

Understanding the changing nature of sports organisations in transforming societies

“The most important instrument of crisis management is language. Those who are able to define what the crisis is all about also hold the key to defining the strategies for [its] resolution”
(t’Hart, 1993)*

Introduction

Eastern European ‘revolutions’ of 1989 are continuing to generate considerable debates amongst scholars, politicians and economists. The transformations also present a unique opportunity for sport scholars interested in studying organisational change. Most studies of sport have been concerned with organisational change as result of state or commercial interventions (Amis & Slack, 2002, Collins 1997, Kikulis & Slack, 1995), or wider cultural shifts such as the move from amateurism to professionalism (O’Brien & Slack, 2003, 1999, Skinner, Stewart & Edwards, 1999). As far as can be ascertained, no study has ventured into change in sport organisations in societies undergoing fundamental political, economic and cultural transformations.

Drawing on the contextualist approach to organisational change (Pettigrew, 1985), this paper is concerned with understanding long-term processes in their context. It ventures beyond the Weberian notion of “ideal types” of economic systems with its focus on transition between two destinations, which has informed much of organisational change research in sport, and offers a fresh perspective that emphasises transformation as a discovery process. The contextualist approach allows us to appreciate the historical, contextual and processual nature of change and to discuss the role of managers and various forces in shaping its course and outcomes. What follows is a framework for understanding change in Bulgarian sport organisations as the country moved between two distinct historical periods commonly referred to as Communism or state socialism (1945-1989) and democratisation (1990-present). The paper first defines transformation, then outlines the contextualist approach to organisational change, followed by the methodology of the study. It then presents and discusses six key aspects of change based on the cases of Bulgarian Hockey, Swimming and Weightlifting Federations and finishes by drawing some conclusions.

* quoted in Hay, (1996, p. 41)

Theoretical framework

A note on transformation

Popular political and economic discourses have presented the events of 1989 in Eastern Europe as a move from state socialism to capitalism and from a planned to a market economy. A similar discourse predetermines two key dimensions in analysing change - the direction and starting point. It implies that change is a linear move between two destinations (e.g., from communism to capitalism) with 1989 as its starting point, and that it represents a total break with history.

Such implications have been challenged by a number of commentators (Levinson, 1980, Raiklin & Yousefi, 1994, Smith & Swain, 1998, Jankowicz, 1999), and four points deserve consideration. First, capitalism is an abstract concept, and as Nielsen, Jessop and Hausner (1995), noted “one cannot chose to move to capitalism per se. Instead there are only specific models of capitalism (neo-liberal, corporatist, etatist, etc.) and the market economy is embedded in quite different institutional settings in different Western countries” (p. 17). The same logic applies to sport, which poses the question which capitalist model of sport should be emulated. A recent British government policy document acknowledges the multiplicity of sport models in Western democracies based on differing philosophies, structures and delivery systems (DCMS, 2002, p. 84). Second, borrowing Western managerial models is not unproblematic. Hollinshead and Michailova (2001) questioned the value of western management wisdom which has not been derived directly from the economic practices of the former eastern Bloc countries it is supposed to instruct. Davies (1996) raised a similar concern and noted the limitations of the Council of Europe’s SPRINT (**S**ports **R**eform, **I**nformation and **T**raining) programme aimed at empowering East European sport organisations in their transition to a market delivery of sport. Third, a theory-driven approach to change has its perils and should avoid “trespassing” (Bernhard, 2000). This means to be aware of the danger of confirming theory in the face of weak evidence, of errors of fact and their deleterious effect on interpretation, of weak historical grounding, and of fitting the evidence to the theory. Fourth, major social transformations have dynamics that are complex and difficult to capture as demonstrated by Skocpol’s (1979) classical study of the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions (situations in which societal crisis have culminated in the emergence of new socio-political arrangements). Moreover, Eastern Europe is not a homogeneous

entity, which, at the beginning of the 21st century comprises twenty very different nation states, highlighting the need for a country-specific focus when studying transformation.

It is imperative, therefore, to define transformation as a central concept of this paper. As Stark pointed out (1995, p. 69) in relation to transformations in Eastern Europe: “thus, in place of transition we analyze transformations, in which the introduction of new elements takes place most typically in combination with adaptations, rearrangements, permutations, and reconfigurations of already existing institutional forms”. He also claimed explicitly that “in a theory of change based on an analysis of transformative practices, the new does not come from the new – or from nothing – but from reshaping existing resources. These resources include organisational forms (that are likely to merge across domains), habitual practices, and social ties, whether official or informal” (1995, p. 70). We concur with Seliger’s (2002, p. 46) definition of transformation as:

a large scale discovery procedure, extending the ‘gene pool’ for institutional development, insofar as radical institutional change is quantitatively different, concerning the number of emerging institutions, as well as qualitatively different, concerning the robustness of institutional arrangements, from long-term institutional change.

The important lesson for this study is that while the notion of transition emphasises destination, transformation implies a discovery process hence the focus on changing and not change. This process unfolds over time and is contingent on past and emerging social, political and economic forces.

A contextualist approach to organisational change

Criticising the existing work on organisational change, Pettigrew and his associates (1992, p. 6) noted the ahistorical, aprocessual and acontextual character of much of the research, concluding that these studies were “often preoccupied with the intricacies of narrow *changes* rather than the holistic and dynamic analysis of *changing*”. Pettigrew et al (1992, p. 6-7) suggested that:

theoretically sound and practically useful research on change should involve the continuous interplay between ideas about the context of change, the process of

change and the content of change together with skills in regulating the relations between the three.

Context refers to inner and outer elements. Outer context includes the political, social, economic and competitive environments of an organisation. Inner context, by contrast, is “made up of those organisational elements that influence the change process, such as the organisation’s structure, culture and political make up” (Pettigrew, 1987, p. 657-658). Content refers to particular elements of transformation that may include technology, people, products and services, but also more abstract features like radical or incremental changes that may affect adaptability. Process views change as “sequences of individual and collective events, actions and activities unfolding over time in context” (Pettigrew Woodman & Cameron, 2001, p. 700). This definition clearly points out the behavioural component of change, which in turn is based on how actors’ perceive and interpret it.

