Sport policy, sport facilities and sport participation

A socio-ecological approach

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Remco Hoekman

Contents

Chapter 1

Synthesis

1.1 General introduction and aim of dissertation

Sport participation is a leisure activity. People are free to decide for themselves whether to practise sport and what type of sport to get involved in. In the Netherlands, 67% of the population between ages 6 and 80 practises sport on a monthly basis, and 56% practises sport weekly (Collard & Pulles, 2015). Sport participation has been relatively stable over the past decade, despite ambitions to raise sport participation levels. Social differences in sport participation have been persistent in the Netherlands as well, with higher socio-economic groups more active in sport than lower socio-economic groups (Breedveld, 2014; Breuer & Wicker, 2008; European Commission, 2014; Rowe, 2015; Van Tuyckom, 2011).

Although people manage their own leisure time, we must recognize that states do seek to influence citizens' leisure activities (Bramham et al., 1993). For instance, governments across Europe stimulate sport as a worthwhile leisure pastime, as reflected in the 'Sport for All' Charter of the European Council (1975). Herein, EU member states present a common policy agenda on sport. Raising levels of sport participation, especially among disadvantaged groups that are less likely to take part in sport, is a particular sport policy objective (Hoekman, Breedveld & Scheerder, 2011). Furthermore, governments have long taken an active role in providing sport facilities, where these are not offered by commercial parties. Ensuring access to sport facilities is considered a central element of effective sport participation policy (Nicholson et al., 2011). Government policy to stimulate sport rests on a socio-ecological rationale (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which anticipates that the broader environment influences individuals' behaviour. This leads in our case to the expectation that sport policy programmes will produce higher sport participation rates.

In the Netherlands, as in many European countries, responsibility for sport policy and sport facilities lies mainly at the local level. Dutch municipalities are the chief governmental investors in sport and in providing sport opportunities (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). Municipalities account for some 90% of government expenditures on sport, with by far the largest share of municipal sport budgets - about 85% - allocated to facilities construction and operation (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). As a result, local sport policy focuses largely on the development and improvement of the local physical infrastructure for sport. Furthermore, municipalities support voluntary sport clubs (VSCs), and initiate sport programmes and partnerships, paying special attention to children, lower socio-economic status inhabitants and vulnerable groups (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013).

Despite the large involvement of government, particularly local government, in sport, very little research has been done on the impact of sport policy (Houlihan, 2005). While other policy domains have been extensively and critically analysed,

sport policy has remained in the margins, leaving much unknown about the development, functioning and impact of local sport policy. Only with regard to factors leading to international sporting success (SPLISS) has considerable research been done (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & Van Bottenburg, 2015). This dearth of research on sport policy effectivity and outcomes certainly applies to the Netherlands.

Governments, including the Netherlands', have high expectations of their involvement in sport, despite the lack of evidence and fact that sport policy issues are rather uncertain, complex and intractable. Based on this characterization, it remains to be seen whether sport policy does in fact have its intended outcomes. The ambiguity regarding sport policy effectiveness sits uneasily beside today's increased emphasis on evidence-based policies, effectiveness, reflexivity and accountability, particularly in times of austerity and changing views of the role and function of the state (Leisink et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, 2013; Sanderson, 2002; Mansfield, 2016). Moreover, unlike in other countries, sport policy in the Netherlands is not mandated or guided by any law; sport services are supplied mainly by municipalities, at the municipalities' discretion and paid for from municipal budgets (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013).

The increased emphasis on evidence-based policy and reflexivity, and the absence of a legal obligation for policy on sport, suggests a need to better understand sport policy in the Netherlands, particularly at the local government level. In line with the socio-ecological rationale (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it would seem appropriate to focus on the development and functioning of local sport policy within its broader environment. Similarly, insight is needed on how local sport policy (e.g., public investment in sports, policy programmes and sport facilities) influence the sport behaviour of individuals. Indeed, in order for individuals and society to accrue the assumed benefits of sport (e.g., health, social cohesion, national pride and wellbeing) (Elling, 2018; Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013), raising sport participation levels is still considered a primary sport policy target in the Netherlands (Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2015).

The central aim of this dissertation is *to examine local sport policy and its influence on the sport participation of individuals.* Specific attention is paid to sport facilities because, as noted, physical facilities are a key element of effective sport participation policy (Nicholson et al., 2011) and also because the greatest share of local sport budgets by far goes to sport facilities construction and operation. The basis of this dissertation is provided by two qualitative studies examining the development and functioning of sport policy in the Netherlands and three empirical studies investigating the outcome of sport policy regarding the distribution of sport facilities and individual sport behaviour in the Netherlands. The socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) is employed

as the starting point for the multilevel and partly multidisciplinary approach of this research, serving to help improve understanding of local sport policy and its impact on individual sport behaviour. Both the effectivity of local sport policy and its impact on individual sport behaviour have been identified as important lacunas in scientific research (Houlihan, 2005; Mansfield, 2016). Consequently, this research aims to contribute to better informed discussions on sport policy as well as to an evidence-based understanding of social inequality in sport participation.

This chapter introduces the research. Section 1.2 reviews the historical context of sport policy in the Netherlands. Section 1.3 outlines previous research findings and shortcomings. Section 1.4 presents the theoretical framework of the current research, centring on the socio-ecological model. Section 1.5 sketches the research design and methodology. Section 1.6 and Table 1.1, finally, outline the remainder of this dissertation.

1.2 Sport in the Netherlands: The context

This dissertation concerns local sport policy in the Netherlands. Much like other European countries, in the Netherlands responsibility for sport is largely delegated to the local level. However, unlike other European countries, the Netherlands lacks a specific law on sports (Hallman & Petry, 2013). This section summarizes key characteristics of the sport system in the country to provide information on the context in which this study can be placed. It is largely based on the depiction of the Dutch sport policy context presented in two of my previous publications, which provided a historical overview of the Dutch sport system and the related, mainly local, sport policy (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2009; Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013).

Sport policy was introduced at a time when sport was becoming a more democratic phenomenon; that is, something done by the people and with the people as increasingly avid spectators (Breedveld et al., 2011). In the Netherlands sport emerged modestly, following the introduction of the eight-hour working day in 1919 up to the Second World War. Soon sport became a regulated and competitive form of exercise, with the largest growth occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. During that period, sport emerged as a visible element of cityscapes, due in part to government policy to facilitate sport in the context of the welfare state (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2009). In 1967, the Netherlands introduced a national subsidy system to increase the number of sport facilities. This system, though temporary, was a great success. In just a few years' time numerous swimming pools, sport fields and sport halls had been built and were being operated by municipalities. Sport clubs, now with the long-desired

facilities, opened their doors to anyone who wanted to participate in sport (Van Bottenburg, 1991; Pouw, 1999). The social and physical infrastructure for sport thus took shape and became an unmistakable part of life in cities and towns.

From 1980 onwards, there was a redirection in the status of sport within Dutch national policy. In the crisis-like atmosphere of the 1980s, the question arose as to whether the government should be concerned with sport (Beckers & Serail, 1991). Sport was a leisure activity, after all, and in essence a responsibility of the individual. Because sport participation was not formally a core task or responsibility of the government, it became difficult to legitimate investments in sport during this period of financial austerity. During the recession, many sport facilities were privatized and very few new facilities were built. Also, from the 1980s onwards, sport participation - or rather the lack of it - within certain groups in society was de-emphasized as a national policy concern (Breedveld et al., 2011). Consequently, legitimation for sport policy in the ensuing period was mainly found in sport's positive social value and in the opportunities sport offered for solving policy problems in other domains, such as health, welfare and liveability (Ministerie van VWS, 1996; Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001).

Starting in 1990, many cities launched 'sportive renewal projects', which linked sport to urban policy and social renewal (Vos, 1998). These projects posited sport as an instrument for increasing social cohesion, especially in low-status neighbourhoods. It was in this period that the commercial market for sport emerged, with private investors taking interest in sport-related enterprises. From 1994 up to today, these developments spawned a new approach: 'sport as an instrument to achieve a range of policy goals', rather than 'sport as a goal and objective in itself'. The first time that sport was included in the name of a Dutch ministry was 1994, with the inauguration of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. This was an obvious signal of the growing importance of sport in the Netherlands. From then on, sport became ever more considered a means to achieve objectives set out in the policy domains of social welfare and cohesion, public health and national pride. Sport was thus placed in a social and civil context. Greater and more serious attention was paid to elite sport too. This was evident in the renovation and construction of first-class sport facilities such as Olympic training centres, bids and efforts to host top sporting events and objectives and targets set for medals earned at successive Olympic games.

The national government's role in sport policy became primarily one of coordination, funding and encouragement (Breedveld et al., 2011). Money was transferred to other organizations in the network to execute sport policy. In addition to the 'sport policy letter', which outlined national sport policy, most sport policy was and remains a local issue. A particular feature of sport policy in the Netherlands is the fact that it is the result of cooperation between different

partners. Foremost among these are the municipal public authorities, sport umbrella organizations, sport clubs, private companies and the media. No single partner in this sport policy network can achieve anything without the others. National sport policy in the Netherlands focuses on three main objectives (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013):

- *health* - improving health through sport and physical activity and reducing injuries;
- *participation* - increasing sport participation rates and levels of physical activity, stimulating people to join a sport club and encouraging volunteering; and
- *achievement* - excellence in elite sport, with the Netherlands being among the top 10 performers at successive Olympic games.

Related to these policy objectives the government has emphasized providing ample opportunity for all to participate in sport and to be physically active close to home, alongside provision of a safe sporting environment. The Dutch government regularly initiates new programmes offering financial and human resources to support local sport providers. These aim particularly to stimulate the development and operation of sport activities for groups known to not or hardly participate in sport. In order to obtain support, programmes must place the needs of these targeted sport participants first and cooperate with local organizations, such as local sport providers, the municipality, schools and health and welfare organizations. In past years, a number of projects have been launched under these three- to four-year national initiatives, to be replaced by other initiatives with a slightly different approach after the project period ends. The current programme 'Sport and Physical Activity in the Neighbourhood' offers supplementary human resources to sport clubs, other sport providers and schools for physical education and after-school programmes. These subsidized Community Sport Workers (CSWs) must work in more than one sector, for instance, being active in both educational and sport organizations. CSWs thus form an important local linchpin. Stimulating cooperation at the local level and making use of the contributions of different organizations is assumed to stimulate higher sport participation rates, which is thought in turn to produce more liveable neighbourhoods. The most recent programme, 'Sport Impulse', requires participating organizations to make use of an available long list of good practices in sport and physical activity programmes in order to be eligible for funding.

Municipalities generally do not provide sport activities themselves. Organization of sport is left to 'private' and 'local' initiatives. Voluntary sport clubs (the aforementioned VSCs) are still the main sport providers, supplemented by commercial parties and to a small extent employers and businesses, welfare

workers and after-school programmes. VSCs form the core of the Dutch sport system, and they are also the main users of municipal sport facilities. Like in other countries, sport clubs are represented by national sport-specific federations. Most of these, in turn, are affiliated with the National Olympic Committee*Netherlands Sport Federation (NOC*NSF) (this was initially two bodies, which merged in 1993). In 2016 75 sport federations, representing about 24,500 clubs, are affiliated with the NOC*NSF, which represents the interests of more than four million athletes (NOC*NSF, 2017).

The Netherlands has one of the highest sport club membership rates in Europe (European Commission, 2014). However, sport club membership has become less self-evident over the years. Participation in unorganized sports and sport at commercial providers, including the more than 2,000 commercial fitness centres in the Netherlands, has risen over the years. Consequently, a larger share of sport participants nowadays utilizes other environments than the official municipal sport facilities to practise sport. Nevertheless, the non-profit sport clubs, and increasingly also schools and the educational system in general, are more easily regarded as potential policy partners. This holds true at the local level as well as nationally. The commercial sector is still hardly regarded as a partner for the government in setting up policies and interventions.

Sport in the Netherlands is financed by consumers (active and passive), the government (national, regional and local), lottery revenues, sponsors and to a small extent by the sale of media rights. Some €9 billion is spent on sport in the Netherlands each year (CBS, 2013; PRC, 2008). The biggest contributors are the sport participants themselves, especially those active in a sport club. They pay a membership fee to participate in the activities of the sport club and to take part in competitions and tournaments. The sport club pays a fee for each member to the national sport federation. In exchange, the sport federation offers the club support and organizes competitions. Though the sport sector is herewith largely self-sufficient, it nevertheless still needs government support to maintain its current structure.

The government invests some €1.4 billion per year in sport, not including the €700 million it invests in physical education. As noted earlier, no specific law restricts or guides the Dutch government's involvement in sport (Ibsen & Seippel, 2010; Hallmann & Petry, 2013). Sport policy is paid for from municipal budgets at the municipalities' discretion, under no legal obligation whatsoever (Breedveld et al., 2011). Almost 90% of government spending on sport is accounted for by municipalities (€1.2 billion, see Van den Dool & Hoekman, 2017), with some 10% accounted for by the national government and 1% by the provincial authorities. Some 85-90% of municipal investments in sport relate to sport facilities, totalling about €1 billion. A large share of the investment in sport facilities relates to the

reduced fees paid by sport clubs for the use of municipal facilities. For some types of facilities, fees paid cover just 10% of the true costs of provision and operation.

National investments in sport consist mainly of subsidized programmes launched for the sport sector (e.g. related to 'Sport and Physical Activity in the Neighbourhood', integrity and safety) (Ministerie van VWS, 2017). This takes up about 63% of the national government's sport expenditures (excl. physical education). Subsidies dedicated to elite sport (e.g. sport events, support for elite athletes, talent development) amount for 30% of the budget. The remainder of the budget is dedicated to knowledge and innovation, of which the majority is used to fund the Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands (KCS).

Certain national characteristics of the Netherlands can be considered beneficial to sport participation. For instance, the Netherlands is a prosperous nation, as reflected among other things in the high educational level of its population. Wage differences and social inequality are low by international standards. Despite the much talked about individualization processes under way, participation in voluntary work remains high in the Netherlands, especially in relation to sport (Schmeets & Arends, 2017). Furthermore, with more than 17 million inhabitants, the Netherlands has almost 500 inhabitants per square kilometre. This density, and as a result scarcity of space, makes good planning essential. Furthermore, the culture of the Netherlands emphasizes stable social relations, alliance-forming and working together rather than social conflict and an emphasis on differences. These characteristics can be considered beneficial, as higher sport participation rates are often associated with higher income and educational levels. Furthermore, countries with a high gross domestic product (GDP) are more likely to have high sport participation rates. The sport sector also profits from the willingness among the Dutch to volunteer. The share of volunteers within Dutch sport clubs is among the highest in Europe (European Commission, 2014). The population density of the Netherlands, together with its well-developed physical infrastructure for sport (see Van der Poel, Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Hoekman, 2016), made up of numerous sport clubs and facilities, means that inhabitants can reach a sport facility within relatively short travel distances. The result is generally affordable sport within the reach of most of the population.

1.3 Previous research: Main findings and shortcomings

This dissertation examines local sport policy, sport facilities and sport participation, and how these aspects are interconnected and function within the broader environment. This section briefly outlines current knowledge on these three topics, highlighting shortcomings within the literature.

1.3.1 Sport policy

Governments, including the Netherlands', have high expectations of their involvement in sport, although sport policy issues are rather uncertain, complex and intractable, and may be identified as wicked problems (Sam, 2009). Sam (2009) signalled three broad characteristics of wicked problems which can be applied to sport policy: (1) difficulties in problem definition, (2) uncertainties regarding causal chains and mechanisms and (3) a propensity for remedies to result in new or unintended problems or to exacerbate existing challenges. The first refers to the fundamental difficulty of articulating an adequate problem definition for sport policy (Crum, 1991; Steenbergen, 2004). To illustrate, in the Netherlands sport participation was from the 1980s onwards no longer considered to be a key policy concern (Breedveld et al., 2011). Consequently, sport has increasingly been positioned as a solution to wicked problems in other domains, such as health, welfare, social integration and liveability (Bergsgard et al., 2007; Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016; Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001). The second is reflected in the many uncontested assumptions within sport policy and the lack of any clear understanding of how sport policy impacts individuals and their behaviour, or society at large (Mansfield, 2016; Houlihan, 2005). Houlihan (2005) noted that government's increasing involvement in sport has not been accompanied by a comparative growth of scientific study of that involvement. With the exception of research on sport policy factors leading to international sporting success (SPLISS) (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & Van Bottenburg, 2015), the body of research on the impact of sport policy is limited. The third characteristic can be found in the unintended negative outcomes of sport policy. For instance, there is the downside of health costs related to sport injuries (Polinder et al., 2016). Another example relates to government's aim to diminish inequalities in sport participation, as public expenditure on sport has been documented to mainly reach higher socio-economic status groups, as these groups tend to participate more in subsidized leisure activities and to make more use of public facilities (Ter Rele, 2007).

Furthermore, there is 'a pervasive and nearly unshakable belief in the inherent purity and goodness of sport' (Coakley, 2015, p. 403), also called the 'Great Sport Myth'. Although several sport sociologists have rightly disputed the universal goodness of sport (e.g., Coalter, 1998; Coalter, 2007; Elling, 2018), sport is considered to have instrumental value beyond its worth as a leisure pastime. 'Sport matters', it is said, and there is an ever-growing interest in involving as many citizens as possible in sport (Coalter, 2007; Dunning, 1999). One could say that nowadays there is a seemingly naturalized, normative and instrumental view of sport participation and sport policy, centred on the function that sport is assumed to have in bringing about multiple democratic, social, educational and health benefits (Coalter, 2007; Osterlind, 2016). Fischer (2003) speaks

in this regard of 'storylines' in policy that take on an ideological or mythical status, even though they may be without substance and without theoretical underpinnings. An example is the ubiquitous drive for 'Sport for All' and to resolve inequality in sport participation (Houlihan, 2002), though studies show that sport participation has remained stubbornly socially stratified. The 'Sport for All' concept itself is very broad and serves as a rather 'convenient umbrella term for a diverse and constantly shifting set of objectives'(Houlihan & White, 2002, p. 25).

In many countries, the focus has shifted from sport for everyone and sport for sport's sake to the narrative highlighting the social and health benefits of sport. This development took place separate from the rise of elite sport, which is organized at the national level (for an overview see Hoye, Nicholson & Houlihan, 2010; Hallmann & Petry, 2013). These general ways of thinking or 'storylines' about sport (Fischer, 2003) have impacted sport policy (Houlihan, 2005) and related policy activities. This is evident at the national level, but also at the local level, to which responsibility for most sport policy is delegated (Green & Collins, 2008). Most studies so far have focused primarily on the national level, comparing countries, looking at policy convergence and discussing shifting discourses (see, e.g., Bergsgard et al., 2007; Houlihan, 2012). The question then arises of how the inputs or mix of resources and the implementation of activities at the local level relate to these contextualizing discourses and values or dominant logics (Houlihan, 2012; Stenling & Fahlen, 2009). In this regard the local sport mangers (LSMs) (e.g. heads of municipal sport policy departments and those otherwise responsible for sport policy (development) within a municipality) are best placed to address this question to.

My expectation is that local sport policy can only be fully understood when contemplated within the broader environment in which it exists (Houlihan, 2005). Indeed, a number of environmental factors can be identified that could have implications for local sport policy in the Netherlands: the shift in government emphasis toward evidence-based policy; the gradual change from the classic welfare state paradigm to a participation society ideology (Rijksoverheid, 2013); the austerity measures which have set in motion a range of efficiency and structural changes in service delivery to citizens (Leisink et al., 2013); and changing discourses in national sport policy related to health and other policy domains (Elling, 2018; Stuij & Stokvis, 2015).

As noted, sport policy has been characterized by limited reflexivity and many uncontested assumptions (Mansfield, 2016). This sits uneasily beside today's increased emphasis within government on evidence-based policies, effectiveness, reflexivity and accountability (Sanderson, 2002; Manfield, 2016). For some instrumental values of sport, however, there is a growing body of

knowledge. Coenders et al. (2017) investigated the health benefits of sport and concluded that increased sport participation increases a person's subjective health. However, when it comes to explaining differences in sport participation, the literature sheds little light on how sport policy is at play. Little research has been dedicated to *how* sport policy contributes to increase sport participation rates, despite the potential benefits of insights into the working mechanisms of sport policy (Sanderson, 2002). Higher sport participation rates and greater sport club membership are still positioned as the necessary targets of sport policy, which will then lead to all kinds of social benefits. More research, however, is needed on how sport policy characteristics, especially at the local level, produce changes in sport participation rates and involvement in organized sport, such as sport club membership.

To summarize, prior studies have done little to help us understand how broader developments influence local sport policy in the Netherlands and how local sport policy functions within its broader environment. This dissertation strives to fill that gap. To that end, it examines local sport policy from several perspectives and investigates how it is influenced by the broader environment. Beyond quantitative analyses, this research acknowledges and analyses the perspectives of local sport managers (LSMs) as these are indispensable to obtain a full understanding of local sport policy. Up to now, research on the functioning of local sport policy has been very limited. Most available studies have been conducted based on analyses of national sport policy documents. An additional advancement of the research presented in this dissertation is its empirical testing of the extent to which local sport policy characteristics influence local sport participation rates. This provides for reflexivity and adds to the hitherto paltry evidence base for local sport policy.

1.3.2 Sport facilities

Providing access to sport facilities is considered a primary element of effective sport participation policies (Nicholson et al., 2011). It is generally assumed that accessibility of sport facilities is responsible, at least in part, for observed differences in sport participation (Camy et al., 2004). The revised version of the European 'Sport for All' Charter (Council of Europe, 2001) makes specific reference to the interdependence between sport participation and the extent, variety and accessibility of sport facilities. Several attempts have been made, mainly using an economic approach or constraints framework, to include sport facilities-related aspects in empirical research models to explain differences in sport participation (e.g., Casper et al., 2011; Wicker, Breuer & Pawlowski, 2009). These, however, have produced mixed results. Some show clear evidence of a positive influence of the supply of sport facilities on sport participation, focusing on sport infrastructure per 1,000 inhabitants (Hallmann et al., 2011; Wicker et al., 2009). Pinkster (2007)

showed the relevance for sport participation of the availability and accessibility of sport facilities and opportunities to be physical active in public spaces. Others have focused on distance to a sport facility and found very little effect (Hoekman & De Jong, 2011) or found positive effects only for people with a positive attitude toward sports (Prins et al., 2010).

Consequently, evidence for the assumption that sport facilities contribute to higher sport participation rates is rather meagre, especially in Western and Northern Europe. In countries such as China, with a developing grassroots sport infrastructure, research has confirmed the interdependence of sport facility provision and sport participation (Guo et al., 2014). In the UK, this interdependence no longer appears to hold true, as public sport policy and private investments in sport facilities seem to have been effective in balancing demand and supply (Kokolakakis et al., 2014). In the Netherlands, the growth in sport facilities played a role in increasing sport participation levels up until a participation threshold was reached in the course of the 1980s. In the decades thereafter, growth in sport participation slowed and eventually levelled off (Van Bottenburg & De Bosscher, 2011).

Although municipalities provide sport facilities, with an eye to their assumed contribution to stimulating sport participation (Hoekman, Collard & Cevaal, 2011), the literature provides no unambiguous evidence for this link. It seems self-evident that if no appropriate sport facility is available it will be hard to practise a specific type of sport. However, a clear reduction has been observed over the years in the interdependence between sport facility supply and sport participation. This is perhaps also self-evident, as the more facilities are present, the smaller the added value of each additional facility will be. This is why in the 1970s and 1980s there was a correlation between the increase in sport participation rates and the number of sport facilities in the Netherlands (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2009). A similar development is now visible in countries that are just developing their sport infrastructure, such as the aforementioned China (Guo et al., 2014). Another reason why additional sport facilities in the Netherlands might have relatively little added significance could be that sport participants increasingly use public spaces, such as roads and parks, for practising sport (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; European Commission, 2014). Nonetheless, from a policy perspective there is still interest in evidence concerning the facilitating role of municipalities with regard to sport (Hoekman, Collard & Cevaal, 2011; Tiessen-Raaphorst & De Haan, 2012).

Surprisingly, unlike many other countries, the Netherlands lacked until recently core indicators on the supply of sport facilities (Tiessen-Raaphorst & De Haan, 2012). The only prior study available on the distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands was a single case study on the city of Eindhoven (Van Lenthe et al., 2005). Thanks to the research grant that supported the current research and additional support from the Ministry of Sport to the Mulier Institute, this situation

changed in recent years. A first attempt was taken by myself and colleagues at the Mulier Institute in 2013 (Hoekman, Hoenderkamp & Van der Poel, 2013), and this formed the starting point for further developing a Dutch database on sport facilities. Once in place this database, called Database Sport Supply (DSS), was used to calculate indicators for sport facilities in the Netherlands and utilized for the current research. Furthermore, in 2016 these indicators were reported extensively in a book on sport facilities in the Netherlands (Van der Poel, Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Hoekman, 2016).

In the Netherlands the supply of sport facilities is strongly demand led (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2009). Arguably, therefore, the physical environment is partly shaped by the individuals residing in a specific area, as supply follows demand. This relation between supply and demand is also visible in a study by Ahlfeldt and Feddersen (2008) which showed that open sport fields and sport halls provided by the municipality tended to be located in low-income neighbourhoods, while tennis facilities and commercial sport facilities followed 'purchasing power' and were located in high-income neighbourhoods. Indeed, with regard to the presence of sport facilities, different studies report the presence of more and better sport facilities in high-status neighbourhoods (Sallis et al., 1996; Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the picture obtained from the studies presently available regarding facilities availability in different types of neighbourhoods is a mixed one.

Regarding the distribution of sport facilities, the sport place theory (Bale, 2003) posits that areas with higher population density will generally have a greater supply and more elaborate types of facilities, while less urbanized areas will be characterized by a smaller supply of sport facilities offering predominantly primary services. Some authors have focused on inequality, using for example, the deprivation amplification perspective (Macintyre et al., 2008) to study the presence of sport facilities in low-status and high-status neighbourhoods. Studies in several countries have found fewer facilities in lower status neighbourhoods. In the Netherlands, low-status neighbourhoods are generally assumed to have less favourable sport provision than higher status neighbourhoods. However, data to back up this claim have until now been lacking. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in the Netherlands, more than in any other European country, citizens are satisfied with opportunities to take part in sport or physical activity in the area where they live. Some 95% of the Dutch population is satisfied with the sport opportunities near their home, substantially higher than the European average of 76%. This puts the presumed limited supply of sport facilities in lower status neighbourhoods into perspective.

The research presented in this dissertation delved into the geographical distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands. With this it becomes clearer

to what extent sport facilities are evenly distributed in the country and whether the absence of sport facilities might hinder certain individuals from practising sport. Furthermore, to gain insight into the effect of local sport policy on sport participation, the role of sport facilities was examined. Sport facilities, as noted, usurp by far the largest share of local sport budgets, making them a major priority of local sport policy. Lack of knowledge on the influence of sport facilities in raising sport participation rates is troublesome, given the current quest for evidence-based and proven effective sport policy. Consequently, this research sought to provide an overview of the distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands and analysed the extent that differences in sport participation in the Netherlands could be explained by differences in the presence and variety of sport facilities.

1.3.3 Sport participation

Previous studies indicate that sport participation is in part dependent on individual characteristics, such as age, gender, educational attainment, income and ethnicity. In the Netherlands, as in other countries, sport participation declines with age (e.g., Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Van Bottenburg et al., 2005; Engel & Nagel, 2011; Farrel & Shields, 2002; Pilgaard, 2013; Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Llopis-Goig, 2014). With regard to gender, in most European countries men are more likely to participate in sport than women (Van Tuyckom, 2011; Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Farrel & Shields, 2002; Warde, 2006). The Netherlands, however, is one of the few countries with a gender neutral inclusion profile and no significant gender differences in sport participation and frequency (Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Scheerder & Breedveld, 2004). Scheerder and Breedveld (2004) did stress, however, that in some aspects of sport involvement, such as participation in certain types of sport, sport club membership and competitive sports, men and women do still differ in the Netherlands.

Generally, educational attainment and household income are important explanatory variables in models of sport participation. These socio-economic factors play a role either in the decision to participate in sport (Breuer, Hallmann & Wicker, 2011; Farrel & Shields, 2002) or in the choice of the type of sport practised (Breuer, Hallmann & Wicker, 2011; Taks & Scheerder, 2006). Regarding educational level, there is consensus that higher educational levels are associated with greater participation in sport (Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). With regard to household income, results are more mixed, but in general higher household incomes seem to correlate with increased probability of an individual practising sport (Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). The positive effect of educational attainment and household income on sport participation relates to the importance of so-called cultural and economic capital for sport participation.

According to Bourdieu (1978), a sporting habitus is class-specific. This explains the social stratification of sport participation found in sport participation studies (e.g., Hoekman, Breedveld & Scheerder, 2011; Scheerder, Vanreusel & Taks, 2005). With his distinction theory, Bourdieu provides a basis for understanding the dynamics of class reproduction and individual differences in sport preferences. Several studies have shown that although the higher classes participate more in sport, not all types of sport are more practised by the higher classes (Taks, 1994; Scheerder et al., 2002). Sports such as boxing are practised more by the lower classes, while non-contact sports, such as tennis and golf, are popular among the higher classes. Several studies have illustrated these 'class divisions' within sport over the years.

Several scholars have built on this work and analysed differences in sport participation from a socio-economic perspective (Taks et al., 1995; Farrel & Shields, 2002; Wilson, 2002; Scheerder, 2003; Breedveld et al., 2008; Van Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010). Repeated studies on sport participation have shown the profound influence of socio-economic status and social class variables, such as educational level, household income and occupational class, on sport participation (Farrel & Shields, 2002; Stempel, 2005; Scheerder et al., 2005; Scheerder et al., 2002; Warde, 2006; Studer et al., 2011; Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Wilson, 2002). In general, lower socio-economic groups (e.g., lower educated, lower income and ethnic minority groups) participate less in sport than their hegemonic counterparts (e.g., higher educated, higher income and native citizen groups). This is also the case in the Netherlands, and these differences have been quite persistent over time (Breedveld, 2014).

Yet, while accepting and acknowledging the importance of socio-economic position and socio-demographic characteristics, these variables alone do not fully explain the differences found in sport participation rates. Socio-ecological reasoning contemplates an individual's sport behaviour as shaped in interaction with their environment. Van Tuyckom (2011) stressed the importance and relevance of the socio-ecological model in studying sport participation, but her study was limited to an investigation of the role of the outmost layer of general national socio-economic and cultural conditions in explaining differences in sport participation between European countries. She did not include the social and physical environment in her study. As such, no insight was gained into the role of these environments in determining sport participation levels. She did find that national conditions explained differences between countries in sport participation. The beneficial conditions already noted for the Netherlands were reflected in relatively high sport participation rates and a large share of sport club membership compared to other European countries (European Commission, 2014). Some 62% of the Dutch population practises sport on a monthly basis and 27% is a member of a sport club, compared to, respectively, 47% and 12% for Europe as a whole.

The research presented in this dissertation adds to the study of Van Tuyckom (2011), by zooming in on sport participation in the Netherlands and the extent to which differences in sport participation can be explained by the policy environment, the physical environment and the social environment. Though these were not included in Van Tuyckom (2011), they can nonetheless be considered relevant in explaining differences in sport participation. The focus here is particularly on the position of the individual within a broader social, physical and policy environment, to obtain a more complete picture of aspects that might influence individuals' behaviour. This includes cross-level interactions between these environments. With this, the current research aims to fill a blind spot in understanding of sport participation related to the role of sport supply and sport policy characteristics.

To enhance understanding of differences in sport participation, a multilevel approach is used, including the social and physical environment and the policy environment at the macro level. Little is known about how sport policy characteristics, such as municipal sport expenditures, sport policy programmes and availability of sport facilities, influence sport participation patterns, though the aim of these policies and facilities is ultimately to increase sport participation rates. To shed light in this area, this research focused particularly on the policy context and the presence of sport facilities and studied how these variables relate to sport participation.

1.4 Theoretical framework: Socio-ecological model

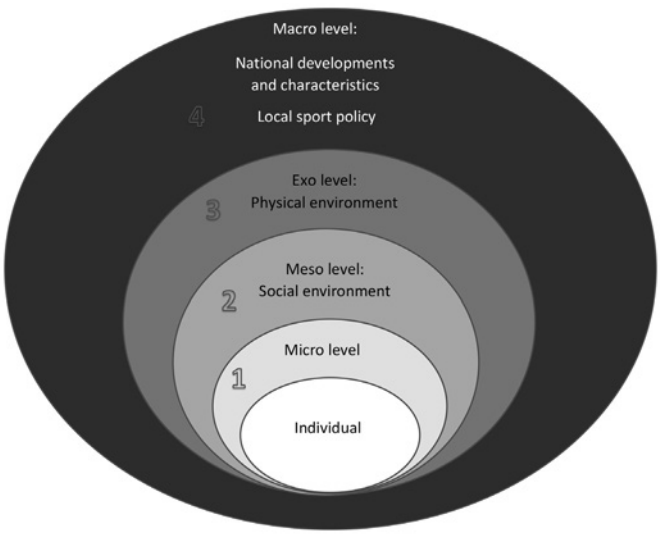
To answer my research questions, I employed the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) as my theoretical starting point. This model aims primarily to better understand individual behaviour by examining its relation to overarching systems and environments (Figure 1.1). We must thus view the development of local sport policy from a wider perspective and place local sport policy in its broader (national) environment. Furthermore, the socio-ecological model stimulates us to include different overarching elements, such as sport policy characteristics and sport facilities availability, to better understand differences in sport participation rates across municipalities. As such, the model serves as a theoretical guiding line in all of the following chapters.

In the socio-ecological model, Bronfenbrenner (1979) considers an individual to be the centre of a system, surrounded by four concentric systems or layers, each representing different aspects of the environment and influencing an individual's behaviour (see Figure 1.1). Bronfenbrenner described these four layers, or levels, as Russian dolls, with the innermost system representing the individual, who is influenced by the different concentric environmental systems.

The four concentric systems are the micro system, the meso system (e.g., the social environment), the exo system (e.g., the physical environment) and the macro system (e.g., the policy environment and national characteristics). Although the individual is seen as a rational being, the individual's behaviour is guided and restricted, and the individual's thinking is structured by the surrounding systems at the micro, meso, exo and macro levels. As such, the model's pre-eminent focus is on the development of an individual within a context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The strength of the model lies in its multidisciplinarity (Damon & Lerner, 2008) and wide view of the environment as a series of nested structures (Keenan, 2002).

It is generally accepted that no one factor or set of factors adequately explains human behaviour (Glanz & Bishop, 2010). To understand behaviour, multilevel perceptions are needed (Stokols, 1996; Sallis & Kerr, 2006). Several studies support the socio-ecological approach as described by Bronfenbrenner (Keenan, 2002; Sallis & Kerr, 2006) for the study of the individual as affected by social environmental influences, physical environmental influences and policy influences. This section more thoroughly examines these surrounding systems and the related socio-ecological reasoning.

Figure 1.1 Socio-ecological framework of dissertation



The micro level is the complex of relations within the immediate setting in which an individual lives. Examples of the micro system are the family, the workplace, school and peers. Individuals' behaviour is assumed to be influenced

by the interacting relationship with family, workplace, school and peers. The literature on child development especially acknowledges the influence of the parents and the family on a child's behaviour (Keenan, 2002). With regard to sport behaviour the family is also of influence on sport participation (Nielsen et al., 2012; Kraaykamp, Oldenkamp & Breedveld, 2013). Shared norms and values within micro systems guide the behaviours of individuals. It is also within this immediate setting that routine behaviour is largely constructed.

The meso system is the second level and is in essence a system of micro systems. The meso system thus refers to relationships among micro systems, and represents the context in which these micro systems come together. An example is the neighbourhood one lives in. The meso system can be defined as the social environment, including among other things, neighbourhood socio-economic status as one of the aspects that is assumed to influence behaviour (Pinkster, 2007; Shildrick, 2006; Murie & Musterd, 2004). Furthermore, several studies have illustrated the influence of the neighbourhood socio-economic status in relation to physical activity (Haerens et al., 2009; Kamphuis et al., 2009; Van Lenthe et al., 2005). In addition, neighbourhood safety is considered important in explaining differences in sport participation (Beenackers et al., 2011).

The exo system is the third level and in general refers to settings in which the individual is not an active participant. Yet, these settings or institutions nonetheless influence the individual's behaviour. Exo systems in sports include formal settings such as sport facilities, parks, recreation centres, sport clubs and community centres. The exo system also entails the physical attributes of the environment. These physical attributes have been well covered in research on physical activity, particularly that linking these physical attributes to physical activity and obesity (for an overview see Gebel et al., 2007; Humpel et al., 2002). These studies examine neighbourhood environmental attributes in relation to their socio-economic status. Sport-related studies have similarly sought to link neighbourhood socio-economic status with the supply of sport facilities, as these two seem to be interconnected. As such, the presence and variety of sport facilities can be considered relevant exo system variables in the socio-ecological model.

The fourth level, or outermost layer, of Bronfenbrenner's model is the macro system. The macro system refers to consistencies in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro, meso and exo) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, alongside any belief systems underlying such consistencies. Accordingly, the macro system is not a specific environmental context. Rather, it entails a culture's overarching values, customs and ideology, as well as general national socio-economic and cultural conditions. The macro system furthermore refers to the identification of class, ethnic and

cultural differences in socialization practices and outcomes. An example is the different socio-economic conditions in various European countries and their relation to sport participation rates within those countries (Van Tuyckom, 2011). Another is the cultural conditions and construction of the sport system within a country, linked to the educational system or developed within sport clubs outside the school setting, and their relation on differences in sport participation rates between countries (Hallmann & Petry, 2013; Hoekman, Van der Werff, Nagel & Breuer, 2016). Comparisons of sport participation across cultures have identified possible effects of these cultural differences. Some have focused specifically on differences within Europe (Van Tuyckom, 2011; Scheerder et al., 2011; Van Bottenburg et al., 2005), while others have taken a worldwide view (Bale, 2003; Hallmann & Petry, 2013; Van Bottenburg, 1994). All this research clearly shows that national characteristics, socio-economic variables and cultural factors influence sport behaviour within countries.

The socio-ecological model posits that aspects at all levels may influence an individual's behaviour (Stokols, 1992). Applying the socio-ecological framework to sport behaviour requires that an individual's sport participation be seen not solely as the product of personal factors, but be linked to the environment, both social and physical, in which an individual lives. Sport behaviour is viewed as determined by multiple influences at the personal, social, physical, policy and economic levels. Most prior research on sport has focused on individual characteristics, neglecting the properties of the social, physical and policy environments in which an individual operates. The socio-ecological model has hardly been used within sport research (for exceptions see Prins, 2012; Van Tuyckom, 2011). As previously noted, the model is well established in the literature on physical activity and health (Van Lenthe et al., 2005; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Ball et al., 2001; Sallis & Kerr, 2006). This literature generally acknowledges that multilevel interventions based on ecological models and targeting individuals' social, physical and policy environments are the most viable means to achieve changes in physical activity within a population (Sallis & Kerr, 2006). Only in the past decade have researchers started to use the socio-ecological perspective to study sport participation. Van Tuyckom (2011) illustrated, for instance, how aspects of the country one lives in (macro level) can explain differences in sport participation between European countries. Such studies have enhanced our understanding of differences in sport participation rates.

Within the Netherlands there is nowadays growing interest in utilizing the socio-ecological approach in explanatory models for sport participation (Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2014). Research has found that differences in sport participation rates between municipalities cannot be explained by socio-demographic factors and individual socio-economic position (Hoekman & Van den Dool, 2009). More

is clearly at play. This dissertation therefore examines the influence of the broader context in which individuals are situated and how this explains, in part, differences between individuals in sport participation. The focus is primarily on the social environment, the physical environment and the policy environment within municipalities, as the broader environment in which individuals are situated. This study considers the policy environment in the municipal context as part of the macro level. As the study was conducted only in the Netherlands, the overarching national conditions are by and large left out of consideration.

Based on this literature overview I formulated five expectations. First, I anticipate that sport policy itself is influenced by broader social developments, such as financial austerity and the shift to the 'participation society' discourse (with citizens asked to take responsibility for their own social services, with less help from the government), and by the local context in which sport policy is formulated (chapters 2 and 3). Second, I expect beneficial local sport policy characteristics, such as higher municipal expenditures on sport, to correspond to higher sport participation rates within the concerned municipalities (chapter 5). Third, I hypothesize that a beneficial physical environment (e.g., a greater variety of sport facilities, shorter travel distances to these facilities; chapter 4) encourages sport participation (chapter 6). Fourth, I posit that a beneficial social environment (e.g., neighbourhood safety and relatively high socio-economic status) leads to higher sport participation rates (chapters 5 and 6). Fifth, I expect sport policy characteristics to matter, particularly among the lower socio-economic groups to which such policy is primarily aimed (chapter 5).

1.5 Research design / methodology

This section describes the methodological approach taken in the current research. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed, with datasets covering the different levels represented in the socio-ecological model. A major strength of this research design is the holistic overview it provides of the sport policy environment and the way this environment interacts with individual behaviour.

1.5.1 Data sources

First, I focused on how the broader environment in the Netherlands has influenced local sport policy, particularly in times of financial austerity and influenced by the shift from the welfare state paradigm to the 'participation society' discourse (chapter 2). To this end, I analysed financial data from Statistics Netherlands on municipal sport expenditures, alongside municipal coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 governing period. Regarding the former, municipalities are obliged to

register their financial statements in accordance with a Dutch reporting standard called IV3 models. This information is collected by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, n.d.) and was made available for this study. This data enabled me to track all Dutch municipalities' annual net expenditures on sport during the 2010-2015 period and to relate these expenditures to total municipal expenditures within the leisure domain. Regarding my analysis of municipal coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 period, this sought to provide an understanding of the policy environment of local sport policy. These agreements set out the political strategies formulated by the municipal executive board, made up of the mayor and aldermen, essentially establishing plans for the various policy domains for the coming four years. Though these documents typically describe municipal sport policy, it is not one of the key elements. I selected 104 municipalities for my analysis of coalition agreements. I first included the Netherlands' four largest cities. Subsequently, I used stratified sampling to select an additional 100 municipalities by number of inhabitants and region. The selected municipalities represented 48% of the Dutch population and 26% of all municipalities in the Netherlands in 2014.

