents. No data were rated more or less credible. My interpretations have instead aimed at understanding the reasons for the contradictory statements.

Processing the data

The gathering of data resulted in a considerable number of transcripts and

texts from clubs and associations. In order to make the data processable and readable they were reduced in several steps. The first selection was made on the basis that some phenomena, processes and circumstances were more interesting than others with regard to the purpose of the thesis and that the text had to be limited to the amount that could be processed and included in the thesis (cf. Nylén, 2005 for a discussion on compression).

This first reduction was based on the theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the data best suited to the purpose of the thesis being selected. Both the interview guide and the criteria for text analysis were created from the theoretical framework, but because of the semi-structured nature of both interviews and text analysis data that did not fit into the framework were also selected (Stake, 1995). In the second stage reductions, based on the operationalizations, were made leaving only sufficient data to make the phenomena, processes and circumstances understandable (Nylén, 2005).

Data used in articles I and II were processed through categorization made from the operationalizations. The categorization was done to increase lucidity and understanding, not in the belief that the categories could reflect any empirical classification. But almost simultaneously phenomena, processes and circumstances that did not fit the theoretical framework were discovered. Thus, data and theory cooperated (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994) in the construction of new classifications conducive to both surveying and understanding. The categories in this thesis are thus primarily theoretical and for analytical purposes but are modified and enriched by the data they are meant to classify. The categories are therefore similar to Weber's ideal types (Weber, 1983) which were not constructed to depict reality precisely but rather to structure large amounts of data in order to explicate comparisons and analysis. However, data are not stretched or left-out so that a better fit is obtained regarding the theoretical framework. But the principal for classification is modified by giving priority to credible data. In those cases where categorization implies distinctions such as low – high, small – big, strong – weak etc., distinctions are made in relationship to one another (Lee, 1999). There are no normative or objective distinctions.

Data used in articles III and IV were processed thematically based on the theoretical concepts presented in the theoretical background. In similar manner as above, statements were used in the cases where they were considered relevant to understanding, but even here data were used to both deepen and broaden the theoretical themes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).

Analyzing the data

Both texts and interviews were analyzed based on the theoretical framework presented (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Understanding of the organization of

clubs was thus assigned to contextual factors as opposed to actors with intentions. In a similar way the understanding of individual experiences is restricted to organizational factors as opposed to individual factors.

My analysis is one of many possible analyses. An analysis which can, nevertheless, contribute to an understanding of the phenomena, processes and circumstances studied, offers pointers to how other similar phenomena, processes and circumstances can be understood, and bring knowledge to the context studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If my analysis is to be seen as stronger or more trustworthy than another depends on how carefully and transparently I have described my points of departure and my procedures. A carefully made, transparent, consistent and internally coherent study, using my arguments, is trustworthy and it is in those arguments that the strength of my study lies.

Presenting the results

The way my interpretations are presented is also of significance for the complete understanding of the thesis. This thesis is presented as four separate but partially interdependent articles and one introductory section. This has affected my writing.

In any communication with an international research community both delimitation of results and theoretical positioning are highly regarded. This should not be a problem for any researcher but rather an advantage. However, one problem which arises is that both results and the use of theory must fit in the disciplinary boxes already defined by the English-speaking research community which sometimes results in a style of writing and a use of vocabulary neither intentional nor fully mastered. Delimitation of results also restricts ideas and arguments making some discussions and intellectual arguments “unfitting”.

Research published in sport management related journals has also affected my research and my writing. As previously touched upon many of those contributions are at a descriptive level based on quantitative data (Slack, 1999). Where theoretical contributions have been made, rational and mechanical explanations have been used (Henry & Theodoraki, 2000). This is not a criticism of descriptive studies or of a certain type of theoretical approach but rather an illustration of some factors that have influenced in my writing. My thinking and consequently my writing has been affected by previous research in the field which has occasionally led me to a vocabulary often associated with quantitative data and rational approaches. This is more visible in some articles and less in others. But my ambition has been to liberate my thinking and my writing from the approaches and vocabulary that have dominated in sport management research for most of its existence and instead contribute qualitative data and a theoretical approach which

could complement and deepen the understanding of organizations.

My own development during the writing of this thesis is also visible in the articles. Developing from a clear-cut view about how and why organizations appear and behave the way they do and with what consequences, to another and more complex view. Through experiencing a changed view of the world and the reality, my view of organizations and human beings has also changed during my writing.

VI. THE ARTICLES IN BRIEF

The four articles this thesis is based on ask four separate but interconnected questions stemming from four basic assumptions about how and why organizations appear and behave the way they do and with what consequences. Before the overall results and conclusions are presented and discussed the four articles, together with their questions and basic assumptions, will be discussed in relation to each other and to the objectives of the thesis.

Article I

Fahlen, J. (submitted). Going Professional - An Analysis of Change in Swedish Ice Hockey.

In article I that part of the objectives aimed at creating knowledge on the development of Swedish ice hockey is studied. The article examines the reasons behind and consequences of this development. The study takes its departure from the first basic assumption that organizations are affected by surrounding environment and dependent on legitimacy. Focusing on the development in Swedish ice hockey 1967-2000 the article aims to highlight how norms, values and ideals have changed over time and have contributed to the change in Swedish ice hockey from an amateur sport based on idealistic motives and volunteer efforts to a professional sport based on entertainment and commercial forces.

The article, which in principal is based on analysis of annals and annual reports, reveals how norms, values and ideals with the regard to the direction, management and practice of ice hockey change from amateur ideals such as team spirit, sportmanship and honour to professional ideals such as efficiency, profit and media coverage.

The article, using arguments taken from institutional theory, shows how this change has occurred. Via milestones such as changes in the number and nature of actors in the organizational field that Swedish ice hockey is part of, changes in the interaction among the actors and between the field and other fields, and changes in regulatory structures, the total change in Swedish ice hockey is demonstrated.

The results show, at a more concrete level, the way in which changing norms and values facilitated the entry into the field of commercial actors such as television networks and corporate sponsors, educational establishments such as upper secondary schools with specific ice hockey

programs and university colleges, and introduced a closer interaction with actors outside the field such as foreign leagues and foreign investors. Events which in turn led to new and changed values, new and changed interaction patterns among clubs, national and international associations and federations, and eventually new and changed balances of power.

The results further show the mechanisms, processes and forces that restrict and facilitate these changes. Despite homogenization, through coercive, mimetic and normative pressures, which according to institutional theory restrict change in an organizational field such as the one studied, the article shows how organizational resistance, capacity, power, interest and interactions with organizations outside the field and interactions with other fields facilitate change.

These results constitute a contribution to knowledge on more general issues such as how and why values are established, maintained and changed within and between generations, groups and individuals and over time. The results also show how these changes in values have affected the social, cultural and historical context of Swedish ice hockey. In all, the article shows how institutional theory can be used in understanding change in Swedish ice hockey. This understanding can in turn indicate the direction in which development is heading and how it can be managed.

Article II

Fahlen, J. (2006). Organizational Structures of Swedish Elite Ice Hockey Clubs. *Sport und Gesellschaft - Sport and Society*, 3(1), 57-80. © Lucius & Lucius Verlagsgesellschaft mbH

Article II continues the exploration of the consequences the above-mentioned changes have had on the organization of Swedish ice hockey. The article takes its departure in the second basic assumption that organizations can be described in terms of structure. It is simultaneously implied that an understanding of organizational structure is partially achieved by looking at the development as described in article I. The purpose of article II is to answer the second question in the thesis: How is Swedish elite ice hockey organized and what factors have contributed to this?

By studying and categorizing 11 clubs based on the structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization it was possible to compare the respective organizations. The article is based mainly on interviews with each general manager who was asked to talk about the division and coordination of workload and decision-making in the club.

Arguments from institutional theory were used to gain an understanding of similarities and variations in organizational structure among the clubs. The similarities found were explained by the existing norms and values in

the field. The social and cultural context that these clubs were part of, in terms of traditions, trends, norms, values and ideals, exerts expectations concerning what constitute desirable, suitable and legitimate structures. These expectations are mediated by the coercive, mimetic and normative pressures which, according to institutional theory, exist in all fields. These isomorphic pressures emanate from authorities, successful competitors, educational establishments and trade organizations.

The variation in organizational structure found were not studied in detail but could nevertheless be understood in terms of the homogenizing processes described above. An understanding of different organizational structures can be achieved by using arguments such as competing values on suitable principals of organization, resistance to prevalent principals of organizing, and lack of visible rewards for adaptation to prevailing principals of organizing.

The article shows at a more concrete level how the clubs are organized. The clubs vary in relation to each other from low to high specialization, standardization and centralization but present many similar characteristics such as organizational form, subsidiary businesses, cooperation with so-called farm clubs and upper secondary schools, types of employments and distribution of workload.

Thus the results show how prevailing norms and values regarding organization at club levels affect the clubs in the article with more or less visible and active pressure being applied by authorities, RF, SIF, other leagues, other sports, other forms of entertainment, sponsors, competitors and educators. The results can, therefore, also cast light on more general issues such as how values are transferred among groups and over time, how processes such as professionalization and commercialization affect the direction, management and practice of sport, and how and why organizations change (or don't).

These results taken together show how institutional theory can offer an understanding of the manner in which Swedish ice hockey is organized and why. Such an understanding could, if one wished, provide a few pointers to how it could be changed.

Article III

Fahlén, J. (2005). Organizational Structure – Perceived Consequences for Professionals and Volunteers: A comparative study of two Swedish elite ice hockey clubs. In Patriksson, G. (Eds.). *Aktuell beteendevetenskaplig idrottsforskning – SVEBI:S årsbok 2005*. Lund: Lunds universitet. © Svensk förening för beteendevetenskaplig idrottsforskning.

In article III the focus partly shifts from an organizational level to individual experiences. This article corresponds to that part of the objectives which examines how clubs are experienced by individuals working or volunteering in them. The article takes its departure from the third basic assumption that organizational structure affects individuals working in an organization and variations in individual experiences follow variation in organizational structure.

Interviewing 12 individuals from two structurally different clubs about their experiences of distribution and coordination of workload and decision-making made it possible to study experiences of organizational structure at an individual level. It was also possible to compare experiences of more developed structures with those of less developed structures.

The individual experiences are discussed in relation to findings concerning job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The results show that different organizational structures seem to give rise to different experiences but also that some experiences are similar regardless of which of the two clubs the individual worked in. Similar to the arguments from institutional theory presented in previous articles some results suggest that individual experiences are regimented. However, the homogenization does not seem to be connected to club structures but rather to structures, norms, values and ideas outside the clubs, which seem to be similar regardless of which of the clubs in the field the individual works in.

On a more concrete level the results show how employees and volunteers in two structurally different ice hockey clubs are in comparative agreement and have similar experiences of issues concerning the elite program vs. the youth program, formal education and training, strategic- vs. operative operations, and personal freedom of action. But when it comes to experiences of the structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization, variation become apparent. Individuals working or volunteering in the club with more developed structures in general have more positive experiences than individuals working or volunteering in the club with less developed structures. However, both groups agree that more developed structures are desirable.

The results taken together show that some organizational features have a greater impact on individual experiences than others or that individual values override experiences from organizational features. Regardless of this, not all experiences can be traced back to organizational structure, which was neither the ambition nor the point of departure. The results could nevertheless be used to create working conditions for employees and volunteers in ice hockey clubs conducive to job satisfaction and organizational commitment which could also facilitate the recruitment of new staff and reduce turn-over in existing staff.

Article IV

Fahlén, J. (2005). Organizational Structures in Sport Clubs – Exploring the Relationship between Individual Perceptions and Organizational Positions, *The Sport Journal*, 8(3). © United States Sports Academy.

The fourth article in the thesis continues the study of individual experiences. This article takes its departure in the fourth basic assumption that individual relationships to, experiences of and opinions about organizational structure vary depending on where in the organization they work. The purpose of the article is to answer the fourth question in the thesis: How are individual experiences affected by factors such as remuneration, authority and centrality?

The results are based on interviews with eight individuals working or volunteering in two ice hockey clubs. The individuals were operating in four different positions in respective clubs. The positions were defined by hierarchical level, line or staff position, and whether the commitment was regulated through employment or was voluntary. Individual experiences were studied in relation to the structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization, making it possible to compare them with each other and with regard to individual positions.

The results show that individual relationships to, experiences of and opinions about organizational structure vary depending on where in the club the individual works. This variation is shown to result in tensions between the different positions, but some similarities in experiences also exist, regardless of organizational position. Thus, these results cannot be understood entirely through the idea of organizational position, but the concepts of job satisfaction and organizational commitment also contribute. Similarly to the results in article III, it seems that some experiences and opinions are not connected to the actual organization or organizational position. Whether these experiences and opinions are related to the norms, values and ideals prevalent in the organizational field the clubs are part of remains to be discovered.

At a more concrete level the article shows how experiences of and opinions about the distribution and coordination of work and decision-making differ among board members, coaches, marketing assistants and volunteers in the youth programs, with regard to organizational position. Experiences and opinions of those in high hierarchical positions differ from those in low positions. Those in paid positions differ from those in volunteer positions. Those in line positions differ from those in staff positions. However, some experiences and opinions are similar, mostly concerning workload and who should be doing what.

Taken together, the article presents some examples of how job satisfaction and organizational commitment can be affected by the

organization the individual works in and that the position held also is of importance. It is also shown how the developments in sport so far have affected people working as paid employees and volunteers in sport and the consequences professionalization and commercialization may have. This knowledge could, if there is a need and interest, be used in efforts to relieve some of the tensions between individuals and groups in these and similar organizations. The knowledge could also be used, together with that presented in article III, to provide some pointers towards making working conditions more attractive to paid personnel and, perhaps even more important, to volunteer staff in sport.

VII. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is a study of the management of Swedish elite ice hockey. The overall objective was to investigate how, why and with what consequences Swedish ice hockey has changed. The consequences in focus are how Swedish ice hockey is organized and how this is experienced by individuals working and volunteering in Swedish ice hockey clubs. The purpose of the thesis was to contribute with knowledge on the direction, management and practice of sport using Swedish elite ice hockey as an example.

In this concluding chapter, overall results and conclusions in relation to the above-mentioned objectives and purpose are discussed. Previous chapter demonstrated how the articles respectively answered the four questions asked under the section Objectives and research questions. This chapter discusses this further and also how the four articles relate to each other.

a) The results taken together show how the structures in elite ice hockey clubs are affected by surrounding environment and societal developments. The clubs are influenced by homogenization through coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. Results show that adaptation is not necessarily made for reasons of efficiency or rationalization but is rather related to an adaptation to prevalent norms and ideals concerning legitimate ways of organizing. Longitudinal studies would be necessary in order to gain further insights into the process of institutionalization and how these clubs are actually shaped by these external pressures. Thus it would be possible to achieve another understanding of what really happens in the meeting between isomorphic pressures and the power, capacity, interest, and resistance of the club and how that in turn shapes a club. It would then also be possible to see which structures are being shaped by external pressures similar for all clubs in the field, and which structures are being shaped by unique internal conditions.

b) The results also show how organizations can be described in terms of organizational structure and its dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization. The similarities in the clubs were distinct and clearly demonstrated how institutional pressures work. However in this case too it seems further studies would be needed to better understand, for example, how competing values and resistances to prevalent norms create variation among the clubs.

c) The results further show how individuals perceive organizational structures. Both differing organizational structures and differing organizational positions are important in experiences of and opinions about

organizational structure. This importance becomes especially visible when the experiences and opinions of the individuals working in the club with more developed structures are compared with the experiences and opinions of the individuals working in the club with less developed structures. The same is true for comparisons of individuals in high and low hierarchical positions, line and staff positions, paid and volunteer positions. However, other results suggest that some experiences and opinions are similar regardless of organization and/or position. Whether these similarities are related to field-specific values, club cultures, leadership, or individual characteristics such as age, gender, background or education remains to discover. This phenomena demands closer study of organizational and individual characteristics if a more nuanced understanding is to be achieved. Regardless of institutional, organizational or individual explanations the results emphasize the importance of studies which take different approaches.

On a more abstract level the results offer examples of the processes affecting organizations and individuals in the social, cultural and historical context of sport but also how both organizations and individuals take part in these processes. At the same time this shows how surrounding structures and individual actions such as exercising power, interest, resistance and capacity work together in the shaping of organizations.

d) The thesis can also offer descriptions of how and why certain values are established, maintained, changed and disappear in a context and how such processes also can change the context. This also highlights how several sets of values are active simultaneously and compete for prevalence. Values which are not seldom introduced as influences from other related and/or desirable fields. The results also show that when new actors are introduced in the field prevalent values change. This becomes particularly evident when new actors, who do not take part in joint activities for the same reasons as existing actors, are introduced. When, for example, actors such as television networks, sponsors, employed staff etc. enter the field with goals other than playing ice hockey, values change. But it is not only new actors that can change existing values. The results show how actors, who have been part of the field for a longer period, change over time. The roles of the government, the associations, the clubs, the coaches and the players have changed over time, which in turn has affected institutional values and ideas.

When values change the conditions for activities and operations in the field change. The results show how regulations regarding taxes, grants and subsidies, the forms of organizations, the forms of employment, international relations, relations between associations, federations and trade organizations change.

e) The results show how homogenization connected with prevalent values rewards the organizations who adapt. Yet, rewards are not necessarily connected to more efficient direction or management. This shows how

increasing efficiency is not the universally prevailing engine that drives development. On the contrary it would seem that society, or at least the part of it studied in this thesis, has reached a point in development where the striving for efficiency is partially replaced by the striving for legitimacy. Striving for efficiency is certainly also present but, as I would argue, with the underlying purpose to act legitimately.

f) Competing values and competing opinions concerning best practices show how the actor, in both organizational and individual form, has the final say in decision-making through making interpretations. Institutional pressures through coercive, mimetic and normative forces are interpreted in different ways which also illustrates how change over time and variation among organizations can be understood within the framework of institutional theory. But the results also show that this decision-making is not necessarily tied to rationality but rather to culture, traditions, trends, assumptions, expectations, norms, values and ideals. Institutional theory has proved useful throughout this thesis in understanding various aspects of Swedish elite ice hockey clubs. The results show how arguments proposed by other institutional theorists (competition and interaction, ambiguous goals, non-profit operations, difficulties in calculating efficiency, structured environment) are easily applicable in the study of the organizations in this thesis.

g) At a general level this thesis can contribute an organizational perspective on Swedish sport with a focus on societal processes, norms and values. The thesis can also contribute to international research on sport through its examples taken from the unique conditions in Swedish sport. This does not only broaden empirical results but also theoretical understanding. Additionally the results can broaden general organization theory with examples drawn from non-profit and volunteer-based organizations.

In that respect it becomes particularly evident how the thesis can contribute to theory. Since most of the theory used in this thesis springs from research based on, and used on data from profit-driven organizations in traditional production industries, some concepts and arguments lose some of their explanatory power. In such a way new data can enrich theory. This is also true for the problems and the research questions considered important to the concepts and the methods used in the study, and for the explanations used to create understanding of that which is observed. Results and conclusions can in that respect also advise on new or supplementary research such as previously suggested.

Implications for practice

In this concluding section the results presented up to now are discussed in

relation to the actors involved in Swedish elite ice hockey: the government, the Swedish ice hockey association, the elite ice hockey clubs, and finally the individuals working and volunteering in the clubs.

The state

The government's relationship to the sports movement has varied over time, both regarding legislation and as financing. As some results indicate there are tensions between the elite program and the youth program in the clubs. These tensions are often the result of competing views about resource allocation. Government support for sport (the distribution between elite programs and mass programs, between youth programs and adult programs, between fitness programs and leisure programs) is a matter of debate. In many cases more than one type of program is run within the same club. Thus, it is not always easy to see exactly where the support is going, for the contributor, the receiver or the observer.

This lack of clarity causes both internal tensions, as the results in this thesis indicate, and tensions between the sports movement as a receiver of support and other establishments claiming just cause for support. At the same time the support to sport itself is being questioned. As is the contribution sport is said to make to society. The downsides of sport, such as social exclusion, drug taking, hooliganism and injuries are also brought into the discussion. To relieve some of these tensions and the conflicts they give rise to in clubs, between clubs and associations, between the sports movement and other prospective beneficiaries, the criteria for support could be formulated more clearly.

