
Sports in Civil Society: Networks, Social Capital and Influence

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Sports represent the largest category of voluntary organizations in many European countries. This article addresses questions concerning the position, centrality and influence of sports organizations as one specific part of civil society, and is based on an approach providing information on networks between categories of organizations. These networks consist of overlapping affiliations to organizations which are then interpreted as structures making communication, persuasion and influence possible. From these networks, position, centrality and potential influence of sports organizations in civil society are analysed. The article also looks more specifically at the links between sports and seven other types of voluntary organizations. The data is based on Norwegian surveys from 1982, 1990, and 2003, providing the possibility to follow sports organizations over a period of 20 years. The results show that sports organizations are influential due to size, but relatively weakly embedded and positioned in civil society. This position is, however, strengthened compared to most other organizations during the last 20 years. Regarding the relation of sports to other specific organizations some type of 'normalization' seems to have taken place, and sports are socially 'closer' to most organizations in 2003 than in 1982.

Introduction

Even though the topic of civil society, in general, and social capital, in particular, have been very much on the sociological agenda lately, as the largest sector of civil society in many Western nations, sports have only received scant attention so far. This is strange, given the sheer size of the sector and the importance of sports for many individual's everyday life, but also because sports represent a type of voluntary organization considered especially important in the social capital debate. Putnam (1993: 173) includes sports clubs as an organizational type, representing a kind of horizontal interaction important for the functioning of social capital, and for Dekker and Uslaner (2001: 2), some of the fascination of the social capital concept stems from '... the idea that "good government comes from singing choirs and soccer clubs"'. In a more recent discussion of trust, Hardin (2006: 82) asks

whether 'local political groups and sport clubs' are what is needed to restore trust in today's loosely connected societies. Thus, the question of how sports, as they take form in voluntary organizations, matter for civil society, and social capital should be of interest to sociologists in general, and especially for those concerned with civil society, social capital, and sports.

To the extent sports have been studied as civil society phenomena, this has been from two perspectives. First, the focus has been placed rather narrowly on sports organizations themselves. Examples are studies of voluntarism (Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006) and studies of how sports function as an arena for social cohesion, bonding and/or integration (Seippel, 2005). A second topic has involved more political questions as, for example, how sports contribute to the most common measures (van Deth, 2003) within the social capital tradition: political interest and institutional and general trust (Seippel, 2006). What is still less known

is how sports relate to other societal actors, one important aspect of this question being sports as part of civil society: how sports clubs are related to other voluntary organizations and how sports might be seen as influential in civil society.

Against this background, the topic of this article is sport as one of many voluntary organizations, and the theme to be addressed is sports' position, centrality, and influence in civil society. More specifically, four themes will be addressed. First, size (affiliations) as a prerequisite for influence will be studied. Second, sports influence will be analysed as a question of how sports are embedded in civil society: how many, and what kind of social networks do we find between sports and other civil society actors? How central are sports in civil society? Third, the links between sports and specific actors in civil society will be in focus. As the analyses are based on data from three points in time, a fourth question to be considered is how sports' position in and influence through civil society has developed over a period of two decades (1982–2003). The article continues with a theoretical section, followed by a presentation of data, the Norwegian case and methodological discussions. The empirical analyses are presented chronologically. The article closes with a discussion of the historical aspects of the findings and a brief conclusion.

Sports, Social Networks and Influence

There are at least three reasons to apply a social network approach to the topic of this article. A first general reason says that this approach captures what most of us actually see as a fundamental aspect of social life ontologically: the relatedness and/or embeddedness of human beings and social interactions (Simmel, 1955; Giddens, 1984; Emirbayer, 1997). A second set of reasons concerns the topic of civil society and voluntary organizations more directly, because the most vital characteristics of social interaction within civil society and civil society's autonomy in relation to other social institutions is exactly about relations and networks (Walzer, 1992; Taylor, 1995; Habermas, 1996). This relational dimension is also vital to the social capital approach which is central in scientific discourses on civil society and voluntary organizations (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001; Burt, 2005). Recently, studies have also been made which explicitly and fruitfully address voluntary organizations and social movement questions through a social network approach (Diani and McAdam, 2003; Tilly 2005).

The third reason for network approaches being appropriate to this study is the relational character of the phenomena of power and influence. This is clear from the fact that most definitions of power and influence address how one set of actors is able to affect other actors (Weber, 1993: 180). Making a distinction between power (dependent upon coercive means or forceful sanctions) and influence which is more based on having one's way by persuasion rather than coercion (Knoke, 1990; Warren, 2001), it becomes clear that sports organizations, at best, have influence—seldom power—and that social networks offering opportunities for communication and persuasion are prerequisites for such influence (Stevenson and Greenberg, 2000). Thus, to really understand the phenomena of civil society and to study power and influence, more than knowledge of attributes of the actors involved is needed; a relational perspective seems indeed useful.

