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Drivers of and Barriers to Professionalization in International Sport Federations

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ABSTRACT

In a changing and complex environment, international sport federations (IFs) have to face new challenges. These challenges can trigger or hinder IFs' professionalization processes. While researchers have examined organizational change and professionalization of national sport federations (NFs) and clubs, studies on IFs are rare. Considering professionalization as an important element of IFs' change processes in recent years, the study attempts to fill this gap. The conceptual framework is based on the concepts and dynamics of organizational change, the influence of isomorphic pressures and the operationalization of a multi-level framework. Data from six case studies was analyzed by means of qualitative content analysis. Findings reveal multiple causes of IFs' professionalization. Three particular findings are discussed: professionalization as a dynamic process with phases of acceleration that vary depending on IFs' size; IFs' becoming increasingly business-like through isomorphic changes; and five causes of particular relevance to IFs' current professionalization process.

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关键词

非营利性组织; 国际单项体育联合会; 专业化; 组织变革; 同构压力

国际单项体育联合会专业化进程的驱动和阻碍因素

随着发展环境的迅速变化和日益复杂化, 国际单项体育联合会(IFs) 正面新的复杂挑战。这些挑战可能对IFs的专业化进程起到促进或阻碍作用。尽管已有研究者对组织变革与国家单项体育协会(NFs) 以及俱乐部的专业化进程进行了研究, 但很少有针对IFs的类似研究。此外, 对体育组织专业化的定义与认识尚不明确。本研究将专业化作为IFs近几年来变革过程中的一个重要因素, 以填补这方面研究的空白。本研究的概念框架主要基于组织变革的概念和动态变化、同构压力的影响以及多层次框架的可操作化, 旨在对IFs专业化的影响因素进行分析。采用定性内容分析的方法, 对6家IFs的案例研究数据进行处理和分析, 研究结果发现IFs专业化的11个基本影响因素。本文对3项研究结果进行了详细阐述: 专业化是一个动态过程, 该过程包含若干加速阶段, 而具体的加速阶段取决于IFs的规模; 通过同构变革, IFs的运作已日趋商业化; 与IFs当前专业化进程最为相关的5个因素是外部压力、领导力、商业化、管理实践和组织文化。

1. Introduction

In the course of the commercialization of international sport (e.g. broadcasting, sponsorship, branding, growth of major sport events) and due to increasing expectations and pressures from various interest groups, international sport federations (IF) have undergone important organizational changes in recent years. Scholars have analyzed and emphasized different elements and processes of organizational change in sport organizations. At the national level (national sport federations, clubs), existing studies have enhanced scholars' understanding of aspects such as occupational professionalization (Dowling, Edwards, & Washington, 2014; Horch & Schütte, 2009; Seippel, 2002), board composition (Taylor & O'Sullivan, 2009), functioning (Yeh & Taylor, 2008) and organizational performance (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Winand, Rihoux, Robinson, & Zintz, 2013). With regard to IFs, isolated phenomena such as governance deficiencies (Chappelet, 2011; Forster, 2006), major sport events (Parent & Séguin, 2008), globalization and commercialization of sport (Forster & Pope, 2004), and scandals on doping (Hanstad, 2008) and corruption (Chappelet & Kübler-Mabbott, 2008; Mason, Thibault, & Misener, 2006) form the main body of literature. Considering professionalization as a process towards increased rationalization and organizational efficiency (Chantelat, 2001), little is actually known about the factors and dynamics that influence this change process in IFs because 'little attention has been paid to GSO [Global Sport Organizations] as a whole' (Crocì & Forster, 2004). This lack results in an incomplete understanding of IFs, often reduced to governance issues following the revelation of scandals (Jennings, 2011; MacAloon, 2011; Pielke, 2013). Dowling et al.'s (2014) and Nagel, Schlesinger, Bayle, and Giauque's (2015) calls for a systemic approach to sport federations' professionalization emphasize this gap. An enhanced understanding of IFs' professionalization as a dynamic process and interaction of triggering and hindering factors might help sport managers to understand and predict change processes more efficiently. The central questions addressed in this study are therefore: What are essential drivers of and barriers to IFs' professionalization? Can we distinguish particular dynamics of professionalization?

The study addresses these questions by first reviewing literature on professionalization and organizational changes in sport organizations. Following this, we develop a conceptual framework to analyze causes (drivers, barriers) and dynamics of professionalization in sport organizations. Data was collected through a multiple-case study design including six IFs. For data processing and analysis we used the qualitative content analysis. In the results section we present drivers and barriers as well as dynamics of professionalization. These are further explained and linked to the conceptual framework in the discussion. We conclude with a summary of main findings and suggestions of future research questions.

2. Previous Research on Professionalization and Organizational Changes in Sport Organizations

Based on existing studies, we define professionalization of non-profit sport organizations as a dynamic process towards a more rationalized functioning, driven by the objectives of enhancing the organization's performance and ensuring its service role towards its members. Being increasingly influenced by for-profit organizations, we argue that this process entails a transformation of sport organizations from volunteer-driven to more

business-oriented logics. Studies and definitions of professionalization that we base this definition on pursue different foci and lines of argumentation, three of which are presented here for their relevance in the context of sport management (Dowling et al., 2014): occupational, organizational and systemic professionalization.

Occupational professionalization (also referred to as professionalism) is a process designating a transformation through which occupations and professions are progressively measured against normative values (Abbott, 1991; Evetts, 2011; Hall, 1968). Brint (1996) speaks of a 'shift from social trustee professionalism to expert professionalism' (p. 11). In non-profit sport organizations, this process is characterized by an increased hiring of paid staff (Seippel, 2002; Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1991; Thiel, Meier, & Cachay, 2006). For Evetts (2014), modern professionalism does not only signify normative values such as occupational procedures, controlling, education and training, but also a discourse applied by managers to describe procedures of accountability and good governance. Using Evetts' definition of professionalism, we may question IFs' current level of professionalism as both their accountability and good governance repeatedly gave rise to critical studies (Alm, 2013; Chapelet, 2011; Forster, 2006; Geeraert, Alm, & Groll, 2014; MacAloon, 2011).

