Foundations of management consultants’ power positions in sport projects

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s1669591

Author:
Hans Slender
Atalanta 75
7908 VJ Hoogeveen

Supervisors:
Dr. B.J.M. Emans
Dr. K.S. Prins
ABSTRACT

Because sport organizations took on business characteristics in the last few decades, increasingly management consultants are hired within the sport context. These consultants are often criticized, because it is hard to prove their added value and sports are for a large part dependent on public means. Moreover, sports are a difficult context to consult, because of the specific culture and characteristics (Stewart & Smith, 1999). For successful consulting and implementing changes in sport organizations, the power and political perspective gives useful insight. The power position of the consultant is important for influencing the projects’ stakeholders, which is important for successfully implementing changes. The aim of this research is to get insight into the foundations of this power position of the management consultant within successful change projects in the sport industry.

The research question is: “To what extent do the power bases of management consultants, hired by national sport organizations (NSOs), contribute to their power position?” The foundations for these power bases, from the theory of Boogers-van Griethuijsen, Emans, Stoker and Sorge (2006), were translated into hypotheses. These hypotheses were tested within three cases. In every case, a change project involving a National Sport Organization (NSO), both the consultant and member of the client organization were interviewed. NSOs are the focal point of this research. They form the heart of the traditional sport world and are the most distinct organizations compared to other businesses. The cases are analyzed by searching for patterns between the three cases.

An important distinction in consulting projects is the nature of the project. Two of the analyzed cases focused on changing the internal organization of the NSO. The third case was funded by the government and involved many sport associations and municipalities. Another distinction between the cases is the background of the consultant. For example, working for a large or a small firm, having a background in sports or no background in sports.

Results showed that the power bases forming a solid power position in a regular business environment also hold within the sport industry. As expected, a background in sports, sport specific expertise and network contacts in the sport industry, appears to contribute to the power position of management consultants in sport projects. The main additional conclusion is that these sport specific power bases are especially important in consultancy projects involving external stakeholders. Within more internally focused projects, the foundations of the consultants power position are similar to regular businesses. Some refinements for the theory on foundations of consultants’ power positions are suggested for the sport context. The nature of the project, the experience and the role of the consultant make different power bases more important.

Furthermore, the data revealed a number of practical implications that helps the management consultant within the sport context. First, having some interest for the latest developments in sports helped establishing a connection with people within the sport organization. Second, not being too expressive in showing status symbols was useful, because of the informal sport culture. To reach successful implementation of changes, a strong power position creates support and acceptance for influencing attempts made by the consultant.

Key words: consulting, change management, sport management, national sport organizations, organizational politics, power bases.
PREFACE

This Master Thesis is the final product of my graduation for the Master of Science in Business Administration at the University of Groningen. During my specialization in Change Management, the profession of management consulting drew my attention. I followed several inhouse courses at large (inter)national consultancy firms. But my career took a different turn. In September 2008 the team leader of my former education, sport management, approached me to become a teacher and researcher in this profession. I’ve been doing this for three years now, teaching and developing several courses in sport management and performing applied social research for external principals.

With this research I tried to bridge the gap between my two major passions, change management consulting and sport management. I had some serious setbacks because of my busy new job at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, but also on a personal level with a marriage, buying a first house and becoming a father in the period of writing this thesis. On a content level I really enjoyed working on this subject, but after three years the last bits and pieces were very hard. I found the drive and motivation to finally finish this research in finding new interesting perspectives on consulting in sport organizations.

I want to thank some people for their support in this process. First, in particular I would like to thank Dr. B.J.M. Emans for introducing me in the subject of organizational politics, giving critical feedback and inspiring me in finishing this project. After each meeting I gained valuable new insights on methodology and writing a research report. I am sure that dozens of my students at the Hanze will benefit from that. I’d like to thank Kris Tuinier, my team leader at Hanze for his belief in a positive outcome, and my colleagues Adri Broeke and Eric Mulder for his feedback during the process. The respondents for their openness during the interviews within this delicate subject. Finally I’d like to thank my wife Gineke and beautiful daughter Iris for their inspiration.

This research was an interesting journey, visiting several interesting organizations in the heart of the sport world. I gained new insights and learned a lot about sports, consultancy, research and myself. I hope you will enjoy the result of this process, as a starting point for my career as a teacher/applied researcher in the sport business.

Hoogeveen,
August 2011
Hans Slender
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Chapter: 1. Introduction

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well."

Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937)
founder of modern Olympic Games

‘Olympic consultants cost taxpayers £1m a week,’ is the provocative header of a contemplative article by journalist James Slack in London’s Daily Mail (2007, Oct.17). The Olympics are spiraling out of control, leaping from £2.4 billion to an estimated £9.3 billion public funding, seventeen months before the start of the London Olympic Games in 2012 (National Audit Office, 2011). Minister Tessa Jowell admitted that consultants are to receive more than £50 million for their work on the Olympic project in 2006-07 with the Games not even in sight (Bond, 2007, Oct.18). The final cost of the Games to the taxpayer, as well as the budget spend on management consultants, remains inherently uncertain, raising public criticism. The consultants, mainly from large global consultancy firms, are hired for building up organizational capacity, while ensuring key delivery milestones are achieved. How can the Organization Committee and the British government justify hiring all these external advisors? How can these consultants prove their added value?

Also on a smaller scale, for example in local sport venues, sport clubs and sport development projects, public funding of sports leads to public debate. Sports receive public funding for their presumed contribution to economic and social capital (Coalter, 2007). The commercialization and professionalization of the sport world into a sport industry leads to more business-like approaches (Van Bottenburg, 2006; Broeke, 2010), but the sport network environment remains dominated by volunteers, emotion and unpredictability. The dichotomy between social responsibility and commerce results in a complex network of organizations and objectives, forming a distinctive and difficult discipline to manage (Smith & Stewart, 1999). The professionalization leads to an increase in hiring management consultants, even in smaller national and local sport organizations (Ruijgrok, 2008). The intangible nature of these management consultant services (Bäcklund & Werr, 2004) and their bad commercial image (Abrahamson, 1996; Clark, 2004) makes it difficult to convince internal and external stakeholders of their added value.

Sports have a very specific culture, often dominated by conservatism, in which political influences always play an important role (Chalip, 2006; Slack, 1996). To achieve valuable objectives within change projects, implementation is an important part of the management consultants’ role. The complex network within and between sport organizations make organizational politics, the possession and utilization of power, an essential part of the consultants’ profession. Conflicting interests of individuals within these projects increases the necessity of a solid power position of the consultant, enlarging the chance of influencing the behavior of the key stakeholders (Boogers-van Griethuijsen, Emans, Stoker & Sorge, 2006). The aim of this research is to get insight into the foundations of this power position of the management consultant, within successful change projects in the sport industry.
1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is difficult to justify the added value of the management consultant. Should they create value for the individual client, for the employees of the client and other stakeholders, or for the profession of management consultancy and the society altogether? According to Strikwerda (1998) their added value lies not only in satisfied customers, but foremost in their technical expertise, professional problem solving, a process of dialogue, and the usefulness of their advises for the client organization. Management consultants should be hired for their independent and unbiased judgment, new ideas, technical skills and implementation skills (Greiner & Metzger, 1991). But the narrow focus on customer satisfaction often leads to criticism when consultants are hired. Especially when public means are spend and the added social value is not clear, as in many sport projects. The change project is a success when not only the client organization is satisfied, but when all involved stakeholders entitle the project as successful.

