Sport Governance, Organisational Change and Sports Policy in the Member States of the European Union

Ian Henry
Director Centre for Olympic Studies and Research /
Member of Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy
Loughborough University.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses organisational aspects of European sports policy primarily at the nation-state level, but also in respect of the European Union. In particular it seeks to identify and evaluate the nature and structure of policy systems and the changes such systems might be undergoing within the EU. Although there has been a relatively recent growth in comparative analysis of elite policy systems (Bosscher Veerle De, Bingham Jerry, & Simon, 2007; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan, Bergsgard, Mangset, Nødland, & Rommetvedt, 2007), more general reviews of sport policy have tended to be limited to collections of single nation studies (Chalip, Johnson, & Stachura, 1996) or to address transnational and global policy influences (Henry & Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, 2007). While material with a European focus does exist, this has related to leisure policy rather than sport (Bramham, Henry, Mommaas, & van der Poel, 1993) or to the European Union per se (Henry, 2008) rather than to European Member States' sports policies.

One of the few sources to address sports policy, from mass to elite, and with a distinctively comparative approach and a focus on the European Union is the report of Jean Camy and his colleagues in the VOCASPORT report (VOCASPORT Research Group, 2004) commissioned by the Sports Unit of the European Commission. In a concise 10 page section of the report the authors seek to outline a typology of sports policy systems in the EU. This chapter aims to extend the VOCASPORT analysis by : exploring the nature of the overall policy goals promoted by, or consistent with, each of the ideal type configurations; evaluating the nature and emphasis of the philosophy of service delivery in each configuration; identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four configurations; and explaining the tensions within national systems that are reflected in shifts from one configuration towards another. The concluding section of the chapter will seek to outline the relationship between the approach to sports policy implicit in the European Commission's White paper on Sport (European Commission, 2007) and the approaches evident in the VOCASPORT typology.

2. The VOCASPORT Typology of Sports Policy Systems in Europe

In the late 1990s in the run up to the of the Declaration on Sport in the Nice treaty (European Council of Ministers, 2000) regular reference was made to the 'European Model of Sport' (European Commission, 1999). This term, used in the singular, masked the great diversity of policy systems in relation to sport which was evident among the Member States of the EU. If the term had any purchase at all on the reality of sports policy it was in relation to the commercial sector where comparison between the American Model (profit maximisation, small number of teams, movement of franchises to highest bidding city, revenue sharing, maintaining uncertainty of outcome etc) and the European model was common (Gratton & Taylor, 2000), but even here there was greater diversity than might be implied by the use of this term in the singular.

However by the time the White Paper on Sport was published in 2007(European Commission, 2007), the text explicitly recognises diversity in the governance systems in the Member States. Indeed Camy et al in their report on the VOCASPORT project on employment in sport, one of four major projects commissioned by the Sports Unit of the Commission, sought to differentiate the different types of national policy evident in the EU, characterising the national sports systems of the Member States as composed of four configurations, based on four parameters. The first is the role of public authorities, specifically the state as represented by the Ministry responsible for sport. The second parameter relates to the level of coordination of, or engagement by, the various actors involved in the sports system. This can take the form of a legal framework or simply of a de facto prescription of the roles to be played by various actors. The third factor relates to the respective roles of the voluntary, public and private sectors in the delivery of sporting provision. The fourth parameter relates to the adaptability of the system to changes in demand.

The first of the four ideal typical policy systems is what Camy et al. term the *bureaucratic configuration* which exhibits high degrees of state involvement. (16 states exhibit this type of policy system: Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France , Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain)

> The "bureaucratic configuration" is characterised by the very active role that the public authorities take in regulating the system. There is almost always a legislative framework specific to the field (law on sport). This is a system characterised by rules from a public authority which, with its political/democratic legitimacy, does not necessarily negotiate to any great extent with other players. The voluntary sports movement acts by "delegation", social partners are often non-existent, and users/consumers and private

> entrepreneurs have a low impact on the implementation of a sports policy. (VOCASPORT Research Group, 2004: p. 53)

The second ideal type is the *entrepreneurial configuration* which is characterised by a high level of involvement of market forces, both in terms of direct provision, but also through contractual engagement by the state to mange publicly owned facilities (through for example competitive tendering procedures) . Market discipline is thus evident on both public and private sectors. Camy et al identify two states as incorporated within this configuration, namely Ireland and the UK.