Another strand of research in sport management investigates professionalization as an organizational transformation, which results in more bureaucratization (Bayle, 2010; Slack, 1985; Slack & Hinings, 1994), rationalization (Kikulis, 2000; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999), efficiency (Chantelat, 2001; Dowling et al., 2014) and effectiveness (Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000). A general decrease in funding to non-profit organizations (Alexander, 2000; Levine & Zahradnik, 2012) in combination with an increasing demand for sport as a social good and entertainment (Borland & MacDonald, 2003) has significantly triggered competition between sport organizations for additional financial resources (Nagel et al., 2015). In their quest for efficiency and effectiveness, IFs increasingly adopt for-profit business methods and structures (Dowling et al., 2014; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

Besides looking at occupational and organizational professionalization, Dowling et al. (2014) suggest systemic professionalization as a third classification. The authors describe systemic professionalization as 'a by-product of environmental shifts' (p. 525). In view of researchers' understanding of current and future developments in sport management, they attribute a particular significance to this approach. Following Dowling et al.' (2014) call for a systemic approach, Nagel et al. (2015) developed a multi-level framework to analyze the influence of internal and external factors on causes, forms and consequences of professionalization in sport federations. The perspective of systemic professionalization appears to be of particular interest for our study as it allows us to determine whether professionalization processes are rather the result of internal or of external causes.

In the absence of substantial research on causes of professionalization in IFs, we drew on change literature on national sport organizations (NSO) that cover various organization-internal and external topics. Examples at the internal level include for instance the hiring of paid managers and staff and their influence on the structure and dynamics of formerly voluntary organizations (Horch & Schütte, 2009), rationalization processes (Chantelat, 2001; Slack & Hinings, 1987) and decision-making structures (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992; Thibault et al., 1991). Based on extensive data collection from multiple NSOs, several scholars put forth typologies to describe and predict their structure-strategy patterns: Kikulis et al.'s (1992), Kikulis, Slack, and Hinings (1995) analyses of the impact

of paid managers on decision-making structures resulted in the deduction of three design archetypes (kitchen-table, board room, executive office); and Thibault et al.'s (1991) investigation on NSOs' long-term strategic planning brought forward four strategic types (enhancers, innovators, refiners, explorers).

At the same time, organizations' survival and development also depend on their capacity to respond to external changes and pressures (Miller & Friesen, 1983). The adaptation of NSOs to environmental pressures from stakeholders (e.g. sponsors) and demands for organizational performance has been researched mainly with respect to changing governance designs. Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) saw in NSOs' adoption of established governance functions (e.g. performance, conformance) an indicator for their degree of professionalization. Acknowledging the complexity of NSOs' governance, Hoye and Doherty (2011), for their part, warned against the negative impact of poor governance structures on organizational performance.

Though some studies applied a configurational approach to analyze NSOs' organizational performance (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Winand et al., 2013) and organizational change (Kikulis et al., 1992; Theodoraki & Henry, 1994), the predominant research focus is on internal actors, especially boards. Boards have received a particular attention as they are regarded as the driving force of NSOs' performance (Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2005; Hoye & Auld, 2001; Inglis, 1997; Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000; Shilbury, 2001). In accordance with Cornforth (2011), we argue that the narrow focus on boards hampers a comprehensive understanding of sport organizations' functioning.

In sum, the lack of general research on and a systemic approach to IFs' professionalization not only creates an incomplete picture dominated by few IFs (e.g. FIFA, IAAF, UCI). It also impedes the development of concrete solutions to current issues. Solutions to current issues in IFs cannot be reduced to governance and some related aspects observed in a few federations only. On the contrary, they require an analysis of professionalization processes in IFs of different size and the knowledge production of underlying causes. The following conceptual and methodological procedures attempt to remedy the lack of a systemic approach to IFs' professionalization and the dominance of a few IFs.

3. Conceptual Framework

IFs' professionalization is the result of general organizational changes in non-profit sport organizations. In this study, we are particularly interested in causes that trigger or hinder the transformation of sport organizations from primarily volunteer-run and loosely structured organizations into increasingly complex and rationalized organizations managed by professionals. We are further interested in the dynamics of this process and seek an answer to whether professionalization is the result of radical or incremental changes or both. Institutional theories provide a useful ground to analyze dynamics of IFs' organizational change.

Institutional perspectives are not only interested in processes of power, but especially in authority and power relations between an organization and a superordinate unit. Authority relations may imply imposition of rules and requirements based on coercion or voluntarily induced structural changes. According to new institutionalism, institutional signs from policies, laws, and professions influence how organizations behave, even if the influence is not consciously experienced. Congruently, Scott (1987) speaks of organizational

structures evolving ‘over time through an adaptive, largely unplanned, historically dependent process’ (p. 506). We base our analysis of IFs’ dynamics of professionalization on the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who describe the impact of authority relations with three adaptive mechanisms of institutional change: coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism occurs in reaction to political influence and organizations’ quest for legitimacy within a same legal environment. This external pressure may be perceived by organizations as ‘force, persuasion or invitation to join in collusion’ (p. 150). Mimetic isomorphism, for its part, is described as an imitation that stems from uncertainty (e.g. environment, goals). In situations of uncertainty, organizations may consciously or unconsciously adopt solutions modelled by prototypical organizations. These prototypical organizations are generally ‘similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful’ (p. 152). Homogeneity is often the result of limited solution and model variety. Normative isomorphism, the third mechanism, is associated with professionalization in the sense of legitimization of professions. Here, isomorphic change primarily stems from formal education (e.g. university) and professional networks, creating organizational norms which professional managers and their staff internalize. The hiring of individuals from similar organizations, training/education institutions and certain skill-requirements are expected to encourage normative isomorphism. This ‘filtering of personnel’ (p. 152) results in common expectations regarding personnel behavior. The authors emphasize that none of the three mechanisms is a guarantor for increased organizational efficiency. However, they constitute helpful tools to establish and predict typologies of homogenous structure, process and behavior.

Within change literature, some scholars argue that radical change creates a positive momentum (Miller & Chen, 1994), some that evolutionary change is more effective (Quinn, 1980) and others observed a mix of both radical and incremental change (Child & Smith, 1987). Amis, Slack, and Hinings (2004) analyzed 36 Olympic NFs in Canada over a 12-year period with regard to pace, sequence and linearity of change. The authors come to the conclusion that initial bursts of change should ideally be followed by restrained progress in order to be more substantive and enduring. Furthermore, the authors observe that changing the decision-making system proved to be most difficult and that NFs differ in pace, sequence and linearity of change. Following Amis et al.’s (2004) observation, we suppose that dynamics of change vary across IFs and that certain organizational change processes require incremental change (e.g. mimetic and normative changes), while others are best achieved through radical change (e.g. coercive pressures). Applied to our initial research questions of drivers, barriers and dynamics of IFs’ professionalization, we put forward two research propositions (RP):

RP1: IFs’ professionalization process has elements of both radical and incremental change. At specific moments in time, certain drivers may have a particularly accelerating effect.