The usual way to undertake social network analysis is to study networks between pairs of actors: Who is talking to whom? Which organizations do business with which other organizations? The present study is based on an analysis of a two-mode network or affiliation data where the crux is data on individuals' participation in specific events—here, individual affiliations to various voluntary organizations. Compared to regular network data, affiliation data has four characteristics (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 291–292; see also Bonacich, 1972; Breiger, 1974; Borgatti and Everett, 1997; McPherson, 1981, 1982, 1983). First, as already stated, affiliation networks are two-mode networks, containing information on both individuals (here, members) and events (here, voluntary organizations). Second, affiliation networks consist of subsets of actors rather than pairs of actors. Third, connections among members of one of the modes are based on linkages established through the other mode, in this case individuals are connected through organizations and organizations are linked through individuals. Fourth, affiliation networks allow the study of the dual perspective of the actors and the events. The rationale of the subsequent analysis is that individuals with double (or more) affiliations represent informal networks between categories of organizations. In this way, a uni-partite (one-mode) network (relations between types of organizations) is extracted from a bipartite (two-mode) network.

Thus, the challenge is to understand more specifically how, through such networks, sports organizations (as one category of organizations¹) have a place within a field of categories of voluntary organizations. Through data on overlapping memberships coming

from different survey studies conducted at various times, we obtain a picture of social networks between various categories of voluntary organizations over time, which in turn, tells us how sports organizations have been more or less influential over the two decades covered by our data.

Warren (2001) points out how ideal voluntary organizations typically work not through money and/or power (coercive means) but by influence: 'Influence must operate through persuasion, however, in that its object must be convinced that to decide as the influencer suggests is to act in the interest of a collective system with which both are solidary' (Warren, 2001: 52). Because of their lack of coercive power, both voluntary organizations, in general, and sports organizations, in particular, are dependent upon social networks representing communicative opportunity structures (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004) enabling persuasion and influence.² Even though it seems self-evident that such networks are important for questions concerning influence, there have been criticisms of network studies for ignoring the questions of action, rationality, or social mechanisms (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; Gulati and Gargiulo, 1999; Gould, 2003). Partial answers to this challenge now exist, and several studies have moved beyond simply claiming that networks are important, and showed how social networks factually matter. The discourse on social capital clearly shows that for social groups to influence their surroundings 'weak ties' or 'bridges'—social networks leading out of a cohesive group—are just as important as 'strong ties' or 'bonds' (Granovetter, 1973; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004; Burt, 2005). The same point – the importance of links between otherwise clustered actors—is made in the discourse on the 'small world' phenomena (Barabasi, 2003; Watts, 2003; see also Robins *et al.*, 2005; Uzzi and Spiro, 2005). DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) seminal theory of organizational development where a mechanism of mimetics is central, is also revealed to be stronger when there are more networks between leaders and members of organizations (Galaskiewicz and Wasserman, 1989). In a recent qualitative study, networks are shown to matter because they are conducive to conformity and conversion among those involved in the interaction represented by the networks (Smilde, 2005). Of special interest for this case, Passy (2003) argues that social networks fulfil three social functions with respect to participation in voluntary organizations: socialization, making contact, supporting a final decision. Especially the first of these social functions, socialization, represents a type of influence where the kind of communicative

everyday networks studied in this case matter. Thus, as a minimum, social networks represent the opportunity structure without which no communication, persuasion, and influence is possible.

The concept of 'social capital' represents a fruitful approach to the topics of how social networks might take form and function in the case of sports. As already pointed out, it has become usual in the social capital discourse to distinguish between two aspects of the social capital phenomena, labelled 'bonding' and 'bridging', respectively (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Lin, 2001; Burt, 2005; Tilly, 2005). For the present study, one could say that 'bonding' concerns community building: how sports link members to each other and thereby generate unity, cohesion, feelings of togetherness and belonging. 'Bridging' is about how participation in a voluntary organization may contribute to new contacts and establishment of social networks outside those bonded into an already familiar circle. And even though vertical relations between organizations and political actors are obviously important for influence, Putnam (1993, 2000) is keen to emphasize that horizontal networks within and between different kinds of organizations—and sports as typical examples of such—are important factors for social capital to develop and to have implications. Consequently, for organizations as sports to be influential in civil society, it is a prerequisite that both kinds of social capital (bonding and bridging) are developed and that they work fruitfully in a balanced way (Burt, 2005). This implies that the social networks representing bridging-social capital provide the opportunity structure that is a prerequisite for influence in and through civil society.

