

# Political Football

*Dr David Hindley, Senior Lecturer in Business, Leisure and Sports Education, Nottingham Trent University\**

---

## ABSTRACT

Much has been written in recent years about governance in the areas of political science, public policy, local government and international relations. However, little research effort has been devoted to examining the term in relation to the organisation, administration and management of sports bodies. This paper is concerned with the way sport is governed, and in particular evaluating the utility of the concept of governance in understanding aspects of the management and policy process in English professional football. The research finds that governance broadens our conceptual repertoire, introduces greater sensitivity and subtlety into policy analysis, and highlights problems of coordination across sports' governing bodies, interest groups and policy actors.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the burgeoning literature on governance, little research effort has to date been devoted to examining the term in relation to the organisation, administration and management of sports bodies. The ways in which sport is governed and, in particular, failures of governance however, have brought the issue into critical focus. Such interest has been fostered by misgivings about strategic directions and manifold complications involved in the decision-making process. An example of this is the confusion surrounding the proposals for the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium, the lack of infrastructure investment for Picketts Lock, and England's failed bid for the 2006 FIFA World Cup Finals.

Rising interest in sports governance has also been cultivated by concerns about the management of amateur sports bodies in light of a significant shift from volunteer-run "kitchen table operations" to organisations with professional managers attempting to function in a highly rational, bureaucratic manner (Kikulis

---

\* The author may be contacted at the Faculty of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Lionel Robbins Building, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham. Tel: 0115 848 3376, E-mail: david.hindley@ntu.ac.uk.

et al. 1989). It has also been stimulated by appeals for greater organisational effectiveness and for more controls on potential abuse of executive power; and by demands for more effective stakeholder representation and far greater accountability of board members.

The central thrust of this paper is that governance provides a potentially insightful and rich conceptual framework for understanding aspects of sport, sports' governing bodies and sports policy. As will be discussed, governing sport has never been a more complex and challenging task. Part of this complexity can be explained by the growth in the range of stakeholder groups, and that the system of sports governance is that of complex independence between international and national governing bodies, the European Union, the media, sponsors, athletes and agents, and supporters.

Within national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) the notion of stakeholding has raised a number of pertinent questions concerning how the interests of groups such as athletes, volunteers, and supporters are articulated. Reflecting on the position of sports people in Canadian athletics, Kidd (1988) advocates athletes' rights suggesting that athletes – referred to as “sweat-suited philanthropists” – should be better paid, and experience greater control over the planning and conduct of their athletic activity. Kidd contends that “elected athletes” representatives should sit on all major decision-making bodies and that athletes should enjoy the substantive and procedural protections of Canadian law in questions of team selection and discipline” (Kidd, 1988:304). The reality however, is less optimistic. A survey by Sport Canada found that elite athletes are poorly organised, with representation on only 17 of 60 national sports bodies and most of these representatives are not elected but appointed by coaches and administrators (Kidd, 1988:304). A more recent small-scale study by Clarke (1999) demonstrated that only one-third of international sports federations have athlete representation. Of these, less than one-third were elected. Clarke goes on to argue “best practice in governance suggests that directors be competence-based, rather than represent specific stakeholder groups, so that directors can look at what is best for their sport overall rather than have a narrow interest or a conflict of interest”.

Closely related to this is the emergence of issue-centred groups that contribute to the debate about the future governance of sport. An example of this is the campaign led and orchestrated by football supporters – most notably the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association (IMUSA) and its sister organisation Shareholders United (SU), to prevent the proposed takeover of Manchester United by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB satellite television company. The formation of SU and IMUSA can be located within a wider attempt by supporters to try to influence the running of the game – raising questions of regulation and control – but also of participation and exclusion, of the organisation and exercise of power in football.

## CONCEPTUALISING GOVERNANCE: A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

The governance concept has a broad appeal. Much has been written in recent years about governance in the areas of political science, public policy, local government, and international relations. Part of the reason for the term's rising popularity is its capacity to encompass the breadth of institutions and relationships involved in the process of governing. At its simplest, governance refers to the ways of governing, involving a range of organisations, many of which are not necessarily classified under the "government" umbrella. Thus governance is no longer assumed to involve a single, all-powerful government but a shifting combination of local authorities, public departments and agencies, quasi-public bodies, and private and voluntary organisations.