RP2: The more an IF depends on resources from business partners, the greater the extent to which it will change isomorphically to resemble the organizations on which it depends for resources.

To find answers to our research propositions, we apply the multi-level framework of Nagel et al. (2015) (Figure 1). The framework is based on a review of current international



Figure 1. Causes of professionalisation in sport federations according to Nagel et al.'s (2015) multi-level framework.

literature and concepts of professionalization in sport federations. Suggesting a systemic approach, the framework applies the social theory of action to focus on three levels of organizational relations: the external environment, that is, stakeholders in sport and society; the sport federation, that is, the federation itself; and the internal environment, that is, the federation's member organizations. Though the framework suggests the investigation of causes, forms and consequences of sport organizations' professionalization, we only focus on causes in this study.

4. Method

4.1. Case Study Design

Lacking empirical evidence on causes of IFs' professionalization and in order to allow elements to emerge and investigate their respective importance, the nature of this study is qualitative and exploratory. To gather empirical data, we carried out a qualitative content analysis based on multiple case studies. By means of 20 semi-structured interviews for which the replication logic was used, we collected evidence of six IFs based in Switzerland. Interviews were conducted with staff members and persons from the IF's direction. Of the interviewees, 17 were male and four female (two interviews were conducted with two persons at the same time). Important moments of change reported by interviewees date back into the 1990s. Some of the interviewees have been with the IF for many years (up to 35 years) and were thus able to provide longitudinal information. However, and with the goal to uncover current causes of professionalization, the main focus is limited to the period between 2008, marking the first ranking of IFs based on the IOC Evaluation criteria, and 2016. A review of secondary sources of information complements data obtained from interviews.

4.2. Selection of Cases

In an approach of purposive sampling, three criteria were used to select the six cases: environmental context, geographical concentration of IFs and size. Regarding the first

criterion and with the objective of enhancing comparability, we focused on Olympic IFs with headquarters in the same country, hence encountering a similar legal, political and economic context. Secondly, we chose IFs with headquarters in Switzerland, as Switzerland is the country with the highest concentration of IFs (about 45 at the time of investigation). Selecting IFs with headquarters in different countries would have made face-to-face interviews much more difficult and costly. The choice of a country with high concentration of IFs further allows a purposive sampling in terms of selecting IFs of varying organizational size. The following six IFs were chosen for case studies (we use the IOC-terminology in English): International Association Football Federation (FIFA), International Hockey Federation (FIH), International Rowing Federation (FISA), International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), International Cycling Federation (UCI) and United World Wrestling (UWW). All six federations represent summer Olympic sports and are non-profit associations under the Swiss Civil Code (Articles 60–79).

4.3. Data Collection

Data collection began in September 2014 and ended in July 2016. A total of 20 semi-structured interviews with staff members (current and former), persons from the IFs' direction, a representative of ASOIF (Association of Summer Olympic International Federations) were conducted in-person ($n = 14$), by telephone ($n = 3$) or by email ($n = 3$). The ASOIF representative was included because of his overall view and in-depth knowledge of the evolution and current situation of the 28 summer Olympic IFs. With the aim of gathering information on IFs' past and current causes of professionalization, we tried to diversify the selection of interviewees with regard to their functional and hierarchical position. With the exception of FIFA, we interviewed minimum one person from the direction having strategic influence and insights, and one staff member at the operational level (Table 1).

To ensure trustworthiness, the same interview guide was used for these interviews (Annex 1). In the case of UWW, the selection was extended to an external consultant and an IOC staff member. Having identified the temporary exclusion of UWW from the

Table 1. Interviews carried out between 2015 and 2016.

IF	Interview	# of Interviews
Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF)	1 person from the ASOIF direction and 1 staff member	1
International Association Football Federation (FIFA)	2 former FIFA staff members	2
International Hockey Federation (FIH)	1 person from the FIH direction, 1 person from the direction of the European Hockey Federation and 3 FIH staff members	5
International Rowing Federation (FISA)	1 person from the FISA direction, 1 person from the past FISA direction and 1 FISA staff member	3
International Volleyball Federation (FIVB)	1 person from the FIVB direction and 1 FIVB staff member	1
International Cycling Federation (UCI)	1 person from the UCI direction, 1 UCI staff member and 2 former UCI staff members	4
United World Wrestling (UWW)	1 person from the UWW direction together with 1 UWW staff member, 1 UWW staff member, 1 UWW consultant and 1 IOC member	4
Total		20

Olympic Program (February–September 2013) as the most important driver of the federation's recent professionalization dynamic, we deemed it useful to integrate these interviews.

Though interview questions were closely tied to Nagel et al.'s (2015) framework, we opted for semi-structured interviews to allow a broadening of the information spectrum. In-person interviews lasted between 30 and 120 min, were recorded, transcribed verbatim and resulted in 185 single-spaced pages of data. Interviews conducted by telephone were summarized producing nine single-spaced pages. In order to increase trustworthiness, participants were invited to check the transcription/summary. Changes made to the transcripts/summaries by participants primarily concerned sensitive information and informal language. Responses by email produced 11 single-spaced pages. We acknowledge that email interviews present certain shortcomings. For instance, the asynchronous nature of email responses regarding time and place makes spontaneous answers impossible, though they are a rich and valuable source of evidence.

Secondary documents from the IFs comprise annual reports, financial statements, statutes, regulations, organization charts and selected external documents. While statutes and regulations for all six IFs are accessible on the IFs' website, annual reports, financial statements and organization charts are only partially available and very heterogeneous in form and length. For instance, both FIFA and UCI publish extensive annual reports (around 130 pages) including financial statements, while the FIVB publishes neither annual reports nor financial statements. None of the IFs publishes organization charts of the administrative staff and we only received two upon request (UCI, UWW). External documents on IFs primarily focus on the IOC Evaluation Criteria (2008, 2012) and the Olympic Agenda 2020 published in 2014. Both documents address current and future expectations within the Olympic Movement and which the 28 summer Olympic IFs have to face. The 2012 IOC Evaluation Criteria is composed of 39 criteria covering eight themes to determine the contribution of summer IFs to the overall success of the Olympic Games. Since 2008, the IOC carries out this evaluation after each Olympic Games. The Olympic Agenda 2020, for its part, is 'the strategic road map for the future of the Olympic Movement' (IOC, Olympic Agenda 2020), built around 40 recommendations.