> - The "entrepreneurial configuration" is characterised by the regulation of the system arising from the social or economic "demand" for sport. There is little to prevent the supply/demand relationship being directly regulated by the market. The public authorities' role consists essentially in setting a framework to enable this market logic to express itself. The voluntary sports movement must adapt to its requirements which correspond to the tendencies of private entrepreneurs and to attempt to maintain its positions, in this context. (VOCASPORT Research Group, 2004: p. 53)

The *missionary configuration* incorporates those states for whom the voluntary sector acts with delegated powers. (Six states fall within this type: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden).

> - The "missionary configuration" is characterised by the dominant presence of a voluntary sports movement with great autonomy to make decisions. The state or regional authorities delegate it much responsibility for orienting the sports policy, even though they may become gradually involved in a contractual logic with it. The social partners have little presence; legitimacy belongs more to the voluntary managers than to employees; users rarely have the chance to adopt the position of consumer, and private entrepreneurs act on the fringes of the dominant system (with a variable role). (VOCASPORT Research Group, 2004: p. 53)

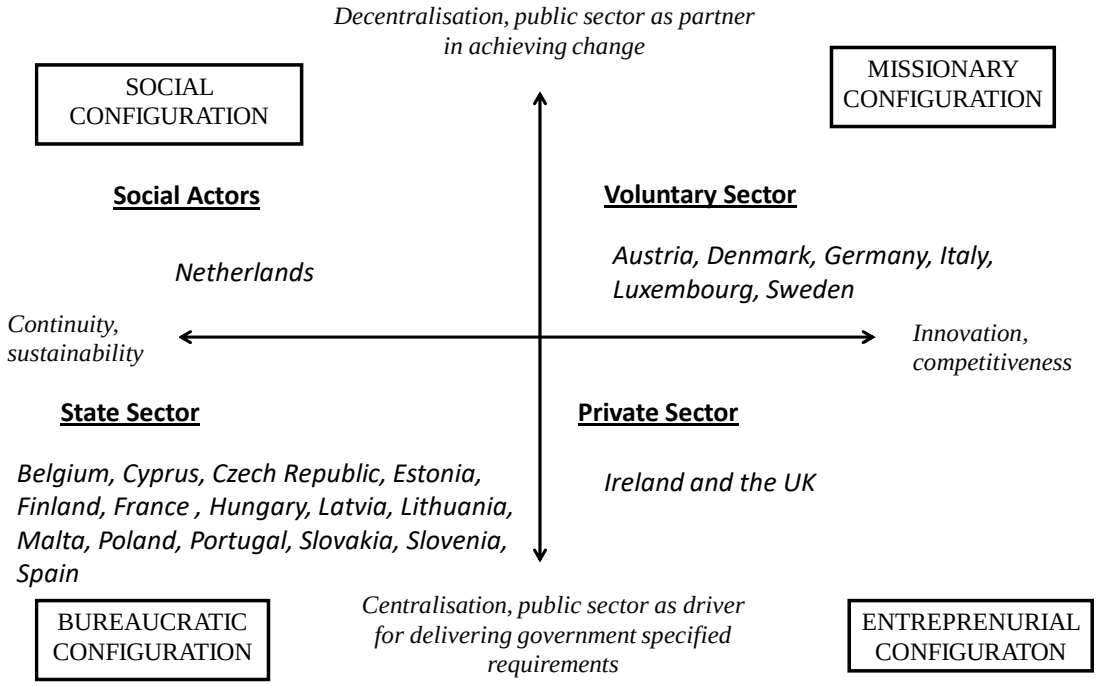
While the missionary configuration involves delegation to the sport movement the *social configuration* builds on involvement of civil society more generally. The social configuration (which incorporates only one state: the Netherlands) thus has high levels of interaction with partners such as trades unions, voluntary and commercial sector providers.