Second, I conducted in-depth interviews with nine local sport managers (LSMs) to ascertain these managers' perspectives on the development, functioning and impact of local sport policy (chapter 3). This part of the research can be considered a follow-up to the quantitative inquiry by Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017). Their dataset contains information on a variety of topics related to sport policy processes and the content of applicable local sport policy documents. An online questionnaire was filled in by LSMs from 240 Dutch municipalities, corresponding to a response rate of 61%.

Third, I conducted geographical analyses based on the Database Sport Supply (DSS) (chapters 4 and 6). The DSS is the leading Dutch dataset with geographical information on virtually all sport facilities in the Netherlands. The DSS builds on the examples of comparable databases in other European countries and regions, such as Flanders, Belgium (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering, 2012), France (Ministère des Sport, 2011) and the UK (Leisure Database Company, 2014). Sport facilities are defined as facilities constructed for the purpose of sport, including those both publicly and privately owned. A strong feature of the DSS is that the sport facilities were geo-referenced using *x* and *y* coordinates, allowing for spatial analysis. To link the presence of sport facilities to characteristics of the environments, I enriched the DSS geographical data with publicly available contextual population data from Statistics Netherlands (2014a) and geographical data for 100 by 100 metre squares (Statistics Netherlands, 2014b). Fourth, I employed data from the 'Injuries and Physical Activity in the Netherlands' survey (further OBiN) (chapter 5 and 6). OBiN is a large-scale population survey in the Netherlands geared to measure levels of physical

activity, sport participation and injury-proneness among different social groups. OBiN samples were drawn from the InterviewBase panel of IPSOS (a market research company), consisting of 230,000 respondents in total. Quota sampling was performed to explore sample representativeness with respect to age, gender, educational level, household composition and area of residence. OBiN was found to produce high-quality data on both sport participation and individual characteristics (Vullings & Bank, 2015). An advantage of the OBiN survey is its large sample size. An additional advantage is my unique access to respondents' four-digit postal code data, providing accurate information on their residential locations and consequently their social and physical environment.

For a first study, I merged the 2012, 2013 and 2014 OBiN datasets, resulting in a total of 3,265 respondents aged 6-17 and 15,447 respondents aged 25-79, living in 399 Dutch municipalities (chapter 5). Furthermore, I enriched these OBiN data with registration data on sport policy characteristics of municipalities, which were available from the Mulier Institute, and with the Statistics Netherlands' data on municipal sport expenditures for the years 2010-2014. For a second study, I merged the 2011 and 2012 OBiN datasets to obtain a total of 17,910 respondents aged 6-79 (chapter 6). I enriched these OBiN data with information on the social and physical environment of the respondents. For the physical environment I employed DSS data on the proximity and variety of sport facilities. Social environment characteristics were available from secondary sources on neighbourhood characteristics, including by linking four-digit postal code data to the OBiN respondents.

1.5.2 Measurements

With respect to the macro level, and as a measurement to identify aspects of sport policy and related policy changes and ambitions of local authorities, I conducted an electronic keyword search of municipal coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 governing period (chapter 2). I gave special attention to sport facilities, due to their importance as a municipal policy priority, and to topics that could relate to neoliberal tendencies (e.g., privatization) and a participation society (e.g., VSCs). Furthermore, I used the municipal sport expenditures for the 2010-2015 period, both absolute and in relation to overall municipal budgets, to determine whether municipal sport budgets had declined in times of austerity.

In addition, I focused on the perspectives of local sport managers (LSMs) on the environment in which they operated, their policy activities and the (social) significance of sport policy. This served to illuminate 'the walk' rather than only 'the talk' (i.e., the line set out in policy documents) (chapter 3). I selected municipalities that had been named 'Sport Municipality of the Year' as well as municipalities that gave less priority to sport policy, following a most-different

design. In the selected municipalities, I conducted in-depth interviews with LSMs. In-depth interviewing is an excellent way to address *how* and *why* questions. My aim was to understand the LSMs' perceptions of processes, norms, decision-making, belief systems, interpretations, motivations and expectations (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

Furthermore, to measure local sport policy characteristics and their influence on individuals' sport participation, I utilized the municipal sport expenditures available from the IV3 models alongside participation in sport policy programmes. Within the IV3 models, sport income and expenditures are registered as budget items 530 'sport' and 531 'outdoor sport facilities'. The former covers indoor sport facilities plus activities to stimulate sport and other sport policy, while the latter includes outdoor facilities development and operation. I merged these two budget items and calculated the average net expenditure per year per municipality for the period 2010-2014 to obtain a robust measure of municipal sport expenditures. Sport policy programmes were measured by the number of Community Sport Workers (CSWs), in full-time equivalents per 10,000 inhabitants, and by participation in the Youth Sport Fund (YSF). CSWs are responsible for organizing activities to stimulate sport participation, especially for lagging groups. The YSF provides funding to participate in sport for children in families in poverty. Using the YSF annual report, which listed all participating municipalities, I coded participating (1) and non-participating (0) municipalities (Jeugdsportfonds, 2016).

Regarding the exo level, I conceptualized the physical environment and consequently explored the geographical distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands (chapters 4 and 6). The distribution of sport facilities was measured by the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities. The presence of sport facilities was calculated as the number of people per facility on average in the Netherlands and the number of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants by region (chapter 4). The variety of sport facilities was measured either by the number of different types of sport facilities found within the area units (chapter 4) or by the number of different types of facilities found within 1 kilometre of the respondent in the OBiN data (chapter 6). For the latter, the variety of sport facilities was restricted to the following types: (1) sport fields, (2) sport halls, (3) swimming pools and (4) fitness centres. For one study, the proximity of sport facilities was measured for each inhabitant based on the population data from Statistics Netherlands (2014a) and geographical data for 100 by 100 metre squares (Statistics Netherlands, 2014b) (chapter 4). To measure proximity in this study, I used the straight line distance from the centroid of a 100 by 100 metre square to the nearest sport facility, whether inside or outside the area unit, and to each of the different types of sport facilities identified; football facilities, tennis facilities, sport halls, korfball facilities, baseball grounds, field hockey facilities, golf courses,

fitness centres, athletics venues and swimming pools. Based on the calculated distances to the nearest facility, a weighted distance score was calculated for each 100 by 100 square area unit, to enable further analyses by area level of deprivation and urbanization. In another study, the proximity of sport facilities was measured for each respondent in the OBiN data by the average straight line distance per four-digit postal code to the nearest facility (chapter 6).

Concerning the meso level, I measured the social environment by neighbourhood socio-economic status and safety. Neighbourhood socioeconomic status scores, also called area level of deprivation, were based on an aggregation of the educational level, labour market position and income level of neighbourhood residents (Knol, 2012). These scores at the four-digit postal code level were added to the OBiN data (chapters 5 and 6). In addition, quintiles were generated for area level of deprivation and by linking the four-digit postal code information to the geographical information on sport facilities (chapter 4). Neighbourhood safety was calculated by aggregating information from the 'Level of Living Barometer' (Van der Reijden et al., 2013), which includes criminogenic aspects like vandalism, nuisance, violation of public order, violent crime and theft (chapter 5 and 6).

Furthermore, urbanity was identified as a relevant contextual variable and measured based on an address-density classification constructed by Statistics Netherlands. This classification was derived from the average number of addresses within a kilometre radius. For one study this information was linked to the four-digit postal code information on the distribution of sport facilities (chapter 4). For a second study, a customary differentiation into five categories was used: (1) not urbanized, <500 addresses per square kilometre, (2) hardly urbanized, 500-1,000 addresses per square kilometre, (3) moderately urbanized, 1,000-1,500 addresses per square kilometre, (4) highly urbanized, 1,500-2,500 addresses per square kilometre and (5) extremely urbanized, >2,500 addresses per square kilometre (chapter 5). For a third study, this five category differentiation was dichotomized into rural (categories 1-3) and urban (categories 4-5).

At the individual level, I used participation in sport or in a sport club as the dependent variable (chapter 5 and 6). Sport participation was measured as taking part in a sport activity according to the rules of the sport identified (e.g., football, swimming, fitness, running and tennis), excluding sport activities during classes at school. One study focused on general sport participation on a monthly basis and on participation specifically as a member of a sport club (chapter 5). The distinction of participation as a sport club member is particularly relevant because municipal sport expenditures are foremost linked to the facilities and activities of these voluntary sport clubs (VSCs). In another study, the focus was

on the frequency of sport participation, represented as the number of times a respondent had practised sport in the past twelve months (chapter 6). In line with policy and research standards in the Netherlands (Ministerie van VWS, 2009; NOC*NSF, 2009; Tiessen-Raaphorst et al., 2010), I defined three frequency categories: 0-11 times, 12-39 times and 40 or more times.

With regard to control variables at the micro level, this research used comparable independent variables that were part of the OBiN data (chapters 5 and 6). Age and household size were measured as continuous variables. Gender was dummy-coded with men as reference category. Educational attainment was measured in six categories ranging from no education or primary school only, to holding a university degree. Categories were recoded into three groups: (1) lower education, (2) middle education and (3) higher education. The income variable concerns a respondent's household income and was classified into seven categories ranging from a minimum income to three times the national average income. For one study, I calculated the centroid of each category and applied a log transformation to obtain a continuous measure for household income for further analysis (chapter 5). For another study, I recoded the seven categories of household income into three groups: (1) lower income, (2) average income and (3) above average income (chapter 6).

1.5.3 Analyses

This research focused on socio-ecological environmental influences, so as to obtain a better understanding of the interaction between sport policy characteristics and individual behaviour. In addition, it aimed to clarify how sport policy itself is positioned within its broader environment. To this end, a mixed method approach was deemed necessary. Consequently, the first part of this dissertation is more qualitatively oriented, providing a better understanding of the environment in which local sport policy is developed and functions, as well as of the significance of local sport policy according to local sport managers (LSMs).

In the first qualitative study, which served to elucidate local sport policy, I conducted a content analysis of coalition agreements on the topic of sport policy (chapter 2). I started by analysing the content of all the documents using an electronic keyword search strategy. Because I first wanted to determine the importance of sport in the municipal coalition agreements, I included many terms that could indicate references to sport. Thereafter, I qualitatively analysed all documents, looking at the context in which the keywords appeared. I started by reading the texts around these keywords and coding text segments referencing aspects of the welfare state, neoliberal tendencies, participation society and austerity measures. Through this content analysis, I was able to identify central discourses or storylines in local sport policy.

The second qualitative study provided a grasp of LSMs' perspectives on the development and functioning of local sport policy. Here, I used in-depth semi-structured interviews (chapter 3) conducted with nine LSMs. These interviews lasted an average of 1 hour and 15 minutes. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and began a deductive analysis regarding three central topics: 'how and why sport policy has changed in the past years', 'how this has affected or relates to actual practices of LSMs' and 'how LSMs view sport policy and their convictions regarding the effectiveness of sport policy and its social impact'. Data analysis involved repeated readings of interview transcripts, with the literature in mind, to identify patterns, similarities and differences. Within the three central topics, I used an inductive approach, reviewing and labelling transcript passages that were theoretically relevant or particularly salient (Bryman, 2012).

The empirical part of this research encompasses three studies. In the first empirical study I employed geographical analyses to map the distribution of sport facilities, to identify differences in the physical environment (chapter 4). First, I performed descriptive analyses to investigate the presence and proximity of the different types of facilities and the association between presence and proximity based on a power trend line. The differences by regions were visualized to increase readability. Second, I conducted analyses of variance to test for significant differences between the means of the presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities by quintiles of area level of deprivation and categories of urbanization.

In the final two empirical studies, I applied multivariate analysis to assess the extent to which sport policy characteristics, the physical environment and the social environment explained differences in sport participation (chapters 5 and 6). The first study examined sport policy characteristics and the social environment by means of three-level logistic regression analysis, to take into account the nesting of respondents within neighbourhoods and the nesting of neighbourhoods within municipalities (chapter 5). Multilevel analysis is an appropriate procedure for hierarchically structured data and hypotheses, as conventional regression techniques are not designed to take a hierarchical structure into account. Using multilevel analysis, it was possible to uncover how elements of public sport policy at the municipal level, and social environment variables at the neighbourhood level, impacted sport participation at the individual level. In addition, I estimated a cross-level interaction effect between sport policy characteristics (macro level) and household income (micro level) on the sport or sport club participation of an individual.

In the final empirical study, I employed multinomial logistic regression to deal with the independent effects of urbanity, socio-demographics and aspects of the

social and physical environment on sport participation (chapter 6). Multinomial logistic regression is an appropriate procedure for testing the influence of several independent variables in a model with a dependent variable consisting of more than two unordered categories. Non-sport participants served as the reference category, which was compared with monthly sport participants and weekly sport participants. I decided not to use multilevel analyses for this study due to the focus on urbanity. Selecting postal codes with a relatively high number of cases would mean an overrepresentation of urban areas, as greater urbanity corresponds to a greater number of cases within a postal code. As my aim was to determine whether aspects of the social and physical environment provide an explanation (interpretation) for differences in sport participation linked to the urbanity of the place of residence, I used a stepwise approach with different models, both with and without the mediating variables. This produced in the final step a full interpretation model including all characteristics at the micro, meso and exo levels.

Altogether, these various studies and approaches, using different kinds of data, comprehensively consider the four contextual levels of the socio-ecological model of sport participation presented in Figure 1.1. Furthermore, attention is given to the assumed interaction between the different levels of this socio-ecological framework.

1.6 Structure of dissertation

This dissertation consists of separate articles, each contributing to a better understanding of local sport policy or its influence on the sport participation of individuals. As such, the following chapters can be read as standalone articles (see Table 1.1). This does mean, however, that there is some overlap in the presentation of the theoretical starting point and description of the employed datasets. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to note that the articles are not presented in the order in which they were written. Instead, an order was chosen based on the structure of the socio-ecological framework, starting at the outmost level (national level) and working inwards, toward the immediate context in which individuals live.

Table 1.1 Outline of the dissertation

Chapter	Level	Subject of study	Context	Method
Chapter 2 (macro)	Policy environment	Coalition agreement and municipal sport expenditures	- Austerity - Participation society	Content analysis and trend analysis
Chapter 3 (macro)	Policy environment	Local sport managers' perspectives on local sport policy	- Broader environment of local sport policy - Critical reflexivity	Qualitative in-depth interviews
Chapter 4 (exo)	Physical environment (sport facilities)	Distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands	- Sport place theory/ urbanity - Deprivation amplification (socio-economic status)	Geographical analysis
Chapter 5 (macro, meso, micro)	Policy environment (macro), social environment and individual level	Sport and sport club participation of individuals and of higher and lower socio-economic positions	- Impact of sport policy characteristics (municipal sport expenditures)	Multiple 3-level logistic regression analyses
Chapter 6 (exo, meso, micro)	Physical environment, social environment and individual level	Intensity of sport participation of individuals in urban and rural areas	- Impact of sport facilities and social environment	Multinomial logistic regression analyses

1.6.1 From welfare state to participation society: Austerity measures and local sport policy (chapter 2)

This chapter examines whether the shift from the welfare state to a participation society in the context of financial austerity in the Netherlands has had consequences for local sport policy. From a socio-ecological perspective it is anticipated that wider conditions, in particular, austerity and the changing role of the government, will have impacted local sport policy. Municipal sport expenditures are expected to have declined and greater demands are anticipated to have been made of civil society, in line with the shift to the participation society discourse.

The central research questions were two: (1) Do municipal sport budgets show evidence of a move away from classic welfare state values towards a participation society? (2) Do changes in local sport policy suggest a move away from classic welfare state values towards a participation society?

First, I analysed spending on sport across all Dutch municipalities. Second, I quantitatively and qualitatively analysed 104 municipal coalition agreements

for the 2014-2018 governing period, to investigate the impact of broader developments on local sport policy. My aim was to identify whether changes in local sport policy were visible in relation to the purported shift away from the welfare state to a participation society or as a result of austerity measures.

My analyses showed that in absolute terms and contrary to my expectations, spending on sport was relatively stable in the 2010-2014 period. Considering that the overall budget of municipalities decreased by some 12% during this period, the share of sport spending in the total municipal budgets increased in the 2010-2014 period, from 2.6% to 2.8%. Only when taking inflation into account can sport spending be said to have declined, undergoing a 3.0% drop in purchasing power between 2010 and 2014. Regarding the first expectation, these outcomes provide a strong indication that grassroots sport has been relatively immune to austerity measures thus far, stemming from both the economic crisis and neoliberal politics seeking to slim down the welfare state.

A closer look at the 2014-2018 coalition agreements showed that sport is a rather significant item. Almost two-thirds of the municipalities devoted an entire section of their document explicitly to sport policy. Facilities are by far the most important sport-related topic in the municipal policy programmes. This is attributable to the large share of sport budgets allocated to sport facilities (about 85-90% of most local sport budgets (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013)). VSCs were also frequently mentioned, which might indicate a shift towards a participation society. Compared to the 2010-2014 coalition agreements (Hoekman & Gijsbers, 2010), there was a remarkable increase in terms related to austerity measures and privatization. The emphasis on sport in these coalition agreements could be summed up in three main challenges facing sport policy: more efficient use and operation of sport facilities, a larger role for VSCs and a need to create financial safety nets to maintain sport's accessibility to all.

Concerning the second expectation, that the move towards a participation society likely impacted the local sport policy discourse, I would argue that local sport policy is still strongly hinged on welfare state values. Nevertheless, sober sport policies are being promoted, though seeking to maintain sport's accessibility. There was no neoliberal slant favouring a reliance on the free market and private entrepreneurship. Rather, the trend in local government in the Netherlands is towards a participation society, with VSCs expected to play a larger role in the operation of sport facilities and as policy implementer in the future. Still, I must conclude that the shift so evident in the national policy discourse of the Netherlands from a classic welfare state ideas to a participation society has had limited consequences for local sport policy. Sport and VSCs remain, as they have long been, a vital element in the local sport landscape and policymaking.

In addition, I note that the coalition agreements position sport as an instrument with external benefits for health, personal development and social integration. As such, sport is posited as a tool to help solve larger social-economic problems in other policy domains. This social value of sport provides strong legitimation for continued public investments in sport and may explain why municipal sport expenditures were relatively immune to the economic downturn. Another explanation is that most of the sport budget is fixed in sport facilities, and it may take more time to slim down these budgets.

1.6.2 Local policy-making in sport: Sport managers' perspectives on work processes and impact (chapter 3)

This chapter seeks to better understand the development and functioning of local sport policy, from the perspective of local sport managers (LSMs). Local sport budgets in the Netherlands continue to be allocated mainly to sport facilities, despite increasing interest in the instrumental value of sport, particularly to achieve health and welfare objectives. This may produce somewhat of a mismatch between wider policy discourses and local sport policy. My aim was to discern how LSMs have locally understood and legitimated new discourses in national sport policy. Starting from the socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I examined changes in national policy discourses and other exogenous developments, in association with local sport policy and the day-to-day work of LSMs. Furthermore, I examined LSMs' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of local sport policy and its social impact.

This study addressed three research questions: (1) How and why has local sport policy changed in the new millennium? (2) How are central discourses in local sport policy reflected in LSMs' daily practices, for example, in their sport policymaking activities? (3) To what extent do LSMs critically reflect on their established methods of working?

To access LSMs' subjective views, experiences and perspectives on local sport policy I conducted nine in-depth semi-structured interviews with LSMs. The significance of this study lies in its acknowledgement that the perspectives and views of LSMs are indispensable to fully understand local sport policy as it is actually implemented, apart from what is written in municipal coalition agreements (chapter 2).

Regarding the first research question, I conclude that most changes in local sport policy were triggered by exogenous developments. Among these developments, three were most prominent: the changed financial realities facing municipalities, changed organizational structures within municipalities and changed national policy and related discourses. LSMs acknowledged that

today, more than in the past, local sport policy is linked to other policy domains based on the social benefits of sport. Furthermore, they observed an increasing demand for accountability and a greater focus on effective sport policy due to the more austere financial realities.

Concerning the second research question, I must conclude that LSMs' activities have remained little altered. LSMs are still strongly focused on providing and managing sport facility infrastructure and supporting VSCs. LSMs said that most money was still dedicated to sport facilities, and they considered this key to achieving the more socially-oriented goals of sport policy. The large expenditures on facilities, however, limited the potential for additional activities to promote the contribution of sport to external collective values.

With respect to the third research question, LSMs expressed a naturalized belief in the goodness of sport and its potential to bring social objectives closer, resembling the 'Great Sport Myth' notion of Coakley (2015). In general, LSMs exhibited little critical reflection on (preconditions for) effective sport policy and the need for policy monitoring and evaluation. They described the sport sector as 'hands on', interested more in initiating new programmes than in evaluating existing efforts. To some extent, they did not consider evidence of the value of sport to be necessary, as sport's social value and its political relevance was generally accepted as self-evident. Indeed, increased accountability demands were applied mainly to VSCs, which must now first demonstrate their contribution to social goals in order to be eligible for funding. Similar accountability demands were made of those to whom the operation of sport facilities was outsourced.

1.6.3 A landscape of sport facilities in the Netherlands (chapter 4)

This study focused on the geographical distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands, evaluating this in relation to area level of deprivation and urbanity. The socio-ecological framework considers sport facilities an important element of the physical environment. Yet, in today's context of financial austerity, many municipalities have been forced to reassess their spending on sport. My analysis of municipal coalition agreements (chapter 2) and interviews with the LSMs (chapter 3) underscored the efforts municipalities have made to uphold a good sport infrastructure. Indeed, the huge share of government sport funding allocated to sport facilities suggests the need for more information and indicators by which to gauge such facilities' adequacy. To this end, I drew on sports place theory and the deprivation amplification model to more theoretically examine the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities in the Netherlands as a whole and according to area level of deprivation and urbanity. My aim was to develop key indicators for the distribution of sport facilities and to investigate inequalities in this distribution.

The central research questions were two: (1) To what extent are there differences in the distribution (presence, variety and proximity) of (types of) sport facilities between affluent and deprived areas? (2) To what extent are there differences in the distribution (presence, variety and proximity) of (types of) sport facilities between more urbanized and less urbanized areas?

Based on the deprivation amplification model and in line with assumptions in Dutch national sport policy documents, I expected the distribution of sport facilities to be more favourable in affluent areas compared to deprived areas. Such inequalities were previously found in studies in other European countries, but not yet investigated in the Netherlands. Regarding urbanization and the sports place theory, I expected a greater variety of sport facilities and shorter travel distances to sport facilities in more urbanized areas and a larger number of sport facilities per capita in less urbanized areas. Data for this study were provided by the Database Sport Supply (DSS), which offers geographical information on virtually all sport facilities in the Netherlands. The data on sport facilities was linked with population statistics from Statistics Netherlands, to assess the type and location of sport facilities available in conjunction with information on the population.

With respect to my first expectation, I found that both the most deprived areas and the most affluent areas had significantly fewer sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants and a more limited variety of sport facilities than other areas. The average distance to the nearest facility was shortest in the most deprived areas. Thus, even though the supply of sport facilities in deprived areas was relatively limited and one-sided, facilities were offered at very close proximity. Deprived areas had similar or, with regard to proximity, better access to sport facilities compared to affluent areas. Consequently, I found no support for the idea of deprivation amplification. Rather, my findings support a more differentiated model by which some resources are equally accessible to all inhabitants regardless of their neighbourhood's level of deprivation; some types of facilities are more prevalent in and closer to more affluent areas (e.g., field hockey facilities and golf courses); and some types of facilities are more prevalent in and closer to more deprived areas (e.g., fitness centres).

With regard to the second expectation, I found evidence of shorter travel distances to sport facilities in more urbanized areas and larger numbers of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants in less urbanized areas. Furthermore, my findings indicate that a basic configuration of sport facilities was present in most places, irrespective of population size, and that beyond these there is a subset of higher-order sport facilities that require higher population thresholds. Thus, even though there are inequalities in the distribution of sport facilities, the Netherlands overall appears to provide a sufficiently dense sport infrastructure,

with various types of facilities offered in close proximity to most inhabitants. The results also indicate that assessing the distribution of sport facilities in a structured way can yield relevant information for sport facility planning and sport participation policy.

1.6.4 Providing for the rich? The effect of public investment in sport on sport (club) participation of vulnerable youth and adults (chapter 5)

'Sport for All' is a central theme of local sport policy in the Netherlands (chapters 2 and 3). Public spending on sport is considered necessary to keep sport affordable, while specific policy programmes aim to include groups that lag behind in sport participation. The socio-ecological rationale anticipates that sport policy at the macro level will influence individuals' behaviour. My aim was to explore the impact of local governments' sport expenditures and of participation in certain sport policy programmes on sport participation and sport club membership, particularly differences in sport participation and sport club membership between higher and lower socio-economic groups in the Netherlands.

The following two research questions guided this study: (1) To what extent do municipal expenditures on sport and sport policy programmes impact the level of sport participation and sport club membership among youths and adults (main effect)? (2) To what extent do municipal expenditures on sport and sport policy programmes impact differences between socio-economic groups in sport participation and sport club membership among youths and adults (cross-level interaction)?

Again, Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model provided the theoretical starting point for these analyses. Based on this model, I expected that higher municipal sport expenditures and greater participation in sport policy programmes would be associated with higher sport participation rates among municipal residents. Furthermore, I anticipated that in those municipalities with higher sport expenditures and greater participation in sport policy programmes, smaller participation differences would exist between higher and lower socio-economic groups. To test these expectations I performed multiple three-level logistic regression analyses to control for the different environmental levels (micro level and meso level) and to identify the significance of local sport policy at the macro level for individuals' sport participation and sport club membership. In addition, I took cross-level interactions into account, to address the second research question. The analyses were conducted separately for youths and adults using information from a large national population survey enriched with secondary data on municipal sport expenditures and municipal participation in sport policy programmes.

Concerning the first expectation, my findings confirmed that municipal sport policy characteristics (macro level) were indeed related to sport participation and sport club membership among youths. In particular, higher municipal sport expenditures correlated with higher likelihoods of sport participation and sport club membership among youths. No effect of participation in sport policy programmes was found with regard to youths. Looking at adults, municipal sport expenditures and employed Community Sport Workers (CSWs) were negatively correlated with sport participation and sport club membership. In part, this might be because the CSWs were mainly employed in municipalities where sport participation rates were particularly lagging. It is likely that the Youth Sport Fund (YSF) and CSWs were utilized primarily in low-status neighbourhoods and in municipalities with especially low sport participation rates, in order to solve the 'problem' of low participation. This might also be, at least in part, why no effect was found for municipalities' participation in sport policy programmes on sport participation among youths.

Regarding my second expectation, the study established that among youths, greater municipal sport expenditures were associated with smaller differences in sport club membership between higher and lower socio-economic groups. As such, I found proof of the cross-level interaction assumed in my second research question.

With this I conclude that sport policy matters for youth sport club membership, which is, after all, its primary aim. Furthermore, my findings reaffirm the importance of neighbourhood socio-economic status and neighbourhood safety (meso level) and the socio-economic position of the individual (micro level) in sport participation and sport club membership. This holds true for both youths and adults. Decisions to participate in sport seem to be taken within the context of broader values, attitudes and lifestyle factors related to these socio-economic factors. All in all, this study advances evidence of the effectivity of local sport policy, thus contributing to a more complete body of knowledge on the reasons for differences in sport participation.

1.6.5 Sport participation and the social and physical environment: Explaining differences between urban and rural areas in the Netherlands (chapter 6)

Local sport policy is strongly focused on providing and managing sport facility infrastructure. Underlying this focus is the belief that providing access to sport facilities is a key element of effective sport participation policies. The current literature, however, provides mixed evidence on the influence of sport facility supply on sport participation. Furthermore, most previous studies have focused either on the individual or on the infrastructure, without including the social

environment in the analyses. Based on socio-ecological reasoning, however, I anticipated that features of both the physical and the social environment, in addition to socio-demographic factors, would explain differences in individuals' sport behaviour. Using the socio-ecological theoretical model, my aim in this study was to explore rural-urban differences in individuals' sport participation, particularly the relevance of the availability and variety of sport facilities and of the social environment.

This study addressed two research questions: (1) Are sport participation differences between urban and rural areas (partly) the result of differences in the social environment? (2) Are sport participation differences between urban and rural areas (partly) the result of differences in the physical environment?

Starting from the perspective of the social environment, I anticipated that the favourable social environment in rural areas would result in higher sport participation rates in rural areas. Starting from the perspective of the physical environment, I expected that the favourable physical environment in urban areas, with shorter travel distances and a greater variety of sport facilities, would result in higher sport participation rates in urban areas. I tested these theoretical expectations using multinomial logistic regression analyses, to deal with the independent effects of urbanity, socio-demographic factors and aspects of the social and physical environment on the frequency of sport participation.

Regarding my first expectation, my results indicated higher rates of weekly sport participation in rural areas compared to urban areas, while no difference by urbanity was found for monthly sport participation. The higher weekly sport participation rates in rural areas were indeed (partly) explained by the favourable social environment in these areas.

Concerning my second expectation, I found no effect of the physical environment in explaining differences by urbanity. However, my findings cannot be taken as a denial of the importance of the physical environment. A larger variety of sport facilities in a person's neighbourhood was found to increase the likelihood of monthly sport participation. Contrary to my expectations, larger distances were associated with more monthly sport participation, and not with non-participation.

The conclusions of this study enhance understanding of the rural-urban divide in sport participation and highlight the particular importance of features of the social environment. Additionally, a larger variety of sport facilities did increase monthly sport participation, especially among those less motivated to participate in sport. These results offer valuable new insights for sport promotion policies.

1.7 Conclusion and discussion

Government involvement in sport, alongside the role of the market, is deemed necessary to guarantee access to sport for all groups in society. Underlying this assumption is the expectation that with local sport policy interventions, governments actually affect individuals' sport behaviour. This intended outcome of sport policy is theoretically in line with the socio-ecological rationale. Within the literature, however, little evidence exists of the impact of sport policy on individuals' sport behaviour. The research presented in this dissertation examined local sport policy and its influence on the individual's sport participation. The socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) served as the starting point, or general theoretical framework. The model proved meaningful in positioning local sport policy and in applying a multilevel, and somewhat interdisciplinary, approach.

In this research I, first, anticipated that local sport policy in itself would be influenced by the broader environment and exogenous developments, such as financial austerity, the rise of the participation society and dominant discourses in national sport policy (section 1.4). Second, I assumed that beneficial local sport policy characteristics, such as higher municipal sport expenditures, would correspond with higher sport participation rates. Third, I hypothesized that a beneficial physical environment (e.g., a greater variety of sport facilities and shorter travel distances), would encourage sport participation. Fourth, I posited that a beneficial social environment (e.g., neighbourhood safety and higher socio-economic status) would lead to higher sport participation rates. Fifth, I expected sport policy characteristics to matter, particularly for lower socio-economic groups, to which such policy is primarily aimed.

Regarding the first expectation, I conclude, in line with socio-ecological reasoning, that local sport policy is influenced by the broader environment and exogenous developments. To fully understand local sport policy, it is necessary to contemplate the broader environment in which sport policy exists (e.g., Houlihan, 2005). I found that local sport policy had been particularly influenced by three developments: the changed financial realities facing municipalities, changed organizational structures within municipalities and changed national policy and related discourses. These developments affected local sport policy discourses and related policy objectives, producing, particularly, an increased focus on accountability. However, that accountability has been assigned mainly to VSCs and the organizations to which the operation of sport facilities has been outsourced. For local sport policy, evidence-based programmes, effectiveness, reflexivity and accountability remain less of an issue than in other governmental policy domains (Sanderson, 2002). This may be because sport policy issues tend to be 'wicked problems'. That is, problem definition in sport policy is difficult, the sport policy domain involves many factors outside the sport sector (e.g., contributing to public health and social inclusion) and there is

considerable uncertainty about the causal chains and working mechanisms of local sport policy.

Furthermore, the shift from the welfare state to a participation society does not seem to have had the expected effect on local sport policy. Local sport policy appears to remain a stronghold of the welfare state. The challenges described in the municipal coalition agreements are best read as arguments for sober local sport policy that fits the current context of austerity and a participation society. This policy seeks to engage civil society while remaining hinged on welfare state principles. Local governments still aim to keep sport accessible to all, especially those in need. They take this responsibility seriously, emphasizing the importance of upholding a good sport infrastructure. LSMs considered the creation of an adequate sport facility infrastructure and providing support to VSCs as key to keeping sport accessible. They believed that in doing so they would in course achieve the more socially-oriented goals of local sport policy. In this regard, LSMs exhibited little critical reflection on the effectiveness of sport policy and the need for policy monitoring and evaluation. As such, it remained unclear to them to what extent local sport policy did indeed contribute to 'Sport for All' and to the more socially-oriented goals.

With respect to the second expectation, I tested the effect of sport policy characteristics on individuals' sport participation and sport club membership and the extent to which sport policy characteristics contributed to 'Sport for All'. I found that local sport policy, operationalized by municipal sport expenditures, has mattered, particularly for youth sport club membership. Though my study found no effect of specific policy programmes on sport participation rates, this should not be taken as a denial of the added value of these programmes. Sport policy programmes are utilized mainly in areas with especially low participation rates, as an instrument to solve this 'problem' of low sport participation. Furthermore, these programmes started relatively recently (in the past few years) and it might take more time to register behavioural change (e.g., Sam, 2009). In general, this research confirmed that aspects of municipal sport policy (macro level) do seem to matter, in addition to the social environment (meso level) and the socio-economic position of the individual (micro level), though municipal sport policy is particularly key for youths and for sport club membership. This is not surprising, however, as local sport policy is directed mainly at youths and at supporting VSCs. This provides some first insights into the working mechanisms of local sport policy. Nevertheless, more research is needed to grasp the significance of specific sport policy projects.

Third, I scrutinized the differences in proximity to and variety of sport facilities and their relevance in explaining differences in sport participation. I found that the Netherlands has a rather dense sport infrastructure, with an average distance of just over 600 metres to the nearest sport facility. Furthermore, unlike other European countries, my findings do not support the idea of deprivation

amplification, which holds that areas with poorer inhabitants have inferior public and private sport facilities. I did find differences in the distribution of sport facilities between rural and urban areas. More urbanized areas had shorter travel distances to sport facilities and a greater variety of sport facilities within a one kilometre radius of respondents. Less urbanized areas had a larger number of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants. These differences in the physical environment in urban and rural areas, however, hardly relate to the observed rural-urban divide in sport participation. The variety of sport facilities nearby did, however, somewhat explain differences in individuals' monthly sport participation, with a higher variety of facilities nearby being related to a greater likelihood of monthly sport participation. This may be due to a lower intrinsic motivation and thus less willingness to travel to take part in sport among this more ad hoc sport participation group (Hoekman & De Jong, 2011). For weekly sport participants, active sport participation may be part of daily or weekly routines. This group of participants likely prefers certain sports and is less concerned about distance; or they may be willing to choose a sport based on the available supply (Teixeira et al., 2012). Moreover, travel distances in the Netherlands are small in general, due the density of the country and its well-developed sport infrastructure. This is illustrated by the fact that the Dutch are, of all Europeans, most satisfied with the sport facilities in the area they live (European Commission, 2014). These findings suggest that local sport policy has thus far succeeded in upholding a good sport infrastructure, accessible to all groups within society.

Concerning my fourth expectation, my findings underscore the importance of the social environment as an explanatory variable for individual sport participation. For starters, the rural-urban divide in sport participation was particularly explained by differences in the social environment. In addition, the social environment appeared to be an important factor explaining differences in sport club membership among both youths and adults. Higher neighbourhood safety and socio-economic status were related to higher levels of sport participation. These findings are in line with prior research on the importance of the social environment in explaining differences in sport participation. By combining aspects of the social environment with aspects of the physical environment or with local sport policy characteristics, within one explanatory model for sport participation, this research unmasked the relative importance of the social environment. As such, the social environment (meso level) appears to be more important than the physical environment (exo level) or sport policy characteristics (macro level) in explaining differences in sport participation.

Regarding the fifth expectation, I tested the effect of sport policy characteristics in reducing the participation gap by socio-economic status. I found that higher municipal sport expenditures did reduce differences in sport club membership between different socio-economic status groups. This indicates that municipal

sport expenditures have indeed contributed to the 'Sport for All' objective and have been particularly important among youths and lower socio-economic strata. Governmental involvement in sport seems to have compensated for existing inequalities. This sheds new light on the notion that higher socio-economic groups could profit most from governmental expenditures on sport in the Netherlands (Ter Rele, 2007).

In sum, the main conclusion of this dissertation is twofold. First, I conclude that despite the omnipresent instrumental focus on sport, local sport policy is still centred on facilitating sport and enhancing sport participation. LSMs consider sport participation essential for society to accrue sport's intrinsic benefits. Consequently, LSMs paid foremost attention to maintaining an affordable and accessible sport infrastructure, to increase sport participation rates. Second, I conclude that in the Netherlands local sport policy characteristics provide some explanation for differences in sport participation. The socio-ecological model proved very helpful in positioning the relevance of local sport policy and explaining differences in sport participation. However, the social environment and socio-economic variables were found to be most important in explaining differences in individual sport participation. In this regard I note that the Netherlands is a relatively strong test case, considering that sport's social value and political relevance is generally accepted here as self-evident, an abundant sport infrastructure is in place, sport participation rates are high and other national characteristics offer beneficial conditions for sport participation. Still, higher municipal sport expenditures were found to contribute to inclusion of more youths from lower social strata in sport club membership; and a greater variety of sport facilities in close proximity appears to promote greater monthly sport participation. Consequently, we might anticipate that in other countries sport policy characteristics may be even more significant in explaining differences in sport participation.

1.8 Limitations and future avenues for research

Although this research provides valuable knowledge on aspects of local sport policy and the influence of local sport policy on individual sport participation, challenges and questions remain for future research.

1.8.1 Limitations

A first limitation of this research relates to its focus on the situation in the Netherlands, as a more international approach might offer additional relevance. This particularly holds true for the rural-urban divide found in chapter 6, with higher weekly sport participation rates in rural areas. Within Europe

higher sport participation in urban areas has been found. The question arises of whether aspects of the social environment and physical environment in the different countries provide comparable explanations for differences in sport participation by urbanity. International comparisons are also recommended regarding sport policy characteristics (macro level) and sport infrastructure (exo level). In countries such as the Netherlands, with an already abundant sport infrastructure and relatively high sport participation rates, additional sport facilities and policy programmes, and herewith additional sport expenditures, may have limited impact. In, for instance, Eastern Europe or a country like China (see Guo et al., 2015) where sport infrastructure is at an earlier stage of development and lower sport participation rates are found, the impact of additional government spending on sport, sport facilities and sport policy programmes may yield more effect. This expectation is in line with findings of Houlihan and White (2002). They concluded that the facility construction programmes of the 1980s in various European countries satisfied a latent demand and contributed to increasing sport participation, but after this period, sport participation levelled off, with further increases in participation mainly observed in sports practised in public spaces, such as running (see also Scheerder and Breedveld, 2015).

A second limitation of this study relates to the focus on individual sport participation in the empirical studies (chapter 5 and 6), as local sport policy is not only about increasing sport participation. This research affirmed the numerous socially-oriented goals of local sport policy (e.g., public health and social inclusion). Regarding these socially-oriented goals, LSMs exhibited a naturalized belief in sport's potential to achieve these goals, though they simultaneously expressed little critical reflection and conducted very little policy monitoring and evaluation to ascertain the extent to which sport policy indeed contributed to these broader goals. Consequently, this presumed contribution of sport to socially-oriented goals is a topic for further research. For this, one could build on explorative studies in the Netherlands on the social benefits of sport (e.g., Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016) and on the health benefits of sport (Coenders et al., 2017). Furthermore, it would be valuable to obtain outsiders' perspectives on this issue, for example, by questioning local politicians, the alderman responsible for sport and civil servants in other policy domains (e.g., health and welfare) regarding the social significance of sport and its contributions to objectives within other policy domains.

A third limitation of this research relates to the measurement of the physical environment. I focused on the presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities and did not include characteristics of the public space, although in recent decades increased use of public spaces for sport participation has become visible (Hoekman, Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Van den Dool, 2015; Scheerder

& Breedveld, 2015). Some may argue that a full picture can be obtained only by combining presence of sport facilities with opportunities to practise sport in public spaces. Rafoss and Troelsen (2010), for instance, concluded that a smaller proportion of the rural population compared to the urban population exercised in organized sport facilities. This may be because in Scandinavian countries, where their study was conducted, rural areas offer ample alternatives for sport in public spaces (e.g. hiking, skiing and other outdoor activities), reducing the relevance of availability of organized sport facilities. However, in the Netherlands opportunities to practise sport in public spaces does not seem to be clearly differentiated by urbanity (see Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp, Van der Poel & Hoffmans, 2016). A further limitation of my measurement of the characteristics of the physical environment is that I studied objective features. My measures may be improved by adding more subjective measures of distance to sport facilities or of the perceived accessibility of sport facilities. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner argued that both the objective and perceived environment are significant in understanding behaviour and development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, 1979).

A fourth limitation concerns my use of cross-sectional data. The use of longitudinal data may be a valuable add-on to discover to what extent changes in the physical environment (e.g., sport facilities) relate to changes in sport behaviour. Longitudinal research on the interrelationships between sport policies, sport facilities and sport participation could better deal with causality issues. To illustrate, higher municipal sport expenditures may result in higher sport participation rates, but contrarily, higher sport participation rates may require higher municipal sport expenditures, due to increased demand for sport facilities. Furthermore, a development seems to be under way toward a widening diversity in sport provision, with different modes of provision that do not always require public investment (e.g., the rise of fitness centres and increased popularity of sports like running and cycling). Consequently, the relative importance of public provision of sport facilities and municipal sport expenditures may actually decline over time. A longitudinal approach would enable us to delve into these causality issues and examine possible changes in the relative importance of local sport policy.