The criteria could also be sharpened so that politically desired effects could be achieved. Regulations and legislation governing sports clubs are under constant debate and are given a lot of attention in the media. Partly the discussion arises from a struggle over resources. Every now and then reports about tax evasion, dirty money, illegal transactions involving grants and benefits, and unfair competition in sport reach the media. The cause of this behaviour is always open to discussion but the lack of clarity in the legislation governing these organizations probably does not make things any easier. The comparatively loose regulations together with recurring shady business deals affect the credibility of sport as a societal establishment and beneficiary of public resources. The loss of credibility also affects the authorities who decide on and distribute the support. An update of the legislation could help to create a clear basis for the decisions communicated by clubs, authorities and politicians.

However, such updated legislation would at the same time restrict the independence popular movements in Sweden have traditionally enjoyed. Regulating and legislating popular movements would imply a changed view of democracy which could have more far-reaching consequences which are

beyond the scope of this thesis to speculate about. Intrusions into activities such as the sports movement that are protected by the constitution could have consequences for other types of activities, such as political and religious, which in most people's opinions are worth protecting.

The sports movement

As described in Chapter II, Swedish ice hockey and other sports have evolved from activities based mainly on volunteers to activities based mainly on commercial forces. This development has partially diminished the government's influence over sport and, in some cases, has also relocated some sport activities outside the sports movement and its national governing bodies. RF's attitude has long been that there should be a sports movement held together which includes both elite sport and sport for all, youth sport and entertainment sport. However, some results in this thesis indicate that the part of the sports movement constituted by these clubs does not always see itself as comprised of non-profit organization. Nor do these organizations take it for granted that their league needs to be connected to the rest of the league system. New regulations allowing sports clubs to form companies add further weight to a dividing line between traditional amateur sport based in the sports movement and a new form of entertainment sport.

This has so far not resulted in any major problems but could in the long run push the sports movement, through RF, to take a stand concerning the intention of keeping all sport together. Today it is already a complicated matter to assess which organizations, divided in one club part and one corporate part or kept together, are entitled to grants, subsidies and tax exemptions; which organizations are open to all, use their resources in the prescribed manner, and serve the public good; which organizations are allowed to arrange lotteries and which are entitled to public support such as police protection at events. These issues have been and continue to be discussed frequently in the sports movement but, as some results in this thesis suggest, no easy solutions are available.

The Swedish ice hockey association

The discussion about a split-divided or all-encompassing sports movement also affects the association in which Swedish ice hockey is organized. However, as Swedish elite ice hockey is also organized through the trade organization - the Swedish Hockey League (SHL) and the players' union (SICO) more than one actor claims the principal right of interpretation and power. With increasing commercialization the struggle over influence hardens. As some of the results in the thesis show the balance of power in Swedish elite ice hockey is tipping in favour of the clubs. Owning the rights to the most commercially saleable product - the elite league - the clubs have

over the years grasped the lion's share of broadcasting and advertising rights connected with the elite league and also some national team events. Thus, the clubs have gained a position from which they in many respects much can dictate their own terms. If this means in the long-runs that the elite clubs will form a separate league of their own unconnected with the rest of the league system, or whether things will develop in a different way remains to be seen. But regardless of which direction is taken SIF faces a situation where the democratic principles the association was founded on are at risk to the benefit of the commercial principles the results in this thesis talk about.

Earlier in this section shady businesses were discussed as one result of unclear legislation. This phenomenon can also be viewed with regard to competition. As touched upon earlier commercialization can be related to increasing competition which in turn is said to be a result of increasing internationalization, shorter distances, and increased cultural understanding. Together with unclear legislation this increasing competition might explain the financial troubles many sports clubs have found themselves in. Competition over players, spectators, sponsors, media attention, viewers and ultimately resources seems to show shady business deals in a more favourable light and at the same time to lead to increasing legal risk-taking. Making it to the play-offs, avoiding relegation or winning the championship has become so important that costs such as the purchasing of new players, salaries, etc. that are immediately associated with success have been given higher priority than costs perhaps less closely associated with success such as tax and loan payments, etc.

In an effort to regulate the financial activities of the clubs a licence was launched which is described in detail in article I. The aim was to prevent financial irregularities by using sanctions, but it is too soon to say whether these measures will prove sufficient to prevent future risk-taking and/or shady deals. The single largest cost for the clubs is the salaries for the players and it is in the area of salaries that clubs compete most fiercely with each other and with other leagues. In order to be able to offer a competitive product clubs outbid each other. A tempting measure to restrict this upward spiral would be to control the market or the salaries in some way but since competition is international a salary capping or similar measures would not be very effective. As the results show such restrictions are also contrary to European legislation. But regardless of possible solutions these issues illustrate the importance of the challenges facing SIF and the future of Swedish ice hockey.

The clubs

As the discussion above suggests, the results in this thesis could be used to indicate a number of issues that the actors in Swedish ice hockey should discuss. Some issues are particularly important to the clubs where elite ice

hockey is played, managed and directed. As the results show much time and effort is spent on tensions and arguments over resources between paid personnel and voluntary staff, and between representatives of the elite programs and the youth programs. These tensions illustrate several issues simultaneously. In order to maintain trust in its role as a non-profit organization, open for all, for the public good and thus able to enjoy the privileges associated with this position, participate in formal discussions, and recruit members, athletes and volunteers it is important to guard the democratic principles the club as an organization rests on. In the light of this it is vital to define members' rights, board responsibilities, and staff tasks.

If on the other hand this ends, as some of the results indicate, in a split between the elite programs and the youth programs or a wave of conversions into companies, different issues have to be faced but they are not less important to discuss or easier to solve. One interesting issue is whether volunteers working today in Swedish elite ice hockey clubs are interested in working without remuneration in a company designed to create profit for its shareholders instead of creating meaningful leisure-time occupations for the local youth. Or would they wish to volunteer in the elite program even if the motives for volunteering are closer to the youth program? If clubs convert into companies and separated elite programs are reduced to using only paid staff in future remains to be explored but, as the results in the thesis show, leading organizations have historically often become models for later norms and in this particular case it will be interesting to see what the future norm will be.

The individuals

Basing this thesis on data obtained from individuals active in Swedish elite ice hockey clubs at various levels has made it possible not only to construct knowledge about how certain phenomena are perceived but also how the individuals would like it to be if they could have it their own way. The results show that more developed structures are more conducive to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. If these two effects are desirable, efforts to create more developed structures would be imminent. Hiring and educating people are perhaps the most obvious measures but neither of them are particularly cheap. Nor can the move towards more developed structures be the responsibilities solely of individuals. When it comes to developing specialization, standardization and centralization there are numerous efforts, as the results show, that can be made without many resources or much money. For example, a simple job description could on its own define the specialization of tasks, standardize routines, and specify the person's position in the chain of command. This is no miracle cure but is an example of how development can be achieved with a minimum of effort and resources. It is also an example of the type of measures many individuals

desire according to the results, or to put it the opposite way, the lack of such measures is perceived as creating problems, and conflicts and producing poor performances.

If smaller deviations are disregarded, the results show that both paid staff and volunteers think that the elite program and the youth program should be separated. Most experience great personal liberty of action, which they also wish to retain. However, one difference that emerged is that individuals in high, paid and administrative positions also want to control individuals, or at least their tasks, in low, volunteer and technical positions. Most would also like the opportunity to focus on fewer tasks, apart from the office staff who instead would like to have more tasks within their jobs. Most do not think that formal education is important in their own or any other position, apart from that of the coach whom everyone thinks should be formally trained. All, except the board members, would like to see the board involved in the daily work.

Concluding remarks

It is evident that ice hockey and presumably other sports have come to be about more than just winning games. Boardroom decisions, sponsor deals and player drafts attract almost just as much attention and media coverage as actual game results. In order to be competitive on ice, clubs need to be competitive off ice. This challenge is taken on with a number of different approaches and with differing amount of success as this thesis has shown. Without pointing out one approach as more successful than another when it comes to creating competitive results on ice I think it can be safe to say that direction and management of elite ice hockey has become important.

However, direction, management and practice of elite ice hockey is not only an issue at club level but just as important at individual, associational and governmental levels. As the approach in this thesis and its four articles have suggested, management of elite ice hockey calls for considerations at multiple levels. What once started as a professionalization of players at elite levels has now come to embrace many parts of the Swedish sports movement at most levels and concerns more than just paid players. As this thesis has shown, professionalization of sport has become much more than just a matter of payment.

As argued throughout this thesis changes and development in Swedish ice hockey ascribed to the process of professionalization have come to be just as much a process of striving for legitimacy. The Olympic Games in Torino and a Swedish silver medal in the women's ice hockey fresh in mind could be interpreted as a manifestation of this striving. The efforts and resources now invested in women's ice hockey have since long been surpassed by most Swedish sports and is essential for all organizations, at both club and

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national levels, aspiring to be recognized as a modern, conscious and equal organizations. Even though this thesis has focused on other aspects than gender differences this example illustrates how the understanding of professionalization, change, Swedish sport organizations and Swedish ice hockey calls for analysis's at many levels.

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ARTICLES I-IV

I

Going Professional - An Analysis of Change in Swedish Ice Hockey

Josef Fahlén

Department of Education
Umeå University
901 87 Umeå, Sweden
E-mail: Josef.fahlen@pedag.umu.se

Abstract: This paper reports on the analysis of change in Swedish ice hockey from amateurism to professionalism between 1967 and 2000. Utilizing ideas from institutional theory this paper explores the nature of this transformation by examining changes in field configuration, interaction patterns, and regulatory structures. Findings are based on an analysis of official yearbooks and annual reports providing data on both organizational field constituency and on significant events. The results show how new actors transformed values and ideas on legitimate activities, goals and organization, how adjustments to and resistance against these new ideas transformed inter-organizational relations, and how these new actors and changed relations eventually combined to new power balances in Swedish ice hockey.

Keywords: organizational field transformation; organizational change; sport organizations; amateurism; professionalism; professionalization

Biographical note: Josef Fahlén is teaching organizational theory and organizational behaviour at the Sport Management Program at the Department of Education, School of Physical Education and Sport, Umeå University, Sweden. In pursuing his PhD he has been interested in organizational design and organizational change in sport.

Sport, like social and economic life in Sweden, has seen some extensive changes during recent decades. From taking the form of recreational games for a fortunate few, sport has now become both a source of income for many and the main leisure activity of the majority (Peterson, 2002). As in most modern international sport, the ideals in contemporary Swedish sport spring from those advocated by the gentleman amateur in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Sport was to be exercised for the love of the game and not for personal financial benefit (Blom & Lindroth, 1995). Since 1967, starting from the point when the amateur rules were abolished, Swedish sport has in a more evident way evolved from an amateur sport based on idealistic motivation and volunteer efforts into professional sport (the terms professional, professionalized, professionalism and professionals refer, throughout this text, to the association with payment and not to an attitude or a behaviour) with its base in on market forces and gainful employment. In Sweden this development has hitherto been most apparent at the upper level of a few male, crowd-drawing sports but some authors argue that the effects can be traced to other sports and down to the grass roots (Peterson, 2002).

On the basis of insights from institutional theory, this text will empirically explore this transformation between 1967 and 2000 and the events that might have contributed to the change. Using as an example the game of ice hockey in its role as one of the pioneers, the analysis aims to illustrate further the nature of this transformation and its implications. As this article will illustrate, Swedish ice hockey is a small sport in a small country compared to the major ice hockey nations Canada, U.S.A. and Russia, but is nevertheless quite successful. In the light of such comparisons, the article can provide some interesting observations and also provide practitioners with an understanding of recent changes in practice while giving some indication of how to handle change in the future. Before going into more detail about the theoretical insights mentioned I shall provide a brief background to the course of events constituting the transformation which I shall argue has taken place.

Contextual Background

Swedish Sport before 1967

The first official definition of the amateur and a prohibition of its counterpart, the professional, were adopted by the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) in 1904. “An amateur is someone who has never competed for prize money or for remuneration from betting, who has never taught, exercised or administered sport for profit and never knowingly participated in competitions with professionals.” [my translation] (Wikberg, 2005, p. 100). The regulations were the sum of a set of moral values, ideas about social exclusion, and financial restrictions. The fundamental idea was to strive to achieve equal terms by

eliminating excessive training, trade-specific advantages, and advantages associated with financial compensation.

The prohibition of professionalism was revised a number of times up to 1948 when it was replaced by general competition regulations. The new ruling allowed the amateur to receive minor prizes and remuneration for loss of earnings but non-compliance was still punished with life-long suspension (Wikberg, 2005). Despite a number of cases which attracted much attention and about which a great deal was written, the Swedish amateur rules were in use until 1967. During the 63 years under the amateur flag RF suspended a number of athletes accused of selling their awards, competing for prize money, or receiving remuneration for loss of earnings that exceeded an acceptable level.

Swedish Ice Hockey before 1967

Ice hockey made its entry into the field of Swedish sport in 1920 with the participation in the Antwerp Olympics. Two years later seven clubs the Swedish Ice Hockey Association (SIF) which was admitted into RF. During succeeding years the Swedish Championship was established (1922), the Swedish king, Gustaf V, inaugurated the first indoor rink (1931), Sweden hosted the World Championships for the first time (1949), and the Swedish national team won its first World Championship (1953) (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.c). During this period Swedish ice hockey was still a minor winter sport in terms of number of participants, clubs, spectators and media attention. But the appeal of ice hockey grew every year with the number of clubs increasing from seven in 1922 to 1620 in 1965, and SIF's turnover increasing from SEK 4800 in 1927 to SEK 300 000 in 1948 (Fahlström, 2001).

Increased international competition from the professional transatlantics and the state-aided Soviets forced Swedish ice hockey to take action in order to keep pace. The elite clubs organized themselves into the "League Association of Elite Ice Hockey" in 1955 (later renamed the Swedish Hockey League (SHL)). SIF encouraged the clubs to build indoor artificially-frozen ice rinks, as a way of overcoming weather that was too mild for ice or too cold for spectators. A national tournament for 15-year-olds, the "TV puck", was established in 1959 as a way of recruiting young players and attracting national interest. The clubs tried to cover their costs by having advertising slogans on their equipment. SIF extended the season to 21 games (having started with 3 games in 1922) in 1961 lasting from November to February in an effort to increase box office revenue and to develop the players (Stark, 1997). One of the more visible signs of increasing competition was the struggle to acquire talented players. With the national team serving as a shop window, foreign leagues, with the North American *National Hockey League* (NHL) in the forefront, began to discover the skill of the Swedes and lured them abroad with lucrative contracts. In 1964 Ulf Sterner signed for

the New York Rangers and became the first professional Swedish player in modern times (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.c).

During the 1950s and the 1960s the media made their entry into Swedish sport becoming serious contenders for the ice hockey audience, beginning in 1948 with the St Moritz Olympics. In 1954-1955 Swedish Radio (SR) broadcast two games between Sweden and the Soviet Union, paying revenue to SIF which early understood the potential in claiming financial compensation for the assumed reduction in the size of the live audience. In 1957 Swedish Television (SVT) started broadcasting a weekly show dedicated entirely to sport, and in 1961 SR started to broadcast a daily show (Dahlén, 2002).

The sixties proved to be an important decade for Swedish ice hockey in many ways. The number of authorized coaches increased from 30 to 380, the number of indoor ice rinks increased from a few to 38, and the all-time high for attendance, 23192, was set in 1962 (Stark, 1997). Ice hockey had now become quite a commitment for the people involved; for example the national team players devoted 64 days to practice and matches in 1968-69, apart from their club commitments.

International comparisons

Swedish sport as a phenomenon stems from different traditions and has developed in different ways than in, for instance, England and the U.S.A.. Even if Swedish sport has been largely imported from other countries it has taken root in a different part of society and thus become invested with a different role and significance.

Where sport in England and the U.S.A. gained a foothold in the school system, at colleges and universities during the 19th century, competitive sport in Sweden developed in membership-based clubs, similar to the Free Church movement and the temperance movement, where citizens joined together to pursue a common interest. The early commercialization and professionalization of North American sport, with the National Hockey Association, formed in 1908, as one example which from its inception allowed in professional players, and its location in a private and commercial sphere (Schaaf, 2004) was not paralleled in Sweden where all sport instead was placed in the non-profit sector with financial support from the government.

These differences are still visible with most sport being exercised and organized without profit and many elite athletes combining their career in sport with a full-time civil employment. Most sport clubs in Sweden are considered non-profit rather than professional. Even the clubs at the elite level are non-profit in most cases even if their players are not. The elite league in ice hockey is not a professional league even if the players have been working more or less full-time and have been paid since the beginning of the 1980s (Sveriges ishockeyspelares centralorganisation, n.d.). The elite league is the highest division in a system comprising a

maximum of seven divisions. The system is hierarchical, based on sports merits (Sweden has, so far, only one example of a so-called closed league, where criteria other than simply sports merits are recognised).

In all, Swedish ice hockey has 66 884 (552 049) licensed players and referees (in a total population of approximately 9 million), and 301 (2501) indoor rinks (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.a) (the comparable figures for Canada as one of the big ice hockey nations with a population of approximately 31 million, are given within parentheses) (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.d). Attendance in 2002/03 was 1 653 322 distributed over 300 games, giving a mean of 5511 (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.b). The average club in the elite league has an annual budget of about SEK 50-60 million (the SEK to a USD is approximately seven to one). The average salary for a player is about SEK 35 000 per month, but top players earn three or four times that much, and in a few exceptional cases, even more (Svenska ishockeyspelares centralorganisation, n.d.). These sums can be compared with the average salary in the NHL of USD 1 050 000 per year in 2000 (Coakley, 2001).

Theoretical Background

In studying the evolution and transformation of organizations, groups, fields, sectors and movements in our society, explanations are not seldom sought in the external environment (Daft, 2004). Researchers with various perspectives on organizations - institutional, resource dependence, and population ecology theorists - direct their attention toward forces, mechanisms, events and processes beyond the organizational boundary and how organizations adapt in order to survive and succeed (Pugh, 1997). In institutional theory attention has been directed towards the development of homogeneity in organizational fields and the establishing of institutional norms. The basic tenet is that organizational environments are characterized by rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy (Scott & Meyer, 1983). Institutional theory has not traditionally been regarded as explaining change so much as similarities and stability of organizational arrangements within organizational populations or fields (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). However, by integrating the concept of organizational action and agency more recent contributions have enabled institutional theory to incorporate the notion of change, and thus offer a more comprehensive explanatory model for organizational phenomena (cf. O'Brien & Slack, 2003).

It is commonly argued that organizational change is sector or field specific (cf. Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1995). Embracing all kinds of organizations in abstract studies does not acknowledge the complex nature of society in general and organizational life in particular. Powell

(1988) stresses in a similar vein that a better understanding is needed of how organizational environments are organized and how they influence the structures and strategies of particular organizations that operate within them. Organization theory must move beyond broad characterizations of organizational environments and instead develop ways of specifying the collective properties of organizational fields. Studying change in Swedish sport would thus first imply specifying Swedish sport as an organizational field. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that all organizations are embedded in organizational fields and are subject to pressures from a) key suppliers, b) resource consumers, c) product consumers, d) competitors, and e) regulatory agencies. According to Scott (1991) organizations are also subject to pressures from 1) professional and trade associations, 2) critical exchange partners, 3) the government, and the general public. Synthesizing these two definitions and transferring them to the current study would thus imply an organizational field comprising a) players, clubs and sponsors, b) clubs and SIF, c) fans, media and sponsors, d) competing clubs, e) SIF, and 1) SIF, SHL, and the players' union (SICO), 2) other domestic and foreign leagues, and 3) RF, the government and the general public.

However, to be part of an organizational field is, according to Child and Smith (1987), not simply to be subject to similar economic, technical, and legislative reality as other organizations in same field but also to share a similar way of thinking. This similar way of thinking about what is legitimate concerning activities, goals, and organization is often referred to as institutions. Institutions specify what could and should be done and how it could and should be done in a given field. Institutions are taken-for-granted rules that may be supported by public opinion or the force of law (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutions are values, ideas and general ways of doing things which become unquestioningly accepted through the forces of habit, history and tradition (Oliver, 1992). Institutions constitute social reality for a group of organizations in a given time, opinions as to which issues are important and which are not, how to think about these issues, and finally how to act upon them.

Criticism of institutional theory often focuses on its inability to address the concept of change (cf. Oliver, 1992), which is of particular interest in this text. How do institutions change? How and why are some institutions abandoned and how and why are new institutions introduced and established? Much of the power in institutional arguments stems from the recognition of conformity, rooted in taken-for-granted practices and perspectives. So how can institutional arguments explain the transformation from amateurism to professionalism in Swedish ice hockey?