> - The "social configuration" is characterised by the presence of the social partners within a multifaceted system. This type of system is not univocally dominated by one player, but instead is subject to cohabitation/collaboration between public, voluntary and commercial players. The employee and employer representatives called upon to provide "governance" of the system are mostly concerned with the "common good" that sport brings, even though real tensions may appear. (VOCASPORT Research Group, 2004: p. 53)

Camy et al go no further than identifying the four configurations and pointing out that while there are tendencies for change or stresses and strains in terms of conforming to these types, the characterisation of states as falling into these categories broadly captures aspects of the system.

The relationship between Camy's four types of configuration can be effectively demonstrated along the two dimensions which Janet Newman employs in distinguishing approaches to governance in public sector services (see Figure 1) (Newman, 2001). The vertical axis relates to the role of the state – centralised versus decentralised power. The horizontal axis relates the promotion of innovation and competitiveness at one end of the continuum (by employing the commercial or voluntary sectors in the delivery of sports services), to continuity (through state regulation) and sustainability (by engaging wider social involvement).

Figure 1: The Relationship between the Four VOCASPORT Types of National Sports Policy System



Ten of the sixteen bureaucratic configuration type are new members either from Eastern and Central Europe which have been traditionally associated with command economies and centralised states, or are micro states (Cyprus and Malta). With reference to the former Soviet bloc states there are tendencies towards commercialisation, and a reduced role for the state, but each still reflects the culture of a state-led sports system to a greater or lesser degree, even though there are declining state resources available to support the system.

The classic case of the entrepreneurial configuration is that of the UK in the 1980s and early 1990s under Margaret Thatcher, where neo-liberal ideology led to the adoption of a market forces approach across a wide range of policy fields including sport (Henry, 2001). This was evident not simply in privatisation of some services and forms of provision, but also in the introduction of competitive tendering (Aitchison, 1997; Centre for Leisure and Tourism Studies, 1992) for the right to manage public services and facilities which engendered a commercial approach on the part of public sector managers (Patterson & Pinch, 1995).

> Essentially these changes can be seen as representing a move from cultures dominated by traditional public service values to ones attuned to the market, business and entrepreneurial values of the 'new' public service model. (Keen & Scase, 1996: p. 168)

The missionary configuration represents the group of Scandinavian countries, plus Germany and Luxembourg which have a tradition of a fiercely independent voluntary sector, while the sole example of the social configuration is that of the Dutch case which, with its traditionally pluralist tendencies drawn from the history of ‘pillarisation’ in Dutch society, has promoted the notion of social consultation as a core feature of policy systems.

In the following section we go on to tease out some of the policy ramifications of the four types, but before proceeding we should add two caveats to the use of this typology. First, the configurations themselves represent a picture of the ‘classic’ configuration associated with a given state, which may have been more applicable in the past but which may currently be subject to pressures for change: and second that a national policy system may exhibit aspects of more than one configuration. These are issues which we will be considered later in this chapter.