4.4. Data Analysis

In view of the narrow framework of Nagel et al. (2015), we chose a deductive approach based on qualitative content analysis. As a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988), deductive content analysis seeks to enhance the understanding of a specific phenomenon (Krippendorff, 1980) by moving from the general to the specific (Burns & Grove, 1993). Our unit of analysis primarily consists of written material from transcribed interviews, telephone summaries and emails on IFs' professionalization. Using the terminology of Graneheim and Lundman (2004), we identified themes, categories, subcategories, meaning units and codes. Themes and categories are deduced from Nagel et al.'s (2015) framework. To define subcategories, our first analytical step was therefore to condense the written material by establishing meaning units, that is, textual units such as words, sentences or paragraphs (Krippendorff, 2004). Graneheim and Lundman (2004) describe condensation as 'a process of shortening while still preserving the core' (p. 106). To achieve condensation, several reading cycles were carried

Table 2. Example of the content analysis process.

Meaning units	Condensed meaning units	Codes
With hockey we probably have to improve that commercial value.	Improve commercial value	Commercial value
Most sports struggle to attract commercial partners.	Attract commercial partners	Commercial partners
The event creates an economy around it.	Event creates an economy	Event economy
We are much more commercially focused than we were in the past.	Commercially focused	Commercial strategy
We have adapted our strategy to the emerging and fast growing economies around the world.	Adapted our strategy to emerging and growing economies	
Subcategory	Commercialization	
Category	Financial resources	
Theme	IF-specific structure and culture	

out and written material progressively classified into meaning units. These meaning units were further condensed (condensed meaning units) before abstracting them into codes (Baxter, 1991). The grouping of substantively similar codes enabled us to define subcategories. Table 2 exemplifies this process.

A complete presentation of processed data would be too space consuming. As a compromise, Table 3 shows an example of condensed meaning units, codes, subcategories and level of influence. Units are sorted according to whether they were referred to and/or interpreted as having a triggering (Drivers) or hindering (Barriers) influence on the IF’s professionalization and with regard to their temporal occurrence (Period).

We extended our data collection and analysis by integrating aforementioned secondary documents. Data from secondary documents was used first and foremost to consolidate

Table 3. Example of the FIH: condensed meaning units, codes, subcategories and level.

-	Period	Condensed meaning units	Codes	Subcategories	Level
Drivers	Before 2010	Value an IF is bringing to the Olympic Games	Olympic value	Competition with other IFs	External
		55% from the Olympic revenue share in 2004	Revenue	Olympic revenue share	External
	Since 2010	New and dynamic CEO	CEO, leader	Leadership	Internal
		Benchmarking across sports and Olympic organizations	Benchmarking	Competition with other IFs	External
		34% from the Olympic revenue share (2012–2015)	Revenue	Olympic revenue share	External
		First long term strategic plan (2014–2024)	Strategic plan, strategy	Management practices	Internal
		First long term strategic plan (2014–2024)	Experts, hiring	Paid experts from within and outside sport	Internal
Development of Hockey5 as a commercial product	Commercial product	Commercialization	Internal		
Barriers	Before 2010	Few sponsor and event incomes	Sponsors, income	(Difficult) Commercialization	External
		Board muddled with operational decisions	Board roles	(Insufficient) Board efficiency	Internal
		No strategic vision and strategic plan	Strategic plan, strategy	(Insufficient) Management practices	Internal
	Since 2010	No critical mass of strong national federations	National federations	(Low) Financial support and development	Internal
		Not having what commercial partners are looking for	Commercial partners	(Difficult) Commercialization	Internal

and contextualize written evidence extracted from interviews, phone calls and emails. In the event of relevant meaning units (e.g. confirmation, affirmation, mitigation of interviewees' statements), we proceeded in the same way as we did with written interview material. We acknowledge that the internal environment as proposed by Nagel et al. (2015) was not specifically analyzed with regard to members' expectations. Considering the high number and global spread of IF-members (up to 222 NFs in the case of ITTF), such analysis proved to be very complicated from a logistical point of view. On the other hand, we uncovered additional causes: competitive environment (competition with other IFs), and empowerment of member organizations (financial support and development, knowledge transfer).

5. Findings

A first observation we can deduce from data is the heterogeneity of the six IFs with regard to size (number of staff, NFs and Continental Confederations, henceforth: CC), operational structure (departments) and financial resources (revenue). Differences are summarized in Table 4.

Moreover, qualitative content analysis enabled us to identify causes and dynamics of IFs' professionalization. Eleven subcategories of causes were uncovered for having an essential influence on the professionalization of the six IFs analyzed in this study. Subcategories could further be divided into drivers ($n = 11$) and barriers ($n = 5$) at the three levels of analysis (Table 5), this being external environment, sport federations and internal environment. The approach of semi-structured interviews and integration of secondary information further revealed two additional themes (competitive environment and empowerment of member organizations), corresponding categories and subcategories. Table 5 also shows that we have found no solid subcategories for two categories. In the case of decision-making structure, a shift of decision-making power towards professional staff emerged from interviews. However, the aspect of formal versus actual decision-making power appears to be a sensitive topic and information is difficult to access. In the absence of substantial information, we decided to omit this aspect. The second category concerns expectations from member organizations. Both regional federations and clubs may influence NFs, but they revealed insufficient relevance in the context of IFs.

Table 4. Structural elements of the six federations analyzed.

IF	Creation	Olympic Sport	NF/CC			Revenue and part of Olympic revenue share 2012–2015	
						Staff	Departments
FIFA	1904	Since 1900	209/6	>450 (2015)	9	USD 1.337bn ^a	0.4%
FIH	1924	Since 1928	132/5	36 (2015)	5	CHF 10m ^b	39%
FISA	1892	Since 1896	148/0	19 (2015)	4	CHF 7.5m ^c	51%
FIVB	1947	Since 1964	220/6	65–70 (2015)	10	Not available	Not available
UCI	1900	Since 1896	174/5	79 (2014)	7	CHF 36m ^d	15%
UWW	1905	Since 1896	174/0	24 (2015)	6	CHF 8.4m ^e	40%

^aFIFA annual reports 2012–2015, ^bFIH financial statements 2014 and 2016, ^cFISA annual reports 2012–2015, ^dUCI annual reports 2012–2015, ^eUWW financial statements 2012–2015; Revenues are referred to in the currency in which financial statements are published and for the years available between 2012 and 2015. The period has been chosen as it represents the latest completed Olympic cycle on the basis of which IFs' dependence on the Olympic revenue share could be established.