We know from previous research that sports are relatively strong contributors to concrete social networks among active members in sports organizations ('bonding' in the above terminology) (Seippel, 2005), yet are somewhat weaker and less political—relative to other voluntary organizations—when it comes to social capital as attitudes, trust, and political participation (Seippel, 2006). The question remaining is what comprises the concrete social relations between sports organizations and other categories of voluntary organizations, and from this, what the position of sports organizations in civil society really is. Before embarking upon the empirical studies, I will attempt, rather exploratively, to see what kind of assumptions it is reasonable to put forward with respect to the four research questions posed in the 'Introduction' section.

First of all, though this is old news, it is important to see that sports organizations comprise the largest part of the voluntary sector in Norwegian organizational society.³ At the same time, it is also pertinent to

remember that a very significant part of those affiliated to sports are too young to be reached by the kind of survey producing the data which forms the basis of this study. Even though sports have shown a virtually constant increase in numbers of affiliated members throughout the post-war period, this does not necessarily apply to all age groups covered by this survey. In general, however, there are good reasons to expect sports to be an influential actor in civil society, simply due to the number of participants.

It is usual to distinguish between voluntary organizations based on whether they primarily are introvertedly oriented towards their own activities, or extrovertedly oriented towards influencing something in the outside world (Smelser, 1962; Wollebæk and Selle, 2002). Sports are typically introverted organizations concerned with their own activities (sport), and from this it is not to be expected that sports organizations—through their members—are particularly oriented towards other voluntary organizations. Other studies also suggest that sports are among the least linked and least politicized parts of civil society (Warren, 2001; Paxton, 2002; Perrin, 2005). Combining the first two factors, one should expect sports organizations to be influential due to size, but not particularly oriented towards the outside world, and thereby relatively weakly embedded in civil society.

Third, based on earlier research on sports, civil society, politics, and culture and the attributes of those affiliated to these organizations, it is possible to sketch some assumptions as to how sports fare with respect to specific other civil society organizations. Compared to those affiliated to other voluntary organizations, members of sports organizations are predominately male, youth, and adolescents and (somewhat) above-average educated (Wollebæk *et al.*, 2000; Enjolras *et al.*, 2005). This gives some indication as to which organizations are close to sports. First, there is a set of organizations with different gender and age profiles—e.g. religious and charity organizations—making it reasonable to assume that sports and these organizations are relatively far apart socially.⁴ There is, however, reason to assume that religious organizations are becoming less strict and sectarian entering a new millennium (Wollebæk *et al.*, 2000), and so, eventually become less unfamiliar to sports. Second, some organizations—trade unions and political parties—have a more male-dominated and (highly) educated constituency, and these are therefore probably closer to sports organizations. Sport activities have been regarded as something superficial and trivial (by cultural highbrows), and this ‘unbearable lightness’

probably indicates that sports are relatively distant from art and culture organizations (Gumbrecht, 2006). Environmentalism, as a ‘new social movement’ (Buechler, 1995), is somewhere at the intersection of politics and culture, and accordingly should be closer to sports than culture, but less so than traditional politics.

An increasing proportion of Norwegians have had some kind of experience with voluntarily organized sports when growing up, and one should therefore expect those active in sports to be decreasingly different from members of other organizations, both as individuals and in type of organization. This is perhaps best illustrated through lowbrow sports’ relation to highbrow culture. On the one hand (for culture), post-modern theorists claim that the highbrow–lowbrow distinction has lost importance (Jameson, 1991), and this is also confirmed empirically: the significance of the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture has shifted and declined—there are more ‘omnivores’ attracted to a broader and less status-ridden selection of cultural practices (Peterson and Kern, 1996; Van Eijck and Knulst, 2005). On the other hand, for sport (here football), it is put forward as a fact that we are entering an era of ‘post-fandom’; corresponding to the downgrading of art, there is an upgrading—middle-classification—of sports spectatorship (Giulianotti, 1999). Concurrently, over time, we should expect sports to move closer to culture and environment during this period, but also more generally that sports is less special—less distant to other organizations—when we come closer to the end of the 20-year period in focus here.

Data and Methods⁵

The most common way to conduct network analyses is to study networks through pair-wise comparisons of actors. In this article, however, the data applied are survey data giving information on individuals and their affiliations to voluntary organizations. From these data, a matrix containing information on overlapping affiliations with voluntary organizations is extracted. Hence, analyses are based on the number of individuals who are members in more than one type of organization. The crux of the analyses is that those affiliated to two or more organizations represent links—opportunity structures with potentials for communication, persuasion and influence—between these types of organizations. The more people who are affiliated, for example, to sports organizations and

trade unions, the stronger the link between these two types of organizations.

