

Mapping Sporting Capital

*Stimulating sporting capital in youth through community sports coaches in the
municipality of Groningen.*

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Abstract

Background: Physical activity is linked to several benefits. The municipality of Groningen has developed a new policy to stimulate sporting capital among its citizens. Sporting Capital Theory (SCT) is used as a framework for developing and implementing policy. Furthermore, the Community Sports Coach (CSC) is implemented to enhance sporting capital among youth. While the importance of physical activity for a healthy upbringing is well-documented and established, the relationship between the CSC and Sporting Capital is not.

Purpose: To examine the views of policymakers and Community Sports Coaches on the role of the CSC in achieving Sporting Capital for every citizen.

Research design: Multi-Method, Focus Group & Semi-Structured Interviews

Method: Document analysis was conducted on four policy documents. A purposive sample of 3 policymakers were interviewed in a private setting. Lastly, a focus group interview was conducted with eight out of ten CSCs. Both interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed with deductive- and inductive coding using ATLAS.ti.

Results: The data shows an understanding between the policymakers and the CSCs on the role of the CSC in creating sporting capital. Differences arose in topics like monitoring, impact, and future implementation. Furthermore, the monitoring system has not been adapted to fit the new policy.

Conclusion: The Community Sports Coach is crucial in creating sporting capital, according to the municipality of Groningen. Furthermore, Sporting Capital Theory as a foundation for implementing sports policy is in accordance with the views of policymakers and CSCs. A sound monitoring system is not present therefore, the effect of the CSCs in creating sporting capital cannot be measured.

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Introduction

Values of sport

Sport seems to have value in solving different problems among youth. Youth who participate in sport or physical activity are seemingly more confident and have lower levels of depression and anxiety (Beauchamp, Puterman, & Lubans, 2018). Sports and physical activity contribute not only to one's mental health- but also to one's physical health. A broad body of knowledge acknowledges the benefits of physical activity on diverse health issues like obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, osteoporosis, and more (Hale et al., 2021).

However, more values can be distinguished. For example, there are positive claims regarding sports concerning: school performance, economy, behavior and upbringing, and social cohesion. But, these claims are not always causal. Furthermore, it may also result in negative outcomes when sport as an intervention is not implemented correctly. (Bailey, 2013; Wilson et al., 2022; Boonstra & Hermens, 2011).

Bailey et al. (2013), in addition to Boonstra & Hermens (2011), found 80 positive effects related to sports and physical activity. In their Human capital model, they divided these effects into six themes which are as follows: intellectual-, financial-, physical-, emotional-, personal and social values. All these different values and effects create a variety of global policies. These policies use sports and physical activity as an intervention to address different problems and obtain different outcomes (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

In the last two decades, physical activity has become a means to solve different social problems. Community sports and physical activity are understood as a partial solution for stimulating youth's social inclusion, participation, personal development, and general well-being (Wilson et al., 2022; Van der Veken et al., 2020; Aalbers & de Wit., 2021; Prins et al., 2014; Hosker et al., 2019). The relevance of sports and physical activity is underlined by the European Sport For All Charter (Council of Europe, 2001). This charter emphasizes the

responsibilities of governments to provide and accommodate sports participation in society to achieve social and health benefits for all. Depending on the values governments in different countries deem important, their approach to accommodating sport participation differs (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

To understand these differences in approaches, it is vital to comprehend the origins from which they derive. Therefore a glance at the frameworks of Social Capital Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Sporting Capital Theory helps to make sense of physical activity and sports as a tool for several beneficial outcomes (Hallman & Petry, 2013; Rowe, 2018).

Social Capital Theory (SCT) is one of the most influential theories concerning sports and societal benefits. It originates in the works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam (Baron et al., 2001). SCT is one of many theories, for the authors' work differs in conceptualizing social capital. The central focus in all three theories is on the influence of social networks and civic norms on society. Furthermore, SCT is linked with civic engagement, trust, and a sense of community. Also, social cohesion bonds the different views on SCT (Bailey, 2005; Tzanakis, 2013). Concepts like civic engagement, a sense of community, and social cohesion are also linked to sports and physical activity (Boonstra & Hermens, 2011; Bailey, 2013; Rowe, 2018).

The work of Putnam (2000) grabbed the spotlight in the discourse on SCT (Bailey, 2005). Putnam conceives social capital on a macro-societal level, in contrast with Bourdieu and Coleman, who conceive social capital as a personal resource (Baron et al., 2001). As a result of the macro-level in which Putnam operationalizes SCT, the work of Putnam offers more usability for governments and politicians to develop policies and justify government social spending. Therefore the work of Putnam is more widespread in practice (Tzanakis, 2013).

According to Putnam, social capital relates to 'features of social life, networks, norms, and trust, ' enabling participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995, p. 664). Social capital correlates with several desirable outcomes for governments and society, such as higher economic prosperity, health improvements, lower crime rates, and more. Some of these outcomes are intertwined. However, contrary to these desirable outcomes, pursuing social capital can also have less desirable outcomes. Schuller (2001) describes the 'dark side 'of social capital in which strong social ties can lead to negative normative associations instead of positive ones. He does, however, state that the latter outweighs the former. Metz et al. (2022) confirm these findings by stating that social capital might lead to exclusion in specific organizations and peer groups. However, both studies agree that social capital can be an excellent framework for developing policy when policymakers know these opposing sides.

In addition to social capital, human capital is a desirable outcome in the studies mentioned (Schuller, 2001; Metz et al., 2022). In this thesis, it is essential to distinguish the differences between these concepts as they relate and overlap depending on the definitions used. In the early sixties, Becker (1964) published his famous book, 'Human Capital,' which defines the concept as the knowledge, skills, and other attributes held by an individual, such as level of education and work experience (Becker, 1964). Human Capital Theory is about investing in the workforce. If a company or government invests in human capital, a more significant economic output and a higher income for the individual are expected. Human capital can include investments in education, health, communication, and many more qualities that improve economic output and productivity (Becker, 1964; Becker & Murphy., 1992). Almost sixty years later, Becker's original theory still holds worth, as it is now widely accepted that investments in education pay off in the future. The relationship between

education (quality and quantity) and future income is: 'one of the most robust findings in social science' (Deming, 2022, p.75).