On the basis of the argument that institutions are products of field constituents, Pralahad and Bettis (1986) proposed three signposts

indicating change in an organizational field: changes in the number and nature of actors; changes in exchange processes and interorganizational linkages; and changes in regulatory structures. These changes combine to form new or altered institutions (Oliver, 1991). It is argued that institutions are stored in the mindsets of the actors in an organizational field and that these institutions result from the collected experiences of the actors constituting the field (Bettis & Pralahad, 1995). Consequently, if actors change in numbers and/or nature, so will institutions. Potential for change is thus created when new actors from different backgrounds, with other experiences and other ideas about what could and should be done and how it could and should be done enter a field. Changes in the number and nature of actors may also result in changes in exchange processes and interorganizational linkages. Just as the numbers and nature of actors can change so can relationships between actors. Eventually, changes in field configuration and interaction patterns lead to changes in regulatory structures. These three signposts indicating change in an organizational field provide a basis for data collection and interpretation of the events that I shall argue have contributed to the transformation of Swedish ice hockey from 1967 to 2000.

Method

In studying the transformation of Swedish ice hockey from amateurism to professionalism a longitudinal analysis of documents was utilized in trying to understand how the field and the institutions that guide organizational behaviour evolve (cf. Slack & Hinings, 1994). The time frame noted above was selected because of its starting-point in 1967 with the decision to abandon the formal regulations associated with the amateur and volunteer spirit, and its end-point in 2000 when Swedish ice hockey had become professionalized to the extent of making the entry of foreign investors possible.

Data were collected from official SIF yearbooks (1967-2000), SIF annual reports (1967-2000), RF yearbooks (1967-2000), SIF 75-year jubilee edition, RF 100 centenary edition, International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) 90-year jubilee edition. Following the lead of Hoffman (1999), arguing that trade journals play two significant roles in the institutionalization process in an organizational field, these sources were selected on the basis of their ability to provide data on both organizational field constituency and on significant events throughout the selected period. First, the sources used in this study act as historical records of key issues and events perceived from within a field as well as of the motivating factors behind field action. Second, the sources are organizational players themselves whose output influences issue interpretation and is subject to political pressures exerted by powerful actors within the field. The content is a biased interpretation of events and

issues, where the bias reflects the interest of the core readers and their sources of information (Hoffman, 1999).

The content was analyzed with the guidance of the three signposts proposed by Pralahad and Bettis (1986) and according to the three sub-processes data reduction, data display and drawing of conclusions suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). These were repeated before, during and after data collection. Most data reduction was conducted prior to data collection due to the definition of signposts. Following the data reduction, data were analyzed and categorized according to each signpost and displayed as seen in Table 1. Finally events were analyzed in comparison with each other to look for connections and draw theoretical conclusions.

Results and Discussion

From the assembled data, results concerning the transformation of Swedish ice hockey emerged. As shown in Table 1 results are presented and discussed according to the signposts of transformation, as noted in earlier sections. However, due to the interdependent and coevolving nature of organizational field transformation events closely bound up with each other are presented together.

Table 1 The Transformation of Swedish Ice Hockey, Result of Content Analysis

| Timeframe | Signposts | | |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| | <i>1. Change in the number and nature of actors</i> | <i>2. Changes in exchange processes and interorganizational linkages</i> | <i>3. Changes in regulatory structures</i> |
| 1965-1970 | State television Advertising agencies | European cup for national champions Transfer contracts SIF-Foreign leagues | |
| 1970-1975 | Stockholm University College of Physical Education and Sport | Settlement SIF-NHL | IOC abandons amateur rules |
| 1975-1980 | Upper secondary school | The Innsbruck Olympics Canada Cup The players union SICO is established | IIHF opens World Championships to professional players |
| 1980-1985 | | Settlement IIHF-NHL Tax authority crackdown | |
| 1985-1990 | Commercial television | Termination of a club coach | |
| 1990-1995 | | SICO on strike Tax concessions for guest workers | The Coach License Pan-European legislation |
| 1995-2000 | Foreign television network Mid Sweden University Foreign investors | Joint venture MIF-Detroit Red Wings | Elite League Commission The Elite License Settlement SHL-SIF RF allows limited sport companies |

As argued by way of introduction, organizational field transformation is induced by and in accordance with the three signposts field configuration, interaction patterns and regulatory structures. In this section these signposts will be discussed and applied to the empirical context of the transformation of Swedish ice hockey from an amateur to a professional sport.

Change in the number and nature of actors

As both the number and nature of actors changed during the period studied so too did Swedish ice hockey. Primarily, four actors and concomitant events emerged in the analysis as contributors to this change: a) professional ice hockey, b) television, c) education, and d) foreign investors.

a) Before the NHL began exploring ice hockey talent outside the North American borders and drafted the first Swedish ice hockey player Ulf Sterner in 1964 (by the New York Rangers), SIF-associated clubs and the national team were the only places where Swedish players could play ice hockey with a few minor and short-lived exceptions. Since professionals were still not welcome at the Olympics and the IIHF ran its World Championship according to the same standards, players going professional were no longer eligible for the national team. The silver medal in the World Championships in Moscow 1973 created a boost in international interest in Swedish ice hockey. The two following years some 15 of the best Swedish players left for the NHL and in 1980 Anders Kallur and Stefan Persson were the two first Swedish players to win the Stanley Cup (with New York Islanders). In 1996, 204 players left for foreign clubs and every fifth player in the elite league was of foreign descent.

The entry of professional ice hockey was followed by a whole set of ideas on how ice hockey could and should be managed. Not burdened by the amateur ideals to the same extent as their European counterparts, American sport entrepreneurs had no problem making money from their efforts. Contracting, paying and transferring players were all part of the new practice based on profitability and efficiency. This illustrates how the entry of a new actor affected the institutional norms in use at the time. As Greenwood and Hinings (1996) suggest, new actors in a field lead to new practices which in this case was initially symbolized by the transfer of players between countries. Although at first only a one-way exchange the new actor introduced a new way of thinking about players, clubs and countries. Certainly, Sweden had the same possibilities to utilize these new ideas but, as Hoffman (1999) points out, organizational choice is limited to a narrowly-defined set of options determined by the group of actors comprising the field. Amateur values still influenced strategy and action, which further illustrates the power of institutional norms. As the findings in O'Brien and Slack (2003) confirm, the longer norms have

been in place, over 60 years in this case, the more difficult they are to displace.

b) Following the increasing general interest in ice hockey, noted earlier, SIF made agreements with SVT in 1969 claiming financial reimbursement for losses in box office revenues caused by television broadcasts of the World Championships played in Sweden for the fourth time. With the newly-established possibilities of reaching far more people than the live audience, SIF and their clients realized the potential of the exposure created by the broadcasts and advertising slogans on the sideboards were introduced.

In 1989 commercial television made its entry into Swedish ice hockey. TV3, the first commercial channel in Sweden broadcast via satellite and cable, bought the broadcasting rights to the world championships. Until then Swedish viewers were quite unaware of the whole concept of broadcasting rights. Popular events had until then always been shown on public service SVT. In 1996 the German ISPR bought the broadcasting rights to the Swedish elite league and the right to broadcast Swedish ice hockey was for the first time in the hands of foreign businessmen.

Influenced by thinking in terms of profitability and efficiency, Swedish ice hockey became aware of the potential of television. As could be seen in the case of other sports and in other countries, money could be made from broadcasting agreements and commercial advertising. This resulted in the entry into the field of state, commercial, and foreign broadcasting corporations, an entry which brought with it concepts such as broadcasting rights, advertising revenues, and media partners. The entry of television was at first met with scepticism and despondency since this new technology would imply loss of box office revenues for Swedish ice hockey. But the first reaction not to allow broadcasting was later replaced by opportunistic behaviour when SIF realized the potential economic rewards that broadcast would generate. Just as Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1992) and others have shown, mechanisms for change seem to be particularly authoritative when linked with financial rewards. This change was also assisted by influences from neighbouring sectors which already used broadcasting as a source of income, thereby supporting the suggestions in Greenwood et.al. (1990) that mimetic behaviour is likely to be imported from other fields. This change has increased revenues for Swedish ice hockey but has simultaneously created a dependency. Broadcasting has also affected the actual game through the introduction of new and adapted rules, intermissions, and spectacle.

c) Lack of sufficient coaching competence had been a persistent problem in Swedish ice hockey throughout its entire development. Coaches from Canada and the United States had been imported at times but it was not until the late sixties that the training of domestic coaches picked up momentum. In 1973, SIF started to collaborate with the

University College of Physical Education and Sport in Stockholm. The idea had two aspects. First and foremost, SIF needed top-level coaches for the national team and the elite clubs to keep up with international competition. Secondly, the program was intended to work as a kind of insurance that people going into coaching would have something to fall back on.

Educational measures were also taken on other levels where the introduction of special sport programs for talented young athletes entering upper secondary school was one example. The aim was to provide young athletes with a formal education as a way of supporting their future careers beyond their active years in sport. SIF was one of the first sport federations to act, and started its first program in 1979.

In 1999 SIF took its authority as the provider of professional training of coaches and managers to a new level when it entered the university milieu. Together with Mid-Sweden University, SIF started two university programs, one for coaches and one for managers. This was seen as the final stage in the SIF coach training program which had started some 30 years earlier. Regarding managers, this was the first time SIF offered a program for staff working outside the rink.

Stimulated, partly by the new way of thinking and partly by increased competition in international tournaments and from foreign leagues, educational measures were taken to keep up. Formal training of players and coaches was introduced and developed throughout the entire period studied, resulting in such new actors as upper secondary schools and universities. As the concept of isomorphism suggests, organizational behaviour within a field becomes similar over time. Inspired by the extensive training and formal education conducted in the Soviet Union and Canada, Swedish ice hockey was soon to follow these apparently successful models. This change contributed to the professionalization of Swedish ice hockey by introducing the use of degrees and licenses and by placing ice hockey players and coaches on a par with conventional occupational groups.

d) In 2000, AIK Ice Hockey Club formed AIK Ice Hockey Limited and at that point the first foreign investor in Swedish ice hockey made his entry. The Finn Harry Harkimo, who already owned the majority of the stock in the Finnish elite ice hockey club Jokerit, bought approximately 20 percent of the shares in AIK.

After 33 years since abolishing the amateur rules, Swedish sport opened up for foreign investors. The entry of this new actor was a clear signal that Swedish sport had now abandoned the amateur idea and everything deriving from it. Swedish sport had by now fully adopted professional norms and values and would thus be able to act more professionally and efficiently. According to its advocates this would imply increased competitiveness and eventually both financial and on-ice

results, but many voices were raised that this change would reduce the power of sport club members. This drawn-out process illustrates what Kikulis and Slack (1995) refer to as high impact systems. Their argument is that values are more entrenched in certain organizational elements than others, and they identified decision-making as being a high impact system in sport organizations. Because of their strong links with values, high impact systems are hard to change, which in this case could explain the extensive resistance towards surrendering decision-making to investors.

Changes in exchange processes and interorganizational linkages

As noted in the theoretical background, changes in the number and nature of actors also result in changes in exchange processes and interorganizational linkages. Primarily, three relationships were altered which, together with concomitant events, emerged in the analysis as contributors to the change in Swedish ice hockey. The relationship between: a) professional ice hockey and amateur ice hockey; b) Swedish sport and Swedish society; and c) players and coaches and their clubs and SIF.

a) Facing the new competition from the NHL, the IIHF set up the European Cup for national champions in 1965. Initiated by the IIHF membership countries, the European Cup was intended to offer players the international routine required to keep up with North American professionals, and in the long run to create a serious contender to the NHL. SIF also took measures to face the competition from the NHL, and succeeded in mediating a deal in 1973 concerning earliest age for transfer. The deal was that no players could be drafted before their military service. In 1985 the IIHF achieved its first deal with the NHL regarding compensation to clubs exporting players to the latter.

Later during the period studied Swedish ice hockey clubs began to interest themselves in international networking. In 1997 one of the most successful clubs at the time, Malmö IF, joined forces with the NHL club Detroit Red Wings in a project similar to a farm club arrangement.

The relationship between professional and amateur ice hockey was problematic throughout the entire period studied. With the professionalized NHL on one side and the amateur IIHF and IOC with their members on the other, the exchange evolved from a complete separation to an almost joint venture. In this development both the IIHF and SIF tried to resist change with various contracts, protests and sanctions but eventually realized that cooperation was inevitable. In contrast the NHL was the more active part during this transformation, more or less dictating the terms and sidestepping or ignoring the agenda set by their counterparts. It becomes evident that in order to ensure survival and success the IOC, IIHF and their member countries had to align with their changing environment. The North American system based on efficiency and profitability proved to have both the money and hence

the power needed to impose its way of thinking on its European cousins. This power derived from the financial and sporting success the NHL could produce which led to the esteem in which it was held as the pre-eminent organization. Kondra and Hinings (1998) proposed that performance above the institutional norm can provide legitimacy for the institutionalization of new norms. Some behaviours can certainly be explained by market pressures but as Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argue some behaviours are responses to pressures from other actors such as, in this case, leading organizations.

The resistance of the IOC, IIHF and their member countries emanated from the amateur way of thinking which had been prevalent for a long time. The amateur ethos was entrenched as Skinner, Stewart and Edwards (1999) put it. Deviance from the amateur norms was met with coercive pressures from the field as the IIHF tried to regulate the international transfer market. The reluctance to abandon the amateur norm could be understood in terms of Slack and Hinings (1994) who contend that organizations are unlikely to conform to pressures that will limit their control over procedures. In a similar way O'Brien and Slack (2003) argue that actors deriving their power and privileges from current institutional norms will probably resist changing to new institutional norms. The resistance of the IIHF and its members in these terms was an effort to retain power, control and privileges. This conclusion is also supported by Kondra and Hinings (1998) who argue that dominant coalitions may act from self-interest in resisting change because doing so increases the probability of their maintaining their current positions.

b) Despite increasing revenues from international transfers, advertising and box office many Swedish ice hockey clubs found themselves in financial trouble. With few formal standards governing non-profit organizations in Sweden, and escalating competition both nationally and internationally, clubs began seeking alternative ways of financing their operations. Questionable manoeuvres in the grey area of fiscal legislation eventually attracted the attention of the tax authorities who, in 1981, cracked down on IF Troja Ljungby. This became the first fiscal case in Sweden involving a sport club.

Sweden decided to join the European Union in 1994. In adjusting to European legislation Sweden introduced a lower tax rate for foreign workers in 1993. Striving for common tax legislation within the union countries was one way of promoting competition on equal terms and many laws were passed to adjust practices restricting competition. The lower income tax rate, at 15 percent, applied to foreigners staying in Sweden for up to six consecutive months. Swedish sport clubs benefited from this new arrangement in two ways. First, clubs came to be on equal terms with their European competitors since playing in Sweden became just as financially beneficial as playing in other European countries. Second, the total expenditure on a foreign player was greatly reduced

since a six-month commitment was much cheaper in both wages and taxes.

From being an almost secluded part of society with its own rules and morals Swedish sport became more entangled with its surrounding society during the period studied. Following increasing professionalization the formation of new occupational groups and trade associations led to the increased involvement of outside agents such as tax authorities and other regulatory bodies. As exemplified by Skinner, Stewart and Edwards (1999), surrounding fields are often sources of change in institutional norms. The development noted above made the boundaries of Swedish sport more permeable and thus more sensitive to ideas from its surroundings, thereby illustrating one of the basic ideas in institutional theory that in order to ensure survival and success organizational fields must align with their surroundings.

c) Pressured by international competition, SIF created contractual documents in 1968 governing transfers to foreign clubs. SIF could not hinder a player from leaving Sweden but could apply sanctions on the player if the SIF-associated club disagreed about the terms offered by the foreign club. The sanction of permanently banning the player from all Swedish ice hockey was an attempt to keep players in Sweden, or at least encourage the player to work for an agreement that would satisfy the Swedish club.

In the footsteps of the escalating emigration and the budding professionalization Swedish ice hockey players, looking to the North American model, saw the need to organize themselves. Their employers had been organized since 1955 and the need for a strong counterpart in negotiations became important. The players' union SICO was founded in 1977. In 1995 SICO called a strike of all players who were to take part in the 1995 All-Star Game. The reason was that SICO had no share in the profits from the game. Inspired by the 103-day conflict between the NHL and the NHL Players' Association (NHLPA) in the same year, Swedish ice hockey players took a stand against the clubs and others profiting from the game.

In 1988 sponsors made their mark on decisions concerning the actual game for the first time. Owing to poor results Brynäs IF, pressured by some influential sponsors, fired their coach in mid-season. This was the first time a coach in the elite league was fired during the season and also the first time sponsors officially had a say in how the game should be played.

In the transition from non-profit to profitable, the status of players, coaches, clubs and SIF changed. The shift implied a transfer of both power and resources as actors moved from spare-time practisers and organizers to fulltime employees and employers. Players increased their independence of their clubs by signing lucrative short-term contracts with escape clauses and the once natural and honourable participation in the

national team was no longer natural. The clubs on the other hand reinforced their position regarding SIF and increased both their power and their access to resources. Through being sensitive to the new professional practice the players and the clubs were rewarded, while SIF stood by seemingly unable to predict the impact of the new way of thinking (cf. Skinner, Stewart & Edwards, 1999). This renegade or innovator behaviour, as Kondra and Hinings (1998) put it, can increase the possibility of organizational death or, as in this case, high returns while operating within existing norms would keep performance at ordinary levels. SIF on the other hand being a central actor in the field for decades was probably too embedded in the amateur norm to anticipate appropriate action.

Changes in regulatory structures

Changes in field configuration and interaction patterns contributed to changes in regulatory structures. Primarily, four structures were altered which together with concomitant events emerged in the analysis as contributors to the change in Swedish ice hockey: a) IIHF – NHL, b) Europe – Sweden, c) SHL – SIF, and d) RF – SIF.

a) Influenced by the headlong development of professional sport the IOC gradually relaxed its amateur regulations. In 1971 the IOC abandoned the amateur concept but referred instead to the rulings within each international sport federation. In 1972 the IOC allowed remuneration for loss of earnings and in 1974 it decided to fully adjust to contemporary sport. The last remnants of the amateur ruling were cleared away.

But before that the last manifestations of amateurism kept Sweden, of its own will, from participating in the 1976 Olympics owing to the players' asserted professionalism. Only two months later the IIHF finally reaped the fruits of victory after a long power struggle with the IOC. Since the IOC had abandoned its amateur ruling the World Championships were for the first time open for all without risking the players' future Olympic participation. However, the Canadian NHL professionals were still not all that eager to team up for the World Championships, but some negotiations between the IIHF and the NHLPA ensured that the next championships would be played by the strongest teams possible. The other part of the deal was that the NHLPA was given entitlement to the revenues from the newly-established Canada Cup. The first Canada Cup was played in 1976 and the Swedish national team could, for the first time, make use of all Swedish players playing professionally in the NHL. Sweden finished in fourth place and the Swedish All-Star Börje Salming was offered SEK 800 000 per season for a five-year contract with Toronto Maple Leafs.

Right from the start, European and North American ice hockey battled for regulatory power in international ice hockey throughout the entire period studied. Adjusting to the development in international sport, the

IOC abandoned the amateur ruling and the IHF declared the World Championship an open tournament. However, these efforts proved futile since the NHL succeeded in retaining its position as the more powerful part, backed by its superior powers of attraction and financial muscle. Drained of its main resource, the players, amateur ice hockey was facing extinction, at least in its own eyes. When these new pressures threatened the survival of Swedish ice hockey, SIF tried using coercive measures to force the new actor to adopt the traditional practice. But as Kondra and Hinings (1998) contend, if coercive action is too expensive or proves ineffective mimetic behaviour might instead come into play. After a few attempts to resist and regulate the practice imposed on it, Swedish ice hockey eventually gave in and instead began to mimic the new actor. This whole chain of events accords with the suggestions made by Kondra and Hinings (1998) that organizational diversity is essential for change in institutional norms.

b) One of the more ground-breaking events during the entire period studied was the so-called Bosman Case, a legal decision reached by the European Court of Justice in 1995. Prior to the Bosman Case, a player could only move to another club with the agreement of both clubs. Usually this agreement was reached by the setting of a transfer fee, regardless of whether the player's contract with the selling club had ended or not. Another condition was that only a limited number of foreign players were allowed on a squad in a particular match. Bosman based his case on a questioning of the rules regulating transfer sums after a contract has terminated by referring to the "freedom of movement" rule within the European Union. He also questioned the practice of limiting the number of foreign players in a team. The court ruled, in accordance with article 48 in the Treaty of Rome, in favour of the right of free movement for employees within the union, resulting in transfer sums between countries being considered a hindrance to this and thus illegal. The court also ruled against the regulation limiting the number of foreign (EU) players on a team, arguing that such regulations restricted competition.