The growth and professionalization of sports changed the way sport organizations are managed (Westerbeek, Hoye, Smith, Stewart & Nicholson, 2006), sport organizations increasingly took on other businesses characteristics (Masteralexis, Barr & Hums, 2005) and the influence of management consultants grew. Sport management became a more important field of study over the last decades (Parkhouse, 2001; Broeke, 2010), creating a distinct academic field (Mahoney, 2008; Olafson, 1995; Smith & Stewart, 1999). Because of the specific character of the business, the enormous media attention, and the public and social interests, always influences the various stakeholders. Management consultants can create valuable knowledge for both the sport organization and the sport industry altogether, because they bring business theory and sport practice together (Parks, 1992).

The successful completion of change projects can contribute to the justification of the management consultants within the sport industry. Implementing changes is a substantial part of the successful completion of change projects and of the consultant’s role. This implementation is particularly difficult within sport organizations because the involved stakeholders often act emotionally. Irrational passions, amateurism, volunteerism, focus on short term results and small budgets makes the sport business a complex environment to work in (Smith & Stewart, 1999; Westerbeek et al. 2006). Business theories and techniques do not transfer easily into the sport context. Knowledge on which qualities of the consultant are important within sport business can increase the effectiveness of consultancy both from a client and a consultant perspective.

1.2 PROFESSION OF SPORT MANAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

For full understanding of the sport management context, specific knowledge on sport phenomena and theory grounded in sports are inevitable (Chalip, 2006). This specific knowledge and competences justify specific sport management professionals, sport management education and even sport management academics (Chalip, 2006; Mahoney, 2008; Olafson, 1995; Parks, 1992). The largest differences with others businesses are found in the traditional competitive sports, organized by both professionals and volunteers in complex structures aiming at both social goals as well as intrinsic sport goals (Broeke, 2010). The National Sport Organizations (NSOs) are part of this field coordinating competitions between many sport clubs and striving for further development of the sports. NSOs have a central position within the traditional sport network and are involved with governments, clubs and other non-profit organizations, internationals sport organizations and commercial sponsors and broadcasting companies. It is difficult for an outsider, like a management consultant, to deal with the political forces within and around the NSOs, striving for added value.
Both the profession of sport management and the profession of management consulting are going through a process of professionalization searching for social acknowledgement and justification. Their technical, political and economic autonomy can work both positively and negatively. Both professions lack a clear Body of Knowledge, core competences are still debated and have no legal acknowledgement. This research focuses on the combination of both upcoming professions, the sport business consultant. A professional sport business consultant can develop knowledge by using systematic approaches towards practical problems and contribute to the advancement of both fields (Broeke, 2010; Pitts, 2001).

1.3 POWER PERSPECTIVE ON SPORT CONSULTING

From a political perspective, organizations can be seen as loosely structured coalitions of individuals and groups, all with their own preferences and interests (Pfeffer, 1992). The political perspective argues that organizations often act irrationally. Both negotiation and influence play an important role, composed of competing and shifting coalitions of groups and individuals (Burnes, 2004). This indicates that formal organizational processes such as decision making, policy making, goal setting, and resource distribution are not only done by rational considerations (Drory & Romm, 1990). In turbulent environments like the field of sport management, change is non-linear, unpredictable (Olafson, 1995), and new perspectives like power and politics are recognized as essential within the roles of the change agent (Buchanan & Badham, 1999).

For consultants, in order to be successful in changing the client organization, maintaining a successful client-consultant relationship is an important part of their job (Kubr, 2002). The consultant as a change agent is inevitably engaged in political activity, because both organizational goals and personal objectives of the involved stakeholders play a role in the change process (Buchanan & Badham, 1999). Although the interest of sport management academics on the topic of organizational politics has been limited (Slack, 1997), the complex networks of private and public organizations co-operating within the sport context make it a very relevant viewpoint. In the sport context, people from various backgrounds and with different viewpoints work together in complex projects. A strong power position is the fundament for the consultant to operate politically effective as a change agent. The power position helps creating support from essential stakeholders within the change project increasing the chances of successful completion of the change project (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006).

The theory of foundations for power bases (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006; Emans & Van Tuuren, 1998; Pettigrew, 1975) is translated and adapted to the sport context into nine hypotheses. In a typical and distinctive environment like the sport industry these power bases might play a different role than in regular businesses, especially within projects involving NSOs. These hypotheses are introduced in chapter 4 after elaborating on the definitions and social justification of both the profession of sport management and management consulting.
2. SPORT MANAGEMENT

"Sport is too much of a game to be a business and too much of a business to be a game."

An old sport saying

The professionalization of the sport business resulted in the relatively new profession of sport management. This profession still lacks a body of knowledge based on research (Zeigler, 1987). For management consultants operating in the sport business, it is important to know whether and how managing sport organizations differ from managing other organizations.

2.1 THE PROFESSION OF SPORT MANAGEMENT

Management is what managers do (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). Robbins and Coulter (2003) define management as the process of coordination of work, so it can be completed efficiently and effectively together with and by others. From an applied perspective sport management has existed as long as sports were there, for example since the ancient Greeks organized combats between gladiators for massive crowds of spectators (Parkhouse, 2001). Definitions of sport management sum up different aspects involved in managing sports:

“Sport management is the study and practice involved in relation to all people, activities, organizations, and businesses involved in producing, facilitating, promoting, or organizing any product that is sport, fitness, and recreation related; and, sport products can be goods, services, people, places or ideas.” (Parkhouse, 2001, p.4).

Sport managers use strategic planning, are leaders of sport organizations, negotiate contracts and licenses, work with very rich top sportsmen or with volunteers. They work within complex global networks of sport associations, national and local governments, media companies, commercial sponsors and non-profit organizations (Westerbeek et al., 2006). Slack (1997) sums up five aspects of a sport organization which defines the work done by a sport manager:

1. Social entity. All sport organizations are groups of people interacting with each other and performing functions within the organization. Many researchers within sport management have focused on the structures between and within these social entities, but all of them failed to find a complete explanation about how a sport organization should be structured (Slack, 1996). The sport industry changed from a more hierarchical structure into an open network structure over the years (Beech & Chadwick, 2004), so that political aspect of interactions became even more important.

2. Involvement in the sport industry. Many private companies are involved in sports as sponsor or partner from sport organizations. Sport organizations are defined by their direct involvement in the production of sport products or services (Slack, 1996). Sport services are built on the participant’s pursuit of pleasure, skill, excellence and health. But participation in sports is just part of the sport industry also including spectator services and sponsorship (Parkhouse, 2001). In this research the focus is on sport organizations involved in organizing participants sports.
3. **Goal-directed focus.** All organizations have a goal directed focus. For companies this is usually making a profit, for government organizations this is usually creating social value for the inhabitants. These goals often count for sport organizations, but often there are other goals like encouraging participation or winning games and medals. Many sport organizations have different goals simultaneously, which often conflict. Even members of the sport organizations may have individual goals conflicting with organizational goals (Slack, 1996). The goals of individual members, institutionalized goals and social responsibility are aspects that make decision making in sports and political aspects of this process important to understand.

4. **Consciously structured activity system.** Sport organizations are not organized randomly but more or less structured. This leads towards descriptions of task, functions and responsibilities within the organization. There is a hierarchy within the relationships between people working in the organization. Communication within the organization is usually formal. Important messages are documented, financial systems are used. Procedures and rules are used to direct people towards certain behavior (Beech & Chadwick, 2004).

5. **Identifiable boundary.** Sport organizations have more or less identifiable boundaries distinguishing members and non-members. Members of a sport club have a more explicit agreement with the organization than fans, who have a more implicit agreement. Within sport organizations, especially within the non-profit or volunteer sector, these boundaries are often less easy to identify than within other businesses (Slack, 1996). The forces surrounding sport organizations makes them difficult to manage.