Table 5. Subcategories, drivers and barriers identified through content analysis.

Level	Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Driver	Barrier			
External environment	Expectations and resources of stakeholders in sport and society	Umbrella federations Government and sport policy Business partners and media	1. Pressure from stakeholders in sport and society	✓				
			2. Olympic revenue share	✓				
			3. Competition with other IFs	✓				
Sport federations	Competitive environment	International federations	4. Management practices	✓	✓			
			IF-specific structure and culture	5. Paid experts from within and outside sport	✓	✓		
				6. Commercialization	✓	✓		
	7. Board efficiency	✓						
	Growing requirements	Size, sports	Financial resources	8. Leadership	✓	✓		
					Strategic capability of the board	9. Organizational culture	✓	✓
							Decision-making structure	10.
	Individual key actors	Role of paid managing director	Organizational values	Regional federations, clubs				
					Continental Confederations	National Federations		
12. Knowledge sharing							✓	
		11	5					
	Internal environment	Expectations of member organizations Empowerment of member organizations						
Total								

5.1. External Environment

At the external environment, three subcategories emerge that can all be classified as drivers: pressures from stakeholders in sport and society, Olympic revenue share and competition with other IFs.

5.1.1. Pressure from Stakeholders in Sport and Society

Since the late 1990s, IFs have to face a significant increase in regulatory requirements. In 1998, the Salt Lake City bidding scandal, which involved bribery, fraud and racketeering committed by members of the IOC, plunged the IOC into a deep governance crisis. Having regained its legitimacy by profoundly reforming its governance in 2000, and having developed a highly successful economic model, the IOC exerts today important pressures on IFs. Those that do not meet the IOC’s expectations risk being downgraded in the Olympic ranking (first carried out in 2008) or even excluded from the Olympic Programme. Both could result in a major loss of earnings and visibility for the federation. UWW and FISA are particularly concerned by this threat: ‘[If FISA] doesn’t move today, we are at risk. Because not being an Olympic sport destroys all the rest’ (FISA president); ‘We [UWW] rely on it [IOC revenue share] a 100%!’ (UWW Secretary General). Apart from this, especially scandal-shaken IFs experience increasing media pressure, which is also ‘stressful for the staff’ (former FIFA staff member). The same interviewee emphasizes the growing pressure of public authorities on IFs, considering this new element as ‘probably the most effective element of brining change’.

5.1.2. Olympic Revenue Share

The Olympic revenue share (ORS), which is a reward for an IF's contribution to the overall economic success of the Olympic Games, is a vital financial resource for many Olympic federations. In the first revenue share (1992), USD 37.6 million (Olympic Marketing Fact File 2014, p. 9), mostly earned from broadcasting rights, were equally divided between the 25 Olympic summer federations (USD 1.5 million/IF) to cover a four-year period. Since then, the skyrocketing revenues from broadcasting rights have ensured constant growth in the ORS. They reached a record figure of USD 519 million (Olympic Marketing Fact File 2014, p. 9) after the 2012 London Games. Overall, financial resources obtained from the ORS help federations pursue and develop their sporting, administrative and social activities. According to a person from the ASOIF direction, some IFs even decide that 'any money coming from the Olympic Games must be only used for development and distributed to the continents'. Despite the generally beneficial effect of the ORS, some IFs are more dependent on it than others. While the ORS represented only 0.4% of FIFA's overall revenue during the period 2012–2015, it amounts to 51% in the case of FISA. A decrease in the ORS is likely to affect a federation like FISA more than a federation with lower dependency. An interviewee from the FISA direction recognizes the need to diversify sources of revenue: 'As an Olympic sport we profit from the Olympic Games' broadcasting rights. But we cannot function solely on these financial resources'. Overall, the financial support through the ORS positively influences IFs' capacities for organizational development, while their ambition to reduce dependencies on the ORS by diversifying income sources triggers federations' quest for increased efficiency.

5.1.3. Competition with Other IFs

Besides being an important source of revenue for many IFs, the ORS also entails a growing competition between sport federations. This competition is reflected in a ranking established by the IOC: based on a set of evaluation criteria, the IOC assigns Olympic summer IFs to one of five groups (A-E) and defines a sum that is awarded to members according to their group membership. In the case of the 2012 IOC Evaluation Criteria, promotion from group B to group A would more than double an IF's revenue share (from USD 22 million to USD 47 million according to Reuters). It is therefore little surprising that moving 'volleyball from category 2 [B] to category 1 [A] in the ranking of the IOC' (FIVB staff member) is a pivotal element in the FIVB's strategy 2016–2020. At the same time, IFs compete for other financial resources (sponsors, broadcasters) as well as fans and athletes: 'we all do benchmarking across sports and across Olympic organizations' (person from the FIH direction). Like the Olympic Games, televised sport is an important marketing opportunity for IFs as the visibility facilitates the linkage with commercial partners, fans and athletes. To convince stakeholders, more and more IFs therefore increasingly analyze their environments and try to adapt to changes and demands.

5.2. Sport Federations

Six subcategories with a triggering and/or hindering influence on IFs' professionalization could be distinguished at the sport federation level: management practices, paid experts from within and outside sport, commercialization, board efficiency, leadership, and organizational culture.

5.2.1. Management Practices

All six IFs progressively introduced management practices, several of them adapted from the corporate world. Many of these practices are designed to facilitate, optimize and evaluate the IF's performance (e.g. strategic planning, job description, staff evaluation). Strategic planning is used as a tool to envision, implement and achieve future goals: 'we have a clear vision of the future. So our vision is to be the number one family sport entertaining the world. So we are moving the entire organization to look for that vision' (person from the FIVB direction). Other practices such as ethics commissions and financial audits are rather following the logic of demonstrating the IFs' commitment to transparency and conformity. However, in case of deficient accountability mechanisms the actual effectiveness of an ethics commission and financial audits may be questioned and an abuse of deficient structures and procedures constitutes a barrier to IFs' professionalization. For instance, in some cases external audits may not be sufficient to uncover corruption as the following example shows: 'The auditors would have been reviewing FIFA's organizational finances rather than any private individual transactions made between FIFA officials such as those that are now being investigated' (former FIFA staff member).