However, social scientific usage of the governance concept has been eclectic, diverse and at times contradictory (Jessop, 1999:29) as well as confusing and sometimes misleading. Rhodes, for example, delineates seven different meanings; Hirst identifies five versions of the concept, while Pierre and Peters suggests its relevance to a range of different theoretical approaches to understanding the changing role of the state in contemporary society (Rhodes, 1986 and 1987; Hirst, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000). Newman (2001) meanwhile, notes that governance has been used both as a descriptive and a normative term – referring to the way in which organisations and institutions are, or should be, governed – as well as seeking to explain a particular set of changes. According to Rhodes:

“governance signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a *new* process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the *new* method by which society is governed” (1997:46, original emphasis).

At the heart of the emerging literature on governance is a shift away from old forms of government based on hierarchies, towards a new, network-based form of governance. Given the looseness and ambiguity of the term, it is necessary to examine and evaluate the concept and its various meanings. As Pierre and Peters (2000:12) contend “governance as an analytical perspective is still emerging and there are contending views on what is the most rewarding approach to governance”.

What we have then is an increasingly used but nevertheless ill-defined concept. One of the aims of this paper therefore is to analyse the utility of the term governance in relation to sport and determine whether the concept, in one or more of its formulations, has the potential to aid our understanding of the strategic management and policy-making process within English professional football. For the purpose of this study we propose a three-pronged conception of governance drawn from the existing governance literature: that is, governance as steering,

governance as networks and good governance. These applications provide three different meanings of governance – governance as a strategy, as an analytical tool and as a normative device.

To elaborate, the notion of governance as steering is broadly about strategic direction. It refers to looking at different ways of giving effect to strategic direction, recognising that the responsibility of modern government is changing – increasingly involving “steering” rather than “rowing”, to borrow Osborne and Gaebler’s (1991) terminology – so that the role of government is to facilitate and coordinate rather than direct and control (Leach and Percy-Smith, 2001:3-4). The emphasis on steering suggests dispersal rather than a concentration of power, with governments involving a greater number of policy actors both inside and outside government.

The second conception – governance as networks – suggests partnership, cooperation and collaboration as an alternative to hierarchical authority. The network approach focuses on relations between organisations, thereby implying that policy emerges as a result of bargaining between organisations rather as a result of authoritative decision making by a single actor or institution. Its primary use then, is that of an analytical tool to explore the interaction between the stakeholders involved in the formation of policy.

The third and final understanding of governance is that of good governance, which refers to the ethical standards underpinning the relationships, methods and instruments of relationships between organisations. While there may be no best way of achieving good governance, the term is essentially normative, that is founded on a number of common elements. These are accountability, transparency, combating corruption, stakeholder participation and a clear legal framework (Agere, 2000:7-9). In this way, good governance refers to “best practice” within an organisation and highlights the arrangement of relationships between the organisation and its primary and secondary stakeholders as crucial. Primary stakeholders include those without whose continuing participation the organisation would not exist and in sports terms, may include athletes, sponsors, broadcasters and governments. Secondary stakeholders refer to those groups who influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by, the organisation but are not essential for its survival. This group might therefore include supporters, facility owners and municipalities. Good governance may therefore be achieved through ensuring that stakeholder groups are capable of providing an effective counter-balance to the focal organisation.

## THE GOVERNANCE OF FOOTBALL

The regulation of professional football has come under increasing scrutiny. According to Cannon and Hamil (2000) issues of governance and regulation are

fundamental to the future of the national game. They argue that stewardship in football is currently lacking and that the game requires a system of governance that is “articulate, explicit, accessible and actionable”. In contrast, football is presently characterised by a culture of corruption and ineffective regulation, with the relationships between policy actors and the game’s stakeholders becoming blurred. Moreover, the commercialisation and globalisation of football has meant the number of actors and their frequency of interaction has multiplied (Giulianotti, 1999:24). Old boundaries between the local, the national and the international are routinely penetrated or collapsed. As a result, pertinent questions in governing football can no longer be effectively solved at the domestic level, or simply by international governing bodies alone.