Sweden's membership of the European Union involved some major changes for Swedish sport. Under the obligation to comply with Pan-European legislation, regulatory power was transferred from SIF and the Swedish government. Several attempts to avoid common tax and labour legislation have proved futile. Used to governing and regulating its own activities, the change for sport in Sweden was considerable. This illustrates the discussion in Greenwood and Hinings (1996) of how strong coupling to prevailing norms lead to great resistance to change but also dramatic change when it finally happens. Forced to adapt to surrounding society this change became isomorphic in the sense that Swedish sport organizations became more similar to outside organizations once forced to abide by the same laws. As results show, players as a collective actor were not satisfied with the status quo regarding the transfer of players and

restrictions regarding foreigners. This exemplifies what Greenwood and Hinings (1996) referred to as precipitating dynamics. A critical antecedent to change is when a powerful actor exhibits dissatisfaction with the current situation.

c) In 1994 SIF introduced the Coaching License throughout the entire league system. In an attempt to raise the standards of the coaching body the license regulated the lowest permissible degree of formal training in each division. If an elite league club failed to meet the standards they had to pay a fine to the SIF with an undertaking to correct matters in the current season.

Together with SHL, SIF also initiated several other counter-offensive moves to meet both international and domestic competition. In 1999 SIF and SHL inaugurated the so-called Elite League Commission. The purpose of the commission was to raise the standard of management in the elite clubs. In order to regulate these aspects the commission launched the so-called Elite License. To qualify for participation in the elite league, apart from results on the rink, a club also had to achieve certain standards concerning finances, organization, youth program and arena management. If a club failed to meet the standards the team would be relegated.

Joining forces in the Elite League Commission was a positive step in the otherwise problematic relationship between SIF and SHL. During the period 1995-2000 this relationship was transformed in a number of respects. In 1996 a new agreement between the two entitled SHL to 50 percent of SIF profits. In 1999 SHL took over the advertising sales associated with several national team events from SIF, increased its say in the management of the national team, and its mandate in the SIF annual assembly.

SIF's status as the primary regulatory authority was undermined during the time period studied. As one way of retaining power SIF launched licenses and commissions to regulate the behaviour of the clubs. Despite these efforts the SHL gradually increased its power in Swedish ice hockey and at the end of the period studied had almost totally transformed the regulatory structures in Swedish ice hockey. This change implied a shift in focus in Swedish ice hockey and an increased emphasis on top-level ice hockey at the expense of lower level and junior ice hockey. This further illustrates the contention in O'Brien and Slack (2003) that organizations engage in coalition building to increase their influence over administration and rule-making. With important resources such as revenues from broadcasting and commercial advertising at stake increasing influence became especially important to the SHL. As noted above, dissatisfaction of a powerful actor is a critical antecedent to change.

d) As noted earlier, lack of resources had been a frequent issue for Swedish elite ice hockey clubs. Even if ingenuity seemed to find new

sources of income, costs always seemed to increase at a faster pace. Following the international model many clubs investigated the possibilities of running their operations as a limited company instead of in the traditional non-profit form and in that way gain access to new sources of capital. To test the regulations one of the clubs, Djurgårdens IF, who already had stock capital waiting, tried to realize their plans in 1997. However, RF turned them down referring to an investigation that was then in progress. When they received the report RF decided at the 1999 annual assembly to admit limited sport companies. Prior to the decision a club affiliated to a sport federation and thereby also to the RF owned the right to participate in an appointed league. After the decision, a club was allowed to grant the use of that right to a limited sport company.

The overall transition in Swedish ice hockey from an amateur sport based on idealistic motives and volunteer forces into professional sport constructed on market forces and gainful employment was finalized with the decision taken at the RF annual assembly where to one of the cornerstones of Swedish sport, the non-profit organization, was added a new valid form of organization, the *limited sport company*. The decision opened up Swedish sport to foreign investors at the expense of the traditional sport club members. As Slack and Hinings (1994) posited, structures are underpinned by the values and beliefs of the actors involved. This fundamental change in the regulatory structures of Swedish sport thus also implies a change in underlying values and beliefs. So far, this change has meant changes in attitudes towards volunteer work, in the directing of government funds and corporate sponsoring, and in opinions concerning the legitimacy of sport.

Conclusions

This article has explored the transformation of Swedish ice hockey, the events that contributed to this change and its implications. The elements of this analysis are more specifically how:

- Swedish sport, primarily in its male elite crowd-drawing form, has changed from being an amateur-based activity exercised for fun and recreation to also being a source of income for many, exercised and organized for profit.
- this change was primarily induced 1) by the entry and change of professional ice hockey, television, education and foreign investors, 2) by the changes in the exchange processes and interorganizational linkages between professional and amateur ice hockey, Swedish sport and Swedish society, players – coaches – clubs and SIF, and 3) by changes in regulatory structures such as those involving the IIHF and the NHL, Europe and Sweden, SHL and SIF, RF and SIF.

- firmly rooted amateur values offered resistance to this change, in which groups resistance was stronger, and how resistance manifested itself.
- new norms and values were brought in from other organizational fields, where North American professional ice hockey functioned as the principal model, and how compliance with new norms and acceptance of new values increased access to resources and power.
- the change was initiated by Swedish ice hockey players moving to North America for financial benefit, followed by changes in rules and regulations and finalized by a whole new idea of how Swedish sport in general can be organized for commercial purposes.
- institutional theory can be used to understand in what manner and why organizational fields change and how it can be used in understanding the development of sport. It has also shown how change can be anticipated which can provide practitioners with options for action.

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II

Josef Fahlén

Organizational Structures of Swedish Elite Ice Hockey Clubs

Organisationsstrukturen von Schwedischen Spitzenclubs im Eishockey

Summary

This paper reports on an analysis of organizational structures in Swedish elite ice hockey and is concerned with the organization at club level, its similarities and differences with regard to the clubs' structural dimensions: specialization, standardization and centralization. Findings are based on structured interviews with the general managers of 11 clubs represented in the Swedish elite league (the first division) and on official and unofficial documents. The results, categorizing the clubs for each of these three structural dimensions into *Low*, *Medium*, and *High*, reveal some smaller variations in structural features, but mainly similarities, explained using the concept of adaptive isomorphism.

Zusammenfassung

In dem Beitrag werden die Organisationsstrukturen von Schwedischen Spitzenclubs im Eishockey analysiert. Behandelt werden Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede hinsichtlich der Strukturdimensionen Spezialisierung, Standardisierung und Zentralisierung. Die Befunde beruhen auf strukturierten Interviews mit Managern von elf Vereinen aus der höchsten Spielklasse Schwedens (Erste Division) und auf einer Auswertung offizieller und inoffizieller Dokumente. Jede Strukturdimension wird nach drei Ausprägungsgraden (*niedrig*, *mittel* und *hoch*) differenziert. Die Ergebnisse zeigen einige kleinere Variationen in den Strukturmerkmalen, aber hauptsächlich Ähnlichkeiten, die mit dem Konzept des „Adaptiven Isomorphismus“ erklärt werden.

Introduction

Due to some changes in social and economic life both locally and globally, the basis for sport organizations in Sweden has altered considerably in the last decades. Berg et al. (1993), Lindroth, (1998), Pavelka and Puronaho (2002), Peterson (1993, 2002), Theodoraki and Henry (1994), and Wijkström and Lundström (2002), among others, have noted that such changes as diminishing community sport, changes in public funding and other resource bases, the role of the state, increasing individualization, increasing emergence of commercial sport companies, increasing reliance on corporate sponsoring, increasing costs for the sporting individual and changes in public opinion about sport have forced and will continue force non-profit sport clubs to make structural adjustments.

The concern of this paper is to further our understanding of sport organizations and how changes in surrounding society might influence them. Focus is directed to the setting of amateur sport clubs and their unique mix of for-profit with non-profit and paid staff with volunteers, a contribution especially interesting in the light of the ongoing transition from amateur to professional sport. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the organization of sport on club level in Sweden, using data from elite ice hockey, assisted by the concept of organizational structure and its dimensions. The paper will describe Swedish elite ice hockey clubs by studying organizational structure and offer some explanations to these structural features, by looking at the organizational environment. While not ignoring other sources of organizational structure, environmental factors will be given priority in this paper. Given the theoretical framework of this study, attention will be directed towards structural similarities.

Theoretical Background

In illustrating how external pressures influence the formal organization of these clubs the concept of organizational structure may be utilized. This concept has been widely accepted as a useful tool for describing organizational features both in the traditional organization theory literature (e.g. Pugh, Hickson, Hinings & Turner, 1968) as in studies of sport organizations (e.g. Slack & Hinings, 1987). Over the last two decades international scholars have contributed to the understanding of sport organizations with a number of studies, primarily in the Canadian, Australian and British research communities (e.g. Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Frisby, 1985, 1986; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992; Kikulis & Slack, 1995; Kikulis, Slack, Hinings & Zimmerman, 1989; O'Brien & Slack, 1999; Skinner, Stewart & Edwards, 1999; Slack, 1985; Slack & Hinings, 1987; Theodoraki & Henry, 1994; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991). These efforts have, broadly speaking, focused on organizational characteristics, organizational configurations and on organizational variation in organizations dealing with sport in the respective country.

In explaining formal structures of organizations, organization theory has gone from the traditional rationalistic approach (e.g. Weber, 1946) to contingency theory (e.g. Thompson, 1967) and to a focus on environmental factors. Within the focus on environmental factors it has been further theorized from a number of different approaches that organizations adapt to their environments (e.g. resource-dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), population ecology-theory (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), and institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)). In the literature on sport organizations the relationship between organizational environments and organizational structures has been studied from an institutionalist perspective in e.g. Kikulis et al. (1992), Slack and Hinings (1994) and Stevens and Slack (1998).

Institutional theory, together with a number of other perspectives, offer descriptions of how environments are constituted, explanations of how organizations interact with their environments, and understandings of how certain environmental factors might affect certain characteristics within an organization. In this paper arguments from institutional theory will be used in trying to achieve an understanding of the structural features displayed in these clubs. Oliver (1988), using a typology of population collectives, proposes that institutional explanations provide stronger arguments if the cluster of organizations compete with each other and the interaction between them is direct. The organizations in this study are most definitely competing as well as interacting with each other, on-ice as well as off-ice, making the use of institutional explanations more resourceful as opposed to e.g. population ecology- or strategic choice explanations.

Institutional theory, proposed and developed by e.g. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Tolbert and Zucker (1983), explains why organizations with similar environments might resemble each other for other than functional reasons. Organizational structure is, from this perspective assumed to be affected by an institutional dimension, which in turn is composed from expectations and values from external stakeholders as how organizations should be designed. The main argument is that organizations adopt structures reflecting what the surrounding community considers legitimate ways of organizing. This legitimacy may help to ensure long-term effectiveness (Slack & Hinings, 1992), or as in this case increase the probability of survival as an elite ice hockey club. This process, referred to as isomorphism, is defined as “the constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The concept of isomorphic adaptation is not only used by institutionalists but also regarded as an explanatory force within the resource-dependence theory and the population-ecology theory. While the source of isomorphic adaptation differs between the three perspectives, the common focus is the organizational environment. The differences are rooted in how much the impact of the environment is recognized and in different views on the capability of action in an organization. In the resource-dependence perspective, isomorphic adaptation is a result of an organization in a position of dependence to another organization, such as a parent company, a trade organization, or an important customer. General principles of organizing are passed down from the more powerful organization to the organization in position of dependence. In the population-ecology perspective, isomorphic adaptation is a result of market competition. The natural selection based on competition favours the strong, competitive and efficient organizations while weaker organizations are extinct. With that, some principles of organizing prosper and some disappear.

Another difference between resource-dependence theory and population-ecology theory on one hand and institutional theory on the other hand is how the organizational environment is conceptualized. While resource-dependence theory and population-ecology theory focus on the immediate or task environment consisting of competitors, suppliers and customers, institutional theory directs the attention towards the general environment where economic, political, sociocultural, legal, demographic, ecological, and technological factors exercise influence.

The mechanisms behind this isomorphic adaptation, in the institutionalist's view, are identified as mimetic, coercive, and normative (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic forces are responses to organizational uncertainty. Copying seemingly successful practices in other organizations is one way of dealing with uncertainty. Not necessarily because of any proven efficiency but simply because it seems like the right thing to do. Coercive forces are responses to external pressure from authorities, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders, which an organization might be dependent upon or is forced to obey, some pressures might be constituted by law or contracts. Normative forces are responses to processes stemming from common training and professionalism. Academic and professional training develops norms and values regarding proper and effective practices, which become standards within a particular branch or field. These mechanisms will be used to explain structural similarities among the clubs in this study.

While some have argued that isomorphic explanations should be used in relation to organizational templates (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), configurations (Meyer, Tsui & Hinings, 1993), or archetypes (Kikulis et al., 1992) this study will study components separately. As Oliver (1988) argues "isomorphic forces may operate with varying effect on different organizational attributes". Rather than affecting organizations as wholes, some components of an organization might be more vulnerable or resistant to the isomorphic forces operating in the particular institutional environment than others. As Tolbert and Zucker (1983) points out, institutionalization refers to the process through which components of the formal structural design of an organization become widely accepted as both appropriate and necessary, consequently this paper studies components of formal structure.

Three analytic dimensions of the concept of organizational structure have been established in the broader organizational literature, both theoretically and empirically. My choice of organizational characteristics was inspired by Oliver's (1988) criteria of selection that the attributes should be acknowledged by previous literature to be commonly understood variables. The three dimensions; specialization, standardization and centralization have been operationalized and tested in several studies and are recognized as reflecting different organizational patterns, configurations and designs,

primarily in the key works of Hage and Aiken (1967), Lawrence and Lorch (1967), Pugh et al. (1968) and Thompson (1967). While there exist several other suggestions to which elements that constitute organizational structure there is a general agreement on the dimensions mentioned, both in the wider management literature (e.g. Pugh et al., 1968) as in literature on sport (e.g. Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Frisby, 1985; Kikulis et al., 1992; Kikulis & Slack, 1995; Kikulis et al., 1989; Slack & Hinings, 1987; Theodoraki & Henry, 1994; Thibault et al., 1991).

Specialization reflects the division of labour: horizontally as division of tasks, and vertically as division of hierarchical levels. Horizontal specialization divides tasks into smaller, simpler and more repetitive sections. Similarly it divides the total workforce into smaller units and groups. Vertical specialization represents the vertical division of tasks and roles, for instance levels of authority. The structural dimension of standardization reflects the degree of formalized procedures and the extent of documentation, such as variability in procedures and coordination of tasks. It reflects the freedom of action for the individuals, units and groups in an organization related to supervision and control. Centralization reflects the locus of control and the degree of involvement of other hierarchical levels in an organization. A high degree of centralization is manifested in decisions made high up in the organization with support from the lower levels. Consequently low degrees of centralization become visible through decisions being made in isolation without any input from other levels. The relationship between volunteers and paid staff is specific to amateur sports organizations when it comes to the concept of centralization. Decisions made by and involving volunteers represent high levels of centralization and vice versa.

Methods

Operationalization

Inspired by constructs created by Kikulis et al., (1989) and Slack and Hinings (1992) a list of interview questions reflecting the three structural dimensions were created. With a minor modification to the *Interview Questions, Organization Design Index* (Slack, n.d.) it was possible to adjust the constructs and the questions to fit this particular study. The concept of specialization, as described in the theoretical background, was operationalized using questions regarding the extent of the administrative and operative roles together with the division of these. The operationalization of specialization involved questions regarding the number of paid staff versus volunteers and the division of tasks between the two groups. The questions were intended to measure the number of roles, levels and activities in the organization. The level of specialization was determined by counting and qualitatively examine the number of employees, volunteers, roles and tasks (Slack & Hinings, 1992). The operationalization of the concept of standardization, as described in the theoretical background, involved questions about efforts made to reduce variations in procedures and

promote coordination. The intention of these questions was to reflect how and to what extent activities are governed and regulated by rules, policies and other formalized procedures. The level of standardization was determined by the quantity and quality of rules, policies, job descriptions and guidelines (Slack & Hinings, 1992). The centralization concept, as described in the theoretical background, was operationalized by questions regarding where decisions are made and how the decision making is distributed. Centralization was measured in three ways; at which hierarchical level the decisions were made, the extent of participation in decision making on other hierarchical levels, and the involvement of volunteers in the decision-making process. The level of centralization was determined by studying decisions regarding selection of athletes and coaches, allocation of human, material and financial resources (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

Research setting

Data in this study is taken from Swedish ice hockey clubs, clubs organized along lines similar to those in many industrialized countries today. The sporting individual is a member of a sport club, which in turn is affiliated to a regional sport federation, which in turn is affiliated to a national sport federation under the Swedish sports confederation (RF). The Swedish elite ice hockey league is the highest division in a system comprising a maximum of seven divisions. The system is hierarchical based on sports merits and the teams are run by membership-based non-profit clubs.

Almost half of the 7 million inhabitants in Sweden between the ages of 7 and 70 are members of a sports club. Of these, 2.3 million are active athletes and 1 million are seen as supporting members, 650 000 compete at various levels, of whom 7000 compete at elite levels. Seven hundred and six thousand volunteers form the backbone of the Swedish sport movement; 241 000 women and 465 000 men contribute the equivalent of 14 billion SEK worth in working hours every year (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b). Sport in Sweden is believed to provide 7500 full-time posts, (6000 in sports clubs (ibid)). In elite sport clubs almost all leaders and administrators are hired full-time, but large numbers of volunteers are still involved in their operations. Two thousand nine hundred and sixteen ice hockey teams compete on a regular basis. These teams are run by the 717 clubs affiliated to the Swedish Ice Hockey Association (SIF) (Svenska Ishockeyförbundet, n.d.a). In total Swedish ice hockey has 66 737 licensed players and referees.

Out of the 12 clubs represented in the Swedish elite league (the first division) in ice hockey 2000/2001, 11 chose to participate in this study. These clubs represent all parts of the country, both geographically and demographically. The general manager represented each club and was picked based on his central position in the club (c.f. Kikulis et al. 1989) and his executive role.

Procedure

By using structured interviews with each general manager and by studying official and unofficial documents both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. It has been stressed by researchers in both the broader organizational theory field and the more specific sport management field (c.f. Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1995) that qualitative studies are necessary to gain a more holistic picture of the reality in organizations. Official documents comprised the club website, marketing material, constitution, bylaws and official statistics. Unofficial documents, varying between the clubs in both form and in extent, consisted of e.g. records, meeting minutes, policy documents, yearly plans and contractual agreements. The different data sources were not used for triangulation but to achieve a more detailed interpretation. No data were considered more reliable than others but, if differing from each other, considered as competing understandings of phenomena and events. Variation and non-variation in organizational structure was defined by measuring the extent and quality of each structural dimension in each club and grouping similar clubs together by structural dimension, a measuring inspired by Slack and Hinings (1987) who argue for definition and specification assessed on a continuum from non-existent to relatively simple to complex, and by Thibault et al., (1991) rating scale 1 (low), 2 (medium), 3 (high). The categories were created to facilitate comparison and understanding, not with the belief that categories represent groups in reality.

Low Specialization, characterized by few paid staff with over-lapping roles and tasks. *Medium Specialization*, characterized by specialized roles based on organizational experience and established levels of authority. *High Specialization*, characterized by paid technical and administrative expertise and many sub-units. *Low Standardization*, characterized by poor documentation and low formal training. *Medium Standardization*, characterized by some rules, programs and policies but still poorly documented and coordinated. *High Standardization*, characterized by formal competences, explicit regulations and extensive plans. *Low Centralization*, characterized by isolated decision making, indistinct separation of strategic and operative tasks, and poor supervision and support. *Medium Centralization*, characterized by centralized decision making at board level but with little or no support, follow-up or control. *High Centralization*, characterized by centralized decision making at board level with support from members, volunteers and employees, a functional chain of command. The distinctions are neither normative nor objective. *High* is not considered better than *Low*, and *High* is in relation to *Low* and not in relation to anything outside the study.