1.8.2 Future avenues for research

This research has produced new research questions that I plan to take up in the near future. The first relates to the modes of operation of sport facilities. By far the largest share of local sport budgets is dedicated to the construction and operation of sport facilities (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). Furthermore, municipal coalition agreements largely focus on achieving more efficient operation of sport facilities (see chapter 2). In addition, LSMs underscored the

importance of upholding a good sport infrastructure, emphasizing their quest for more efficient means of operating sport facilities. Often they choose to outsource aspects of sport facilities operation (chapter 3). Subsequently, the commercial market is increasingly involved in sport, and voluntary organizations, especially VSCs, are being asked to assume responsibilities as well. It would be relevant to learn what modes of sport facility operation prove successful and under what conditions. This could inform LSMs on ways to attune the mode of operation of sport facilities to the local situation, improving the effectiveness of local sport policy. Given current developments regarding modes of sport facility operation, facility provision may become more blended. This may make it less clear to what extent government involvement does make a difference. A first explorative study of the different modes of operation of sport facilities in relation to inclusiveness, utilization and financial results would promote better informed decisions on the facilitating role of government.

Second, in this research the socio-ecological theoretical framework proved valuable for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of differences in individuals' sport behaviour, and as such may be relevant for future studies asking different questions. The current research focused on sport participation, sport club membership and the frequency of sport participation. However, the socio-ecological framework may also be valuable for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of differences in participation in various types of sport or in the use of specific types of sport facilities.

Third, it would be interesting to dig deeper into changes in municipal sport expenditures and provision of sport facilities. The current research sought LSMs' perspectives on developments in local sport policy, dominant sport policy activities and the social impact of sport policy. Additionally, I would suggest qualitative research to identify the logics that LSMs apply to decisions on locations of sport facilities and to the relation between investments in sport facilities, which generally last for 30 to 40 years, and fluctuations in usage patterns of sport facilities. Such a qualitative approach may additionally help identify to what extent a higher demand for sport is a result of supply, and consequently higher municipal sport expenditures, or if instead demand shapes supply, and thus influences municipal sport expenditures. This would help resolve the causality issues raised before (section 1.8.1). Furthermore, a study with a broader perspective on aspects of sport supply may be a relevant addition to the focus of this research on the presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities. Other aspects of sport supply may provide additional explanations for sport participation differences. Such other aspects are the size and quality of sport facilities (e.g., number and condition of pitches) and the organization providing the activities, alongside the types of activities offered and the price of the sport activity. That last is particularly relevant in relation to the ambition to provide affordable sport opportunities for all.

1.9 Policy implications

A key strength of this research is its broad focus on the development, functioning and impact of local sport policy. Examining local sport policy and individual sport participation from a socio-ecological perspective, including the different environmental systems, I provided an overview of the development and functioning of local sport policy and the relevance of local sport policy in explaining differences in individual behaviour. These insights are valuable in discerning the effectivity of local sport policy.

For starters, this research demonstrates that local sport policy has influenced individuals' behaviour to some extent. It also provides important information for policymakers on which groups or environmental settings are particularly lagging in sport participation. Thus, this research offers information on which groups and environment settings warrant added policy attention to achieve the 'Sport for All'. In this regard, my research reaffirms the importance of the social environment (meso level) and the socio-economic position of the individual (micro level) in sport participation. Sport participation is lowest in neighbourhoods with a low socio-economic status and low neighbourhood safety; and these neighbourhoods in particular warrant policy attention. Policymakers and policy implementers, furthermore, should be aware of the importance of the social environment. It may be recommendable, for example, to utilize social networks in low socio-economic status neighbourhoods for more successful promotion of sport participation and positive attitudes towards sport.

Moreover, this research found low participation rates to be associated with relatively low household incomes, lower educational levels and older age groups. To increase sport participation among these groups, municipalities could seek to remove barriers specific to these groups, and in their policies pay greater attention to these target groups. Municipal coalition agreements commonly mention two relevant target groups: children in poverty and people with disabilities. However, to reach and encourage these groups to get involved and stay involved in sport, specific expertise and insights are needed regarding the barriers these groups face. The fact that these groups are relatively difficult to reach and not necessarily catered for by the market, underlines the need for government involvement in sport. To illustrate, an evaluation of the Big Society agenda in the UK demonstrated that it is difficult to mobilize the private sector for the common good (Civil Exchange, 2015). In the focus on specific target groups, the CSWs may be a valuable instrument within municipalities, to develop activities for these groups in close relation to aims and objectives in the social policy domain.

The current research showed that maintaining a good sport infrastructure is a key feature of local sport policy in the Netherlands. Furthermore, it demonstrated that the Netherlands has an outstanding sport infrastructure with a fine distribution of sport facilities. Contrary to findings in other countries, access to sport facilities in the Netherlands is rather good in low-status neighbourhoods. This is something to cherish and build upon. Consequently, LSMs could focus on optimally escribing the local sporting capital. Local sporting capital can be defined as the locally present combination of sport facilities (hardware), sport organizations (orgware) and programmes/activities (software) (VSG, 2018). NOC*NSF refers in this regard to the 'golden triangle' of facilities, volunteers and activities to achieve 'open clubs' that are attuned to the needs of their environment and contribute to the more socially-oriented objectives of sport policy. As such, utilizing the available sport infrastructure, including both sport facilities and sport organizations (e.g., the VSCs), to its full potential is one of the biggest challenges facing sport policy. Indeed, LSMs underlined the importance of this excellent infrastructure and their struggles to find ways to more effectively provide and operate it, under the pressures of financial austerity. To achieve this it is essential that the hardware, orgware and software be attuned to the changing needs of the population. Consequently, it is important to critically assess whether supply and demand of sport facilities is in line, especially given the different prospects for the future, based on the forecast demographic shifts (e.g., population decline or growth, the ageing of society) and changing sport participation patterns (see Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Hoekman, 2016). Thus, LSMs need a clear picture of sport behaviour, population needs and opportunities and barriers to different groups within their municipality. Information is especially needed regarding those who do not participate in sport and those who participate very irregularly. To provide LSMs this better understanding of the population development in their municipality, more research is needed to support evidence-based local sport policy.

Regarding the omnipresent focus on 'Sport for All' and ambitions to resolve inequality in sport participation, it is notable that 'Sport for All' has not in fact been accomplished. In addition, and in line with other scholars, I would argue that 'Sport for All' may never be achieved (Skille, 2011). The current research demonstrated once more that sport is a social phenomenon, with socio-economic factors and different environmental systems influencing individuals' sport behaviour. Decisions to participate appear to be taken within the context of broader values, attitudes and lifestyle factors related to socio-economic factors and systems. This could imply that those who do not participate in sport are not necessarily 'constrained' or 'excluded', they simply might not wish to participate (Coalter, 1998). There may be a certain sport participation ceiling, as not all people choose to participate in sport. One may argue that in the Netherlands, a country with very high sport participation rates, it will be quite difficult to

further raise sport participation rates. Hence, it becomes even more important to focus on specific target groups, with activities attuned to their specific needs and desires. These target groups will generally be those who would profit most from the assumed external benefits of sport participation.

According to LSMs, high sport participation rates and frequent sport participation is key to achieving many socially-oriented goals. Of course, one has to participate in sport to gain the presumed external benefits. However, there is limited empirical evidence to vouch for these external effects, with the exception of health effects of sport participation (Breedveld, 2014; Breedveld et al., 2016; Coenders et al., 2017; Elling, 2018). To enrich our understanding of these external effects, more research on this topic is needed (see also section 1.8.2). In addition, LSMs should exhibit critical reflexivity and aim for reflexive local sport policy. Reflexive local sport policy ('*lerend beleid*' in Dutch) refers to better awareness of what to achieve, how to measure it and learning by doing to achieve goals (e.g., through experiments and knowledge exchange) (VSG, 2018). In this regard, the absence of a legal framework for sport policy and the related autonomy of municipalities in shaping local sport policies provides LSMs opportunity to experiment in their policy activities. This relative freedom may make sport an attractive policy partner and experimental setting ('*proeftuin*') for other policy domains, particularly the social welfare domain, which was recently decentralized in the Netherlands, and the spatial planning domain, in which significant changes are upcoming in 2021 (regarding the spatial planning law, '*Omgevingswet*'). Municipalities have the opportunity to experiment with the use of sport to discover how sport policy activities may contribute to socially-oriented objectives. LSMs should engage with other policy domains to start up these experiments and critically monitor their outcomes. This will require short cyclic measurements of progress, in addition to leeway for changing activities and resource allocations in response to developments and new insights. In the end, these experiments should contribute to a better understanding of the working mechanisms of local sport policy, especially in relation to socially-oriented objectives. They may also help answer the basic question of to what extent local sport policy contributes to broader social objectives. Furthermore, they will help LSMs increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their local sport policy and activities, identified as one of the key challenges facing local sport policy today.

Concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of local sport policy, one other point needs to be raised. The current research found somewhat of an imbalance between the very share of local sport budgets allocated to sport facilities and broader social objectives underlying sport policy. To increase the effectivity of local sport policy, a clear connection is needed between policy objectives, on one hand, and policy activities and the mix of available resources on the other. This calls for a critical look at the funding of local sport policy. LSMs confirmed

that currently most money is tied up in sport facilities, and that they therefore had little freedom to initiate new activities. Moreover, as noted, much is still unknown about the long-term outcomes of outsourcing sport facility operation, for example, to private companies and VSCs (see section 1.8.2). Outsourcing may not in fact prove more cost-effective in the long run. Municipalities should also be aware of other potential negative effects. For example, outsourcing facilities management to VSCs could put them under added pressure, apart from the pressure to contribute to the socially-oriented goals of sport policy (see chapter 2). VSCs exist, in the first place, to pursue their own objectives, and not the objectives of state or market actors, and furthermore community empowerment is easier said than done (Civil Exchange, 2015). Because not all VSCs will prove able to take over the operation of sport facilities, a customized approach is recommended to successfully reduce sport facility expenditures.

To conclude, this research has demonstrated the potential of the socio-ecological approach for the study of local sport policy. This multilevel approach helped us to understand the development, functioning and significance of local sport policy. This research highlighted the influence of different environmental systems on the behaviour of individuals. The findings suggest that LSMs would be well advised to employ mainly policy programmes aimed at specific target groups and which utilize the different environmental systems to maximize the potential influence on individuals. This multilevel approach is commonly used, with success, in health interventions (Stokols, 1996). An example of such an approach in the Netherlands is the Healthy Weight for the Youth programme ('Jongeren Op Gezond Gewicht', or JOGG), which has produced promising results. This multilevel approach could be applied for sport promotion programmes as well. Indeed, as this research found, an emphasis on the youth at different policy levels (local and national) has been effective in increasing youth participation in VSCs. In addition, it remains important to keep the excellent local sport infrastructure (including hardware, orgware and software) attuned to the changing needs of the population.

Chapter 2

From welfare state to participation society: Austerity measures and local sport policy

ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether the shift from welfare state to participation society in the context of austerity in the Netherlands has had consequences for local sport policy. The central research questions are (1) do municipal sport budgets show evidence of a move away from classical welfare state values towards a participation society? and (2) do changes in local sport policy suggest a move away from classical welfare state values towards a participation society? First, we analysed spending on sport across all Dutch municipalities. Second, we quantitatively and qualitatively analysed 104 municipal coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 governing period. The approach used was interpretive, focusing on dominant or hegemonic discourses or storylines within local sport policy. It shows that local sport policy in the Netherlands still hinges strongly on welfare state values and has not yet been hit by serious austerity measures. We found no evidence of a neoliberal slant or an emphasis on free-market and private entrepreneurship. Rather, the accent is on an expanded role for voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) in operating sport facilities and as policy implementer. We conclude that the shift in narrative from classical welfare state to participation society has, as yet, had limited effect on local sport policy.

Keywords: economic crisis; neoliberalism; sport policy; voluntary sport clubs; sport facilities

A slightly different version of this chapter has been published in International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (Hoekman, Van der Roest & Van der Poel, 2018). A previous draft of this chapter has been presented at the European Association for Sport Management congress in Warsaw, Poland, September 2016.

2.1 Introduction

Similar to the United Kingdom's 'Big Society', which offers a distinctive narrative to legitimate cuts in public services (Bach, 2012), the Netherlands has introduced the idea of the 'participation society' to frame the impetus for its austerity measures. The king, speaking for the Dutch government, invoked the term in his first annual address:

> Undeniably, people in our modern network and information society are more outspoken and independent than in the past. Combined with the need to reduce the government deficit, this leads to a gradual change from the classical welfare state to a *participation society*. Everyone who is able, is asked to take responsibility for their own life and environment (Rijksoverheid, 2013, emphasis added).

We define austerity, following Blyth (2013), as a form of voluntary deflation set to adjust an economy to restore competitiveness. This is done by cutting state budgets, debts and deficits, among other means. Austerity, however, entails more than just cutbacks in public service provision. Austerity measures involve wider 'executive and managerial responses, aimed at restoring the fiscal balance, against the background of increasing demands for public services and political and public expectations of organizational performance' (Overmans & Noordegraaf, 2014, p. 101). From this description it is clear that austerity programmes also seek to reshape the organisations associated with public service provision.

To illustrate, austerity measures in the Netherlands have entailed a wide range of efficiency and structural changes in the way services are provided to citizens (Leisink et al., 2013). Particularly, responsibilities have been moved from national to local-level authorities, with greater emphasis on engaging civil society and shrinking the role of the state.

From a socio-ecological perspective, austerity-induced changes in the Dutch political and policy environment seem likely to have consequences for local sport policy and sport budgets. One would expect the shifting discursive context - from welfare state to participation society - to have influenced municipal spending on sport and the dominant 'storyline' (Fischer, 2003) or discourse in local sport policy.

Thus, for starters, we expect austerity measures to have led to reduced municipal sport budgets. Földesi (2014, p. 22) called the prolonged recession that affected Europe between 2009 and 2013 'the worst one experienced

since the Great Depression'. Speaking of grassroots sports, he concluded that 'considerably less money has been spent on this area than previously seen, and the investment in sport infrastructure has been dramatically reduced' (Földesi, 2014, p. 29). An analyses of Dutch municipal coalition agreements for the 2010-2014 governing period drew a similar conclusion (Hoekman & Gijsbers, 2010). These coalition agreements, which set policy plans for the upcoming governing period, indicated that local governments intended to cut spending on sport. A range of austerity measures was presented, including raising user fees for sport facilities, privatising sport facilities, closing facilities and postponing new builds and renovations of older facilities.

Furthermore, we expect national politics to influence local policies (Green & Collins, 2008). As such, the altered discursive context - from welfare state to participation society - will likely have influenced the dominant 'storyline' or discourse in local sport policy. Indeed, a crisis is not seldom presented as a critical juncture that opens up an opportunity if not a necessity for radical welfare state reform (Vis, Van Kersbergen & Hylands, 2011). The previous economic crisis, in the 1980s, triggered deregulation, privatisation and withdrawal of the state from social services. At that time, these measures were presented as more or less unavoidable adjustments to a technologically advanced and globalised economy. This framing effectively problematises 'legitimate aspects of public service provision for both the nation as a whole as well as for individuals' (Adams, 2011, p. 24).

Clarke (2004) linked the problematisation of public goods and dissolution of the welfare state to neoliberal tendencies. Neoliberalism is 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within a framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). In the 1980s, neoliberal tendencies led to policies of deregulation and privatisation in the sphere of social welfare in the Netherlands and in other European countries (Bramham, Henry, Mommaas & Van der Poel, 1993). This effected a move away from centralist and bureaucratic service delivery toward consumer-oriented approaches to service provision with a more prominent role for market forces (Fenwick & Bailey, 1998; Gaster, 1991). A wave of privatisation of sport facilities in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2009) was an expression of this.

It is possible that a new move away from public provision may now be under way, with local governments implementing a new wave of privatisation efforts favouring more business-like approaches to providing sport facilities (Kuhry & Jonker, 2006). The tendency toward rolling back the local state and allowing more space for privatisation might in fact be more powerful this time around,

because people and politicians are more used to the idea than they were in the 1980s. In this same vein, the expansion of the EU single market creates a legal obligation for all EU member states to reconsider their existing subsidy policies. Neoliberal ideology, however, could be exhausted in the current day and age. The impacts of the recent recession have already been snatched upon by governments to further reshape public services. The United Kingdom did so utilising the 'Big Society' narrative (Bach, 2012), which recognises the limitations of the earlier neoliberal-derived emphasis on free markets and private entrepreneurship. 'Big Society' denotes a wider perspective, signalling the government's ambition to shrink the state while increasing the role of civil society. Central in this is an emphasis on volunteering as a user-centred and cost-effective way to maintain public services in times of economic hardship (Bach, 2012).

The Dutch government, by invoking the idea of a 'participation society', has also chosen such a wider perspective. It has called on its citizens to volunteer and take greater responsibility for themselves and their surroundings. The recent decentralisation of youth services and health care to the municipal level of government (Leisink et al., 2013) is an example of the Dutch ideal of bringing policy closer to the people, for more user-centred and cost-effective services. Moreover, because municipalities supposedly know the local situation best and are best placed to develop and implement integral policy measures, they, together with local civil society, are deemed able to provide tailored services more cheaply, which has legitimised severe budget cuts. We expect this new policy environment and the new participation-centred discourse to have consequences for the vocabulary used to present local sport policy. This could be evident as a revival of neoliberal free-market terminology. Or, in line with the participation society discourse, it could take the form of greater expectations for the role of voluntary sport clubs (VSCs).

Our analyses investigated whether a shift from welfare state to participation society is indeed evident in local sport policy. We focused on the development of local sport budgets as an indicator of austerity within local sport policy. Furthermore, we examined local sport policy using an interpretive approach, focusing on dominant or hegemonic discourses or storylines, related to aspects of the welfare state, neoliberalism or a participation society (see e.g. Green, 2006). In particular, we sought indications of a policy shift away from the welfare state.

This brings us to this study's central research questions: (1) Do municipal sport budgets show evidence of a move away from classical welfare state values towards the idea of a participation society? (2) Do changes in local sport policy suggest a move away from classical welfare state values toward the idea of a participation society? Answers to these questions will shed light on the position

of sport, particularly local sport policy, in relation to the purported shift away from the welfare state to a participation society, framed in part as a result of necessary austerity measures.

2.2 Methods

To answer our research questions, we carried out a mixed-methods study with quantitative and qualitative research stages (Bryman, 2006). The research was divided into two studies, with the second study made up of two research stages. The overall study can thus be understood as QUAN - quan → QUAL (cf. Morse 1991). In the first study, we examined all municipal budgets in the Netherlands over the 2010-2015 period to identify whether municipal spending on sport has indeed decreased, as claimed by Földesi (2014). In the second study, we analysed a selection of 104 municipal coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 governing period to identify policy changes and ambitions of the local authorities. This exercise used a technique similar to that in Hoekman and Gijsbers (2010), to allow comparisons. The sections below discuss the research procedure in detail.

2.2.1 Study one

To track sport spending, both absolute and in relation to overall municipal budgets, we analysed financial data from all municipalities in the Netherlands during the 2010-2015 period. Municipalities are obliged to register their financial statements in accordance with a Dutch reporting standard called IV3 models. This information is collected by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, n.d.) and was made available for the purpose of this study. Within these IV3 models, sport income and expenditures are registered as budget items 530 'sport' and 531 'outdoor sport facilities'. Budget item 531 covers outdoor sports facilities. Budget item 530 covers indoor sport facilities plus activities to stimulate sport and other sport policy. We merged these two budget items and calculated the net expenditures per year for each municipality to obtain an overview of the sport expenditures of Dutch municipalities during 2010-2014. We related this net expenditure to total municipal expenditures in a given year and to total municipal expenditures within the leisure domain. This provided a broader perspective on sport expenditure. To ascertain the current situation as well as a future perspective we also examined estimated expenses for 2015.

2.2.2 Study two

Sampling procedure
The second study consisted of quantitative and qualitative research stages, in line with the procedure in Hoekman and Gijsbers (2010). We selected 104

municipalities for this analysis. First, we included the Netherlands' four largest cities. We then used stratified sampling to select an additional 100 municipalities by number of inhabitants and region. The selected municipalities represent 48% of the Dutch population and 26% of all municipalities in the Netherlands in 2014.

The coalition agreements of the selected municipalities were collected in May 2014. These agreements set out the political strategy formulated by the municipal executive board, made up of the mayor and aldermen. These documents establish the policy plans for the various policy areas for the coming 4 years. Though municipal sport policy may be described in these documents, it is not one of the key elements.

Quantitative stage

After collecting the coalition agreements, we analysed the content of all the documents using an electronic keyword search strategy. Because we first wanted to determine the importance of sport in the coalition agreements we included many terms that could indicate references to sport. We gave special attention to sport facilities, due to their importance in municipalities both financially and content-wise, and to topics that could relate to neoliberal tendencies (e.g. privatisation) and a participation society (e.g. VSCs). A wide range of words was included in the search because little consistency was found in the formulation of policies by the individual municipalities. For example, policies on public playgrounds were found to use either the Dutch word *speelpleinen* or the English term 'playgrounds'. Incorporating all keywords that could be associated with sport policies enabled us to find the sections referring to sport in the documents. Table 2.1 presents an overview of the keywords used.

Qualitative stage

After the quantitative content analysis, we qualitatively analysed all documents. To this end, we looked at the context in which the keywords appeared. We started by reading the texts around these keywords and coding text segments referencing aspects of the welfare state, neoliberal tendencies, participation society and austerity measures. This content analysis served to identify central discourses or storylines in local sport policy indicative of either a shift away from welfare state toward a participation society or impending austerity measures. We also identified implications for the local sport sector.

Table 2.1. Search terms used in quantitative document analysis, translated from Dutch

Sport club; sport facility; sport supply; sport organisation; sport events; sport promotion; sport firm; sport participation; sport for disabled persons
Playgrounds; Cruyff Courts
Names of ten most practised sports in the Netherlands
Swimming; swimming pool; school swimming
Elite sport; elite sport events; professional football; professional football club; stadium; city marketing
Movement; active lifestyle; national norm healthy movement; overweight
Olympic Plan; OP2028; centre for elite sport and education; regional training centre; national training centre; open club
Neighbourhood, education and sport; grassroots sport impulse; national action plan sport and movement; sport and movement in the neighbourhood; safe sporting environment
Dual career; Neighbourhood Sport Coach; neighbourhood scan
Sport teacher; physical education; sport-active school, school sport
Rates; subsidies
Mode of exploitation; privatisation
Multifunctional sport facility; clustering
Sustainable; self-help; cooperation; to cooperate
Volunteers; citizen's initiative; participation
Austerity; Youth Sport Fund
Demographic shrinkage
Market and Government Act

Capitalized search terms are names of policy programmes or sport-related policy terms

2.3 Context: The role of local authorities in a contested welfare state

In the Netherlands, local authorities or municipalities (404 in 2015) are the main governmental investors in sport. They contributed 93% of public spending for sport in 2012 (CBS Statline, 2015). The greatest portion, some 85%, of municipal sport budgets goes to fund sport facilities' construction and operation (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). Local sport policy is centred on facilitating sport. Continuation of existing facilities and provision of new accommodations is highly demand-led. The strong growth in sport facilities in the 1960s and 1970s and their stabilisation in the 1980s reflects demographic and economic developments, as well as the needs of the educational system. Currently, the Netherlands has a dense sport infrastructure (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2016). The Dutch population is generally highly satisfied with the availability of facilities for sport (European Commission, 2014).

Unlike in many other countries, the Dutch government's involvement in sport is not restricted or guided by a specific law (Hallmann & Petry, 2013; Ibsen &

Seippel, 2010). While the national government encourages active participation in sports, it considers organisation of sport a matter for 'private' and 'local' initiatives. Sport policy is delegated to the municipal level and paid for from municipal budgets at the municipalities' discretion. However, as municipalities are under no legal obligation to provide sport facilities, and as sport is a leisure pastime, we may wonder whether municipalities uphold their investments in sports in times of austerity.

To understand the role of local authorities in the Dutch sport system, it is useful to place their activities into context. As Houlihan (2005, p. 176) notes, 'to understand the development of sport policy and its current salience it is important to appreciate the environment in which it emerged and continues to operate'. The widest perspective in this regard is that of the EU, with its expanding neoliberal 'single market'. This is followed by the national government, which recently decentralised many tasks in public service provision, and then local organisations, which provide for a mixed economy of sport provision.

The single EU market is more than just a new common or scaled-up version of the previously existing national markets. It is a much more 'free' market than these national markets. National policies, by extension, may be considered almost a form of 'false' competition by the state, allowed only under certain conditions. This conception of an unfettered free market has begun to influence existing market regulation. In 2014, the Netherlands translated the EU regulations on competition into the Market and Government Act. For local sport policy, this means that subsidising sport facilities - so that they can be rented out to VSCs below the cost price - is no longer allowed, as this creates false state competition for private entrepreneurs. For the time being, there is an escape route: the municipal council declares a particular service, such as sports, a 'service in the general economic interest'. So far nearly all Dutch municipalities have used this pathway to continue subsidising sport facilities (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2016).

From the perspective of the national government it is relevant to point out that the Netherlands is by origin a welfare state, though the country now displays aspects of corporatism and social democracy. Esping-Andersen (1990) therefore labelled it a hybrid welfare state (cf. Van Oorschot, 2006). The Dutch welfare state has traditionally had paternalist features, with the strong and fortunate expected to care for the weak and disadvantaged (Vis, Van Kersbergen & Becker, 2008). Indeed, the literal translation of the Dutch word for 'welfare state' is 'caring state' (*verzorgingsstaat*). However, while once considered an ideal worthy of pursuit, the welfare state is now contested, in part due to financial difficulties in upholding public services. This has led to implementation of an array of efficiency and structural changes in the way services are provided

to citizens (Leisink et al., 2013). A major recent development is the earlier-mentioned shift of responsibilities from national to local authorities.
Locally, municipalities are part of a diverse sport provision landscape. Sport facilities are built and operated by private companies, foundations, clubs and local authorities, including mixed forms. Private companies, for example, may run swimming pools with a fixed subsidy from local government. The government, both local and national, plays a minimal role in provision of sport activities (Van der Werff, Hoekman & Van Kalmthout, 2015; Hallmann & Petry, 2013). VSCs have long been a fixture in the Dutch sport landscape. Some 27,500 VSCs organise sport activities (Van der Werff et al. 2015). They either operate their own facilities (e.g. for tennis, golf, watersports, equestrian pursuits, shooting and bowling) or rent accommodations from private owners (ibid.) or local authorities (e.g. for indoor sports, swimming, soccer and athletics). In cases where local authorities are involved, the fees paid by VSCs are typically below market rates.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Municipal spending on sport, 2010-2015

Municipal spending on sport showed an upward trend prior to 2010 (CBS Statline, 2015). However, considering the economic crisis that began in 2008 there is reason to believe that from 2010 onwards, less funding was available (Hoekman & Gijsbers, 2010). Table 2.2 shows expenditures on sport. The table first presents the absolute amounts spent by municipalities. The second column presents an index of spending in relation to the first year of measurement, which is 2010. The initial figures are related to total municipal expenditures in the third and fifth column.

From this table, it is clear that, in absolute terms and contrary to our expectation, spending on sport has been relatively stable - even though total spending by municipalities decreased by 12% during this period. This overall budget shrinkage led to an increased share of sport spending in the total municipal budgets in the 2010-2014 period, from 2.6% to 2.8%. Taking inflation into account, however, reveals a somewhat hidden reduction in sport spending, especially in the last 2 years (fourth column). Sport spending underwent a 3.0% decrease in purchasing power between 2010 and 2014. Nonetheless, this is less than the intended cutbacks on sport that were noted in the coalition agreements for 2010-2014. Recall that these referred to austerity measures including raising user fees for sport facilities, privatisation and closing sport facilities.

Table 2.2. Net expenditures on sport in the Netherlands, indices and share of sport expenses in total budget, average of 404 Dutch municipalities, 2010-2015.

	Net expenditures (x million euro)	Index sport	Index total budget	Index sport, including inflation	Share of sport in budget (%)
2010	1141	100	100	100	2.6
2011	1149	101	98	98	2.6
2012	1165	102	98	97	2.7
2013	1190	104	93	97	2.8
2014	1195	105	88	97	2.8
2014 (Estimated)	1154	101	86	93	2.8
2015 (Estimated)	1156	101	93	92*	2.4

* The expected inflation in 2015 is 1%.

The last two rows in the table present estimated budgets. In 2014, actual expenditures were higher than budgeted. This could again be the case in 2015. Or, the new coalition period could serve as the starting point for severe cutbacks in sport budgets. To determine whether this is to be expected, we now shift our attention to the coalition agreements for the 2014-2018 governing period.

2.4.2 Sport policy and austerity measures

Previously, Hoekman and Gijsbers (2010) found that sport, though not a key topic as there is no legal obligation to fund sport, is a significant item in most municipal policy programmes. Our analysis of the 2014-2018 coalition agreements reiterates this conclusion. Almost all municipalities (91%) devoted attention to sport in their 2014-2018 policy programmes (compared to the 89% found in the 2010 study). Similar to findings from the earlier study, almost two-thirds of municipalities devoted an entire section of their document explicitly to sport policy. There seems to be a relation between a municipality's size and the likelihood that it will pay attention to sport (table 2.3). This is not surprising, as larger municipalities also have more comprehensive coalition agreements, which leaves more space for coverage of sport. Still, sport receives considerable attention even in small municipalities' coalition agreements.

Table 2.3. Significance of sport in municipal coalition agreements.

Size of municipality (inhabitants)	Small (<25,000)	Medium (25,000-70,000)	Large (70,000-250,000)	Major cities (>250,000)	Total
Separate section on sport in coalition agreement	54	61	67	100	63
Sport mentioned in coalition agreement	75	94	100	100	91
N	24	49	27	4	104

Sport facilities are by far the most important sport-related topic in the municipal policy programmes (table 2.4). Some 79% of the municipalities mentioned 'sport facilities' in their document, comparable to the finding from the 2010 study (77%). This is attributable to the large share of sport budgets that goes to fund sport facilities. VSCs were also frequently mentioned. Some 64% of the policy documents used this term. This is a considerable increase compared to the 57% found in the 2010 analysis and might indicate a move towards a participation society.

Table 2.4. Top 10 most mentioned sport-related terms in municipal coalition agreements.

	%	*N*
Sport facilities	79	313
Voluntary sport clubs	64	209
Movement	29	57
Swimming pool	27	51
Cooperation	26	40
Sport promotion	24	34
Mode of exploitation	23	32
Youth Sport Fund	21	24
Sport for disabled persons	19	23
Neighbourhood Sport Coach	17	25

Compared to the 2010-2014 coalition agreements there was a remarkable rise in terms related to austerity measures and privatisation. The 3 newcomers in the keywords top 10 were all somehow related to austerity. First, 26% of municipalities mentioned 'cooperation' in their policy programme. This might indicate pursuit of economies of scale or partnership with civil society (e.g. VSCs) to maintain sport facilities. Second, 'mode of operation' was mentioned by 23% of the municipalities, signalling a quest for more efficient ways to run facilities, including through privatisation and outsourcing responsibilities to

VSCs. Finally, 'Youth Sport Fund' appeared in 21% of the municipal programmes. Youth Sport Fund is an organisation that pays membership fees and sometimes provides sporting equipment for children and young people from lower income families. Municipal policymakers therefore seem to be paying greater attention to accessibility of sport to lower income youths. The ideas expressed with these austerity-related terms will become more clear in the discussion of the qualitative research stage, in which actual passages in the coalition agreements were examined.

2.4.3 Three challenges for municipalities

This section fleshes out the policy changes and arguments municipalities use to underpin shifts in sport policy and budgets. Three main challenges regarding sport policy were found in the municipal coalition agreements: more efficient use and operation of sport facilities, a larger role for sport clubs and a need to create financial safety nets to maintain sport accessibility for all. For each of these a related discourse and storyline could be traced.

More efficient use of facilities

As mentioned, the Netherlands has a very dense sport infrastructure. Hence, many municipalities, particularly in regions with a shrinking population, argue the necessity and feasibility of making more efficient use of sport facilities. In particular, centralisation and clustering are proposed for making optimum use and raising the 'social return' of the remaining facilities:

> Because of demographic changes, the lower number of youths and the aging of the population, we are going to centralise the sport facilities. (midsized municipality)

Some policy programmes explicitly mention closure of facilities. Many propose mergers between facilities as the best option for keeping sport facilities available and affordable. This is often framed as a response to changing demands, as demographic changes and the reduced youth population are said to necessitate changes in supply. Some municipalities, though unsure of what to do with the facilities they have, are hesitant to suggest clustering. They just pose the questions they are facing:

> What facilities can be sustainably maintained and what facilities would be better concentrated in the larger villages? What other functions and activities can the facilities accommodate? (small municipality)

In the larger municipalities and major cities, the discussion is somewhat different. They do not face a shrinking population. City populations are growing.

But municipal finances are overstretched, so they have to be prudent about what facilities they continue to support. Sport facilities with low occupancy or in need of renovation are being re-evaluated, particularly in areas where land is costly. In some cases centralisation of facilities can yield both cost savings and direct income from land sales.

Many municipal programmes present the more efficient use of facilities as the only 'realistic' or pragmatic course. After all, who could oppose a more efficient use of ever-scarce tax monies? Some municipal programmes present the option of privatisation and a rolled back government role in a similar way, arguing that this will help keep sport affordable for municipalities. A midsized municipality formulated this as follows:

> Regarding sports the muicipality's role should be re-examined: from administrator to director. Savings could be generated with a smarter organisation of the operation of facilities and by opting for a reduced role of the municipality. Some of those savings can be used to keep sport accessible to all. (midsized municipality)

Thus, across the board, increased efficiency in sport facility operation is argued for, framed as a means of keeping sport available and affordable. Most municipalities do warn that cutbacks in sport funding will be required in the near future. However, these are, in most cases, presented as a 'logical' consequence of reductions in total local government funds. Few suggestions could be found for an ideological conviction that local government should relinquish its role in providing local sport facilities to the private sector. Hence, this challenge is cast, in most cases, as a pragmatic one.

A bigger role for VSCs

Municipal policy programmes call for a larger role for VSCs and volunteers. The coalition agreements contain language actively encouraging VSCs to take more responsibility for the maintenance of the facilities they use. VSCs are expected to become more financially independent as well. In one large municipality, this is directly related to the cutbacks that need to be made:

> In the coming years, the finances will further be re-evaluated. Providing facilities to VSCs for a too-low rent can no longer be maintained. We expect VSCs to become more and more independent. (large municipality)

In some cases, the road to more independence seems to lead to a process of privatisation or at least a first careful step in that direction. One small municipality put this as follows:

> The new coalition wants to promote the VSCs' independence with regard to maintenance activities and examine options for further privatisation of sport facilities [to VSCs]. (small municipality)

To avoid rising membership fees, VSCs are being asked to make greater use of volunteers to reduce costs such as maintenance and to raise income by organising more paid activities. Some municipalities suggest that VSCs could or should cooperate with other VSCs to save money. The idea here is that sport facilities can be used more efficiently if VSCs work together. VSCs were sometimes even directed towards mergers:

> The [municipal] executive board promotes cooperation between VSCs and we support VSCs that want to merge. (small municipality)

As with the efficiency challenge, this challenge is presented as a 'logical' consequence of the 'necessity' of adjusting sport budgets to the financial limitations the local authorities are confronted with. Interestingly, 'privatisation' in this context does not refer to a transfer of responsibilities, tasks and facilities to private enterprises, but to VSCs as volunteer organisations. The apparent hope is that if volunteers take over tasks from the municipality membership fees will not be affected. When privatisation does mean a shift into the hands of a private enterprise, it is often presented as a means to make facilities 'cheaper'. The assumption here is that the commercial sector can somehow operate facilities more cost-effectively than the public sector can.

The subtext, again, reads as a pragmatic argument. Who could oppose to the idea of transferring facilities to the commercial sector, if the commercial sector can run them at lower cost than the municipality? Privatisation to VSCs is also in line with the notion of a participation society. Civil society is incorporated into the policy, and the focus on volunteering makes it possible for the state to take a step back.

Creation of financial safety nets to maintain accessibility

Municipalities still attach great value to the accessibility of sport. Thus, local policymakers still consider it their responsibility to provide access to sport for all and not rely entirely on the participation society. Especially in relation to the youth, municipalities emphasise that austerity measures should not compromise the ability of the less advantaged to participate in sport. The solution proposed in the municipal policy programmes is creation of 'safety nets'. Most municipalities reserve funds to sponsor membership fees for low-income youths:

> If further austerity measures turn out to be needed, that should not lead to reduced sport participation among the youth. That means a safety net has to be created for those who cannot afford the membership fees. (midsized municipality)

Many coalition agreements refer to the Youth Sport Fund, which pay for membership fees and sometimes also equipment for those who cannot afford it (Jeugdsportfonds, 2014). A bigger role for this fund is desirable, according to some municipalities:

> The Youth Sport Fund should be promoted as a way to make sport accessible and affordable for children. (large municipality)

Youth sports in general is a reoccurring topic in the policy programmes, but there is also considerable attention for lower socio-economic status groups and sport for the disabled. The increased attention for these groups suggests a 'welfarist' reflex in local sport policy. If and when cutbacks lead to higher membership fees, this is acceptable only insofar that sport accessibility is not compromised. Sport, apparently, is still seen as an activity that everybody should (be able to) participate in, as it fosters social cohesion, personal well-being and health while playing a role in countering the obesity epidemic. Because the largest benefits in these respects can be gained by disadvantaged groups, a safety net is considered essential. Explicitly or implicitly, most local governments still seem to consider sport as a merit good and as having positive external effects, and not simply as a service traded on the market and needing no government support.

2.5 Discussion

The introduction of this paper suggested that local sport policy might have been influenced by the move away from classical welfare state values to the idea of a participation society. We expected (1) sober local sport policy with declining municipal expenditures on sport and (2) a discourse within local sport policy indicative of a revival of neoliberalism or the notion of a participation society.

Regarding the first expectation, we found that municipal expenditures on sport remained stable from 2010 to 2014. Only when we factor in inflation is a slight (3.0%) decrease in purchasing power evident. Yet, this cannot be considered a 'dramatic reduction' (Földesi, 2014) and in fact contradicts the plans and expectations formulated in the municipal coalition agreements for the 2010-2014 governing period (Hoekman & Gijsbers, 2010). We did find evidence of

austerity in the general municipal budget, as local budgets did decrease over time while populations grew. Outlays on sport as a proportion of total local budgets therefore rose slightly, from 2.6% in 2010 to 2.8% in 2014. This provides a strong indication that grassroots sport has been relatively immune, thus far, to both the economic crisis and to neoliberal politics trying to slim down the welfare state.

However, budget cuts could merely be delayed, as estimated budgets for 2015 do indicate severe cuts. Public opinion is an important factor in shaping the timing, extent and pace of social spending cuts. For this and other political or institutional reasons there seems to be a considerable gap between intentions and achievements (Vis et al., 2011). Or perhaps the intended budget cuts require more time than anticipated to realise. This suggestion is strengthened by the difference between the estimated budget for 2014 and actual spending in that year. Budget cuts were intended, but not carried through. In the end, the local government evidently allocated more money to sport than originally planned. Apparently, then, the value of sport is acknowledged at the local level and local forces are active in influencing politics with regard to sport.

Concerning the second expectation that the move towards a participation society has likely impacted the discourse in local sports policy, we argued that local sport policy can be seen as a stronghold of the welfare state. The challenges that municipal coalition agreements identify are best read as arguments for sober sport policy that engages civil society but is still hinged on the principles of the welfare state. Local governments still aim to keep sport accessible to all, especially those in need. They also take their responsibility in achieving this seriously, emphasising the role of the 'caring state'. Hence, the austerity measures described in the coalition agreements can best be understood as an expression of the Calvinistic culture of frugality with public monies, rather than a neoliberal slant. Sober local sport policies with a larger role for VSCs is a way to enable this. The expanded role for VSCs is in line with the participation society narrative. It also links with developments in the United Kingdom, where VSCs are being stimulated to participate in civic programmes related to health, education, social cohesion and employment (Houlihan & Green, 2009).

The 'participation society' spoken of by the Dutch government is like a VSC writ large: volunteers and not civil servants organise sport activities and run competitions, keep the clubs alive and to a large extent maintain and operate sport facilities. The participation society notion presents VSCs as a user-centred and cost-effective vehicle for delivering public services in tough times, in line with elements of the Big Society in the United Kingdom (Bach, 2012). However, the expanded social role of VSCs foreseen by local governments might be difficult for these organisations to fulfil (cf. Waardenburg, 2016) and has not

been received uncritically (see e.g. Bach, 2012). Indeed, in the United Kingdom the Big Society has been judged a failure, unable to deliver on its original goals and ineffective in reaching those most in need (Civil Exchange, 2015). Why then should the participation society in the Netherlands be more successful?

The increased efficiency (and effectiveness) that municipalities seek would require VSCs to adopt a more business-like approach, capitalising on the values of independence, autonomy, self-motivation and initiative that are assumed to be key in VSC management (cf. Nagel et al., 2015). Yet, already, multiple studies have questioned the realism of VSCs as policy implementers (Harris et al., 2009; Skille, 2008). An expansion of VSCs' tasks as part of a move toward a participation society might therefore be less straightforward than foreseen within the coalition agreements.

Returning to the concept of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005), we could conclude that the cutbacks articulated in the coalition agreements point to a neoliberal slant (e.g. privatisation). However, the references do not suggest reliance on the free-market or the private sector. Taking references to privatisation as an illustration, the coalition agreements refer to VSCs not private entrepreneurs as the new owners of sport facilities. Furthermore, the signs of neoliberalism read as a call for more value for money spent and wise allocation of tax payers' money. While this is in line with the sober sport policy presented in the municipal policy programmes, we found no evidence of neoliberal assertions that the private sector is invariably good and the government is a 'necessary evil' (cf. Houlihan & Green, 2009).

The absence of neoliberalism is further emphasised by the welfarist focus on the accessibility of sport. Municipalities argue that, when unavoidable, austerity measures must not affect the accessibility of sport and sport facilities. This is a good example of hybrid welfare state principles (Van Oorschot, 2006) and the felt responsibility of municipalities to contribute to the notion of sport for all and provide for the weak and disadvantaged ('caring state'). The coalition agreements emphasise the need for safety nets for those unable to pay for sport participation. Austerity measures generally do cause a greater segment of the population to fall into poverty, due to unemployment and cuts in government budgets.