3. Features of Governance and Policy Delivery in Each of the Four Configurations

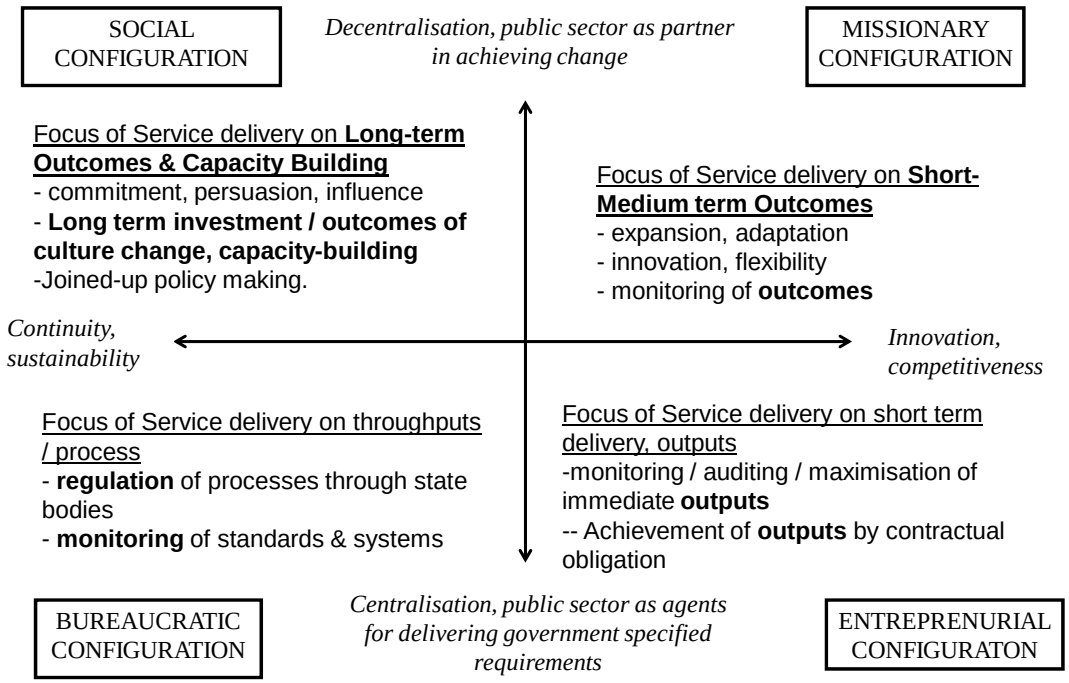
Perhaps the first thing to note about these four types is that they imply a different focus in terms of service delivery. The bureaucratic configuration places emphasis on regulation of processes, rules and requirements concerning how to proceed, in short on *accountability* through following required processes. By contrast, the entrepreneurial configuration focuses

almost exclusively on *outputs*, particularly in the context of public sector bodies contracting commercial entities to manage services, where contracts will stipulate the kinds of output to be achieved. One of the difficulties associated with the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering for the provision of sports services in the UK and the introduction elsewhere of commercial management of public services, was that while financial outputs such as revenue targets may be readily spelled out, operationalising social outputs presented a serious challenge (Aitchison, 1997; Centre for Leisure and Tourism Studies, 1992).

The focus of the missionary configuration is on maintaining the broad social *outcomes* of a healthy voluntary sector in sport, rather than on government specifying the nature of direct outputs to be achieved. The voluntary sector it is assumed should be relatively independent of direct government pressures and when given selective autonomy will produce pubic benefits.

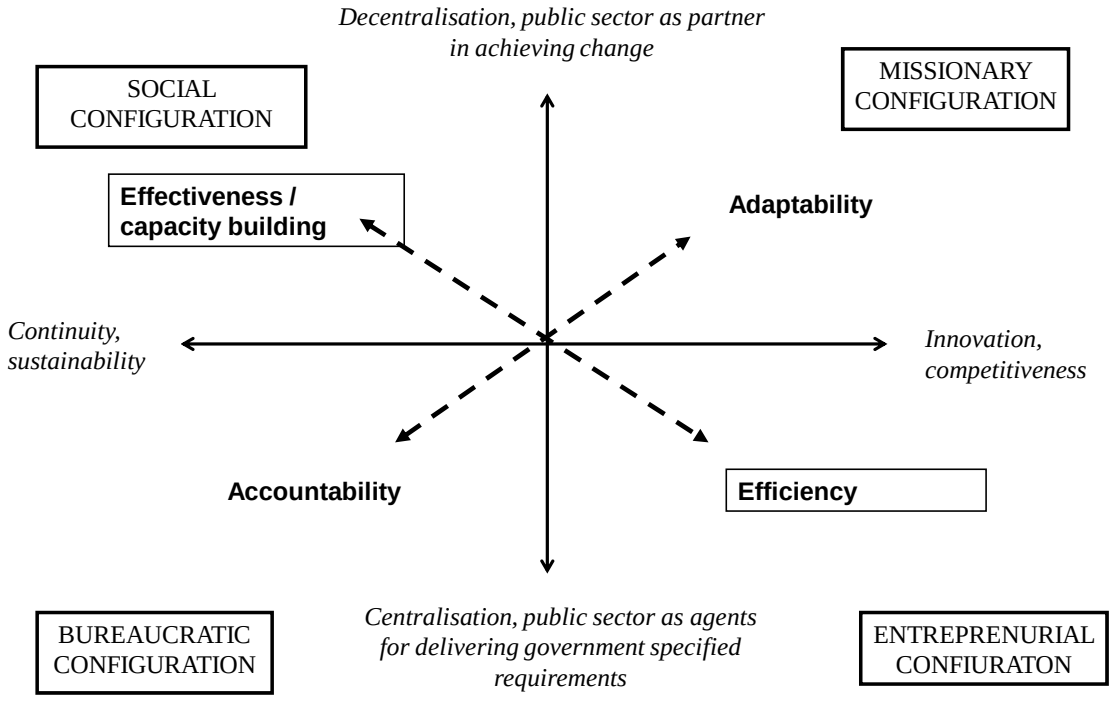
The social configuration is somewhat different. It is a model the philosophy of which is reflected in the European Commission's promotion of social dialogue in a whole range of sectors (including sport as we see in the European Commission's White Paper on sport), an approach which is premised on the notion that for policy solutions to be sustainable and implementable they have to have the commitment of all major stakeholders. This approach is thus focused on a long term commitment to social, political, and economic inclusion as a broader outcome, the building of *social capacity* in each sector such that multi-perspectival analyses of policy may be undertaken producing better and more sustainable policy.