Results

The results are presented as a number of categories based on the structural dimensions *Specialization*, *Standardization* and *Centralization*, and on the distinctions *Low*, *Medium* and *High* as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Clubs by Structural Dimension and Levels

| levels | structural dimensions | | |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | specialization | standardization | centralization |
| high | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| medium | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| low | 6 | 5 | 4 |

Low Specialization

Six of the clubs are characterized by low and indistinct forms of specialization in both roles and tasks. The total workload is divided among a few departments, often overlapping each other and with staff members functioning simultaneously in a number of different roles. All clubs in this category have divided their work into 3 departments: accounting, marketing, and sport. The clubs in this category have approximately 5 people employed for administrative duties; a general manager with operational responsibility; one manager for each of the 3 departments and one office clerk/receptionist or similar employee. The workforce is characterized by general rather than specific competences. The members of the clubs in this category are very active, thus replacing several salaried positions. The home games involve approximately 75 people, all volunteers. Despite the relatively small workforce these clubs run extensive sport activities. Similar contradictions apply to the workforce surrounding the first team. The number of people employed for tasks associated with the team varies from 5 to 8.

The vertical specialization can be interpreted from the three hierarchical levels of decision making: the board, the managing director, and the rest. The board in most cases is a small assembly consisting of a few committees as a way of relieving the pressure on the often heavily burdened operative workforce. In some cases board members also double as employees. Parts of the operations in these clubs are contracted on lease to contractors (mostly souvenir sales and restaurants). Some traditional sales operations however are run by the clubs themselves, such as hot-dog stands. Other business activities such as conferences, courses, lotteries, and assets such as real estate are managed by a subsidiary company owned by the club.

Medium Specialization

This category consists of 3 clubs. Their operations are divided into 4 departments even if the dividing lines between them may be difficult to discern. The 4 departments are accounting, marketing, sport, and youth.

The administrative workforce consists of approximately 9 people: one general manager and one manager for each of the departments each with one assistant. These clubs, when playing home games, involve 160 people on average. Most of them are volunteers. The workforce around the first team consists of a head coach, an assistant coach, and a goalie coach or physical training coach. In addition to coaching duties 1 or 2 people are responsible for team equipment and 2 people work with health-related issues (e.g. physiotherapist, naprapath, masseur, doctor).

The decision-making hierarchy is divided into 4 vertical levels: board, general manager, department managers, assistants and others. Following the proportionately higher specialization, the vertical levels become more distinct and hierarchically consistent than in the previous category. The board on average consists of 11 people. The board members are recruited from the corporate sector, with specific competences, complemented by driving forces from within the organization. The board is relatively detached from operational activities and the focus is on strategic issues. Two of the board members however are also active operatively.

The ownership of the arena varies among the 3 clubs. One of the clubs leases the arena from the municipality which owns and manages it, one club owns its training arena but rents the match arena, and the third club runs its arena in a subsidiary company owned by the club. Consequently, that particular club conducts extensive business in the arena as well as subletting it to schools, the municipality and other organizations. The other 2 clubs runs traditional sales activities in the arenas in connection with home games and some business activities in separate subsidiary companies.

High Specialization

The third category concerning specialization consists of 2 clubs, far more specialized than the previous categories. These clubs employ a large staff in both administrative roles and technical positions. The divisions of tasks and roles are sharp and well defined. The operations are divided in 6 departments with well-defined boundaries. Both clubs divide their work into accounting, marketing, sport, youth, and administration. The 6th department in one club is concerned with security in and around the arena while in the other club it handles events/sales. The administrative personnel consist on average of 14 people in total with the general manager at the top, managers for each department with assistants below. Most of the employees have formal competences corresponding to their positions and responsibilities. During home games a considerable number of people work in the respective arenas. The first club uses approximately 200 volunteers and the other thirty salaried personnel and approximately 70 volunteers.

The vertical specialization is high and well-defined with five hierarchical levels of decision making: the board, the general manager, the managers, the

assistants, and the rest. The order of delegation is clear and formal. The boards in these clubs are tailor-made to meet the specific needs for competences and consist solely of corporate managers with little or no formal connection with the club, with a few exceptions. The board is mainly concerned with strategic issues prepared by the operational staff.

One of the clubs has converted the first team with its supporting organization into an independent subsidiary company while leaving the rest of the operations in the non-profit organization form. All personnel are employed by the company where the general manager is one of the board members. The other club has not yet converted to this pattern but intends to do so shortly. Currently they have a similar solution with a club-owned subsidiary company employing all personnel (60). The same company also owns the club arena, which at times is sublet for concerts, events, to schools, and such. The company is also the owner of the club's real estate and properties. The first club has a leasing deal with the arena where the first team plays its home games. A real estate company is responsible for the total management of the arena. Both clubs conduct extensive sales activities at home games even if the second club is in a position to make more profit from these activities as it owns the arena.

Low Standardization

This category consists of 5 clubs also found in the *Low specialization* category. The category is characterized by the lowest forms of standardization with hardly any guidelines, means of control or rules. If these can be found they are written between the lines and neither explicit nor documented. Documentation on the whole is very limited.

Operations are managed and conducted in an ad-hoc way where tasks are solved as they appear by the person on the spot. The staff enjoys great freedom of action but also heavy responsibility. Job descriptions, when found, appear to be created by each employee personally. Personal suitability rather than formal competence seems to decide who is responsible for what task. The clubs use different employment measures for different parts of the operations.

Similar conditions apply to the work of the board where dedication and loyalty seem to be more important than formal competence. In most cases the board is closely connected with operational activities and the line between the strategic and the operative work is very thin, resulting in fuzzy structures of authority. Some tools of standardization however are in use in these clubs. Most of the clubs in this category have formally written agreements of cooperation with clubs in lower divisions. Four of the clubs have three such agreements each but the 5th has none. A similar type of agreement is that between a club and a local high school with ice hockey on its program. All the clubs in this category have this kind of agreement.

Medium Standardization

Most significant for the 2 clubs in this category is that the procedures of standardization are mentioned verbally but not documented. Even if the operations may sound well reasoned and well thought-out, documentation is the core of the standardization process. One example of how operations may seem highly standardized on the surface but not well-founded or anchored in the organization is one general manager's statement regarding the continuity in the hiring of coaches. "It has been stable. We haven't had like. ... I mean, I think two, three years is standard and that is how it should be". This statement indicates that the manager has ideas about how long a coach should stay in the club but they do not appear to be especially well-founded or well thought-out.

The operations are managed and led, in many ways, like a highly standardized organization with many professional routines. Both clubs have some guidelines for their operations as well as for their goal-setting procedures. One of the clubs also has some standardization regarding specialization of tasks. The standardization is, generally speaking, somewhat higher than in the previous category but it is hard to track down any consistent methods.

One of the clubs is a large, old club with a long list of merits that runs extensive and seemingly professional activities. But in the corporate-style organization the volunteers are slighted, especially when it comes to standardization. In complete contrast, the other club has focused on its volunteers, thus neglecting the professionalized part of the club. Economic difficulties have forced the club to downsize with the ensuing need to rely primarily on voluntary forces. As a result most formalizing procedures have been directed towards parts of the organization managed by volunteers, leaving the more professional parts in the backwaters.

High Standardization

Four of the clubs are considered highly standardized in terms of organization. The tools of standardization are comparatively extensive and well-developed. These clubs operate in a very corporate-like manner when it comes to rules, policies, routines, manuals and guidelines. The clubs all have well documented principles guiding daily operations, goals directing these operations (both economic and sports-wise), and visions governing long-term plans.

Sports-wise, the clubs have a number of formalized principles for drafting and training, as well as for transfers of players and coaches. Two of the clubs have policies for the quota of home-grown players on the first team. One club has exported a lot of players to other professional leagues over the years and as a result has developed routines for the contact with players leaving the club, with the intention of getting them to return at the end of their careers.

All the clubs have standardized their procedures for player development with collaborations with clubs in lower divisions and high school programs.

We have guidelines. We have documented what we expect from parents and others and what they can expect from the club. We have created rules for all teams, where and when everyone is playing, and at what age it is time to send in the best players. Everything is documented and handed out to everybody interested.

This quotation is one example on how the documentation works in one of the clubs. Documented guidelines taken by the board are used to control employees and volunteers in their encounters with parents, the media, authorities and others. Policies such as these are also created to support employees and volunteers in their decision making and daily work.

All clubs have fixed schedules for board meetings and the forms of work are clearly established. The board members all have documented competences and merits from their respective branches of business and these specific competences are used in specific areas of the board's work. The administration is led by a general manager with a job description very much that of a general manager in a conventional company. The staff has well-defined areas of responsibility and the level of formal education is high.

Low Centralization

Four clubs constitute the first centralization category. The low centralization is characterized by decisions made by lower-rank employees without being overseen from above, or by the fact that the organization is run by one or a few individuals at the top with little or no support from the members, the staff or the elected representatives. The decentralized procedures in these clubs are highly accidental and due to "strong" individuals running things according to their own ideas. The board in these clubs has left it to the operative staff to run things as they see fit. "The organization has grown without any supervision so to speak. Too many people are running around getting popular by making promises and stuff". This quotation reflects how separate individuals act on their own initiative without support or supervision from the rest of the organization.

Another common feature is the integration of the strategic and operational activities, between the work of the board and the work of the administration that is. This fuzzy line between the two manifests itself in operative staff being members of the board and board members having operative duties. In all the clubs the general manager is on the board and in most clubs even other employees.

Yet another factor influencing the degree of centralization in these clubs are the sources of finances and the localization of power, which often coincides.

The majority of the clubs derive more than half their total income from corporate sponsors, a fact which influences the clubs in three visible ways; team jersey design, various commitments towards sponsors, and the composition of the board. This brings with it a transfer of power from members and elected representatives to external investors. The next step in this development is total conversion into an independent subsidiary commercial company where all activities are run in the corporate mode. One of the clubs is already running their first team and surrounding activities in this way and two of the other clubs have announced ambitions to do the same.

Medium Centralization

This category consists of 3 clubs. This category includes signs of deliberate decentralization, unconscious centralization and unconscious decentralization. The collective impression is that the clubs are run by senior executives that want to centralize and have all decision-making concentrated to the top of the organization but lacks the resources to pursue this philosophy throughout the whole organization. This leads to decisions still being made at all levels without any supervision or participation from other levels or parts of the organization.

This quotation symbolizes the locus of decision making and the degree of influence accessible to the rest of the organization. The general manager is answering a question on how he works with the board and what his relationship to the board is.

I think we're doing well. Of course there are a lot of things you could do better, the dissemination of information for instance. I don't blame them (the board) for being angry at having to read in the papers about our drafts. I can understand that but at the same time I cannot work as executive if the board does operative work as well. Of course they get the information, maybe not everybody but that is the responsibility of the chairman. I cannot go buying players without the consent of the chairman. But then not everybody is informed and they get to read about it in the paper afterwards. Apart from that I think it's working out pretty well.

There is an understanding that the current situation is not good and awareness that things could be done in a better way but there is neither time nor resources or the knowledge to run the operations in another way.

High Centralization

The third category consists of 2 clubs with deliberate and distinct centralization. The strategies are produced in committees and in the board with the consent of members and staff. The dividing line between the work of the board and the operational work is distinct and no staff are members of the board. One of the clubs even has regulations forbidding this. Both clubs

have active members in committees and in regular operations. The membership body makes all major decisions.

If you were to look at the organizational structure in other clubs, I would say our club is more reliant on the hours put in by our members compared to hired and paid staff. The whole organizational style involving sport managers, youth managers and such is based entirely on volunteer work in our club. Instead of hiring people we rely on our committees. Many of our members are involved in the daily operations.

This quotation is one example on how a highly involved membership body and a small staff may contribute to well-grounded decisions, extensive support and insight.

Giving up the decision-making to presumptive shareholders is not something that would arise in the near future for any of the clubs. One club has mapped the differences between the corporate form and the non-profit form based on economic factors and concluded that the corporate form would not offer any substantial advantages. The other club has conducted an extensive survey amongst the members where they were asked for their opinions on converting the club into an independent subsidiary company. A convincing majority found no reason to abandon the non-profit form the club is organized after.

Discussion

So far the organization of elite ice hockey in Sweden has been described and how the concept of organizational structure and its dimensions may be utilized to do this has been shown. Following discussion will relate the organizational features in these clubs to environmental factors and will try to explain these feature using institutional theory arguments, principally the coercive, mimetic, and normative forces of isomorphism as proposed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

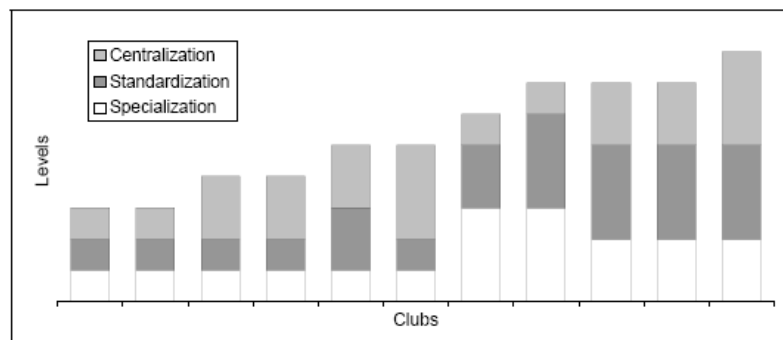


Figure 1. *Variation in Organizational Structure.*

Figure 1 illustrates the variation and similarities in organizational structure among the clubs, starting to the left with a club with low levels in each structural dimension. One unit on the Y-axis represents *Low* level for each structural dimension, following 2 units for *Medium* level, and 3 units for *High* level. As shown in Figure 1, structural diversity is found in all three dimensions.

Coercive Pressures

All clubs but one are organized in the non-profit organizational form. The operations are partly funded by grants and subsidies from government and local municipality (30 percent of the direct revenues in average for non-profit organizations in Sweden, 12 percent of their total revenue is a cash support for localities, in addition to the total revenue sport organizations have access to subsidised localities to a net value of approximately SEK 3,5 billion annually (SOU 1998:76)). These clubs are also very much dependent on the work put in by numerous volunteers (SEK 14 billion worth of working hours in total in Swedish sport (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.b)). All these resource bases are tightly bound to the clubs' non-profit organizational form which until recently was the only admissible form of organization. If an organization wants to benefit from subsidies, tax concessions and government funding connected to this form of organization there are some rules to be followed. The purpose of a non-profit organization must be for public utility. It has to be open to all and its total turnover must be allocated in a certain manner (at least 80 percent of the net income has to be distributed each fiscal year). It cannot have as its objective the economic interests of individual members. Even if an organization is considered non-profit and a public servant it is not prohibited from doing business, as long as the business is created to finance the organization's primary activity. Tax exemptions apply to all business connected with the main activity.

It has however emerged an alternative to the non-profit organizational form for these clubs. In 1999 the RF assembly decided to admit the limited sport company as an alternative form of organization. A club may, according to the decision, grant their right to participate in an appointed league to a limited sport company (Riksidrottsförbundet, n.d.a). One of the more visible consequences of this organizational form is the access to grants and subsidies. Since most grants and subsidies are motivated by the contributions sport makes to society it is impossible for a limited sport company to be included in such financial support for a number of reasons (cf. Fahlén, 2004, Falck, 1999). These factors taken together form a substantial coercive pressure on these elite clubs as how to organize their activities. Since many of the factors are bound by law or regulations and tightly connected to the access to resources the isomorphic forces are particularly strong (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). But since the earlier prescribed non-profit organizational form is not the only admissible form of organization anymore these clubs are now in range of two competitive coercive forces. So far seen only one club

has left the non-profit organizational form and it is yet too early to draw any conclusions based on those circumstances. However, if the findings in e.g. Kikulis et al. (1989) would have some explanatory power also in this setting it would not be too speculative to suggest that the organizations in this study are moving towards a more professional and bureaucratic organizational form, such as the limited sport company.

The resistance towards this conversion into an independent subsidiary company seen in many of the other clubs could, apart from the coercive pressures tied to financial resources noted above, also stem from the coercive force of cultural expectations on appropriate behaviours (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This explanation is further strengthened by Oliver (1991) who argues that resistance often stem from ideological conviction as expressed by one of the clubs, or the lack of visible proof of financial gain as expressed by another club. The tradition of non-profit and volunteerism is still weighing heavily in the collective opinion on how an ice hockey club should be run. The growing numbers of paid employees and remunerated staff is still outnumbered many times over by the hundreds of volunteers active in each club. It would seem like having only two alternatives of formal organization is just as a powerful isomorphic predictor as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest. This finding lends further weight to the findings in Skinner et al. (1999), O'Brien and Slack (1999, 2003, 2004), and Cousens and Slack (2005). While examining transitions from amateur to professional sport in different settings, all found resistance connected to the amateur ideals.

Mentioned coercive pressures affect structures also in other parts of these organizations. Almost all clubs have located parts of their operations, such as fixed assets, real estate, sales activities, and course and conference activities, in a subsidiary company owned by the club. As already mentioned, regulations governing non-profit organizations versus private business stipulate that there are financial advantages and disadvantages with each organizational form. In order to avoid certain taxes and gain access to certain grants many clubs split their operations and assets in this manner. This manoeuvring could be explained as a direct response to the coercive forces of isomorphism these clubs are subjects to. The political and legal frameworks in surrounding society exert pressure on these clubs, making such responses logical and also financial viable.

The political and legal frameworks within ice hockey are also exerting pressure on these clubs. Rules regulating the transfer of players between clubs have added to the emergence of so-called farm clubs. Almost all clubs have written cooperation agreements with clubs in lower divisions, with the intention of facilitating temporary transfer of players when needed. The coercive forces in this case are not forcing clubs with legal authority but as

the transfer rules are established farm clubs is both a cheap and practical way of dealing with temporary movement of players during season.

A similar phenomenon is the collaboration between almost all clubs and a local upper secondary school (senior high school) with special athletic programs for young and promising ice hockey players. The programs originate from a joint venture between the RF and the Swedish Parliament, beginning in the early nineteen eighties with the ambition of providing education to young athletes as a way of supporting a future career beyond sport. These contributions to the professionalization of Swedish sport has provided these clubs with ideal scouting and recruiting resources and is another example of how coercive forces work in institutionalizing organizations. The coercive forces are in this case not forcing the clubs to cooperate with a local upper secondary school but the mere existence of these programs is suggesting that cooperation would be both profitable and politically correct.

Almost all clubs still have a youth program of their own. This behaviour is prescribed by several stakeholders and logic for a number of different reasons. The most obvious explanation is again tied to financial arguments. Developing home-grown talent is much cheaper than signing already trained professional players from other clubs but the behaviour is also guarded by the state through RF and SIF directing parts of the economic support only to youth activities. Another explanation is the coercive pressures exerted by the SIF in the form of an agreement called the elite license. To be eligible for competing in the elite league the club must not only achieve certain standards on ice, but must also reach certain standards concerning economy, organization, youth activities, and arena as set by a committee composed of representatives from SHL and SIF (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.). If a club fails to meet the standards or obtain an exemption the team will be relegated. According to the standard concerning youth activities, the club is bound to run youth activities to an extent considered a reasonable contribution to the renewal of Swedish ice hockey. This agreement is thus coercively forcing each club to have a youth program regardless of the club's own strategies. This finding supports the findings in the collected research carried out in the Canadian setting by Trevor Slack and others. One of the more obvious results in that line of research is that the design and behaviour of sport organizations is heavily influenced by guidelines from the state and other similar authorities.

The elite license is exerting coercive pressures also in other areas of these organizations. The standard concerning organization stipulates that the board is bound to have qualified competences in economics and administration and extensive experience of activities within the field of sport (Svenska ishockeyförbundet, n.d.). As suggested by Kikulis et al. (1992), mechanisms such as these are particularly authoritative given the political

and economic ties to an association, federation or government. In simple words, if a club fails to present sufficiently professional staff and board members it could be relegated from the league. This could be one explanation to the corporate-style boards found in many of the clubs with the underlying cause to gain legitimacy.

A counteracting process to this prescribed professionalization of staff is the governmental programs of employment measures available to sport organizations, allowing them to hire unemployed people at a low cost (worth SEK 1257 million in 1996 (SOU 1998: 76)). These individuals are most often not formally trained for their tasks but nevertheless found in positions with significant responsibilities even if most are used in assisting positions. Almost all clubs use this opportunity since the coercive pressure is connected with large financial rewards in form of cheaper pay-rolls. The legitimacy as a professional organization is probably suffering but the financial advantage is hard for the clubs to disregard. The coercive pressures are here once again tied to the access to resources and hence particularly strong. The club however is not gaining legitimacy as a professional organization but nevertheless as a contributor to the welfare in the society by helping to keep the unemployment numbers down.