Three data sets are used in this study: World Values Survey 1982, 1990 and European Social Survey 2003. These surveys include random samples of the Norwegian population aged 18–80 years. The response rates are respectively 65, 71, and 65 percent (Listhaug *et al.*, 1983, Listhaug and Huseby, 1990; www.nsd.uib.no). Applying survey data as in this study, and especially over time, some challenges require clarification. This study is based on questionnaires with a pre-given choice of types of organizations, and a first question is whether they represent an acceptable selection of organizations. Compared to other general studies of voluntary organizations in Norway (Wollebæk *et al.*, 2000; Wollebæk and Selle, 2002), it seems clear that the most important categories of voluntary organizations are included in the questionnaires. Second, it is important to keep in mind that sports organizations have a significant proportion of their members in age groups not covered by these data. When it comes to questions of networks and influence addressed in this study, this will probably not affect the findings seriously because it seems reasonable to assume that adults are most important for the questions of networks and influence posed here. Finally, although the questions are similar in all the surveys, there is a slight shift in the response alternatives; they are identical in 1982 and 1990, but differ for two types of organizations in the last survey.⁶ Accordingly, one should take care when comparing the proportion of the population being members in organizations over time, and especially for the two categories of organizations where the phrasings are not identical. Irrespective, the main topic of this article assumes that networks between organizations are less affected by these differences in phrasing.

The methods applied are first, simple frequency distributions describing the proportions of the population and various organizational groups affiliated to the different categories of organizations, and diverse combinations of overlaps between the organizations.⁷ These are used to analyse the embeddedness of various organizations in general, and sports in particular, in the field of organizations. A special measure for centrality (BMC) developed by Bonacich (1987) is applied to evaluate the potential influence of organizations (Faust, 1997). This measure not only indicates the centrality of each category of organization in the field of organizations but also builds on information on the centrality of the units (types of organizations) closely linked to each organization.⁸ To illustrate the association between organizations' size and influence,

the two measures (size and BMC) are standardized and compared in figures. To obtain an understanding of how specific categories of organizations relate to each other, hierarchical cluster analyses are conducted. Cluster analysis recognizes actors (categories of organizations) that are socially similar to each other when it comes to affiliations. The method joins the pair of actors most similar, which is then considered a single entity, and then continues in this manner level by level until all actors have been joined into a single cluster. Multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) is used rather exploratively to illustrate social distances between the various organizational types. It is based on matrices of the overlapping affiliations, and is produced by a procedure searching for locations in a two-dimensional⁹ space making the Euclidian distance between the points (here, categories of organizations) correspond as closely as possible to the distances in the matrices (Kruskal and Myron 1978; Borg and Groenen 2005). The MDS analyses—where the axes have no substantial meaning except 'social distance'—might then be interpreted as exactly the social distance between types of organizations. Results from the cluster analyses are included in the MDS maps. Network analyses have been carried out by the network program UCINET (Borgatti *et al.*, 2002).¹⁰

Sports in Civil Society: Empirical Results

The chronologically presented empirical analyses will each address the three questions outlined in the introduction: size, embeddedness and relations to specific other organizations. The results from the first point in time (1982) will be presented most thoroughly, whereas in the latter cases the question of shifts and developments will be more in focus.

Sports in Civil Society 1982

Table 1 shows a series of measures for organizational size and embeddedness. The first column shows that sports, together with trade unions, is the largest category of organizations in the Norwegian organizational field of 1982: close to 40 percent of respondents report affiliations to these organizations. Proceeding to column 2 ('average affiliations') reveals that members of these two largest types of organizations have the lowest average number of affiliations; members of sports organizations are members of 'only' 2.07 organizations, whereas members of environmental organizations are, on average, affiliated to more than

Table 1 Norwegian Civil Society, 1982

	Proportion of population affiliated to each type of organization (prop./SD)	Embeddedness in civil society					Centrality and influence
		General			Sport		Bonacich measure of centrality: (coeff./SD)
		Average number of affiliations ^a	This/Other ^b	Other/This ^c	Sport/Other ^d	Other/Sport ^e	
Religious org.	0.10/0.26	2.29	0.70	0.11	0.08	0.28	0.39/0.66
Sport org.	0.37/0.97	2.07	0.67	0.40	-	-	0.57/0.98
Art & Music org.	0.08/0.38	2.77	0.79	0.09	0.08	0.38	0.44/0.76
Trade unions	0.38/1.00	2.07	0.66	0.42	0.45	0.43	0.58/1.00
Political parties	0.16/0.42	2.69	0.86	0.19	0.19	0.44	0.56/0.96
Environmental org.	0.05/0.13	3.07	0.86	0.06	0.06	0.38	0.42/0.71
Professional org.	0.16/0.42	2.73	0.87	0.19	0.19	0.43	0.58/0.99
Charity org.	0.14/0.37	2.62	0.83	0.17	0.14	0.36	0.54/0.93

^aAverage number of affiliations among members in each category of organization.