Municipalities expect a rather narrow neoliberal focus would promote inequality, as shown in previous studies in other countries (e.g. Ostry, Loungani & Furceri, 2016). Evaluations of the Big Society in the United Kingdom also concluded that it was too difficult to mobilise the private sector for the common good (Civil Exchange, 2015). Furthermore, from a participation society perspective, civil initiatives are understood as more likely to come from higher socio-economic

groups than from lower socio-economic groups (Bakker, Denters & Klok, 2011). Hence, local governments still feel the need to provide for lower socio-economic groups and continue governmental support for them to participate in sport. This is emphasised by the fact that virtually all local governments in the Netherlands have declared sports a 'service in the general economic interest', enabling them to opt out of the Market and Government Act for sport facilities (Hoekman & Van der Poel, 2016). In the Netherlands, as in other countries, maintaining access to sport is a central element of sport policy (Nicholson, Hoye & Houlihan, 2011). This points to a classical welfare state regime rather than a neoliberal regime, in which sports are nothing more than a pastime that the market can cater for (Harvey, 2005).

It is also notable that the coalition agreements position sport as an instrument to reach goals in other policy areas, such as health and social welfare. Under this merit good agenda (Liu, Taylor & Shibli, 2009), increased involvement is seen as socially desirable above and beyond any private benefit derived. A wider role of sport is generally acknowledged in sport policy, although it is debated whether sport can live up to this role (Coalter, 2007). This social value of sport is what justifies public investment in sport, especially inclusion of disadvantaged groups which the market does not necessarily cater for and which are less likely to organise themselves and contribute to the participation society (cf. Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2011). This might explain why sport has been relatively immune to the recent economic crisis, in fact registering increasing budgets relatively speaking. Other departments see sport as an valuable policy partner, given its instrumental merit. Furthermore, the fact that many tasks are performed by VSC volunteers instead of professionals makes sport a cost-effective partner for these other policy areas.

This also raises a danger: sport policy is vulnerable to policy spillovers (Houlihan, 2012) from other departments faced with cuts and decentralisation of tasks. Sport could as a result become more utilised or manipulated (Houlihan, 2000) by other policy sectors to achieve their goals (e.g., related to health and youth welfare). Indeed, municipal sport policy in the Netherlands is nowadays more about promoting health and social inclusion than about the benefits of sport participation itself (Hoekman & Van der Maat, 2017).

The strong focus on broader social welfare in local sport policy suggests that the welfare state is alive and well. Or perhaps, all along, sport is better seen as a vital element of the 'participation society'. In that sense, the participation society may be less a matter of replacing the welfare state, but of re-emphasising the traditional role of the third, voluntary, sector, alongside the state and the market. At the same time, sport continues to have a highly positive profile, for the independent voluntary contribution it makes to public and commercial

values such as health, city promotion, social cohesion and innovation. This could explain why developments in sport facility provision seem more affected by demographic and educational developments and changes in sport preferences than by shifts in the political landscape. This could, in turn, help explain the differences in the impact of the economic crisis on sport across Europe, in line with the various funding models and differences in national conceptions of the positive external effects of sport (Eurostrategies, 2011).

With regard to the differences in the impact of the economic crisis on sport across Europe, it is important to acknowledge that the Netherlands is often presented as an outlier in comparative studies (see e.g. Hoekman, Van der Werff, Nagel & Breuer, 2015; Scheerder, Willem & Claes, 2017). This is related to the 'social configuration' of the Dutch sport policy system, with its strong sport sector and numerous VSCs playing a relatively large role in local policy. For the Netherlands, welfare pluralism (Chaney & Wincott, 2014) seems to be an appropriate term to describe the framework for local sport policy. This conveys a strong focus on the common good of sport and the instrumental value of sport, alongside reliance on a participation society to maximise local involvement in sport and its social value.

To summarise, local sport policy in the Netherlands is still strongly hinged on the 'caring state'. Local sport budgets have so far been relatively immune to the economic crisis, seemingly due to the merit good agenda of sport. Nevertheless, sober sport policies are being promoted, however, maintaining accessibility of sport for all. There is no neoliberal slant favouring reliance on a free-market and private entrepreneurship. Rather, local government in the Netherlands tends towards a participation society with VSCs expected to play a wider role in the operation of sport facilities and as policy implementer in the future. Still, we conclude that the shift from classical welfare state to participation society has had limited consequences for local sport policy. Sport and VSCs, remain, as they have long been, a vital fixture in the local sport landscape and policy-making.

2.6 Implications

The sober sport policy promoted by municipalities has two primary implications. First, the planned austerity measures and call for more a business-like approach to sport provision put added pressure on VSCs. This may result in a mismatch between municipal policy and VSCs' own ambitions and abilities. Not all VSCs and volunteers (cf. Harris et al., 2009) are up to taking on more responsibilities and becoming a policy implementer. Some VSCs might simply lack the organisational

capacity for these roles (cf. Misener & Doherty, 2009). Previous research in the Netherlands found that few VSCs were entirely comfortable with their changing position in policy and society (Van der Werff et al., 2015). Furthermore, the autonomy of the voluntary sector could be undermined by conditions attached to public financial support and the need for public accountability (Harris & Rochester, 2001; Harris et al., 2009).

In considering the role of VSCs in delivering on policy objectives, respect for their diversity and autonomy must be maintained. While top-down incentives, such as subsidies from local government, can support and trigger VSC initiatives (Skille, 2009), the value of autonomy should not be underestimated. Nagel et al. (2015) considers autonomy a key characteristic of sport clubs. Numerous reasons have been given for why involvement of sport clubs in wider social issues could be troublesome (cf. Nichols et al., 2005; Skille, 2008). VSCs exist, in the first place, to pursue their own objectives, and not the objectives of state or market actors. Moreover, conclusions regarding the United Kingdom's Big Society make it crystal clear that community empowerment is easier said than done (Civil Exchange, 2015). It therefore seems useful to first revitalise VSCs' support systems and stimulate them to professionalise their operations before calling on them to expand their tasks and perspectives.

A second implication is that local sport policy increasingly does not stand alone. Sport policy is influenced by the broader environment, from the EU down to the local organisational level. Local governments have thus far been able to avoid the Market and Government Act by using the escape route. But it is questionable how long this escape route will stand, as initial steps have already been taken to close it. Furthermore, from a local perspective we found evidence of policy spillovers from other departments and sport being utilised to pursue goals in other sectors. Of course, there are benefits to this use of sports as a means. But sport policymakers should safeguard promotion of sport for its own sake.

Apart from these implications, the current study points to several avenues for further research. First, future research is needed to determine whether the recently announced austerity measures mark the year 2015 as a decisive turn in local sport spending. In a couple of years we may conclude that there was only a delay in the expected 'dramatic reduction' and that the intentions expressed in the coalition agreements of 2010 and 2014 were achieved in the subsequent period. Moreover, research suggests that a new phase is beginning in which budgetary constraints are forcing political actors to make tough financial choices. This could produce increasingly sharp distributional conflicts (Vis et al., 2011). An example in the United Kingdom is the termination of the free swimming programme (O'Brien, 2013).

Second, research is needed to examine the extent that the plans formulated in the coalition agreements are actually translated into sport policy programmes and affect the day-to-day business of sport provision.

Third, this study raises questions of the importance of municipal sport spending in safeguarding the accessibility of sport and sport participation. Will lower sport expenditures influence sport participation rates? Will safety nets prove able to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged groups? And how important are the sport facilities that take up most of the sport budget to enable sport participation? In this regard, it would be fruitful to determine the extent that municipal sport expenditures and the presence of sport facilities correlate with sport participation rates and inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Finally, on a more theoretical note, future research could examine the 'position' of sport in the welfare state. It seems rather obvious that grassroots sport is a vital element of the welfare state. However, it could be equally argued that grassroots sport is more a vital element of the 'participation society', invoking not a replacement of the welfare state but marking a rising importance of the existing third, voluntary, sector alongside the state and the market.

Chapter 3

Local policy-making in sport: Sport managers' perspectives on work processes and impact

ABSTRACT

In this study we sought a better understanding of the development and functioning of local sport policy, from the perspective of local sport managers (LSMs). Local sport budgets in the Netherlands continue to be allocated mainly to sport facilities (85% of sport budgets), despite increasing interest in the instrumental value of sport, particularly to achieve health and welfare objectives. This seems to produce somewhat of a mismatch between wider policy discourse and local sport policy. We studied LSMs' perspectives on recent changes in sport policy, and how these relate to changes in the environment (from a socio-ecological perspective), alongside LSMs' actual practices, policy values and personal beliefs regarding effective sport policy and social impact. For this purpose we conducted nine semi-structured interviews with LSMs from different municipalities in the Netherlands. This was to illuminate 'the walk' in local sport policy, rather than only 'the talk' (i.e., the line set out in policy documents). We conclude that the day-to-day work of LSMs was indeed influenced by developments in the broader environment (particularly, austerity measures, organizational restructuring and changed national policies and related discourses). However, the focus of LSMs' activities remained on ensuring a good sport facility infrastructure, as a necessary precondition to utilize the instrumental value of sport. The LSMs expressed a belief in the goodness of sport and tried to 'sell' this to other departments. Yet, they exhibited little critical reflection on (preconditions for) effective sport policy and the need for policy monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: sport policy; sport manager; the Netherlands; discourses; impact

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3.1 Introduction

Legitimation of sport policy in the Netherlands has always relied on broader rationales. In the early days, sport was seen as a worthwhile past-time for individuals. The government supplied sport facilities, often with shower amenities, to promote improved hygiene, especially among the working class (Pouw, 1999). In the sixties and seventies in the context of the welfare state, sport participation was positioned as a social right. In the 1980s under neoliberalism the role of the government with regard to sport was reconsidered as part of broader discussions on the core responsibilities of the government. In this period sport participation for all was no longer considered a key policy objective for the Dutch government (Breedveld et al., 2011). From the 1990s, the emphasis of national policy documents shifted to a more functional approach to legitimate continuous involvement in sport. Sport thus came to be viewed as a vehicle for solving problems in other policy domains, such as health, social integration, welfare and liveability that were partly the result of the period of neoliberalism and related decline of the welfare state (Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001; Ministerie van VWS [Dutch Ministry of Sport], 1996; Stuij & Stokvis, 2015). Nowadays, sport is considered widely beneficial for society at large as well as for personal development. Sport is positioned more and more as an instrument with health and social effectivity to help to achieve non-sport policy goals (Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016; Verweel & Wolterbeek, 2011), as also witnessed in other European countries (Bergsgard et al., 2007; Coalter, 2007; Hartman-Tews, 2006; Seippel, 2006).

Various scholars have traced and criticized this changing emphasis of sport policy, from sport as a general positive practice and a 'right to participate' for all towards sport as an instrument for solving larger socio-economic problems and a 'moral obligation to participate' for all. The main critique is that this latter perspective bypasses the exclusionary nature of many sport practices and oversimplifies the positive social value of sport (e.g., Coakley, 2015; Coalter, 1998, 2007; Elling, 2018). Indeed, within sport policy there seems to be a 'pervasive and nearly unshakable belief in the inherent purity and goodness of sport' (Coakley, 2015: 403), which Coakley refers to as 'the Great Sport Myth'.

Unlike most other policy areas, sport policy, and especially local sport policy, has rarely been subject to extensive critical analysis. Much is therefore unknown about the actual functioning and development of local sport policy (Houlihan, 2005; Mansfield, 2016). It remains unclear how the described national development of sport as a social right to sport as a means works out at the local level. One could, for instance, presume that shifts in sport policy objectives have had repercussions for the work of local sport managers (LSMs). However,

Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017) found that most of the sport budget of local authorities in the Netherlands has remained dedicated to the operation and maintenance of sport facilities, while the main sport policy objectives have consistently been defined as to improve public health and contribute to social inclusion. The current article examines whether LSMs see this growing belief in the instrumental value of sport as congruent with the continued emphasis of local policy on financing sport facilities. We define LSMs as the heads of municipal sport policy departments and those otherwise responsible for sport policy (development) within a municipality.

While the quantitative study of Hoekman and Van der Maat[1] (2017) on local sport policy in the Netherlands provides an overview of different processes in sport policy development, it falls short of grasping the perspective of LSMs on the changing discourse regarding local sport policy, the consequences of changes in sport policy for LSMs' day-to-day activities and LSMs' reflections on effective sport policy and social impact. Consequently, this study serves as an in-depth follow-up.

In this study, our central goal was to gain a better understanding of the development and functioning of local sport policy. We therefore chose to start from the perspective of LSMs. Our aim was to discern how LSMs have locally understood and legitimated new discourses in national sport policy. This article begins by addressing the developments and changing discourses in local sport policy itself, starting from a socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) with attention for national developments and policy discourses. These national developments and sport policy discourses have been studied extensively in the Netherlands (Breedveld et al., 2011; Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2015) and in other countries, for instance, in the UK (e.g., Green, 2006; Green & Houlihan, 2004; Grix & Carmichael, 2012; Houlihan, 2005; Phillpots et al., 2010), but have seldom been related to the local sport policy context. Secondly, it examines actual practices of LSMs and the ways LSMs relate their work to the central discourses in local sport policy. Thirdly, it investigates the reflexivity of LSMs and their personal beliefs on the effectiveness of local sport policy and its social impact. These three aspects together open a window on local sport policy, that currently lacks in the literature. The significance of this study lies in its acknowledgement of the perspectives and views of LSMs as indispensable to fully understand local sport policy. It therefore illuminates 'the

[1] These authors developed an online questionnaire to probe LSMs' views on a wide variety of topics related to the local sport policy process and the content of local sport policy documents. LSMs in 240 Dutch municipalities completed the online questionnaire, corresponding to a response rate of 61%.

walk', rather than only 'the talk' (i.e., the line set out in policy documents). In this regard it is good to note that in the Netherlands municipalities have autonomy with regard to local sport policy and consequently local sport policy is not necessarily linked to national policy developments or discourses.
Our study addressed three research questions: (1) How and why has local sport policy changed in the new millennium? (2) How are central discourses in local sport policy reflected in LSMs' daily practices, for example, their sport policymaking activities? (3) To what extent do LSMs critically reflect on their established methods of working?

3.2 Theoretical background

The sport policy process itself functions within a broader social environment. According to Houlihan (2005), to understand the development of sport policy it is important to appreciate the environment from which it emerged and in which it operates. This refers to, among other things, the departmental configuration within which sport policy is situated and the influence of other organizations and developments on sport policy.

This suggests that a layered or hierarchical perspective would be needed to grasp the sport policy process at the local level (Vos, Vandermeerschen & Scheerder, 2016), in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological perspective. The socio-ecological perspective holds that individual behaviour is constituted within an environment and thus is partly the outcome of different interacting and overarching contextual systems. Applied to LSMs, this means that the content of local sport policy would be influenced by LSMs' own policymaking activities, the environment in which they work and the local network in which they are positioned. This affirms the value of a hierarchical perspective and suggests the need to incorporate the influence of other domains linked to sport policy.

Vos et al. (2016) concluded that different policy domains work together at the local level. Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017) found this to be true in relation to local sport policy in the Netherlands. Connections with other policy domains could create opportunities to promote the instrumental value of sport and thus access additional public resources for sport (Houlihan, 2005). However, these could also lead to a marginalization of the role of sport, due to the influences of other, higher priority policy areas. As sport policy in the Netherlands is not legally enshrined as a core responsibility of local government, it is sensitive to policy spillover and manipulation by other, stronger policy domains (Houlihan, 2005). Policy spillovers are exogenous factors that further or obstruct the own policy objectives. In sport, most policy spillovers come from powerful adjacent areas and departments, such as health, welfare and education.

Furthermore, with the increasing 'sportification of society', public, private and civil society entities are increasingly involved in the sport landscape, in which there is a wide variety of 'modes of operation' (Crum, 1991; Fine & Leopold, 1993). Lavigne (2014) referred to new relationships between the state, private actors and civil society, exemplified by the role of 'voluntary sport clubs'(VSCs) in defining and implementing public policies. This notion of new local relationships was underlined in a recent study on sport and austerity measures in the Netherlands. Herein municipalities were found to use budget cuts to legitimate a bigger role for the market and civil society, including VSCs and other social initiatives, within sport policymaking itself and in contributing to sport policy objectives (Hoekman, Van der Roest & Van der Poel, 2018). It is thus apparent that local sport policy is the outcome of the efforts of actors within and outside municipal offices and the means these parties can muster.

In this study we investigated LSMs perspectives on the environment in which they operate and the extent that this environment has influenced and continues to influence local sport policy. Our expectation is that local sport policy has indeed changed over time. Throughout North-western Europe there are indications that the remit of local authorities has expanded dramatically in recent decades, including in sport policy. Hartman-Tews (2006) noted in this regard that more emphasis is being put on comprehensive local sport policies aimed at extending sport's beneficial health, social, educational and cultural effects to all segments of the population. With this, an apparent shift is noticeable from access to sport as a social right, in line with the 'sport for all' philosophy (Council of Europe, 2001), to 'sport as a means', that is, sport as an instrument for addressing a wider range of social issues (e.g., Coakley, 2015; Coalter, 2007).

Several central discourses can be identified in discussions on sport policy. These discourses reflect rather static ways of thinking and a degree of ideological embeddedness (Houlihan, 2012). They can be considered policy predispositions or 'storylines'. In some cases, these have taken on 'mythological' status, though they may lack substantiation and theoretical underpinnings (Fischer, 2003; Houlihan, 2012). A first example in this regard is the omnipresent focus on 'sport for all' and ending inequality in sport participation (Houlihan, 2005). This relates to the view of sport as a social right. A second example is the discourse on sport's instrumental value, reflected in its curative and preventive health value and sport being posited as a panacea to solve social problems. This is illustrated, for example, by the 'healthification' of Dutch sport policy. Stuij and Stokvis (2015) found an increasing emphasis on health and physical activity in national sport policy documents in the Netherlands.

Policy and politics often convey an "overly simplistic connotation of the 'goodness' of sport and its transforming potentials for changing the world"

(Elling, 2018: 57). One could say that nowadays there is a seemingly naturalized, normative and instrumental view of sport participation and sport policy, with a presumption of links between sport and various democratic, economic, educational and health values (Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016; Coalter, 2007; Österlind, 2016). Central to this discourse is the belief that sport, and by extension sport policy, produces multiple social benefits (Nicholson et al., 2011). In the current study, we set out to explore the extent that LSMs have adopted and critically reflect on such dominant discourses in sport and sport policy.

The issue is to how locally the financial inputs and resources have been affected by contextual discourses (Houlihan, 2012; Stenling & Fahlen, 2009). Since most of the local sport budget is allocated to sport facilities (Van den Dool & Hoekman, 2017), it is questionable whether policy is and can be attuned to these dominant storylines within national sport policy. As society and the role of the government changes, it is plausible to assume that LSMs may experience tensions or restrictions in local policymaking activities and difficulty in implementing new approaches. Indeed, how the shift in discourse has impacted the day-to-day activities and priorities of LSMs remains unknown.

Furthermore, most sport policy reports provide little evidence for the assumed beneficial effects of sport. As scholars like Mansfield (2016) note, sport policy generally has limited critical reflexivity. However, in the development of sport policy, critical reflexivity is deemed necessary in order to rethink current normative methods and policy actions. Existing sport policy studies provide some insight into the policy process (e.g., Hallmann & Petry, 2013; Nicholson, Hoye & Houlihan, 2011). Though their focus is mainly at the national level, they do pay some limited attention to LSMs' perspective on the reflexivity of local sport policy and how sport policy contributes to its objectives. Since Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017) found that municipalities undertake limited monitoring and evaluation of sport policy, we explored LSMs' views on (studying) the effects of sport policy and whether sport policy lives up to the objectives set for it.

3.3 Methods

To access LSMs' subjective views, experiences and perspectives on local sport policy we used in-depth semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviewing is an excellent way to address *how* and *why* questions, in order to understand the interviewees' perceptions of processes, norms, decision-making, belief systems, interpretations, motivations and expectations (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). Quantitative studies of policy research can reveal interesting patterns of behaviour and policy changes, but yet offer little information on

practical outcomes and why changes occurred. This is also the case for the quantitative study by Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017) on local sport policy in the Netherlands. Therefore, to comprehensively grasp the research topic of local sport policy additionally in-depth interviews are essential (Weiss, 1994).

For the current study we selected nine municipalities in which we conducted semi-structured interviews with LSMs, to gain more in-depth information and a better understanding of local sport policy and the daily practices of LSMs. Sampling was purposeful in that we sought to capture a wide diversity of municipalities, following a most different design. We included both municipalities known for outstanding sport policy and municipalities that gave less priority to sport policy. Subsequently, LSMs were interviewed from five municipalities that had won the title 'Sport Municipality of the Year' in the past ten years, with attention to differences in population size to get a good variety. In addition we selected four municipalities that had not participated in this contest and had similar population sizes to the five selected Sport Municipalities of the Year. In each municipality we requested an interview with the responsible LSM (head of the sport policy department). Although these officials were not responsible for all sport decision-making in the local context, they were all heavily involved in local sport policy development and serve as a good example of sport policy development practitioners in Dutch municipalities. The chosen municipalities were diverse in population size, geographical location and policy attention for sport. Although the sample is relative small, additional information was reduced in progressing towards the ninth interview, which led us to conclude that saturation had been reached.

The interviews were held between July 2017 and September 2017 using a semi-structured topic list. Questions were built around why and how sport policy had changed in the past years, how this affected or related to actual practices, and LSMs' reflexivity and beliefs regarding effective sport policy and social impact. The open-ended questions in the interview guide facilitated informal conversations and elicitation of information on the LSMs' knowledge, attitudes, experiences and behaviours on the topics at hand. In addition, this semi-structured design enabled the interviewer to follow leads and uncover other important issues as they arose.

The interviews were conducted by the first author in the interviewees' personal offices. The first author is a white male, active in sport. Also, all interviewees were white males. We acknowledge the homogeneous and gendered nature of our sample, but unfortunately positions in sport leadership are predominantly filled by white males (Claringbould, 2008). The interviewed LSMs clearly had affinity with sport. Some had a history as a physical education teacher, one had been a professional athlete. Others had been involved in sport clubs as a coach,

volunteer or board member. All had been or were currently frequent sport participants.

The interviews lasted an average of one hour and fifteen minutes and were digitally recorded. To encourage openness and free conversation and to avoid social desirability bias, interviewees and their municipalities were assured anonymity. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Using the threefold purpose of this study as a broad framework, we first analysed the data deductively, categorizing relevant comments under the three main issues: 'how and why sport policy has changed in the past years', 'how this affects or relates to actual practices of LSMs', and 'how LSMs view sport policy and (study of) its social impact'. Within these three central topics, we used a more inductive approach, labelling relevant fragments that seemed to be of potential theoretical significance or that appeared particularly salient (Bryman, 2012). We used a word processor for data analysis. This involved the repeated reading of transcripts with the aforementioned literature and issues in mind to identify patterns, similarities and differences within and between the LSMs working in municipalities in which sport policy was regarded as a high and low priority.

3.4 Findings

This section starts by presenting and discussing the results related to how and why local sport policy has changed in the past two decades. It subsequently addresses the implications of policy changes for the daily practice of LSMs and the tensions that arise. Finally, it discusses LSMs' reflexivity and perspectives on the effectiveness of sport policy and its social impact.

3.4.1 Policy changes: Sport policy as a growing social force without any legal foundation

Common topics emerged from the interview data regarding the tenor and background of changes in local sport policy. In general LSMs referred to three external factors that they considered to have affected local sport policy: (1) changed financial realities, (2) changed organizational structures within the municipality and (3) changed national policy and related discourses.

Changed financial realities

The majority of LSMs indicated that the financial recession had forced their municipality to more critically assess activities and core responsibilities. This was the case both in municipalities where sport policy was a high priority ('sport award municipalities') and in those where sport policy received lesser emphasis. LSMs noted an awareness of the lack of a legal basis for sport policy.

Although, local sport authorities do play a prominent role in sport policy in the Netherlands, municipalities are under no legal obligation with regard to sport (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). As such, municipalities have substantial autonomy in determining their sport-related activities. A drawback of the absence of a legal requirement is that sport is not one of the core responsibilities of municipalities, and therefore sport policy must function within an inherently broader environment. As a result, sport is particularly susceptible to budget cuts in times of austerity when discussions on core responsibilities are most likely to arise. This was the case in the Netherlands during the economic crisis of the 1980s (Pouw, 1999), but surprisingly did not affect national government's sport expenditure in the Netherlands during the recent times of austerity (Hoekman, van der Roest & van der Poel, 2018). Comments made during the interviews indicate that such discussions still take place at the local level when resources are short:

> That is always a bit difficult with sport. Everybody knows that it is important, but you do not always have the hard numbers to show for it. It is no legal obligation, and as such there is always discussion when, in current times of austerity, budget cuts are needed. (LSM, sport award municipality)

The recent period of austerity further appears to have produced an increased emphasis on effective and efficient sport policy. In this regard, the exogenous development of the economic recession did once again resulted in policy change (Sabatier, 1998) in the sense that it led to re-examination of the role of sport policy within municipalities and reorganizations within municipalities, especially in relation to the operation of sport facilities. Outsourcing the operation of sport facilities was considered to be in line with the drive to focus only on core responsibilities. This was mostly seen in the smaller municipalities and particularly in those where sport was less of a priority. However, there was no broad agreement among LSMs on whether such outsourcing was more cost effective:

> I'm glad we did not privatize all sports facilities, because I'm convinced that you put VSCs in their strength by letting them do what they do best, and that is offering sports activities. They do not exist to manage and renovate sport facilities. There are good examples, but also very bad ones. In practice, it appears that due to circumstances they do not succeed to reserve for big expenditures required in ten or fifteen years' time. And then in the end the town council yields and pays the 200.000 euro needed for renovation. (LSM, standard municipality)

The increased emphasis on core responsibilities, alongside pressure on local budgets, led LSMs to take a more strategic approach in sport policy. They emphasized the instrumental value of sport in policy areas that are within the municipality's core responsibilities. Focusing on sport's instrumental value enabled sport to profit from budgets available for other domains, such as social welfare, public health and poverty alleviation. 'Everybody knows that sport is important', an LSM emphasized, referring to the broad acceptance of the universal goodness of sport (Coalter, 2007; Elling, 2018). Sport also comes with a large voluntary - and therefore relatively cheap - base of local support organizations. This general acceptance and naturalized view of the instrumental value of sport has helped to legitimate continued investment in sport in times of recession (Hoekman, Van der Roest & Van der Poel, 2018; cf. Nicholson, et al., 2011; Österlind, 2016).

Changed organizational structure

Most municipal organizations have been reorganized once or multiple time over the years to increase their efficiency and streamline their functioning within the broader environment. LSMs noted that their municipal structure had been reorganized in the past decade mainly to achieve policy integration (e.g., related to youth services) and efficient alignment with the needs of the population. In most cases this led to a separation of policy and implementation and to altered departmental positions within the municipality. Nowadays, sport policy is usually positioned as part of the social services department and linked to the department of health:

> Sport policy is part of the social services department and we also have the 'sport concern' [*sportbedrijf*], which is only the executive authority. Within the social services department we had the assignment to include the sport domain in integrated social policies on youth, health, the elderly, the welfare act, you name it. Sport and physical activity should become one of the key things in these integrated social policies. (LSM, sport award municipality)

As a result of these administrative arrangements, cooperation with colleagues from health and welfare has become common in the sport policy development process. Consequently, the content of sport policy has shifted more towards sport and physical activity policy aimed to improve health among the population. This is an example of the idea of 'policy spillover' referred to by Houlihan (2005). Spillovers between sport policy and health and welfare policies were especially common, as new challenging tasks in these areas have been decentralized to municipalities as a result of austerity (Leisink et al., 2013). Paradoxically, sport seems to have profited from these austerity measures. Several LSMs indeed

referred to these developments as providing opportunity to uphold budgets. They stressed that inclusion of sport initiatives in other policy domains underlined sport's importance and enhanced sport's position.

Changed national policy and related discourses

All LSMs said that national sport policy had broadened over time and that sport was now being attributed greater social value (cf. Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001; Pouw, 1999). Moreover, they noted that the increased emphasis on sport and health had broadened the sport market, extending it beyond the traditional sport clubs. This led municipalities to recognize more health-oriented, less organized sports like running, walking and cycling (see Van den Dool, 2017) and to pay attention to sport opportunities outside of the official sport facilities. This was equally the case for municipalities where sport policy was a high priority and in those where sport policy received lesser emphasis.

> We have recently put a lot of effort in facilitating a sportive public space for those practicing sport unorganized in public space. We have always paid a lot of attention to VSCs, but less to this group of unorganized sport participants, while it is getting bigger and bigger. It has now become very important to learn how the organization of public space stimulates people to become more active. (LSM, standard municipality)

With regard to the impact of national policy, the LSMs referred to a subsidized national programme to launch local-level initiatives. Participation in this programme enabled them to employ 'neighbourhood sport workers' to organize sport activities. This national programme had thus increased the resources available to sport policymakers, as the number of full-time-equivalents (FTEs) to implement sport policy had increased substantially (by some 2.900 FTE, employed at 371 of the 388 municipalities in the Netherlands, according to Van Lindert et al., 2017). These neighbourhood sport workers can be regarded as 'street-level bureaucrats', producing a situation in which policymaking occurs in everyday contexts at the very local level within communities (Lipsky, 1980).

Furthermore, mainly the LSMs of sport award municipalities noted that the move towards a 'participation society' and the generally changing role of government had impacted sport policy and sport policy development in recent years. However, this was also mentioned by one of the other municipalities. As an example, one LSM mentioned the involvement of the population in the policy development process as a way of ensuring that policy is attuned to needs:

> I see that different than years ago, you need to take a lot more into account [in the process of sport policy development]. Nowadays, you get more in connection with practice , with VSCs and citizens, to develop a supported sport policy. (LSM, standard municipality)

Similarly, LSMs noted that it had become increasingly important for policy to support public initiatives and to draw civil society into the process of sport policy development and implementation. This is in line with findings of Lavigne (2014) on the new relationships between the state, private actors and civil society.

Regarding the shift from the welfare state to a participation society and the changing role of government (Raad voor Openbaar Bestuur, 2012), LSMs observed that policy development is now more open to initiatives from society and that civil society is included in the policy development process. Furthermore, they pointed to the availability of national programmes in which municipalities could enrol based on the needs of their populations; these were also said to influence the content and functioning of local sport policy. LSMs furthermore initiated activities and supported VSCs to activate citizens to participate in sport. VSCs, in particular, have been given a larger role in sport policy implementation in the Netherlands, as austerity measures have pushed local governments to transfer tasks and responsibilities to VSCs where feasible (see also Hoekman, Van der Roest & Van der Poel, 2018). Findings from the online questionnaire affirmed that VSCs were particularly active as initiators of sport-related topics on the policy agenda. As one interview respondent noted:

> When it comes to the participation society, then sport is an example of this, where it has existed for over 100 years already. If there is anywhere that citizens [organized in VSCs] take care of things, then it is within the sport sector. (LSM, sport award municipality)

All LSMs said that subsidies were increasingly used to launch or support initiatives that benefit society and to persuade VSCs to take over responsibilities from the local government, herewith contributing to greater efficiency and effectiveness of sport policy and its widened goals. Furthermore, all LSMs specifically noted that sport had become embedded within the larger dominant health discourse (Stuij & Stokvis, 2015). This development was said to have impacted local sport policy and broadened the network in which sport policy is developed. This was also noted in the study of Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017), with 76% of the municipalities indicating that sport policy was developed in cooperation with the health department, and 90% of the municipalities mentioning that increasing

the health of the population is a key objective of sport policy. LSMs related this to a general increase in emphasis within society on healthy lifestyles:

> Take for instance the TV commercials, where about 60 to 70% relates to more physical activity, less food consumption and better health. Ten years ago that definitely was not the case. […] [In this context] sport has been widely embraced. (LSM, sport award municipality)

Consequently, we found that, in line with the socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) the development of sport policy can indeed be better understood by appreciating the hierarchical structured environment from which it emerged and in which it operates (Houlihan, 2005).

3.4.2 Policy activities: day-to-day practice of LSMs relatively unchanged

This section elaborates on the LSMs' views on the consequences of developments in sports policy for their day-to-day practice. Nearly all LSMs noted that despite the changed position of sport within the municipal policy landscape, funding mechanisms for sport had so far remained relatively unaltered. Even though sport participation is now generally acknowledged as contributing to solve larger social problems, sport policy still received very little financial support from other policy domains:

> [Financial support from other departments] is the next step in the process. It's getting into gear. You see increased cooperation and that other departments notice the value of utilizing sport. However, when it comes to financing there are still disagreements. (LSM, sport award municipality)

Moreover, all LSMs indicated that despite the greater accent on the social value of sport, most of the local sport budget is still dedicated to sport facilities:

> Ninety per cent of the sport budget is dedicated to mowing pitches and maintaining and operating the sport facilities. Of course that is fundamental. However, we don't have much free money to spend. (LSM, standard municipality)

Construction and operation of sport facilities is costly, since municipalities provide sport facilities to local sport clubs at a relatively low user fee, below cost price. Indeed, some 85% to 90% of the municipal sport budget is dedicated to maintaining and operating sport facilities (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013).

The remaining resources are used to stimulate specific target groups to participate in sport, and for participation in national programmes and subsidization of local initiatives from civil society. The interviewed LSMs acknowledged that the national programmes provided opportunities to undertake activities to encourage sport participation. Most of them also indicated that alongside providing sport facilities and supporting VSCs and community sport initiatives, policy was still foremost focused on the 'sport for all' objective. Providing inclusive access to sport thus remained an important aspect of the LSMs' day-to-day work:

> You need good facilities, to get people to practise sport. […] My ideal situation is that [each neighbourhood] has a sport park with one accommodation that all VSCs can use and which is also available for the neighbourhood and for social activities; and that the facilities around this accommodation have a broader purpose, for instance, offering possibilities for unorganized sports. In my opinion you then have a good foundation to get more people practising sports and to achieve the objectives of sport policy. (LSM, sport award municipality)

In light of the Netherlands' concerted shift towards a participation society (Raad voor Openbaar Bestuur, 2012), similar to the Big Society ideology in the UK (Bach, 2012), some LSMs had high expectations of civil society. The changing times, they said, had made civil society more keen to take on greater responsibilities, in addition to the vibrant commercial sector that sought business opportunities in operating sport facilities for local governments. These developments widen prospects for municipalities to outsource certain activities in order to increase sport policy efficiency. This trend, already evident in numerous governing coalition agreements across municipalities (Hoekman & Van der Bol, 2014), was partly confirmed by the LSMs. However, here we found a clear division between the 'Sport Municipalities of the Year' and the other municipalities. The former were more proactive and set on staying in control and utilizing sport to its full potential, while the latter seemed more passive to let other organizations, insofar as possible, take up leadership and responsibilities.

The vast majority of LSMs noted that they provided subsidies to support civil society initiatives, mainly via VSCs. In this regard it is worth remarking that in the past sport clubs, especially VSCs, received government contributions automatically for their social function, while nowadays there is a move towards contractual performance-based relations between municipalities and VSCs. VSCs, like national sport organizations, must now more and more demonstrate that they deliver (public) value for (public) money (Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013).

In line with the focus on accountability, VSCs are deemed responsible for more than just providing sport activities; to be eligible for funding they must be open to the wider community and contribute to society at large (Van der Werff, Hoekman & Van Kalmthout, 2015):

> The municipality is more keen on utilizing the own strength of VSCs or other organizations and how you can help them become stronger; that there is a good foundation to utilize these organizations for broader social purposes. These organizations can apply for subsidies for sport activities, but we have now combined it with the obligation to organize social activities. We have higher expectations of VSCs, that they also have meaning for the city. This [obligation to organize social activities] was not the case in the past. (LSM, sport award municipality)

Other organizations in the local sport landscape must also confirm that their activities contribute to the widened focus of sport policy. Paradoxically, however, municipal sport policy itself is not necessarily linked to any ancillary benefits of sport, like public health and social welfare, as most of the budget is dedicated to sport facilities. LSMs seemed to regard sport mainly as a context in which interventions related to health and social welfare could be placed. Sport appeals to a lot of people and is therefore a valuable tool or context to use. Nevertheless, some LSMs appeared reluctant to change their policymaking activities to accommodate the goals of other policy domains, particularly if that meant drifting away from facilitating sport and supporting VSCs:

> We believe that although sport is more intertwined with other policy domains, sport still has its individuality that needs to be preserved. You need to find a certain balance in this, because we notice that sport is otherwise somewhat overloaded. […] When we only focus on sport as an instrument [and there is insufficient attention for sport itself], then we notice a kind of frustration or pushback from the sport sector to cooperate. (LSM, sport award municipality)

Thus, while all LSMs underlined that the policy rhetoric was indeed changing, and that more emphasis on the instrumental value of sport was required, their core activities remained related to sport participation as a goal in itself. In other words, the policy discourse strongly reflected the 'sport as a panacea' storyline, but the main policy activity of most of the LSMs was still to enhance sport participation:

> We actually only have one core objective and that is to increase sport participation rates. (LSM, standard municipality)

This reveals a dilemma: the dominant sport policy discourse espousing the social benefits of sport does not match the day-to-day practice of the LSMs. LSMs were mainly occupied with supporting VSCs and providing a good sport facility infrastructure to help raise sport participation levels. Additional subsidies and stimulation activities were offered for groups that lagged behind in sport participation, such as the disabled, children in poverty and the elderly. By increasing sport participation levels, especially for lagging groups, LSMs generally assumed that they were contributing to the broader external objectives of sport policy, particularly in the social welfare domain. In this sense they do not see this as a dilemma.

The LSMs additionally referred to the political relevance of sport at the local level, as a large share of the population is involved in sport in some way. Several LSMs considered VSCs and other civil society initiatives as capable of applying political pressure and influencing the development of local policy. This pressure had been used to oppose fundamental changes in local sport policy, for instance, to avoid a reform of the rate system (e.g. rental fees) of sport facilities or to obstruct the outsourcing of the operation of sport facilities to VSCs. It had also been used to obtain additional funding for sport and to reduce intended budget cuts. Furthermore, there seemed to be a mutual dependency between the VSCs and municipalities: the VSCs were financially dependent on the municipalities, while at the same time, the municipalities were dependent on the VSCs to realize their policy objectives.

3.4.3 Reflexivity: very limited role of critical reflexivity in sport policy development

Reflecting on the logic currently dominant in sport policy, that is, sport as a panacea for all of society's problems, most LSMs agreed that sport has this power. This also legitimated why their activities were still concentrated on enhancing sport participation. Most LSMs, and especially those from sport award municipalities, said that sport, more than any other sector, could be a successful instrument in addressing social problems:

> Very broadly speaking, I think that sport and physical activity is a fantastic instrument. Name any policy domain and you can say that sport and physical activity is a suitable instrument. Always! I cannot say that for other activities. (LSM, sport award municipality).

The majority of LSMs underwrote the universal goodness of sport, with very little critical reflection on how this effect might work. Most sport policy, as noted, related to provision of a good and accessible sport facility infrastructure and special programmes for some lagging target groups. These LSMs generally assumed that the rest, the social benefits, would then naturally follow:

> [Sport] has many positive effects. I mean when you manage to get people to be active and practise sports, then you achieve a lot of things in doing this. (LSM, sport award municipality).

While some LSMs expressed a desire to contribute to social welfare targets, they said that a large part of their budget was fixed. They therefore had limited scope to attune their activities to the changing sport policy discourse, though the general belief that sport has great social value had proven helpful in obtaining additional funding for promising initiatives. The key to better aligning activities to policy objectives, LSMs said, was for other policy departments start to think in terms of including sport. This would, they said, further increase the contribution of sport-related programmes to goals external to sport.

How successful sport policy has been in achieving its objectives is largely unknown. Most LSMs reported very limited monitoring and evaluation of sport policy. As a result all of them admitted to having no idea of the extent that policy initiatives had been effective. At best there were indications that policy initiatives had contributed to achieving policy goals. This confirms the idea of limited reflexivity of sport policy found in previous studies (Mansfield, 2016; Houlihan, 2005) and which was also highlighted by Hoekman and Van der Maat (2017). They reported that only 10% of the municipalities can prove that their sport policy activities are effective and contribute to (the majority of) the objectives of sport policy.

Regarding monitoring and evaluation, LSMs generally did indicate keeping track of statistics on sport participation and sport club membership. In addition, the stronger sport municipalities had moved to a more dynamic policy process. They no longer had four-year sport policy programmes but instead used annual plans, assessing whether specific activities were successful and refining programmes and goals for the year after accordingly. However, this only concerned the roughly 10% of the budget that was not fixed in sport facilities.

Furthermore, LSMs were asked to report on what they did rather than what they accomplished. The LSMs perceptions of what works and what does not work are derived mainly from their beliefs and personal experience rather than research. Consequently, most LSMs interviewed rarely used monitoring and evaluation to

learn what worked and what did not; rather they tended to rely on uncontested assumptions regarding the wider instrumental values of sport (cf. Coalter, 2007). One reason for the limited attention to monitoring and evaluation lies with the cost involved. Indeed, a substantial financial investment would be needed to develop a proper monitoring and evaluation system for determining the wider impact of sport policy. Some LSMs, and according to them, politicians even more, in the end preferred to dedicate the moneys available to actual activities or to new initiatives rather than to research. Sport is in this regard a rather hands-on domain, more interested in doing things than investigating whether they are doing the right things.

Interestingly, most LSMs did consider research was needed on the effect of sport policy, particularly the sport award municipalities. However, this was not seen necessarily to improve sport policy itself. Instead, these LSMs referred to the need for research so as to demonstrate to other departments how effective sport is and thus get more funding from them for sport policy. Once again, this illustrates the omnipresent belief in the universal goodness of sport. Greater accountability was considered key, not to get a deeper understanding of the factors and mechanisms underlying successful local sport policy, but to obtain more money to expand it.

The LSMs from the 'Sport Municipalities of the Year' did appear to have greater appreciation of the potential of sport policy and progress made towards targets. However, even these LSMs expressed difficulty in identifying the true significance and effect of sport policy. LSMs in general acknowledged that sport policy initiatives were difficult to isolate from other activities within a municipality, especially when focusing on contributions of sport to other policy areas (cf. Breedveld et al 2016):

> Well, it is difficult to identify whether it works or not. We can measure all kinds of things, but then is this the result of our policy activity, or a result of other circumstances? (LSM, standard municipality)

Furthermore, most LSMs noted that effects of sport policy may only become visible in the long term. Someone who takes up a sport does not become healthier immediately, but could in time become more healthy, reducing the costs of health care in the future. Children who start practising sport at a young age may profit from this early exposure later in life, with benefits to society as a whole.