Figure 2: Focus of Service Delivery in Each of the Four VOCASPORT Types of National Sports Policy



These differential foci imply fundamentally different approaches to policy. They are in effect based on the achievement of different goals, and there are tensions between these. The core goal of the bureaucratic model is to secure accountability, while the missionary model's insistence on freeing the sports sector from state control is to ensure flexibility and adaptability, the ability to respond to changing circumstances unfettered by the bureaucracy of the traditional state apparatus, and free from party political interests. Similarly while the core concern of the entrepreneurial model is to secure efficiency, in terms of cost per unit of output, the social configuration is concerned with securing the social engagement of all stakeholders to maximise the benefits of consultation in terms of the quality of decisions made, but also the subsequent ownership of, and commitment to, policy by these key actors. In short the social model seeks to promote active citizenship, and to enhance the strengths of civil society more broadly.

Figure 3: The Key Goals of the Four VOCASPORT Types of National Sports Policy System



Nevertheless, though these different approaches imply different strengths they also imply key weaknesses. These are perhaps most clearly illustrated if we draw on a traditional logic model of policy development (see Figure 4). Bureaucratic policy systems, because

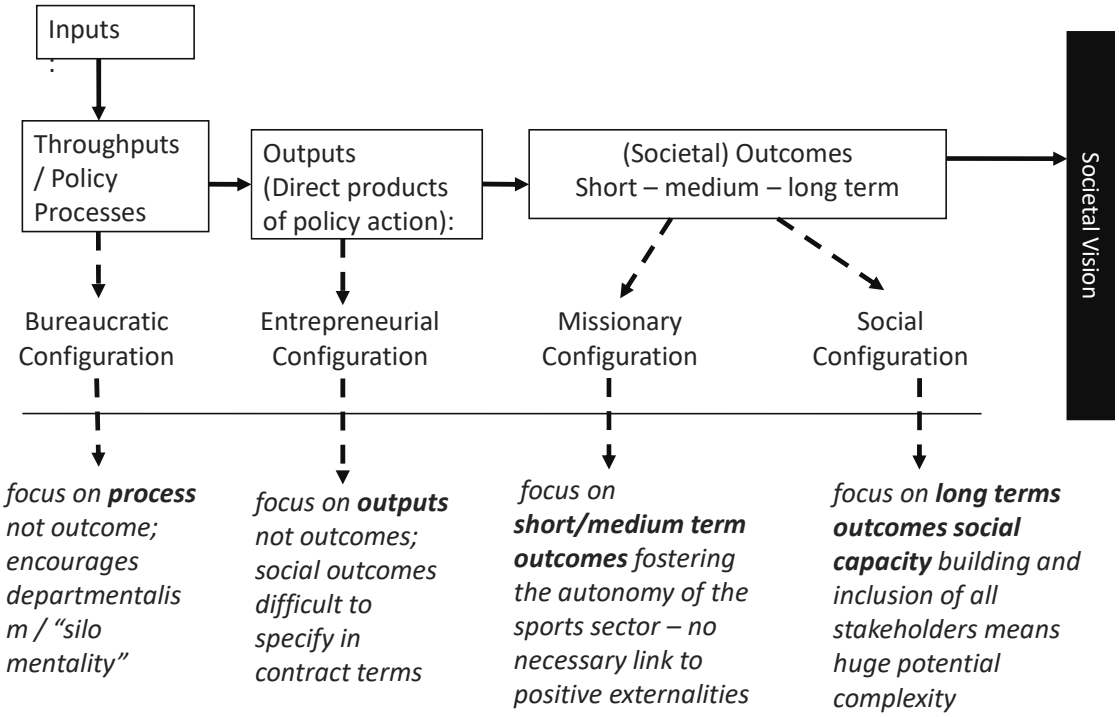
of their commitment to control processes are more prone to bureaucratic dysfunctions which privilege process over outcome. One can account for example for every policy action undertaken and every penny spent, while failing to achieve any long term policy benefits.