### **Governance as Steering**

The FA (Football Association) is the sovereign body governing English football, charged with establishing and enforcing the rules of sport, cultivating the sport’s development at the grassroots, and has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the game. Below the FA is a myriad of football organisations that set rules for their constituent members, including competitions, clubs and individuals associated with them. It is therefore common for football clubs to be operating under the jurisdiction of more than one body, for example both the FA and the Football League. The economic success of the FA Premier League since its conception in 1992 and the growing commercial influence of its elite clubs have raised questions about the FA’s ability to act as an effective guardian of the game. As Boon (2000:33) has asserted:

“[It is] the clubs that have the real power in football ... the birth of the ‘super league’ concept, of which the FA Premier League was the first incarnation, was the initial manifestation of this power in a negotiating context. It represented an attempt by the bigger clubs to have a larger say in how the game was run, the future direction it would take, and the distribution of financial rewards.”

The game’s governing bodies meanwhile have tended to adopt a *laissez-faire* approach to the governance of football clubs, opposing any imposition of extra layers of regulation. During the last two decades the FA has been characterised by an amateur, insular and parochial management that is ill equipped to deal with an increasingly complex industry – leading Freeman (2000:18) to conclude that “the FA has no future and cannot continue in its current form”.

Clearly then it is necessary to recast football’s governance “map”. To an extent it seems convenient to retain football’s governing bodies at the centre of this framework, playing a key role in framing and controlling the game. But it is also misleading to do so given the hypothesis that there has been a leakage of authority

from these bodies, and subsequently a diminished capacity to “steer” in an increasingly complex and fragmented environment. Indeed, the FA has often lacked the confidence to govern effectively and proactively, especially when it is faced with what it sees as powerful vested interests. The advent of the Premier League, greater migration of overseas players and increasing revenues from television companies have meant that many aspects of the game have commercially transformed the game almost beyond recognition. As a result, clear threats to established structures are now emerging. Clubs are cultivating relationships with other clubs both within domestic and across international boundaries (Chadwick, 2000). In addition, media companies such as BSkyB and ENIC are challenging the rules governing club ownership through strategically obtaining stakes in multiple numbers of clubs (Brown, 2000; Crowther, 2001). Broadcasting contracts that were previously organised centrally are now fragmenting as clubs across Europe ally themselves to media groups which can help them break away from binding contractual relationships with the sport’s governing bodies.

The organisational framework for British sport in general is characterised by multiple lines of responsibility and numerous stakeholders with sectional interests. Within this, the role of different levels of government is unclear. This is reflected by the views of Brian Alexander, who suggests “the number of politically motivated sports organisations in Britain is weighing our sporting nation down with an unacceptable level of bureaucracy” (*The Guardian*, 21/01/00). This implies there is no unambiguous chain of command, or clear strategic direction driving policy. At a governmental level, the attitude of New Labour towards football has been one of indifference and lacking clarity, caught between a desire for greater government influence and direction, and a commitment to maintain an “arm’s length” relationship (Oakley and Green, 2001). As Houlihan (1991:200) has suggested, governments have sought to distance themselves from possible sporting conflict, preferring to establish quangos to administer policy solutions and deflect criticism of government when things go wrong. Against this backdrop, the formation of the Football Taskforce in 1997 under the New Labour administration represented, superficially at least, a shift in the attitude of government to professional football, introducing a range of new issues into the political and regulatory agenda (Brown, 2000). According to Mortimer and Pearl (2000:218) “the Football Taskforce is searching for a ‘third way’ ... to redress the balance against wholesale commercialism currently dominating the corporate culture and also to re-inject a community spirit into the game”. The position of New Labour – committed to a review of the Hillsborough Enquiry and the possible reintroduction of terracing, as well as support for the FA’s bid to host the 2006 FIFA World Cup – contrasts sharply with the hostile attitude, and law and order agenda of the previous Thatcher administrations. However, the lack of statutory action to implement many of the Taskforce recommendations and the long-delayed formation of the Independent Football Commission (IFC) hinted at a government that

is conciliatory and deferential to the powerful bodies that govern football, and that does not wish to offend the interests of big business. Thus, having established a body to investigate the governance of football, the Labour government is now keen to distance itself from suggestions of statutory action, preferring to encourage self-regulation and reform, and foster a culture of dialogue and partnership in a sport that historically has been divisive and has failed to put its own house in order.