All in all, we found a very limited role of critical reflexivity in sport policy development and among LSMs. Generally, LSMs attributed this in part to the way sport policy is organized, with most of the budget consumed by sport facilities management, subsidies to launch new initiatives and municipalities'

participation in national programmes that ran for a certain number of years and were followed up by slightly different ones, normally before critical assessments of the previous programme took place. As a result, LSMs experienced very limited freedom to change their day-to-day activities, and consequently gave less priority to monitoring and evaluation.

Despite the given boundaries, LSMs said that their sport policymaking activities did make a difference. They saw this confirmed in their contacts within the municipality and in changes they observed taking place. While it was hard to pinpoint this added value of sport in local evaluations, especially the sport award municipalities were confident that no other policy area could have the same impact that sport has.

3.5 Conclusion

With this study we attempted to fill a gap in the literature by engaging in semi-structured interviews with LSMs. We focussed on the how and why of changes in local sport policy, the reflection of this in the daily practice of LSMs, and to what extent LSMs critically reflect on the established methods of working and the (social) impact of local sport policy. Particular attention was paid to differences between LSMs of sport award municipalities and of standard municipalities that gave less priority to sport policy.

Regarding the first research question, in line with Sabatier (1998) and the socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), all LSMs indicated that changes in sport policy were mainly triggered by exogenous developments. The three most prominent environmental influences were changed financial realities, changed organizational structures within the municipality and changed national policy and related discourses. LSMs exhibited an awareness of changes in policy and policy discourse over time and acknowledged that today more than in the past local sport policy is linked to other policy domains based on the social benefits of sport. The LSMs referred to discourses in national policy documents and a general awareness or belief in the instrumental value and goodness of sport. In most municipalities, and particularly the sport award municipalities, the changed sport policy discourse had provided openings for escaping the severest budget cuts in recent period of recession-driven budgetary reductions at the local level. As sport is not legally enshrined as a municipal obligation, legitimation of continued investment of sport was provided by sport's instrumental value and contribution to other policy domains. Consequently, policy spillovers (Houlihan, 2005) were also identified, particularly in efforts to utilize sport policy to achieve objectives related to public health and welfare (Stuij & Stokvis, 2015). In general, sport was considered a relatively cost effective

policy instrument as it builds on a voluntary organizational base. In this respect, VSCs and neighbourhood sport workers were by all LSMs considered important partners in initiating activities for the benefit of society at large.

Answering the second research question, contrary to our expectations, we identified that the policymaking activities of LSMs remained largely the same. All LSMs considered the creation of an adequate sport facility infrastructure as key to achieving the more socially-oriented goals of sport policy. Consequently, most money (up to 90% of sport budgets) was still dedicated to sport facilities (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). This limits the potential for additional activities to promote the contribution of sport to external collective values. Consequently, LSMs still strongly focused on providing and managing sport facility infrastructure and supporting VSCs. The interviewed LSMs, all white males active in sport, embody a privileged social status position, and they held a naturalized belief in the goodness of sport and its potential to bring social objectives closer, resembling the 'Great Sport Myth' notion of Coakley (2015). LSMs, especially in sport award municipalities, tried to 'sell' this dominant view to other departments in order to strengthen the legitimation of sport policy and enlarge the sport budget. The increased demand for accountability was applied mainly to VSCs, which must now demonstrate their contribution to social goals in order to be eligible for funding. Accountability demands were also made of those to whom the operation of sport facilities was outsourced. Herein, a certain economic rationale is discernible. Municipalities are exploring new modes of operation to reduce the cost of sport facilities, without compromising the sport infrastructure available in their municipality. Particularly, the LSMs of sport award municipalities are keen on upholding control over the sport infrastructure and supporting VSCs to be of utmost relevance to society.

Reflecting on the third research question, LSMs in general exhibited little critical reflection on (preconditions for) effective sport policy and the need for policy monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation were generally restricted to registration data, to obtain a notion of the reach of sport policy initiatives. Several LSMs described the sport sector as 'hands on', interested more in initiating new programmes than in evaluating existing efforts. Most of them did not consider evidence of the value of sport to be necessary, as sport's social value and its political relevance were generally accepted as self-evident. Equally in sport award municipalities and the other municipalities, the LSMs noted that on several occasions 'emotions' had trumped 'reason' in decision-making on sport issues, resulting in a greater influence of politics in this policy domain. A relatively large segment of society is somehow involved in sport, meaning that sport policy has a relatively high political clout. This appears to undermine the need for evidence to what extent sport policy activities matter, as the general rhetoric on the goodness of sport and the high community involvement in sport, do help to get things done even though there is no evidence to back up the claim.

Apart from these conclusions, this current study points to several avenues for further research. First, future research is needed on to what extent local sport policy activities indeed contribute to higher sport participation rates and the health and social inclusion objectives that are currently central in local sport policy (Hoekman & van der Maat, 2017). Consequently, an overarching question that emerged from this study is, 'Does sport policy matter?' LSMs were naturally convinced of the significance of their work, despite very limited reflexivity, not only in relation to the broader social goals, but also with respect to 'sport for all'. It remains unknown what the effect is of municipal sport expenditures in stimulating sport participation and including lower socio-economic status groups. Moreover, Ter Rele (2007) has shown that that higher income groups profit most from governmental expenditures on sport. Furthermore, how effective are the existing sport stimulation programs and does a good sport facility infrastructure indeed make a difference, as the LSMs assumed? These are questions for future studies to more thoroughly address, at the same time increasing reflexivity in local sport policy domain.

Second, for this study we interviewed the LSMs on their perspective on local sport policy and its merit, while a broader consultation is likely to bring forward additional perspectives . LSMs expressed little reflexivity on the goodness of sport and tried to 'sell' this to other departments. Consequently, it would be valuable to conduct similar in-depth interviews with representatives of other policy departments and of different local political parties to get an outsider perspective on the local value of sport and sport policy.

Finally, the dilemma that unravelled between policy discourses and policy activities is intriguing, even though the LSMs did not see this as a dilemma. LSMs mainly seem to hold VSCs accountable for these wider objectives of sport policy. These VSCs now must demonstrate their contribution to social goals in order to be eligible for funding. Furthermore, it are the neighbourhood sport workers that function as the street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) and as such probably experience this dilemma more than LSMs do. Consequently, it is worth looking further into the perspective of VSCs and the neighbourhood sport workers on sport's contribution to broader societal objectives in relation to the local sport policy activities.

In sum, we conclude that there are too high expectations in sport policy, nationally and locally, that are not followed up by concrete policy activities. Local sport policy activities mainly remained unchanged despite exogenous developments positioning sport policy as a growing social force. In line with the latter, LSMs expressed a general belief in the goodness of sport and tried to position the instrumental value of sport within other departments. LSMs simultaneously expressed little critical reflection on (preconditions) for effective sport policy and the need for policy monitoring and evaluation, leaving much unknown on the true meaning of local sport policy.

Chapter 4

A landscape of sport facilities in the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This article explores the geographical distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands and evaluates the supply and proximity of such facilities in relation to area level deprivation and urbanity. In today's context of financial austerity, many municipalities must critically assess their spending on sport provision. Most government funding to sports goes to construction and maintenance of sport facilities, so there is an increasing need for information and indicators by which to gauge the adequacy of such facilities. The current study draws on sports place theory and the deprivation amplification model to examine the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities in the Netherlands as a whole and according to area level deprivation and urbanity. Data were provided by the Database Sport Supply, a national dataset offering geographical information on (nearly) all sport facilities in the Netherlands. These data were linked with population statistics from Statistics Netherlands to allow spatial analyses. Our results indicate that by assessing the distribution of sport facilities in a structured way, relevant information can be obtained for sport facility planning and sport participation policy. Furthermore, our results show that certain standard sport facilities are fairly evenly distributed throughout the Netherlands, irrespective of the local population size. For more specialised facilities, however, higher population thresholds appear to be required. We conclude that, even though there are inequalities in the distribution of sport facilities, the Netherlands overall provides a sufficiently dense sport infrastructure with various types of facilities offered in close proximity to most inhabitants.

Keywords: sports place theory; sports geography; deprivation amplification; urbanity; sport provision

A slightly different version of this chapter has been published in the International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2016). This chapter has been presented at the RGS-IBG annual congress in Exeter, September 2015.

4.1 Introduction

Providing access to sport facilities is considered a key element of effective sport participation policy (Nicholson et al., 2011). The European Sport for All Charter (Council of Europe, 2001) makes specific reference to the interdependence of sport participation and the presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities. In line with this charter, many national and local sport participation policies focus on sport provision, centred on the facilitating role of government. This is the case both within Europe and in non-European countries (Nicholson et al., 2011). Sport policies generally assume that differences in the accessibility of sport facilities is at least partly responsible for differences in sport participation (Camy et al., 2004; Nicholson et al., 2011).

Empirical evidence for this assumption is rather meagre, however, especially in Western and Northern Europe. In countries such as China, with a developing grassroots sport infrastructure, research has confirmed the interdependence of sport facility provision and sport participation (Guo et al., 2014). In the UK, this interdependence no longer appears to hold true, as public sport policy and private investments in sport facilities seem to have been effective in balancing demand and supply (Kokolakakis et al., 2014). In the Netherlands the growth in sport facilities provision played a role in increasing sport participation levels up until a participation threshold was reached in the course of the 1980s. In the decades thereafter, growth in sport participation slowed and eventually levelled off (Van Bottenburg & De Bosscher, 2011).

The observed reduction in the interdependence between sport facility supply and sport participation has lent a new perspective to sport policies in Europe. The necessary levels of sport facilities are being reconsidered and debated, also in light of the aging of society and the population declines under way in many places. Furthermore, a climate of financial austerity has led governments throughout Europe to ever more critically assess their spending on sport, seeking opportunities to reduce this funding where prudent (Földesi, 2014). As large shares of sport budgets are often dedicated to construction and operation of sport facilities, much emphasis has been placed on sport facilities when identifying ways to reduce costs. To illustrate, in the Netherlands some 85% of the total government budget for sport is spent on construction and operation of sport facilities (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Waardenburg & Van Bottenburg, 2013).

To critically assess spending on sport provision and underpin decisions on changes in the provision of sport facilities, policymakers are keenly interested in indicators for gauging the adequacy of sport facility supply. In various countries within Europe and elsewhere, scholars have conducted analyses of

the distribution of sport facilities, contributing to policies on sport promotion. Most of these studies have focused on inequalities in numbers of facilities per 1,000 residents and the distances residents must travel to reach the nearest sport facility, either by the level of deprivation of an area (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006; Hillsdon et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 2012) or urbanity (Bale, 1982; Hallmann et al., 2011; Steinmayr et al., 2011).

The attention to deprived areas is theoretically anchored in the deprivation amplification model (Macintyre, 2007), which postulates that individual disadvantages are amplified by disadvantages arising from a poorer quality of environment, in either social or physical terms. This model has been linked to sport policies in efforts to ensure that deprived areas have access to adequate sport facilities, assuming that these areas would otherwise have fewer facilities. The attention to level of urbanity can be theoretically traced to the sports place theory (Bale, 2003). This theory states that an area's level of urbanity plays a key role in defining expectations of the supply of facilities, including sport facilities. As the function of a sport facility is to offer opportunities for the surrounding residents to practise a sport, population size is an important determinant of the local presence of different types of sport facilities (Bale, 2003).

The current article builds on this previous work and examines a case study of the Netherlands. The Dutch case is an interesting one, as 85% of local sport budgets are spent on sport facilities - and apparently with some success, as the Dutch report the highest degree of satisfaction with their sport facilities among all Europeans (European Commission, 2014). Surprisingly, unlike other European countries, the Netherlands lacks core indicators on the supply of sport facilities (Tiessen-Raaphorst & De Haan, 2012). The only study available on the distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands, is a single case study on the city of Eindhoven (Van Lenthe et al., 2005). That research found an equal distribution of sport facilities regardless of area level of deprivation. In more recent years, budget cuts in the Netherlands have led most municipal governments to reconsider their policies on sport provision. Interest in scaling down expenditures has heightened demand for sophisticated information on the adequacy of sport facilities. Keeping sport accessible to all, particularly the lower social classes in disadvantaged areas, nonetheless remains a key government priority (Ministerie van VWS, 2011). Furthermore, a debate is under way on the need to preserve sport facilities in rural areas, as many of these areas are experiencing population declines, and closing down sport facilities is considered to threaten the livability of such areas (Hoekman, Bulsink & Van Kalmthout, 2015). Thus, a further examination of the distribution of sport facilities is called for in the Netherlands, to identify inequalities in this distribution so as to improve the effectiveness of sports policy and perhaps even to identify options for prudent disinvestments.

Employing the Database Sport Supply (DSS) with geographical information on (nearly) all sport facilities in the Netherlands, we investigate several key indicators regarding the distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands, assessing their ability to underpin decisions on changes in sport facility provision. The indicators examined are the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities by the area level of deprivation and urbanity. In doing so, we hope to shed light on how such analyses could provide new insights for sport policy debates, in the Netherlands as well as in other European countries. To sum up, our central research question is the following: *To what extent do spatial inequalities occur in the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities in the Netherlands by area level of deprivation and urbanity?*

4.2 Theoretical background

4.2.1 Spatial inequalities by area level of deprivation

Most of the literature on the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities employs a health perspective and is founded on a socio-ecological model. Socio-ecological models focus explicitly on the behaviours of individuals within a social and physical context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Using such a model, sport facilities and other aspects of the built environment, as well as the social context, are considered major environmental resources that interplay with individual factors to encourage a physically active and healthy lifestyle (Brownson et al., 2009). Some authors even conclude that inequalities in the built environment underlie health-relevant disparities in physical activity (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006; Powell et al. 2006). After all, in line with the deprivation amplification model, disadvantages arising from a poorer quality environment may amplify individual disadvantages. This would suggest that describing the socio-spatial distribution of sport facilities and identifying environmental injustices is an important aspect of public health action (see, e.g., Billaudeau et al., 2011; Hillsdon et al., 2007). A similar reasoning applies to sport participation, as the absence of sport facilities in deprived areas could reinforce the participation gap observed between poorer and richer areas based on individual factors such as education and income levels (Scheerder et al., 2005).

A review of previous analyses of sport facilities in different European countries, however, shows mixed and sometimes conflictive outcomes regarding the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities and area level of deprivation. Results have varied depending the type and ownership of the sport facilities studied, and the country or even the region examined. For example, a study in Glasgow, Scotland, found an inequitable distribution of recreational facilities in favour of the most affluent areas (Macintyre et al., 2008), while a study for

Scotland as a whole suggested that fewer facilities were present in the most affluent areas than in less affluent areas (Lamb et al., 2012). In France (Ministère des Sport, 2011) and England (Hillsdon et al., 2007) fewer sport facilities were present in deprived areas. With regard to different types of sport facilities, Macintyre et al. (2008) found that tennis courts were more likely to be situated in affluent areas, while public sport centres and public playing fields were more likely to be situated in deprived areas. This could be partly explained by the logic of supply and demand, as higher social classes are likely exhibit a higher demand for tennis courts compared to lower social classes. Next, privately owned sport facilities appeared to be more common in affluent areas, following purchasing power, while public sport facilities, which aim at providing equal access for all, were more common in poorer areas (Ahlfeldt & Feddersen, 2007; Lamb et al., 2010). It would be interesting to determine whether any such differences in the distribution of sport facilities are found in the Netherlands.

As previous scholarly work in Europe provides mixed evidence on the distribution of sport facilities by area level of deprivation, we base our hypotheses on the assumption generally made in Dutch policy. Thus, our first hypothesis tests whether there is, as policy documents assume (Ministerie van VWS, 2011), a less favourable provision of sport facilities in deprived areas: *(H1) In affluent areas there is a greater presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities than in deprived areas, especially with regard to private sport facilities.*

4.2.2 Spatial inequalities by area level of urbanity

Bale (2003) is one of the few scholars to have paid attention to differences in the distribution of sport facilities from a geographical perspective. Using sports place theory, Bale (2003) emphasised the efficiency of distribution of sport opportunities, to minimise travel costs for consumers to practise a desired sport while achieving a minimum threshold for sport providers to earn a living. This theory observes that less urbanised areas are characterised by a smaller supply of facilities, offering predominantly primary services, such as a grocery store, bakery and café. More urbanised areas provide a greater supply and more elaborate types of facilities, such as shopping malls and theatres, which might also fulfil a regional function in serving the surrounding less urbanised areas, or so-called lower order places (Bale, 2003). Lower order places have small catchment areas, and can only support facilities that have low population thresholds for viability. Higher order places are fewer in number and more widely spaced. They can support facilities with larger population thresholds for viability (Bale, 2003). Thus, according to the sports place theory, the population density of an area is a key indicator for determining the variety of supply of sport facilities; and a greater variety of sport facilities

would be expected in more densely populated areas. Furthermore, Hallmann and colleagues (2011) conclude for German cities and medium-sized municipalities that sport participation rates can be increased by offering a good supply and variety of particular facilities to all groups within the population. With this they emphasise the importance of looking at specific types of sport facilities.

With regard to the number of facilities per capita we propose an opposite expectation: that more facilities per capita will be present in less urbanised areas. This is because analyses of sport supply in the metropolis of Munich and medium-sized municipalities in Germany indicate that a larger number of sport facilities is available per capita in medium-sized municipalities than in large metropolises (Hallmann et al., 2011). This was confirmed by Ahlfeldt and Feddersen (2007) in a study of the spatial distribution of sport facilities in Hamburg, as they found central and more urbanised areas to be relatively underprovided in sport infrastructure compared to peripheral areas. At the same time, travel distances are expected to be shorter in more urbanised areas. Steinmayr et al. (2011) found for Germany that people living in rural areas must travel farther to reach the nearest sport facilities, irrespective of the type of sport facility examined.

In line with the aforementioned, we formulate the following hypotheses on the provision of sport facilities in the Netherlands by urbanity: *(H2a) More urbanised areas are characterised by a greater variety of sport facilities and shorter travel distances to facilities, and (H2b) less urbanised areas offer a higher number of sport facilities per capita.*

4.3 Data and measurements

4.3.1 Data

We tested our hypotheses using data derived from the Database Sport Supply (DSS). The DSS is the leading Dutch dataset with geographical information on (nearly) all sport facilities in the Netherlands, including 2,557 private fitness centres, 1,846 sport halls, 803 swimming pools, 244 private golf courses and 5,736 outdoor sport facilities (Table 4.1). The DSS builds on the examples of comparable databases in other European countries and regions, such as Flanders, Belgium (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering, 2012), France (Ministère des Sport, 2011) and the UK (Leisure Database Company, 2014). Sport facilities are defined as facilities constructed for the purpose of sport, including those both publicly and privately owned. To allow for spatial analyses, the sport facilities in the database were geo-referenced using x and y coordinates.

4.3.2 Measurements

Distribution of sport facilities was measured by the presence, variety and proximity of such facilities. The presence of sport facilities was calculated as the number of people per facility on average in the Netherlands (see Table 4.1) and the number of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants by region. For this calculation we used the location of the facility to identify the area unit in which it was located and aggregated the information to obtain the number of facilities by region, by area level of deprivation and by urbanity. The number of facilities per 10,000 inhabitants was derived using population data from Statistics Netherlands (2014a). The variety of sport facilities was measured by the number of different types of facilities found within the area units.

The proximity of sport facilities was measured for each inhabitant based on the population data from Statistics Netherlands (2014a) and geographical data for 100 by 100 metre squares (Statistics Netherlands, 2014b). To measure proximity, we used the straight line distance from the centroid of a 100 by 100 metre square to the nearest sport facility, whether inside or outside the area unit, and to each of the different types of sport facilities identified. Based on the calculated distances to the nearest facility, a weighted distance score was calculated for each 100 by 100 metre square area unit, to enable further analyses by area level of deprivation and urbanity.

The measurement for area level of deprivation was available from secondary sources and included by linking four-digit postal code information to the geographical information on sport facilities. The area level of deprivation was determined using an aggregate indicator of average educational level, labour market position and income of area residents (Knol, 2012). Quintiles were then generated for area level deprivation, with 1 being a most deprived area and 5 being a most affluent area.

Our measure of urbanity was based on an address-density classification constructed by Statistics Netherlands derived from the average number of addresses within a 1 kilometre radius. The customary differentiation into five categories was maintained: (1) extremely urbanised, with 2,500 addresses or more per square kilometre; (2) strongly urbanised, with 1,500 to 2,500 addresses per square kilometre; (3) moderately urbanised, with 1,000 to 1,500 addresses per square kilometre; (4) hardly urbanised, with 500 to 1,000 addresses per square kilometre; and (5) not urbanised, with fewer than 500 addresses per square kilometre.

4.3.3 Analytic strategy

We conducted several analyses. First, we performed descriptive analyses to investigate the presence and proximity of the different types of facilities and

the association between presence and proximity based on a power trend line. Furthermore, we visualised, based on the descriptive analyses, differences between regions in the presence and proximity of facilities. Second, we conducted analyses of variance to test for significant differences between the means of the presence, proximity and variety of sport facilities by quintiles of area level of deprivation and categories of urbanisation. We chose this technique over multilevel modelling because individual-level data were lacking and because our main aim was to highlight current differences rather than to explain differences between municipalities, regions or provinces by differences in applicable policies or other factors. Moreover, because most facilities were built 30 to 40 years ago, current policies were unlikely to provide satisfactory explanations for existing differences.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics: number and distance to the sport facilities

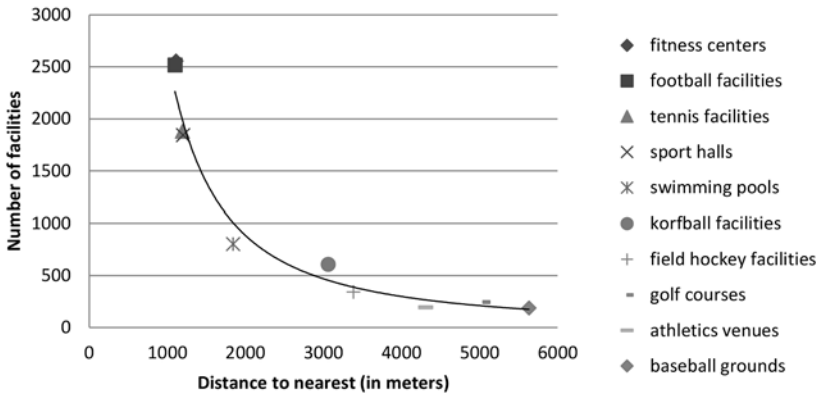
	football facilities	tennis facilities	sport halls	korfball facilities	baseball grounds	field hockey facilities	golf courses	fitness centers	athletics venues	swimming pools	all facilities
N	2519	1881	1846	609	189	342	244	2557	196	803	11186
Capita per facility	6681	8948	9117	27636	89050	49212	68977	6582	85870	20959	1505
Mean distance (in meters)	1100	1191	1202	3062	5633	3385	5045	1110	4309	1841	629
Std.Dev.	579	661	1053	2878	5445	2959	3309	1196	3536	1359	311
Min	173	200	172	227	386	354	453	170	262	172	170
Max	17080	14501	20271	39725	47930	28964	34791	19775	40094	21221	6840

4.4 Results

4.4.1 National and regional indicators

The Netherlands provided 6.68 of the selected sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants in 2014 (not including, e.g., facilities for horse riding, sailing or rowing). This corresponds to 1,505 inhabitants per sport facility (see Table 4.1). Fitness centres and football facilities had the lowest number of inhabitants per facility (resp., 6,582 and 6,681 inhabitants), while baseball and athletic facilities had the highest number of inhabitants per facility (resp., 89,050 and 85,870). On average, 3.14 different types of sport facilities were available within each postal code area. The mean distance for the Dutch population to the nearest sport facility was 629 metres (see Table 4.1). Football facilities (1,100 metres), fitness centres (1,110 metres), tennis courts (1,191 metres), sport halls (1,202 metres) and swimming pools (1,841 metres) were all located on average within 2 kilometres. Baseball fields (5,633 metres) and golf courses (5,045 metres) were on average unavailable within a range of 5 kilometres. Availability of greater numbers of facilities of a certain type corresponded with shorter average travel distances to the nearest facility. This relationship was not linear, however, as the data indicate that some types of facilities were geographically more evenly distributed than others (Figure 4.1). Swimming pools were nearer to the population than would be assumed based on the number of facilities available, while korfball facilities were on average farther away than would be expected considering the number of facilities present. This suggests well-considered planning of the locations of swimming pools, as they are accessible to the largest possible group of residents, while korfball facilities appear to be more demand driven and not necessarily located in more densely populated areas.

Figure 4.1. Relationship between the number of sport facilities and distance to nearest facility per type of facility, including a power trendline.



By region, the average distance to the nearest sport facility ranges from 446 metres in the urban agglomeration of Haarlem to 857 metres in non-urbanised eastern Groningen. The least urbanised regions, in the northern, eastern and southern parts of the Netherlands, present higher travel distances than the more urbanised western and central areas of the country (see Figure 4.2). Despite greater travel distances, more facilities per 10,000 inhabitants were found in the less urban northern, eastern and southern regions. Nationally, the number of facilities per 10,000 inhabitants varied from 4.3 in the urbanised Greater Amsterdam area to 10.7 in non-urbanised south-eastern Friesland (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.2. Average distance (metres) to the nearest sport facility per region.

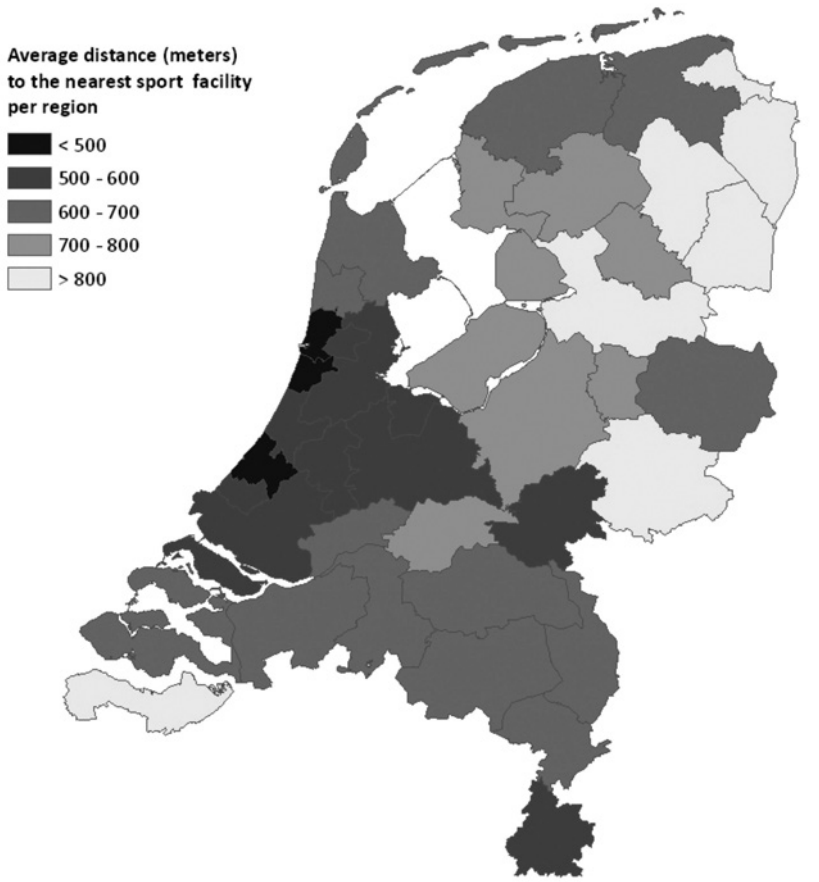
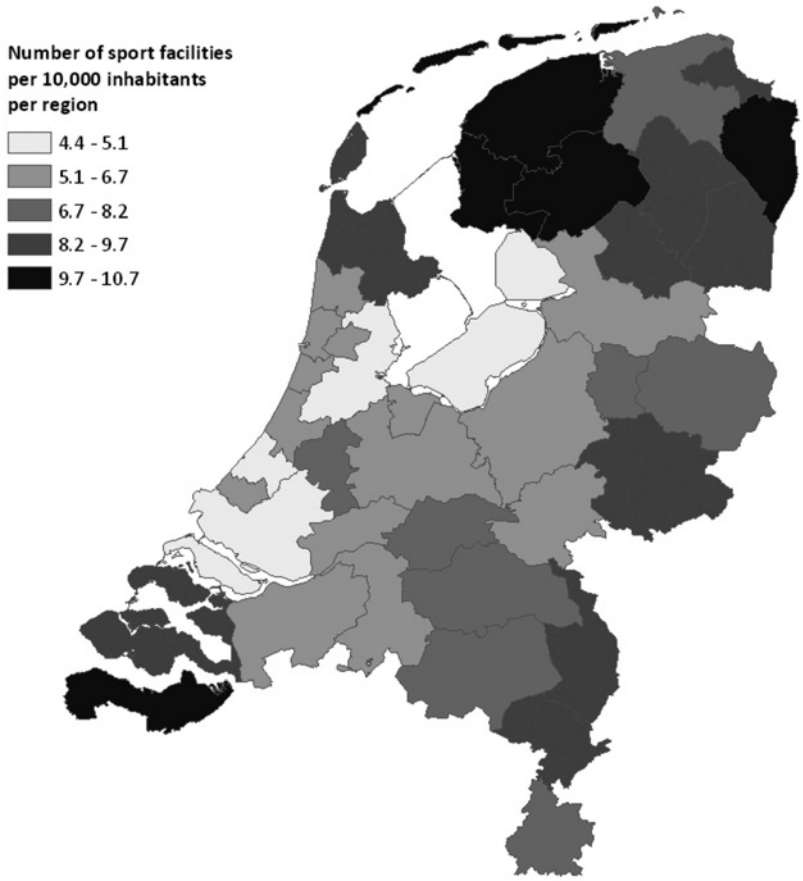


Figure 4.3. Number of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants per region.



4.4.2 Provision of sport facilities by area level of deprivation and urbanity

We analysed the variance of the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities by area level of deprivation (H1) and urbanity (H2). For area level of deprivation, no clear linear associations were found (Table 4.2). Both the most deprived areas and the most affluent areas had significantly fewer sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants and a more limited variety of sport facilities than other areas. The average distance to the nearest sport facility was lowest in the most deprived areas. Thus, even though the supply of sport facilities in deprived areas was relatively limited and one-sided, facilities were available at very close

proximity. Deprived areas had similar, or with regard to proximity better, access to sport facilities compared to affluent areas. Access to sport facilities was most extensive in the areas in our median deprivation quintile.

A linear association was found between the number of facilities per 10,000 inhabitants and urbanity: less urbanised areas offered a larger number of facilities. Furthermore, a linear association was found for proximity of facilities: the average distance to the nearest facility increased with decreasing levels of urbanity. We found no clear relation between the variety of sport facilities and urbanity. Thus, there is no evidence of a greater variety of sport facilities in more urbanised areas. Hardly urbanised and moderately urbanised areas showed the highest variety of sport facilities, while the most and least urbanised areas showed the least variety of sport facilities.

Table 4.2. Analysis of variance, all sport facilities by area level urbanity and deprivation.

	Mean number of facilities per 10.000 inhabitants	**Mean distance (metres) to nearest facility**	**Mean number of different types of facilities**
Categories of urbanization			
1 - extremely urbanized	3,49	419	2,1
2	5,22	543	2,9
3 - moderately urbanized	6,07	629	3,5
4	8,59	722	4,4
5 - not urbanized	11,38	912	2,5
Total	6,68	630	3,1
	F=45,325; *p*<0.001	*F*=334,433; *p*<0.001	*F*=179,428; *p*<0,001
Deprivation score quintile			
1 - most deprived	5,89	544	2,9
2	6,95	654	3,4
3 - middling	7,46	645	3,5
4	6,97	673	3,1
5 - most affluent	5,70	632	2,7
Total	6,55	624	3,1
	F=12,599; *p*<0.001	*F*=27,030; *p*<0.001	*F*=22,826; *p*<0,001

4.4.3 Provision of types of sport facilities by area level of deprivation and urbanity

We did find differences in geographical distribution for the different types of sport facilities identified. Private golf courses and field hockey facilities were significantly more common in affluent areas (Table 4.3), where demand for these facilities can be assumed to be higher than in less affluent areas. At the same time, contrary to our expectations, private fitness centres were more common and closest in deprived areas. Apparently, there is sufficient demand for private fitness centres in these areas to support these facilities. This result could also reflect a tendency of private fitness centres to seek locations near business districts to attract office users either before or after work. Public sport halls, swimming pools and football fields were also relatively close to inhabitants of poorer areas, although the presence of these facilities per 10,000 inhabitants was higher in other quintiles of deprivation. Nevertheless, public facilities appear more likely to be located near low-status groups than the more mobile and sport-minded higher status groups. While we found mixed evidence on the assumption that private facilities follow purchasing power, we do note the likelihood that private fitness centres follow population density, as they were less common in non-urbanised areas (Table 4.4). In contrast, public sport facilities were in general more common in non-urbanised areas, in line with the expected facilitating role of local governments in maintaining sport facilities, even where population densities are low. Football fields and tennis courts, and to a lesser extent sport halls and swimming pools, were overrepresented in non-urbanised areas. To illustrate, we found 4.16 football facilities per 10,000 inhabitants in non-urbanised areas and only 0.48 football facilities per 10,000 inhabitants in highly urbanised areas.

While in general the travel distance to the nearest sport facility increased with decreasing level of urbanity, this did not apply to all types of sport facilities. The distance to the nearest football field in highly urbanised areas was broadly comparable to the distance in non-urbanised areas (resp., 1,117 metres and 1,171 metres). Also tennis courts, sport halls and swimming pools were relatively nearby in non-urbanised areas. This is mainly due to the aforementioned overrepresentation of these facilities in these areas.

Table 4.3. Analysis of variance - area level deprivation.

		1 - most deprived	2	3 - middling	4	5 - most affluent
Mean number of facilities per 10,000 inhabitants						
Swimming pools	**	0,49	0,59	0,59	0,43	0,26
Sport halls	**	1,04	1,18	1,25	1,14	0,85
Fitness centers	*	1,59	1,60	1,54	1,30	1,38
Football facilities	**	1,33	1,48	1,76	1,77	1,09
Tennis facilities	**	0,72	1,18	1,35	1,37	1,06
Field hockey facilities	**	0,16	0,18	0,16	0,20	0,31
Golf courses	*	0,07	0,11	0,15	0,13	0,22
Athletics venues		0,10	0,14	0,11	0,12	0,10
Baseball grounds		0,10	0,09	0,10	0,11	0,15
Korfball facilities	**	0,28	0,39	0,45	0,41	0,29
Mean distance (meters) to nearest facility						
Swimming pools	**	1499	1810	2039	2169	1795
Sport halls	**	992	1291	1301	1309	1146
Fitness centers	**	862	1163	1261	1363	958
Football facilities	**	982	1115	1066	1144	1210
Tennis facilities		1209	1187	1186	1181	1153
Field hockey facilities	**	3239	4094	3719	3367	2395
Golf courses	**	4873	5856	5532	4802	4039
Athletics venues	**	3782	4630	4968	4541	3700
Baseball grounds	**	5030	7294	6584	5318	3825
Korfball facilities	**	2724	3621	3370	3141	2467

Note: Significance of deviance: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.001$.

Table 4.4. Analyses of variance - urbanity.

		1 - extremely urbanized	2	3 - moderately urbanized	4	5 - not urbanized
Mean number of facilities per 10,000 inhabitants						
Swimming pools	**	0,21	0,32	0,40	0,81	0,74
Sport halls	**	0,44	1,00	1,17	1,58	1,40
Fitness centers	**	1,71	1,54	1,54	1,83	0,83
Football facilities	**	0,48	0,94	1,00	1,69	4,16
Tennis facilities	**	0,27	0,65	0,89	1,44	2,89
Field hockey facilities	*	0,07	0,18	0,30	0,32	0,13
Golf courses	**	0,01	0,06	0,12	0,21	0,36
Athletics venues	*	0,05	0,13	0,17	0,17	0,05
Baseball grounds		0,08	0,16	0,16	0,08	0,06
Korfball facilities	**	0,17	0,25	0,30	0,46	0,75
Mean distance (meters) to nearest facility						
Swimming pools	**	1209	1487	1608	1921	3441
Sport halls	**	905	889	903	1105	2629
Fitness centers	**	468	672	842	1090	3033
Football facilities	**	1117	1017	1130	1092	1171
Tennis facilities	**	1153	1083	1134	1109	1564
Field hockey facilities	**	2153	2235	2470	4448	6689
Golf courses	**	3549	4064	4890	6141	7357
Athletics venues	**	2380	2737	3758	5875	7995
Baseball grounds	**	2425	3450	5272	8126	10501
Korfball facilities	**	1662	2333	2825	3881	5298

Note: Significance of deviance: $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.001$.

4.5 Conclusion

The objective of our study was to investigate key indicators of the spatial accessibility of different types of sport facilities in the Netherlands. We assessed the type and location of facilities in conjunction with information on the population, providing insights not only on the overall availability of sport facilities, but also on specific types of sports facilities.

Our results give rise to three main conclusions. First, we find that, even though there are inequalities in the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities, the Netherlands provides a rather dense sport infrastructure. Offering on average 6.68 of the selected facilities per 10,000 inhabitants and approximately three different kinds of sport facilities in each area code, there are sport facilities relatively near everyone in the country. The average distance to the nearest sport facility is just over 600 metres. Even in non-urbanised areas, the average distance to the nearest sport facility is less than 1 kilometre. This helps to explain why, among all Europeans, the Dutch are most satisfied with the sport facilities in the area they live (European Commission, 2014).

Second, our findings for the Netherlands do not support the idea of deprivation amplification, which holds that areas with poorer people would also have inferior public and private sport facilities. This finding contrasts with the assumption often found in policy documents that deprived areas have poorer access to facilities. It is also counter to research on other European countries, such as France (Ministère des Sport, 2011) and England (Hillsdon et al., 2007), that found an under-representation of sport facilities in deprived areas. Rather, our findings support a more differentiated model by which some resources are equally accessible to all inhabitants regardless of their neighbourhood's level of deprivation, some facilities are more prevalent in and closer to more affluent areas, and some facilities are more prevalent in and closer to more deprived areas. Indeed, this study shows that both the most deprived and the most affluent areas have the fewest facilities per 10,000 inhabitants as well as the least variety of sport facilities. Nevertheless, sport facilities were in general closer to people in deprived areas, particularly public swimming pools, sport halls, football fields and fitness centres. This is in line with findings on Scotland (Lamb et al., 2012). Field hockey and golf are mainly practised by higher income groups, and probably for that reason are located in affluent areas, as supply here likely follows demand. However, other factors might be at play as well. Field hockey facilities were more recently developed than, for instance, football facilities and tennis courts, and it is plausible that this more recently constructed sport infrastructure is more easily realized in the more spacious affluent areas than in less affluent areas. Golf courses are space-consuming and therefore in general located outside the major cities in more affluent suburbs.

It is remarkable that private fitness centres were found to be least present in affluent areas, as we expected private sport facilities to follow purchasing power. An explanation could be the positive correlation between area level of deprivation and urbanity[2] and the required population threshold for viable operation of a private fitness centre.

Third, our analyses partly confirm our hypotheses derived from sports place theory (Bale, 2003). We found evidence of shorter travel distances to sport facilities in more urbanised areas and higher numbers of sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants in less urbanised areas. This geographical imbalance was also found in Norway and Denmark (Rafoss & Troelsen, 2010). No evidence, however, was found for a greater variety of sport facilities in more urbanised areas. This could be a result of the inclusion in our analysis of only the more common types of facilities. We did not include, for instance, facilities for horse riding, rowing, ice skating, mountain climbing and squash. Furthermore, our outcomes might have been different if we had focused on the variety of facilities and population within 1 kilometre squares, or within municipalities instead of within postal code areas. Nevertheless, our results suggest that a basic configuration of sport facilities is present in most places, irrespective of their population size, and beyond these, there is a subset of higher order sport facilities that require higher population thresholds. These latter facilities in general need larger catchment areas, reflected in larger average distances to the nearest facility. Examples of these facilities are baseball fields, golf courses and athletics venues. Sport facilities that can be considered part of the basic configuration are football fields, swimming pools, sport halls and tennis courts. These primary facilities are overrepresented in non-urbanised and deprived areas and for most Dutch can be found relatively close by. Private fitness centres can also be considered part of this basic configuration of sport facilities, except in non-urbanised areas. This indicates that for these private fitness centres, a certain population threshold is probably more important than it is for the aforementioned public facilities.

Certainly our study has some drawbacks. One limitation is the fact that distances to facilities were determined by a straight-line measurement, disregarding potential barriers to access, rather than using street travel distances. This could mean that actual distances in rural areas are longer, due to the less dense road networks in these regions. Elsewhere, highways and waterways might interfere with access, resulting in greater travel distances than calculated. In general the actual distance to the nearest sport facility will be a bit longer than the straight-line distance used in the current study. Furthermore, no information

[2] Correlation (0.181) is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

was available on the size of facilities and the effective amount of sport space provided. A previous study of the size of football facilities does point to more, but smaller facilities in non-urbanised areas, compared to urbanised areas (Romijn & Hoekman, 2013). With the data available, we could not analyse differences between the effective sport space offered by facilities. Romijn and Hoekman (2013), focusing on football, found both a larger net area of space for sport per inhabitant in rural areas and less effective use of this space based on the large number of small-scale football facilities observed.