As introduced by Becker, human capital primarily focuses on the economic output when one invests in education for the workforce. Capital, by Becker, is perceived as wealth, mostly income (Becker, 1964). However, as Human Capital Theory started to get more mainstream among economists, some studies have a different view on human capital and its perceived economic value.

For example, Bailey (2013) argues that capital is more than money. He defines capital as a resource that promises future utility. In this concept, various activities can be deemed an investment in human capital, including physical activity and sports. Biernat et al. (2020) support this broader interpretation of human capital, as they identify 'health' as an essential indicator of human resources. Health is viewed as a source that guarantees social- and economic development.

Furthermore, it guarantees the attainment of a good quality of life. Therefore, it is an essential factor and pre-condition for professional and social competencies. Biernat et al. (2020) describe the additional costs of Polish employers when factoring in various health conditions like diabetes on their economic output. Therefore it makes sense to invest in the health and well-being of the workforce, in this case, the Polish workforce, by stimulating physical activity.

It does not only seem appropriate to invest in the workforce's health. The future workforce is essential in most policies as the health of a future employee can be stimulated from an early age (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). However, Rowe (2018) argues that policies for protecting the health of youth are failing. For example, in the United Kingdom, sports participation is dropping in the age category of 12 – 15. Other OECD countries show the same tendencies ("The Heavy Burden of Obesity," 2019). Furthermore, child obesity in OECD

countries is on the rise. 31% of children are overweight, which is almost one-third. Greece, the United States, and Italy exceed 40% ("The Heavy Burden of Obesity," 2019). In the European Union, the estimated healthcare costs of physical inactivity are around 12 billion dollars annually. This results in up to 3.8 billion dollars in productivity losses (Soric et al., 2021).

Part of the solution is promoting a healthy lifestyle with sports and physical activity ("The Heavy Burden of Obesity," 2019). Also, a sound monitoring system must be in place to measure the activity. Currently, monitoring systems across OECD countries differ in metrics, definitions, and populations in the database. These differences result in difficulties comparing countries directly (Soric et al., 2021). Promoting a healthy lifestyle starts with improvements in policy. The OECD mentions some good practices, like in Denmark, where the television advertisement code is changed so that products that contain too much salt, sugar, and fat cannot be advertised on television ("The Heavy Burden of Obesity," 2019). However, despite these good practices, the prospects for the near future could be more favorable. Therefore, the OECD urges policy improvements to counter the trend. Rowe (2018) suggests that a new theoretical framework is needed.

The framework Rowe suggests is called Sporting Capital Theory (SCT). SCT is a model in which sporting capital is defined as: 'the stock of physiological, sociological and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time' (Rowe, 2018, p. 33). The model absorbs features of human, social, and cultural capital. Furthermore, Rowe states that sporting capital is most related to human capital as it incorporates many of the same characteristics. Given the origins of human capital, Rowe seems to derive his model from the influences of Bailey's (2013) Human Capital Model.

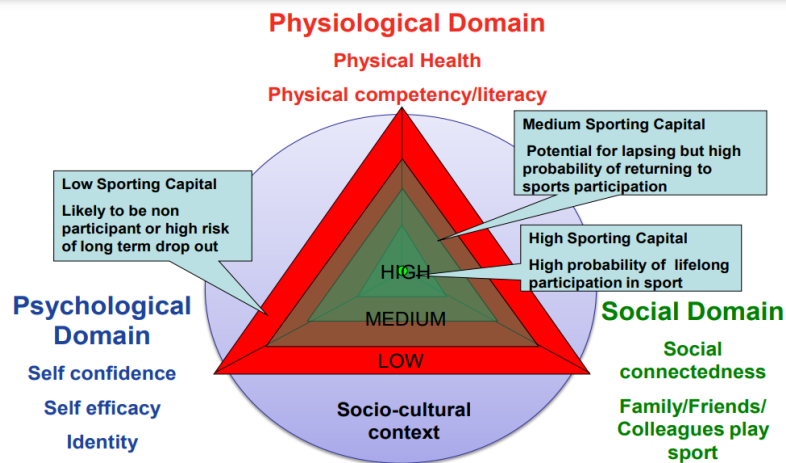


Figure 1.1 Sporting Capital Model as proposed by Rowe (2018).

Rowe states that although theories, like Human Capital Theory or Cultural Capital Theory, contribute to forming public policy, none applies well to sports and physical activity. Rowe emphasizes the values of the theories mentioned by pointing out that critical elements are prominent in sporting capital, like the importance of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and identity. Rowe opts for the 'trans-disciplinary' features of his proposed model by integrating key features of existing theories to make them more applicable in the context of sports. This context distinguishes SCT from other capitals or theories. It embodies all capitals in their influence on sports and physical activity. The model seems to determine the probability of current sports participation and physical activity and impacts the likelihood that participation is sustained later in life. High levels of sporting capital mean that it is more likely for an individual to sustain active behavior in the future.

The theories and frameworks mentioned in this paragraph are a sample of frameworks that can be used to develop- and justify specific policies. The following paragraph examines the differences between several OECD countries concerning sport policy.

Sport policy & implementation

In the introduction of this thesis, it was noted that sport and physical activity seems to have value in solving various problems among youth (Beauchamp, Puterman, & Lubans, 2018). Furthermore, sports and physical activity have over 80 positive effects (Bailey, 2013). Therefore, to ensure that sports and physical activity are accessible to everyone, various charters are developed. In Europe, one of the essential charters to ensure that everyone has access to sports and physical activity and its positive effects is the Sport For All Charter (Council of Europe, 2001).