In the case of entrepreneurial policy systems the major difficulty encountered is that of translating social goals into contractual requirements for providers. Britain's experience of Compulsory Competitve Tendering for contracts to manage public facilities and services in sport in the 1980s and 1990s was that contracts let by local government which were won by commercial contractors tended to spell out only financial arrangements with little emphasis on the social returns to be provided by the contractor. Indeed, where serious attempts were made to place a central emphasis on the achievement of social goals such contracts tended not to be subject to active competition from commercial entities, and tended thus to be won by public sector management which because of the lack of competition and reduced financial resources were not always called to account in terms of achieving social goals.

The missionary approach liberates the sports sector (in particular the voluntary sector elements in sport) from state control, an where funding for sport is provided this is at "at arm's length" by the state. However this approach is based on the assumption that by leaving control of sport to those with expertise and commitment, the externalities associated with sport will presumably follow. Of course government can "steer" rather than command policy through for example fiscal incentives but the securing of outcomes is uncertain in such contexts, and disentangling self interest of the voluntary sector from the public interest may become increasingly difficult, especially where outcomes (beyond that of fostering a healthily independent sports sector) may remain implicit.

Finally the social model, though it has a broad goal of the development of a sustainable and consensual policy system which both draws and contributes to capacity building in wider society and implies also what is termed "joined up policy-making" since it aims to achieve general policy outcomes such as social cohesion, healthier communities (in social, psychological and political as well as physical terms), and economic development etc. Sports policy is thus simply part of a vehicle to achieve these broader goals. The sheer complexity of this approach provides problems in terms of specifying the social outcomes to be achieved, and in terms of the trans-policy domain activity required to achieve this.

Figure 4: Illustration of the Relationship of Each of the Policy Configurations to the Focus on Stages of Policy Development through a Simplified Logic Model



4. The Direction of Change within European Sports Policy Systems

While these four configurations are useful descriptors as ideal types, it is clear that sports policy systems are subject to tensions and pressures for change. One clear example of this is the growing pressure on bureaucratic systems to introduce aspects of market forces. This is evidenced to a greater or lesser degree in the former Eastern bloc Member States which, though they have a traditional culture of central government control of sport, are also subject to the pressures of a liberalising set of economies. Jolanta Zysko (2008) for example points to the reduction in centralised bureaucratic control of sport in Poland, citing the decentralisation of responsibility for sports facilities and services to local government which was however not accompanied by the provision of additional resources to allow the local authorities to manage such provision effectively. The result is poorer quality provision, and / or growth in opportunities for the private sector to step in cases of gaps in provision.

In Western Europe also, in countries as traditionally state-centric as France and Italy in terms of control and administration of sport in general (France) and Olympic sport

specifically (Italy, through the activities of CONI), we have witnessed growing tendencies to introduce commercial approaches to what were previously virtually uniquely state regulated and provided activities. Examples of this include the hiving off of aspects of the work of CONI into a commercial trading wing (CONI Services, with an accompanying reduction in state finance and employment), and in France the growing tendency from the 1990s to foster private sector management of public facilities, and more recently plans to privatise aspects of the activities of INSEP (2008).