More recently, Pettigrew *et al.* (2001) proposed six key analytical challenges for future research on organisational change concerning: (i) multiple contexts and levels of analysis, (ii) time, history, process and action, (iii) the link between change processes and organisational performance, (iv) international and cross-cultural comparisons, (v) episodic versus continuous change and (vi) partnership between scholars and practitioners in studying organisational change. Two of these, the examination of multiple contexts and levels of analysis in studying organisational change and the inclusion of time, history, process and action will form the focus of the present research. This was a deliberate choice because we concur with Pettigrew *et al.*'s. (2001) assertion that the only way to reveal the relationship between multiple levels of context in the interaction field is to examine a sufficiently long time period in order to demonstrate how specific sport organisations, the sport sector and wider political and economic levels of context interact to enable change processes. Another consideration was that by extension these two analytical challenges would allow us to discuss a third challenge concerning the link between change processes and organisational performance outcomes. Here we will use three *levels of contexts*: broader political and economic, sport sector, and organisation-specific levels. Questions arise from the interplay between levels in relation to links between sport organisations and state and international agencies, the composition of the sport domain, the role of path dependency and choice, cultural embeddedness and power

relations that enable and constrain change. This interpretation of context is more instructive than narrow contextual criteria for change including gender, department, job type, years of service and age proposed by Szamosi and Duxbury (2001). Leppitt's (2006) comprehensive examination of 19 change management approaches further reinforced the importance of context of change as a prerequisite for change design. A focus on *time and history* entails examining organisational change over a period of time. Pettigrew *et al.* (2001) interpreted time both as chronology ("out there") and as a social construction ("in here"). History was seen not simply as a sequence of events but as revealing patterns or trajectories of change. Venturing into change in sport organisations, therefore, appears to make sense, to use Gioia, Corley and Fabbri's, (2002) expression, only if we are able to revisit the past while thinking in the future perfect tense. In other words, engaging in analysing change requires an informed understanding of sport organisations' histories. Table 1 shows the relationships between the levels of contexts and time, history, and process as well as the analytical tasks pertinent to each level of context.

Table 1 about here

Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee (1992, p. 23-29) noted that, although a contextualist perspective pushes researchers towards certain choices of theoretical frameworks, by itself it does not supply an adequate theoretical underpinning. It is unlikely that any theory of change could provide the great narrative capable of explaining all the aspects of change. Instead, following Pettigrew *et al.*'s. (1992, p. 27-8) contention that "often a melange of different perspectives will be evident in a case", this research borrows useful insights from three perspectives. Palys (1997) argued that a similar approach offers the advantage of complementarity. Other authors have also employed a multiple-perspectives approach in studying organisational change in sport (Slack & Hinings, 1992 in Canada and Smith, Evans & Westerbeek, 2005 in Australia).

First, Habermas' (1976) theory of state crisis informed the analysis about the difference between system and identity transformations and the role of agents in constructing the language that translated change. The crisis of the sport system is characterised by the exhaustion of techniques for tackling the internal contradictions and steering problems of sport organisations as they arise. By contrast, identity crisis, as Hay argued, "is defined as a breakdown of social integration arising when members of society become aware of the existence of system crisis and feel their identity

threatened” (1996, p. 89). t’Hart’s opening comment eloquently summarises the key point of this theory. We also used Habermas’ (1976) notion of the logic of crisis displacement to explain the consequences of translating change. This logic is established with the intervention of the state within the economy and implies that a system crisis originating within the economy now becomes the responsibility of the political system (the state) as supreme regulator of the economy. This crisis is thus displaced from the economy (which does not have the internal capacity to resolve it) to the political system (which might have) (cf. Hay, 1996, p. 91). The logic of crisis displacement helps relate the three levels of analysis, broader political and economic, sectoral and sport organisation-specific, and context with action.

Second, Nielsen, Jessop and Hausner’s (1995) work on path-dependency and strategic choice in post-socialism provided the link between continuity and change, and context and action. According to Nielsen et al (1995, p. 6) “path-dependency suggests that the institutional legacies of the past limit the range of current possibilities and/or options in institutional innovation”. In contrast, “the path-shaping approach implies that social forces can intervene in current conjunctures and actively re-articulate them so that new trajectories become possible” (1995, p. 6). As Pettigrew *et al.* (1992, p. 8) argued “a central concept linking political and cultural analyses essential to the understanding of continuity and change is legitimacy”. The transformation challenged the legitimacy of various actors at all three levels of contexts. Thus, the search for or restoration of one’s tarnished legitimacy has become an essential part of the behaviour of various group and individual actors. Third, Newman and Nollen’s (1998) model of organisational transformation, which is built on an analysis of radical organisational change in the Czech Republic, identified conceptual orientation, structures, resources and capabilities as central aspects of analysis. These clearly correspond with the key elements of Pettigrew’s definition of content (e.g., structure, strategy, political make up, technology, people and culture of management) and process (e.g., the framing of change resulting from actions and interactions) respectively. Moreover, they help address some limitations of the contextualist approach concerning the lack of detailed guidance it offers researchers as to the issues that should be considered in the content, context and process of change (Collins, 1998, Spurgeon & Barwell, 1991). Newman and Nollen (1998) defined conceptual orientation as an organisation’s core values; structure as the way labour is divided and relationships organised; resources as the

tangible and intangible assets with which the organisation conduct business; and, capabilities as processes, systems and routines created through combinations of resources to control organisational activity.

Change in sport organisations has been investigated from several perspectives including the contextualist approach (Robinson, 1999, 2004 in the UK and Caza 2000, Cousens, Babiak & Slack, 2001 and Thibault & Babiak, 2005 in Canada). Although these studies provide useful insights, it is worth noting that each has offered a different interpretation of the contextualist approach. The present study differs from previous research in that it examines organisational change not as a move between two destinations (e.g., from a bureaucratic to athlete-centred sport system) but as a transformation, akin to a discovery process, involving the interaction between all three levels of contexts and the role of agents in interpreting and constructing change. This understanding of the change process over time is markedly different from the Weberian notion of “ideal types” of economic systems which presupposes transition, a movement from one state to another. Greenwood and Hinings’s (1993) concept of organisational archetypes which underpins much of the work of the University of Alberta group (Kikulis *et al.* 1992, 1995, Amis & Slack, 2002, Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004) illustrates this thinking. This is because archetypes are concerned with large-scale, frame-breaking change and reflect a single interpretive scheme they tend to represent a particular destination, a movement from one archetype to another. Recently Kikulis (2000) acknowledged the limitations of the Canadian approach to studying organisational change in sport and called for greater attention to the political and economic environments as well as the cultural milieu within which National Sport Organisations (NSOs) operate. This recognition reinforces the need to link the three levels of analysis with time, history and process advocated by this research.

Research design

Pettigrew, *et al.* (1992) noted that a contextualist methodology to organisational change naturally suggests analysis based on intensive case study, stressing the value of cross-case rather than within-case analysis. The adoption of a case study strategy was supported explicitly by commentators studying transformations in Eastern Europe who stressed the importance of country-specific conditions for understanding change. The works of Katchanovski (2000) on divergence in growth in all 28 post-communist

countries, Granato, Ingelhart and Leblang (1996) on the role of cultural values and Seliger, (2002) on the importance of cultural and theoretical traditions for understanding transformations explicitly provide support for this research strategy. Borrowing from Merriam's (1998) four essential characteristics of a qualitative case study this research was defined as: *particularistic*, focusing on one particular phenomenon which is the process of change in context; *descriptive*, as the end product includes a rich description of the phenomenon under study; *heuristic*, as the cases sought to illuminate our understanding of the process of change in Bulgarian NGOs by bringing about the discovery of new meaning, and extending our experience or confirming what is known; and, *inductive*, as reasoning from the derived data lead to generalisations and concepts emphasising the "discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification of predetermined hypotheses, characterizes qualitative research" (p. 13). The study expected to be able to identify the differences responsible for contradictory outcomes in at least similar circumstances (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The focus of this study was three Bulgarian NSOs of swimming, weightlifting and field hockey, selected because they provided an informative sample of established and newly formed NSOs. As a mass sport, prior to 1989, swimming enjoyed substantial party-state support. The pursuit of excellence was equally important, and the efforts of the Bulgarian Swimming Federation (BSF) culminated in one Olympic gold and two bronze medals at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. In contrast, weightlifting was never a mass sport, but between 1956 and 1988 it established itself as the most successful Bulgarian sport competitively, with 24 Olympic medals including 9 titles and 496 world records (Dimitrov, 2004). The Bulgarian Weightlifting Federation (BWF) was also given special political patronage and state subsidies. The Bulgarian Hockey Federation (BHF) formed in 1991 was a new entry on the national sport scene, so it was not tied up with any previous ideological and structural tradition. It offered a useful contrast with established NSOs.