Hoekman et al. (2017) acknowledge that every European country has different policies and practices for implementing the Sport For All Charter. Most seem to prioritize (vulnerable) youth. Furthermore, social values and health benefits associated with sports participation are essential. However, the implementation of those policies seems to differ among European countries. Hallmann & Petry (2013) overview 24 OECD countries and their sports development infrastructure. All participating countries in this study were asked to describe their sport development system through the following themes: (1) system and structure, (2) financing, (3) policy, and (4) participation.

The Netherlands seems to have a unique national, regional, and local system based on these themes (Hallmann & Petry, 2013). Where other countries like England, the United States, Ireland, Canada, and Finland, also integrate and stimulate sport through their educational system, the Netherlands seems to be unique in its way of organizing and facilitating sport outside of the educational system through the so-called Voluntary Sports Club (VSC) (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

However, the system in the Netherlands does show resemblances in comparison with other European countries. The system and structure might be unique, but the goals that ought to be achieved are not. Sports policy in the Netherlands does focus primarily on vulnerable

youth. Furthermore, stimulating and accommodating sports participation is the overall goal (Van der Veken et al., 2020; Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn & Sport, 2018). Also, historically the Dutch system has influences from England, as the Dutch VSCs resemble their English counterparts at the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, even then, the English system centered more on schools (Kramer, 1987). Although resemblances are found in focus and goals in comparison with other countries like Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, the systems to accommodate these goals differ (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

Figure 1.2 shows the influence of municipalities in interpreting and implementing national policy. In the Netherlands, the Provinces have no mediating role as opposed to other countries like Germany, Finland, or France (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

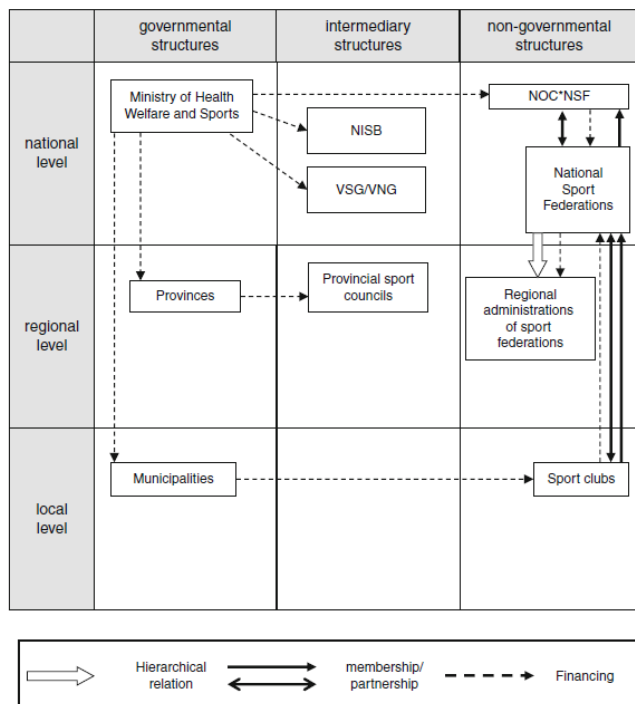


Fig. 10.1 The organization of sport in the Netherlands (Hallmann & Petry, 2013).

So, concerning sports participation and physical activity, municipalities in the Netherlands can decide how to implement national policy in their communities. To stimulate participation in these VSCs, a Youth Sports Fund is in place to cover participation costs for children from families with a low social-economic status (SES). To further accommodate those families, the Community Sport Coach (CSC) is becoming a central figure in many municipalities to increase further sports participation among youth (Hoekman & Breedveld, 2018; de Jeu & Street, 2021).

Although social workers in other countries also use sports to stimulate youth participation, the role of the CSC in the Netherlands seems to be unique because the CSC is not a social worker but a professional with a specialization in sports as an educational background (Super et al., 2016; Aalbers & de Wit, 2021). Aalbers & de Wit (2021) define three critical roles for a CSC in the Netherlands:

1. Referral role: coaching and counseling youth who got advice from their doctor or therapist to exercise more.
2. Organizer: Organizing introduction courses, clinics, events, or physical check-ups with physiotherapists, health centers, and community sports clubs.
3. Inclusion: Connecting organizations, professionals, and participants sustainably.

Opposed to other countries like England, Germany, and Belgium, the Netherlands distinguishes itself on a European level by introducing the CSC. This is because social workers abroad are a more versatile profession where sports and physical activity is not their core occupation in the social domain. As for a CSC, their core occupation is to promote sports and physical activity durably to ensure a healthy upbringing of youth or to sustain that health into adulthood and old age (Hallman & Petry, 2013; de Jeu & Street, 2021).

Policy & implementation in the municipality of Groningen

As discussed in the previous paragraph, on a local level, the municipalities of the Netherlands can develop policies independently to achieve national policy goals as they see fit (Hall & Petry, 2013). In the municipality of Groningen, creating sporting capital is the main focus of policymakers regarding youth, health, and sport participation (Groningen, 2021). The lead vision document on sports and youth for the coming years focuses on Sporting Capital Theory (SCT), a model in which sporting capital is defined as: ‘the stock of physiological, sociological and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time’ (Rowe, 2018, p. 73). According to the policy document, those physiological, sociological, and psychological factors are as follows:

Table 1

Sporting capital factors according to the municipality of Groningen.

| Physiological | Sociological | Psychological |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Motorial skills | Stimulating environment | Self-confidence |
| Discovering talents | Social connection and interaction | Self-regulation |
| Accessibility for disabled people | Belonging | Sport-identity |

To stimulate and influence sporting capital, the municipality of Groningen developed its own Groningen Sport Model (GSM) to implement strategies to reach a higher level of sporting capital for every citizen in the municipality (Groningen, 2021). The model

distinguishes three levels of influence for the municipality in creating sporting capital:

hardware (e.g., in- and outdoor sports facilities), software (e.g., activities, interventions, and coaching), and orgware (VSCs, community, and social partners).