5.2.2. Paid Experts from Within and Outside Sport

Despite large variations with regard to revenues, all six IFs have expanded their organizational structure in terms of workforce, though at varying speed and with varying results. The hiring of paid staff to carry out tasks that demand special know-how (e.g. legal, communication, finances, marketing) has in turn increased the need for well-defined hierarchical structures and processes. On a long-term basis, a growing staff entails the need for multiple adaptations: 'we went from four persons [in 1992] to 79 persons [in 2015]. We had to professionalise many things: human resources, formation, logistics' (former UCI staff member). Thanks to their special know-how, experts are an important element in the IF's continuous adaptation to a changing environment. IFs with little financial resources risk having difficulties to keep up with IFs that are capable of employing highly specialized experts.

5.2.3. Commercialization

Since the 1980s, IFs realized that 'some of the things they had, their events, had some commercial value' (person of the ASOIF direction). Ever since, IFs have increasingly commercialized their activities, though with various degrees of success. For IFs as non-profits, profit orientation is not a contradiction per se. On the contrary, IFs need to generate revenues in order to finance their activities such as administration, development or organization of World Championships. For many IFs, revenues from membership fees and donations, their main sources of income in the past, are no longer sufficient. Competition between Olympic IFs and their quest to consolidate their position on the Olympic program increase this tendency. And as long as IFs use profits to finance their activities and reinvest into their system (e.g. development of members), commercialization constitutes a powerful driver. Or as a person from the FIH direction puts it: 'the more we grow, the more resources we can start pushing down'.

5.2.4. Board Efficiency

Boards, a topic largely analyzed in the context of NFs (e.g. boards' power, strategic capability, effectiveness and performance, roles of the board), represent an obvious research gap in IFs. This is even more surprising as an emerging shift in decision-making structures seems to influence the role of the board. IFs' strategic decisions are generally taken during board meetings, which take place two or three times a year. Over time, the six IFs have introduced solutions to overcome the challenge of such slow decision-making processes. One solution is a shift of decision-making power from the board, as the highest decision-making authority, to the president (or general director in some IFs) in specific circumstances to accelerate the decision-making process when necessary. Another example of increasing or ensuring board efficiency is what the FIH calls 'board evaluation'. Recognizing the need to evaluate and eventually readjust the role of the board in order to ensure its efficiency, the FIH carries out a two-fold board evaluation since 2014. As an FIH staff member explains, the board is first assessed as a whole asking 'how the board is, how it functions, what are we good at, what not and where can we make improvements'. This overall assessment is followed by 'an individual competencies assessment where we can identify the strengths and weaknesses'. Overall and individual board evaluations then 'guide our nominations process because we will put out a demand for certain competencies [...] when we do a call for nominations'.

5.2.5. Leadership

In light of increasing external pressures and growing public scrutiny, IFs have to make proof of sound governance practices that legitimize their autonomy on the one hand, and their funding and other financial sources on the other hand. In the cases of UCI, FIVB, UWW and FIFA, recent changes in leadership were made to correct previous leadership issues. In all four cases, external pressures were at the origin, including allegations of corruption (FIFA, FIVB), insufficient fight against doping (UCI), and the risk of being excluded from the Olympic Games for not fulfilling IOC requirements (UWW). The arrival of a new president represents a moment of rupture, bringing along a belief in new dynamic and positive changes. Even though the FIH has been free of serious leadership issues, the federation demonstrated its willingness to embrace change. The FIH's current stability is above all the result of an anticipated internal governance review in 2010, revealing that the FIH Executive Board members 'were not playing the role they should be playing in modern days' (person of the FIH direction). As a consequence, important adjustments were made such as reducing the board size and hiring an experienced and dynamic CEO.

As well as being a driver of professionalization, leadership can also be a barrier. This is especially the case if key actors (individuals or groups) are motivated by personal rather than organizational interests. Some IF-presidents have been negatively associated with long-term presidencies resulting for instance in self-enrichment (FIVB) and systemic corruption (FIFA). And despite the IOC recommendation of a maximum term for president (12 years) to avoid leader monopolies, three of the six IFs examined still had not introduced term limits in 2016 (i.e. FISA, UCI, UWW). In 2015, the IOC tried to make term limits mandatory for all Olympic IFs. The attempt failed as a majority of IFs voted against it during the IF Forum organized by SportAccord Convention (informal discussion with an IOC staff member).

5.2.6. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be both a strong barrier and a powerful driver to IFs' professionalization. The amateur culture carried by passionate individuals significantly shaped IFs' structure. With IFs' turning increasingly towards business logics, the amateur culture is frequently considered as being out-dated and hindering to the federation's business objectives. Growing business objectives and commercialization bear the risk of deviating the IF from its actual mission, which is to serve its members by developing, promoting and organizing its sport. Or as an FIH staff member puts it: 'should they [IFs] even be about money? Is it strange for sports to connect with a brand that may not be related'. Repeated scandals including corruption, self-enrichment and bribery in recent years account for this risk of direction change. On the other hand, these scandals also raise leaders' awareness with regard to new expectations that the organization and individuals have to internalize: 'in the modern world, greatest standards of transparency are expected, highest standards of integrity and a greater level of clarity in terms of decision-making processes' (person from the UCI direction). Therefore, organizational culture also appears to play a decisive role in making adaptive change happen. Especially as a new generation of sport managers is emerging, trained through new education programs ('we have FIFA Master and AISTS graduates here', FIH staff member) and aware of previous scandals.

5.3. Internal Environment

Our analysis revealed two subcategories in the internal environment, both classified as drivers of IFs' professionalization: (1) financial support and development of members, and (2) knowledge sharing.

5.3.1. Financial Support and Development

Financial support to member federations and for development projects varies greatly depending on IFs' financial situation. In 2015, the FIH invested 20% of its budget in development projects, whereas FIFA claims to have injected more than USD 3.869 billion directly into football between 2011-2014, meaning 72% of its revenues during this period. Some IFs even anchor development programmes into their strategic plans. One of the FIH's strategic priorities, for instance, is to engage and empower its member federations to become more self-sufficient: 'we want sustainable programmes. And the only way you get sustainable programmes is to get someone who has an interest in it, who is local and will be there for a long time to be involved in it' (FIH staff member). The UWW, for its part, has appointed a Development Officer for each of its continental confederations in order to help them develop and implement the UWW's strategic plan.