New Labour, like previous administrations, has been reluctant to “steer”, preferring to adopt a stance of weak regulator, tentatively supervising the actions of the game’s governing bodies. This form of weak regulation is evident in the formation of the IFC, dubbed as the “fans’ watchdog” but with no powers of sanction, the unenforceable recommendation that the FA direct between 5 and 10 per cent

*governance highlights problems of coordination across sports’ governing bodies, interest groups and policy actors*

of its broadcasting income towards grassroots development, and the government’s unwillingness to take any responsibility (or blame) for the protracted redevelopment of Wembley national stadium. The rhetoric on representing fans’ interests through the formation of the Football Taskforce and support for Supporters’ Trusts

meanwhile hints at a populist stance, wishing to be closely associated with the “people’s game”. As Brown (1999:59) contends “for a New Labour government entering office, football became hard to ignore given both its own commitments and the increased profile of the game ... it was easy for Labour to pick up the populist concerns about the development of football”. Taken together the above examples of growing yet hesitant government intervention suggest a lack of policy direction or active steering, with New Labour tentatively supervising the FA on uncontroversial issues such as developing grassroots sport, or promoting a relatively limited role supporter groups that depends on the cooperation of football clubs and the game’s authorities.

### **Governance as Policy Networks**

The broadening range of policy actors and interests illustrate the difficulty of delineating the scope and boundaries of the football “community” (Roche, 1993) and the complexities of understanding the process of sport policy-making. The fragmentation of the policy arena has been accentuated by the changing dynamics of power. For example, the authority of the English FA has seeped out in a number of directions: upwards to FIFA and UEFA, the overarching bodies for the control of world and European football; outwards to sponsors and media corporations; and down to the leading professional clubs. The latter is manifest in the increased threats from the newly commercially empowered and internationally

oriented leading football clubs to breakaway from domestic competitions to form a European “super league”. To date a collection of self-selected European clubs – known collectively as G14 – has joined forces to pursue more rewarding continental or global projects, such as the enlarged UEFA Champions League. The emergence of such a transnational competition has implications for how football may be regulated internationally, and represents an additional threat to the standing and influence of existing national leagues and their associations.

These developments illustrate the difficulties that football authorities face in their attempts to steer and direct, exacerbated by the pattern of interdependencies with broadcasters, sponsors, player unions, and the elite football clubs. How can the different interests and stakeholders in football be reconciled, so that the rising influence of leading professional clubs and commercial bodies is dealt with fairly and the interests of players and supporters are taken into account? A key proposition of the governance literature stresses the need for a shift away from traditional forms of hierarchical, top-down “government” towards networks and partnership as new modes of “governance”. As John and Cole (2000:82) argue “systems must adapt to form more horizontal, cooperative and trusting relationships with the many actors who need to be involved in the policy process. Command and control does not work; networking, bargaining and cooperation are part of the answer”.

Membership of a policy community however, does not imply equal involvement, similar resources or common goals (Rhodes, 1986). The policy community within professional football in England is fragmented, characterised by unstable membership with groups joining and leaving according to the issue under discussion. While the networks approach reinforces a pluralist image of policy making, there is little evidence of meaningful consultation, which fails to involve all stakeholder interests. An example of this is the lack of an active voice on the part of professional footballers, coaches and managers in decision-making. The Professional Footballers’ Association (PFA) has played a significant role in changing basic terms and conditions for its members through legal interventions (most notably Eastham), collective solidarity and threatened legal action. This has shaped their relationship with the game’s governing bodies, which originally viewed the PFA as a fairly innocuous organisation because of its parlous financial state (Greenfield and Osborn, 1998), but nevertheless treated the union with suspicion. More recent disputes over the distribution of television income serves to highlight the sometimes conflicting relationship between the PFA and the sports’ governing bodies, as well as the union’s limited autonomy because of its dependency on a share of broadcasting money that helps finance the welfare of its members, as well as offering financial and legal assistance. The League Managers’ Association (LMA) meanwhile is a weak organisation in the hierarchy of power within English football, commanding relatively little or no influence in the way the game is governed.