To influence youth participation in sports to achieve sporting capital, the municipality positions the community sports coach between 'software' and 'orgware' (Groningen, 2021; Groningen, 2022; Groningen, 2018). The following goals ought to be achieved to increase sporting capital by using CSCs:

- Organizing sports activities in which the creation of positive experiences is central and it is possible to become acquainted with different sports motives and contexts;
- Connect with the perception of the 10-15-year-old (also the non-athlete) and respond to this.
- Help sports clubs with a suitable follow-up and a positive sports climate that contributes to sustainable sports participation;
- Cooperation throughout the chain (education, social work, YSF (Youth Sports Fund), sports clubs, parents) to remove barriers for children who are not yet participating.

In order to measure whether these goals are reached, the municipality uses several indicators mentioned in its annual plan (Groningen, 2021):

- percentage of children who rate the activities positively;
- number of activities set up in collaboration with sports clubs and that are followed up at the club;
- number of sports clubs that have been helped to develop an appropriate sports offer and/or positive sports climate;
- number of children for whom an intermediary role was played to remove barriers toward sustainable sports participation;

- Developing cooperation in the neighborhood in sports and exercise with education, sports clubs, neighborhood associations, childcare, etc.

However, several questions arise as the indicators lack depth concerning Sporting Capital Theory. First, it needs to be clarified to what extent these indicators can measure whether or not the goals have been achieved. Furthermore, it is unclear how the indicators contribute to measuring sporting capital as they do not seem to match. If sporting capital can be defined as a combination of factors mentioned in table one, the relation between those factors and the CSC goals and indicators seems rather vague. Lastly, SCT has only been studied in England, a country without CSCs. Therefore it is unclear where and how the role of the CSC fits into the Sporting Capital Model (Rowe, 2018).

The following research questions emerge:

1. How do policymakers of the municipality of Groningen view the role of Community Sports Coaches in achieving sporting capital?
2. How is the implementation of the Community Sports Coach monitored, and how does that relate to the Sporting Capital Model?
3. What are the views of Community Sports Coaches in the municipality of Groningen on implementing the Sporting Capital Model in their work?

Method

A multi-methods approach of a qualitative nature will be used to study the role of the CSC in the municipality of Groningen. First, content analyses of policy and implementation documents determine how the sporting capital model is translated into those documents.

Therefore the documents will be examined deductively on the 1) physiological-, 2) psychological- and 3) social themes and factors that are in play in the creation of sporting capital according to Rowe (2018) and the GSM model (Groningen, 2021). The documents

used in this study are the lead policy document, the annual implementation document, a multiple-year implementation document from the municipality, and the Groningen Sports Charter (Groningen, 2021; Groningen, 2021; Groningen, 2021; Groningen, 2018). The documents are attached in the appendix.

The outcome of the analysis has resulted in seven themes, that have been used as a foundation for the in depth-interviews and focus group: 1) sporting capital, 2) equality of opportunity, 3) promising interventions, 4) integrated focus, 5) inclusion, 6) stakeholders, and 7) target population. The interview structures derived from these themes can be found in the appendix.

In-depth interviews are conducted with the two policymakers of the vision document. In addition, an employee responsible for youth, the CSCs, and the marketing of the sports activation program has participated in an in-depth interview. Furthermore, the municipality's ten CSCs were invited to participate in a focus group. Eight out of ten CSCs did participate in the focus group.

The in depth-interviews with the policymakers of the leading policy document of the municipality will be used to examine the reasoning and theory behind the sporting capital model concerning the role of a Community Sports Coach. To get a better understanding of this matter, the following topics were discussed in creating sporting capital: (1) the role of the municipality, (2) the role of the Community Sports Coach, (3) the role of other mediators and organizations, (4) the future of the Community Sports Coach. In the topics, the deductive- and inductive themes derived from the document analyses are used for structuring the interviews. The interviews are conducted using a thematic interview format derived from Flick (2019). The participants were interviewed in a setting of their preference. For two policymakers, it meant their own office. Their colleague was interviewed in a different location as it was

logistically convenient. In all three conversations, privacy was ensured, for the surroundings were soundproof, and there were no spectators.

Focus group interviews were held with Community Sports Coaches (CSCs) of the municipality to determine their views on implementing the Sporting Capital Model. First, an interactive introduction game was conducted to familiarize the CSCs with the topics. Next, a small lecture was presented to explain the theoretical framework of sporting capital. Third, the following pre-determined topics were discussed in a joint setting: (1) sporting capital policy, (2) current implementation, (3) monitoring, (4) recommendations, and (5). A post-it workshop was conducted to grasp the hindering- and constructive factors in creating sporting capital in the current situation. The deductive- and inductive themes derived from the analyses were reoccurring in the moderation of the topics during the interview.

The in-depth interviews and focus group interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed. Both interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data from the documents and interviews were analyzed with deductive- and inductive coding with the help of ATLAS.ti software. Participants were informed about the topic, their right to withdraw, and the way the data will be used and stored, in line with the ethical guidelines of the Faculty BSS.

Results

In the following paragraphs, the data from the in-depth interviews with the policymakers are presented together with the data from the focus group conducted with the CSCs. Therefore, in each paragraph, it becomes evident how the views of the participants compare. The following subjects were inductively more profound in the conversations with policymakers and CSCs: (1) policy, (2) implementation & collaboration, (3) monitoring, and (4) the future. Therefore, these topics are chosen to structure the presentation of the results derived from the data. However, every pre-determined theme described in the method finds its way back into this structure.

Sporting capital and policy

The policymakers were asked in which way they were involved in developing the current vision. Furthermore, they were questioned about the process from development to implementation. Thereafter, their opinions on using sporting capital as a framework were asked.