5.3.2. Knowledge Sharing

Some IFs have created platforms to help their members share knowledge and experiences. For example, since 2013, the UCI runs the Sharing Platform seminars. Through these seminars, NFs can learn from each other and strengthen networks with NFs from neighboring parts of the world. In the case of hockey, the FIH provides members with technical and management courses through the FIH Hockey Academy, a series of online educational programs. The FIH further benefits from the experience of its strongest NFs: 'The way we work with the larger ones is that we try to utilise their resources as much as we

can. I mean in a lot of cases much has already been developed by these top nations' (FIH staff member).

5.3.3. Dynamic Phases of Professionalization

Taking a closer look at the temporal occurrence of drivers, findings suggest that the six IFs go through different dynamic phases of professionalization. Table 6 indicates these dynamic phases, drivers and their level of influence.

In the three IFs with less than 40 paid staff members (FIH, FISA, UWW) we can roughly distinguish three phases since the 1990s. The first phase (1990s) is marked by the advent of the Olympic revenue share, which was distributed for the first time in 1992, giving especially smaller IFs a considerable financial thrust. In the second phase (around 2000–2010), two main drivers stand out: competition with other IFs (notably for the Olympic revenue share and commercial revenues) and pressures from stakeholders in sport and society (notably through the IOC evaluation criteria and expectations of business partners in terms of return on investment). Since 2010, and in reaction to external pressures, IFs increasingly adjust their structures, processes and activities at the internal level (e.g. leadership, management practices, paid staff). A tendency with regard to the current focus of the three IFs emerges from interviews. This tendency evolves around IFs' goal to increase revenues through the commercialization of their activities (notably of events).

In the three IFs with more than 60 paid staff members (FIFA, FIVB, UCI) we can roughly distinguish two main phases of professionalization since the 1990s. The first phase (1990s–2010) is marked by strong commercialization, hiring of paid staff and long-standing presidencies: Hein Verbruggen at the UCI (1991–2005, but whose influence continued until 2008), Ruben Acosta at FIVB (1984–2008) and Sepp Blatter at FIFA (1998–2015). Though a clear-cut delimitation is not possible, a second phase can be located around 2010 and onwards. In this phase, pressures from stakeholders in sport and society represent the main driver, notably following scandals. Here as well, a tendency with

Table 6. Dynamic phases of six IFs, drivers and their level of influence.

FIH, FISA, UWW (<40 staff members)				
Phase	Phase 1: 1990s	Phase 2: 2000–2010	Phase 3: since 2010	Phase 4: tendency
Drivers	Olympic revenue share	Competition with other IFs Pressure from stakeholders in sport and society	Leadership Management practices Paid experts from within and outside sport	Commercialization
Level	External		Internal	Internal
FIFA, FIVB, UCI (>60 staff members)				
Phase	Phase 1 (1990s–2010)		Phase 2 (since 2010)	Phase 3: tendency
Drivers	Commercialization Paid experts from within and outside sport Leadership Financial support and development		Pressure from stakeholders in sport and society Leadership	Management practices
Level	Internal		External	Internal

regard to the current focus of the three IFs emerges from interviews. External pressures seem to push the three IFs to consider and/or implement large-scale and more transparent management practices.

6. Discussion

Findings support the relevance of themes and categories proposed in Nagel et al.'s (2015) conceptual framework. However, to operationalize the framework for IFs, a more differentiated approach seemed preferable. As outlined in the conceptual framework, IFs' professionalization is understood in this study as a dynamic process (Amis et al., 2004; Bayle, 2000). In accordance with Amis et al. (2004), we notice that this process is non-linear due to the unpredictable nature of changes in the political-economic and/or institutional environment and their varying influence on federations. For the time being, we draw three main conclusions from dynamic phases observed in six IFs and illustrated in Table 6: (1) dynamic phases of professionalization vary according to IFs' size; (2) professionalization influenced by external pressures is likely to be followed by a slower phase of internally-driven professionalization; and (3) IFs become increasingly business-oriented and commercialized.

Conclusions (1) and (2) underpin our first research proposition on professionalization processes being accelerated at specific moments in time. As Nagel et al. (2015) expected, competition between sports for scarce financial resources (e.g. Olympic revenue share) and external pressures (e.g. scandals, sponsors' expected return on investment) trigger professionalization. In both examples, financial resources and the question of means and ends (Anheier, 2000) play an essential role. As a means, financial resources produce competition. As an end, especially in case of massive commercialization, they may raise external pressures and question IFs' legitimacy as autonomous non-profit organizations. Geeraert, Mrkonjic, and Chappelet (2015) see in IFs' quest for legitimacy a 'counterstrategy' against threats such as losing their autonomy. In accordance with DiMaggio and Powell (1983), we notice that IFs enter a phase of slower pace when implementing substantive and enduring incremental changes at the internal level (e.g. management practices) in reaction to radical change (e.g. external pressures).

Conclusion (3) supports our second research proposition on IFs changing isomorphically (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to resemble business-oriented organizations on which they depend in terms of financial resources. In their pursuit of financial resources to maintain and/or grow their activities, all six IFs experience what Dees and Anderson (2003) call 'sector-bending'. Dees and Anderson define four types of behavior that are typical for this process: imitation, interaction, intermingling and industry creation. Imitation includes the adoption of 'strategies, concepts and practices of the business world' (p. 17). Interaction refers to a blurring that originates from collaboration, competition and partnerships between the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Intermingling sees the emergence of hybrid organizations, with both non-profit and for-profit components. The for-profit component usually serves the goal of revenue generation. And finally, industry creation constitutes a new sector-blurring field, 'populated by for-profit, nonprofit and hybrid organizations looking to harness market forces for social goods' (p. 18). All four types of behavior can be found in the IFs analyzed.