In parallel, those in positions of power within football have seen no advantage in developing any meaningful dialogue with the game's supporters. While football in the last decade has been characterised by a growth in "fan democracy" with the advent of Supporters' Trusts and an increase in the number and variety of independent fan groups and fanzines, there is little evidence to suggest that supporters have a constructive say in shaping the way football is governed. As Katwala contends "in terms of loyalty, voice and exit, the fans' excessive loyalty and inability to exit means that their voice is too often simply ignored" (2000:33-4). One of the possible reasons for this is that supporters are difficult to organise in any formal democratic structure. Indeed the greatest degree of influence has centred on particular clubs involving coalitions of disparate fan groups existing only for limited periods. This new "fan power", although limited at national level due to the relative ineffectiveness of bodies such as the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF), nevertheless demonstrates a new, proactive role for supporters within the game.

### **Governance as Good Governance**

The overlapping concepts of good governance and stakeholding have emerged as a language for reform and modernisation, and improved financial management. The rising interest in good governance is in part a consequence of what Gardiner et al (2001:165) suggests as "an increasing belief that the standards of sports governance in the UK have been substandard". Within football for example, the English FA has traditionally been seen as out of touch with the realities of modern sport, caught between the affluent Premier League clubs and the amateur game at grassroots level. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the English FA lacked effective leadership, long-term planning and strategic focus, and was characterised by inertia and inadequate enforcement of existing regulation. Concerns have been raised about the unwieldy nature of the FA's General Committee, which in the words of Back et al (2001:167) is made up of "103 largely elderly and exclusively white men, drawn from the professional and amateur games as well as the armed forces and the old universities".

The concept of good governance is gradually gaining credence among a range of sports bodies that traditionally have been managed along amateur and voluntary lines. As Katwala has noted "there are positive signs of an emerging new agenda in sporting governance ... in the lessons to be learnt from southern hemisphere rugby's confidence in adapting to change, and in the reformist manifesto of UEFA President and defeated FIFA candidate Lennart Johansson" (2000:10). Within English professional football there has also been some degree of modernisation in the last few years. A key catalyst in this process was the FA's recruitment of former joint Chief Executive of advertising giants Saatchi and Saatchi, Adam Crozier who is widely recognised as being an influential figure in reorganising and reshaping the FA to accommodate the needs of the modern game. He is reported to have been instrumental

in streamlining decision-making, improving the commercial and media image of the FA, and making tentative steps towards better administration of football clubs. Crozier's resignation as the FA's Chief Executive, however, points worryingly to the prevailing of economic interests in the professional game and notably the larger Premier League clubs.

The players' union, the PFA has also contributed to fostering a culture of good governance through providing a range of welfare and support services to its members, as well as running schemes that promote good practice. One such initiative is the "Kick Racism out of Football" campaign that was instigated at the beginning of the 1993/94 season by, among others, the Commission for Racial Equality. Here, the PFA was a key organisation in persuading clubs of the problem of racism, developing models of good practice and providing a framework for clubs and other agencies to develop their own schemes and agendas (Garland and Rowe, 2001).

According to Jacques Rogge, "basic principles of good governance will give sports bodies a point of reference to ensure they are governing their sport reasonably towards their members. It should also help in basing all actions or decisions on adequate motivation open to control and discussion" (The Rules of the Game, 2001).

Here, the concept of stakeholding is useful in identifying those involved and affected by policy – and crucially, asking questions about how to involve them in the policy process. In the case of English professional football the ideas of stakeholding and mutualism have been flagged up as ways of increasing the involvement of supporters, and democratising the ownership and governance of football clubs (Michie, 1999). This is manifest in the formation of Supporters Direct in 2000, a government-funded initiative borne out of the Football Task Force, which provides legal and practical advice to fan groups in forming trusts that allow them a greater say in how their clubs are run. The Task Force was also instrumental in the introduction of Customer Charters at every FA Premier League club, which sets out club policy with regard ticketing, merchandise, and club-supporter relations. These initiatives represent a form of "supervised autonomy" (Foster, 2000) where government can promote good governance without imposing strict external regulation.

Despite the increasing revenue coming into football from the sale of broadcasting rights, the game depends fundamentally on its supporters for its commercial viability, whether it is through ticket sales, merchandise or subscribing to pay-TV. As Lee (1998:46) asserts:

*supporters' trusts are ideally placed to become the foundation stones of a new pattern of corporate governance, one that receives its impetus, finance and direction from the grassroots*

“The relevance of stakeholding for football supporters is immediate ... although their financial commitment to their club may be limited to the purchase of tickets and club merchandise, supporters’ stakeholding is based on something equally powerful and tangible, namely a long-term (possibly lifelong) allegiance to their club.”