The sporting capital model is used by the municipality as an “umbrella” (policymaker 2), an overarching principle from which policy can be formulated for the municipality of Groningen:

I think that sporting capital is a lovely framework on which you can build a lot. I think it also fits in very nicely with the coalition agreement. Actually, in all areas of sports and physical activity, if you look at it very broadly, it offers a foundation. (. . .)

I like how the ambitions have been formulated. For one, it is broad enough that our work fits well. However, on the other hand, it is also specific to see which future directions we want to take in all kinds of areas (policymaker 1).

The policymakers mention primarily positive things concerning the new sporting capital vision and their multi-year plan (Groningen, 2021). As for the CSCs, the new policy seems to have their approval as it offers “guidelines and a perspective” on future implementation (CSC 6). However, some remarks are made regarding the development of the new policy. Whereas policymakers claim that CSCs were actively involved in creating the new vision (policymaker 1), CSCs seem to feel left out in the process as they describe a bottom-down process and a lack of involvement in developing new policies and implementations.

Well, I am not under the impression that I had an influence on the development of the new sports vision. I can imagine that the policy is based on the actions we took or did not take. However, personally, I was not involved in the thinking process. My personal opinion is that others [the municipality – AJK] have determined for us what to do (CSC 2).

Every CSC agreed on this notion. Although they did not experience a kind of influence, they do seem to appreciate the new vision and policy: “agreed, but I do not mind [not being consulted – AJK] for I like the content of the new vision” (CSC 6). Furthermore, every CSC expressed approval concerning the content of the policy.

Sporting capital, implementation & collaboration

According to Rowe (2018), there are three domains in which sporting capital operates. These are the physiological, social, and psychological domains. Furthermore, Aalbers & de Wit (2021) defined specific roles for the CSC: 1) referral role, 2) organizing role, and 3) inclusion role. Policymakers and CSCs were questioned on the roles of the CSC in the three domains of sporting capital. For example, they were asked in which role a CSC generates impact. In addition, their general thoughts on implementing their new policy were asked.

Every interviewed policymaker confirms the notion of a broad framework in which the CSC plays a small yet essential part. According to the policymakers, the CSC has a role in intervening in all three sporting capital domains. Furthermore, every CSC attending the focus group seems to agree. However, the views on sporting capital differ regarding focus and implementation.

The CSCs describe focus as a priority concerning the target population, main goal, and sub-goals. According to them, their focus currently lies in the physiological domain, but they acknowledge some overlap with the social domain. Their target population currently is mainly youth in the category of 10 – 15 years old. Furthermore, they acknowledge the roles defined by Aalbers & de Wit (2022). The organizing role and inclusion role are mentioned the most. When asked in which role a CSC has the most impact, the following is mentioned: 1) Activating youth in an organizing role, 2) Connecting and collaborating with relevant stakeholders like community sports clubs, social workers, schools, and more. 3) Referring and introducing youth to various sports activities.

Policymakers seem to have a broader focus regarding the implementation of CSCs. They agree that the current focus is on youth in an organizing role. Nevertheless, the weight of the impact of the CSC seems to shift towards the social domain, whereas the CSCs think their impact and importance lie mainly in the physiological domain. Furthermore, in the future, the focus might shift to a broader target population, according to the policymakers:

I think there is an important role to play for the CSC in the general well-being of people. Sports and physical activity can contribute to the general well-being of people in many ways. For example, in solving unemployment by building self-confidence and identity (...) It can attribute to participation in society (...) Our society is aging rapidly, so our elderly population will be an important target group in the future (...) Therefore, the CSC will be important in more policy areas (Policymaker 1).

I profoundly believe that the role of a CSC can be broadened in the future. I believe that the CSC can contribute to youth's physical and mental resilience, especially when it concerns students in the 12+ age category (Policymaker 2).

Regarding the domains of sporting capital, policymakers of the municipality mention opportunities in the psychological- and social domains by mentioning concepts like resilience, self-confidence, identity, and social connectedness, as presented by Rowe (2018). These are opportunities that the CSC can embark on in the near future.

The policymakers talk with verbs like “belief” and “think” in the quotes above. This frequently occurred in other parts of the interviews. The following quote sheds light as to why this might occur. “Actually, we are still at the beginning of the further implementation of our vision. Together with the HIS [Hanze Institute for Sports – AJK], we can examine how implementation should follow with all stakeholders. This is the point where we are currently” (policymaker 2). Thus, there is no implementation strategy or document to ensure effective implementation in practice. The policymakers see the implementation process as a work in progress till 2025, a process they just started.

Monitoring sporting capital

In the introduction of this thesis, a lack of depth in indicators was mentioned. Therefore, it seems unclear to what extent the indicators mentioned in the 2022 implementation plan (Groningen, 2021) measure sporting capital. When asked about the monitoring system, the following arose. Policymakers acknowledged the discrepancies between the Sporting Capital Model and the indicators in the 2022 implementation plan. The policy documents have changed, but the monitoring system still needs to be adapted to these changes. For example, the implementation focus of the CSC in 2022 lies in secondary schools according to policy. However, the focus of the monitoring system currently still lies in primary schools. Therefore the indicators in the 2022 implementation plan are still the same.

However, the HIS is working on integrating the Sporting Capital Model into its monitoring system. Also, they are developing questionnaires for usage in secondary schools. Rowe (2018) proposes a questionnaire that measures the levels of sporting capital in an individual, which might be integrated into the existing monitor. “ (...) Currently, a proposal is made to integrate the sporting capital questionnaire into the existing one” (Policymaker 2). However, due to ethical committees, approvals, and ongoing meetings, the integration has yet to be made.

Furthermore, policymakers acknowledge some dilemmas in building a sound monitoring system. There is a limited financial budget for the total sports activation program. Therefore, the funds required for this system might be better spent elsewhere, according to the municipality.