^bProportion of members in each category of organization, also member in one or more of the other categories of organizations.

^cProportion of members in other categories of organizations, member in each specific category of organizations.

^dProportion of members in sport organizations, also member of each specific category of organizations.

^eProportion of members in each specific category of organization, also being member of sport organizations.

three organizations. Corresponding to this finding, column 3 ('This/Other') shows that only 67 percent of those affiliated to sports organizations are members of other organizations whereas the equivalent level or professional organizations is 87 percent. Column 4 ('Other/This') shows the proportion of members of other organizations being member of each specific organization. This number corresponds more or less to that for the population as such (column one), but sports organizations have a relatively low membership among those affiliated to other organizations. Looking to column 7, Bonacich's measure for centrality shows that sports organizations are among those with the highest measure on this score. Comparisons to other and smaller organizations nevertheless indicate that sports are less central in the organizational field than their size might indicate. Figure 1 shows the size of the various organizational categories and their influence coefficient—both standardized—and visualizes sports (relative to size) as having a less influential position in the field. Overall, these measures indicate that on a general level, sports organizations are relatively weakly embedded in the field of voluntary organizations.

Looking for more specific relations between sports and other types of organizations (columns 5 and 6, Table 1), three findings stand out. First, those affiliated to religious organizations are clearly less affiliated to sports than others, and vice versa, members of sports

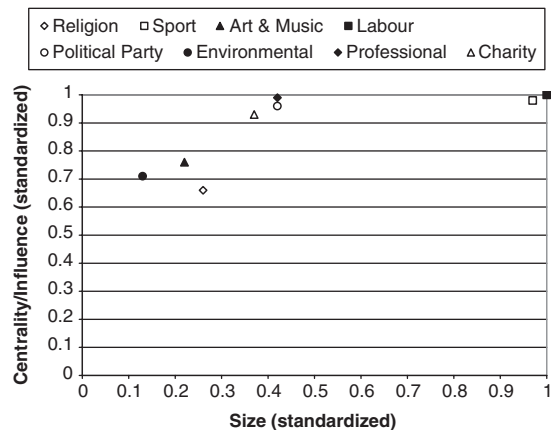


Figure 1 Size of organizational category and centrality (BMC) in Norwegian Civil Society, 1982: standardized measures.

organizations on average, are less affiliated to religious organizations. Thereafter, art/music, charity, and environmental organizations are linked to sports at about the same level as the average population. Finally, political parties, and especially trade unions and professional organizations, are more closely linked to sports than the rest of the organizational population.

The MDS and cluster analysis (Figure 2) confirms the above findings, and indicates, first, that the two strongest clusters (whole lines) are sports and trade unions and political parties and professionals. Next, the statistical procedure extracts a third cluster for charity and arts and music. Finally, the first two clusters are associated to each other, and the third cluster is then linked to environmental organizations. Religious organizations are clearly the least linked category in all the above analyses.

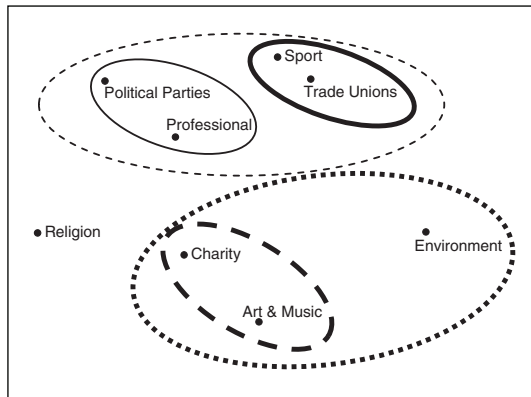


Figure 2 The field of voluntary organizations, Norway, 1982: multidimensional scaling. Circles indicate results from hierarchical clustering analysis. Stress of MDS-solution: 0.18. Clustered at level one (whole thick line). Clustered at level two (whole thin line). Clustered at level three (broken thick line). Clustered at level four (broken thin line). Clustered at level five (thick dotted line)

Sports in Civil Society 1990

Data from 1990 (Table 2) shows many similarities to the 1982 results. For the first question of size, sports organizations are still among the largest, but less clearly so than in 1982 compared to trade unions. ‘Art and music’ is the sector with the most significant growth. With respect to embeddedness, sports, together with trade unions, are still the least linked organization.