While there is evidence to suggest there has been gradual change in how football’s authorities are governed internally, the relationships between the game’s governing bodies and their stakeholders – whether they are clubs, players, managers or supporters – are characterised by a lack of consultation and meaningful involvement. According to Hamil et al (2001) the majority of football clubs communicate ineffectively, flagging up a lack of cooperation between clubs, their supporters and the local community. They argue:

“the football industry at present lacks a code of best practice and one of the effects of this is that clubs do not always know what good practice is, or in some cases, what is required of them by law.”

For change to become sustainable and effective it is imperative that the FA continues to promote good governance among clubs in complying with company law, accounting procedures, and codes of best practice. The work of the FA’s Financial Advisory Unit (FAU), which is charged with assessing whether the governance structures of football clubs are sound, has been instrumental in rolling out this good practice and clarity about club’s legal obligations. Crucially however, the FAU has no power to enforce changes, but it can make recommendations in the form of a consultancy report to the directors of clubs.

Whilst recognising the potential of stakeholding as a mechanism for harnessing the positive role of supporters, Rogan Taylor offers a contradictory view, stressing that its use is limited to small, community-centred football clubs:

“The problem is, in most cases with regard to the bigger clubs, [the role of supporters is] always going to be fairly small and insignificant contribution, whereas the Northampton Town example demonstrates smaller clubs now have to find their *raison d’etre* in being oriented around their community, in being in good relations with their local authority and therefore their function is to act as a local emblem. It’s simple, because they are not going to win the UEFA Champions League, they are not going to win the Premiership, they are probably not even going to get into the First Division, never mind the Premier League. Therefore the reorientation at that level of the game gives for lots of opportunities for well organised fans or shareholder groups to find themselves quite deeply involved in the running of their club” (Interview, December 13, 2000).

Supporters and the local communities in which clubs are located are therefore major stakeholders that are playing an increasingly important role in promoting good governance through the formation of supporters' trusts, which seek to strengthen the bonds between club and community and promote greater fan involvement in the running of their club. The idea of a trust is that it is a democratic, accountable and inclusive method of organising supporters for the purposes of playing a more active role in the management of their football club. Typically the aims of supporter trusts are threefold:

1. **Influence** – the formation and running of representative bodies for supporters.
2. **Ownership** – the acquisition of shares in the football club to pool the voting power of individual supporters to further the aims and objectives of the supporters' trust.
3. **Representation** – securing the democratic election of supporters' representatives to the boards of directors of individual football clubs (Supporters Direct, 2003).

The first democratically-run supporter trust was established at Northampton Town Football Club in 1992. The trust was formed to save the club from bankruptcy and to ensure that the club would be properly managed in the future (Lomax, 1999). The benefits of the Northampton Town Supporters' Trust have been manifold: the trust has raised significant funds for the football club, helped develop closer links between the club and the local authority, fostered community development, improved disabled access, staged a number of anti-racism events at matches, and formulated an equal opportunities policy for the club that was unanimously adopted by the board of directors in 1996 (Frampton et al, 2001). Since the launch of Supporters Direct – a government-funded initiative that provides legal and practical advice to democratically run supporters' groups – in September 2000 there has been a dramatic increase in the number of supporters' trusts across the whole of the football industry. Of the 102 established trusts, almost 50 have a shareholding in their club, whilst 30 have a supporter-elected director at boardroom level. At Chesterfield, Lincoln City, York City, AFC Wimbledon and Enfield Town, the supporter trust owns the football club outright.

The above examples suggest that supporters' trusts are ideally placed to become the foundation stones of a new pattern of corporate governance, one that receives its impetus, finance and direction from the grassroots. As Binns et al. (2002:6) observe:

“Supporters' trusts can play a positive role in the governance of football clubs by ensuring higher levels of transparency and accountability, by promoting links with the local community, by encouraging new support, by bringing business, legal and professional skills to the boardroom and by providing finance.”