However, while the UK is held up as the proto-typical example of the entrepreneurial model, there is clear evidence of a retreat form the neo-liberal enthusiasm for this approach in New Labour's activities over the last decade. There have been significant attempts over the last three years in particular to develop 'joined up policy', linking sports policy activity with that of other stakeholders in communities such as education, and health services, environment, public safety and security, social cohesion, and the engagement of public, voluntary and public sector actors, as well as citizens' groups per se (Henry, Downward, Harwood, & Robinson, 2008). This in effect is a move towards a focus on the development of capacity in local communities to participate in the setting of, and contributing to the achievement of, local policy goals. This push to developing a local social model is one which is strongly related to the European Commission's commitment to social dialogue at European level which is expressed in the White Paper.

Finally it is perhaps worth noting that the Dutch commitment to the social model has been undermined in some respects. In a research project undertaken in 2004 for the European Commission entitled *Sport and Multiculturalism*, Amara et al. (2004) noted a retreat by at least some Dutch local authorities from the traditional commitment to pluralism / multiculturalism in the wake of the murders of the far right politician Pim Fortuyn (in 2002), and of the film maker Theo Van Gogh (in 2004). These incidents raised a national debate about the limits to social engagement with certain constituencies in Dutch society.

5. The Relationship between the National Sports Policy Configurations and Policy at the European Union Level.

In the Nice Declaration in 2000, the underlying principle of horizontal subsidiarity is clearly underlined:

> The European Council stresses its support for the independence of sports organisations and their right to organise themselves through appropriate associative structures. It recognises that, with due regard for national and

> Community legislation and on the basis of a democratic and transparent method of operation, it is the task of sporting organisations to organise and promote their particular sports, particularly as regards the specifically sporting rules applicable and the make-up of national teams, in the way which they think best reflects their objectives. (European Council of Ministers, 2000)

Nevertheless, the rejected *Constitution for Europe* and the Lisbon treaty both incorporated an article or aspects of an article which would have provided the EU with a "competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States". Of course until such Treaty elements are formally adopted, the EU has no formal powers to intervene in sport per se, but in the Nice Declaration the Council of Ministers noted that

> Even though not having any direct powers in this area, the Community must, in its action under the various Treaty provisions, take account of the social, educational and cultural functions inherent in sport and making it special, in order that the code of ethics and the solidarity essential to the preservation of its social role may be respected and nurtured.(European Council of Ministers, 2000)

Furthermore in the White Paper on sport, the Commission refers more directly to its potential to play a more direct role:

> The Commission acknowledges the essential role of sport in European society, in particular when it needs to bring itself closer to citizens and to tackle issues that matter directly to them. (European Commission, 2007)

The paper is replete with areas in which EU initiatives have been or might be adopted. These areas are justified by reference to existing policy goals (rather than being dependent on agreement of the proposed Article on sport in the Lisbon treaty) and include the following:

a) Cohesion Policy (e.g. sport and intercultural dialogue, gender equality, sport and disability)
b) Anti-racism and anti-violence (e.g. inter-authority cooperation; analysing the possibility of new legal instruments and EU wide standards to prevent violence and disorder at sporting events)
c) External Development (e.g. sport as a tool in development policy promoting physical education, targeting asses for girls and women to physical education to

help build confidence and improve integration, support for health promotion etc).