### 2.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT

Sports come from old folk traditions, games played in medieval times. After the industrial revolution people created more spare time by organizing labor, thus creating demand for leisure activities like sports (Van Bottenburg, 2004). By formalizing sport rules, institutionalizing sport organizations and stratification, sports became a growing worldwide phenomenon (Beech & Chadwick, 2004; Kunnen, 2007). Traditional sports, in which sport clubs play in competitions organized by national sport organizations (NSOs), are still an important part of the contemporary sport industry. Emerging sport markets, for example mega top sport events, professional sports, and sports organized in small businesses (fitness and outdoor), have come up since the 1970s (Broeke, 2010). Still, the traditional sports and NSOs are in a dominant position within the sport industry. The traditional sport organizations adapted to the changing market conditions through professionalization.

Sport management practitioners and academics acknowledge that there are many commonalities with other industries and academic fields, but they also insist in having their own unique characteristics and contributions that sets sports apart from other businesses (Parks, 1992). According to Smith and Stewart (1999) there are ten unique characteristics that distinguishes sports from other businesses (table 1). These characteristics justify the academic sport management field, developing specific knowledge for the field of sports. Further, these characteristics also justify the existence of sport-specialized consultancy firms. These consultancy firms should be able to transfer management knowledge into the specific sport context.

These unique characteristics of sports are especially true for traditional sports, being participative sports and competitions organized through NSOs and sport clubs. The commercial sport organizations, for example fitness companies, are managed more like a regular business. The specific structures of the sport industry and sport organizations ask for specific expertise on sports when functioning within sport organizations. Further, the practitioners within these organizations form a network with different backgrounds and interests (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). And sports possess a very strong and specific traditional culture. Different kinds of sport organizations have typical cultural differences, too often neglected when translating business methods towards the sport context. The diversity in sport cultures makes experience and a background in sports important for sport management practitioners (Westerbeek et al., 2006).
TABLE 1
Unique characteristics that distinguishes sports from other businesses (based on Smith & Stewart, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Irrational passions</td>
<td>Both managers and consumers act irrationally in decision making involving sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance measurement</td>
<td>Profit is less important than sportive results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive balance</td>
<td>Cooperating with competing clubs in order to increase suspense during games and raise profits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable quality</td>
<td>The quality is uncertain in service focused companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Sport organizations work together in networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product and brand loyalty</td>
<td>Members and fans are extremely loyal to their clubs, both as participant or as fan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious identification</td>
<td>Sports play an important role in the life of participants and fans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind optimism</td>
<td>Both managers and fans are often overconfident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>Sport organizations change slowly and are skeptical towards innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed supply schedule</td>
<td>The number of games is set and more supply on short term is difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Changing sport organizations is becoming an increasingly popular topic for academic research, often focusing on structural change and too often neglecting the internal dynamics that shape the change processes within sport organizations (Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004). In understanding the dynamics and effects of change processes the organization could be interpreted as a complex, open, human system. Sense making, interpretation by individuals and emotions could be part of the analysis of the change project (Lundberg, 2004). National Sport Organizations (NSOs) form the top of the pyramid in the traditional competitive sport sector. In most European countries, but also in Australia, Canada and some Asian countries NSOs organize almost all sport competitions. They are also responsible for the rules, coordinate national teams and start programs to promote sport participation (Westerbeek et al., 2006). Other NSOs active within the sport network, not directly bond to a specific sport, but focused on ideological purposes, are striving for more social responsibility within sport organizations.

Culture and conservatism. Historically the NSOs are highly internally focused on their main purposes, organizing competitions and developing their sport. They consist of various sub-units, some run by professionals, some dominated by volunteers. These sub-units can be conceptualized as heterogeneous groups pursuing their own goals and promoting their own interests (Amis et al., 2004). For example, some groups want more focus on top sports and others on participative sports. Consequently, there is a status quo between these groups resulting in a small capacity for change. The NSOs are known for their conservatism (Smith & Stewart, 1999) and slow decision making. They have a humanistic-encouraging type of organizational culture, in which relationships play an important role (Boucher, 2010).
Political influence. National Sport Organizations are for a substantial part of their budget dependent on governmental funding. Sometimes indirectly through sport governmental funding agency, sometimes directly in subsidized projects. Research by Boucher (2010) showed that subsidized funding often leads to disappointing results because the objectives of the government are not the main purposes of the NSO. These projects are perceived more as a source of extra funding and are therefore not integrated in the strategy of the NSO. Because NSOs are also dependent on private investors, they become part of complex networks in which change is only possible by negotiation and compromises between stakeholders. Planned directive change is impossible because the programs and projects are often started within the cooperative networks (Beech & Chadwick, 2004), making politics an important aspect in predicting consultancy effectiveness.

Projects. Within the sport industry consultants are hired in a variety of projects. Two kinds of projects are particularly interesting when researching the client-consultant relationship within projects involving NSOs. First, the NSOs are sometimes the principal for projects focusing on achieving organizational purposes, solving problems, identifying new opportunities, or enhancing learning (Kubr, 2002). Whether the consultant has a more internal or external focus, the consultant takes the NSO as the focal point.

This is different in assignments from larger programs or projects subsidized by the government. In these assignments the consultant works within a network on meeting the programs objectives, solving problems within the program, identify opportunities for cooperation within networks and enhance learning between different stakeholders. In this type of assignment, the consultant works with the NSO and tries to obtain results with them.

Summarized, sport organizations have some unique characteristics which influence the roles and positions of people working within the sport industry. Especially in traditional sport organizations, like NSOs, specific structural, cultural and political aspects influence the functioning of a management consultant within the sport context. In the next chapter the roles of management consultants are further examined.
Management consulting started with advisory on organizational problems concerning operations management. The first advisors like Taylor and Gelbreth (1883) mainly had a technological focus. Later came other perspectives: administration (50s), organizational structures and management styles (60s), strategy (70s), and after that a very differentiated scope of topics (Twijnstra, Keuning & De Caluwé, 2002). Although consultancy realized an enormous growth in this period, the added value of management consulting is still a subject for discussion (Jackson, 2001; Kam, 2004). After all these years there is still no clear definition of the management consultant.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Many practitioners, firms and management consultancy associations use their own definitions of management consultancy. In a profession where admirers use words like experts, doctors, innovators and sometimes even revolutionaries and where critics use words like witch doctors, charlatans and pop psychologists (Greiner & Metzger, 1983, p.7), a well chosen definition is very important. Some definitions:

“Management consulting is an independent professional advisory service assisting managers and organizations to achieve organizational purposes and objectives by solving management and business problems, identifying and seizing new opportunities, enhancing learning and implementing these recommended changes.” (Kubr, 2002, p.10)

“Management consulting is the delivery of an independent and professional advice regarding identifying and solving organizational problems and when requested assisting in the implementation of these solutions.” (Twijnstra et al., 2002, p.42).

“Management consulting is an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify management problems, analyze such problems, recommend solutions to these problems, and help, when requested, in the implementation of solutions.” (Greiner & Metzger, 1983, p.7)
Brief examinations of these definitions show the most distinctive aspect of management consulting:

1. **Independency.** Because a consultant comes from outside the client organization, there is little affiliation with the interests of various involved stakeholders. This should be a position in which an unbiased assessment of the situation and objective recommendations are possible without having any second thoughts (Kubr, 2002). This independent stance results in objectivity and new perspectives, not automatically accepting the problems and facts presented by the client (Greiner & Metzger, 1983). According to Sloterdijk (2005) the advisor must help individuals, groups or organizations discarding routines and paradigms that became dysfunctional and accept new viewpoints resulting in development and growth. A management consultant is a critical and independent thinker.