You are addressing a vulnerable topic here regarding sports and physical activity (...). We see the participation numbers as these are not difficult to track (...). We see the annual reports and the evaluations, which give us an impression of participation in the program's activities. However, whether these numbers implicate an effect of our policies is not easy to say. (...) It is tough to measure the causality between our efforts and the participation of youth in the program. (...) One can spend a lot of money on the monitoring system to prove the effectiveness of our policy. But would you not rather spend the money available primarily on embarking on our activation goals? (policymaker 1).

According to the policymakers, it is about the right balance of spending the budget. They are aware of the importance of a monitor and acknowledge that there are improvements to be made, as only participation numbers do not tell the whole story (policymaker 3). However,

they would rather see most of the budget flow into the actual program than the monitoring system.

The CSCs seem to agree that the current measured indicators are not sufficient.

Honestly, I would rather see the Hanze Institute for Sports [HIS] conduct some kind of conversation with our target population [instead of counting participation numbers – AJK]. However, I do not know what that would look like, for I am not a researcher (...). Nevertheless, I am more interested in those stories, as numbers are not that interesting to me since they do not show our impact (CSC 4).

Other CSCs endorsed this statement as they questioned participation numbers as indicators for measuring the impact of their actions. They view most of their activities as events that attract youth already enrolled in sports and physical activity. However, they still see value in pursuing these mass events. “(...) The social aspect of these activities is essential. Kids from the whole block interact with each other. These interactions would not happen without these activities (...). You see beautiful interactions between children (...) That is what sports can do “(CSC 2). It is about more than just the number of youth exercising and participating in physical activity. It also seems to be about the social connections that play when doing so.

However, according to the CSCs, the result of a focus on participating numbers is also a focus on mass events. By focusing on mass events, the CSCs mean a focus on activities that attract many participants who are already physically active. For example, an after-school football activity or a free for all hour in a sports accommodation. According to the CSCs, there should be a shift towards an approach in which these numbers become less important, as

it is not about the number of children who are activated. It should be about the number of children who actually need activating (CSC, 1,5 & 7).

The future of creating sporting capital

With the notion that the first steps of the implementation process have just started, talks of the creation of sporting capital are mainly about the future. For example, when asked about the ideal scenario for implementing the new policy without the restriction of financial barriers, the following arose:

First, a community-oriented approach is described as an approach in which each area of the municipality has an implementation plan accustomed to the characteristics and needs of the community living there. “The keyword is a community-oriented approach” (policymaker 2). This would lead to collaboration between several domains like sports, healthcare, education, and social work.

Second, expanding and broadening the sports activation program to all municipality districts is a wish described by the policymakers. Currently, only ten out of more than sixty districts are included. All districts should be included as the policy targets all youth. Furthermore, it seems interesting to make comparisons between districts with low- and high social and economic status (policymaker 1,2 and 3)

(...) Why only for certain districts and areas? Why not for all? For every child, it is vital to attain sporting capital. No matter the home situation or their parent's wealth, you wish to build sporting capital in every child. Furthermore, you would like to see that every school participates in our program to achieve sporting capital. That is something to strive for, I think (policymaker 1).

The broadening of the sports activation program to all districts has the support of the CSC, as it is mentioned by three CSCs as a recommendation for the future.

Third, integrated implementation is a subject mentioned several times by all policymakers. Barriers between partners and stakeholders should be removed to ensure effective collaboration in pursuing the same goals from a community-oriented implementation plan. An equilibrium must be found between partners and stakeholders in pursuing mutual goals (Policymakers 1,2 and 3).

Lastly, social capital as a framework arose from the conversation. Policymaker 2 foresees a situation in which their sports policy will be used alongside a different framework.

(...) The alderman for sport is also the alderman for social security (...). So it is no coincidence that the term social capital is also introduced. She seemed to favour talking about social capital alongside sporting capital. They are exploring the possibilities (...). I can see benefits in this while working on a sound community-oriented approach.

The future of creating sporting capital seems embedded in a community-oriented approach in which barriers between stakeholders are overcome. If the municipality finds more funds or grants more budget towards these efforts, an expansion of the sports activation program to other areas of the municipality seems likely.

Discussion

Sports and physical activity seem valuable for various reasons (Beauchamp, Puterman, & Lubans, 2018; Bailey, 2013). The municipality of Groningen laid out its reasoning in its

new policy documents (Groningen, 2021). Sporting Capital Theory is used in these documents as an overarching framework (Rowe, 2018). The Community Sports Coach is described as an intervention to support the creation of sporting capital (Groningen, 2021). However, the relationship between the CSC and the creation of sporting capital is unclear based on these documents. Furthermore, the indicators in the annual plan of the municipality lack depth. Therefore, the views of the policymakers and the views of the CSCs were examined along with the monitoring system.

First, It was examined how the policymakers of the municipality of Groningen view the role of CSCs in achieving Sporting capital. The present study shows the CSC as a critical part of the overall sports vision of the municipality. The CSCs are important figures in their respective areas of the city. In a community-oriented approach, the CSC reduces barriers for youth to interact with sports and physical activity, thus creating more inclusive opportunities. According to the policymakers, connecting organizations, participants, schools, and other stakeholders are a vital feature in the role of CSC.

Second, it was of interest how the implementation of the CSC is being monitored and how that relates to the Sporting Capital Model. There is a monitoring system in place, for the HIS conducts annual recurring surveys on several primary schools regarding the sports activation program in which the CSCs are vital figures. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the indicators being monitored, do not seem to match the Sporting Capital Model. This study partly explains why, because the surveys are not adapted to the new policy and practices yet. Therefore a clear relation between the current monitoring system and the Sporting Capital Model is not present. Furthermore, the impact of the CSC is not measured in all areas of implementation, for there isn't a system in place in the new focus areas of the CSC.