All clubs have specialized the task of marketing and assigned the responsibility to a marketing manager. One isomorphic explanation to this similarity could be the coercive forces exercising influence through outside stakeholders such as sponsors and buyers of commercial spots in the arena or on the team jersey. These stakeholders, used to negotiating business agreements in their day to day work, expect a negotiating counterpart in the club, thus making such a specialization viable or even necessary (cf. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These informal pressures, as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue, are particularly strong when an organization is dependent on the organization exerting the pressure, as is in this case. The clientele these clubs serve is accustomed to certain procedures when dealing with similar organizations thus making also mimetic behaviours rewarding. This finding further illustrates the findings in Thibault et al., (1991) where an increase of professionals in an amateur sport organization is followed by changes in the structural variable of specialization.

Mimetic Pressures

Almost all clubs have divided their total workload in to one administrative part and one technical part, where a general manager runs the former part and a sport manager runs the latter part. This phenomenon could be explained with the mimetic forces of isomorphism insofar as such a division is being used in many other organizations with similar operations. These clubs have used paid staff for a relatively short time and looking at sport clubs in other more commercially developed countries (e.g. the national hockey league in North-America, other domestic sports, other international

sports) and organizations in other parts of the entertainment industry (e.g. theatres) offers established practices to copy and could be one way of dealing with the uncertainty these clubs are facing. A similar finding is highlighted by Cuskelly, Boag and McIntyre (1999) who point out the existence of normative principles of organizing when it comes to division of workload. Some tasks are supposed to be carried out by certain employees and other tasks by others.

Normative Pressures

The existence of the trade organization Swedish hockey league (SHL), where all clubs in the elite league are represented, is probably contributing to homogenization of the clubs. "Professional and trade organizations are (another) vehicles for the definition and promulgation of normative rules about organizational and professional behaviour" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Frequent meetings with the other actors in the field is probably also contributing to mimetic behaviours. The more successful organizations on-ice stand models as how to organize operations off-ice for the less successful organizations.

Also the principle for departmentalization in these clubs is similar even if the level of specialization differs. One explanation put forward by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is the filtering of personnel as a normative isomorphic force. Those in charge of hiring, hire peers with similar values and convictions regarding organizational design. With this follows a reproduction of dominant values and opinions on how organizations should be structured, as in this case with the principle of division of workload and departmentalization. Mimetic behaviours is certainly also adding to these similarities. Mentioned principle for job splitting is probably perceived as standard procedure for these clubs and little or no explorations of other principles are made.

The principle for specialization of tasks and roles around the first team is recurring in all clubs but again differing in level. One explanation to this similarity could be found looking at the head coaches working in these clubs. Most of them have a background as an elite player themselves and most of them have gone through same educational system (the SIF coaching program). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), similar background and training is one of the more basic reasons behind the occurrence of normative isomorphism and in this case these two factors are probably combining to the homogenization of the specialization of staff surrounding the first team.

The widespread use of outsourcing of souvenir sales, restaurants, arenas and similar could be a result of tradition (with almost all public facilities being owned by the local municipality) or practical/financial concerns, but a contributory explanation could be offered by looking at normative forces of

isomorphism. Congruent with Slack and Hinings (1994), normative isomorphism in sport organizations occur when professionals from other sports or other sectors are brought in. Professionalization of staff with a greater use of academically trained managers and managers from the corporate sector are probably contributing to increasing use of corporate business methods, such as outsourcing in this case. In addition to this DiMaggio and Powell (1983) propose that professions are subject to the same mimetic pressures as organizations are, which in this case would mean that behaviours found in these clubs are copied from the business world.

The similarities discussed could taken together be interpreted as efforts made to signal a more business-minded approach to the outside world in order to gain legitimacy. Regardless of efficiency, these structural arrangements can carry a powerful message to surrounding stakeholders that “the sleepy non-profit station (club in this case) is becoming more business-minded.” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). A similar reorientation was identified by Slack and Hinings (1987) in Canadian voluntary sport organizations already back in 1987. Sport organizations went from being controlled by volunteers to being controlled by professionals.

Conclusion

A few assumptions, presented earlier in the Theoretical Background, laid the ground for the methodological approach used, the results presented and the conclusions drawn in this study. These assumptions, established by scholarly investigation, deal primarily with how organizations may vary or resemble each other and how these variations and similarities may be explained. Although these clubs are facing similar environmental conditions and are concerned with similar tasks, such as fund raising, recruiting players, competing in the same league and organizing events, they exhibit some variation in structural features. It would however seem like an institutional perspective has some shortcomings in explaining variations in organizational structure among organizations in a given field. The theoretical point of departure and the methods used has limited the interpretations and the analysis to a focus on external influences and structural similarities. Hence, it was not possible to achieve an understanding to all data gathered using this one perspective. However, this does not diminish the explanatory power in the framework used but merely point out the complexity of organizational reality and the need for studies with different approaches. Both Slack and Hinings (1992) (drawing on resource-dependence-theory, institutional theory and organizational culture) and Steven and Slack (1998) (drawing on institutional theory and strategic choice perspective) show good examples on how a richer understanding may be gained by using more than one theoretical perspective.

The knowledge created in this study was built on my interpretation of documents and interview data. Thus, my interpretation is dependent on

other's interpretations of the organizational phenomena in question. Data are with that tied to my abilities as an interpreter but can nevertheless function as reliable and useful descriptions and interpretations. However, it is not if data are absolute reflections of the organizational reality in question that can be questioned but instead if my interpretations are reasonable in relation to the theoretical framework and the methods presented.

The clubs in this study are not a statistical sample representing all Swedish ice hockey or even less all Swedish sport. However, my ambitions with this article were not to generalize but to argue that it is reasonable to think that phenomena observed in this study also could be observed in other similar settings. Swedish ice hockey clubs in the role of precursor, role model and trend setter could be useful when it comes to predicting organizational design and behaviour in other similar settings.

While some has been written internationally on organizational structure, organizational change, and environmental pressures in sport organizations automatic transferability to other national settings or other types of sport organizations can not be taken for granted. Papadimitriou (2002), Koski and Heikkala (1998), Horch (1998) and Colyer (2000) provide good examples on how sport organizations vary in design and behaviour depending on each cultural specific setting. This research may provide a starting point for the study of sport organizations in Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia from an organization theory point of view. Studies on Swedish sport organizations is sparse and both theoretical development and empirical testing is needed to diversify the conventional understanding of organizations, diversify understanding created in the English-speaking parts of the world, and diversify understanding created from only one type of organizations.

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Josef Fahlén
Department of Education
School of Physical Education and Sport
Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå, Sweden
E-Mail: Josef.fahlen@pedag.umu.se

III

Organizational structure – perceived consequences for professionals and volunteers: A comparative study of two Swedish elite ice hockey clubs

Josef Fahlén

Introduction

The organized sports movement in Sweden employs approximately 7500 people, of whom about 6000 are employed in sports clubs, (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2002) and a further approximately 610 000 people are involved on a voluntary basis (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2002). These people are argued to be absolutely indispensable for Swedish sport. In the gradual professionalization of Swedish sport (Lindroth, 1998) the prerequisites for the clubs and the working conditions for these people have changed. Changes in public funding and other resource bases, class structures, media exposure, political currents, the role of the state, and changes in public opinion on sport have altered many basic prerequisites. It has been suggested that these changes have and are going to have an impact on both the basic structure of organized sport in Sweden and the attitude towards volunteer work (Peterson, 2002).

Despite the fact that sport involves large sections of the Swedish community and enjoys substantial support from the taxpayers (Fahlén, 2004) we know relatively little about the organizations offering these organized sporting activities and receiving funding for doing so, and even less about the individuals working professionally or as volunteers in these organizations during the ongoing professionalization of Swedish sport. Research into the professionalization of sport is fairly unanimous in agreeing that professionalization is affecting organizational structure (e.g., Skinner, J., Stewart, B., & Edwards, A., 1999) and I venture to suggest that different organizational structures affect individuals differently.

The contribution of this paper is to further our understanding of organizational structure and perceptions of the same, related specifically to the setting of amateur sport clubs and their unique mix of for-profit with non-profit and paid staff with volunteers, a contribution especially interesting in the light of the ongoing transition from amateur to professional sport. Thus the purpose of this paper is to examine perceived consequences connected to organizational structures for employees and volunteers in Swedish sport, by comparing data from two structurally different elite ice hockey clubs.

Theoretical background

Perceived consequences

Perceived consequences connected to organizational structures in sport organizations is also internationally an unexplored issue with a few exceptions. Apart from Amis, Slack and Berrett (1995), Auld and Godbey (1998), Cuskelly, Boag and McIntyre (1999), Cuskelly, McIntyre and Boag (1998), and Theodoraki and Henry (1994) we have to turn to broader organizational literature to find out how individuals within an organization perceive different organizational features. The subject is touched upon by Pitter (1990) and Thibault, Slack and Hinings (1991), without the provision of any deeper understanding of perceptions of organizational structures in sport organizations.

The concepts of job satisfaction and organizational commitment may however be useful in explaining some perceptions related to organizational structures and processes (Chelladurai, 1999). The concept of job satisfaction has been found to be important both from an economic and moral point of view and especially important in non-profit organization where economic compensations can be limited. Baltzer et al.

(1990) defined job satisfaction as “the feelings a worker has about his or her job or job experiences in relation to previous experience, current expectations, or available alternatives”. The relationship between job satisfaction and outcome variables such as performance and turnover is somewhat weak but the concept may nevertheless be useful in relation to organizational structure where job satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be argued to be a function of different organizational structures.

The two-factor theory developed by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) provides a few pointers to some contextual factors as possible sources of job dissatisfaction, but not explicitly organizational structure. The Minnesota model of job satisfaction (Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1964) can also give some guidance to contextual factors relevant to job satisfaction, such as company policies, supervision, responsibility and independence, factors closely related to the structural dimensions used in this study. Balzer et al. (1990) and Gidron (1983) have also touched upon similar factors specific for volunteers that is helpful in this study.

The concept of organizational commitment has been found to be important for an organization in pursuing its goals and creating conditions for success. The concept could have some explanatory power in this study if one looks at organizational structure as an antecedent to organizational commitment and treats organizational commitment as being one possible perceived consequence of organizational structures. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) defined organizational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) among others have shown a positive relationship between organizational commitment and some contextual factors such as skill variety, leadership initiating structure and participative leadership but also a negative relationship between organizational commitment and role ambiguity and role conflict, concepts closely related to the structural dimensions used in this study. Meyer and Allen (1997) have also shown relationships between organizational commitment and a few antecedent factors related to organizational structure such as supportiveness, fairness, personal importance and competence. Knobe (1981) has shown similar relationships focusing on communication and participation in decision making in voluntary associations.

The concept of perceived consequences is used in this paper to oppose actual consequences, supported by the argument that agents within an organization may react differently to similar organizational contexts (Theodoraki & Henry, 1994). The focus of this study is however differences between organizations, not between individuals which will be explored in coming articles.

Organizational structure

The structural dimensions *specialization*, *standardization* and *centralization* in this paper are studied in relation to the individuals working or volunteering in the clubs mentioned. The basic assumption is that different levels of these dimensions ought to give rise to different perceived consequences for the individuals in question. In other words, a highly specialized, standardized and centralized organization ought to be perceived differently by its employees and volunteers than an organization with low levels in the respective structural dimension. These three dimensions have been operationalized and tested in several studies of sport organizations and are recognized as reflecting different organizational patterns, configurations and designs (e.g., Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Frisby, 1985; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992; Kikulis & Slack, 1995; Kikulis, Slack, Hinings & Zimmerman, 1989; Slack & Hinings, 1987; Theodoraki & Henry, 1994; Thibault et al., 1991).

The theoretical basis for organizational structure stems from the Weberian work on the theory of bureaucracy and was established empirically primarily by the key works of Hage and Aiken (1967), Lawrence and Lorch (1967), Pugh et al. (1968) and Thompson (1967). These scholars are in general agreement on the definition of the concept of organizational structure and the above-mentioned structural dimensions.

The concept of specialization is constructed to reflect the division of labour: horizontally as division of tasks, and vertically as division of hierarchical levels. Horizontal specialization divides tasks into smaller, simpler and more repetitive sections. Similarly it divides the total workforce into smaller units and groups. Vertical specialization represents the vertical division of tasks and roles, for instance levels of authority.

The structural dimension of standardization is constructed to reflect the degree of formalized procedures and the extent of documentation, such as variability in procedures and coordination of tasks. It reflects the freedom of action for the individuals, units and groups in an organization related to supervision and control.

The concept of centralization is constructed to reflect the locus of control and the degree of involvement of other hierarchical levels in an organization. A high degree of centralization is manifested in decisions made high up in the organization with support from the lower levels. Consequently low degrees of centralization become visible through decisions being made in isolation without any input from other levels. The relationship between volunteers and paid staff is specific to amateur sports organizations when it comes to the concept of centralization. Decisions made by and involving volunteers represents high levels of centralization and vice versa.

Methods

The data were collected in two Swedish elite ice hockey clubs playing in the highest division, clubs organized along lines similar to those in many industrialized countries today. The sporting individual is a member of a sport club, which in turn is affiliated to a regional sport federation, which in turn is affiliated to a national sport federation under the Swedish sports confederation (RF). The Swedish elite ice hockey league consisting of 12 teams is the highest division in a system comprising a maximum of seven divisions. The system is hierarchical based on sports merits and the teams are run by membership-based non-profit clubs.

The 2 clubs in this study were selected based on the findings in Fahlén (n.d.) where the concept of organizational structure and its dimensions were used to describe the organization of elite ice hockey clubs and their activities. Eleven of the twelve clubs available were categorized into low, medium and high specialization, standardization and centralization. The twelfth club chose not to participate due to recent turnover of key personnel.

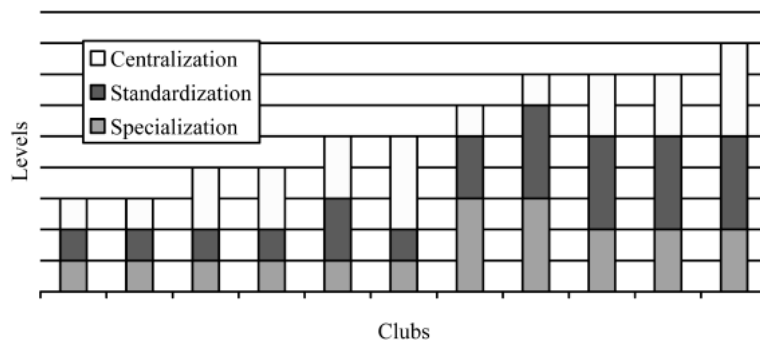


Figure 1 Variation in organizational structure.

Figure 1 illustrates the structural composition of each club participating in the Swedish elite league in ice hockey 2000/2001 starting to the left with a club with low levels in each structural dimension. One unit on the Y-axis represents *Low* level for each structural dimension, following 2 units for *Medium* level, and 3 units for *High* level.

In order to compare perceived consequences possibly stemming from different organizational structures I chose the two clubs that differed most from each other regarding organizational structures. In figure 1 above I distinguished two clubs from the others by selecting the club that, in my analysis, was most specialized, standardized and centralized (*Club 1*), to the right, and the club which had the lowest levels of specialization,

standardization and centralization, to the left. Due to practical reasons I was unable to use the club with the lowest levels of specialization, standardization and centralization I therefore chose instead to study next lowest club, second from the left (*Club 2*).

In order to identify suitable interviewees in each club I used the concepts of horizontal and vertical differentiation (cf. Morrow & Chelladurai, 1992). The interviewees were picked according to their position in the organization (high, middle and low in vertical differentiation and at the ends and in the middle in horizontal differentiation). My objective was to obtain a comprehensive picture of each organization composed by the different positions presented. Since the focus of this study was to compare the two clubs it was important to select individuals in similar positions in both clubs. The selection resulted in 6 interviewees in each club: member of the board, member of the chancellery staff, coach of the first team, assistant position in marketing, member of arena personnel, volunteer in youth program. In cooperation with the respective general manager I picked the interviewees in positions where there were several individuals to choose among. Interviewees were selected based on accessibility. Four of the interviewees were volunteers (members of the boards and volunteers in youth programs) while the rest were paid.

The structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization were operationalized in the spirit of Slack (n.d.), assisted by the constructs created by Kikulis et al. (1989), more thoroughly described in Fahlén (n.d.).

The interview questions were designed to study (a) the picture each interviewee had of the respective club's organizational structures, (b) each interviewee's opinion about the same organizational structures, and (c) each interviewee's opinion on how they or others were affected by these organizational structures. The structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted face to face in each interviewee's workplace, in private. The interviews were recorded, transcribed in full and then coded for anonymity. Data were analyzed using the techniques outlined by Stake (1995).

Results

The perceived consequences are presented by structural dimension – specialization, standardization and centralization.

Specialization

Club 1

The relatively high specialization in the first club is perceived by the interviewees as almost entirely positive. Specialized tasks and roles build confidence and a sense of security in the job situation. Each individual gets a fair chance to focus their energy on their specific area of competence, which is needed to perform their tasks in a satisfying way. This becomes most evident in the testimony given by the member of the board. According to him no professional work could be carried out if the board was not constituted as it is. Each member is recruited for his or her specific professional competence and the horizontal specialization is considered vital in the wide range of tasks taken on by the board.

One drawback, mentioned by the member of the chancellery staff, is that the increasing specialization in the club leads to frictions caused by organizational size and organizational distance between individuals and between units. The opinion is that the operations should be further divided in order to function more efficiently. A natural dividing line would be between the youth program and the elite program.

Club 2

The relatively low level of specialization in the second club is perceived by the interviewees as mostly negative. A feeling of being or having to be a Jack of all trades is predominant among all those in the operative workforce. Even if job descriptions are available in some cases, there is a general feeling of having to perform urgent duties in other areas. The weak economy is seen as the major reason for the small workforce and the resulting low specialization. The common belief is that a larger and more specialized workforce would solve many problems in the club. The member of the board in particular would prefer to see hired professionals replace the volunteers performing administrative duties. At the same time, all the other interviewees see it as a problem that the board and the committees limit their work to strictly strategic issues. In their opinion a small club like theirs can not afford to have a non-operative board and non-operative committees. The board makes decisions but the group of salaried employees who are to execute the decisions can not keep pace with them.

One advantage of the specialization in the club, expressed by most of the interviewees, is a hypothetical division of the club into a youth program and an elite program. Today all youth operations are run by a special youth board answering to the main board. The main argument for this arrangement is to protect the youth program from the ups and mostly downs of the main organization. The youth board enjoys great freedom of action within the framework (budgetary etc) set by the main board. The consensus is that the youth program is doing much better than the elite program.

Standardization

Club 1

The standardization in the first club is thoroughly planned and well documented throughout out the whole organization. An extensive policy document, covering all issues from account coding to specification of the requirements for youth coaches, guides and governs the operations in this organization. The handbook is perceived by all interviewees to be an important support and a necessity for a club of this size, especially in the youth program where all those involved are volunteers. The handbook is seen as the glue that holds the organization together. Despite the high levels of standardization most interviewees state that even higher levels are desirable. Increasing size involves more people and thus a need for more detailed rules, procedures and policies. The long-term visions and goals in the club permeate the whole organization in the sense that everyone seems to know the direction of movement and tries to design the operations accordingly.

Despite the high standardization almost none of the interviewees consider formal education to be a prerequisite for holding their position. Certainly education is important but experience and personal abilities are considered more important. Even those interviewees with high levels formal education share this opinion. Experience from playing or coaching ice hockey is seen as the most important prerequisite. The only place where education is considered a formal prerequisite is in the youth program which has formal standards that the coaches involved have to comply with. The attitudes towards education is however exclusively positive. All the interviewees, except the coach of the first team, feel they have the opportunity to take classes and courses, both internally and externally. The coach mentions lack of time as the crucial factor in this case. The club runs several courses internally which are received differently throughout the organization. One problem for the club regarding competence according to the member of the arena personnel is the fact that the club uses various unemployment measures to run parts of the operations. The economic benefit of this kind of settlement

overshadows the lack of formal competence, a fact that, in his opinion, is a major drawback for the organization.

Everyone but the member of the chancellery staff states that they have a job description. They are all in favour of job descriptions in principal but few of them feel that the description is more than a piece of paper.