2. **Professional.** Bessant and Rush (1995) point to four contributions that a consultant can make, all requiring certain professional knowledge and skills: (1) transferring expert knowledge; (2) sharing experience about other cases; (3) diagnosing problems; and (4) providing access to specialized services. The combination of knowledge, skills and experience asks for a knowledge worker focusing on learning and personal development.

3. **Service.** The quality of consultants is often primarily measured by the satisfaction of clients. This is quite logical for being a professional service, but can conflict with for example; the critical independency or professional attitude. While consultancy can be considered a helping activity (Greiner & Metzger, 1983) client satisfaction is only a part of the evaluating process of a consultant (Strikwerda, 1998). The client-consultant relationship in which expectations and roles are well defined is important for successful consultancy (Kubr, 2002).

4. **Identification and Analysis.** A management consultant identifies both problems and opportunities. Analyzing the client organization or the market is important for the identification of alternatives and fact finding (Deakins & Dillon, 2006). Hiring consultants who look at problems from a different perspective, expertise or even paradigm (De Caluwé & Vermaak, 2004) can add value to an organization.

5. **Solving problems and Implementation.** The different definitions give space to implementing changes, solving problems, and enhance learning in the organization. This is not a part of all consultant contracts (Kubr, 2002).

### 3.2 Justification of Management Consulting

The management consulting industry is a fast growing industry since the 1970s. Corporations and public agencies increasingly worked with consultants bringing (1) an explosion of revenues, (2) proliferation of services, (3) growth in professional staff and (4) entry of new firms (Greiner & Metzger, 1983). In the Netherlands approximately two hundred consultancy firms in 1988 (Twijnstra et al., 2002) grew towards 700 in 2001 (Bolweg, 2001). When sole practitioners are also counted the number of companies has grown from 16 thousand to 25 thousand between 2000 and 2005. In the same period the number of consultants in the Netherlands quadrupled from 27 thousand to 89 thousand (Bos & O’Mahoney, 2008). There is quite a diversity in clients, markets, services, approaches and personalities within the industry (Kubr, 2002). With this differentiation, different kinds of consulting firms and practitioners started organizing themselves, resulting in many different firms and business models.

In spite of their popularity among managers, who more frequently hire external advisors, there are many researchers who criticize management consultants. The management consultancy industry is often criticized for the use of the management fashion or fads (Abrahamson, 1996; Jackson, 2001). Critics claim that consultants often sell their professional image instead of adding real value to the organization (Kam, 2004). The largest problem is that added value of consultants is difficult to prove or disapprove. Proponents (Greiner & Metzger, 1983) and opponents (O’Shea & Madigan, 1998) can do little more than summing up (un)successful examples. There is some consensus on the training, education and experience a consultant should have (Kubr,
but there are still no compulsory qualifications and a good consultant is still difficult to recognize (Fincham, 1999).

Strikwerda (2001) concludes that modern client-consultant relationships within management consulting have lead to a justification crisis. Expert systems from the positivists’ tradition do not hold in our postmodern society, resulting in many failed change programs and failing management concepts in practice. This lack of expert knowledge must be compensated by building trust between consultant and client, often resulting in contractual trust, important as long as the added value of the consultant is insecure (Van Baalen, 2000). Only when this trust-based relationship develops towards cooperation, and when the performance by the consultant is without any doubt, the trust will play less an important role. Within the client-consultant relationship, in order to successfully intervene within change projects, the political context plays an important role. The ability to influence clients by possession and tactical use of power resources will help building successful relationships (Pettigrew, 1975).

3.3 CONSULTANCY FIRMS

The consultancy business has diversified because of the expanding demand for a variety of services (Greiner & Metzger, 1983). Various authors (Greiner & Metzger, 1983; Kubr, 2002; Twijnstra et al., 2002) divided the consulting industry in different types of practices, classified by various criteria: (1) functional/technical specialization; strategy, general management, finance, information technology, marketing, human resources management, communication, (2) market; public or business, (3) firm size; large or small firm/sole practitioner, and (4) region; international or national (appendix, table 9). Management consulting is not a monolithic industry dominated by a few giants. Various types of consulting firms operate in different segments of the market, positioning themselves to appeal to certain kinds of client organizations (Greiner & Metzger, 1983). The background and positioning of the consultancy firm largely determines which projects consultants conduct and which roles they fulfill.

Within the sport industry the most important distinction can be made between general management consultancy firms and sport-specific consultancy firms (technical area). The specialization in sports by the sport-specific firms is where the justification for the profession of sport management can be found. The international consulting firms focus merely on international sporting organizations, for example international sporting associations and mega sport events and are seldom involved in projects with NSOs. Another interesting distinction for the power bases of the consultant might be the size of the firm, influencing the approach of the consultant. Practitioners of smaller firms are often generalists with well developed behavioral and problem solving skills (Kubr, 2002). They use a more personal and flexible approach, making different foundations for their power position relevant.

3.4 CONSULTANTS’ ROLES AND PURPOSES

Consultants can be used for various purposes depending on the specific situational context. Hiring a consultant can be used to temporary supplement the staff. This is often the case in interim management relations, when an organization lacks time or staff to tackle a problem. In other situations consultants bring knowledge and information towards a company. The network function can also be a role of consultants. The consultants search for contacts with agents, representatives, suppliers, contractors, partners, and so forth. Because a consultants’ independent position, obtaining an expert opinion can be a consultant’s role. Consultants are also known for specific identifying, diagnosing and problem solving skills. They can develop and implement new methods or organizational change. The last role consultants can fulfill is training of management and staff, which could include counseling and coaching (Kubr, 1993; Kubr, 2002). More directive roles within the client-consultant
relationship are a trainer/educator, expert or advocate. These roles result in completely different processes than non-directive roles such as process specialist or reflector (Kubr, 2002). The chosen role should fit the purpose of a change project (appendix, table 10).

Pottinger (1998) argues that the gap observed between the consultants’ performance and the perceived consultants’ performance is due to a lack of well-developed performance measures, benchmarks or performance standards. The consultants work can be evaluated by the deliverables produced or the process used to achieve those deliverables (Deakins & Dillon, 2006). Different roles ask for different evaluating methods (Chang & Williams, 1999). More directive consultant roles must be evaluated by looking at the deliverables, while more non-directive roles should be evaluated by looking at the process. Deliverables can be measured by achieved goals defined by cost, quality or time specifications. Time and costs can be measured by comparing the scheduled goals and budget with the results. Process quality is more difficult to assess than product quality, because of the use of intangible criteria (Deakins & Dillon, 2006). In projects involving implementing changes non-directive roles are important resulting in process evaluation. Effective use of power by change agents, such as consultants, helps meeting the projects objectives (Buchanan & Badham, 1999).

Management consultancy has been a fast growing business over the last decades. The profession is often criticized for not adding real value to organizations. The performance of consultants is difficult to measure, but to be valuable successful implementation of projects is important. Various types of consultancy firms, projects purposes and consultants’ roles makes consultancy an interesting field of study. In the next chapter these theories on consultancy are viewed from a power and politics perspective resulting in a research question and nine hypotheses.
Organizational politics can be defined as “the use of power to modify or protect an organization’s exchange structure” (Cobb & Margulies, 1981). The political subsystem co-exists alongside the formal structures of the organization and is composed by the sources, locations, and flow of power through the organization. Often, organizational politics are explained as behavior of people acting stray from organizational goals or even against it (Drory & Romm, 1990). In this chapter the foundations of the power position in change projects involving NSOs is examined.