The level of influence (BMC) exerted by sports have increased slightly, but relative to trade unions, sports show a poorer performance in 1990 than eight years previously. There have been some changes in the networks between sports and specific organizations. For relations to religious organizations, these have turned out to be even weaker than in 1982. For both ‘art & music’ and ‘charity’, however, there has been a shift as predicted, and these organizations are now closer to sports than in 1982. Trade unions and professional organizations also seem closer, whereas political parties are less linked to sports than previously.

Cluster analysis (Figure 3) produces a picture both similar and different from the one from 1982. Sports have a similar position to the extent that the cluster with trade unions is still the strongest. Thereafter, the sports–trade-union cluster is linked to professionals, but political parties are now in a position closer to religious organizations. Environmental organizations and art and music have moved closer to the centre of the organizations field.

Table 2 Norwegian Civil Society, 1990^a

	Proportion of population affiliated to each type of organization (prop./SD)	Embeddedness in civil society					Centrality and influence
		General			Sport		Bonacich measure of centrality: (coeff./SD)
		Average number of affiliations	This/Other	Other/This	Sport/Other	Other/Sport	
Religion	0.11/0.26	2.41	0.75	0.12	0.06	0.18	0.41/0.59
Sport	0.33/0.76	2.30	0.71	0.36	-	-	0.61/0.88
Art & Music	0.14/0.33	2.95	0.86	0.16	0.17	0.43	0.59/0.86
Trade unions	0.42/1.00	2.27	0.69	0.47	0.51	0.40	0.69/1.00
Political party	0.14/0.33	2.91	0.90	0.17	0.15	0.35	0.58/0.84
Environmental	0.04/0.10	3.20	0.80	0.05	0.05	0.41	0.37/0.53
Professional org.	0.16/0.38	3.07	0.90	0.20	0.23	0.46	0.65/0.94
Charity	0.11/0.26	2.68	0.79	0.12	0.13	0.39	0.46/0.66

^aFor explications of measures, see Table 1.

Sports in Civil Society 2003

Moving on to 2003 (Table 3), almost the same proportion of the population is affiliated to sports organizations, but trade unions have increased their proportion even more. Other significant changes in the organizational field are the continuous growth of culture and humanitarian (charity) organizations, and the decrease in affiliations to political parties. The proportion of those affiliated to sports being also a

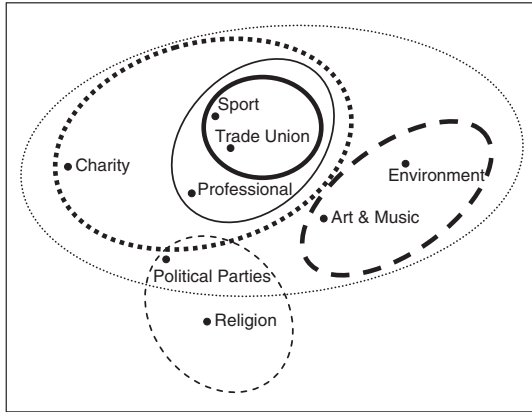


Figure 3 The field of voluntary organizations, Norway, 1990: multidimensional scaling. Circles indicate results from hierarchical clustering analysis. Stress of MDS-solution: 0.17. Clustered at level one (whole thick line). Clustered at level two (whole thin line). Clustered at level three (broken thick line). Clustered at level four (broken thin line). Clustered at level five (thick dotted line). Clustered at level six (thin dotted line)

member of other organizations has increased, as it has for most other organizations because of a denser organizational field with more overlapping memberships in 2003 than previously. Yet, with the exception of trade unions, sports are still the least embedded organization in the field.

For sports, the measure of centrality and influence (BMC) has increased slightly, but less so than for trade unions. There also seems to be a larger spread in the organizational field with regard to size and influence (BMC) from 1982 to 2003, and the association between size and influence appear much clearer, almost linear, by the end of the period than at the beginning (Figure 4). This suggests a process whereby organizations' centrality and influence seems to be more closely correlated with size.