The current study indicates that by assessing the distribution of sport facilities in a structured way, relevant information can be obtained for sport facilities planning and sport participation policy. To further develop knowledge on sport facilities and the connection between sport policy and sport participation, three trajectories can be envisioned for future research. First, the aforementioned limitations of this study suggest the need to expand the DSS data to include the size and quality of the sport facilities provided. Second, it would be interesting to establish a stronger link with sport policy and identify determinants of the spatial distribution of sport facilities. The current study found indications of both market forces and conscious planning by government. However, a qualitative approach could go further in identifying the logic underlying location decisions on sport facilities. Third, further study is needed on the alleged interdependence between the presence, variety and proximity of facilities and sport participation. Sport facilities are generally closest to people in deprived areas, though sport participation rates are lowest in these same areas. Moreover, sport participation in the Netherlands is known to be higher in less urbanised areas (Hoekman & Tiessen-Raaphorst, 2011), though our results clearly show that distances to sport facilities are considerably larger in less urbanised areas. Considering the high satisfaction of the Dutch population with facilities for practising sport (European Commission, 2014), the Netherlands does not appear to have a problem of accessibility of sport facilities. It could be argued that, given the dense sport infrastructure, differences in sport participation in the Netherlands are unrelated to the presence, variety and proximity of sport facilities, but instead due to other factors. This suggestion is in line with findings of Houlihan and White (2002). They concluded that the facility construction programmes of the 1980s in various European countries satisfied latent demand and contributed to increasing sports participation levels, but after this period sport participation levelled off, with further increases in participation mainly observed in sports practised in the public space, such as running (see also Scheerder & Breedveld, 2015).This development, combined with the current level of accessibility of sport facilities, could in times of financial austerity even legitimate disinvestments in sport facilities.

To conclude, our study enhances knowledge on the distribution of sport facilities in the Netherlands and tests indicators that might help policymakers critically

assess their spending on sport provision and make well-founded decisions on potential changes in the configuration of sport infrastructure. Our findings indicate that, especially in times of financial austerity, policymakers should focus on making better use of the existing sport infrastructure and increasing the attractiveness of the sport facilities available by improving the quality of facilities and the organisation of sport rather than increasing the presence, variety and proximity of sport accommodations.

Chapter 5

Providing for the rich? The effect of public investment in sport on sport (club) participation of vulnerable youth and adults

ABSTRACT

The relevance of local sport policy to achieve 'sport for all' has been widely recognized. Public spending on sport is seen necessary to keep sport affordable, while specific policy programs are aimed to include groups that lag behind in sport participation. This paper explores the impact of local government's sport expenditures on sport (club) participation and more particularly its impact on sport (club) participation differences between higher and lower socio-economic positions, in the Netherlands. Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model is used as a theoretical starting point for our analyses and we performed multiple 3-level logistic regression analyses. The analyses were conducted separately for youth and adults using information from a large national population survey enriched with secondary data on municipal sport expenditures and policy programs. Our findings suggest that the effect of sport policy is most substantial for youth sport club participation. For adults, sport participation tends to be negatively associated with municipal sport expenditures and policy programs. With regard to the impact of sport policy on participation differences between higher and lower socio-economic positions, we find that for youth higher municipal sport expenditure is associated with smaller sport club participation differences between higher and lower socio-economic groups. Overall, our results imply that in the Netherlands municipal sport policy does matter, although primarily for youth, in addition to the social environment and socio-economic position of individuals. With these results our study contributes to an evidence-base for sport policy and to the current body of knowledge on explaining differences in sport participation.

Keywords: Sport policy; socioeconomic position; sport-for-all; voluntary sport club; multilevel

A slightly different version of this chapter has been published in the European Journal for Sport and Society (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017b). A previous draft of this chapter has been presented at the European Association for the Sociology of Sport annual congress in Copenhagen, May 2016.

5.1 Introduction

Sport for all is a central theme in sport policy in the Netherlands, as in many European countries (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). Its relevance is amongst others underlined by the acceptance of the European Sport For All Charter (Council of Europe, 2001). This charter puts emphasis on the right to participate in sport and on the responsibility of governments to provide for basic sporting needs of society. The concept of Sport for All is however very broad and serves as a rather 'convenient umbrella term for a diverse and constantly shifting set of objectives' (Houlihan & White, 2002, p.25). In many countries the focus on sport for all, and sport for sport's sake, moved to highlighting the social values and health benefits of sport and this development took place apart from the attention on high performance sport, which is organized at the national level (for an overview: Hallmann & Petry, 2013; Hoye, Nicholson & Houlihan, 2010). Policy priorities related to the social value of sport and health benefits primarily focus on children and young people, and often programmes aim to reduce the costs for sports associated with those in poor health and poor educational achievement (Green, 2006). In the Netherlands a similar shift is visible. Local sport policy in the Netherlands, and in other Northern European countries, foremost concentrates on developing and improving a local sport infrastructure (includes several types of sport facilities but not parks, fitness centers, and cycling and walking paths etc.), supporting voluntary sport clubs (VSCs), and initiating programs and partnerships, paying special attention to children, lower socio-economic status inhabitants, and other disadvantaged groups (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013).

Sport policy's special attention to lower socio-economic status groups is understandable given the aim to reduce long-term costs associated with higher degrees of inactivity, overweight patterns, and lower educational achievements of these groups. With regard to inactivity previous studies have shown that household income and educational attainment are important determinants for sport participation (e.g. Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Farrel & Shields, 2002). Individuals with higher socio-economic status (e.g. higher educational attainment and income) are more likely to participate in sport in the Netherlands and in the EU. Furthermore, the policy attention fits with the notion of compensation in which government policies and public support are intended to compensate for other existing inequalities. In this case municipal sport expenditures may compensate for social inequalities in sport participation, and therefore contribute to the sport for all goal. Though, despite the local government's sport expenditures in the past, several studies still note that sport for all is not yet achieved in Europe (e.g. Breuer & Wicker, 2008; European Commission, 2014; Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Rowe, 2015; Van Tuyckom, 2011).

Some authors argue that sport for all can never be achieved (Skille, 2011), as sport is a social phenomenon and part of a person's relatively stable habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Sport behaviour is linked to unequal social, cultural and economic capital and distinctively related lifestyles. Governments nevertheless hold high expectations from their involvement in sport, although sport policy issues are rather uncertain, complex, and intractable, and may be identified as wicked problems (Sam, 2009). Furthermore, studies focusing on the distribution of public expenditure in the Netherlands noted that high income groups seem to benefit most from public spending on sport facilities, while it explicitly intended to reach the lower socio-economic status groups (Ter Rele, 2007). These observations question the added value of public expenditures on sport when it comes to sport participation and reaching out to disadvantaged groups in particular. It might even give rise to accepting the idea of accumulation, where it is proclaimed that public spending on sport adds to inequalities in sport participation rather than compensating them.

With the exception of research on SPLISS, sport policy leading to international sporting success (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & van Bottenburg, 2015), the body of research on the impact of sport policy is limited. Houlihan (2005) noted that the increasing involvement of the government with sport has not been accompanied by a comparative growth of the scientific study of that involvement. To our knowledge, until now there have been no studies directed at the impact of public spending on sport and the ideal of sport for all. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to provide insights into the impact of local sport policies (sport expenditures and programs) on individual sport participation. We particularly focus on sport (club) participation and on the differences between higher and lower socio-economic status groups. We employ a multilevel design to study socio-demographics on the individual level, as well as policy characteristics on the municipal level (macro level). We conduct separate analyses for youth (6-17 years old) and adults (25-79 years old)[3], as these groups differ considerably in their sport participation patterns, and (local) policy mainly focuses on children and young people (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). The youth are the most intensive users of public sport facilities, members of sport clubs, and the prime beneficiates of financial arrangements and sport stimulation programs of municipalities. Adults are known for their participation in unorganized sports and the use of more private sport facilities. Thus, we expect different outcomes of local policies and sport expenditures for these different age groups. We investigate both sport participation in general as well as sport

[3] The age group of 18-24 years old was excluded as this group contains mainly students that generally live on their own, practice sport at private university facilities, and have a low income. With this they are an a-typical group and we decided to exclude this group from the analyses to provide a more robust test of our assumptions.

club participation. Voluntary Sport Clubs (VSCs) are the main beneficiates of the public money spend on sport, as they are the main users of public sport facilities and most often recipients of municipal sport subsidies. Hence, VSCs play an important role in local sport policy. This applies for large parts of Europe and is particularly the case in Austria, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France, Northern Ireland, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Belgium (Hoekman, Van der Werff, Nagel & Breuer, 2015).

The abovementioned issues amount to two main research questions of this study: *(1) To what extent do municipal expenditures on sport and sport policy programs have an impact on the level of sport participation and sport club participation of youth and adults (main effect)? (2) To what extent do municipal expenditures on sport and sport policy programs have an impact on the differences in local sport participation and sport club participation between socio-economic status groups for both youth and adults (cross-level interaction)?* By answering these questions we aim to add to the small yet growing body of knowledge on the topic of impact of municipal sport expenditures and policy programs on sport for all. A topic that has become even more significant in various countries in times of austerity and announced budget cuts of municipalities (Hoekman, Van der Roest & Van der Poel, 2018; King, 2014). Furthermore, we aim to contribute to well informed discussions on sport policy as well as to the understanding of social inequality in sport participation.

5.2 Theoretical background

We start with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model as a theoretical guideline in the current study. This model implies that behaviours of individuals are closely related to and influenced by their environment, such as the policy environment at the macro level. The influence that policy makers assume to have is built on the presumed relation between the level of sport policy (macro), and an individual's sport behaviour (micro). The importance of the environment with regard to sport behavior is further highlighted by Liu et al. (2009, p.19) as they state that "sport inequities occur as a consequence of a complex interaction of cultural, social, geographical and economic factors". People learn and adapt their behaviour in contact with their environment, being within the family, at school or work, or within a neighbourhood. To deal with this phenomenon in the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner, different environments or systems are distinguished at the micro level, meso level, and macro level. On the macro level, the municipal sport policy and related expenditures on sport may affect an individual's sport behavior by providing facilities, supporting sport organisations, initiating programs, and lowering the financial threshold to stimulate individuals to take part in sport or in a VSC. On the meso level, the

social environment characteristics of a neighbourhood may affect an individual's sport behaviour (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a). On the micro level, educational attainment and household income are aspects that may affect an individual's sport behaviour.

Several studies provide support for the socio-ecological approach employing these different levels (macro, meso, micro) of analysis to enhance the understanding of differences in individual behaviour (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a; Keenan, 2002). This approach could also proof fruitful in providing a better understanding of the impact of local sport policy on sport behaviour. The model is well established within the domain of physical activity and health studies (e.g. Stokols, Allen & Bellingham, 1996; Van Lenthe, Brug, & Mackenbach, 2005), but has seldom been at the core of sport participation research (with the exception of Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a and Van Tuyckom, 2011) or in studies on the impact of sport policy. The relatively few studies on the impact of sport policy generally focus on a specific element of local sport policy or on the meso-level of sport policy itself (Houlihan, 2005).

In our study we employ the socio-ecological model to identify the impact of municipal policy programs and sport expenditures (macro level), in addition to neighbourhood characteristics (meso level), and individual characteristics (micro level) on the sport behaviours of individuals. In our case we expect sport (club) participation to be determined by individual characteristics (micro level), especially a person's (or family's) socio-economic position, in conjunction with the policy environment of the municipality (macro level). Applying this socio-ecological model and using a multilevel perspective to study the relationship between socially differentiated sport participation and municipal sport expenditures and sport policy programs is one of our main advancements.

5.2.1 Municipal sport policy - main effect (macro level)

For this study we focus on the situation in the Netherlands, since we have data available on sport expenditures and policy programs for all municipalities. Furthermore, policy processes that are visible in the Netherlands are also reflected in other European countries (see Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

Alleged evidence for increased sport participation as a result of policy programs and interventions was found in the Netherlands in the 1960's and 1970's as a growth in sport participation coincided with an increasing provision of subsidized sport facilities by municipalities (Hoekman & van der Poel, 2009). This provision of sport facilities was however (partly) initiated by an increasing demand for sport practices, meaning that supply followed the demand for sport facilities. A further democratization of sport was realized as VSCs were provided with

low-priced facilities and opened up for a broader public. From this period on, providing access to public sport facilities at a low financial threshold has been a major policy tool in Dutch municipalities. This policy tool to subsidize the use of sport facilities was accountable for the larger share of the sport budget. These subsidized sport facilities are then used by VSCs to especially attract youth (Van der Werff, Hoekman & Van Kalmthout, 2015). Nowadays, about 85-90% of the municipal sport budget is dedicated to sport facilities corresponding to about EUR 1 billion in the Netherlands (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). The other 15% of the municipal sport budget is dedicated to specific programs and arrangements to stimulate sport participation, such as Neighbourhood Sport Coaches (NSC) and the Youth Sport Fund (YSF) to cover the costs of sport club participation for children living in poverty. Both programs are aimed at increasing sport club participation especially for youth[4]. Hence, we infer that especially youth participation is impacted by these policy programs.

Irrespective of the policy developments discussed above, the increase in sport participation in the last two decades in the Netherlands has mainly been related to sport activities that do not necessarily take place in municipal sport facilities and are not linked to municipal sport expenditures. Fitness has become one of the most popular sports in the Netherlands (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013) and within the European Union (European Commission, 2014), relying almost entirely on private supply with (almost) no involvement of the government. Furthermore, there is an evident trend of individualization exemplified in growing participation in individual sports that do not per se require a public sport facility. Examples of these are the growth of running (see Scheerder & Breedveld, 2015) and cycling, which are mostly practiced on the public road. Both are particularly popular among adults. Youth, to the contrary, are the main users of public sport facilities.

Consequently, we propose to test the hypothesis that sport participation of youth and adults is partly dependent on the public sport expenditure and policy programs of the municipality a person is living in. We expect possible effects of municipal sport expenditures and policy programs to be different for youth and adults. Given the different sport preferences of these age groups, youth are more likely to benefit from public expenditures. Furthermore, we expect the effect to be more substantial for sport club participation, especially when it concerns youth, as VSCs are the main beneficiates of public sport expenditure.

Apart from this alleged influence of sport policy at the macro level, more factors should be taken into account to understand differences in sport participation. In our analyses we additionally control for factors at the meso and micro level.

[4] NSCs focus for a small extent on adults as well and are mainly employed to provide activities in areas where sport participation rates lag behind.

Hoekman, Breedveld and Kraaykamp (2017a) have proven for instance that a favourable social environment (SES neighbourhood and neighbourhood safety) at the meso level increases the likelihood of sport participation.

At the micro level, the current state of literature on sport participation identifies various key determinants (e.g. sociological, economical). Generally, educational attainment and household income are positioned as important explanatory variables within models for sport participation. These socio-economic variables are important for either the decision to participate in sport (Breuer, Hallmann & Wicker, 2011; European Commission, 2014; Farrel & Shields, 2002), and the choice of type of sport (Breuer, Hallmann & Wicker, 2011; Taks & Scheerder, 2006). Concerning educational level, there is consensus that a higher educational level is associated with greater participation in sport (Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). With regard to household income levels, results are more mixed; but in general a higher household income seems to correlate with an increased probability for an individual to practice sport (Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). Students, with low incomes and high participation rates, are the exception of this. Household income is particularly important for explaining differences in sport participation of children, and reflects the socio-economic status of the family household (Vandermeerschen, Vos & Scheerder, 2015). The association of educational attainment and household income with sport participation levels points towards the importance of so-called cultural and economic capital for sport participation, with Bourdieu's theory of distinction and habitus as a starting point (Bourdieu, 1984; 1978). Cultural capital refers to knowledge and skills. Economic capital refers to monetary assets such as household income. In the field of sport, the composition of capital can result in participating in a different type of sport or type of sport organisation, because one has a sense of place or because it does fit with an individual's capital attributes (Bourdieu, 1984). According to Bourdieu (1978), a sporting habitus is class-specific and relates to different preferences with regard to the type of sport. In line with Bourdieu, Stuij (2015) illustrated how children of lower and higher classes acquire their sporting habitus differently. A sporting habitus, conceived as a sort of 'second nature' which produces practice in combination with (sporting) capital in a specific (sporting) field, is largely acquired unaware (Stuij, 2015). As a result, various studies still find social stratification in sport throughout Europe (e.g. Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Hoekman, Breedveld & Scheerder, 2011; Rowe, 2015). Consequently, in our modelling, we control for the socio-economic position, represented by the household income and for adults in addition to the educational attainment.

5.2.2 Cross-level interaction (macro-micro level)

In the Netherlands, local sport policies typically focus on providing sport facilities and promoting sport particularly targeted towards groups that lag behind in

participation (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). Consequently, policy activities with regard to sport promotion are mainly directed at lower socio-economic status groups to enable them to participate in sports. One way of doing so, is by providing sport facilities that are popular in lower socio-economic status groups for low rates, such as football or swimming facilities. One other policy option is to install a Youth Sport Fund (YSF) that covers the costs of sport participation for people from low income households, or by considering Neighbourhood Sport Coaches (NSC) who initiate sport activities in lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods. Given this specific focus within local policy, we expect that people from vulnerable groups benefit most from municipal sport expenditures and the various implemented sport policy programs. With regard to municipal sport expenditures, we assume that both youth and adults of lower socio-economic backgrounds will benefit from these policies. With regard to the YSF and the NSC, we foremost expect more participation of youth from low income households. Consequently, we test a cross-level interaction of the macro-level of level of municipal sport expenditures and policy programs with the micro-level of individual socio-economic characteristics.

The above is founded in a compensation premise in which governmental policies are intended to compensate existing inequalities in sport by public support. Contrarily, studies have noted that public expenditure is mainly reaching higher socio-economic status groups as these groups tend to participate more in subsidized leisure time activities and tend to make more use of public facilities (Ter Rele, 2007). This would suggest an accumulation of advantages, since social differences in sport participation then would be even larger as a result of public expenditures. In this case, it is expected that public expenditures on sport mainly attract higher socio-economic individuals and thereby enlarge the participation gap between people from lower and higher socio-economic groups. Note that this accumulation expectations contradicts the above mentioned compensation hypothesis. It, however, fits within the lively debates on sport policy issues as wicked problems and related difficulties of achieving behavioural change (Sam, 2009).

5.3 Data and measurements

5.3.1 Data

We tested our hypotheses using data derived from the 'Injuries and Physical Activity in the Netherlands' survey (further OBiN). OBiN is a large-scale population survey in the Netherlands geared to measure levels of physical activity, sport participation, and injury-proneness among different social groups.

We merged the 2012, 2013 and 2014 OBiN datasets resulting in a total of 3,265 respondents aged 6-17 years and 15,447 respondents aged 25-79 years,

living in 399 Dutch municipalities. The year samples of OBiN were drawn from the InterviewBase panel of IPSOS (a market research company), consisting of 230,000 respondents in total. Quota sampling was performed to explore sample representativeness with respect to age, gender, educational level, household composition, and area of residence. Accordingly, OBiN was found to produce high-quality data on both sport participation and individual characteristics (Vullings & Bank, 2015).

5.3.2 Measurements

Sport participation was measured as taking part in a sport activity according to the rules and regulations of the sport sector (e.g. football, swimming, fitness, running, and tennis), both in- and outside of clubs or competitions, and excluding sport activities during classes at school. Respondents were asked how many times they participated in a sport activity in the last twelve months. Based on policy standards in the Netherlands, people were classified as sport participants if they took part in sports at least 12 times in the last twelve months (Ministerie van VWS, 2009). Subsequently, if a respondent stated to have practiced sport at least 12 times in the last twelve months, the discrete variable sport participation was coded 1, and 0 if a respondent stated to have not participated or practiced sport less than 12 times in the last twelve months. Those participating in sport were asked in which context they took part. If a respondent indicated that one of the practiced sports was performed as a member of a voluntary sport club (VSC), a discrete variable sport club participation was coded 1, otherwise it was coded 0.

Macro level sport policy characteristics at the municipal level were available from secondary sources and included by linking municipality codes to OBiN respondents. Sport expenditure data of municipalities was available for the years 2010 to 2014 at Statistics Netherlands. To compare sport expenditures of municipalities we used the net expenditure per inhabitant per year and calculated the average yearly costs for the period 2010-2014 to obtain a robust measure. To include data on local sport policy programs we used information of the Mulier Institute on the presence of Neighbourhood Sport Coaches (NSC). These NSCs are responsible to organize sport activities to stimulate sport participation especially for groups that lag behind. We calculated the number of full-time equivalents of NSCs per 10.000 inhabitants. We further used information on municipal investments in a Youth Sport Fund (YSF). YSF supports families in poverty to receive funding for the costs of sport participation for their children. We used the yearly report of the YSF, which listed all participating municipalities to code participating (1) and non-participating (0) municipalities (Jeugdsportfonds, 2016).

Table 5.1 Overview and descriptive statistics of variables.

		6-17 years; n=3265		25-79 years; n=15447	
Variables	**Description**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Dependent variables					
Sport participation	Do you participate in sport (excluding sport at school)? (1=yes)	0,88	0,32	0,63	0,48
Sport club participation	Do you practice one of your sports within a VSC? (1=yes)	0,77	0,42	0,20	0,40
Policy variables (macro level - municipality)					
Sport expenses	Municipal sport expenses per year per inhabitant (in €)	69,17	20,94	69,86	20,97
Youth Sport Fund (YSF)	Presence of Youth Sport Fund (1=yes)	0,57	0,50	0,62	0,49
Neighbourhood Sport Coach (NSC)	Number of employed full-time equivalent of NSC per 10.000 inhabitants	1,39	0,50	1,40	0,44
Social environment and urbanity (meso level - neighbourhood)					
SES neighbourhood	Aggregated socio-economic statusscore of the neighbourhood	0,33	1,04	0,14	1,12
Safety neighbourhood	Aggregated safety score of the neighbourhood (higher=safer)	14,00	24,24	6,30	27,06
Urbanity	Urbanity of the area of residence of the individual: 5 categories (range 1-5)	3,02	1,27	2,69	1,28
Socio-economic position (micro level)					
Household income	Net household income per year (in €)	35.919	16.729	32.473	14.845
Eductional attainment	Highest educational level attained by the individual: 5 categories (range 1-5)			2,06	0,80
low				*29%*	
middle				*36%*	
high				*35%*	
Individual variables (micro level)					
Gender	Gender of the individual (1=male)	0,52	0,50	0,54	0,50
Age	Age of the individual (in years)	11,31	3,38	49,77	14,26
Household size	The size of the household of the individual (number of people)	4,23	0,97	2,47	1,25

Several individual level characteristics were included in the analyses. Educational attainment was measured in six categories ranging from no education or primary school only, to holding a university degree. We recoded these categories into: (1) lower education, (2) middle education, and (3) higher education. We included educational attainment in the analyses for adults only, as the age group of 6 to 17 years of age is still enrolled in education and current educational attainment does not provide a true reflection of a person's socio-economic position. Their socio-economic position is considered to be to a large extent related to the household income of their family. This income variable concerns a respondent's household income and was available in the panel data in seven categories, ranging from a minimum income, to three times the national average income. We calculated the centroid of each category and applied a log transformation to obtain a continuous measure.

To provide a strong test we also controlled for the influence of other socio-demographics such as age, gender, and household size, and urbanity of the area of residence. From previous studies it is well-known that these aspects influence sport participation. Sport participation declines with increasing age (see, e.g., Engel & Nagel, 2011; Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). Regarding gender, research has shown that in most European countries men participate more in sport than women (Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Van Tuyckom, 2011). The Netherlands, however, is one of the few countries with a gender-neutral participation profile, although men still participate more in VSCs (Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Scheerder & Breedveld, 2004). Finally, a large family is negatively associated with sport participation (Downward, 2007). Age and household size were measured as continuous variables. Gender was dummy coded (men=1). Also, urbanity of the area of residence is known to make a difference with regard to sport participation. In more urban areas sport participation rates are lower compared to less urban areas (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a). Our measure of urbanity is derived from an address-density classification by Statistics Netherlands that provides the average number of addresses within a 1 km radius. A customary differentiation into five categories was used: (1) not urbanized, <500 addresses per km2, (2) hardly urbanized, 500-1.000 addresses per km2, (3) moderately urbanized, 1.000-1.500 addresses per km2, (4) strongly urbanized, 1.500-2.500 addresses per km2, and (5) extremely urbanized, >2.500 addresses per km^2.

Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model (1979) implies that behaviours of individuals might be influenced by their direct social environment at the neighbourhood level (meso level). Therefore, we controlled for several neighbourhood characteristics in our analysis to accurately model policy effects at the municipal level (macro level). Social environment characteristics

of a respondent's neighbourhood were available from secondary sources and included by linking four-digit postal codes to our OBiN respondents. Socioeconomic status scores of the neighbourhoods were based on aggregation of educational level, position on the labour market, and income level of neighbourhood residents (Knol, 2012). Neighbourhood safety was calculated by aggregating information from the 'Level of Living Barometer' (Van der Reijden et al., 2013), which includes criminogenic aspects like vandalism, nuisance, violation of public order, violent crime, and theft. Table 5.1 presents the descriptive characteristics of our variables.

5.3.3 Analytic strategy

Our hypotheses, as well as our data, are hierarchically structured and we assume that individual sport behaviour is not only determined by individual factors at the micro level, but also determined by environmental factors at the meso level and macro level. It is essential to employ multilevel analyses (Heck et al., 2012) to adequately uncover how elements of sport policy at the municipal level impact individual sport participation. Conventional regression techniques are not designed to take this hierarchical structure into account possibly leading to inaccurate estimates. Multilevel frameworks have already been applied in sport participation research, for instance with regard to the role of sport supply in determining sport participation (Wicker, Hallmann & Breuer, 2013) and with regard to differences in sport participation between countries (Van Tuyckom, 2011).

To answer our research questions 3-level logistic regression models are estimated with general sport participation and with sport club participation as dependent variables. We estimated four models: (1) a baseline model, (2) a model with individual (micro level) and neighbourhood (control) variables (meso-level), (3) a full model also including the municipality variables (macro level), and (4) a model with cross-level interactions for socio-economic position and macro level variables (municipal sport expenditures and policy programs). We conducted our analyses for two different age groups: youth (6-17 years old) and adults (25-79 years old).

5.4 Results

The results of the multi-level analyses are presented in Table 5.2a and Table 5.2b, displaying B-coefficients and standard errors (SE) in brackets. Table 5.2a displays the findings for the youth (6-17 years old) and Table 5.2b for the adults (25-79 years). Significant cross level interactions were not included in Table 5.2a and 5.2b, but visualized in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

Our baseline model indicates that there is variance at the municipal level that legitimizes our multilevel modeling (Heck et al., 2012). We calculated intraclass correlations by dividing the variance estimate of the intercept model with the within group variance term ($\pi 2/3=3,29$) plus the variance estimate of the intercept model (Heck et al., 2012). The intraclass correlation is the highest for the model of sport club participation for youth (6,53%) and the lowest for the model of sport participation for adults (2,26%).

In Table 5.2a it is displayed that at the macro level municipal sport expenditures per inhabitant are positively related to sport participation and sport club participation for youth. The effect of municipal sport expenditures is most substantial for sport club participation of youth. The YSF and the NSC are not related to more sport (club) participation for youth. For adults (see Table 5.2b), a significant negative relation was found between municipal sport expenditures and NSC and sport participation. No significant effects were found between aspects of sport policy (sport expenditures and policy programs) and sport club participation of adults. The above-mentioned significant effects exist alongside the effects of the control variables at the meso and micro level.

On the meso-level, urbanization only proved to be significant for adults' sport participation and sport club participation. Adults in strongly urbanized areas have a higher likelihood to practice sport in general and in a VSC as compared to the reference group of adults in extremely urbanized areas. The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood proved to be significant for sport participation and sport club participation for both youth and adults, while the safety of the neighbourhood was significant for sport participation for both youth and adults. Higher levels of safety and socio-economic status of a neighbourhood are related to higher levels of sport participation, which is in accordance with prior research (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a).

At the micro level, the importance of the socio-economic position for sport participation is found both for adults and youths. A higher household income leads to higher likelihoods of sport club participation for youth and sport participation for adults. Furthermore, we find that adults with a higher educational attainment are more likely to participate in sport and also to be a member of a VSC. This positive and significant impact of educational attainment on sport participation is in accordance with prior research (Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). Regarding the controls, we find that the odds for sport participation and sport club participation decline with an increasing age, as was assumed and found in previous research (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Van der Werff, Hoekman & Van Kalmthout, 2015). With regard to gender, women seem less likely to participate in sport and within a sport club. Household size is relevant with regard to youth for both sport

participation and sport club participation, with lower odds in larger households. For adults, household size is not relevant.

Evidence for the assumed cross-level interaction (macro-micro level) of the municipal sport expenditures and policy programs with individual socio-economic position were only detected with regard to sport club participation. Figure 5.1 shows, in line with the compensation premise, a negative cross-level interaction of individual household income and municipal sport expenditures for sport club participation of youth. Higher municipal sport expenditures thus correspond with smaller differences in sport club participation between youth of higher and lower household incomes. For adults, no cross-level interactions were found for municipal sport expenditures on either sport club participation or sport participation. However, cross-level interactions were found related to sport club participation for NSC with household income and lower educational levels (see Figure 5.2 and 5.3), although no significant main effect of NSC on sport club participation was found. Contrary to our expectations a negative cross-level interaction was noted for sport club participation of adults for lower income groups and lower educational levels, meaning that the participation gap between income groups increases with an increasing number of NSC per 10.000 inhabitants.

Table 5.2a. Results of 3-level logistic regression analyses, youth (6-17 years old)

	Sport participation			Sport club participation		
	baseline	**micro-meso**	**full model**	**baseline**	**micro-meso**	**full model**
Intercept	2,046 (,06)***	1,916 (1,01)*	1,744 (1,03)*	1,282 (,05)***	1,926 (,82)**	1,811 (,84)**
Policy variables (macro level - municipality)						
municipal sport expenses			0,004 (,00)*			0,005 (,00)**
Youth sport fund (YSF)			0,007 (,11)			-0,024 (,10)
Neighbourhood sport coach (FTE per 10.000 inhabitants)			-0,064 (,11)			-0,127 (,10)
Social environment (meso level - neighbourhood)						
SES neighbourhood		0,175 (,05)***	0,184 (,05)***		0,174 (,05)***	0,183 (,05)***
Safety neighbourhood		0,008 (,00)**	0,009 (,00)**		0,004 (,00)	0,004 (,00)
Socio-economic position (micro-level)						
Log household income		0,342 (,21)	0,332 (,21)		0,400 (,17)**	0,395 (,17)**
Individual variables (micro-level)						
Gender (men ref.)		-0,213 (,10)**	-0,215 (,10)**		-0,196 (,08)**	-0,198 (,08)**
age		-0,105 (,02)***	-0,105 (,01)***		-0,140 (,01)***	-0,140 (,01)***
household size		-0,085 (,05)*	-0,085 (,05)*		-0,161 (,04)***	-0,160 (,04)***
urb=1 (not urbanised)		0,270 (,29)	0,245 (,29)		-0,326 (,27)	-0,361 (,28)
urb=2		0,210 (,22)	0,230 (,22)		-0,065 (,20)	-0,061 (,20)
urb=3		0,178 (,19)	0,185 (,19)		-0,215 (,17)	-0,207 (,17)
urb=4		-0,153 (,17)	-0,141 (,17)		-0,227 (,15)	-0,219 (,15)
urb=5 (extremely urbanised)		ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.

Note: Displayed are the coefficients (SE in brackets)

* p<.1.

**p<.05.

***p<.01

Table 5.2b. Results of 3-level logistic regression analyses, adults (25-79 years old)

	Sport participation			Sport club participation		
	baseline	**micro-meso**	**full model**	**baseline**	**micro-meso**	**full model**
Intercept	0,532 (,02)***	-0,027 (,34)	0,182 (,35)	-1,387 (,03)***	-0,250 (,39)	-0,144 (,41)
Policy variables (macro level - municipality)						
municipal sport expenses			-0,002 (,00)*			-0,001 (,00)
Youth sport fund (YSF)			0,054 (,05)			-0,013 (,06)
Neighbourhood sport coach (FTE per 10.000 inhabitants)			-0,086 (,05)*			-0,038 (,06)
Social environment (meso level - neighbourhood)						
SES neighbourhood		0,061 (,02)***	0,059 (,02)***		0,057 (,02)**	0,056 (,02)**
Safety neighbourhood		0,003 (,00)**	0,003 (,00)**		0,002 (,00)	0,002 (,00)
Socio-economic position (micro-level)						
Log household income		0,342 (,07)***	0,344 (,07)***		0,004 (,08)	0,004 (,08)
low educational attainment		-0,971 (,05)***	-0,970 (,05)***		-0,689 (,06)***	-0,690 (,06)***
middle educational attainment		-0,656 (,04)***	-0,653 (,04)***		-0,467 (,05)***	-0,466 (,05)***
high educational attainment		ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.
Individual variables (micro-level)						
Gender (men ref.)		-0,060 (,03)*	-0,061 (,03)*		-0,484 (,04)***	-0,485 (,04)***
age		-0,010 (,00)***	-0,010 (,00)***		-0,017 (,00)***	-0,017 (,00)***
household size		0,001 (,01)	0,001 (,01)		0,027 (,02)	0,027 (,02)
urb=1 (not urbanised)		0,154 (,12)	0,141 (,12)		0,031 (,15)	0,029 (,16)
urb=2		0,059 (,09)	0,052 (,09)		0,051 (,11)	0,050 (,11)
urb=3		0,087 (,08)	0,080 (,08)		0,130 (,10)	0,132 (,10)
urb=4		0,134 (,07)*	0,125 (,07)*		0,229 (,09)**	0,226 (,09)**
urb=5 (extremely urbanised)		ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.

Note: Displayed are the coefficients (SE in brackets)

* p<.1.

**p<.05.

***p<.01

Figure 5.1. Cross level interaction household income and municipal sport expenses, 6-17 years old, sport club participation, visualized.

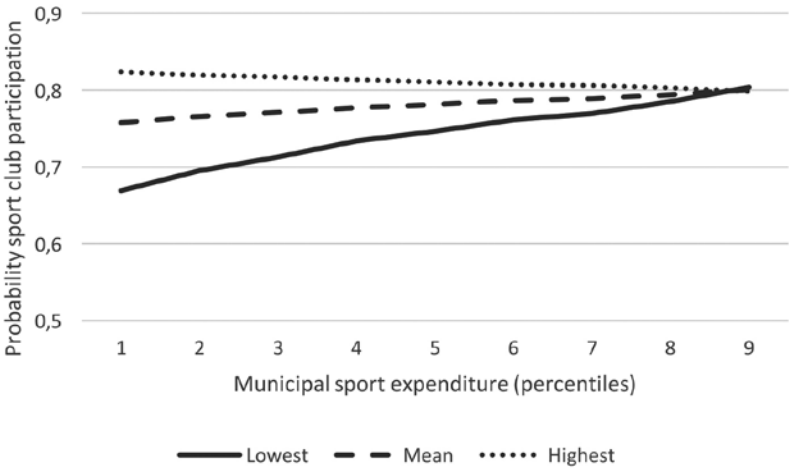


Figure 5.2. Cross level interaction household income and NSC, 25-79 years old, sport club participation, visualized.

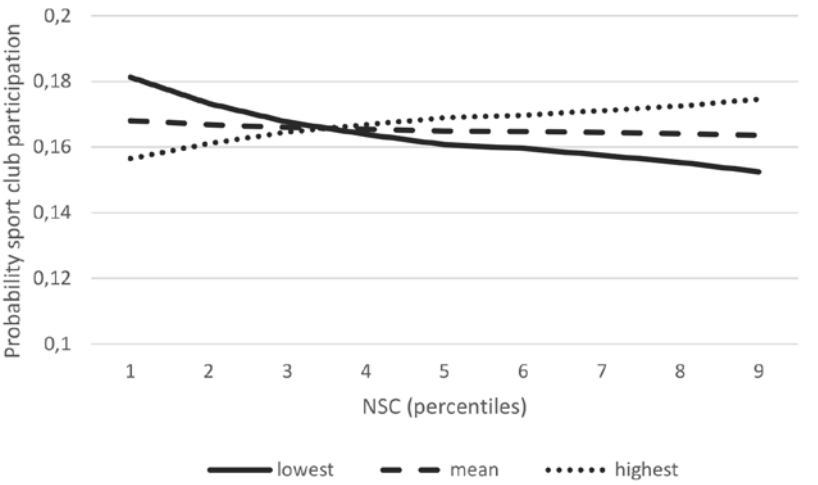
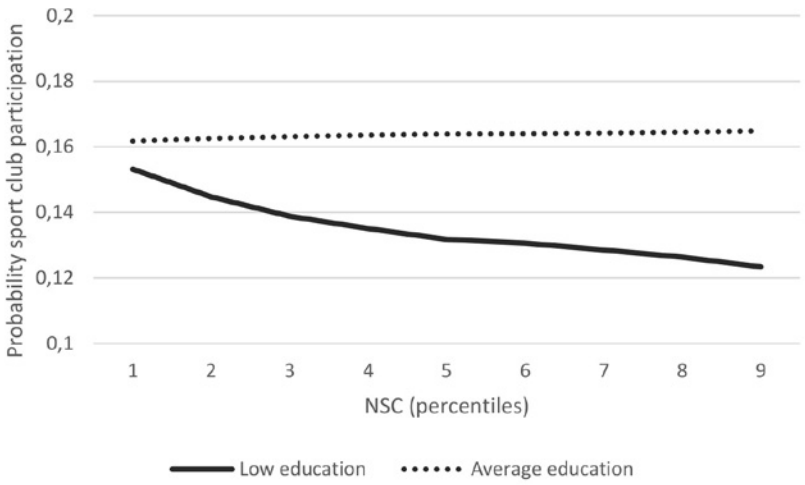


Figure 5.3. Cross level interaction educational attainment and NSC, 25-79 years old, sport club participation, visualized.



5.5 Discussion

In this contribution, we set out to analyse the influence of municipal sport expenditures and policy programs on individual's sport (club) participation and participation disparities by socio-economic position. We consider these issues to be crucial in the dispute over the effects of sport policy and consequences of announced budget cuts on municipal sport expenditures as part of larger austerity measures. Policy workers and politicians in general assume a substantial effect of their municipal expenditures to sport when it comes to sport participation, and subsequently assume that lowering the municipal sport expenditures will result in lower sport participation rates and less opportunities for people from lower social strata. Obviously, this is in line with central principles of the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in which different environments, including the policy environment at the macro level, are expected to affect behaviours of individuals.

In this article we therefore tested the hypothesis that sport (club) participation of youth and adults is (partly) dependent on the public sport expenditure and policy programs of the municipality a person is living in. Furthermore, we assumed that an individual's socio-economic position is of importance as well. First, based on a compensation premise, we inferred that higher municipal sport expenditure and the presence of specific sport policy programs will reduce participation differences by socio-economic position. Second, we also

acknowledged a competing accumulation hypothesis that led us to propose a negative influence of public policy and consequently an increase in the participation gap by socio-economic position.

Our results confirm our hypothesis that sport participation and sport club participation for youth are indeed related to municipal sport expenditures (macro level). Especially higher municipal sport expenditures correlate with higher likelihoods of sport club participation of youth. No effect of sport policy programs was found with regard to youth. With regard to adults a negative effect of municipal sport expenditures and employed Neighbourhood Sport Coaches (NSCs) was found for sport participation. This might partly be explained by the fact that NSCs are mainly employed in municipalities where actual sport participation rates lack behind. NSC then may be seen as a reaction on low participation rates. The YSF and NSCs might be mostly utilized in low status neighbourhoods and municipalities with low sport participation rates in order to solve this perceived problem of low participation. This might also be partly an explanation for the fact that the policy programs did not provide an explanation for differences in sport participation of youth.

Furthermore, we found proof for the cross-level interaction that is assumed in our second research question. Municipal sport expenditures do impact the sport club participation gap between income groups for youth. Higher municipal sport expenditures relate to smaller sport club participation differences by socio-economic position. This led us to accept our compensation hypothesis in this respect, and reject the accumulation hypothesis.

This study reaffirms the importance of the social environment (meso level) and the socio-economic position of the individual (micro level) for sport (club) participation. This holds true for both youth and adults. It seems that decisions to participate are taken within the context of broader values, attitudes, and lifestyle factors related to these socio-economic factors, which are most powerful in explaining differences in sport (club) participation. This could imply that those who do not participate in sport are not necessarily 'constrained' or 'excluded', they simply might not wish to participate (Coalter, 1998).

At this point we need to address the fact that the provision of sport facilities in the Netherlands is strongly demand-led, as was described earlier in this article. In the Netherlands, there are applicable guidelines to calculate the required provision of sport fields and sport halls. Sport clubs can successfully use these guidelines to request financial support for an expansion of the number of sport fields. This demand-led supply could imply that local governments provide additional facilities once there is a high demand. Consequently, higher municipal expenditures, based on the maintenance of the additional sport infrastructure,

are in that case a result of a higher demand. It could therefore be the case that the found effect of sport expenditures on sport club participation works the other way around, in the sense that municipalities with a high sport club participation of their youth population tend to have higher sport expenditures because they have facilitated this demand, rather than a larger supply leading to an increase in demand. This however fits nicely with the assumed relationships in the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), where the different systems may be seen as nested layers (like a set of Russian dolls).

This complexity of the influence of sport expenditures on sport participation also links to the discussion on distinctive lifestyles. It could be argued that municipal sport expenditures only matter to some extent as non-participation does not necessarily equal exclusion, as some people do not want to participate in sport (e.g. Coalter, 1998). This cannot simply be solved by increasing municipal sport expenses.

Furthermore, in the conducted analyses it remains unclear what causes the differences in sport expenditures between municipalities. One could argue that especially municipalities with lower participation rates intensify the sport expenditure in order to solve the 'problem' of low sport participation, while municipalities with high participation rates might relocate money for other purposes. This could then provide an alternative explanation for the negative effect of municipal sport expenditure on sport participation for adults. Furthermore, municipalities with a higher degree of social problems are more likely to intensify the sport expenditures and their policy programs, including NSC and YSF, as sport is nowadays considered an effective instrument to solve problems of social cohesion and health (Hoye, Nicholson & Houlihan, 2010). This would also provide an alternative explanation for the found negative effect of NSC on sport participation of adults.

The above provides some interesting avenues for further research. For starters, the perspective of the local sport manager is very relevant in this regard to further add to the understanding of the impact of local sport policy. It might be interesting for qualitative studies to dig deeper into the effects of sport policies and changes in municipal sport expenditures, as well as in the provision of sport facilities, from a local sport manager's perspective. This might help to identify to what extent a higher demand for sport is a result of supply and consequently higher municipal sport expenditures, or instead that demand shapes supply and influences the municipal sport expenditures. Furthermore, longitudinal research about the relationship of sport policies, sport facilities, and sport participation is preferred to better deal with causality issues that have been mentioned above. Besides, there is a wide diversity in sport provision, with different modes of provision that do not always require public investment (Fine & Leopold, 1993).