Data sources

The main sources of data collection came from two previous studies (Girginov, 1994, 2000) of organisation-specific, sport sector, and broader political and economic changes between 1945-2000. Personal observations, discussions, document analysis,

and semi-structured interviews with seven former and current key sport officials from the three federations were also conducted (the Executive Director and the former Vice-President of BSF; the Secretary General, head of Information Commission and the former President of the BWF, and the Executive Director and a founding Board member of the BHF). Following the premises of the contextualist approach and themes suggested by previous studies, an interview guide was developed around six main topics: (i) interactions between state institutions and NSOs; (ii) links and interactions with Bulgarian Sports Union (BSFS) and latter with the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS), (iii) image and legitimacy of each NSO; (iv) management (decision-making and structures) of the NSOs; (v) the role of regulative, normative and cognitive contexts (Clark, 2000), and (vi) personal and collective interpretations of change. The interviews followed the same format for all informants. The interviews lasted between 1-2 hours and were held in informants' offices, giving a window in the working day and style and with consent were tape-recorded. There was no language barrier as the researchers were fluent in Bulgarian.

Data analysis

The process of data analysis was similar to that reported in previous research (Girginov & Sandanski, 2004) and involved three stages of data reduction, display and veracity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, an ongoing process of data reduction of over 300 items including clustering of information, writing summaries and discarding irrelevant data was carried out. Data collected from interviews and field notes were transcribed verbatim and analysed. These were clustered into common themes (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis & Sparkes, 2001) by comparing and contrasting quotes from interviewees and field notes. This process is mutually enhancing as it allows gathering insights into the six themes identified earlier as well as identifying higher level themes. No sufficient uniformities were found to warrant the development of a higher level theme. However, the emphasis of this method of data analysis was on identifying rare experiences that are no less important or enlightening than common ones (Krane, Anderson & Stean, 1997). Second, to illustrate some structural aspects and the dynamics of change essential data were displayed in the form of tables (Tables 2, 3 & 4). Finally, a process of verification including checking interview data, triangulation, and peer debriefing was conducted. Interview transcripts were returned to all informants to ensure authenticity. No

inaccurate points were raised. Data from different theoretical viewpoints (e.g., strategic relation theory, Girginov, 2000) and interviews with different informants and those taken from the same people at different times were used as a form of triangulation. To test the reliability of the guide and its theme identification procedure, peer discussions with two colleagues from different institutions also took place. Those people were selected because of their expertise in both the subject matter and theoretical framework. The feedback raised no major issues and provided confidence in the analysis and the findings. Of course, ultimately this method is bound to reflect the investigators' personal interpretations of events. One limitation of this study is the non-inclusion of an established NSO of a team sport because logistical, time and resource constraints meant it was not possible to include, for example, the NSOs of basketball, football or volleyball.

Results

Following a methodological premise concerning the value of cross-case comparisons established earlier (Pettigrew *et al.* 1992), this section presents the results of the study of the three NSOs. These are organised around the six key aspects of changing including three levels of contexts and time, history and process (Table 1).

Political, economic and social level of change (outer context)

Transformations in Bulgaria were heralded on 10 November 1989 by a change in Communist Party leadership, recorded as a 'palace coup' and 'negotiated transformation' (Kolarova, 1994). Consequently, political discourse presented the transformation as a crisis rather than a failure of socialism. This framing proved critical, as it ruled out 'design' as a mode of change, because the political actors chose 'round table talks', the most radical approach of institutionally regulated institutional change. In the institutionally regulated mode of change, as Offe (1995, p. 53) observed, "actors charged with political functions in the old regime co-opt and admit other actors with no such previous functions in order to negotiate new rules and issues". The Party carefully controlled everything from the roster of participants to its agenda and timing. In reality the Round Table (nicknamed "the chequered Politburo") took away the legislative functions of parliament and the executive functions of the State Council and the Council of Ministers (Peykov, 1996). The main priority of this process was to ensure stability, which runs counter to the idea of radical change. This

explains why ‘Bulgaria bucked the trend’, to use Glenny’s (1999) phrase, because the renamed Socialist Party returned to power in June 1990 with a comfortable 47 % of the vote.

Equally important for understanding the transformation and the behaviour of the main participants, however, was the role of international forces. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the European Union (EU) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) were among the key designers and implementators of transformations. Bulgaria’s post-socialist development provides ample examples for the effect these agencies have had on the content, context and process of change in general and in sport organisations in particular. The 34 items of the government’s three-year programme with the IMF (CM, 1998) illustrates the point. Ensuring domestic tax policy compliance with the Fund’s requirements imposed amendments to eight laws, each affecting the interests and the scope of operations of local actors. Non-profit sport organisations were also directly affected, as they have to pay heavy import duties even on equipment donated by international agencies, which hindered their performance.

Sport sector level of change (outer context)

Structurally, the sport sector was based on multi-sport societies (DFS) at municipal level comprising a network of clubs established in educational establishments and work places and a single supreme quasi-voluntary governing body, the Bulgarian Sports Union (BSFS), with the mission to implement state policy in the field of sport. National sport organisations were regarded as auxiliary bodies of the BSFS and their role was to assist it in fulfilling its mission. However, important precursors of the transformation in the sport sector were evident before 1989. The ideological barrier between East and West was not a deterrent, as for example, as early as the 1970s, the BSF had sponsorship deals with leading sport manufacturers such as Speedo, Arena and Golden Cup. These provided state-of-the-art equipment for the national squad and all swimming centres. A 1980 Council of Minister Decree (CM, No63-6/11, p. 2) encouraged sport organisations to charge the public for their services. Moreover, the BSFS was given a licence to undertake both nationally and internationally entrepreneurial activities, such as “international sport and tourism mediation, contracting sport scientists and experts abroad, selling licences and know-how,

advertising and organisation of lotteries”. Although similar policies failed to produce a major shift in the delivery of sport they were indicative both for the state’s gradual withdrawal from funding sport and the search for market oriented approaches.