Club 2

The level of standardization in the second club is perceived as low and as a problem by all interviewees. According to the member of the board, the whole administration is in need of a total make-over in terms of structure. All of the salaried operatives state that they lack guidance and support from the board and that it is a problem to have a non-operative board. The few routines found are created by the interviewees themselves and the high turnover in personnel makes it hard to ensure that routines and procedures endure. The all-embracing policy in the club, according to most interviewees, concerns the youth program only and has little or no bearing on the elite part of the organization. In the youth program however the policy is seen as being very useful and meaningful and is considered by the volunteer in the youth program to be the main reason for the difference between the youth program and the elite program. Goals and visions are documented but remain unknown or are by all interviewees seen as paper tigers. Goals and visions are only established to please sponsors and authorities, says the member of the chancellery staff.

Lack of time and money are the two reasons why education is a low priority according to most of the interviewees. Most of the interviewees feel they have no opportunities to educate themselves paid for by the club. The exception again is the youth program where education is seen as the key to success. Even though there are no prerequisites for formal education, the club tries to give all those interested a chance to take coaching courses. The level of formal education in the administration is low but is not seen as a problem by the interviewees. Personal suitability, commitment and experience are more important in their eyes.

One of the interviewees is not aware of any job description. Two of them know that there is a written job description but do not know the contents. Two of them know what their job description says but do not feel they get any guidance or support from it. The sixth interviewee is the member of the board who thinks it is important to have job descriptions and states that everyone has one.

Centralization

Club 1

In the operations of this club there is a strict separation of the strategic and the operative activities. The basic idea is that the board should focus on the long-term strategic issues and leave the day-to-day operations to the administration. The board and the various committees should function as sounding boards for the employees, an arrangement that is absolutely necessary according to the member of the board but that is not as popular among the employees. The formal power in the club is perceived to be in the hands of the board and the committees even if a few of the interviewees indicate that the club would be better off if more power were distributed to those individuals closer to the operations instead.

All the interviewees express a feeling of great personal freedom of action within their professional area. Freedom with responsibility supported and guided by rules and regulations is an expression used by all interviewees.

The perceived level of participation in decision making amongst the interviewees is generally low, with the exception of the coach who states that he has all the power he wants and needs. There is no noticeable dissatisfaction with this, on the contrary everyone seems to be aware of how things must be done. The perceived friction between the board and the operatives is taken as natural and not as a big problem. The reported level of participation with the members of the club is low but it does exist. The annual club meeting is seen as the main opportunity for members to speak out, but not many take the opportunity. Active members (players, youths, coaches, leaders and such) have the chance to express their opinions in various committees and forums (players' council, youth coaches' council, arena council and such). The volunteer in the youth program and the member of the arena staff feel that these councils gain a fair hearing with the main board. An opinion supported by the member of the board who feels there is a satisfactory level of participation amongst employees, volunteers and members via their representatives in councils and committees.

The dissemination of information in the organization is seen as satisfactory by all interviewees. Everyone is familiar with the goals and visions of the organization as well as with recent decisions made by the board. Regular meetings are held to keep all employees informed. The only thing left to wish for, according to a few of the interviewees, is more and stricter follow-ups from the board.

Club 2

The interviewees in the second club, apart from the member of the board, all agree that the board is too distant from the rest of the operations. The

member of the board on the other hand claims the distance, if it is perceived as a problem, as a result of the lack of initiative from employees. A considerable share of the power of the board is distributed to the, so-called, youth board, a favourable arrangement according to the interviewees. Many of the problems in the club, according to most of the interviewees, are the result of isolated decision-making everywhere in the organization. An exaggerated focus on sport related issues to the disadvantage for the administration is also mentioned as a problem.

Freedom of action is enjoyed by all interviewees within their specific professional areas and the participation in decision making is, with a few exceptions, perceived as high. The members' influence on the other hand is limited to the annual club meeting and is not believed to have any power other than in adopting or questioning the annual report and accounts.

None of the interviewees are satisfied with the dissemination of information in the club. Usually employees get to read about news concerning the club in the newspapers. No meetings are held except for the annual club meeting and the board meetings. No formal information channels are established. The marketing assistant claims that it is probably for the best to keep information concerning transfers and such to a minimum number of people to avoid rumours. Most of the interviewees are familiar with the existence of visions and goals and a few also know the contents.

One organizational feature accentuated as positive concerning the centralization in the second club is a group established to co-ordinate all sport-related issues in the club. The group consists of representatives from the youth administration, the sport committee, the first team coaches, the youth coaches, and the upper secondary school hockey program. The benefits of this kind of arrangement, according to the volunteer in the youth program and the first team coach, are the co-ordination of internal and external education, the allocation of players to different teams, and drafting activities.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to examine perceived consequences connected to organizational structures for employees and volunteers in Swedish sport, using data from elite ice hockey clubs, by comparing two structurally different organizations. The analysis of the data presented shows that different structural features are related to different perceived consequences for individuals in an organization. Yet despite the variations in organizational features between these clubs there are a few perceived consequences that are similar in both clubs . In these

conclusions I will start by looking into this phenomenon and end with my main focus: the analysis of the differences in perceived consequences, possibly deriving from differences in organizational structure.

Similarities

- Elite vs. youth
- Education & training
- Strategic vs. operative
- Freedom of action

The interviewees in both clubs are fairly unanimous regarding the fact that a separation of the youth program from the elite program would be favourable. More appropriate organizational size and stability in the youth program are given as reasons for such a separation. It seems that the high level of specialization in the first club and the unstable elite program in the second club are the reasons behind this. However that may be, the perceived consequences are unwanted friction between the two programs. Amis et al. (1995) argue that one possible explanation for this friction lies in basic structures giving rise to conflicts between professionals and volunteers. An example of this would be conflicting goals (sport for all vs. elite sport) and different values, where the competition for resources often functions as a release mechanism. Different structures for rewards and remuneration are also postulated as structural antecedents to conflicts in voluntary sport organizations. Dawis et al. (1964) have reported similar findings stating that fair policies and procedures are important for job satisfaction. Auld (1994) has found that differences in organizational experience between volunteers and professionals can also cause friction between the two. Volunteers are in general found to have longer organizational experience. The data available does not reveal any information regarding these facts but some background information indicates support for his findings.

The attitude towards formal education and formal competence is also a unifying feature in these clubs. Personal suitability, commitment and experience are seen as being more important prerequisites than formal education. Experience of playing or coaching ice hockey is the required background, even for purely administrative positions. The general opinion is that no formal education can replace the experience you get from working in a sport club. One explanation for this phenomenon could be the ideas of Parks, Zanger & Quarterman (1998) and Kikulis & Slack (1995) on sector specifics. The area of sport management may be seen as being so detached from more conventional businesses that conventional degrees and certificates are not seen as valid for a position in a sport club.

Degrees in the area of sport management are not as yet very common in Sweden, which may also explain why the interviewees consider degrees in general as invalid (cf. Olson & Sund, 2002).

The exception regarding attitudes towards formal education is the attitudes towards the education of coaches and youth leaders, an exception that could have historical reasons. Sport in Sweden has traditionally, until very recently, been managed solely by volunteers. Training and education, have been delivered by each respective national sport federation with a strict focus on practical coaching (Blom & Lindroth, 1995; Fahlström, 2001). The explanation for these reported similarities despite organizational differences appears to lie outside the framework of this study.

Both clubs share views on the perceived distance between the strategic and the operative activities. All the interviewees except the two members of the boards agree that the power to make decisions should lie closer to the actual operations, either through distributed power or through an operative board. This finding could be understood through the findings in Mathieu and Zajac (1990) where participative leadership is found to precede organizational commitment.

The board members on the other hand agree with each other that strategic and operative work should be strictly separated, a result also found in Cuskelly et al. (1999) where the budget, planning and evaluation are seen as the responsibilities of the volunteers and sponsoring, marketing and subsidies the responsibilities of the employees. This phenomenon is not unique in any way (Thibault et al., 1991). Those in power strive for distance and those without strive for proximity, which according to Amis et al. (1995) is the most fundamental source of conflict between professionals and volunteers. Another explanation, supported by the findings in Cuskelly et al. (1999), is that paid staff tend to complain about the unrealistic demands made on them by volunteers, especially voluntary board members. The volunteers and the voluntary board members on the other hand resent the demands put on them by paid staff, especially if the tasks are perceived as being the responsibility of an employee. This result however is not congruent with Auld and Godbey (1998) who argue that both volunteers and professionals agree that professionals have more power and influence than volunteers but that the order should be the other way around. The reason for the lack of differences in perceived consequences in this case could be due to the insignificant differences in the way the boards operate.

Great personal freedom of action is perceived in both clubs. A phenomenon possibly rooted in different grounds. Some statements indicate that the perceived freedom of action in the first club is due to the explicit guidelines and regulations while in the second club it is due to the lack of supervision and control. The interviewees in the first club feel free because they know their boundaries and exactly what they are and are not

allowed to do, a result supported by the findings in Gidron (1983) where job satisfaction is linked to clear direction. The interviewees in the second club feel free because little or nothing limits their actions. However that may be, this result could be explained to some extent by the general conception that professionals in these types of organizations are in general satisfied with their levels of influence and power (Auld & Godbey, 1998).

Differences

- Specialization
- Standardization
- Centralization

The main conclusion concerning the perceived consequences possibly deriving from variations in the structural dimension of specialization is that high levels of specialization are to a certain extent preferred to low levels. This is consistent with Knoke (1981) who argues that larger budgets are associated to a higher degree with satisfaction and commitment, and with Gidron (1983) who argues that lack of resources is negatively associated with job satisfaction. Knoke (1981) has also found a connection between higher positions within the organization and organizational commitment. In this case this could perhaps be translated into the first club's lead over the second club when it comes to recent success both on the ice and financially. Confidence and focus are the keywords in understanding the perception of high specialization as desirable. The preference for high specialization could be in terms of the findings in Mathieu and Zajac (1990) who state that role ambiguity, role overload and role conflict are negatively associated with organizational commitment, and in those of Slack (1985) who states that high specialization is crucial for an organization of this kind. Differentiation of tasks and roles is said to be inevitable with increasing organizational size (Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991) and the horizontal span of tasks demands specified competences.

The reason given for not being able to specialize to the desired extent is money. It would seem to be a classic "catch 22" for the second club. The desire to specialize is limited by lack of resources and the lack of specialization prevents the club from raising the necessary funds. The club finances are apparently dependent on the success of the first-team and the possibilities of creating the necessary requirements for success are limited by the finances. One possible solution suggested in the interviews, is to increase the use of voluntary forces. A board consisting of corporate professionals who more closely assist the employees or even perform

operative duties themselves could provide many hours of work that would otherwise have to be paid for. This proposed solution is however somewhat in contradiction to the findings in Auld and Godbey (1998) who argue that success is linked to having more paid staff with more power. The result also contradicts the findings in Ouchi and Johnson (1978) stating that well-being among employees is related to low task specialization and not high as in this case, and to the findings in Balzer et al. (1990) which state that job satisfaction is related to task variety.

The main conclusion on the perceived consequences possibly deriving from variation in the structural dimension of standardization is that high levels of standardization are preferred to low levels. Policies, rules, regulations and guidelines are perceived as making the work situation easier and raising the standards of performance. The formalization procedures are perceived as being the organizational glue, the spirit of the club. People like the feeling of a job well done and high levels of standardization are seen to facilitate the possibility of achieving that. It seems that the greater number of professionals in the first club is associated with higher levels of standardization (cf. Thibault et al., 1991). This result is not congruent with Aiken and Hage (1966) who argue that excessive rule formalization leads to alienation, or with Knoke (1981) where supervision is found to be connected with dissatisfaction, but it does agree with Amis, Slack and Berrett (1995) where low levels of formalization tend to be seen as negative as responsibilities fall between two stools.

Another conclusion regarding the perceived consequences possibly deriving from variation in the structural dimension of standardization is that lower standardization seems to reduce the possibilities of on-the-job training or other kinds of educational opportunities for the individuals within an organization and higher standardization seems to increase those opportunities. This could be another explanation of why high levels of standardization are preferred over low levels. Balzer et al. (1990) have found that the chance to expand one's knowledge is positively associated with job satisfaction.

The main difference in the perceived consequences possibly deriving from the structural dimension of centralization, according to the interviewees is the reported participation in the decision making of each membership body. High centralization in this case seems to involve greater opportunities for the members to make themselves heard, a fact that according to Cuskelly et al. (1998) is closely connected with organizational commitment, and may be why high centralization is regarded favourably in this case. Knoke (1981) however has in direct opposition found that a decentralization of power increases support and participation in an organization and that high centralization leads to low commitment amongst members. Higher centralization here also seems to improve the information channels and the overall communication in the

organization which, according to the findings in Cuskelly et al. (1998), appear to be vital elements in creating an atmosphere of participation, commitment and influence.

The indications of discontent in the second club could very well be a result of perceived lack of influence over decision making in the lower ranks, as found by Amis et al. (1995). The greater number of professionals in the first club however does not seem to increase the decentralization of decision making as Thibault et al. (1991) suggest. Another argument presented by Thibault et al. (1991) is that more sophisticated structures (such as high centralization in this case) would reduce both influence and power for voluntary board members. These data however provide neither support for that, nor any support for similar results concerning links between high and vertically complex organizations and perceived dissatisfaction among employees.

Conclusion

High specialization, standardization and centralization are often said to be elements of a highly efficient organization (Frisby, 1986; Koski, 1995) and the contribution of this paper shows that high levels of these three dimensions are also perceived as favourable by the individuals in an organization of this kind. This study shows also that some structures, despite variations, seem to yield similar perceptions, suggesting that some structures have stronger impact on individuals' perceptions than others. The reported similarities also suggest that not all perceptions can be related to organizational structure. Explanations to these similarities are however beyond the framework and the scope of this study but deserve nonetheless attention in order to learn more about how different organizations can affect individuals within.

In studies of this kind it is always hard to isolate the causal connections and to derive with any certainty a particular consequence from a particular structural arrangement. However, this study may shed some light on the concept of organizational structure in sport clubs and its consequences and, as Farrell, Johnston and Twynam (1998) call for, facilitate understanding of perceptions in order to create conditions conducive to satisfaction and thereby potentially improve planning and management. Satisfaction, according to Baltzer et al. (1990), has proved to be connected positively to both lower absence and increased turnover. An increased understanding of job satisfaction would also be helpful for managers in recruiting and retaining volunteers, as Chelladurai (1999) points out.

This study has not investigated the possibilities that organizational structures could affect individuals within an organization differently

depending on their position in the organization. In future studies I will try to extend the analysis to include variations within each organization. Such an approach could facilitate further understanding of organizational structure and their consequences for individuals. It would also be useful to include organizations in other sports, at other levels, and in other settings since the sample in this study is somewhat limited and generalizations should be made with care.

While much has been written on organizational structure, organizational change, and environmental pressure in sport organizations we cannot be sure of automatic transferability to other national settings or other types of sport organizations. As outlined in Fahlén (n.d.) organizational studies of Swedish sport organizations is sparse and both theoretical development and empirical testing is needed to diversify the conventional understanding of organizations, diversify understanding created in the English-speaking parts of the world, and diversify understanding created from only one type of organization.

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Organizational Structures in Sport Clubs - Exploring the Relationship between Individual Perceptions and Organizational Positions

Josef Fahlén
Department of Education
Umeå University
Sweden

Abstract

This paper reports on an analysis of individual perceptions of organizational structures in Swedish elite ice hockey with the purpose of studying the relationship with organizational position. Findings are based on structured interviews with 8 individuals who work or are volunteers in 4 different organizational positions in 2 elite ice hockey clubs. Organizational position is defined by hierarchical level, line or staff position, and by paid or volunteer position. Perceptions are studied in relation to the structural dimensions specialization, standardization, and centralization. Results show that perceptions are related to the organizational position occupied and that the various perceptions result in tensions between the different organizational positions. The results are discussed in relation to findings concerning organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Introduction

Increasing difficulties in attracting and retaining coaches, administrators and volunteers within Swedish sport (Peterson, 2002) has generated a growing interest in the management and design of sport organizations. Increasing demands for effectiveness have increased the need for more sophisticated organizational structures which in turn have resulted in new, changed, and unknown circumstances for the people involved in sport organizations (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1995). During these circumstances individual perceptions of organizational structures becomes important to explore.

In the study of organizations, the concept of organizational structure and the structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization has long been utilized to describe organizational features and configurations (Hage & Aiken, 1967; Lawrence & Lorch, 1967, Pugh, Hickson, Hinings & Turner, 1968; and Thompson, 1967). The concept of organizational structure has also been studied in relationship to individual variables such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, employee turnover etc (see Porter & Lawler; 1964 and Cumming & Berger, 1976 for early reviews).

This text takes its departure in Fahlén (n.d.) where perceptions of organizational structure in two structurally different ice hockey clubs were compared. That study showed, amongst other things, that high levels of the three structural dimensions -specialization, standardization and centralization- were perceived more positively than low levels. The study did however not distinguish between different positions in each organization and as e.g. Payne and Mansfield (1973) point out, representing organizational climate in terms of mean values can be misleading. Payne and Mansfield (1973) showed that people in different positions in an organization have different views about the organizational climate. Rice and Mitchell (1973) have also shown that an individual's perceptions are related to his or her position within an organization. Thus, studying individual

perceptions related to organizational position becomes interesting.

Studying individual perceptions of organizational structure will not only help us to understand some of the mechanisms behind attracting and retaining individuals in a voluntary sport organization but will also contribute to the broader literature on both organizational structure and organizational commitment, organizational climate, job satisfaction, job performance, employee turnover etc.. Since organizations are much too complex for any given variable to have a consistent unidirectional effect across a wide variety of types of conditions (Porter & Lawler, 1965) extending the analysis to the study of variation in perceptions between different positions within an organization will help us broaden our understanding of how organizational structure affects individuals. If voluntary sport organizations are to succeed in delivering programs and events, the reasons behind individual perceptions and behaviours need to be explored. Organizations which fail to attract and retain a voluntary or paid workforce are more likely to spend more time and effort recruiting and training new personnel than furthering the goals of the organization (Cuskelly, 1995).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between the positions of individuals in an organization and their perceptions of organizational structures. The aim is not to seek incontrovertible proof of cause and effect relationships between organizational structure and individual perceptions but to, in an explorative manner, throw light upon some mechanisms behind mentioned perceptions. The analysis is based on interview data from two elite ice hockey clubs in Sweden.

Theoretical background

In the literature pertaining to the study of organizations it has long been emphasized that research needs to bridge the traditional gap between macro and micro, between the total organization, the group, and the individual (Brass, 1981). While considerable effort has been devoted to both

the structures of organizations and to individual attitudes to work less attention has been given the relationship between the two. The relationship has indeed been investigated but, with a few exceptions (e.g. Oldham & Hackman, 1981; Pheysey, Payne & Pugh, 1971), exactly how it functions remains unexplored. What we do know about attitudes towards and perceptions of structural features is based mainly on results taken from industrial and government enterprises and we do not yet know whether that knowledge would hold in a sport organization context (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003).

Research roughly speaking has studied either individual or organizational factors as possible sources of individual perceptions such as e.g. job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Both perspectives have produced results to support their case even if some comparative studies have found perceptions, attitudes and behaviours to be related more to the structural context within which the job occurs than to individual characteristics (e.g. Glisson & Durick, 1988; Oldham & Hackman, 1981).

The basic assumption in this paper is drawn from the Job-Modification Framework where an understanding of the relationship between organizational structure and individuals' perceptions is sought by looking at structural context and more precisely the characteristics of the job. Organizational structure is seen to affect job characteristics which in turn affect individual perceptions of the work and the organization. The Job-Modification Framework is based on findings concerning the relationship between organizational structure and job characteristics (e.g. Pheysey et al., 1971) and on the relationship between job characteristics and individual perceptions (e.g. Pierce & Dunham, 1978). Theoretical and empirical work using the Job-Modification Framework offer some understanding of how organizational structure is perceived by individuals in an organization (e.g. Rousseau, 1977; and Oldham & Hackman, 1981).

One significant characteristic of a job is its position within an organization (Rice & Mitchell, 1973). Both hierarchical

position and line or staff position have been explored in the literature. In the study of sport organizations the distinction between paid staff and volunteer personnel has also been analyzed. Research into organizational position with regard to the distinction hierarchical level and line or staff function has, broadly speaking, shown that people at higher levels and in line positions are to a greater extent associated with more positive attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and with more positive behaviours such as high performance and low absenteeism (Cummings & Berger, 1976; and Porter & Lawler, 1964). No uniform findings regarding the differences between people in paid and volunteer positions are available but some related research shows that the two groups have different perceptions of e.g. organizational commitment and influence in decision making (Cuskelly, Boag & McIntyre, 1999; Auld & Godbey, 1998; and Cuskelly, McIntyre & Boag, 1998).