With this, the relative importance of public provision and public expenditure in sport seems to decrease. Attention to sport participation of lower socioeconomic status groups however still seems to be relevant. An evaluation of the Big Society agenda in the UK illustrated that it is hard to mobilize the private sector for the common good (Civil Exchange, 2015), and therefore government involvement in sport is still needed to include all social groups of society. Furthermore, it seems self-evident that sport facilities and these policy programs do enable sport participation.

Another point worth mentioning is that in countries such as the Netherlands with an abundant sport infrastructure (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2016) and relatively high sport participation rates (European Commission, 2014), additional sport facilities and policy programs, and herewith additional sport expenditures, might have a very limited impact. While in for instance Eastern European countries or China (see Guo et al., 2015) with a developing sport infrastructure and lower participation rates, the impact of additional government spending on sport and policy programs might yield more effect. Therefore, specific country studies on the effects of sport expenditures and sport policy programs on sport participation are recommended, not only in the Netherlands but also in other European countries, to gain a better understanding of the relative influence of sport policy. This would further add to our understanding of the impact of sport policy on sport behaviour.

5.6 Conclusion

In sum, to answer our initial questions, the effect of sport policy is found to be most substantial for youth sport club participation. Whereas for adults a negative effect of sport policy is noted on sport participation. The effect for youth is related to municipal sport expenditures and not to the policy programs. The positive effect for youth on sport club participation is in line with our expectations, as youth and the sport clubs profit the most from the municipal sport policy (expenditures and programs). Furthermore the significant cross-level interaction of municipal sport expenditures and household income for youth sport club participation provide support for compensation mechanisms working in this field. When it comes to sport club participation of youth, higher municipal sport expenditures are related to a reduced participation gap between youth from lower and higher income households. With regard to sport participation for adults, a negative association was noted of the NSC and municipal sport expenditures with sport participation of adults. For sport club participation of adults, no main effect was found for NSC, while the cross-level interaction effect of NSC with lower income groups and lower educational levels proved to be negative and significant. This could be an indication that

municipalities intensify sport expenditures and policy programs when large participation differences exist. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that these policy programs started relatively recently (in the past few years) and it might take some more years to achieve behavioural change (e.g. Sam, 2009) and raise the sport participation levels in these municipalities.

We conclude that sport policy matters for youth sport club participation, where it is also primarily aimed at. In addition, higher municipal sport expenditures are for youth associated with smaller sport club participation differences between higher and lower socio-economic groups. Furthermore, the socio-ecological model and the related 3-level approach added to our understanding of differences in sport participation for both youth and adults. The results imply that aspects of municipal sport policy (macro level) seem to matter in addition to the social environment (meso level), and socio-economic position of the individual (micro level), although mainly for youth and for sports club participation. Though specific policy programs did not provide an explanation for higher sport participation in our study, this should not be taken as a denial of the added value of these policy programs. It could be related to the fact that these programs are mainly utilized in areas with considerably low participation rates and that it might take some time to raise sport participation levels in these areas. Still, our findings provide local sport managers with new arguments in the discussions on sport policy in times of austerity and announced budget cuts.

Chapter 6

Sport participation and the social and physical environment: Explaining differences between urban and rural areas in the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated the intensity of sport participation in the Netherlands comparing urban and rural areas. Using a socio-ecological theoretical model, we focussed on the extent to which the rural-urban divide in sport participation is explained by micro-level (socio-demographics), meso-level (safety and socio-economic status of neighbourhoods) and exo-level (variety and proximity of sport facilities) characteristics. We tested our theoretical expectations using representative data on 17,910 Dutch inhabitants between 6 and 79 years of age. Our study reconfirmed the importance of individual socio-demographics (micro-level), such as age, education and household income for sports participation. Furthermore, our results showed that weekly sport participation was more common in rural than in urban areas. This rural-urban divide in sport participation especially was attributed to social environmental factors (meso-level); physical conditions of the environment provided no explanation. Our findings should, however, not be taken as a denial of the importance of the physical environment (exo-level). This study was conducted in the Netherlands, a country with a high density, abundant sport facilities and a supportive sport climate. Moreover, variety of sport facilities nearby proved significant in explaining an individual's monthly sport participation. To conclude, this study enhances our understanding of the rural-urban divide in sport participation and highlights the importance of especially meso-level features in addition to the socio-demographics. It thus may inform policymakers to critically assess sport promotion policies.

Keywords: sport facilities; sport activity; socio-economic status; urbanity; socio-ecological model

A slightly different version of this chapter has been published in Leisure Studies (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2017a). A previous draft of this chapter has been presented at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport annual congress in Portland, Oregon (US), November 2014.

6.1 Introduction

Numerous scholars have highlighted the importance of social position, education and socio-demographics to explain individual differences in sport participation (Downward et al., 2011; Wilson, 2002). This is understandable given that sport evidently is a social phenomenon that takes place and finds meaning in social interaction (Bourdieu, 1990; Shove et al., 2012). Only few studies have focused on geographical aspects, such as the rural-urban divide in sport participation or on the importance of the physical and social environment. Still, the wide variety in popularity of different types of sport throughout the world and differences within a country suggests that socio-demographics may only partly explain differences and that geography matters as well. This is because beyond socio-demographics, differences in physical environment (e.g., climate, presence of natural elements and space available for sports) and, more importantly, differences in cultural (e.g., gaelic sports in Ireland) and social environments (e.g., safety, neighbourhood composition) also result in differences in sport participation around the globe (Bale, 2003; European Commission, 2014).

With regard to the physical environment it is generally assumed that accessibility of sport facilities is, at least partly, responsible for observable differences in sport participation (Camy et al., 2004). In the revised version of the European Sport for All Charter (Council of Europe, 2001), specific reference is made to the interdependence between sport participation and the extent, variety and accessibility of sport facilities. Several attempts, mainly using an economic approach or a constraints framework, have been made to include aspects of sport facilities in empirical research models to explain differences in sport participation (e.g., Casper et al., 2011; Wicker et al., 2009). These studies, however, have provided mixed evidence. Some studies showed clear evidence of positive influences of the supply of sport facilities on sport participation, when focusing on sport infrastructure per 1,000 inhabitants (Hallmann et al., 2011; Wicker et al., 2009). Others, focusing on distance to a sport facility, hardly find any effects (Hoekman & De Jong, 2011), or find positive effects only for people with a positive attitude towards sports (Prins et al., 2010). Most of these contributions studied sport participation in a particular city or selection of larger cities and subsequently encountered difficulties in generalizing their outcomes.

Furthermore, most studies have focused on either the individual or infrastructural level without including social environment in their analyses (e.g., socioeconomic status and safety of the neighbourhood). The importance of the social environment is illustrated by the fact that individuals imitate or copy modelled behaviour by observing others in their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As a result, research showed that social differences are best marked by the environment where people lives, more particularly the socioeconomic status of

the neighbourhood (Shildrick, 2006). In several studies evidence was found for higher sport participation rates in neighbourhoods with a higher socioeconomic status (Pinkster, 2007). In addition, the safety of the neighbourhood appeared to be an important aspect of the social environment in explaining differences in sport participation (Beenackers et al., 2011).

Based on a socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) we here presume that features of both the social and the physical environment, next to socio-demographics, may explain differences in individuals' sport behaviour. To test this, this study focuses especially on differences between urban and rural environments given their obvious differences in physical and social characteristics. Urban areas generally offer a high variety in sport supply and present smaller travel distances compared to rural environments (Hoekman, Hoenderkamp & Van der Poel, 2013). In contrast, rural areas, at least in the Netherlands, present favourable social environments in terms of higher socioeconomic status and safer neighbourhoods (Steenbekkers et al., 2006). The current study builds on earlier work on the rural-urban divide (e.g., Hallmann et al., 2011; Wicker et al., 2009), and advances upon these works by employing a nationwide perspective. With this, we aim to provide a more complete picture of the role of sport facilities and of the social environment in explaining differences in sport participation between urban and rural areas. Our research questions are the following: *(1) To what extent do individuals living in urban and rural areas differ in their sport participation? (2) To what extent are these differences in sport participation explained by (a) features of the physical environment (e.g., sport facilities), (b) features of the social environment and/or (c) individual factors like age, gender and educational attainment?*

To answer these questions we employed representative national population data for the Netherlands. We used secondary sources to add characteristics of the social and physical environment to these data at postal code level. The Netherlands provides an interesting and relatively strong test case for the influence of social and physical environment features on sport participation, as it has a high population density, limited social differences and a well-developed sport infrastructure. That last being reflected in a high satisfaction among Dutch citizens regarding the opportunities to engage in sport in their residential area (European Commission, 2014).

6.2 Theoretical background

6.2.1 The socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner

We used Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model (1979) as a starting point to explain individual differences in sport participation. The main idea underlying

Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model is that individuals are closely related to and influenced by their environment. Bronfenbrenner predominantly argues that individual behaviours may be understood by looking at four surrounding systems: the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems. These different systems may be seen as nested layers (like a set of Russian dolls), with the innermost layer representing ego. First, the micro level is made up of a complex of close relations, for example, those with family members, at the work place, in class at school, in the neighbourhood and with one's peers. The meso-system represents the second layer. It is the context in which the micro-systems interrelate, such as the family home, the neighbourhood, and the school. The meso-system, thus, refers to relationships between micro-systems. The exo-system is the third layer, and refers to support settings in which individuals are not active participants. Exo-systems affecting sport participation include formal settings and physical attributes, such as sport facilities, parks, recreation centres, sport clubs and community centres. The fourth and outermost layer of Bronfenbrenner's model is the macro-system, defined as consistencies in the form and content of the lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) at the level of society as a whole. Accordingly, the macro-system may not be perceived as a specific environmental context. Rather, it entails the overarching ideology, values and customs of cultures and societies, as well as general national socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

The socio-ecological model explicitly focuses on the behaviours of individuals within a social and physical context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Its strength lies in its multidisciplinary approach (Damon & Lerner, 2008), and explicit focus on the environment as a series of nested structures (Keenan, 2002). The socio-ecological approach is widely used in community health promotion (Stokols, 1996; Van Lenthe et al., 2005). Furthermore, socio-ecological theory is known to explain differences in levels of physical activity and obesity by environmental attributes, such as community design, road connectivity and street design (e.g., Cochrane & Davey, 2008; Gebel et al., 2007), which are also important for access to sport facilities. The socio-ecological model was applied by researchers associated with the Active Living Programme in the USA to assess the impact of the built environment on physical activity (see, e.g., Brownson et al., 2009). Our application of the socio-ecological model is more limited, as we employ it to individual sport participation, a segment of physical activity.

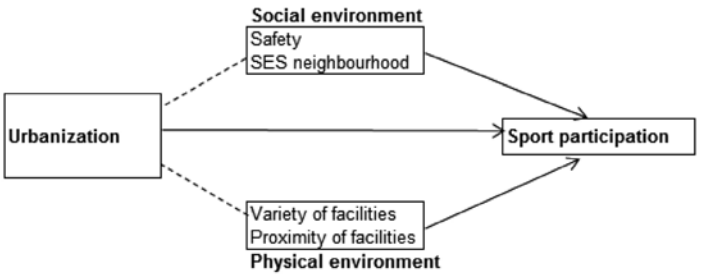
As yet, Bronfenbrenner's model has seldom been at the core of sport participation research. An exception is the study by Van Tuyckom (2011), who adopted the socio-ecological model in cross-national research. Van Tuyckom reworked Bronfenbrenner's model stressing the importance and relevance of the social and physical environment for the study of sport participation. Her research, however, investigated only the outmost layer of national characteristics

(socioeconomic and cultural conditions), in addition to individual factors. In our study we mainly employ the socio-ecological model to identify the influence of the social and physical environment on sport participation within a country and by urbanity, in addition to individual characteristics.

6.2.2 Differentiation between urban and rural areas

Our study focuses on differentiation in sport participation between urban and rural areas, given the obvious distinctions in the social (meso-level) and physical (exo-level) features of these areas. Urban areas are in general characterized by heterogeneity, choice, density and proximity (Wilson & Schulz, 1978), whilst rural areas may be characterized by homogeneity, limited choice and dispersion over a wide area (Collins, 2003). Given our theoretical socio-ecological model we expect differences in sport participation between people living in urban and rural areas. We furthermore presume that these differences are (partly) interpreted by the socioeconomic status and perceived safety of neighbourhoods (meso-level), and by the variety and proximity of sport facilities (exo-level). Figure 6.1 presents our conceptual interpretation model.

Figure 6.1. Conceptual model.



- - - The dotted lines are not tested in this article

First, starting from the perspective of the social environment, Castells (1977) noted that the bigger a city is, the wider its spectrum of individual variation and also the greater its social differentiation. This seems to be true for the Netherlands (Steenbekkers et al., 2006), with its segmentation of social relations and overrepresentation of low socioeconomic status groups and neighbourhoods in urban areas. We presume this will likely result in lower sport participation rates in urban areas, as studies (at least in the Netherlands) have shown that people in lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods participate less in sport than people from higher socioeconomic status neighbourhoods (Kamphuis & Van den Dool, 2008). In contrast, rural areas may be characterized

as more homogeneous, with a stronger sense of group solidarity than urban environments (Castells, 1977), and this social context is more likely to generate higher levels of sport participation.

Additionally, in the Netherlands, safety is generally perceived to be higher in rural areas than in urban areas, as crime rates are higher in cities, and people in the countryside typically feel more at ease in their surroundings (Oppelaar & Wittebrood, 2006). Several scholars have related safety of neighbourhoods to physical activity or sport participation, suggesting a positive relationship between safety and sport participation (Beenackers et al., 2011; Carver et al., 2008).

All these arguments taken together lead us to expect people in neighbourhoods with a high socioeconomic status and less crime to be more active in sports. This suggests the following hypotheses:. *(1) Sport participation is lower in urban areas compared to rural areas. (2) This lower sport participation is partly explained by a less favourable social environment (lower socioeconomic status and safety) in urban areas compared to rural areas*

A second line of reasoning dealing with the physical environment leads to contradictory expectations. Urban areas offer a greater variety of sport facilities and shorter travel distances to sport facilities than rural areas (Hoekman, Hoenderkamp & Van der Poel, 2013). Several studies indicate that the variety of sport facilities in a person's proximity may influence their sport participation (e.g., Karusisi et al., 2013; Limstrand & Rehrer, 2008; Wicker et al., 2009). Proximity of sport facilities seems particularly important as several studies have found that the distance to sport facilities does matter (Prins et al., 2010; Steinmayr et al., 2011). Evidence for a positive association between urbanization and sport participation was provided by Hovemann and Wicker (2009) and by Van Tuyckom (2011) for Europe, and García, Lera-Lopéz and Suárez (2011) provided such evidence for Spain. Consequently, we hypothesize that a greater variety and closer proximity of sport facilities in urban areas compared to rural areas result in higher sport participation in urban areas. Our hypotheses read as follows: *(3) Sport participation is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. (4) This higher sport participation is partly explained by a greater variety of sport facilities and a closer proximity of sport facilities in urban areas compared to rural areas.* Note that hypotheses 1 and 3 are contradictory.

6.2.3 Socio-demographics

Obviously, research relating sport participation to features of the social and physical environment must adequately control for relevant individual characteristics. Disregarding these features may cause biased estimations in our

modelling. In the Netherlands, as in other countries, sport participation declines with increasing age (see, e.g., Engel & Nagel, 2011; Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). We therefore include it in our modelling. Regarding gender, research has shown that in most European countries men are more likely to participate in sport than women (Hartmann-Tews, 2006). The Netherlands, however, is one of the few countries with a gender-neutral participation profile; we thus expect no large gender differences in sport participation. Regarding educational level, there is consensus that a higher educational level is associated with greater participation in sport (Breuer & Wicker, 2008; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009). Furthermore, a high income seems to increase the probability of an individual's sport participation (Downward, 2007; Hovemann & Wicker, 2009), whereas belonging to a large family household is negatively associated with sport participation (Scheerder et al., 2005).

6.3 Data and measurements

6.3.1 Data

We tested our hypotheses using data derived from the 'Injuries and Physical Activity in the Netherlands' survey (further OBiN). The OBiN is a large-scale population survey in the Netherlands geared to measure levels of physical activity, sport participation and injury-proneness among different social groups. It is a mixed-mode survey, using both an Internet questionnaire as well as telephone interviewing of respondents. Sixty per cent of the respondents filled in the questionnaire online (via Internet), and forty per cent completed the questionnaire through computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

In line with common practice in sport participation research, we selected respondents from 6 to 79 years (see, e.g., Tiessen-Raaphorst et al., 2010). We merged the 2011 and 2012 OBiN datasets resulting in a total of 17,910 respondents. The year samples of the OBiN surveys were drawn from the InterviewBase panel of IPSOS (the market research company), consisting of 230,000 respondents in total. Quota sampling was performed to explore sample representativeness with respect to age, gender, educational level, household composition and area of residence. Accordingly, the OBiN survey was found to produce high-quality data on both sport participation and individual characteristics.

6.3.2 Measurements

Sport participation was measured as taking part in a sport activity according to the rules of the sport sector (e.g. football, swimming, fitness, running and tennis),

excluding sport activities during classes at school. For the analyses, we used the frequency variable of sport participation as a dependent variable, representing the number of times a respondent had practised sports in the past twelve months. Because this variable is highly skewed, as all non-participants score null, normality may not be assumed. We therefore recoded yearly participation frequencies into three categories: 0-11 times, 12-39 times and 40 times or more. Based on policy standards in the Netherlands, people were classified as participants if they took part in sports at least 12 times a year (Ministerie van VWS, 2009; NOC*NSF, 2009). Therefore, we defined the first category as 'non-participants'. The second category is considered as 'monthly sport participants' (12-39 times a year), and participants with a sport frequency of 40 times or more were considered 'weekly sport participants', corresponding with the sequence of a regular sport season in competition sport (Tiessen-Raaphorst et al., 2010). Social environment characteristics were available from secondary sources and included by linking four-digit postal code data to our OBiN respondents. Socioeconomic status scores of the neighbourhoods were based on an aggregate indicator of educational level, position on the labour market and income level of neighbourhood residents (Knol, 2012). Neighbourhood safety was obtained by aggregating information from the 'Level of Living Barometer' (Van der Reijden et al., 2013), which includes criminogenic aspects like vandalism, nuisance, violation of public order, violent crime and theft.

Table 6.1. Descriptives of the variables.

Variable	Measurement	%	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Dependent variable						
Sport participation	0= 0-11 times	34,7	0	2	1,19	0,92
	1= 12-39 times	11,7				
	2= 40 times or more	53,6				
Urbanization	1= rural	57,3	1	2	1,43	0,49
	2=urban	42,7				
Social environment						
SES neighbourhood	score (linear)		-7,25	2,98	0,05	1,16
Safety	score (linear)		-5,00	4,92	0,81	2,68
Physical environment						
Distance to facility	distance to nearest sport facility (in kilometres)		0,00	9,27	0,70	0,51
Variety in facilities	0= no types of sport facilities within 1 km	19,4	0	4	1,46	1,06
	1= 1 type of sport facility within 1 km	35,7				
	2= 2 types of sport facilities within 1 km	27,7				
	3= 3 types of sport facilities within 1 km	13,8				
	4= 4 types of sport facilities within 1 km	3,4				
Personal factors - controls						
Age	age (years)		6	79	40,77	19,66
Gender	1= male	50,3	1	2	1,50	0,50
	2= female	49,7				
Educational level	1= low	36,8	1	3	1,90	0,79
	2= average	36,4				
	3= high	26,9				
Income (household net income)	1= below average	21,4	1	3	2,24	0,78
	2= average	33,7				
	3= above average	44,9				
Household size	number of persons		1	10	2,89	1,40

Physical environment measures were obtained from the Database Sport Supply (DSS). The reputed DSS provides geographical information on (nearly) all sport facilities in the Netherlands (more than 14,000). Particular dimensions of the physical environment that we included in our modelling were proximity and variety of sport facilities. We explicitly used information on distance to the nearest sport facility and the number of different types of sport facilities within 1,000 metres. We distinguished the following facility types: (1) sport fields, (2) sport halls, (3) swimming pools and (4) fitness centres.

Our measure of urbanity of the area of residence is derived from an address-density classification used by Statistics Netherlands which is based on the average number of addresses within a one kilometre radius. The customary differentiation into five categories was used: (1) not urbanized, <500 addresses

per km2; (2) hardly urbanized, 500-1,000 addresses per km2; (3) moderately urbanized, 1,000-1,500 addresses per km2; (4) strongly urbanized, 1,500-2,500 addresses per km2; and (5) extremely urbanized, 2,500 addresses or more per km2. For the regression analyses this urbanization variable was dichotomized into rural (1 to 3) and urban (4 and 5).

Finally, we control for individual characteristics associated with sport participation. Age and household size were measured as continuous variables. Gender was dummy coded with men as reference category. Educational attainment was measured in six categories ranging from no education or primary school only, to holding a university degree. Categories were recoded into three groups: (1) lower education, (2) middle education and (3) higher education. The income variable concerns a respondent's household income and was questioned in seven categories ranging from a minimum income to three times the national average income. Again, we recoded the categories into three groups: (1) lower income, (2) average income and (3) above average income. Table 6.1 presents the descriptive characteristics of our variables.

6.3.3 Analytic strategy

We conducted several analyses. First, we tested mean differences in aspects of the social and physical environmental by urbanity to justify the assumptions of mediation. Second, we employed multinomial logistic regression analyses to deal with the independent effects of urbanity, socio-demographics and the aspects of the social and physical environment on sport participation. Multinomial logistic regression is an extension of binary logistic regression and deemed an adequate procedure for testing the influence of several independent variables in a model with a dependent variable consisting unordered categories (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). We tested for collinearity and our measures proved fit for regression analysis; the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) was 2.035. We preferred multinomial logistic regression over ordinal regression based on a test of parallel lines and a better fit of the multinomial logistic regression model. Furthermore, using ordinal regression would have hidden any potential nonlinearity. We ruled out multilevel analyses, which may seem appropriate given the hierarchical structure of the data and our theoretical framework, because of a limited number of cases per postal code. Only 14 postal codes had 25 or more cases, while 633 postal codes had only 1 case. Simply selecting postal codes with a relatively high number of cases would thus mean an overrepresentation of urban areas, as greater urbanity corresponds with a greater number of cases within a postal code.

As highlighted in Figure 6.1 we deal with a so-called interpretation model. Our aim is to look whether aspects of the social and physical environment may provide

an explanation (interpretation) for urbanity differences in sport participation. We however do not test the indirect effect of urbanity on aspects of the social and physical environment, but rather assume that mediation exist if urbanity difference in sport participation are no longer significant. In logistic regression analyses one cannot straightforwardly interpret and compare coefficients as is the case in linear regression. As a result one cannot compare log-odds ratios or odds ratios across models with different independent variables (see Mood, 2010) and provide no exact effect of the mediation. Multinomial logistic regression provides in this sense not the most robust test for indirect effects. However by using a stepwise approach with different models, with and without the mediating variables, it is possible to find prove for mediation and accept the hypotheses if the urbanity differences in sport participation are no longer significant.

In a first step of our multinomial logistic regression, we estimated a baseline model containing urbanity of a respondent's area of residence only. In a second step, we introduced individual variables (baseline and socio-demographics). This model allowed us to investigate whether there are influences of individual characteristics on the urbanity effect. In a third step, we included social environmental factors to investigate interpretation of the urbanity effect (baseline and socio-demographics and social environment), and in a fourth step we took characteristics of the physical environment into account (baseline and socio-demographics and physical environment). In the fifth step, we estimated a full model with all characteristics included (total interpretation model).

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Difference in social and physical environment by urbanity

We first consider differences in aspects of the social and physical environment by urbanity. Table 6.2 shows variation between urban and rural areas in social and physical environment. Rural areas score higher on the social environmental variables (socioeconomic status and safety), while urban areas score favourable on the physical environmental variables (distance to sport facilities and variety of sport facilities within 1 kilometre). This is in line with our expectations and supports our assumption of mediation.

Table 6.2. Aspects of the social and physical environment by urbanisation (mean, t-test).

	Urbanization	
	Rural	**Urban**
SES neighbourhood	0.30	-.028***
Safety	2.42	-1.25***
Distance to sport facility	0.73	0.65***
Types of sport facilities within 1 km	1.85	1.98***

*** $p<.001$

6.4.2 Multinomial logistic regression

To further test our hypotheses, we consider whether the differences between urban and rural areas in sport participation might be explained (interpreted) by (1) individual characteristics, (2) the social environment (meso-level) and (3) the physical environment (exo-level). Table 6.3 presents estimates of a multinomial logistic regression analysis of sport participation. Exp(B) coefficients represent the effect size of the factors included in the model and give information about effect direction. An Exp(B) greater than 1 indicates a positive effect, while an Exp(B) less than 1 indicates a negative effect (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). For both weekly and monthly sport participation, non-participation is taken as reference category.

Our baseline model (see Table 6.3) only includes urbanity and underscores that people living in urban areas were less likely to practise sport on a weekly basis than people living in rural areas. No urbanity differences were found for monthly sport participation. In the second model it is confirmed that age, education and income are important in explaining differences in sport participation. Older people are less likely to practise sport on a monthly or weekly basis (Exp(B)=0.98 for monthly sport participation, and Exp(B)=0.97 for weekly sport participation). Moreover, people with a higher educational attainment and a higher income are more likely to participate in sport on a monthly and weekly basis than people with a lower educational level and incomes. Gender and household size showed no significant effects. In model 2 urbanization still is significant for weekly sport participation (Exp(B)=0.87), indicating that frequent sport participation was more likely in rural areas, even when controlling for relevant confounders.

Table 6.3 Multinomial logistic regression of sport participation.

	Baseline Model			Baseline Model + Socio-demographics			Baseline Model + Socio-demo-graphics + Social environment			Baseline Model + Socio-demo-graphics + Physical environment			Full Interpretation model		
	Estimate	SE	Exp(B)	Estimate	SE	Exp(B)	Estimate	SE	Exp(B)	Estimate	SE	Exp(B)	Estimate	SE	Exp(B)
Monthly sport participation vs non-participation															
Urbanization	,000	,052	1,00	-,047	,065	,95	,019	,088	1,02	-,033	,066	,97	,021	,089	1,02
Controls															
gender				,056	,065	1,06	,051	,065	1,05	,062	,065	1,06	,057	,065	1,06
age				-,020***	,002	,98	-,020***	,002	,98	-,020***	,002	,98	-,020***	,002	,98
education				,370***	,042	1,45	,366***	,042	1,44	,373***	,042	1,45	,368***	,042	1,44
income				,178***	,044	1,20	,162***	,045	1,18	,179***	,044	1,20	,163***	,045	1,18
householdsize				,024	,028	1,02	,019	,028	1,02	,023	,028	1,02	,019	,028	1,02
Social environment															
SES neighbourhood							,069*	,030	1,07				,070*	,030	1,07
safety							,007	,017	1,01				,004	,017	1,00
Physical environment															
distance to facility										,191**	,068	1,21	,205**	,072	1,23
types of facilities										,093**	,035	1,10	,102**	,035	1,11
Weekly sport participation vs non-participation															
Urbanization	-,126***	,034	,88	-,144***	,043	,87	,073	,058	1,08	-,143***	,043	,87	,074	,058	1,08
Controls															
gender				-,067	,042	,94	-,074	,043	,93	-,066	,043	,94	-,074	,043	,93
age				-,027***	,001	,97	-,027***	,001	,97	-,027***	,001	,97	-,027***	,001	,97
education				,205***	,028	1,23	,206***	,028	1,23	,205***	,028	1,23	,206***	,028	1,23
income				,359***	,029	1,43	,336***	,029	1,40	,359***	,029	1,43	,336***	,029	1,40
householdsize				-,033	,019	,97	-,041*	,019	,96	-,033	,019	,97	-,041*	,019	,96
Social environment															
SES neighbourhood							,078***	,020	1,08				,080***	,020	1,08
safety							,048***	,011	1,05				,048***	,011	1,05
Physical environment															
distance to facility										,008	,048	1,01	-,026	,051	,97
types of facilities										,016	,023	1,02	,016	,024	1,02
Fit statistics	-2LL=35,836; p<.001			-2LL=15132,788; p<.001			-2LL=21305,160; p<.001			-2LL=21399,552; p<.001			-2LL=21290,646; p<.001		
Nagelkerke R2	,001			,101			,106			,102			,107		

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Next, in model 3 we included social environmental features to address the issue whether rural-urban differences in sport participation may be interpreted by social aspects of the neighbourhood. We found that socioeconomic status of the neighbourhood mainly has a positive effect on the likelihood of participating in sport on a monthly basis (Exp(B)=1.07) or a weekly basis (Exp(B)=1.08). Safety of a neighbourhood seemed to be relevant only for weekly sport participation; thus, the safer a neighbourhood, the greater the likelihood for a person to sport on a weekly basis (Exp(B)=1.05). Especially remarkable is that the effect of urbanization previously found disappears after including these social neighbourhood features, indicating that the rural-urban divide in weekly sport participation may partly be understood looking at the social conditions of the neighbourhood a person lives in.

Our next model (4) dealt with the distance to and variety of sport facilities. Results indicated that indeed more types of sport facilities in a person's close proximity increases monthly sport participation (Exp(B)=1.10). Contrary to our expectations, however, larger distances to a facility were positively related to monthly sport participation (Exp(B)=1.21). No relationships were found for weekly sport participation. Regarding our hypotheses we conclude that the rural-urban division in weekly sport participation remains significant; its influence is not interpreted by the physical aspects of the surroundings.

Finally, in a model with all factors we found similar results as in a model with social neighbourhood conditions. Physical environmental characteristics seem of limited importance and are significant only for a person's monthly sport participation. Social environmental characteristics are important for both monthly and weekly sport participation. It also showed that the earlier found effect of urbanization on a person's weekly sport participation is no longer significant; its influence is interpreted by the social aspects of a person's neighbourhood.

6.5 Discussion and conclusions

Studies have repeatedly found that individual socio-demographics, such as age, education and household income, are essential in explaining sport participation (e.g., Hovemann & Wicker, 2009; Scheerder et al., 2005). Few studies however have focused on the rural-urban divide and incorporated social and physical aspects of a person's close environment. Our study built on theoretical explanations derived from socio-ecological theory to explain urbanity differences in individual sport participation, by including socio-demographics, meso-level aspects (social environment) and exo-level aspects (physical environment). Our main results for the Netherlands indicated higher rates of weekly sport participation in rural

areas than in urban areas (accepting hypothesis 1 and rejecting hypothesis 3), while no difference by urbanity was found for monthly sport participation. This contradicts research for the European Union as a whole (Van Tuyckom, 2011), that points to lower sporting activity levels for rural than for urban subjects. We can explain differences in sport participation between urban and rural areas by applying the socio-ecological model. The social environment is most important in this regard for our findings in the Netherlands. We presume however that this is also due to the observed macro-level and exo-level (physical environment) in the Netherlands as the levels of the socio-ecological model can be seen as a series of nested structures (Keenan, 2002). The Netherlands has roughly 500 inhabitants per km2 while the European average is estimated on 117 inhabitants per km^2 (Eurostat, 2015). This density in the Netherlands in combination with the fairly evenly distribution of sport facilities throughout the country, irrespective of the local population size (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2016), makes that the population has good access to sport facilities and consequently the highest satisfaction of the European population regarding the opportunities to engage in sport in their residential area: NL=95%; EU=75% (European Commission, 2014). With this the physical environment within rural areas forms no constraint for sport participation in the Netherlands, in contrast to other countries. Studies that do find higher sport participation levels in urban areas, for instance also find that constraints, including lack of access to sport facilities, partially mediates the effect of urbanisation on sport participation (Liu & Walker, 2015).

Three additional conclusions may be drawn from our current findings. First, our study reconfirms the importance of individual socio-demographics for regular sport participation, but these socio-demographics provide no explanation for the rural-urban divide. Second, the rural-urban divide in weekly sport participation was explained by meso-level social environmental factors (accepting hypothesis 2). This supports the notion that socioeconomic neighbourhood aspects mark social divisions and refer to differences in provision of social, instrumental and informational resources to promote sport participation (Cerin & Leslie, 2008; Shildrick, 2006). Especially aspects of social status related to the social environment seem important to explain differences in sport behaviour as it relates to similar living conditions and (im)possibilities, shared experiences and corresponding sporting habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Third, our results showed that exo-level aspects related to the physical environment (variety and proximity of sport facilities) could not explain the rural-urban divide in weekly sport participation (rejecting hypothesis 4). Probably, because even in rural areas certain standard sport facilities are provided (Hoekman, Breedveld & Kraaykamp, 2016). Physical environment however does relate to differences in an individual's monthly sport participation, as a higher variety of sport facilities in a person's neighbourhood increases the likelihood of monthly sport

participation. Contrary to our expectations larger distances were associated with more monthly participation, and not with non-participation. Although surprising, Ruseski et.al (2011) also found in their study of a small town in Germany that travel distance is positively related to participation. Typical for that study, as well as our study, is that in general for the study population the sport facilities are very well accessible regardless of where people live.

Even though in this study aspects of the physical environment are hardly related to the rural-urban divide in sport participation, this should not be taken as a denial of its importance. As mentioned, the current study refers to the Netherlands, a country with abundant sport facilities and a supportive sport climate. Moreover, variety of sport facilities nearby seems to be important in explaining individuals' monthly sport participation. This may be related to lower intrinsic motivations and willingness to travel to take part in sport for this more ad hoc sport participation of the monthly sport participants (Hoekman & De Jong, 2011). For weekly participants being an active sport participant may be a part of daily or weekly routines. Likely they prefer certain sports and do not care about distance so much, or they may be willing to choose a type of sport based on the available supply (Teixeira et al., 2012).

A limitation of the current study is that it focussed on sport facilities and did not include the public space as part of the physical environment. It might be argued that a full picture only can be obtained by combining presence of sport facilities with opportunities to practise sport in the public space. Rafoss and Troelsen (2010) for instance concluded that a smaller proportion of the rural population compared to the urban population exercises in organized sport facilities. This may be because of the ample alternatives for sport in the public space in rural areas, which partly reduces the relevance of the availability of organized sport facilities. A further limitation to this study refers to our measurement of characteristics of the physical environment. In the current study we only studied objective features. Measures could be improved adding more subjective measures of distances to sport facilities (e.g., perceived distances).

A few implications of our findings may be noted. First, our findings illustrate the usefulness of the socio-ecological model in explaining urbanity differences in sport participation. It especially underscores the importance of the social environment (meso-level) in explaining the rural-urban divide, in addition to socio-demographics. This highlights the importance to focus within sport promotion programs on low socioeconomic status neighbourhoods to overcome class-based inequalities. Policymakers and policy implementers should be aware of the importance of the social environment and may want to use the social networks in low socioeconomic status neighbourhoods to successfully promote sport participation and sport attitudes. Second, this study brings up

new research questions. The puzzling outcome in the Netherlands in contrast to Europe, of higher weekly sport participation in rural areas, illustrates the relevance of looking further into the rural-urban divide in other European countries. The issue is whether aspects of the social environment would provide comparable explanation for existing urbanity differences in sport participation in other countries, given for instance the differences between countries with regard to the macro-level and the exo-level. In addition, we have touched upon the alleged differences in willingness to travel for sports participation. We suggested that for people that are more motivated to participate, distances form less of a barrier. Still, this hypothesis requires further empirical testing.

To conclude, the current study enhances our understanding of rural-urban divide in sport participation and may inform policymakers to critically assess sport promotion policies. Special attention is required for the social environment features and to the availability of various sport facilities for those less motivated to participate in sport.

Summary in Dutch (Samenvatting)

Achtergrond en doelstelling

Sport wordt als een zinvolle vrijetijdsbesteding gezien en als zodanig door overheden gestimuleerd. Dit blijkt ook uit de '*Sport for All' charter* (European Council, 1975) die de Europese lidstaten hebben onderschreven. In deze gemeenschappelijke sportbeleidsagenda staat het verhogen van de sportdeelname, met name bij groepen die achterblijven, centraal (Hoekman, Breedveld & Scheerder, 2011). Het aanbieden van sportaccommodaties wordt als belangrijk beleidsinstrument gezien voor effectief sportstimuleringsbeleid (Nicholson et al., 2011). Dit sluit aan bij een sociaal-ecologische rationale (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), waarbij wordt verondersteld dat het gedrag van een individu kan worden beïnvloed door diverse factoren in zijn of haar omgeving. Bij sportbeleid is de algemene gedachte, en ook de aanname voor dit proefschrift, dat door het aanbieden van sportaccommodaties en het uitvoeren van beleidsactiviteiten het individu kan worden aangezet tot sportgedrag.

In Nederland is, evenals in veel Europese landen, de verantwoordelijkheid voor sportbeleid en sportaccommodaties op het lokale niveau bij gemeenten belegd (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). De beleidsmatige aandacht vanuit de overheid voor sport is in de afgelopen decennia toegenomen. Dit is alleen niet gepaard gegaan met een toename van onderzoek naar de betekenis van sportbeleid (Houlihan, 2005). In vergelijking met andere domeinen kenmerkt de sportsector zich door een gebrek aan kritische analyses en veel aannames in beleid waarvoor de bewijslast ontbreekt. Een uitzondering hierop is het onderzoek rondom topsportbeleid, vanuit het SPLISS-netwerk (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & Van Bottenburg, 2015). Echter, wanneer het gaat om lokaal sportbeleid, dan is in de internationale literatuur weinig bekend over de ontwikkeling, werking en betekenis hiervan. Ook in Nederland ontbreekt dit inzicht.

Ondanks het gebrek aan inzicht in de betekenis van sportbeleid, bestaan er vanuit de overheid hoge verwachtingen ten aanzien van sport. Dit is opmerkelijk, te meer omdat sportbeleid kan worden gezien als een '*wicked problem'*, vanwege (1) de moeilijkheden bij probleemdefinitie, (2) de onzekerheid over causale verbanden en werkzame mechanismen, en (3) door de kans dat een aanpak leidt tot nieuwe of onbedoelde problemen of huidige knelpunten vergroot (Sam, 2009). Ten aanzien van de probleemdefinitie is het ten eerste lastig om tot een definitie van sport en probleemdefinitie voor sportbeleid te komen (Crum, 1991; Steenbergen, 2004). In Nederland is sportdeelname vanaf de jaren 80 niet meer door de landelijke overheid als beleidsprobleem aangemerkt (Breedveld et al., 2011). Als gevolg hiervan wordt sport meer en meer gepositioneerd als middel om problemen op te lossen die behoren tot andere beleidsterreinen, bijvoorbeeld gerelateerd aan gezondheid, welzijn, sociale integratie en leefbaarheid (Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016; Elling, De Knop

& Knoppers, 2011). Het tweede punt relateert aan de vele niet onderbouwde aannames in sportbeleid en het gebrek aan inzicht in hoe sportbeleid van invloed is op het gedrag van een individu en op de maatschappij als geheel (Mansfield, 2016; Houlihan, 2005). Het derde punt verwijst naar negatieve uitkomsten van sportbeleid. In dit kader kan worden gedacht aan de gezondheidskosten als gevolg van sportblessures (Polinder et al., 2016). Een ander voorbeeld is het streven van overheden om de ongelijkheid in sportdeelname weg te nemen, terwijl onderzoek laat zien dat de overheidsuitgaven aan sport juist terechtkomen bij de hogere sociaaleconomische groepen, omdat deze groepen meer deelnemen aan sport en meer gebruikmaken van de door de overheid gesubsidieerde sportaccommodaties (Ter Rele, 2007).

Ondanks de vele onzekerheden rondom sportbeleid is er een breed verspreid geloof in de kracht van sport, in internationale literatuur ook wel aangeduid als de '*Greath Sport Myth'* (Coakley, 2015). Hoewel diverse sportsociologen kritische kanttekeningen hebben geplaatst bij een te positieve 'sport als panacee'-benadering (e.g. Coalter, 1998; Coalter, 2007; Elling, 2018), wordt de instrumentele waarde van sport breed onderschreven en wordt sport belangrijk gevonden voor het individu en voor de samenleving als geheel. Hierdoor wordt er ook veel belang aan gehecht om zoveel mogelijk burgers te laten sporten (Coalter, 2007; Dunning, 1999).

De onzekerheid over de effectiviteit van sportbeleid staat op gespannen voet met de toegenomen aandacht voor '*evidence-based'*-beleid, effectiviteit, doelmatigheid en reflexiviteit, als gevolg van de financieel mindere tijden en discussies over de veranderende rol van de overheid (Leisink et al., 2013; Rijksoverheid, 2013; Sanderson, 2002; Mansfield, 2016). Te meer omdat, in tegenstelling tot andere landen, het in Nederland ontbreekt aan een wettelijk kader voor de overheidsinzet van sport. Overheden hebben geen wettelijke verplichting om aandacht te besteden aan sportbeleid, maar zijn autonoom en vrij om hier vanuit de eigen middelen invulling aan te geven (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). Het ontbreken van een wettelijk kader en de toegenomen aandacht voor effectiviteit en doelmatigheid van beleid vragen om een beter inzicht in lokaal sportbeleid in Nederland. Aansluitend op een sociaal-ecologisch perspectief (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), is aandacht gewenst voor de omgeving waarin sportbeleid wordt vormgegeven en waarin het functioneert. Daarnaast is inzicht nodig in hoe sportbeleid het sportgedrag van individuen beïnvloedt.