The resignation of the BSFS’s chairman at the end of 1989, which was observed by unprecedented standing applause by key actors, signalled the transformations in the sports domain. This episode illuminated how members’ perceptions shaped the event: no sport organisation felt immediately threatened and there was no organisational pressure to implement urgent measures. Actors’ translation (calling attention to the richness of meaning, Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996) of events, therefore, becomes a key to understanding organisational change. The response of the Bulgarian sport organisations after 1989 provides an illuminating example of the logic of crisis displacement (Habermas, 1976) at sectoral level. In 1990 the seventh BSFS congress portrayed the party-state policy in sport as ‘voluntaristic’ (BSFS, 1990, p. 7), because it charged a voluntary organisation with the main responsibility for implementing sport in the people’s daily lives. Thus, the BSFS acknowledged there was a gap between the state’s expectations and the system’s capabilities. Pettigrew *et al.* (1992, p. 290) referred to this type of situation as ‘crisis-as-opportunity’ where actors’ perceptions of crisis pushes a problem up the issue agenda. Consequently, all NSOs declared their commitment to elite sport and discarded the units dealing with mass participation. In this way they actively initiated two related processes by: (i) translating the crisis into a political and social discourse presupposing incremental changes, and (ii) restoring their tarnished legitimacy by displacing sport for all from the crisis in economy (lack of resources) to the political system (the new democratic state) by calling for state intervention. This reaction was consistent with Isabella’s (1990, p. 9-10) four interpretive assumptions of change, suggesting that: (i) organisational members actively create, or enact the reality they inhabit; (ii) frames of reference that individual members can share exist within a collectivity; (iii) the views of managers as a collective are especially salient; and (iv) interpretations are made a posteriori. It also helps relate the three levels of context with processes and actions. Although the relationship between discourse, decision and action are not unproblematic, organisational discourse affects organisational practice as evident in Canada (Kikulis *et al.*, 1992, Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004). Table 2 shows the changing membership of the sport domain.

Table 2 about here

What follows is that notwithstanding the profound nature of the events of 1989 it seems these were not the primary instigators of change in sport organisations. Rather there was a crisis in the governability of the sport system caused by constant party-state interventions and spiralling expectations and NSOs' capacity to deliver. Therefore, we could expect that change would be determined partly by tensions generated in the old system, and partly by new forces in sport organisations' inner and outer contexts. Several commentators (Stark, 1995, Nielsen, *et al.*, 1995, Smith & Swain, 1998) termed a similar understanding of change as 'path dependency' in Eastern European transformations. Our findings, however, are in contrast with Pettigrew and Fenton's (2000, p. 289) conclusion that none of the innovation pathways in their eight case studies were crisis driven.

The thesis of political and social overload (Henry, 1999) and its core concept of 'ungovernability' entail that as state intervention in the economy and civil society increases, a politicisation of new areas, including sport and ever spiralling societal expectation occurs. Vassilev's (1999) analysis of modernization tendencies in Bulgaria echoed this view. For example, two Party policy decisions from 1969 and 1971 (Bobev, 1980, p. 6) set the BSFS and BSF the task to ensure that "every boy and girl learn to swim", but in 1977 there were only 26 indoor swimming pools in the country for more than 1,000,000 pupils. Inevitably, collectively NSOs failed to deliver what was projected.

Similar to the political domain, the global nexus also played a prominent role in sport. The prompt reaction of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to the events of 1989 and developments on the ground reinforce these observations. In 1990 the IOC held two successful meetings with the sport leaders of Eastern Europe where the Communist model of sport was endorsed and offered material support (Girginov, 1998). Contrary to the expectation for greater democratisation and accountability of the governance of sport, between 1992 and 1999 sixteen key positions in the voluntary sport sector were shared between three officials from the old nomenclature (Girginov, 2000).

The reshaping of the sport sector cannot be understood without consideration to state actions. The state's response to the events was ambiguous and politically motivated all pre-1989 strategies, structures and achievements were labelled 'communist' and bound to be demolished. For three years, from being a clearly defined area of state policy, sport became a "no-man's land" with no well-articulated policy from ruling or opposition parties. Establishing a new institutional order in sport followed two classical steps of discrediting the institutions to be replaced (BSFS and multi-sport societies DFS) and offering an alternative order including a state agency and a network of single clubs. The first government intervention in 1992 was to dismantle the BSFS and DFSs (not as ineffective but as ideologically discredited) and set up a State Committee for Youth and Sport (SAYS, changed between 2002-2005 into a Ministry of Youth and Sport). Yet SAYS did not publish its strategy until 1996. The complete dismissal of the BSFS as a core member in 1998 (after 40 years of operation) was a major change within the sport domain, which saw the end of co-ordinated governance of the voluntary sector. As a result, institutions and individuals lost their identification with projects previously promoted by the state, which guaranteed their position in the system.

The central role of the state in sport was reasserted by the Conception for the System of Physical Education and Sport (CYPES, 1996), a Sport Law (CYPES, 1996a) and Council of Ministers decree (CM, 1997). At the same time in matters of strategy, voluntary sport organisations were largely marginalised and put under central control. The above documents constitute political and structural mechanisms for shaping the sport domain in line with the state's vision of being responsible for representing the general interests of society. The chief mechanism was compulsory licensing of all NSOs, related to subsidies in return for international success and close control over organisational performance. For example, in 1997 the state subsidy offered to a sport club for an Olympic gold medal (\$3,000) exceeded the annual contribution made to any sport club in more than 120 municipalities (of 160 financed in total) (SAYS, 1998, 1998a). The state's administrative intervention was crucial for structuring the sports domain. In 1993, the Council of Ministers (CM, 1993) delegated unrestricted rights to the SAYS to intervene and override all voluntary sport organisations' collective decisions. This is what Hausner (1995) termed imperative strategy to change in Eastern Europe, where the key question is "how to shape the consciousness

of the system's participants such that their behaviour becomes compatible with the views of the central authority" (1995, p. 251). It is akin to a process of institutionalisation described by Zucker (1983) which leads to ideas about how an organisation should be structured that become "widely accepted as being appropriate and necessary components of a rational efficient organisation" (quoted in Kikulis & Slack, 1995, p. 136).

Organisation-specific level of context (inner): the cases of BSF, BWF and BHF

The period 1985-88 was the most successful in the history of swimming. In 1985 the BSF hosted the European Swimming Championship, which served as a catalyst for embarking on a massive state-sponsored construction programme of 21 new swimming pools at the cost of US\$35 million. At the same time, the BWF was going through a legitimisation and structural crisis in the wake of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games doping scandal that stripped two weightlifters off their gold medals and led to the resignation of the entire Executive Board. Field hockey was an imported product in the country through links at sectoral level. The first club was set up in 1988 and until 1999 the BHF had only 6 affiliated clubs with some 150 players, no qualified coaches and facilities, and existed mostly on paper. Each NSO confronted the general crisis of ungovernability and the transformation with its own "baggage" and priorities.