The networks between sports and other organizations based on overlapping affiliations in 2003 still show similarities to 1982 and 1990, but a clear result from Table 3 is that the distance to religious organizations has decreased significantly. The MDS analyses (Figure 5) also visualize the fact that the category of sports is more central to the field than in the previous periods. Cluster analysis further reveals that the field of organizations and sports' place within it has changed in significant ways during the 20 year covered by our data. First, the strong cluster of sport and trade unions remains. Second, the organizations closest to this sports–trade-union cluster have changed from professional (and political parties in 1982) to culture (art and music) and humanitarian organizations. A third significant shift concerns the structure of the whole field. Whereas the 1982 analysis contained

Table 3 Norwegian Civil Society, 2003^a

	Proportion of population affiliated to each type of organization (prop./SD)	Embeddedness in the organizational field					Centrality and Influence
		General			Sport		Bonacich measure of centrality: (coeff./SD)
		Average number of affiliations	This/Other	Other/This	Sport/Other	Other/Sport	
Religion	0.13/0.28	2.73	83.0	0.15	0.14	0.34	0.30/0.31
Sport	0.31/0.66	2.53	77.9	0.35	-	-	0.66/0.68
Culture	0.22/0.47	2.80	86.6	0.26	0.27	0.39	0.55/0.57
Trade union	0.47/1.00	2.34	72.8	0.54	0.55	0.37	0.97/1.00
Political party	0.09/0.19	3.00	85.5	0.10	0.10	0.35	0.25/0.26
Environment	0.05/0.11	3.37	91.2	0.06	0.06	0.37	0.16/0.17
Professional	0.14/0.30	3.09	92.7	0.17	0.19	0.43	0.40/0.41
Humanitarian	0.17/0.36	2.94	88.6	0.20	0.21	0.39	0.49/0.51

^aFor explications of measures, see Table 1.

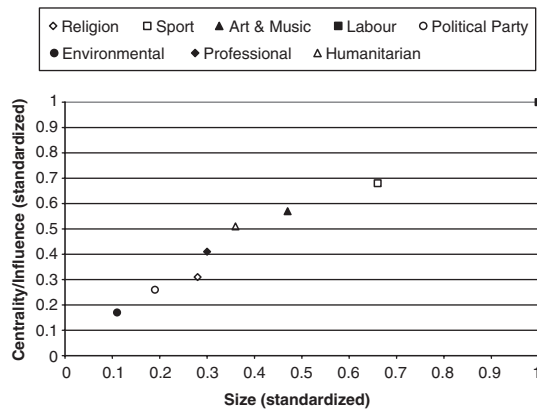


Figure 4 Size of organizational category and centrality (BMC) in Norwegian Civil Society, 2003: standardized measures.

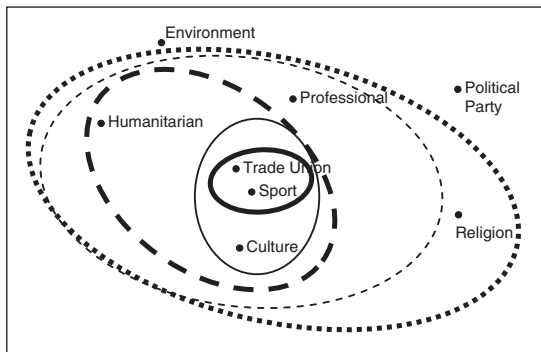


Figure 5 The field of voluntary organizations, Norway, 2003: multidimensional scaling. Circles indicate results from hierarchical clustering analysis. Stress of MDS-solution: 0.28. Clustered at level one (whole thick line). Clustered at level two (whole thin line). Clustered at level three (broken thick line). Clustered at level four (broken thin line). Clustered at level five (thick dotted line)

three pairs of organizations and two more isolated actors, the 2003 results indicate one cluster (sports–trade-unions) to which is added, level by level, one organization after another. This indicates that the field is less divided, and seems to consist of one block of organizations with trade unions as the most central.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article commenced by posing three specific questions as part of the overall endeavour to understand the position and influence of sports as part of civil society. A fourth question then dealt with historical shifts along the dimensions involved in the initial three questions.

The first question addressed the position and influence of organizations based on their size (number of affiliates). Previous analyses showed the proportion of the adult population affiliated to the various organizations, and for sports, there are two noteworthy findings. First, sport is a large organization. Second, there seems to be a decrease in affiliation to sports in the adult population.¹¹ Even though the numbers are among the highest in the field, sports (for adults) seem to be somewhat on the wane, and thereby less influential.

The second question addressed the centrality and embeddedness of sports in civil society. In general, the impression was that those affiliated to sports were affiliated to other organizations to a lesser extent than members of most other organizations (except trade unions). A more compact measure of the centrality of influence was Bonacich's measure of centrality. The development of this measure shows a slow increase in centrality for sports, a lower increase than for trade unions and an increase more or less at the same level as culture organizations, but more than the other types of organizations which all seem to have a downward trend with regard to centrality. This is in line with the assumptions sketched earlier in the article.