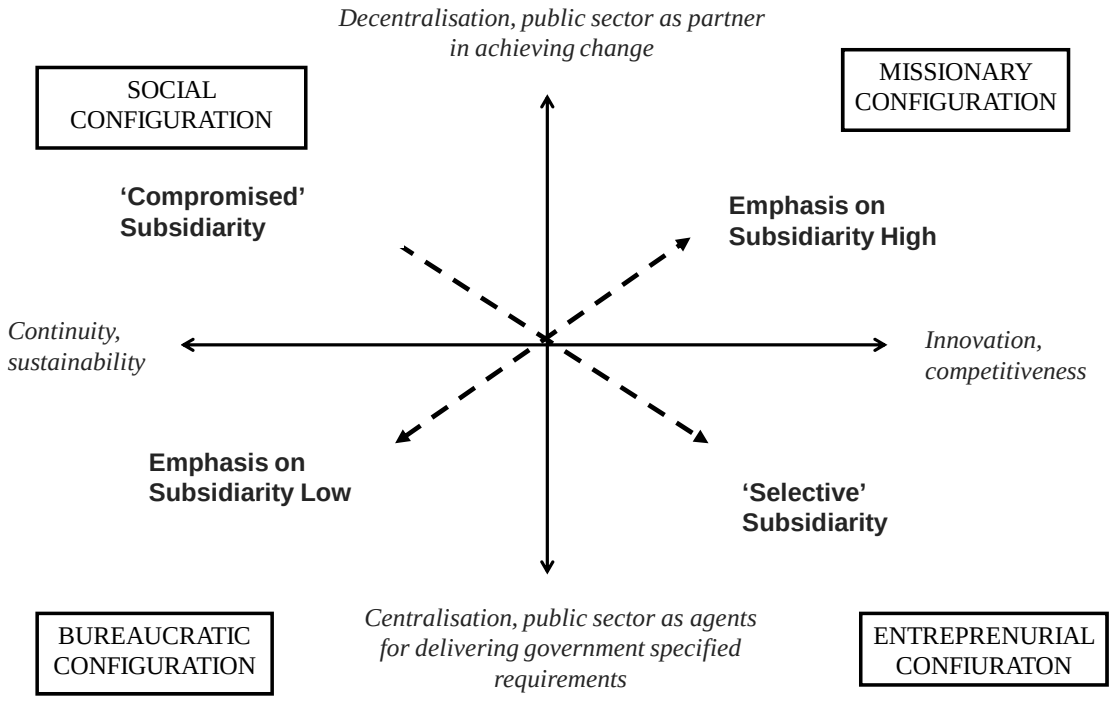
d) Environment Policy (e.g. sport and sustainable development)
e) Economic Development Policy (sport as a tool for local and regional, urban and rural development)
f) Sport as Business, Competition Law and the Internal Market (e.g. Free movement; good governance practice – transfers, players' agents, licensing of professional clubs, media rights and access, mutual recognition of qualifications).

In so far as these policy interventions are to be based on structured dialogue between the myriad of local (national) and transnational actors they reflect a mixed subsidiarity approach, which is consistent with the social configuration. Indeed in addition to continuing and deepening its mechanisms for structured dialogue with Member States and European and other sporting and cultural organisations the White Paper also affirms the Commission's commitment to establish social dialogue in sport with employers, athletes, employees and others.

> The Commission considers that a European social dialogue in the sport sector or in its sub-sectors (e.g. football) is an instrument which would allow social partners to contribute to the shaping of employment relations and working conditions in an active and participative way. .... The support that the Member States should make available for capacity building and joint actions of social partners through the European Social Fund in the convergence regions should also be used for capacity building of the social partners in the sport sector. (European Commission, 2007)

What in effect the approach promoted in the White paper affirms is the difficulty of maintaining the myth of vertical subsidiarity in sport since the domain of sport is so clearly bound up with other areas of policy which are de facto areas of EU intervention. Certainly horizontal subsidiarity at the national level, that is the independence of national sporting bodies from the state, is increasingly harder to claim since to a greater or lesser degree all states invest in relatively direct ways in sport. The deeper engagement of the EU in sports policy goes beyond the rhetoric of the missionary configuration, to promote an approach which is more consistent with the compromised subsidiarity evident in the social configuration.

Figure 5: The Relationship between Sports Policy Configurations and Policy at the European Union Level



6. Conclusions

What we have sought to achieve in this chapter is to develop and extend the typology of sports policy configurations developed in the VOCASPORT study and to locate the debates about these configurations and the changing policies of nation states in a broader discussion about the strategic aims of policy, not simply in sport, but in other domains. Our point of departure was to emphasise that the notion of a (singular) European Model of Sport is misplaced, not only because it fails to note the considerable variations which exist between (and sometimes within) Member States in terms of sport policy systems, but also because it ignores the often implicit tensions in respect of what sports policy should be seeking to achieve and hence how its successes or failures might be evaluated. Such questions are bound up with issues of both local political cultures and histories, and global factors (such as financial pressures placed on state bodies), and have implications for policy at the local, national and transnational (European Union) levels.

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