NSOs conceptual orientation (inner context).

The conceptual orientation of the Bulgarian Swimming (BSF), Weightlifting (BWF) and Hockey (BHF) Federations was shaped by the interplay between how members subjectively interpreted change and how the sport system objectively transformed. This resulted in a gradual shift in the BSF's and BWF's orientation from mass participation encompassing the whole process of sports development and elitism to "narrow elitism", characterised by a preoccupation with the national team. Although the core value of elitism did not change its meaning was redefined suggesting that most of NSOs' time and resources were devoted to a handful of athletes capable of representing the country internationally. BHF declared participation its priority and spelled out its visions in a long-term strategic plan for 2002-2008. The elitist orientation of the sport sector, however, presents a major challenge for its conceptual orientation. The state offers legitimacy and financial support in return for international success. This is a hurdle for an emerging NSO, as it has to establish first a network of

clubs, facilities and systems to build a capacity needed to deliver medals. As a result BHF sought alternative solutions. Table 3 shows the key aspects of change in the BSF, BWF and BHF.

Insert Table 3 about here

NSOs structures (inner context).

The three NSOs established similar structures but there were some important differences as well. The Executive Boards (EB) of the BSF and BWF comprised professional coaches and officials while the same body of the BHF included business and public figures and a foreign diplomat. A 1999 decision of the BWF's General Assembly stipulated that the EB should include only experts. This represented an organisational disadvantage, and as the Secretary General commented, "our people are world class experts and they are very knowledgeable about weightlifting, but if you ask them how much is a loaf of bread they won't know. They spend most of their time in the training hall" (personal communications, February 16, 2004). The remit of the six working commissions further reinforced BWF's specialisation at a technical level and low level of functional completeness. This is supported also by a high level of formalisation with regard to athletes-BWF relationships, regulated by five separate documents.

The BSF, on its part, increased the number of commissions from ten to thirteen to involve more volunteers in organisational matters. Its pre-1990 functional incompleteness was partly addressed by appointing an international relations specialist, a legal adviser and an accountant on a part-time basis. Compared to BSF and BWF, the BHF had better functional completeness owing to its youth hockey development, marketing and public relations commissions. However, unlike BSF, two of its four full-time positions, that of international relations officer and a legal adviser, were imposed by the outer context and not by its strategic orientation. This is because lengthy court battles over the leadership and legitimacy demanded legal expertise, while intense communications with the International (IHF) and the European (EHF) Hockey Federations, comprising some 300 letters, faxes and email exchanges in 2003 alone, dictated an international specialist. These findings provided support for Pettigrew *et al.* (1992, p. 271) who, building on Kanters (1985), contended that "it is the environment, more than the person, which makes the biggest difference in the level of innovative managerial activity".

The work of BHF is highly formalised as a whole host of rules regulate almost all aspects of its operations. A regular flow of compulsory information allows the EB to monitor two key aspects of the work of each club - its organisational activities and athletes' development. The BSF and BWF formalisation is little, as they operate with a minimum of ground rules and regulations determining the rights and responsibilities of their executive bodies and commissions. Griffin (1990) argued that organisations chose a similar "organic" organisational design with limited amounts of rules and operational flexibility when they face a great deal of uncertainty, but the BHF's case did not support that. Two possible explanations could be a dynamic leadership style and close links with international governing bodies.

Forging links with the emerging private sector and the political establishment led to promoting business people and politicians as presidents of the three NSOs. After 1998, however, the BWF saw two former weightlifters elected presidents. A post-1990 change of the key position of Secretary General to Executive Director in the three Federations was supposed to mark a shift from a voluntary to a business operation, but in the case of BSF and BWF this was not matched with actions. The BWF kept the position of Secretary General alongside that of an Executive Director and created a functional overlap. The prevailing management style in BSF and BWF could at best be described as *ad hoc*, and as the BWF's Secretary General said, "my working day is not fixed in terms of duration and tasks. I couldn't claim I plan things in advance, that is, writing various tasks in a diary. We decide things on the spot" (personal communications, February 16, 2004).

Structural changes appeared to have little impact on the decision-making process. A small group of officials continued to make key decisions in the three NSOs. The Executive Directors (ED) are solely responsible for determining the EB's agenda. As the BSF's ED put it:

the General Assembly has authorized the ED to run the day-to-day business of the Federation without consulting the EB... It is the EB which decides on all strategic matters and their implementation, but we never consulted our stakeholders on what and how should be done. After all, there are all busy people and it is very difficult to get them together in one place.

Then, indicating both the lack of real interest from the clubs and “cognitive legitimacy” of the Federation, she observed, “during my tenure in the past two years there hasn’t been a single case of a club challenging any decision of the federation” (personal communications, February 17, 2004). Despite NSOs’ reduced scope of operations, our case studies provided no evidence for organisational downsizing, which Pasmore (1994, p. 31) identified as “the most noticeable trend during the past two decades” in strategic change literature.

NSOs resources (content)

The transformation dissolved old networks with a loss of valuable resources. As a result both BSF and BWF lost legitimacy at two levels: at sectoral level neither Federation runs joint projects with national or international organisations, limiting their access to outside resources; at organisation-specific level, as the BSF’s ED admitted “we find it increasingly harder to demand anything from our clubs, as they would turn round and say – what are you giving me? We just don’t have enough leverage” (personal communications, February 17, 2004). Personal networks appeared to be a valuable resource for the three NSOs. Strong personal links and interests in varying configurations exist between NSO Presidents, main sponsors and Executive Directors. These findings were supported by Drakulevski’s (2000, p. 31) study on managerial style in transition economies who noted that “managers are relatively more oriented toward the development of personal relationships and less toward the accomplishment of tasks”.

Neither NSO owns any properties and the BSF and BWF in particular are heavily dependent on government subsidies. The BWF is the most funded NSO with shares ranging from 9% to 14% of the total state subsidy for Olympic sports. Sponsorship makes only a modest contribution to limited aspects of those NSOs’ operations. The BHF was the only NSO, which has been making consistent efforts to adopt a business-style operation including marketing initiatives, event management, training services and merchandising. Revenue has risen steadily from US\$21,500 in 2000 to US\$64,500 in 2004, while state subsidy has ranged from 60% to 35% of BHF’s budget. Financial scarcity plays a structural-creative role in how actors interpret changes and act. As the BSF’s ED observed:

some 60% of the clubs are in the business of recreational swimming which brings personal profits to coaches, but they don't bother with training and participation in competitions. At the moment we are considering how to separate those clubs from the rest, which are working for elitism. We cannot be concerned with supporting those who are in the business of bathing children. We can only finance those who are producing elite athletes (personal communications, 17 February, 2004).

Technology has not been utilized yet as a resource as most clubs don't have access to computers and the internet and still communicate via conventional mail, except for the BHF which made all clubs open email accounts. The voluntary base of the three sports has not changed from its pre-1990 status and it is only the BHF, which has been investing in developing their volunteer resource. This hasn't been unproblematic though as it involves challenging old attitudes. As the BHF's ED observed in relation to a leading club "in NSA they don't even collect a membership fee, which is beyond comprehension for me" (personal communications, February 16, 2004).