As discussed in previous sections, the links between sports and religious organizations have been weak, but the 20 years covered by our data show a very clear improvement of these relations, and sports and religion are now closer than previously. The second weakest link—and below average in the population in 1982—have been to charity (humanitarian); these links have also strengthened considerably. Culture and environment were both expected to be rather weakly linked to sports at the starting point in 1982, but these links were then hypothesized to grow stronger over time. These expectations are confirmed: the links to culture and environment are both among the strongest at the end of our period. For the links that were assumed to be among the strongest at the start of the period—trade unions, professional organizations and political parties—these have weakened in the case of the latter two, and are at about the same level for trade unions. There are, of course, complicated economical, cultural, and political processes behind these processes, most of them indicated through the hypotheses, but overall they reflect substantial shifts both in the field of voluntary organizations as such, and in sport's position within this field.

Couched in theoretical terms, the influence of sports in civil society depends on a well-developed and balanced amount of the two kinds of social capital: bonding and bridging. Whereas voluntary sports have been shown to be relatively strong with respect

to the bonding aspect (Seippel, 2005), this article tells a different story for the bridging side of sports as social capital. Relative to size, sports seem less embedded in civil society than most other organizations and thereby also to be weak in bridging-social capital. Sports consequently do not provide a strong opportunity structure for communication and persuasion, and thereby lack a most important precondition for a really influential position in civil society. The analyses presented in this article also indicates that as a type of organization sport has increased its centrality in the field of organizations more than most other types of organizations in the period 1982–2003, and sports appear as less ‘sectarian’ than in 1982. The two exceptions are trade unions and culture organizations, both of which have become more central.

This study of networks between categories of voluntary organizations shows primarily how the networks between members of types of organizations provide an opportunity structure for influence. Based on a distinction between introvert and extrovert organizations, we postulated that sports organizations are less embedded—have weaker links—than most other voluntary organizations. This study has confirmed this assumption: sports organizations are weakly embedded in the field of voluntary organizations and, accordingly, have a relatively weak opportunity structure for potential influence. Based on the same theoretical distinction (extrovert versus introvert organizations), one could also hypothesize that sports organization would be relatively weak when it comes to factually working through these weak structures. Future studies may tell us more about how the opportunities represented by the networks described in this article actually are approached and applied for various kinds of organizations. This could also be a step towards a better understanding of what being a member of different voluntary organizations actually implies.

Notes

1. It is important to note that what we are looking at are *categories of organizations*. One person might be a member of two sports organizations or two religious organizations, yet this is only registered as one affiliation to each category of organizations when looking at the networks between organizations.
2. This should not be taken to mean that voluntary organizations never have power or never have influence in other ways than the networks in focus here. At least in certain situations, trade unions, for example, will have both the possibility

to sanction those not doing what they want, and they often inhabit positions making it possible to exert influence through elite channels, such as in corporatist regimes.

3. For more information on the Norwegian case, see Olstad and Tønnesson (1986), Tønnesson and Olstad (1987), Goksøyr (1996), Slagstad (1998), Mangset and Rommetvedt (2002), Seippel (2002), Bergsgard and Rommetvedt (2006), and Enjolras *et al.* (2005).
4. This is also to be expected from studies of party politics where the Christian Democratic Party is the party with the lowest level of affiliation to sports organizations (Heidar and Saglie, 2002).
5. Data are made available by NSD (Norwegian Social Science Data Service). All interpretations of data are the responsibility of the author.
6. The differences are that the type of organizations termed ‘Art and Music’ in 1982 and 1990 are termed ‘Culture’ in 2003, and that ‘Charity’ in 1982 and 1990 is changed to ‘Humanitarian’ in 2003.
7. This part of the analyses is inspired by Cornwell and Harrison (2004).
8. The point for Bonacich (1987) here is that centrality does not automatically mean influence. For the case of networks of information, nevertheless, Bonacich assumes that centrality implies influence. In more technical terms, this implies that the β -factor is determined as 0.75 (default) for the analyses.
9. I have chosen not to increase the number of dimensions. This is partly because there are no strong methodological reasons for doing so (low increases in ‘stress’ moving from two- to three-dimensional solutions), partly because two-dimensional solutions are easier to interpret.
10. The matrices are normalized for the network analyses (Bonacich, 1987).
11. NSC (Norwegian Sport Confederation) reports an increase in affiliation in this period. These apparently contradictory findings are probably due to increase in the younger age cohorts (not covered in these data) outweighing the decrease among adults.

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