Lastly, this study offers a perspective on sporting capital from the point of view of the CSC. The CSCs were asked about their views on the new sporting capital policies and the implementation of those policies in their work. The study shows a positive view towards sporting capital as a framework, a vision, and a goal, regardless of the notion that the CSCs did not experience a bottom-up approach in developing the policy or implementation plan. Various opinions arose on implementing the new policy into practice. Concerning the three domains of sporting capital, the CSCs focus on the physiological domain, followed by the social- and psychological domains. Concerning the monitoring and indicators, the CSCs need to see how the current system shows the impact of their work. There needs to be more than the current focus on participating numbers and referrals towards sports community clubs (Groningen, 2021) to capture the effects of their work. Notions are made that there should be room in the indicators for a more personal approach to target a population that needs activating.

However, the answers to the research questions can be put into perspective. A sound monitoring system is currently being developed as the municipality strives to integrate sporting capital indicators, as proposed by Rowe (2018). Following Soric et al. (2020), the municipality recognizes the importance of a monitoring system. However, they point out that difficult choices must be made as their budget is limited. Van Yperen (2013) suggests a model that can effectively reduce the costs of various services thanks to a sound approach to monitoring. This means that the choices the municipality faces do not have to be too complex, for it is possible to have an effective monitoring system while staying within their budget limits. Furthermore, it might even reduce the costs of their programs long term, thus creating greater cost-effectiveness in their implementations of policy.

Moreover, a broad body of knowledge suggests that a bottom-up approach in implementing practices and interventions in a community-oriented approach can be relevant,

for it creates a more substantial support base among stakeholders who are intervening in these communities (Fixsen, 2005; Nilsen, 2015; Powel et al., 2013; van Yperen, 2013; Moullin et al., 2017). In the near future, as part of the community-oriented approach, the municipality wants to examine and remove barriers between relevant organizations and stakeholders in creating sporting capital for every citizen (Groningen, 2021). The description of this community-oriented approach sounds similar to the ‘targeted neighborhood approach’ as described by van Yperen (2013). Therefore van Yperen (2013) might offer a foundation for an implementation strategy that is currently not present.

In addition, the social capital framework might help to implement a community-oriented approach. The scope of this research is limited regarding a community-oriented approach, but it is described by policymakers as an approach that transcends the sports domain. Therefore it might be worthwhile to conduct further research on this matter. A glance at the work of Putnam (2000) and Tzanakis (2013) offers guidelines to determine whether Social Capital Theory should be introduced.

Furthermore, the results implicate a mutual understanding between policymakers and the CSC concerning the role of the CSC in creating sporting capital. The referral-, organizer-, and inclusion roles defined by Aalbers & de Wit (2021) are acknowledged by both, although the referral role is interpreted somewhat differently. In Groningen, it is more about referring youth to a sports community of their preference, than coaching or counseling youth who got advice from their doctor or therapist to exercise more. This mutual understanding is important as the literature shows that it is necessary for a broad support base in the community (Fixsen, 2005).

Both parties agree that Sporting Capital Theory can have an impact, as presented in the new sports vision. However, the CSCs describe an impact mainly in the physiological domain in the current and future situation, focusing on youth. The policymakers also agree on

a focus on youth, but they describe the impact of a CSC mostly in terms that follow the social- and psychological domain (Rowe, 2018). They would also like more coverage of their sports activation program in all municipality districts. Moreover, the focus might be broadened in the future toward other target populations like adults and seniors. However, according to the municipality, a core focus on youth remains justifiable. A broad body of knowledge on behavioral changes and physical activity is in accordance with this notion, for It seems better to start intervening at a young age. (Beauchamp, Puterman, & Lubans, 2018; Bailey et al., 2013; Rowe, 2018).

The strength of this study lies in a combined deductive and inductive approach to capturing and analyzing the data. It offers the first insights into how the new sports policies are perceived by professionals who must implement them in their work. However, there are some limitations in the way this study was conducted. The moderator of the focus group is a known colleague of the participants. Therefore social desirability bias might have occurred in the responses, for the participants might want to 'help' their colleague in the best way they could. However, one can also reason that the participant answered more freely, for they were questioned by a familiar face, resulting in an open and more honest discourse.

In addition, the fact that the moderator is a direct colleague might have resulted in forms of confirmation bias, for the moderator examines his own field of work. However, the risk of confirmation bias was mitigated by developing a thematic interview structure before the interview sessions took place. These are found in the appendix.

While analyzing the data from this interview, it was noticed that five out of eight CSCs were dominant in the conversation. Three CSCs were relatively quiet compared to the others, which might have impacted the overall stance of the CSCs. We found that the three CSCs less dominant in the conversation were also the ones who were less experienced when it came to years in service. Their lack of involvement in the discussion was partly tackled by the

post-it assignment in which the CSCs could write down their thoughts, but this was only a tiny part of the total assessment. Therefore it is recommended to be aware of a potential gap in experience in the field.

This study offers a perspective regarding Sporting Capital Theory and the roles of Community Sports Coaches. However, the CSCs are not the only players who operate in this domain. One can think of social workers, daycare workers, teachers, parents, and many more actors who can play a role in the creation of sporting capital (Rowe, 2018). Further research on different actors operating in the physiological, psychological, and social domain of sporting capital might ensure the best possible implementation of a framework that seems to be promising in the light of this study.