The BWF and BHF capitalised on two different resources - know-how and international linkages. For the BWF the myriad of world and Olympic champions represents a valuable capital, as they are now coaching in over twenty countries around the world. Those coaches have been regularly bringing their teams to joint training camps in Bulgaria, thus ensuring a small but steady revenue. The BWF also exported a whole national team of eight weightlifters to Qatar for four years, reportedly in return for \$US1, 000,000 and training camps generating enough cash to support fifteen of its own athletes. This, however, was not a mere business transaction, but rather a breakthrough by Qatar which has had a cathartic impact on the weightlifting community and the public. Never before had eight lifters been nationalized at once and turned overnight a country, which only joined the IWF in 1997, into a 1998 World Championships winner and 2000 Sydney Olympics medallist.

The international nexus offered a valuable resource for the BHF. The IOC and the IHF declared 2001 to be international year of children's field hockey, which allowed

BHF to receive free equipment that was sufficient to support all clubs. In 2003, the IHF urged BHF to present a five-year development plan on the basis of which it became the only European country nominated to receive a US\$100,000 grant to build the first artificial hockey pitch in Bulgaria. Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) identified globalisation as a principle driver for change. However, our case studies revealed it can work both ways – as a driver (BHF) and a non-driver (BSW and BWF) to change depending on whether the content (strategy) of change matches the context (international influences).

NSOs capabilities and outcome (content /process)

Promoting participation and services is not on the BSF's and BWF's agenda. The entire system for sports development has been reduced to almost total preoccupation with the national team, and a modest sporting calendar (Table 3). In the words of the BWF's Secretary General "the first and the main part of our budget is devoted to national teams. Over 50% goes to that with the second main expenditure being for participation in international competitions" (personal communications, February 16, 2004). Developments at broader political and sectoral levels impacted on NSOs' capabilities. The SAYS's imposed licensing of sport organisations significantly reduced the number of swimming and weightlifting clubs. In 1991 only four clubs in each sport obtained a licence and were eligible for state subsidy. Privatisation seriously affected swimming, as 93% of the pre-1989 swimming pools were lost to private interests or poor maintenance due to ongoing court battles over their ownership. The lack of facilities plays also a structural-constructive role in shaping the organisation-specific domain. For example, in Varna, one of the leading centres, thirteen clubs operate in the only indoor swimming pool in that area.

In contrast, BHF operations are not confined to managing a national team. They are aimed primarily at young people as 70% of hockey players are under 18 years of age. About 35% (down from 60% in 2002) of its budget is devoted to domestic and international events and the rest is invested in grass roots level. BHF's plan for youth development envisages that all clubs work with at least three local schools. Forging links with major public and voluntary institutions like the Ministry of Education and the School Sport Federation complements this - from 2005 hockey features on the National School Games programme sanctioned by those institutions. To achieve its

strategic objectives BHF invests regularly in building its human resource by training Physical Education teachers, volunteers and technical personnel.

NSOs' capabilities are affected not only by events in political and sectoral contexts, but equally by the personal views of actors. In 1990, two years after the Seoul doping scandal, the BFW's former Secretary General (1994-2004) replaced the "architect" of Bulgarian weightlifting as national coach. We asked our informant whether there was something in the organisation or the image of this sport he wanted to change. "No, I don't think so", he replied, "the programme was clearly laid out and everything was well defined. There were problems of different kind – less money" (personal communications, February 16, 2004). His view indicates what Isabella (1990) termed the "confirmation" stage of managers' interpretations of change: "Interpretations at this stage provide no new or creative insights but primarily reflect understandings that worked or are believed to have worked in the past – presumptions about what will be, based upon what has been" (Isabella, p. 17). NSOs' capability, however, appears to be a multidimensional issue, as our informants recognised the link between weightlifting's diminishing appeal to young people and the regimental system of training on which it is based. This situation is reversed in hockey where the majority of young people find this sport a welcome break from the traditional diet of football, basketball and volleyball (BHF's ED, personal communications, February 16, 2004). Despite its reduced capacity, the BWF continues to produce results at international level, but as the head of the Information Commission explained: "the thing is that those who still win medals are a product of the old system. Eighty percent of the medal winners have been trained and developed by this system. But those are almost gone. We will start feeling the real impact of the change after 2004" (personal communications, February 17, 2004). This is another testimony for the path dependency of transformations.

Discussion

This section discusses the three analytical tasks identified earlier (Table 1). First, the change process at *political, economic and social level of context* was shaped by a constellation of forces. These included the Communist Party elite, re-emerging non-communist political formations prominent before 1944, popular protests (until 1997) which brought down two governments, powerful patrons such as Russia and USA,

and major international agencies such as the IMF, WB and the EU. Notwithstanding the salience of those forces, the transformation was designed and implemented by the only significant political and economic actor - the Communist party elite. Its key aim, as Minev (1997, p. 75) argued, was “the re-creation of the elite’s eroded power, and chiefly of reconcentrating its economic power, which had been lost in the process of industrial development”. Interestingly, the main ideological battle was constructed not along the line ‘communism versus democracy’ but around the notion of ‘restoration’. In this contest the old forces were associated with communism while the new ones with what had been before 1944 (fascism, hence restoration) (Karasimeonov, 1998). After 1992 the new forces took prevalence in sport and embarked on a poorly conceived plan for the restructuring of the sport sector. These processes illustrate the interplay between wider political and sport-sector contexts, where a shift in ideology resulted in the institutionalisation of the sport sector. The global nexus in sport served a dual purpose of both endorsing the elitist orientation of NSOs by the IOC and promoting sports development in the case of international (IHF) and Bulgarian hockey federations.

The underlying process shaping the national economy was a massive redistribution of national capital and its resulting effects on social stratification. Abandoning the system of central planning did not deprive the state from ownership of national wealth. In this negotiated transition from a centralised to a market economy, as Avramov and Genov (1997, p. 25) posited, “at the start, individuals and groups who possessed the real economic power during the previous regime have an advantage”. Economic liberalisation and privatization played a structure-constructive role. For example, the municipal ownership of sport facilities (about 80% of the total), which was reinstated by a Council of Minister’s order (1992), was an obstacle to converting to a market economy. Around 65% of the sport facilities in the country continued to be used free of charge and only 15% demanded usage fees from sport clubs (Slavkov & Girginov, 1994). Privatization particularly affected the BSF and was responsible for increasing competition for space between swimming clubs and those clubs poor overall performance.

The main pattern of transformation at this level of context could be described as incremental (as oppose to radical) change aiming to ensure stability and to preserve

the status quo. In this situation new political and economic arrangements were taking place alongside path-dependency choices and old behaviours. Two examples illustrate this point. The freedom of association offered by the democratisation project continued to be regulated by a 1949 Communist Law for Persons and Family. Similarly, the unprecedented freedom granted to local governments by the Local Self-Government and Local Administration Act (1991) ensured only limited decentralisation. This is because for many years the financial relationship between the central government and the municipalities continued to be governed by the 1961 Budget Law, which has been the cornerstone of centralised control of municipalities.