4.1 POLITICS IN NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

In the non-profit sport networks the goals which a management consultant tends to achieve can be business, social or other goals. For the NSOs programs difficulties like slow decision making, lack of customer focus, small number of professionals and backroom politics are aspects a consultant has to deal with (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). What remains is that the consultant should add value in a tangible and measurable contribution in order to achieve the goals of the client organization or the coalition between stakeholders (Kubr, 2002). In NSOs the role of the political subsystem (Cobb & Margulies, 1981) cannot be underestimated. Because of the upcoming commercialization, technological advancements, increasing competition and the interest in societal responsibility, the number of transitions in sport organizations is rising (Amis et al., 2004) and so does the need for hiring sport business consultants.

NSOs deal with a large network of stakeholders: the government, directors, coaches, officials and volunteers. All play an important role (Westerbeek et al., 2006). For funding they are dependent on their clients, the sport clubs and athletes. Further, they receive income from sponsorships deals, the government funding agency, directly from the government in subsidized programs, broadcasting companies and spectators of organized events. They have to justify their policies not only to these stakeholders, but also towards the media, because of their social responsibility position (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). Within the NSOs different interest groups, both thematic and regional form an interesting distribution of power (Amis et al., 2004). The consultant has to deal with the constant struggle between intrinsic goals of the sport organization and the pressure from stakeholders using sports as a mean for achieving extrinsic social objectives.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

There are three levels of analyzing organizational politics: (1) the individual level, (2) the group level and (3) the organizational level (Cobb, 1986; Drory & Romm, 1990). On the individual level the formal position, reputation and therefore access to information and role in organizational decision making are part of a person’s political interest (Cobb, 1986). To act politically a person needs to possess and use power resources like expertise,
control over information, political access and sensitivity, assessed stature and group support (Pettigrew, 1975). Individuals develop a basic political style and choose issues which they orientate on (Cobb, 1986). Organizational politics often have a negative connotation, with people acting in a self-serving way against the organization, and power attainment in acquisition of resources (Drory & Romm, 1990). On the other hand are politics also used for creating support, collaboration and participation (Cobb & Margulies, 1981).

The consultant has several influencing tactics at his disposal to change the behavior of members of the client organization (Yukl & Fable, 1990). When members of the client organization attribute more power to the consultant, the use of influencing tactics will be accepted or even appreciated. When the members of the client organization do not attribute enough power to the consultant, the use of influencing tactics will be ineffective, and will even evoke resistance within the client organization (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). This attributed power, referred to as the power position of the management consultant, is best described as the opportunity to influence the behavior of people within the client organization (Emans, Boogers-van Griethuijsen & Stoker, 2009). This potential influence is hypothesized to have an positive influence on the effective performance of the consulting role, but there is still little empirical evidence conclude these supposed outcomes. The power position of consultants gives room for successful consultants’ initiatives, changing behavior of clients, and creating commitment from stakeholders (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006).

The consultant’s power bases (or power sources) are the foundations for the consultant’s power position. These power bases are forces related to characteristics of the consultant that enhance the chances members of the client organization positively contribute to the consultancy project. The consultant’s power bases are therefore pivotal for successful implementing changes in the client organization (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). For full understanding of this topic, the following research question is formulated:

**To what extent do the power bases of management consultants, hired by national sport organizations (NSOs), contribute to their power position in change projects?**

### 4.3 HYPOTHESES

NSOs represent an useful research site because they operate in a complex environment that changed from kitchen table organizations into more professional and bureaucratic boardroom organizations (Amis et al., 2004). They operate in an environment of many non-profit organizations with slow decision-making organs, dependent on volunteers, with difficulties in aligning goals, and with complex relationships between public and private organizations (Westerbeek et al., 2006). The bureaucratic and traditional nature of these sport organizations, and the complexity of projects sometimes involving many stakeholders, makes the implementation of organizational changes difficult.

From an political perspective, the theory of the power position of management consultants can increase the chance of successful change projects in the complex sport environment. This theory is translated from a theory of managers’ and leaders’ power bases (Mulder, Koppelaar, De Jong & Verhage, 1986; Pettigrew, 1975), into a theory of consultants’ power bases by Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006). Usage of the literature on sport management and management consulting brought forward nine sport business consulting power bases, forming the hypotheses of this study. In the following paragraphs the nine power bases are subdivided in three categories, forming distinctive power mechanism, labeled attributes, dependencies and abilities (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006).
4.3.1 CONSULTANTS’ ATTRIBUTES

The first category is labeled ‘attributes’. These power bases are purely based on characterizations of what the consultant is. These are demonstrated qualities or attributes perceived by the client (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006).

According to Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) the power position of management consultants is sometimes based on expert power. They distinguish two kinds of expertise. First, members of client organizations value knowledge and experience within the specific industry and, second, knowledge and experience with the content of the change project. Further, the same research distinguishes between a ‘demonstrated’ and ‘perceived’ amount of expertise. Especially younger consultant have to demonstrate their expertise by showing evidence (business cards, university degrees) or prove themselves within conversations. Older consultants are often attributed with expert power by the members of the client organization, reducing discussions and resistance.

Sports unique cultural characteristics cause reflexive application of standard business practices to result in poor decision making (Smith & Stewart, 1999). Expertise by specific education or experience within the sport industry could be an important power base, because of these specific characteristics of sport organizations and the sport industry. Within sport business consulting there is a difference in background between general management consultants who sometimes execute an assignment in the sport industry and sport-specialized consultants functioning merely within the sport industry. Demonstrated sport-specific expertise and experience should increase the consultant’s power position and therefore contribute to the success of the change project.

H1a: The more attributed knowledge and expertise in the sport industry, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (sport expert power).

Smith and Stewart (1999) also recognize a contrasting philosophical approach to sport management, claiming that sports are nothing more than just another business. This stream claims that application of standard business tools will lead to optimal results in sport organizations. In that case, especially knowledge about and/or experience with the content of the change project contributes to the power position of the consultant (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). Consultants can be hired for their experience with certain specific change management knowledge, methods or techniques (Kubr, 2002). These rational business approach could even lead towards new perspectives on sport organizations.

H1b: The more attributed knowledge and expertise in management consulting, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (consulting expert power).

Collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and trust are important determinants of client-consultant relationship. This relational capital has to be created, built up, maintained, improved an expanded to be successful (Kubr, 2002). When the consultant and the members of the client organization have a ‘click’ personally, this results in personal power. For operating within sport organizations, affinity with sports should help establishing this click with the client organization. When a consultants has interest in sports, for example as an active participant, trainer/coach or just watching games on tv, this results in more resemblance with members of the client organization. Further, affinity with sports helps in understanding the specific language and particularities.

When consultants are specifically asked for certain assignments or continue cooperation in consecutive projects, this indicates towards power based on personality. There can still be a mismatch between consultant and client based on personality, but affinity with sports is a strong factor for building a relationship between consultant and client.

H2: The more attributed affinity with sports, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs, by facilitating the personal client-consultant relationship (personal power).
Name-recognition of the consultants’ firm forms a power base when a firm is associated with quality, reliability and the possibility of involvement of more specialized colleagues if necessary (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). The firm reputation is a brand which results in respect and status for the consultant. Bäcklund and Werr (2004) indicate that the intangible nature of the services provided by consultancy firms make convincing clients of their added value necessary. Consultancy firms use rhetorical strategies to make their services viable. They rationalized models of management and build strong brands and reputations. The acquaintance of larger (inter)national consultancy firms works like a quality label for consultants, resulting in client comfort and security (Kam, 2004). Consultancy firms facilitate the organization of consultants, networks, reputations, brands. The firms function as an invisible control mechanism, resulting in a stronger power position for the individual consultant employed by larger consultancy firms.

Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) conclude that consultants’ power derived from the status of the consultancy firm is only relevant in the beginning of the project, or when the consultant establishes new contacts. If the consultant does not meet the expectations raised by the reputation of the firm, this power base will decrease quickly.