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Appendix

1.0 Interview Structure Policymakers

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Rol gemeente | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sportief Kapitaal (Hoe gebruikt de gemeente het model in beleid en implementatie) • Hoe ziet deze implementatie eruit? (meerjarenprogramma 2021-2025) (beweegakkoord) • Groninger Sport Model • Ontstaan bewegvisie (bottom-up top-down) |
| Rol buurtsportcoach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoe wordt sportief kapitaal gecreëerd • Hoe draagt de BSC bij in deze creatie? (fysiologisch, psychologisch, sociaal) • Waar hebben BSC's (het meeste) impact (fysiologisch, psychologisch, sociaal) • Hoe wordt inzet bepaald en gemeten? • Wat zijn 'slimme interventies' die toegepast worden? |
| Rol van andere partijen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoe zou de samenwerking in het werkveld eruit moeten/kunnen zien? • Wie heeft welke rol? • Huis voor de Sport • SPORT 050 • JOGG • WIJ • Onderwijs |
| Toekomst | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zijn er zaken die anders kunnen/moeten • Lerend evalueren • Buurtgerichte aanpak |

1.1 interview structure focus group

Opzet Focus interview

- Doel:** Inzichtelijk krijgen wat de opvatting zijn van de buurtsportcoaches op het sportstimuleringswerk in hun respectievelijke wijk binnen de gemeente Groningen in het kader van Sporting Capital
- Wanneer:** Woensdag 6 juli
- Waar:** Sportkantine v.v. Mamio Eikenlaan 292, 9741 EW Groningen
- Tijd:** 9.00 – 10.30
- Vorbereiding:** Van tevoren:
- Informed consent rondmailen naar de participanten voor video & audio opname
 - Participanten verzoeken bladzijde 8 t/m 23 te lezen van de sportvisie 2021+ gemeente Groningen.
 - Participanten verzoeken het jaarplan 2022 van Huis voor de Sport door te nemen met een focus op de genoemde prestatie indicatoren in het document
 - Post-it's kopen
- Op de dag zelf:
- Koffie regelen
 - Flipover of digiboard met daarop het sporting capital model + het groninger sport model.
 - Camera installeren
 - Audio controleren en testen
- Uitvoering:**
1. **Ijsbreker over de streep**

Doel: introductie van de thema's en de participanten opwarmen voor de focusgroep discussie.

Aanpak:
Participanten worden verspreid over weerszijden van de kantine. De Participanten krijgen enkele stellingen te horen waarmee ze het eens of oneens kunnen zijn. Neutraal standpunt innemen in het midden is niet mogelijk.

Stellingen:

 - De werkzaamheden van de buurtsportcoach zijn sinds het uitkomen van de nieuwe bewegvisie fundamenteel veranderd.
 - Het belangrijkste doel in het werk van de buurtsportcoach is om kinderen die niet lid zijn van een sportvereniging onder te brengen bij een sportvereniging
 - Het werk van de buurtsportcoach heeft impact op de sportparticipatie van jeugd en jongeren
 2. **Introductie**
 - Sporting capital introduceren aan de hand van het model, voorbereiding van de participanten meenemen en uitleggen wat het doel van vandaag is om vervolgens de thema's te introduceren met de bijbehorende vragen

Met opmerkingen [AJK1]: Afhankelijk wat voor positie wordt ingenomen proberen te achterhalen of de bsc's vinden dat hun werk veranderd is sinds de invoering van het nieuwe beleid

Met opmerkingen [AJK2]: Doel van deze stelling is om reacties te ontlokken van de participanten wat het belangrijkste doel is in de werkzaamheden van de bsc.

Met opmerkingen [AJK3]: Achterhalen op welke wijze de bsc's impact denken te hebben op de participatie/gedrag van jeugd en jongeren.

3. Thema's + vragen

Beweegvisie

Uitvoering

Monitoring

Aanbevelingen

4. Post-It plakken

BSC's krijgen ieder 3 post-it's van verschillende kleuren rood: belemmerende factoren in de huidige werkzaamheden in het creëren van sportief kapitaal groen: opbouwende factoren in de huidige werkzaamheden in het creëren van sportief kapitaal. Geel: aanbevelingen om in toekomstige werkzaamheden meer sportief kapitaal te creëren

5. Afsluiting

- Participanten bedanken en de vervolgstappen + terugkoppeling toelichten.

Met opmerkingen [AJK4]: De opvatting over de nieuwe beweegvisie achterhalen

1. Begrijpen de bsc's de genoemde modellen en opvattingen van de gemeente in de beweegvisie?
2. Hebben de bsc's het gevoel gehad invloed te hebben op de vorming van visie/beleid?
3. Hadden ze deze invloed gewild? Waarom wel waarom niet?
4. Overkoepelend wat is de visie van de bsc's op het creëren van sportief kapitaal'

Met opmerkingen [AJK5]: Vinden de bsc's dat ze in de uitvoering de juiste dingen doen om het sportief kapitaal binnen de gemeente groningen te stimuleren? Waarom wel waarom niet? Hebben ze het gevoel dat ze vrijheid hebben om te bepalen hoe ze invulling kunnen geven aan het werk?

- Hoe kijken ze naar het plan van eisen:
1. Interventies
 2. Vaste beweegmomenten op wijkniveau
 3. doelen

Met opmerkingen [AJK6]: Ingaan op de indicatoren uit het plan van eisen? Is dit hoe je sportief kapitaal/succes moet meten? Wat vinden de bsc's

Met opmerkingen [AJK7]: Wat zou er anders kunnen in zowel visie/beleid als uitvoering? En de tot standkoming van dit geheel?

Met opmerkingen [AJK8]: Misschien integreren in bovenstaande?

1.2 Coding Tree interviews

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------|--|
| • Policymakers | • Current Situation | • Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bslim • Activation • Monitoring • Accommodation • Top-Down structure |
| | | • Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting Capital • Finance • GSM • Sportsagreement |
| | | • Stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing • Collaboration • Home for Sports • Sport050 |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|------------------|--|
| | | • Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated approach • Collaboration • Advantages CSC |
| | • Future Situation | • Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting • Top-Down structure • Bottom-up structure • Monitoring • Directing • Social Capital • Psychological • Physiological |

- Creating Sporting Capital

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing • Social Domain • Community Oriented • Sport050 • WIJ • Home for Sports |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Situation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bslim • Activation • Monitoring • Target population • Top-Down structure |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Sports Coaches | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting Capital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological • Physiological • Social Domain |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting • Events • Activating |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Logistics • 12+ |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Situation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bslim • Activation • Monitoring • Target population • Top-Down structure |

-
- Sporting Capital
 - Psychological
 - Physiological
 - Social Domain