Second, two specific *patterns of change at sport sector level of context - centralisation* of sport governance and continuing political clientelism, could be discerned. Similar to the communist period the state assumed a central role in matters of vision setting, resource allocation, and control. This has been achieved through two interrelated processes of institutionalisation of the sport sector and reconstruction of networks. However, the centralisation of governance brought neither a clear sense of destination of transformation nor practical policies. Smith and Swain (1998) suggested that the emergence of a great diversity of unarticulated social practices tends to accentuate the crisis of governance in post-socialism, rather than providing solutions to it. They identified three types of processes affecting the network and institutional legacies: (i) the dissolution of networks and isolation of institutions; (ii) the reconfiguration of networks in which institutions interact and learn new forms of action; and, (iii) the endurance of pre-existing networks and the insulation of institutions. Table 4 shows the three types of network transformation processes in the sport sector in Bulgaria. Critical national, regional and local networks established between the sport sector and state agencies responsible for the delivery of sport were dissolved and new configurations emerged. The only enduring networks, although in different format, have been between three branches of government – defence, police and education, and sport associations. Traditionally, sport has always been well-organised within these three spheres of government and a change in ideology was not sufficient to upset the existing networks.

The second pattern of change deals with continuing political clientelism which was just as strong but less oppositional than that of Greece, as demonstrated by Henry and

Nassis (1999). At the beginning of 2000, the presidents of six national federations (equestrian, ski, jet ski, pentathlon, volleyball, and boxing) were acting ministers. Between 1992 and 1999 three ministers and five members of the parliament served as presidents of the Basketball Federation, two ministers presided over the Tennis and Swimming Federations, while a major crisis in the Volleyball Federation was solved by the election of the Minister of Agriculture as president. Mingling politicians with sport was encouraged by the former Prime Minister Kostov who did not see this as a political intervention, but rather as a “healthy process” which aims to “help sport, and keeps the mutri (ugly faces, a slang for the mafia) away from it” (Ivanov, 1999).

The transformation from state-controlled to independent sport organisations was a political and economical process mediated by the state. It shaped the actions, reactions and interactions in the sport sector. The structuring of the third sector in Bulgaria, as Jordanova (1998, p. 7) maintained:

follows not a line of expansion and mobilization of civil initiatives, irrespective of their type, public interest and even power and public intensity about particular issues, but rather it follows the line of financial stabilization through joining a community of sponsored non-for-profit organisations.

The cases of BSF and BWF provided strong support for this pattern. Both NSOs lost much of their pre-1989 networks of clubs, state agencies and resources and turned for sponsorship to the new political elite. In this regard the NSOs were not qualitatively different from what they used to be before the transformation. Developments at sport sector level of context reaffirmed the path-dependency nature of transformations and reinforced established historical patterns of strong state control over sport and political clientelism. Our findings of path-dependency are similar to what Kikulis and Slack (1995) and Aimis *et al.*, (2002) termed “reversal” and “oscillations” in the behaviour of Canadian NSOs undergoing change. This is partly because NSOs in both countries were lacking the moral and cultural infrastructure of the “original model”, a long-term professional and centralised planning approach in Canada and market orientation in Bulgaria, and were bound to produce outcomes that differed from the intended results.

The third analytical task pertinent to the *organisation-specific level of context* concerned the relationship between patterns of change and organisational performance. Three different patterns of change emerged –shrinking, insulation and

expansion, concerning the BSF, BWF and BHF respectively. The BSF has transformed from being a multimillion dollar national movement involving a wide network of voluntary and public agencies and infrastructure to a small operation concerned with the elite end of sport. Similarly, the BWF lost not only its pre-1989 glory and networks, but turned into a self-recruiting body trying to capitalise on its past achievements and further isolated itself. The newcomer on the national sport scene, BHF, embarked on a developmental programme and significantly enhanced its operations compared to 1991. These specific trajectories of change resulted from the interplay between patterns of change at wider social, sport sector levels of contexts and managers' interpretation of crisis. At the social level of context the construction of transformation as an incremental and negotiated process impacted on NSOs' strategic orientation. Most approaches to change (Newman & Nollen, 1998), including the contextualist, suggest that organisations should create a clear strategic vision first before they embark on a programme of change. In post-socialism a similar prescription is difficult to sustain because, as demonstrated, elements of the old and new order co-exist but they obey two opposing logics. As Stark (1995, p. 67) commented "post-communism is a 'non-system'...the impossibility of making any rational predictions about the consequences of behaviour and decisions means that genuinely strategic behaviour is impossible". In this regard the former BSF's vice-president (1982-1991) attested:

Bulgarian sport as a whole, and the Federation in particular, failed to produce an analysis to determine the impact of transformations on the operations of governing bodies. We failed to foresee the most important factors responsible for the functioning of sport as a system. This was followed by a state-led total process of destruction of existing structures, networks and capabilities, (personal communications, February 19, 2004).

A "non-system" paralysis in sport was created at the conjuncture of context and content. The logic of crisis displacement and signals from the international sports system (content) suggested that NSOs were very effective, while the logic of transformation (context) urged NSOs to learn new behaviours. As Seliger (2002) maintained, change appears to be a discovery procedure. Naturally, the three NSOs were urged to improvise, to rely on old responses and to learn new skills.

The centralisation of sport governance at sport sector level nurtured a similar trend at

organisation-specific level. The decision-making process in all three federations is far from democratic and is concentrated in the hands of several key officials. This has been facilitated by a low level of formalisation in BSF and BWF but was evident in a highly formalised environment of the BHF as well. A strong state control coupled with an elitist ideology of the sport sector naturally favoured a narrow concentration on national teams and hindered BSF and BWF's capacity to enhance their performances. The BHF chose a strategy of sports development and markedly improved its capabilities and results. Pettigrew *et al.* (1992, p. 291) alluded that "the perception of crisis...facilitates rapid learning, consciousness raising and mobilization". However, as our cases demonstrated, by itself, a crisis does not unleash new energies for learning and action. Moreover, as a previous national study by Slavkov and Girginov (1994) showed, only 12% in 1990 and 8% of NOSs in 1993 organised staff training courses. It is, therefore, the interplay between context and content that determines whether a NSO produces a perceptive or non-perceptive context of change. Caza's (2000) study of context receptivity of the Canadian Amateur Boxing Association provided support for our findings.