Overall, five causes (subcategories) appear to be of particular relevance to IFs' current professionalization process. These are external pressures, leadership, commercialization, management practices and organizational culture. Referring to the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), we argue that explanations can be found in isomorphic pressures. It appears that phases of radical change in IFs are often the result of coercive pressures resulting from an ever-growing number of actors of sometimes diverging interests. In her multiple constituency approach to organizational effectiveness of Hellenic NFs, one of Papadimitriou's (2000) conclusions is that sport organizations have to 'identify and reconcile the multiple demands of their interest groups' (p. 43) to be effective. This supports the hypothesis of Nagel et al. (2015) suggesting that sport organizations' professionalization is a response to 'pressure from the sport system, their competitors, sponsors, media, etc.' (p. 424). A change in leadership can also be source of radical change, especially in relation to and following governance issues (e.g. corruption). As Antonakis (2006) points out, the uncovering of system inefficiencies increases the need for 'effective but also ethical leadership'. New IF-presidents are increasingly being measured against capacities such as domain relevant expertise, values, moral conviction and trustability. 'Through their actions on subordinate leaders and followers and on organizational systems' (p. 7), Antonakis considers leaders as essential for organizational adaptation to take place.

On the other hand, mimetic and normative isomorphism in IFs rather seems to result in incremental change. In our study, mimetic pressures and isomorphism can be found in the subcategories of commercialization and management practices. While scholars tend to criticize IFs' trend towards commercialization and business objectives (Crocchi & Forster, 2004; Forster, 2006; Katwala, 2000), two interrelated aspects are important in order to understand IFs' commercialization from a more comprehensive perspective. First, IFs need financial resources in order to carry out their mission. In the past, their main sources of income were membership fees and donations. Second, IFs' response to a general decrease in the funding of non-profits and the simultaneously growing demand for sport spectating (Robinson, 2003) is to organize more sport events. From an operational perspective, IFs' organization becomes difficult with only membership fees and donations, especially in the case of fast-growing sports. Using for-profits as models, commercialization and management practices are closely related to organizational effectiveness and performance, concepts that several scholars have studied in NFs (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Winand et al., 2013). In their study on pressures on the UK voluntary sport sector, Nichols et al. (2005) emphasize the need to analyze whether the introduction of new management practices, as a response to external pressures, enhances organizations' effectiveness. These concepts are fairly unexplored in IFs. Findings suggest that the implementation of management practices such as strategic planning, job descriptions and staff evaluation help IFs improve their organizational performance. However, the challenge seems to lie in the alignment of performance objectives the IF aims at and the IF's mission. Bayle (2000) identifies six types of performance for NFs (sporting, economic and financial, organizational, internal social, media and societal). In the advent of IFs' focus on commercialization, they risk to emphasize the organization's economic and financial performance to the detriment of other performances.

Organizational culture, for its part, can be classified under normative isomorphism. As a new generation of sport managers emerges, we are likely to see a progressive change in terms of individuals' behavior for two interrelated reasons. First, a growing program of

education and training in sport management (Chelladurai, 2005; Robinson, 2003) brings forth individuals with targeted know-how. In addition, an increase of experts from outside sport can be observed as IFs become more specialized (e.g. lawyers, accountants, marketing and communication experts). Second, repeated scandals in IFs entail external pressures to replace discredited leaders by ethical leadership. In the future, a generation of new sport managers may bring along a more ethical mind-set, marked by previous scandals and formed through education and training programs.

7. Conclusion and Perspectives

Research on IFs is still scarcely developed and existing studies mainly focus on governance issues in a few prominent sport organizations such as IOC and FIFA (Chappelet & Kübler-Mabbott, 2008; Forster, 2006). By looking at six summer Olympic IFs of different size, this study suggests a systemic approach to the question of causes and dynamics of IFs' professionalization processes. Based on Nagel et al.'s multi-level framework (2015) and themes and categories suggested in it, we identified eleven subcategories by carrying out a qualitative content analysis. We further classified these subcategories into eleven drivers of and five barriers to professionalization. Drivers and barriers uncovered in this study come as a proposal to researchers and sport managers to analyze, understand and predict IFs' professionalization as a systemic change process. Three particular findings stand out: first, professionalization is a dynamic process with phases of acceleration that vary depending on IFs' size; second, professionalization triggered by external pressures entails phases of slower and internally-driven professionalization; and third, IFs become increasingly business-oriented and commercialized.

At this state, our research makes three main contributions to the study of professionalization within sport organizations and raises a number of new research questions. First, our review of literature and applicable theories revealed abundant studies on national federations and clubs, but little research on IFs' systemic professionalization. Hence, answers remain to be found to the question: *How does the professionalization of an IF affect its member federations and vice-versa?*

Our second contribution is empirical, as the qualitative content analysis allows a first direct comparison of several IFs of different size regarding drivers of and barriers to professionalization. A detailed assessment of respective impacts of drivers and barriers on the professionalization process could help sport managers develop adaptive strategies: *How can researchers measure and assess the intensity and impact of drivers of and barriers to professionalization on IFs?*

Third, our findings support the research proposition that IFs' activities and management practices tend to become more business oriented. In addition, the hiring of professionals by IFs results in existing managerial practices being modified or replaced by new practices (Dowling et al., 2014). These new practices enable IFs to move away from a system based on trust to a system based on expertise in which much greater importance is given to accountability and strategic planning (Evetts, 2011). Given this context: *How do increasing business logics affect IFs' mission and functioning in the long term?*

Besides above research questions, the following limitations of this study emphasize the lack of systemic research on IFs' professionalization. First, we did not discuss the intensity at which drivers and barriers may trigger or hinder an IF's individual dynamic of

professionalization. Findings represented in Table 6 provide a simplified picture of major drivers. They do not reflect the detailed analysis of IF-specific dynamics and intensity of causes. Meanwhile, Table 4 exemplifies the underlying and more fine-grained analysis on which Table 6 is based upon. However, to further investigate the intensity of drivers and barriers and their impact on IFs' professionalization processes we recommend studies of single cases. Second, all six IFs of this study are summer Olympic federations. Though causes found in the empirical cases correspond largely with those of NFs and the multi-level framework, the relatively small sample and specific context do not allow for generalization. Future studies should examine a greater number of both non-Olympic and winter/summer Olympic federations, as these may face different problems and hence adopt different solutions. Also, the impact of different geographical settings on IFs' professionalization should be considered. And third, we did not analyze decision-making structures as access to topics such as actual power relations within IFs turned out to be very difficult. Isolated examples give rise to the assumption that formal decision-making structures (e.g. statutes) may differ considerably from actual decision-making power. Shifts in the decision-making power bear the risk of blurring the roles and of professionals getting muddled in politics. Ideally, future studies should find ways to analyze if decision-making powers differ from formal structures and if so, whether discrepancies are anchored in the past or the result of recent changes, and how these effect the organization's functioning.

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