Het doel van dit proefschrift is om *inzicht te bieden in lokaal sportbeleid en de betekenis van aspecten van lokaal sportbeleid voor de sportdeelname van individuen*. Daarbij gaat specifieke aandacht uit naar sportaccommodaties vanwege het belang dat hieraan wordt toegekend voor sportstimuleringsbeleid (Nicholson et al., 2011) en vanwege het feit dat ongeveer 85 procent van

de gemeentelijke sportuitgaven gerelateerd zijn aan sportaccommodaties (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2013). Ik heb twee kwalitatieve studies uitgevoerd die ingaan op het lokale sportbeleid zelf en drie kwantitatieve studies die ingaan op uitkomsten van sportbeleid ten aanzien van de spreiding van sportaccommodaties en de sportdeelname van individuen. Het sociaal-ecologisch model van Bronfenbrenner (1979) vormt in dit proefschrift het theoretisch uitgangspunt. Dit model veronderstelt dat diverse omgevingen van invloed zijn op het gedrag van een individu (Stokols, 1992). In dit proefschrift bezie ik hoe de sociale omgeving, de fysieke omgeving en de beleidsomgeving (karakteristieken van lokaal sportbeleid) van invloed zijn op het sportgedrag van een individu en hoe de omgeving inwerkt op de vormgeving en uitvoering van lokaal sportbeleid. Dit helpt om een beter beeld te krijgen van lokaal sportbeleid en de impact hiervan op het sportgedrag van het individu. Zowel de effectiviteit van lokaal sportbeleid als de invloed op individueel sportgedrag zijn tot dusverre geïdentificeerd als belangrijke lacunes in wetenschappelijk onderzoek (Houlihan, 2005; Mansfield, 2016).

Voor dit proefschrift heb ik vijf verwachtingen geformuleerd. Ten eerste verwacht ik dat sportbeleid wordt beïnvloed door de lokale context waarin sportbeleid wordt geformuleerd en door bredere maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen, zoals de economische situatie en de 'participatiesamenleving' discourse, waar van burgers wordt verwacht dat ze meer verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor zichzelf en hun omgeving (hoofdstuk 2 en 3). Ten tweede veronderstel ik dat gunstige karakteristieken van lokaal sportbeleid, zoals hogere gemeentelijke sportuitgaven, samengaan met hogere sportdeelnamepercentages bij deze gemeenten (hoofdstuk 5). Ten derde verwacht ik dat een betere fysieke omgeving (grote variëteit aan sportaccommodaties en korte reisafstanden naar sportaccommodaties; hoofdstuk 4) de sportdeelname bevorderen (hoofdstuk 6). Ten vierde stel ik dat een positieve sociale omgeving (veiligheid en sociaaleconomische status van de buurt) samenhangt met hogere sportdeelname percentages (hoofdstuk 5 en 6). Ten vijfde verwacht ik dat karakteristieken van lokaal sportbeleid vooral van betekenis zijn voor de lagere sociaaleconomische groepen waar het sportbeleid vooral op is gericht (hoofdstuk 5).

Hoofdstuk 2: Lokaal sportbeleid

In hoofdstuk 2 ligt de focus op lokaal sportbeleid en in welke mate dit door bredere maatschappelijke en economische ontwikkelingen wordt beïnvloed. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is om te onderzoeken in welke mate de verschuiving van verzorgingsstaat naar participatiesamenleving in de context van economisch mindere tijden van invloed is op lokaal sportbeleid in Nederland. De centrale onderzoeksvragen in dit hoofdstuk zijn:

(1) Laten gemeentelijk sportuitgaven bewijs zien voor een verschuiving van de klassieke verzorgingsstaat naar een participatiesamenleving?
(2) Wijzen aanpassingen in lokaal sportbeleid op een verschuiving in beleid van verzorgingsstaat naar een participatiesamenleving?

Om tot een antwoord op deze vragen te komen, heb ik de sportuitgaven van gemeenten geanalyseerd over de periode 2010-2015 en een analyse uitgevoerd op een representatieve steekproef van collegeprogramma's van 104 gemeenten voor de collegeperiode 2014-2018. Bij de analyse van de collegeprogramma's heb ik me gericht op de leidende discoursen en retoriek ten aanzien van sportbeleid. Hieruit blijkt dat de gemeentelijke sportuitgaven in Nederland redelijk stabiel zijn en dat sportbeleid niet te maken heeft gehad met grote bezuinigingen. Lokaal sportbeleid hangt nog steeds sterk op de waarden van de verzorgingsstaat. Ook is er geen bewijs voor een neoliberale inslag of een sterke focus op de markt en ondernemerschap. Het is eerder zo dat accent wordt gelegd op een grotere rol voor sportverenigingen in het beheren en onderhouden van sportaccommodaties en als beleidsuitvoerder. Ik concludeer dat de landelijk zichtbare verschuiving in narratief van verzorgingsstaat naar participatiesamenleving tot dusverre maar zeer beperkt zijn weerslag heeft in lokaal sportbeleid. Verder stel ik vast dat de collegeprogramma's sport positioneren als een instrument met grote sociaalmaatschappelijke waarde in relatie tot gezondheid, persoonlijke ontwikkeling en sociale integratie. Als zodanig wordt sport als middel genoemd bij het realiseren van doelen op andere beleidsterreinen. Deze maatschappelijke waarde van sport vormt een belangrijke legitimatie om op sport in te blijven zetten en kan een verklaring zijn voor de stabiele gemeentelijke sportuitgaven in tijden van bezuinigingen.

Hoofdstuk 3: Perspectief beleidsambtenaar sport

Hoofdstuk 3 richt zich op de ontwikkeling en het functioneren van lokaal sportbeleid vanuit het perspectief van de verantwoordelijke beleidsambtenaar sport. Ondanks de sterkere focus op de maatschappelijke waarde van sport (gezondheid, sociale participatie en integratie) bij de legitimering van beleidsinzet op sport (zie hoofdstuk 2), zijn de sportuitgaven van gemeenten grotendeels gericht op het bouwen en beheren van sportaccommodaties. Hiermee lijkt een mismatch te ontstaan tussen de inzet van middelen en de beoogde doelen van sportbeleid. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is om inzicht te krijgen in het perspectief van de beleidsambtenaar sport op de veranderingen in het sportbeleid en hoe dit zich verhoudt tot ontwikkelingen in de bredere omgeving (vanuit een sociaalecologisch perspectief). Daarnaast is het doel om inzicht te krijgen in het perspectief van de beleidsambtenaar sport op de uitvoering en effectiviteit van lokaal sportbeleid en de betekenis hiervan voor de samenleving. De volgende drie onderzoeksvragen staan centraal in hoofdstuk 3:

(1) Hoe en waarom is lokaal sportbeleid in de afgelopen decennia veranderd?
(2) Hoe verhouden de centrale discoursen in lokaal sportbeleid zich tot de dagelijkse uitvoering van lokaal sportbeleid?
(3) In welke mate past de beleidsambtenaar sport kritische reflectie toe op de aanpak van lokaal sportbeleid en de betekenis hiervan voor de samenleving?

Om tot een antwoord op deze vragen te komen, heb ik in negen gemeenten semigestructureerde diepte-interviews gehouden met de beleidsambtenaar die verantwoordelijk is voor sportbeleid. Ten aanzien van de eerste onderzoeksvraag concludeer ik dat de meeste wijzigingen in lokaal sportbeleid veroorzaakt zijn door exogene ontwikkelingen. Met name de veranderende financiële realiteit voor gemeenten, veranderingen in de organisatiestructuur van gemeenten, en veranderingen in landelijk sportbeleid en de prominente discourses hierin, worden daarbij genoemd. Beleidsambtenaren sport onderkennen dat sportbeleid meer dan in het verleden in verband staat met andere beleidsterreinen vanuit de breed onderschreven maatschappelijke waarde van sport. Verder benoemen ze een grotere focus op doelmatigheid en effectiviteit binnen het gemeentelijk beleid, ook waar het gaat om sport, mede door de druk op de gemeentelijke budgetten.

Ten aanzien van de tweede onderzoeksvraag stel ik vast dat de beleidsactiviteiten maar beperkt aan verandering onderhevig zijn. Sportaccommodaties staan nog altijd centraal, zowel financieel als in de uitvoering. Een goede sportinfrastructuur wordt als belangrijke voorwaarde gezien om te kunnen profiteren van de instrumentele waarde van sport. Doordat een groot deel van het budget vastzit in sportaccommodaties, hebben de beleidsambtenaren sport weinig mogelijkheden om met aanvullende beleidsactiviteiten specifiek in te zetten op de externe doelen van het sportbeleid.

Met betrekking tot de derde onderzoeksvraag concludeer ik dat de beleidsambtenaren sport een groot geloof hebben in de kracht van sport en de bijdrage van sport aan doelen op andere beleidsterreinen. In zeer beperkte mate was sprake van kritische reflectie op de betekenis van sportbeleid en aandacht voor monitoring en evaluatie van sportbeleid. Tot op zekere hoogte zagen ze geen noodzaak tot onderzoek naar de waarde van sport, omdat deze waarde in hun ogen vanzelfsprekend was en er ook groot politiek en beleidsmatig draagvlak is voor de inzet op sport. Vanuit de focus op doelmatigheid en effectiviteit van beleid wordt vooral naar sportverenigingen gekeken die moeten bijdragen aan de bredere doelen van het sportbeleid om in aanmerking te komen voor subsidies, en naar andere partijen om een rol te vervullen bij het beheren en exploiteren van sportaccommodaties om zo de doelmatigheid en effectiviteit van het accommodatiebeleid te vergroten.

Hoofdstuk 4: Geografische spreiding van sportaccommodaties

In hoofdstuk 4 is aandacht voor de geografische spreiding van sportaccommodaties in Nederland en de mate waarin verschillen waarneembaar zijn naar stedelijkheid en naar sociaaleconomische status van buurten. In hoofdstuk 2 en 3 ben ik ingegaan op de aandacht van gemeenten om een goede sportinfrastructuur overeind te houden. Het overgrote deel van de gemeentelijke uitgaven aan sport richt zich op sportaccommodaties. Dat vraagt om inzicht in de mate waarin sportaccommodaties goed verspreid zijn over het land om zo vast te stellen of gemeenten geslaagd zijn in het aanbieden van een goede sportinfrastructuur. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is om te komen tot kernindicatoren omtrent de spreiding van sportaccommodaties (aanwezigheid, variatie, nabijheid) en om ongelijkheden hierin naar stedelijkheid en sociaaleconomische status van buurten aan het licht te brengen. De volgende onderzoeksvragen staan daarbij centraal:

(1) In welke mate bestaan er verschillen in de spreiding van (typen) sportaccommodaties tussen hoge en lage statuswijken?
(2) In welke mate bestaan er verschillen in de spreiding van (typen) sportaccommodaties tussen stedelijke gebieden en plattelandsgebieden?

Voor de analyse is gebruikgemaakt van de Database SportAanbod (DSA) van het Mulier Instituut, waarin geografische informatie van (bijna) alle sportaccommodaties in Nederland is opgenomen. Deze database is gekoppeld aan bevolkingsgegevens van CBS om ruimtelijke analyses mogelijk te maken. In relatie tot de eerste onderzoeksvraag stel ik vast dat zowel de hoogste als de laagste statuswijken minder sportaccommodaties per 10.000 inwoners tot hun beschikking hebben en minder variatie kennen in de typen sportaccommodaties dan de tussenliggende groepen. De gemiddelde afstand tot de dichtstbijzijnde sportaccommodatie bleek het kortst in de laagste statuswijken. Hoewel het aanbod aan sportaccommodaties relatief beperkt en eenzijdig is in de lage statuswijken, is dit aanbod wel dichtbij gelegen. Lage statuswijken hebben vergelijkbaar, of met betrekking tot de nabijheid, een betere spreiding van sportaccommodaties vergeleken met de hoge statuswijken. Het blijkt wel dat bepaalde typen sportaccommodaties meer in hoge statuswijken aanwezig zijn (hockeyvelden, golfbanen) en andere typen meer in lage statuswijken (fitnesscentra). Ten aanzien van stedelijkheid, de tweede onderzoeksvraag, concludeer ik dat de afstand tot sportaccommodaties kleiner is in stedelijk gebied en dat in plattelandsgebieden meer sportaccommodaties per 10.000 inwoners aanwezig zijn. Meer in het algemeen blijken er sportaccommodaties te onderscheiden die mede door beleidsinzet van gemeenten nagenoeg overal aanwezig zijn ongeacht de bevolkingsomvang (voetbalveld, tennisbaan, sporthal) en daarmee een soort basisinfrastructuur vormen. Dit uit zich met name in de oververtegenwoordiging van sportaccommodaties in plattelandsgebieden,

omdat gemeenten ook daar verschillende sportaccommodaties in de nabijheid van de burger willen aanbieden. Verder concludeer ik dat Nederland, met een variëteit aan sportaccommodaties in de nabijheid van de meeste inwoners, een zeer fijnmazige sportinfrastructuur heeft. Tot slot laten de uitkomsten zien dat door gestructureerd de geografische gegevens van sportaccommodaties te analyseren interessante kernindicatoren kunnen worden opgesteld over de aanwezigheid, variatie en nabijheid van sportaccommodaties in Nederland. Deze uitkomsten zijn bruikbaar voor de planning van sportaccommodaties en voor sport(stimulering)beleid.

Hoofdstuk 5: Betekenis van sportbeleid voor sportgedrag

De focus in hoofdstuk 5 ligt op de betekenis van sportbeleid voor het sportgedrag van het individu en meer specifiek voor het tegengaan van ongelijkheid in sportdeelname. Met de gemeentelijke sportuitgaven, en door middel van beleidsprogramma's, streeft de gemeente ernaar om sport toegankelijk te maken voor iedereen en daarmee vooral de lagere statusgroepen, die in sportdeelname achterblijven, aan te zetten om te gaan sporten. Hierbij wordt uitgegaan van de sociaalecologische redenering dat met sportbeleid het gedrag van het individu kan worden beïnvloed. In lijn hiermee is het doel van dit hoofdstuk om inzicht te geven in de invloed van deze beleidsomgeving (gemeentelijke uitgaven aan sport en beleidsprogramma's) op sportgedrag van een individu. Hiervoor heb ik de volgende onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd:

(1) In welke mate hebben gemeentelijke sportuitgaven en sportbeleids-programma's invloed op de sportdeelname en sportclubdeelname bij de jeugd en bij volwassenen?
(2) In welke mate hebben gemeentelijke sportuitgaven en sportbeleidsprogramma's invloed op het verschil in sportdeelname en sportclubdeelname tussen hoge en lage statusgroepen?

De verwachting was dat hogere sportuitgaven van gemeenten en participatie in sportbeleidsprogramma's samengaan met een hogere sportdeelname en kleinere verschillen tussen hoge en lage statusgroepen. Om deze verwachting te testen, heb ik gebruikgemaakt van het onderzoek Ongevallen en Bewegen in Nederland (2012-2014) en dit gecombineerd met andere databronnen, waaronder informatie over sportuitgaven van gemeenten van het CBS, informatie over de inzet van buurtsportcoaches van het Mulier Instituut en informatie over de inzet van het Jeugdsportfonds. Door middel van een multiple 3-niveau logistische regressieanalyse heb ik gecontroleerd voor de invloed van de diverse omgevingsniveaus (micro- en mesoniveau) en vastgesteld wat de invloed van sportbeleid (macroniveau) is op sport(club)deelname. Tevens heb ik hierbij interactie-effecten tussen de verschillende niveaus meegenomen om antwoord

te kunnen geven op de tweede onderzoeksvraag. Ik heb de analyses voor de jeugd en voor volwassenen apart uitgevoerd. In relatie tot de eerste onderzoeksvraag worden de verwachtingen bevestigd voor de jeugd en blijkt dat hogere sportuitgaven samenhangen met hogere sportdeelname en sportclubdeelname. Participatie in beleidsprogramma's heeft geen effect op de sport(club)deelname van de jeugd. Bij volwassenen is sprake van een negatief effect van sportuitgaven en participatie in beleidsprogramma's op de sportdeelname. Gedeeltelijk kan deze negatieve relatie worden verklaard doordat buurtsportcoaches vooral te werk worden gesteld in gemeenten en wijken waar een lage sportdeelname is. Dit biedt ook een verklaring waarom van de aanstelling van buurtsportcoaches geen effect zichtbaar was in relatie tot de sport(club)deelname van de jeugd. Waar het gaat om de tweede onderzoeksvraag, stel ik vast dat in lijn met mijn verwachtingen, hogere gemeentelijke sportuitgaven samengaan met kleinere sportclubdeelnameverschillen tussen jeugd uit hoge en lage statusgroepen. Ik concludeer dat sportbeleid er vooral toe doet voor sportclubdeelname van jeugd, waar het beleid ook vooral op is gericht. Ondanks de invloed van sportbeleid, blijken sociaaleconomische variabelen op individueel en buurtniveau belangrijker in het verklaren van verschillen in sport(club)deelname voor zowel jeugd als volwassenen.

Hoofdstuk 6: Betekenis van sociale en fysieke omgeving voor sportgedrag

Hoofdstuk 6 richt zich op de betekenis van de sociale omgeving (veiligheid en sociaaleconomische status van de buurt) en de fysieke omgeving (sport-accommodaties) in het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname. Sport-accommodaties worden als belangrijk instrument voor sportstimulering gezien, waarbij wordt aangenomen dat een betere sportinfrastructuur leidt tot een hogere sportdeelname. Op basis van een sociaalecologische benadering verwacht ik dat naast de fysieke omgeving ook de sociale omgeving van belang is (zie ook hoofdstuk 5), alsmede individuele kenmerken. Gelet op de grote verschillen in stad en platteland ten aanzien van de sociale en fysieke omgeving, richt ik me in dit onderzoek specifiek op verschillen in sportdeelname tussen stedelijke gebieden en plattelandsgebieden. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is om verschillen tussen stad en platteland in sportdeelname van individuen in beeld te brengen en te bezien in welke mate deze verschillen worden verklaard door verschillen in de sociale en fysieke omgeving. Twee onderzoeksvragen staan centraal in hoofdstuk 6:

(1) Zijn sportdeelnameverschillen tussen stad en platteland (deels) het gevolg van verschillen in de sociale omgeving?
(2) Zijn sportdeelnameverschillen tussen stad en platteland (deels) het gevolg van verschillen in de fysieke omgeving?

In relatie tot de sociale omgeving verwacht ik dat de gunstige sociale omgeving in plattelandsgebieden in vergelijking met stedelijke gebieden resulteert in een hogere sportdeelname in plattelandsgebieden. Vanuit het perspectief van de fysieke omgeving, verwacht ik een gunstige fysieke omgeving (grotere diversiteit en nabijheid sportaccommodaties) in stedelijke gebieden in vergelijking met plattelandsgebieden en daarmee een hogere sportdeelname in stedelijke gebieden. Ik heb deze verwachtingen getoetst door middel van multinomiale logistische regressie analyses om zo de onafhankelijke effecten van stedelijkheid, aspecten van de fysieke en sociale omgeving en de achtergrondkenmerken van het individu te bepalen in relatie tot de sportfrequentie van het individu. De afhankelijke variabele van sportfrequentie bestaat uit drie groepen: niet-sporter (referentiegroep), maandelijkse sporter en wekelijkse sporter.

In relatie tot de eerste onderzoeksvraag laten de analyses zien dat de wekelijkse sportdeelname in plattelandsgebieden hoger is, terwijl bij een maandelijkse sportdeelname geen verschil zichtbaar is. De hogere wekelijkse sportdeelname in plattelandsgebieden wordt (deels) verklaard door de gunstige sociale omgeving in deze gebieden in vergelijking met stedelijke gebieden. Aangaande de tweede onderzoeksvraag, stel ik vast dat de fysieke omgeving geen verklaring biedt voor verschillen in sportdeelname naar stedelijkheid. Dit betekent overigens niet dat de fysieke omgeving niet van betekenis is. Uit de analyses blijkt dat een grotere diversiteit van sportaccommodaties in de nabijheid van het individu de kans op maandelijkse sportdeelname vergroot. In tegenstelling tot mijn verwachting blijkt een grotere afstand tot de dichtstbijzijnde sportaccommodatie niet samen te hangen met niet-sporten, maar juist een grotere kans te geven op maandelijkse sportdeelname. Ik concludeer in dit hoofdstuk, evenals in hoofdstuk 5, dat de sociale omgeving van groot belang is bij het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname, ook waar het gaat om verschillen in sportdeelname tussen stedelijke gebieden en plattelandsgebieden.

Conclusie

Door middel van vijf studies heb ik enerzijds onderzocht waar het lokale sportbeleid over gaat en welke omgevingsfactoren daarbij een rol spelen, en anderzijds wat de betekenis van lokaal sportbeleid en de sociale en fysieke omgeving is in het verklaren van sportdeelnameverschillen. Op basis van deze studies kom ik voor dit proefschrift tot een tweeledige conclusie. Ten eerste concludeer ik dat, hoewel lokaal sportbeleid autonoom is, gemeentelijk sportbeleid sterk wordt beïnvloed door de omgeving en exogene ontwikkelingen, zoals landelijk (sport)beleid en financiële, bestuurlijk-organisatorische en maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen. Op basis van deze bredere omgeving van lokaal sportbeleid ontstaat een beter begrip van de inhoud van lokaal sportbeleid (vgl. Houilhan, 2005) en daarmee van de focus

op de instrumentele waarde van sport. De uitvoering van lokaal sportbeleid is overigens vooral gericht op het faciliteren van de sportbeoefening en op het verhogen van de sportdeelname. Beleidsambtenaren sport hechten veel belang aan het verhogen van de sportdeelname omdat dit grote maatschappelijke betekenis heeft vanwege de aangenomen positieve effecten van sport op onder andere gezondheid, persoonlijke ontwikkeling en sociale participatie. Zodoende wordt in de beleidsuitvoering de nadruk gelegd op het behouden van een betaalbare en toegankelijke sportinfrastructuur, om zo de sportdeelname te bevorderen. Het wordt als vanzelfsprekend gezien dat met het verhogen van de sportdeelname ook de sociaalmaatschappelijke doelstellingen worden gerealiseerd, bijvoorbeeld ten aanzien van gezondheid en sociale participatie en integratie. Ik concludeer dat er maar zeer beperkt sprake is van een kritische reflectie op de betekenis van lokaal sportbeleid (Mansfield, 2016).

Ten tweede concludeer ik dat in Nederland de karakteristieken van lokaal sportbeleid (deels) verklaringen bieden voor verschillen in sportdeelname. Het sociaalecologisch model is in deze behulpzaam geweest in het zichtbaar maken van de relevantie van lokaal sportbeleid en andere omgevingsfactoren bij het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname. Hoewel lokaal sportbeleid op onderdelen van betekenis was, bleken de sociale omgeving op wijkniveau en de sociaaleconomische achtergrondkenmerken van grotere betekenis bij het verklaren van sportdeelnameverschillen. In dit kader is het goed om op te merken dat Nederland een sterke testcase is. Immers, Nederland heeft al een zeer fijnmazige sportinfrastructuur, met gemiddeld genomen een afstand voor de burger van ongeveer 600 meter tot de dichtstbijzijnde sportaccommodatie, en een relatief hoge sportdeelname. Ook de nabijheid van sportaccommodaties in plattelandsgebieden en lage statuswijken is goed te noemen, zeker in vergelijking met andere landen. Ondanks deze sterke testcase blijkt lokaal sportbeleid van betekenis te zijn. Hogere sportuitgaven van gemeenten droegen bij aan een betere inclusie van jeugd van lagere statusgroepen in sportverenigingen en daarmee aan het verkleinen van participatieverschillen tussen hoge en lage statusgroepen. Dit is een mooie opsteker voor lokaal sportbeleid en biedt een tegengeluid aan studies waaruit blijkt dat vooral hoge inkomensgroepen profiteren van de overheidsuitgaven aan sport (zie Ter Rele, 2007). Verder bleek een grotere diversiteit aan sportaccommodaties in de nabijheid bij te dragen aan een hogere maandelijkse sportdeelname. Dit houdt mogelijk verband met de mindere intrinsieke motivatie en daarmee beperktere reisbereidheid bij de maandelijkse sporters (Hoekman & De Jong, 2011). Voor wekelijkse sporters, die vaak meer intrinsiek gemotiveerd zijn en waar sport meer onderdeel is van de leefstijl, blijken verschillen in het aanbod van sportaccommodaties er niet toe te doen. Deze groep is, gegeven de goede spreiding van sportaccommodaties in Nederland, bereid om de benodigde afstand te overbruggen voor een specifieke sport of om te kiezen uit het beschikbare aanbod in de nabijheid (Teixeira et al.,

2012). Vanwege de sterke testcase in Nederland, verwacht ik dat in andere landen waar minder voordelige condities zijn, de karakteristieken van sportbeleid meer van betekenis zijn in het verklaren van sportdeelnameverschillen.

Uitdagingen en vervolgonderzoek

Hoewel dit proefschrift waardevolle kennis heeft opgeleverd over aspecten van lokaal sportbeleid en de invloed hiervan op sportdeelname, zijn aanvullende kennisvragen en uitdagingen te benoemen waar in het verlengde van dit proefschrift verder aan kan worden gewerkt. Ten eerste kan een internationale benadering aanvullende inzichten opleveren. Dit is met name het geval bij de onderzochte verschillen tussen stad en platteland. In hoofdstuk 6 trof ik een hogere sportdeelname in plattelandsgebieden aan, terwijl in Europa over het algemeen een hogere sportdeelname in stedelijk gebied wordt gevonden. Dit roept de vraag op hoe de fysieke en sociale omgeving in andere Europese landen een verklaring bieden voor verschillen in sportdeelname naar stedelijkheid. Een internationale vergelijking is ook aan te bevelen voor de invloed van karakteristieken van sportbeleid en de invloed van sportaccommodaties op de sportdeelname. In landen zoals Nederland, met reeds een rijke sportinfrastructuur en een hoge sportdeelname, is het goed voor te stellen dat meer accommodaties en beleidsprogramma's en hogere sportuitgaven van gemeenten minder aanvullende betekenis hebben (zie ook Houlihan & White, 2002). Terwijl in bijvoorbeeld Oost-Europa of China (zie Guo et al., 2015), waar de sportinfrastructuur nog in ontwikkeling is en een kleiner deel van de bevolking sport, de betekenis van extra sportaccommodaties, beleidsprogramma's en sportuitgaven groter zijn.

Ten tweede constateer ik dat in het lokale sportbeleid veel aandacht is voor de maatschappelijke waarde van sport en dat de doelen van dit beleid vooral betrekking hebben op gezondheid en sociale participatie en niet meer primair op het verhogen van de sportdeelname. Er is echter weinig tot geen monitoring en evaluatie op lokaal niveau die vaststelt of het lokale sportbeleid erin slaagt om de gezondheid en sociale participatie van de bevolking te verbeteren. In dit proefschrift is dit onderdeel buiten beschouwing gebleven en is alleen gekeken naar de invloed van sportbeleid op de sportdeelname. Derhalve is het aan te bevelen om meer onderzoek te doen naar deze als vanzelfsprekend beschouwde maatschappelijke betekenis van sport en te bezien in hoeverre sportbeleid bijdraagt aan deze meer sociaalgeoriënteerde doelen. Hiervoor kan worden voortgebouwd op enkele eerste exploratieve studies in Nederland over de maatschappelijke betekenis van sport (Breedveld, Elling, Hoekman & Schaars, 2016) en de gezondheidsvoordelen van sport (Coenders et al., 2017).

Ten derde zie ik mogelijkheden om de indicatoren en variabelen voor de fysieke omgeving aan te scherpen en uit te breiden. In dit proefschrift lag de focus op

aanwezigheid, diversiteit en nabijheid van sportaccommodaties. De mogelijkheden van de openbare ruimte voor sportbeoefening, zoals routestructuren, parken en bossen zijn hierin niet meegenomen, terwijl tegenwoordig toch een substantieel deel van de sportdeelname in deze openbare ruimte plaatsheeft (Hoekman, Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Van den Dool, 2015; Scheerder & Breedveld, 2015). Er is dus wat voor te zeggen om naast de officiële sportaccommodaties ook de openbare ruimte voor sportbeoefening mee te nemen als onderdeel van de fysieke omgeving. Daarbij kan de recent door het Mulier Instituut ontwikkelde Kernindicator Beweegvriendelijke Omgeving (Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp, Van der Poel & Hoffmans, 2016) een goede basis zijn om in de toekomst ook de mogelijkheden om te sporten en bewegen in de openbare ruimte mee te nemen in verklaringsmodellen voor sportdeelname.

Ten vierde liggen er op basis van dit proefschrift enkele interessante causaliteitsvraagstukken die longitudinale data vereisen om te achterhalen hoe sportbeleid resulteert in een aanpassing van het sportgedrag. Het is nu bijvoorbeeld niet met zekerheid vast te stellen dat hogere gemeentelijke sportuitgaven leiden tot een hogere deelname in verenigingsverband. Het zou ook kunnen dat doordat het aantal leden van de vereniging is toegenomen, de gemeente besluit om een extra veld aan te leggen om de vereniging de ruimte te geven die op basis van de planningsrichtlijnen bij het nieuwe aantal leden past. In dit geval volgen de hogere gemeentelijke sportuitgaven (aanleg van een extra veld) op een hogere deelname in verenigingsverband. Daarnaast kunnen longitudinale data van pas komen om te volgen hoe de invloed van gemeentelijke sportaccommodaties en gemeentelijke sportuitgaven door de tijd heen verandert als gevolg van ontwikkelingen in de sportsector. Het is aannemelijk dat als gevolg van de opkomst van commercieel aanbod en sport in de openbare ruimte, de betekenis van gemeentelijke sportaccommodaties en de hieraan gerelateerde gemeentelijke sportuitgaven afnemen bij het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname.

Tot slot zijn in het verlengde van mijn proefschrift interessante nieuwe vraagstukken te benoemen. Een eerste voorbeeld is de aandacht van gemeenten voor effectief en doelmatig accommodatiebeleid en de zoektocht naar een ideale beheervorm voor de sportaccommodaties. Er is nog weinig bekend over welke beheervorm in welke situatie het best passend is. Vandaar dat een verkennende studie naar verschillen tussen exploitatievormen van sportaccommodaties in relatie tot gebruik, tevredenheid, financiële prestaties en bereik van specifieke doelgroepen een mooie eerste stap is om bij te dragen aan betere besluitvorming op dit thema. Daarnaast is een zekere spanning waarneembaar tussen investeringen in sportaccommodaties die voor 30 tot 40 jaar worden gerealiseerd, en de ontwikkelingen in de sportsector en veranderende sportvoorkeuren van de bevolking. Het is interessant om meer verdiepend onderzoek te doen naar de processen en de logica achter beslissingen voor

uitbreidingen of aanpassingen aan bestaande sportruimte en hoe wordt geprobeerd om aan te blijven sluiten op de veranderende voorkeuren van de bevolking. Als laatste zie ik mogelijkheden om het sociaalecologisch model breder toe te passen. In dit proefschrift is vooral gekeken naar de frequentie van sportdeelname en sportdeelname in verenigingsverband, maar het model kan ook waardevol zijn voor het verklaren van verschillen in het gebruik van sportaccommodaties en in de deelname aan specifieke takken van sport.

Beleidsimplicaties

Een belangrijke meerwaarde van dit proefschrift is de brede focus op de ontwikkeling, het functioneren en de betekenis van lokaal sportbeleid. Door lokaal sportbeleid en individuele sportdeelname vanuit een sociaalecologische perspectief te onderzoeken, heb ik een overzicht geboden van de ontwikkeling en het functioneren van lokaal sportbeleid, en van de relevantie van lokaal sportbeleid voor het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname. Deze inzichten zijn relevant voor beleidsmakers en waardevol bij het bepalen van de effectiviteit van lokaal sportbeleid. Ten eerste laat ik zien dat lokaal sportbeleid tot op zeker hoogte het sportgedrag van het individu beïnvloedt. Daarnaast levert het belangrijke informatie op voor beleidsmakers over welke groepen en omgevingen in het bijzonder in de sportdeelname achterblijven en waar extra aandacht op zijn plaats is om de inclusie in sport te vergroten. In dit perspectief bevestigt dit proefschrift het belang van de sociale omgeving bij het verklaren van verschillen in sportdeelname. Het is aan te bevelen om voor sportstimulering gebruik te maken van de sociale netwerken in lage statuswijken om de attitude ten opzichte van sport te verbeteren en sportdeelname te vergroten. Daarnaast blijft de sportdeelname achter bij de lage inkomensgroepen, lager opgeleiden en ouderen. Om de sportdeelname bij deze groepen te vergroten, is meer inzicht nodig in de ervaren barrières en is in het lokale sportbeleid specifieke aandacht voor deze groepen vereist. De ervaring leert immers dat vooral de overheid aan zet is bij het bereiken van moeilijke doelgroepen. Voor dit doelgroepenbeleid kunnen de buurtsportcoaches van betekenis zijn bij het ontwikkelen van op de doelgroep afgestemde activiteiten. Hierbij kan ook aansluiting worden gezocht bij de doelstellingen en beleidsinspanningen vanuit het sociaal domein, waar deze doelgroepen ook in beeld zijn.

Het proefschrift laat zien dat de sportinfrastructuur in Nederland op orde is en dat hiermee goede randvoorwaarden voor sportbeoefening aanwezig zijn. In tegenstelling tot andere landen is in lage statuswijken in Nederland ook sprake van een goede bereikbaarheid van sportaccommodaties. Dit is iets om te koesteren en op voort te bouwen. Het benutten van deze sportinfrastructuur zou centraal moeten staan waarbij naast de accommodaties (hardware), aandacht moet zijn voor de organisaties (orgware) en de activiteiten (software) die hier

plaatsvinden. Deze combinatie van hardware, orgware en software wordt ook wel aangeduid als het lokale sportkapitaal (VSG, 2018). NOC*NSF verwijst in dit kader naar de gouden driehoek van accommodatie, kader en activiteiten om te komen tot 'open clubs' die kunnen bijdragen aan de maatschappelijke doelstellingen van het sportbeleid. De belangrijkste uitdaging voor lokaal sportbeleid is om de lokale sportinfrastructuur optimaal te benutten en zo ook de exploitatietekorten beperkt te houden, aansluitend op de focus op effectief en doelmatig accommodatiebeleid en de druk op de gemeentelijke budgetten. Hiervoor is het essentieel dat de sportinfrastructuur is afgestemd op de veranderende wensen en behoeften van de bevolking. Dit vraagt om een lokale toets, te meer omdat de toekomstperspectieven tussen gemeenten sterk kunnen verschillen als gevolg van demografische ontwikkelingen en veranderende sportdeelnamepatronen (zie Wezenberg-Hoenderkamp & Hoekman, 2016). Daarvoor hebben beleidsambtenaren sport een duidelijk beeld nodig van de lokale sportdeelname, de behoefte van de bevolking en kansen en belemmeringen van verschillende doelgroepen binnen hun gemeente om het sportbeleid hierop af te stemmen. Hoewel dit proefschrift een overkoepelend beeld geeft van verklaringen voor verschillen in sportdeelname, is meer onderzoek en ondersteuning op lokaal niveau nodig om de beleidsambtenaar te helpen bij het ontwikkelingen van toekomstbestendig lokaal sportbeleid.

Ten aanzien van de focus op '*Sport for All*' en de ambities om ongelijkheid in sportdeelname tegen te gaan, moet worden gezegd dat dit nog niet is gerealiseerd. Ik betwijfel overigens, in lijn met Skille (2011), of dit ooit kan worden gerealiseerd. Dit proefschrift heeft eens te meer aangetoond dat sport een sociaal construct is, waarbij sociaaleconomische factoren en verschillende omgevingssystemen op het gedrag van het individu inwerken. Besluiten om te gaan sporten worden genomen in een bredere context van waarden, normen, attituden en leefstijlfactoren die gerelateerd zijn aan deze sociaal-economische factoren en omgevingssystemen. Dit houdt ook in dat de niet-sporters niet per se een belemmering ervaren om te sporten of zijn uitgesloten, het kan ook zijn dat ze simpelweg niet willen sporten (zie Coalter, 1998). Ik verwacht daarom dat er een sportdeelnameplafond is, omdat niet iedereen ervoor zal kiezen om te gaan sporten. Gelet op de reeds relatief hoge sportdeelname in Nederland, is de verwachting dat de mogelijkheden voor een verdere stijging van de sportdeelnamepercentages beperkt zijn. Het verder verhogen van dit deelnamepercentage hoeft dan ook geen doel op zich te zijn. Beter is het om specifiek in te zetten op doelgroepenbeleid en vooral op de groepen die het meest profiteren van deelname aan sport in relatie tot gezondheid en sociale participatie en integratie. Dit zal weinig tot geen betekenis hebben voor landelijke of lokale sportdeelnamecijfers, maar wel bijzonder relevant zijn vanuit de nagestreefde maatschappelijke waarde van sport.

In mijn proefschrift stel ik vast dat er maar beperkt sprake is van lerend beleid op het terrein van sport. Het ontbreekt aan inzicht in de werkzame mechanismen van het lokale sportbeleid en vaak blijft het bij indicaties dat doelstellingen zijn bereikt of het gevoel dat iets werkt. Wat meer reflectie op de betekenis van sportbeleid en de werkzame mechanismen van beleidsactiviteiten is op zijn plaats. Om een rol in andere sectoren te spelen, zal het belangrijker worden om aan te tonen dat sport van betekenis is. Het kan hiervoor een voordeel zijn dat sport niet wettelijk is ingekaderd en dat gemeenten daarmee de vrijheid hebben om op eigen wijze aan dit beleidsterrein invulling te geven. Hiermee kan sport een interessante 'proeftuin' zijn voor andere beleidsterreinen, vooral in relatie tot de decentralisaties in het sociale domein en de inwerkingtreding van de Omgevingswet in 2021 (zie ook VSG, 2018). Gemeenten kunnen dan uittesten hoe sportbeleidsactiviteiten bijdragen aan de realisatie van maatschappelijke doelen en hiermee meer zicht krijgen op de werkzame mechanismen van lokaal sportbeleid. Dit is ook nuttig in relatie tot het vergroten van de effectiviteit en doelmatigheid van sportbeleid, wat als één van de voornaamste uitdagingen voor lokaal sportbeleid naar voren kwam.

In relatie tot de effectiviteit en doelmatigheid van sportbeleid verdient een ander punt de aandacht. Het proefschrift maakt duidelijk dat er een mismatch is tussen de doelen van beleid (gezondheid, sociale participatie) en de inzet van middelen (sportaccommodaties). Om de effectiviteit en doelmatigheid van het sportbeleid te vergroten, moet er een logische relatie zijn tussen de beleidsdoelen, de beleidsactiviteiten en de inzet van middelen. Dit vraagt om een kritische blik op de financieringsmechanismen van lokaal sportbeleid, aangezien nu het meeste geld 'vastzit' in sportaccommodaties en er daarmee weinig vrijheidsgraden zijn om met beleidsactiviteiten aan de gestelde beleidsdoelen bij te dragen.

Dit proefschrift heeft laten zien dat een sociaalecologisch perspectief waardevol is bij het bestuderen van lokaal sportbeleid. Verder is aangetoond dat sportbeleid, de fysieke omgeving en de sociale omgeving van invloed zijn op het gedrag van het individu. Het is daarom aan te bevelen om bij beleidsprogramma's en interventies diverse omgevingssystemen in te zetten om zo het potentiële effect op het gedrag van het individu te vergroten. Deze aanpak is redelijk gangbaar bij gezondheidsinterventie en vrij succesvol gebleken (Stokols, 1996). Een voorbeeld van zo'n benadering, waarbij diverse omgevingssystemen worden betrokken, is de integrale aanpak van Jongeren op Gezond Gewicht (JOGG). Deze benadering kan ook potentie hebben voor sportstimuleringsprogramma's waarbij ingezet wordt op specifieke doelgroepen. Op deze wijze kan de betekenis van sportbeleid worden vergroot, niet alleen in termen van de sportdeelname maar zeker ook in termen van de maatschappelijke waarde van sport, die voor specifieke doelgroepen (kinderen in armoede, mensen met een beperking, etc.) evidenter zijn.

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About the author

Remco Hoekman (1981) obtained a Master of Science in Leisure Studies and a Bachelor of Economics. He is a senior researcher at the Mulier Institute, with former working experiences at a municipal sports council and as a local sport manager. Furthermore, Remco is affiliated with the Radboud University for research and education on the topics of sport policy and sport sociology.

Within the Mulier Institute, Remco is responsible for research on financial aspects of sport, local sport policy, sport facilities and activity-friendly environments, and for the international activities of the institute. He has been in charge of and participated in (inter)national research and monitoring projects on sport policy, sport facilities, sport participation and funding of grassroots sport. He has an extensive national and international publication list, including both policy-oriented and fundamental research, and is a frequently asked expert, advisor and speaker on the abovementioned topics.

In the Netherlands, Remco holds several advisory positions and is, amongst others, columnist for *SportAccom* (a journal on sport facilities), and member of the evaluation committee for the election of 'Sport municipality of the year' and 'Best sport policy initiative'. Internationally, he is known as the founder of the expert group on sport facility databases and related research, and as one of the initiators of the 'Measure' network, a network with the aim to enhance knowledge on sport participation. In addition, he is an expert member of networks on sport organisations (SORN) and sport policy and politics (POLIS). Furthermore, he was co-editor of the book 'Sport Clubs in Europe: A Cross-National Comparative Perspective' and guest editor of the European Journal for Sport and Society (EJSS) for the special issue on ´Sports participation in Europe´. Currently, Remco is President of the *European Association for Sociology of Sport* (EASS), co-editor of the *European Journal for Sport and Society* (EJSS) and board-member of the *Observatory for Sport in Scotland* (OSS).

Both the effectivity of local sport policy and its impact on individual sport behaviour have been identified as important lacunas in scientific research. Little is known about how sport policy characteristics, such as municipal sport expenditures, sport policy programmes and availability of sport facilities, influence sport participation patterns. To obtain a better understanding of the interaction between sport policy characteristics and individual behaviour, this book applies a socio-ecological approach and focuses on environmental influences. In addition, it aims to clarify how sport policy itself is positioned within a broader environment.

The results show, in line with socio-ecological reasoning, that local sport policy is influenced by the broader environment and exogenous developments. Despite the omnipresent instrumental focus on sport, local sport policy activities are still centred on facilitating sport and enhancing sport participation. Local sport policy characteristics provide some explanation for differences in sport participation, yet the social environment and socio-economic variables are found to be most important. Considering that the Netherlands is a relatively strong test case, given the abundant sport infrastructure and relatively high sport participation rates, it is anticipated that in other countries sport policy characteristics may be even more significant in explaining differences in sport participation.

Remco Hoekman (1981) is a senior researcher at the Mulier Institute and affiliated with the Department of Sociology at Radboud University. He has an extensive national and international publication list, including both policy-oriented and fundamental research on sport policy, sport facilities, sport participation and financial aspects of sport.