Political clientelism's main role was to ensure legitimization of NSOs and to counter the negative effects of system and identity crisis by linking the social appeal of sport with political and commercial interests. It appears to be closely associated with the centralisation of sport governance patterns but has only limited capacity to enhance NSOs' performance. Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) identified building and sustaining effective internal networks as a recurring theme in organisational change. This raises questions about the relation between social and private interests in the three NSOs, which is logical, as the economic liberalism promoted by the democratisation project demands thinking in terms of interests. Ost (1993, p. 454) eloquently explains this issue in post-communist East Europe: "Everyone favoured 'the market' (i.e., not communism), but no social group seemed to organise, politically or economically, the way market-based interests organise". This is because the political milieu of the transformation has proved highly vulnerable and has been marked by frequent changes of governments and political figures. For fourteen years (1992-2006) SAYS underwent five restructurings and changed eight chairpersons. Moreover, political vulnerability has been taking extreme forms as with the assassination of the BSF's and DZI Bank president in 2005.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine changing in Bulgarian national sport organisations (NSOs), during a period of simultaneous major political, economic and cultural transformations. Key aspects of the content, context, time, history and process of change were examined, including the conceptual orientation, structures, resources, capabilities and outcomes of three NSO of swimming, weightlifting and hockey. Our findings demonstrated that the direction of change was determined by tensions generated in the previous socialist sport system and by the new forces in the NSOs' context. They provided support for the heuristic power of the two analytical challenges proposed by Pettigrew *et al.* (2001) concerning the three levels of analysis and the role of time and history in understanding organisational change. The history of changing unfolded over a 25 years period and followed three stages of (i) crisis of governability (1980-1989), (ii) crisis displacement (1989-1997) and (iii) identity search (1998-2004). This process of changing is associated with “minor tinkering” as opposed to structural transformations and strategic reorientation. The specificity of Bulgarian transformations presented a challenge to NSOs in developing a truly strategic behaviour. Organisational changes, therefore, are bound to be a discovery process, which may mean making many adjustments over a substantial period.

Six patterns of change emerged at social, sport sector and organisation-specific levels of contexts. An incremental transformation formed the pattern of change at the social level. Here the key actors played an active role in constructing the language of change which proved critical for the behaviour of NSOs at organisation-specific level of context. Two patterns of centralisation of sport governance and political clientelism, which were rooted in the socialist model of sport, were discerned at sport sector level. The combination of those patterns and sport managers' personal networks and interpretation of change informed their decisions and actions. At the organisation-specific level of context the BSF, BWF and BHF followed different change patterns of shrinking, insulation and expansion respectively. These corresponded to their non-receptivity (the BSW, BWF and BHF until 1999) and receptivity to change (the BHF after 2000). Two key reasons for the difference in the outcomes of changing could be proposed. First, the institutionalisation of the broader political and sport sector contexts led NSOs to lose networks, systems and organisational identity. Second, the

transformation created a conjuncture between path-dependent and path-shaping choices. The BSF and BWF showed a greater propensity to focus their resources and capabilities to pursue a narrow elitism (specialism), whereas the BHF, free of socialist legacies, and critically assisted by the international sport nexus opted to undertake the broader task of sports development (generalism). As the three cases demonstrated, relatively uniform sector-wide transformations did not result in similar organisational responses. This suggests that changing should be seen as a combination of a myriad of culturally specific transformations unfolding over time, which when taken in their entirety more fully inform our comprehension of organisational change. As Pettigrew et al (2001, p. 697) pointed out “generalisations are hard to sustain over time, and they are even tougher to uphold across international, institutional, and cultural borders”. Further research in the areas of organisational knowledge transfer during change and comparative studies is needed, however, to enhance our practical and theoretical understanding of this phenomenon.

Table 1. Interrelationships between level of contexts and time, history and process in analysing organisational change

Multiple contexts	Time		History	Process	Analytical tasks
	Chronology	Construction			
Political, economic, social (outer)	1980s 1989 1994 2004	Perceptions/ formulation of change (State)	Patterns of change	Ideological & economic shifts Global nexus	How and why constellation of forces shape the character of change process
Sport sector (outer)	1980s 1989 1994 2004	Perceptions/ formulation of change (NGOs)	Patterns of change	Reconfiguration of networks Composition of sport domain	Identify patterns/trajectories of change
Organisation specific (inner)	1980s 1989 1994 2004	Perceptions/ formulation of change (Managers)	Patterns of change	Conceptual orientation Resources and capabilities development Performance	Identify relationships b/n patterns of change and organisational performance and outcomes

Table 2. Sports domain membership (sectoral level, 1989-2004)

Members	1989	1994	2002	2004
Sport Clubs (sections until 1989)	2,600	1,114	1,228	2,171
Sport Societies (DFS-multi-sport clubs)	276	68	54	7
National Sport Organisations/Associations	42	59	145	93

Table 4. Dissolution, reconfiguration and endurance of major networks in the sports domain in Bulgaria

<i>Dissolution of networks</i>	<i>Reconfiguration of networks</i>	<i>Endurance of pre-existing networks</i>
BSFS – Sport Federations – DFSs	Disbanding DFSs into single Sport Clubs which later form Joint Sports Clubs BSFS and NSOs concentrates on elite sport, Sport for All – out New personal networks of Sport & Business Executives Organisational learning – EU seminars, migration of athletes and administrators	Ministry of Internal Affairs – Sport Club ‘Levski’
DFSs – Sport Clubs		Ministry of Defence – Sport Club ‘CSKA’
Sport Federations – DFSs		Ministry of Education – School Sport Federation
BSFS–Party		
DFSs–Party Committees		

Table 3. A summary of change in Bulgarian Weightlifting (BWF), Swimming (BSF) and Hockey (BHF) Federations

Aspects of change	BWF		BSF		BHF	
	1989	2004	1989	2004	1989	2004
Conceptual orientation	Elitism	Narrow elitism	Particip'n/ elitism	Narrow elitism	Founda tion	Developm ent
Managers' interpretation of change	No need for immediate action Sport is responsibility of the state	We are the best in the world. Give us resources and we will deliver medals	No need for immediate action Sport is responsibility of the state	We are not in the business of recreation swimming	No need for immediate action Sport is responsibility of the state	Profession al managem ent leads to success
Structural elements						
Executive Board members	15	13	13	13	5	7
Committees/Commissions	6	6	10	13	1	9
Membership	4,700	658	n/a	2,500	20	1,500
Affiliated centres/clubs (single)	28	41	21	49	1	18
Resources						
Staff on payroll	5	4 + 2pt	6	5 + 3pt	1	4 + 4pt
Volunteers (Number - circa)	90	90	120	120	10	60
Sources of revenue - state - commercial - services	99% 1%	90% 10%	95% 5%	98% 2%	100% BOC	54% 30% 16%
Facilities (indoor halls/swimming pools)	71	40	482	32	None	2
Capabilities						
National sporting calendar (events)	45	13	40	17	2	17
International sporting calendar (events)	30	10	30	17	None	7
Services to general public	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Joint programmes with other agencies	None	None	ME, MH DCMS	None	None	ME,SSFIHF
Outcomes	enhanced	weak	enhanced	weak	weak	enhanced

Key: ME- Ministry of Education; MH – Ministry of Health, DCMS – Youth Communist Union, SSF– School Sport Federation, IHF–International Hockey Federation, BOC-Bulgarian Olympic pt – part time

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