**H3:** The higher the attributed status of the consultancy firms, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (firm reputation).

Not just the larger and leading consultancy firms are involved in the sport business. Sport-specialized small consultancy firms and sole practitioners play an important role within the sport industry. Where consultants working for larger firms derive power from the firm’s reputation, the sole practitioners and small firms derive power from the consultant’s reputation. Medium sized consultancy firms, between 10-100 employees, do not give a clear picture.

A consultant can build a reputation from successfully conducting assignments within the sport industry. But a reputation in sports can also come from a background in an active sport career or as a trainer/coach. There is an enormous media attention for sports, distinguishing the dynamics in the sport market from other business (Parks, 1992). Well-known actors in this media sports who later in their careers switch to sport business consulting, benefit from their reputation, independent of their expertise in sports and business.

**H4:** The higher the attributed status as a consultant in sport projects, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (consultant reputation).

Professional status symbols reflect a certain image of the consultant and therefore influences their power position. Symbols like clothes, cars, mobile devices, and hourly rates, can increase or reduce distance with people from the client organization. Younger consultants sometimes use status symbols to compensate for their age. Other consultants try to adapt as much as possible to the client organization, especially with their cloths (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). Sport organizations often have a informal culture, where status symbols might easily create too much distance.

Status symbols do not create a stronger power position automatically. Consultancy firms build, defend, and enhance an image of professionalism and status (Kam, 2004). This professional prestigious status gives the client organizations trust and belief in the advices by the consultant. The optimal amount of status symbols emphasis this professional status, but does not create too much distance between consultant and members of the client organization.

**H5:** The more effective use of professional status symbols by management consultants, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (status symbols).
4.3.2 Dependencies from consultants’ resources

The second category is labeled ‘dependencies’. Does the consultant have valuable resources at his disposal, which the client is dependent on to obtain (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006)? The consultant can use dependencies like his resources, information and technical skill to organize necessary alliances within the client organization (Slack, 1996).

The sport industry has developed into an open network structure in recent years (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). Sport practitioners are highly connected to each other and meet each other often around sport events. Network contacts are important in the sport industry to get interesting opportunities. When a consultant has network contacts which could give valuable opportunities to the client organization, this can give him a stronger power position. The consultant could help the client to get in touch with relevant people within the sport industry. This power base even works without the necessity for the client to actually meet these contacts.

Experienced consultants often possess a larger network than young consultants. Their experience also gives opportunity to benchmark the client organization with other relevant organizations in the sport industry. Further, consultants in a larger firm could even use their network within their consultancy firm to provide specific information or provide specialist resources (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006).

H6: The more network contacts within the sport industry valued by members of the client organization, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (network power).

There is a difference between knowledge as an attribute and knowledge as a source. Expert power as an attribute contributes to the power position of the consultant because members of the client organization perceive the consultant as being an expert. Knowledge can function as means for exchange when the consultants make it available towards members of the client organization in exchange for support. The use of knowledge and information as means for exchange is possible due to knowledge gap between consultant and members of the client organization (Emans & Van Tuuren, 1998).

This knowledge gap exists because members of the client organization attribute themselves with less knowledge or abilities, which strengthens the power position of the consultant. In this unequal relationship, they tend to agree with the consultant and support the change project (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006; Pettigrew, 1975).

H7: The more knowledge or information shared with the client and exchanged for support, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (means for exchange).

In sports feedback, both positive and negative, is used very intensively by coaches and managers rewarding bonuses when performing well and benching players when performing poor (Slack, 1996). For consultants formal sanctions are often not an option, but consultants do use psychological rewards or negative feedback (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006), raising opportunity for feedback power.

French and Raven (1959) recognized reward power as a form of power used by managers. Rewards can be material as well as psychological. Consultants often use psychological rewards like recognitions for the support or abilities of client organization’s members. Consultants can also give negative feedback. Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) distinguished content-related negative feedback and process-related negative feedback. They can point out weaknesses of the client organization (content-related) or hold a mirror up to members of the client organization (process-related).
In summary, giving feedback by the consultant can add to their power position and create support for the change project. Recognizing efforts and qualities of client organization’s members stimulates them to contribute to the project. These members also want to prevent the possibility of process-related negative feedback. Further, consultants can recognize content-related weaknesses within the client organization.

H8: The more psychological rewards and more negative feedback applied by the consultant, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (feedback power).

### 4.3.3 Consultants’ Abilities

The previous sections and hypotheses focused on the possession of attributes and dependencies by the sport business consultants, contributing to their power position. When politics within change management are defined as “the ability to use the bases of power effectively” (Mintzberg, 1983, p.26), not only power resources play an important role, but also the influence tactics used by the consultant (Pettigrew, 1975; Yukl & Fable, 1990). Influence tactics ask for persuasive skills, influence skills and analytical skills. A distinction can be made between the effective use of these political skills which can be typified as influence tactics and the recognition of the consultant’s skills by members of the client organization, which are general consulting abilities as a power base. For effective change support in the client organization, political skills are important for the consultant. Consultants can build coalitions by spending time communicating their views to others, establishing trust relationships, and building mutual respect (Pfeffer, 1992).

Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) found that many consultants bring forward that persuasive skills include showing advantages of the changes, the use of argumentation, use positive examples and make sure that members of the client organization conclude for themselves what is best. Further, also the analytical skill of diagnosing situations quickly and understanding the real problem helps the consultant. Adapting the language and communication on the jargon of the industry are an important foundation in establishing a power position. These skills are abilities recognized by members of the client organization and valued by them, attributing to the power bases of the consultant.

H9: The better general consulting abilities (persuasive skills, communicative skills, and analytical skills), the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (political skills).
The hypotheses on the power bases of sport business consultants are tested by means of a multiple case study research (Yin, 2009). Within this study a change project involving a sport business consultant and National Sport Organization (NSO) forms a case. The three selected cases all had implementing aspects, but differed on other characteristics. They were researched in depth by interviewing both the consultant and the principal.

5.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Because organizational politics within sport organizations is a relatively new subject of study, the complexity of the subject, and the sensibility towards the people involved, it is more useful to grasp the subject in full complexity with an in depth qualitative research strategy. In this research the relationship between the consultant and people from the client organization (NSO) are central. By focusing on a single case, too general answers by the respondents are prevented. This focus gives interesting insight in the differences in interpretation, on the subject of consultants’ power positions, between members of the client organization and consultants. This brings a new perspective on the concept of the consultant’s power position.

The multiplicity with three cases makes the research more robust because of the replication logic, in which similarities between the results of the cases are sought-after (Harriott & Firestone, 1983). But the differences in characteristics of the three cases also make theoretical replication possible, explaining differences between cases, resulting in a more nuanced theory on consultants’ power bases.

FIGURE 1
Multiple case study research strategy (based on Yin, 2009)

“Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton asked why.”
Bernard Baruch
political consultant
The starting point of the case studies are the theory of Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006), modified for the sport context in the previous chapters. The use of this theory makes analytic generalization towards other cases possible (Yin, 2009), so that findings can be generalized to other sport organizations and projects. In this multiple case study design three case studies were conducted, using a single data collection protocol. Further, the same analytic techniques were used to draw reliable conclusions from the three cases.

5.2 SAMPLING

In search for different explanations for consulting success, sampling was based on different types of consultancy firms involved, background of the consultant, nature and goal of the project and the specific client-consultant relationship as can be seen in table 2. All three cases selected had implementing aspects in them, because this is when organizational politics play an important role.