In other words, supporters' trusts provide an instructive lesson in the positive opportunities possible when the public seizes direct power over, or influence upon, institutions they care passionately about.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS AND REFLECTIONS

In conclusion, if governance is in part a response to the erosion of traditional bases of power and control then the development of football in the twentieth century provides a particularly rich case study. It provides a theoretical language in which to identify key features of a complex reality and also to pose significant questions about that reality. What it does not do is offer all-encompassing explanations to these issues: as Pierre and Peters (2000) note, "[governance] ends up raising more questions than it answers". Part of the reason for this is the elasticity of the governance concept, which can cause confusion and make it difficult to delineate the most rewarding approach.

At the same time, reflecting on the three uses of the governance concept examined, we can conclude: Firstly, the notion of governance is valuable in directing our attention to how governments cope with increasing complexity in the sport policy process. Moreover, governance introduces greater subtlety to the related concepts of steering and networks, highlighting problems of coordination both in government and across a range of agencies, organisations and policy actors. Subsequently, governance recognises that no single actor has the capacity to control a diverse field of actions and interactions, flagging up "new" forms of governing, such as cooperation and partnerships. Secondly, the interrelated concept of stakeholding is also useful in differentiating between levels, and the nature of involvement of interest groups in the policy process. Here, the distinction between primary and secondary stakeholders is constructive in exploring the complex and intricate relationships between policy actors and interest groups. Thirdly, the concept of governance as good governance raises a number of interesting questions regarding the distinctiveness of sports organisations; the role and position of fans; and external influences on the internal machinery of sporting bodies. In short, governance broadens our conceptual repertoire and introduces greater sensitivity and subtlety into policy analysis.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agere, S (2000) *Promoting Good Governance: Principles, Practices and Perspectives*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Back, L, Crabbe, T, and Solomos, J (2001) *The Changing Face of Football: Racism, Identity and Multi-culture in the English game*, Oxford: Berg.

- Binns, S, Hamil, S, Holt, M, Michie, J, Oughton, C, Shailer, L, Wright, K (2002) *The State of the Game: the Corporate Governance of Football Clubs 2002*, Football Governance Research Centre, University of London.
- Boon, G (2000) "Football Finances: Too Much Money?" In Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Warby, S (ed.) *Football in the Digital Age: Whose Game is it Anyway?* Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- Brown, A (1999) "Thinking the Unthinkable or Playing the Game? The Football Taskforce, New Labour and the reform of English football", in Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C (ed.) *The Business of Football: A Game of Two Halves?* Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- Brown, A (2000) "The Football Task Force and the Regulator Debate", in Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Warby, S (eds.) *Football in the Digital Age: Whose Game is it Anyway?* Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- Caiger, A and Gardiner, S (ed) (2000) *Professional Sport in the European Union: Regulation and Re-regulation*, The Hague: Time Asser.
- Cannon, T and Hamil, S (2000) "Reforming Football's Boardrooms", in Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Warby, S (eds.) *Football in the Digital Age: Whose Game is it Anyway?* Edinburgh: Mainstream.
- Chadwick, S (2000) "A Research Agenda for Strategic Collaboration in European Club Football", *European Journal for Sport Management*.
- Clarke, H (1999) *Athlete-centred Sport*, position paper.
- Crowther, P (2001) "Broadcasters v. Regulators: the Threat to Football from Media Company Ownership of Football Clubs", in Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Warby, S (eds.) *The Changing Face of the Football Business: Supporters Direct*, London: Frank Cass.
- Foster, K (2000) "Can Sport be Regulated by Europe? An Analysis of Alternative Models", in Caiger, A and Gardiner, S (eds.) *Professional Sport in the EU: Regulation and Re-Regulation*, The Hague: TMC Asser Press.
- Frampton, P, Michie, J and Walsh, A (2001) *Fresh Players, New Tactics: Lessons from the Northampton Town Supporters' Trust*, Football Governance Research Centre, Birkbeck, University of London.
- Freeman, S (2000) *Own Goal! How Egotism and Greed are Destroying Football*, London: Orion.
- Gardiner, S, James, M, O'Leary, J and Welch, R (2001) *Sports Law* (Second edition) London: Cavendish Publishing.
- Garland, J and Rowe, M (2001) *Racism and Anti-Racism in Football*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Giulianotti, R (1999) *Football: a Sociology of the Global Game*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Greenfield, S and Osbourne, G (1998) "From Feudal Serf to Big Spender: the Influence of Legal Intervention on the Status of English Professional Footballers", *Culture, Sport and Society*, 1, 1, pp.1-23.

- Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Shailer, L (2001) *The State of the Game: the Corporate Governance of Football Clubs 2001*, Football Governance Research Centre, Birkbeck, University of London.
- Hirst, P (2000) "Democracy and Governance", in Pierre, J (ed.) *Debating Governance: Authority, Steering and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holt, M (2003) *A "Fit and Proper" Test for Football? Protecting and Regulating Clubs*, Football Governance Research Centre, Birkbeck.
- Houlihan, B (1991) *The Government and Politics of Sport*, London: Routledge.
- Houlihan, B (1997) *Sport, Policy and Politics: a Comparative Analysis*, London: Routledge.
- Jackson, M and Maltby, P (2003) (eds.) *Trust in Football*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Jessop, B (1999) "Governance Failure", in Stoker, G (ed.) *The Politics of British Local Governance*, London: Macmillan, pp.11-32.
- John, P and Cole, A (2000) "Policy Networks and Local Political Leadership in Britain and France", in Stoker, G (ed.) *The New Politics of British Local Governance*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Katwala, S (2000) *Democratising Global Sport*, London: The Foreign Policy Centre.
- Keasey, J, Thompson, S and Wright, M (1997) (eds) *Corporate Governance: Economic and Financial issues*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kidd, B (1988) The Elite Athlete, in Harvey, J and Cantelon, H (ed.) *Not Just a Game: essays in Canadian Sport Sociology*, University of Ottawa Press.
- Kikulis, LM, Slack, T and Hinings, B (1989) "A Structural Taxonomy of Amateur Sport Organisations", *Journal of Sport Management*, **3**, pp.129-150.
- Kooiman, J (1993) (ed.) *Modern Governance: New Government-Society Interactions*, London: Sage.
- Leach, R and Percy-Smith, J (2001) *Local Governance in Britain*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Lee, S (1998) "Grey Shirts to Grey Suits: the Political Economy of English Football in the 1990s", in Brown, A (ed.) *Fanatics! Power, Identity and Fandom in Football*, London: Routledge.
- Lomax, B (1999) "Supporter Representation on the Board: the Case of Northampton Town", in Hamil, S, Michie, J, Oughton, C and Warby, S (ed.) *The Changing Face of the Football Business: Supporters Direct*, London: Frank Cass.
- Michie, J (1999) *New Mutualism: a Golden Goal? Uniting Supporters and their Clubs*, London: Cooperative Party.
- Michie, J (2000) The Governance and Regulation of Professional Football, *The Political Quarterly*, **71**, 2, p.184-191.
- Mortimer, T and Pearl, I (2000) "The Effectiveness of the Corporate Form as a Regulatory Tool in European Sport: Real or Illusory?" In Caigner, A and Gardiner, S (eds.) *Professional Sport in the European Union: Regulation and Re-regulation*, The Hague: Time Asser.

- Newman, J (2001) *Modernising Governance: New Labour, Policy and Society*, London: Sage.
- Oakley, B and Green, M (2001) "Still Playing the Game at Arm's Length? The Selective Re-investment in British Sport 1995–2000", *Managing Leisure*, **6**, pp.74-94.
- Osbourne, D and Gaebler, T (1991) *Reinventing Government*, Reading: Addison Wesley.
- Pierre, J and Peters, BG (eds.) (2000) *Governance, Politics and the State*, London: Macmillan.
- Pierre, J (2000) *Debating Governance: Authority, Steering and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rhodes, RAW (1986) *The National World of Local Government*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Rhodes, RAW (1997) *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Richards, D and Smith, MJ (2002) *Governance and Public Policy in the UK*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roche, M (1993) "Sport and the Community: Rhetoric and Reality in the Development of British Sport Policy", in Binfield, JC and Stevenson, J (ed.) *Sport, Culture and Politics*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, pp. 72-112.
- Stoker, G (1998) Governance as Theory: Five Propositions, *International Social Science Journal*, **155**, pp.17-28.
- Supporters Direct (2003) *The Supporters' Trust Handbook*.

## INTERVIEWS

Dr Rogan Taylor, Director of the Football Research Unit, University of Liverpool.