Using the framework proposed above and supporting empirical findings on the job characteristics mentioned will allow an exploration of and explanations for possible differences in individual perceptions of organizational structure in this study. No causal interpretations of possible relationships will be made since neither sample nor method is appropriate for testing. Nevertheless the findings may be useful in pointing out where further research on sport organizations is needed, how knowledge of these issues can be achieved, and why this knowledge is important for the management of sport organizations in Sweden and elsewhere.

Methods

Sample

Data were collected in two Swedish elite ice hockey clubs, clubs organized along lines similar to those in many industrialized countries today. The sporting individual is a member of a sport club, which in turn is affiliated to a regional sport federation, which in turn is affiliated to a national sport federation under the Swedish sports confederation (RF). The Swedish elite ice hockey league is

the highest division in a system comprising a maximum of seven divisions. The system is hierarchical based on sports merits and the teams are run by membership-based non-profit clubs.

One way of moving away from calculated means and closer to actual perceptions is to analyze interview data from individuals in a variety of positions within an organization. The definition of organizational position, inspired by the Aston Paradigm, comprises the distinction between hierarchical levels (Pugh et al., 1968), the distinction between line and staff personnel as proposed by Porter and Lawler (1965), and the distinction between paid staff and volunteer personnel. No distinction is made between the two clubs.

The lowest hierarchical level (0) according to Pugh, et al. (1968) is the operating level, the direct worker, in this case assumed to be the ice hockey player or the Youth volunteer. Line personnel are the people involved in the organization's primary output (playing ice hockey) while staff personnel are involved in the coordination, control, and support of those in line positions. Paid staff derive their main income from the organization. Volunteer personnel, while not excluded if paid smaller amounts, are not salaried in the sense that they make their living from their involvement.

Respondents were picked based on organizational position. My aim was to reach individuals on all levels, in both line and staff positions, and both paid staff and volunteer personnel. For those positions where there was more than one individual to choose from interviewees were selected in consultation with the general manager based on accessibility. The selection resulted in 4 interviewees from each club as shown in Table 1: member of the board, coach of the first team, sales manager, and volunteer in the youth program.

Table 1

Organizational Position

| Rank Above Lowest Level | Staff Positions | | Line Positions | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | Voluntary Position | Paid Position | Paid Position | Voluntary Position |
| 3 | Board Member | | | |
| 2 | | Sales Manager | | |
| 1 | | | Coach First Team | |
| 0 | | | | Youth Volunteer |

Measures

Inspired by the constructs created by Kikulis, Slack, Hinings and Zimmerman (1989) and Slack and Hinings (1987) a list of interview questions was created that were considered to reflect the three structural dimensions of organizational structure. With a minor modification to the Interview Questions, Organization Design Index (Slack, n.d.) it was possible to adjust the constructs and the questions to fit this particular study.

The concept of specialization was operationalized using questions regarding the extent of the administrative and operative roles together with the division between these. The operationalization of specialization involved questions regarding the number of paid staff versus volunteers and the division of tasks between the two groups (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

The operationalization of standardization involved questions about efforts made to reduce variations in procedures and to promote coordination. These questions were intended to examine how and to what extent

activities are governed and regulated by rules, policies and other formal procedures (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

The centralization concept was operationalized through questions regarding where decisions are made and how the decision making is distributed. Centralization was examined in three ways; at which hierarchical level the decisions were made, the extent of participation in decision making on other hierarchical levels, and the involvement of volunteers in the decision-making process (Slack & Hinings, 1992).

No measure of organizational structure other than each interviewee's perception was used. Contrary to e.g. Oldman and Hackman (1981) where the president or someone similar provided data on organizational structures for the employees to relate to, the present study assumes organizational structure to be partly a function of the perceptions of the organizational members in question. Inherent in the notion of organizational position, as presented earlier, is an assumption that perceptions of organizational structure are affected by an individual's place in the organizational hierarchy, distance from the core activities, and function as either paid staff or volunteer personnel. It follows with this line of argument that organizational structure is not seen as a constant variable for the interviewees to relate to but as a perceptual concept constructed by each interviewee.

Perceptions of organizational structure were not measured in the way commonly used in the literature on job satisfaction and organizational climate such as job challenge (Payne & Mansfield, 1973), autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), feedback (Brass, 1981) and similar. Instead, interviewees were asked to speak freely about organizational structures.

Procedure

The interview questions were designed to study (a) the picture each interviewee had of the respective club's structural arrangements, (b) each interviewee's opinion about those same structural arrangements, and (c) how

each interviewee were affected by those arrangements. This procedure made it possible to explore both links in the Job-Modification Framework, (1) the relationship between organizational structure and job characteristics and (2) the relationship between job characteristics and individual perceptions. It also allowed for organizational structures to have a direct effect on individual perceptions regardless of any relationships they might have with job characteristics (cf. Brass, 1981).

The structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted face to face in each interviewee's workplace, in private. The interviews were recorded, transcribed in full and then coded for anonymity. Interview data were analyzed using the techniques outlined by Stake (1995).

Results

The results are presented according to organizational position with regard to hierarchical position, the distinction of line or staff, paid or volunteer, as shown in Table 1. The quotations should be read as examples and illustrations of the opinions found in the data rather than complete reflections of all opinions. Quotations are taken from both respondents in each position without any given order.

The Board Member Position on Specialization

I have worked to move the daily operations down to the office. The club has gotten to large to for [us] voluntary forces to run the daily and operative business. I want the financial committee to function more as a sounding board for XX and YY [two individuals working in paid staff positions] who need to take the day-to-day responsibility.

The Board Member Position on Standardization

First of all, you need to have your heart in the club and be interested in ice hockey....In my position I think it is good to have [a degree in business administration]. Issues like balancing the books or discussing things with accountants would be difficult otherwiseThe general level of expertise needs to be raised.

Documented routines are important....I do not see them as paper tigers, I see them as documents that are observed....Who should authorize payments, orders, investments....We try to do things in a corporate way even if we are a club.

The Board Member Position on Centralization

There is always some friction between the employees and the board, everywhere and in all kinds of issues....If this were a company it would be easy, but now it is kind of both you could say....Volunteers against professional staff...of course there is friction in between.

The sport committee is the centre of gravity in the club...handles sports-related issues...[which are] the most important issues...decides on new recruitments [players] and lay-offs.

The Sales Manager Position on Specialization

There should be more people [working at the office], so that each one could focus on his task so to say....You might want a board that works closer to the actual operations....They have more of a supervisory role [now]....We need more people working [administrative] with our youth operations....They have grown too big for one person to handle.

Everything has to go through us [the office]...the youth teams can not go around selling advertisements on their own.

The Sales Manager Position on Standardization

There are always courses and classes for all kinds of things but here we try to learn from each other instead....Education and those things are important but I would go according to background and personality more than education....You cannot just go for a theorist with so and so many [academic] credits....It is more to do with relations.

The club has produced a handbook for the operations...fairly detailed as to what we can do and can

not do...which issues go up to the board and such....All the way from the youngest youth team...not only on the ice but also journeys, cups and such. It is a must in such a large club as this....In that way we can avoid all questions and rumours in the corridors...just look it up in the book.

The Sales Manager Position on Centralization

You might want some more steering and concrete ideas [from the board]....One shortcoming, in my opinion, is that the board is quicker to question our work than to give us directions....It is very seldom we get concrete assignments. Instead it is us generating proposals and ideas. It ought to be the other way around more often.

More things need to go through us...we cannot leave the decisions to the dads and mums...there are a lot of capable people but you feel that you cannot let things go....Same goes for transports as for away games and team uniforms....More control is needed.

The Coach of the First Team Position on Specialization

My opinion is that the sport manager should have both the competence and power to direct the sport issues....Not as it is now with ideas coming from down here and up....It is problematic to have us [head coach and assistant coach] doing everything....We should be let to focus on our jobs.

The Coach of the First Team Position on Standardization

We must keep ourselves updated. The problem is lack of time....Coaching at top-level leaves little time for education....Of course competence is important but I think you need to calculate from case to case whether courses, degrees, or experience is to be preferred....But you have to adhere to the standards [set by the Swedish Ice Hockey Association (SIF)].

Not everything is written down, it is more like the players know these things....As long as they take care of things there are no problems....It is tacit and unspoken....It is often solved within the group....Policies and routines are important but most important is having strong individuals supporting [the policies and the routines].

The Coach of the First Team Position on Centralization

When it comes to hockey I have all the authority I want...training, organizing travelling, pre-season, cups etc....Outside hockey, very limited....You can have ideas and, for instance, shopping lists for players but when you don't know all the financial stuff it is problematic....I would like to know the [players'] salaries so that I could evaluate from that.

The sport committee evaluates [the team] during the season...but they do not have the same basis for making decisions as me and ZZ [the assistant coach] have....If I want to get rid of a player it is often impossible since they are bound by contracts...[then] you just have to put up with it...[but] it is not unusual for us to get the blame for it [a less successful recruitment].

The Volunteer in the Youth Program Position on Specialization

I think all sport clubs with a first team in the premier division would benefit from separating the youth and the elite operations....Run the elite operations on business lines...and let the youth operations lead their own life....It is all business [otherwise]....Making ends meet in the youth operations is no problem.

The Volunteer in the Youth Program Position on Standardization

We generally start with the parents...with some kind of interest and/or know-how. After one year we send them to Step 1 [Basic Youth Leader Course at SIF]...which is a requirement [if they want to continue]...next year Step 2 and so on....It is important for us to educate both kids and parents....How [else] are we supposed to foster our own elite coaches?.

I personally think that it is good that the club has policies...so that everybody pulls together....Do the right thing at different ages, when to send in the best players etc....I think it is really important for the club's survival....We have rules for how to practice and play...but

more importantly we have policies for behaviour and what it means to play ice hockey...do you best.

The Volunteer in the Youth Program Position on Centralization

We [the youth operations] apply for money each season [from the board]....They set the budget...and we manage ourselves....The board is 98 percent concerned with issues related to the first team and the juniors [Team 18 and Team 20]...they trust us to do the best we can.

This club is based on mutual trust...when it comes to money, education, tasks...I need to trust that he or she is doing their best...I have enough to do doing my own job.

Discussion

This study has examined the relationship between the positions of individuals in an organization and their perceptions of organizational structures. Organizational position was defined by hierarchical level, line or staff position, and by paid or volunteer position. This discussion will show how an individual's organizational position relates to their perceptions of the structural dimensions specialization, standardization and centralization. On a few occasions, quotations in the Results above overlap into two or more of the analytical paragraphs below.

High vs. low hierarchical positions

Specialization

People in all positions express a feeling of working to capacity and would rather see someone else doing more. The statements from the interviewees indicate that people in high positions transfer responsibility and tasks downwards and people in low positions refer responsibility and tasks upwards in the organization.

Explaining these findings by means of hierarchical position seems to be difficult but a few pointers can be found in Cumming and Berger (1976) where Meta study results show that people in higher positions derive satisfaction,

among other things, from smoothness of workflow while people in lower positions derive satisfaction, among other things, from the amount of work they do. It seems that directing tasks elsewhere might help both groups achieve satisfaction, for people in lower positions as it reduces their workload and for people in higher positions as it makes the workflow smoother.

People in higher positions are argued to be more satisfied with their job than people in lower positions are (Herrera & Lim, 2003). The results in present study however provide no indications to support that view.

Standardization

Formal education and formal competence is more important at the top and at the bottom of the organization, and is seen in both places as a requirement for the work. At middle levels background, personality and experience are seen as more valuable than formal qualifications.

Standardization, formal structuring, routines, procedures and management practices are often said to be associated with job satisfaction (e.g. Stevens, Philipsen, & Diederiks, 1992). Educational level is also found to be related to job satisfaction, with high educational levels related to high satisfaction levels (Herrera & Lim, 2003). None of these findings however shed any light on the differing perceptions in this study.

Centralization

People in higher positions express a need to control the activities of people in positions further down in the organization, while the people in lower positions refer to the need for mutual trust. It seems, however, as if the trust mostly works one way - upwards.

The need for control as expressed by people in higher positions can be understood with reference to the findings in Rice and Mitchell (1973) where people in higher positions are found to attach greater importance to external results (turnover, profit, on-ice success and such)

than people in lower positions. The reason for this could be found in Inglis (1994) where higher visibility is given as a reason for differences between professionals and volunteers. Likewise, visibility could offer one possible explanation of why people in higher positions are concerned with controlling the activities of people in lower positions. The higher visibility means that the people in higher positions are more strongly associated with the success or failure of the organization, making the need for control understandable.

Another possible explanation could be sought in organizational commitment where Jackson and Williams (1981) have found that higher positions are more positively related to organizational commitment than lower levels are. This commitment in the present study could be illustrated by the greater need for control.

Line vs. staff positions

Specialization

Differences in opinions regarding specialization between line and staff personnel are not easily separated from differences related to the distinctions paid or volunteer positions and high or low positions. There are nevertheless some expressions which indicate that both groups would like to focus on their "own" tasks, even if some people in staff positions would also like to have some supervision over some of the tasks performed by people in line positions.

It is argued that people in staff positions derive less satisfaction from their jobs than people in line positions (Porter & Lawler, 1965). The results in this study, however, provide no support for more or less satisfaction in either group.

Standardization

The main difference in perceptions concerning standardization between the people in line and the people in staff positions is how the two groups see the time dimension in formal education and training. The

interviewees in line positions talk in terms of continuous training and education during their current appointment while the interviewees in staff positions refer to the level of competence demanded for their respective appointments. In simple terms, line personnel expect training and education on the job while staff personnel expect to have achieved the level of competence required before they take up an appointment.

One possible understanding of this difference is pointed out in Fahlén (n.d.) where historical and cultural reasons are given as explanations of differences in attitudes towards formal education. Sport in Sweden has traditionally, until very recently, been managed solely by volunteers and training and education, where it existed, was delivered by each respective national sport federation with a strict focus on practical coaching (Blom & Lindroth, 1995; Fahlström, 2001). This could have resulted in certain expectations among individuals involved in practical coaching and other expectations with individuals involved in supporting positions.

Centralization

Comparing the opinions on the locus of control between the board member position and the coach position gives us some insight into the power struggle between line and staff personnel. The sport committee, consisting mainly of board members, is seen by the board members as the main decision maker when it comes to the recruitment and laying off of players. The coach position, on the other hand, hints that the true decision lies with him and his assistant coach but admits that decisions in the sport committee which is beyond his influence throw spanners in the works. It is obvious where the coach position thinks the power should be.

One possible explanation for these differing perceptions could be a conflict between two functions stemming from the clash between two different sources of power. People in staff positions might derive their power primarily from the fact that they perceive themselves as being in charge of acquisition and the control of resources and thus

important for the success of the organization and thereby powerful. Similarly people in line positions might perceive themselves as being very central to the organization in terms of being the people who know the game and who should therefore be in charge (cf. Slack, Berrett & Mistry, 1994).

Paid vs. volunteer positions

Specialization

Both paid and volunteer personnel are fairly unanimous that the other group should do more. The division of tasks, however, between the two does not seem to be all that simple. The paid personnel, perhaps empowered by their salary and their longer hours, seem to think that keeping and/or moving tasks to the office implies a guarantee of quality. Both groups however agree on the need for more paid staff in order to cope with the heavy workload.

Cuskelly et al. (1998) found similar results where volunteers feel marginalized by the paid staff and paid staff feel frustrated with the volunteers not meeting their deadlines and not doing their jobs. The two groups seem irreconcilable but Farrell, Johnston and Twynam (1998) argue that it is the responsibility of the management to manage facilities and operations in a way that satisfies volunteers in order to make them stay. However that may be it seems that communication and task definition need to be addressed. The easy way would, of course, be to engage more people for both functions, a solution which, needless to say, is easier said than achieved.

It should however be noted that earlier findings have shown that commitment to an organization decreases inversely with level of remuneration and also inversely with number of working hours (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003).

Standardization

Differences in opinions on standardization between paid and volunteer personnel are not so easy to discern. All positions apart from the coach of the first team position express the importance of routines, guidelines, rules, handbooks etc. The coach position on the other hand refers to traditions, tacit and unspoken knowledge, and group norms. It would take further investigation to reach an understanding of why perceptions within the paid positions differ.

Centralization

Not only is the division of tasks a source of conflict between paid and volunteer personnel but perhaps even more evident is the division in opinions about where decisions should be made. The volunteers in the youth operations want to mind on their own business whereas the people in the office cannot accept decision making being in the hands of parents.

This finding conflicts with some findings in Auld and Godbey (1998) where both professionals and volunteers agree that professionals have more influence over decision-making. Both groups also agree that the relationship should be more balanced, the professionals even more than the volunteers. The commitment to voluntary governance is stronger among professional staff than volunteers. The professionals want the involvement of experienced volunteers with more insight and knowledge about the particular sport. As a comment on these disparities Cuskelly et al. (1999) argue that it seems that the opinions and behaviour of volunteers do not integrate into the explanatory system of organizational behaviour as easily as those of employees do.

One possible explanation for the differing perceptions can however be found in the findings of Amis et al. (1995) where the professionals' need for control is explained by financial dependence. Since professionals are dependent on the success of the organization for their own financial wellbeing their need for control is assumed to be greater.

Conclusion

The present analysis can offer a few pointers on how organizational structure is perceived by individuals in a sport organization and how their organizational position is related to these perceptions. In these conclusions I will also try to elaborate on the implications these perceptions may have for the development of these organizations.

Regarding the structural dimension specialization most people would like somebody else to do more, making their own focus narrower. The indications are the same, whether you compare high and low, line and staff, or paid and volunteer positions. The exception is the people in paid staff positions at the upper middle level who would like to keep more tasks in the office, as they put it. It would seem that the organization is perhaps too thin around the middle, needing more people on the upper middle level to carry out managerial and administrative duties.

Perceptions of standardization show that formal education is seen as being more important at the top and at the bottom of the organization and that people in staff positions see formal education as a prerequisite while people in line positions see training and education as a part of their job. It would seem that prospective educational measures should be directed towards the upper middle hierarchical level, or simply that formal education is not needed to the same extent at that level. Another possible implication is that there should be an attempt to raise the requirement for formal education among people in line positions and to extend on-the-job training and education among people in staff positions. Why routines, guidelines, rules, handbooks etc. are considered less important by people in paid line positions at the lower middle level than by the rest of the interviewees remains to be explored. It might be implied, however, that the operations around the first team are dependent on the specific person in the position at the time rather than on the performance of the organization.

Centralization of control and decision making is where the differences in perceptions are most obvious. All groups want to have control over decisions concerning their own tasks but people in high, staff, and paid positions would also like to have control over people in low, line, and volunteer positions. The implications of this seem to be that decision making, control, and power are moving from volunteer board members to paid administrators, away from the actual line operations to the staff positions, and from both high and low levels to the upper middle level of an organization. Auld and Godbey (1998) have however shown that balance, between paid staff and volunteers, regarding control, power, and decision making is not necessarily needed in order for an organization to be successful.

The extension of these findings and their contribution to our knowledge on the interplay between organizations and individuals in general and sport organizations more specifically is primarily that organizational structure affects individuals within an organization and that organizational position is related to the perceptions these individuals express.

Secondly, this study has shown how the distinctions high and low, line and staff, and paid and volunteer can be used to define organizational position and how the concept of organizational position could be used in illustrating how different positions in an organization relate to each other and to internal and external influences, pressures and phenomena.

Finally, these results can be used to gain an understanding of some of the reasons behind personnel (primarily volunteers) turnover in sport organizations and what the organization in question could do about this. While it is already recognized that volunteers are indispensable to both Swedish and international sport not much effort has so far been spent on finding out how they can be attracted and retained.

Even if organizational factors have been found to be more important than individual ones in other studies (Cuskelly, 1995), generalizations from this study should be made with care. Since such a small and specific sample as the one used in this study is sensitive to such variables as age, gender and income and not just to hierarchical position, line or staff function, or paid or volunteer position (cf. Ebeling, King & Rogers, 1979). The linear relationships assumed on a few occasions in this text should also be read critically. Even if earlier findings have shown results at one end of the scale it is not always correct to assume the opposite results at the other end of the scale (cf. Porter & Lawler, 1965). Similarly it is hard to tell separate and combined effects apart. While some perceptions can be the result of one organizational distinction others can certainly be result of two or three.

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