Detailed content of consulting projects are often confidential. Comparing the opinion from both client and consultant on such a project brings the respondents in a vulnerable position. The selected cases are evaluated as successful change projects by the various stakeholders and openly discussed in the media or professional magazines. This makes it more likely that respondents are willing to openly discuss the role of power within the change project in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Case 1: Cultural change intervention</th>
<th>Case 2: National sport development program</th>
<th>Case 3: Educational program development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of consultancy firm</td>
<td>National general management firm Large sized</td>
<td>Sport and public specialized firm Medium sized</td>
<td>Sport specialized small partnership Two persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant’s experience and consultant’s background</td>
<td>Senior consultant Experienced business</td>
<td>Partner Experienced in sports</td>
<td>Junior consultant Experienced in sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Volleyball Association National Sport Organization</td>
<td>Ministry of sports</td>
<td>Soccer Association National Sport Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project goal</td>
<td>Cultural change: - Democratic decisions - Client-focused - Develop pro-active staff - Implement changes</td>
<td>Sport participation: - Participation specific target groups - Cooperation NSOs, clubs and municipalities</td>
<td>Develop curriculum: - Formulate learning goals from practitioners - Promote and create interest - Organize the courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant’s role</td>
<td>Process specialist - Managing changes - Independent feedback - Technical skill/method</td>
<td>Identifier of alternatives - Specialist resources - Expert opinion - New ideas</td>
<td>Fact finder - Specialist resources - Providing information - Action proposals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first case describes a cultural change intervention within the Dutch volleyball association (NeVoBo). A senior consultant from a national general management firm was hired by the NSO for supporting decision making and implementing changes. The intervention by the consultant was part of a larger ongoing change process within the organization. Both the senior consultant, and the project leader within the NSO, were interviewed.

The second case is a national sport development program initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Sports involving various sport associations, municipalities and many sport clubs. A partner of a medium sized sport specialized consultancy firm was hired as a program leader for this program. In this case the consultant was interviewed as well as the project leader from one of the main projects within the program working for the Dutch swimming association (KNZB).

The third case consists of a small sport specialized consultancy firm (two persons) who developed an educational program for the Dutch soccer association (KNVB). The principal within the NSO was interviewed. Furthermore, the junior consultant was interviewed on his role.

Because the cases have very distinctive characteristics, confirmation or rejection of a hypothesis within all three cases, generalization towards other projects within the sport industry is possible. These characteristics might as well lead towards a more detailed theory of consultants’ power bases in sport projects.

### 5.3 DATA COLLECTION

Key informants within the case studies were both the consultant and a key employee of the client organization. The respondent from the client organization, the NSO, was the principal or a person who was closely related to the consultant within the change project. The interviews with the three management consultants and the three employees of the NSOs each lasted between one and two hours and were recorded on tape. The goal of the interviews was to discover how the nine power bases function within change projects in the sport industry and in what degree they influence these change projects.

The interviews were divided into three parts. The first part of the interview was used to give opportunity to the interviewee to describe the change project. This information is used for better understanding the context of the case. Later, the interview was used to gain insight in the impact of the nine power bases of the consultant on the acceptance and commitment by members of the client organization. The power bases were introduced briefly to the respondents, classified by attributes, dependencies and abilities. The respondents were asked whether these power bases contributed to the power position of the management consultant within the project. Further, the respondents were asked to illustrate their answers with examples. Probing was used for clarification when necessary.

Before responding on the structured questions on the nine power bases, the respondents were asked for their opinion on critical power bases of the consultant within the project. These spontaneous reactions showed which power bases were most important to the interviewees. They gave a broad perspective on the subject, and thus opportunity for new insights (Gratton & Jones, 2004). This funnel interviewing technique (Emans, 2004; Mandel, 1974) prevents that respondents lose their own reference, and moves from free association to structured questions, leaving room and priority to the respondent before checking the nine hypotheses.
5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data the starting points are the case descriptions. The theoretic hypotheses are the bases for these descriptions. First, a brief description of the context of the change project, the consultant organization and the client organization is used to acknowledge literal replication between the cases. In the multiple case study design the three cases are used to confirm or reject the hypotheses. Therefore the cases have certain similarities, like implementing aspects and involvement of NSOs. The literal replication implies that when all three case confirm or reject a hypothesis, the importance of this power base is concluded. The process of the case is described using the interview and secondary data. The consultancy process phases of Kubr (2002) are used to structure this process.

The answers to the open question, giving the respondent the opportunity to come up with their own associations, are summarized in the first table of the case. The first two or three critical success characteristics are interpreted by the researcher and connected to a power base from the hypotheses when possible. These spontaneous mentioned power bases are considered as most important characteristics to the respondent. In the second table the topics of the hypotheses are summed up and the relevant answers are summarized per hypothesis. The draft case study reports are shared with the interviewees in order to optimize interpretation, searching for optimal construct validity and checked by telephone with other stakeholders to optimize reliability.

Within the cases conclusions are drawn on the interesting findings from the desk research and the interviews with client and consultant. Per variable the answers of the client organization respondent and the consultant are compared, searching for interesting differences between the viewpoint of the client organization respondent and the consultant. When differences between the viewpoints of the client organization respondent and consultant occur, the concerning hypothesis is revised for rival explanations. This method increases the internal validity of this research, because this makes the data collection more vigorous (Yin, 2009).

In order to draw valid explanatory conclusions from the cases, pattern matching is used. In search for causal relationships between certain consultant power bases and the effectiveness of the consultant in getting results, this analytic tactic establishes a higher internal validity (Trochim, 1989). Per hypothesis the results of the cases are analyzed, searching for patterns of similarity to confirm or decline hypotheses, comparing results from the three cases. Contrasting patterns lead to explanation building on differences between projects, but also between consulting firms and individual consultants. Differences between the several cases result in a more nuanced theory on power bases in sport business consulting in sport projects. Furthermore, the spontaneously mentioned power bases are used for more nuanced conclusions on the importance of the various power bases.
6. RESULTS

In the result section of this report the case study reports are central. They are all structured in the same order, summarizing the nature and content of the change project and summarizing the opinions of the various respondents on the power bases of sport business consultants. In the next chapter conclusions will be drawn based on the three cases.

6.1 CASE 1: CULTURAL CHANGE INTERVENTION

The Dutch volleyball association (NeVoBo) conducted an internal strategic change project. The NSO started this project with hiring a former management consultant for changing the governance structure between different divisions of the organization. The new governance structure focused on democratic decision making and new relationships between different sections of the organization. After this structural change project a cultural change project was started. The employees and volunteers in the service-centered structures of the association needed a more client focused and pro-active approach within their job. For this project they hired a well-known Dutch consultancy firm.

6.1.1 CASE DESCRIPTION

Project. The consultant was hired for leading a series of interventions within a larger change process. The association hired the consultant with help from a sport consulting mediator. In smaller NSOs the top consists of managers, in larger NSOs the top consists of governors. The dynamics of both types of organizations are different. The first group focusing on organizing and getting things done. The second group focusing on politics and decision making.

Consultant. The consultant sees changes often earlier than the client organizations. His objective and professional view on the organizations can help with reflection and initiate new ideas. Further, the option to compare with other organizations and cases is valuable for the client organization. In this case the consultant was hired to manage a part of a larger change process. His process role was important, expertise in sport organizations was less a topic. Within the process the consultant used specific decision making instruments to help the associations within this cultural change process.

Entry. In sports the consultant searches for opportunities for cooperation. From these opportunities within the sport network, new assignments result. Because of limited means this organizing through networks is necessary. Business can learn from sports on the topic of networking and cooperation. In this specific case the consultant was hired after a first meeting, because of the click and trust, and because of the specific instrument the consultant was offering.

“Advice is judged by results, not by intentions.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC – 43 BC)
ancient roman statesman)
**Diagnosis.** The consultancy firm helped analyzing the roles of all internal stakeholders; referees, trainers, members, volunteers and governors. This cultural analysis was the fundament for building a cultural change program. For these different internal stakeholders behavioral interventions were developed. This plan was implemented during the change project of four months.

**Action planning and implementation.** A lot of members from different parts of the organization were involved in the change process by using specific brainstorming and decision making techniques. Support was also created by using certain sports and volleyball metaphors in the different behavioral interventions. All these small interventions resulted in awareness of new tasks, roles and desired behavior. The consultant guarded a positive and constructive atmosphere within the organization.

**Termination.** The consultancy firm plays a small role within a larger ongoing strategic process. After the termination of the project, the change process continued, led by the internal change management specialist.

### 6.1.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS

After describing their background, the nature of the project and the process involved, the respondents were asked to sum up the most important characteristics of the management consultant resulting in the success of this project.

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (volleyball association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What factors related to your characteristics gave opportunity to influence the behavior of stakeholders within the change project?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What factors related to the management consultant’s characteristics contributed to the implementation of the change project?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My passion for sports was important in establishing a personal connection with decision makers in the client organization.” (<em>=personal power)</em></td>
<td>“The consultant helped us to reflect on our strategy and change process, his opinion gave confidence that we were doing the right things. (=feedback power)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The National Sport Organizations are network organizations, my network contacts were relevant and valuable for them.” (<em>=network power)</em></td>
<td>“He used his expertise on project management to improve our change process. The associations possess sport expertise, but lacks business administration expertise.” (<em>=consulting expert power)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They used an interesting decision making tool, which increased support from other members of the management team.” (<em>=means for exchange)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the consultant and the representative of the NSO answered this question from their own point of view. The management consultant respondent stresses the importance of getting a connection with the client organization, especially the decision makers and emphasizing the role of network power. The client organization respondent lays emphasis on the added value on top of their sport specific expertise within the NSO. It is the knowledge and techniques from a business perspective and the role as a reflector that adds value to the sport organizations (table 3).
In this case the differences between the client perspective and consultant perspective are evident. Although both respondents recognize similar power bases (table 4), they emphasize different power bases as being important.

**TABLE 4**
Answers given by respondents in structured questions (case 1: cultural change intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (volleyball association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport expert power (H1a)</td>
<td>Sport expert power (H1a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. When the client perceives that the consultant understands sport organizations, this helps gaining support.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting expert power (H1b)</td>
<td>Yes. Demonstrated knowledge and experience in process consultation raised believe in the consultant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Successful methods and techniques build trust in relationship with members of the client organization.</td>
<td>Personal power (H2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. A passion for sports helps establishing a personal click, this was done by keeping updated with sport news.</td>
<td>Yes. Understanding the sport culture for building relationships helped for the relationships, but no specific background in volleyball was required for the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Recognition of the firm’s brand raised expectations.</td>
<td>Yes. Well-known firm name build internal support within the client organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. The background and experience of the team members of consultants builds trust.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. I try to dress not too formally.</td>
<td>Yes. The consultants created a certain distance by his formal clothes, but not too much distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Use of too much management jargon is not effective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network power (H6)</td>
<td>Network power (H6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Network contacts in a variety of sports established interesting relationships for the client organization.</td>
<td>Yes. The network within the consultancy firm helped for involving other consultants with specific knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means for exchange (H7)</td>
<td>Means for exchange (H7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Knowledge on decision making created support, because the client organization could use this knowledge.</td>
<td>Yes. Sharing experiences from other projects build trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback power (H8)</td>
<td>Feedback power (H8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Giving compliments created support from members of the client organization.</td>
<td>Yes. Feedback from an external advisor is valued by employees of the client organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General consulting abilities (H9)</td>
<td>General consulting abilities (H9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Reflection skills from outside of the organization.</td>
<td>Yes. Asking questions, probing and active listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Listening, probing and checking the real question.</td>
<td>Yes. Creating support and involving employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Communicate, authentic interest in resistance.</td>
<td>Yes. Analytical and political skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.3 CASE SUMMARY

There are quite some differences between the recognition of power bases by the respondent from the client organization and the consultant, but many power bases are confirmed by both respondents. They also agree upon the importance of quite the same general consulting abilities.

The respondents bring forward that within expert power especially the expertise in consulting is important within this project. ‘There is enough knowledge on sports inside the NSO, the consultant’s job is to bring this knowledge together and facilitate sharing within the organization, rather than bringing his own ideas’, according to the client respondent. The consultant also emphasizes the importance of sport-specific expertise, but stresses that this is something the general management consultancy firm can train a consultant in. This is different for the affinity with sports, which helps establishing a personal click according to both respondents, but is closely linked to the personality of the consultant.

Both respondents recognize the influence of the consultancy firm’s reputation. ‘The firm is a brand which creates a certain expectation. In tenders the brand is more important than in smaller assignments build on personal network contacts’, says the consultant. But not only in the acquisition phase the firm reputation is important. The respondent from the NSO mentions that in the internal organization a strong consultancy firm brand helps for credibility and creates support. Although the consultant’s reputation did not play a large role in this project, the consultant does emphasize the importance of a strong team of consultants.

Both respondents argue that status symbols, especially clothes, can create some distance between client and consultant. However, in sport organizations too formal clothes are often not accepted. The consultant: ‘I try to put on decent clothes, in order to be taken seriously, but not with a tie, because this is too formal for sport organizations.’ Consultants should over think these status symbols for engaging sport organizations.

The consultant emphasizes the value of his network within the change project. It is interesting to see that the client organization especially valued his network within his firm: ‘Especially the contacts within the consultancy firm were useful for solving specific problems during the change project’.

It was the content of the project, the decision making tool, which created a strong power position for the consultant. The possession of this means for exchange was important in this project. Further, also the opportunity of giving feedback was used by the consultant to strengthen his position. ‘Employees value feedback from an external advisor, than regular feedback within the organization’, according to the respondent from the NSO.
6.2 CASE 2: NATIONAL SPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Dutch Association for Sport and Exercise (NISB) conducts a program on participative sports for special target groups. The program is funded by the Dutch ministry of public health, well-being and sports. Within the program a large amount of stakeholders like municipalities and national sport organizations participate within projects related to this program. The program is monitored by a sport research center, and the program is implemented by a management consultant from a sport-specialized consultancy firm.

6.2.1 CASE DESCRIPTION

Project. The program was focused on involving special target groups, mainly young immigrants, in participative sports and sport clubs. The program involved nine NSOs and eleven municipalities. These municipalities were selected for indwelling many immigrants. The NSOs and municipalities worked together with the sport clubs in these cities to involve these kids in participative sports. Within the program, sport clubs were supported with budget, advise, training, changes in accommodation, promotion campaigns and changes in policy. It was a large program with a large consortium of stakeholders. There was some attention from the media, but within these types of programs the role of the media is relatively small.

Consultant. The management consultant was hired within this program by the ministry to lead the program for three years. He comes from a management consultancy firm mainly specialized in sports and public affairs. The firm does many assignments for governmental organizations and sports are one of its main topics. Ten out of the sixty advisors within this firm are specialized in the sport industry, which makes this firm one of the largest sport business consultancy firms in the Netherlands. The senior consultant is experienced within the sport industry both as a consultant and a researcher. In this program he was hired for two days a week as program manager for the period of three years. The consultant managed the process by meeting all stakeholders regularly and keeping the focus on the formulated targets. His main role was to advice the NSOs, municipalities and other stakeholders both asked and unasked.

Entry. The ministry asked the NISB for coordinating this program over a period of five years. After two years they felt that more interaction between several projects was necessary for achieving the goals. They asked the NISB to hire an external program manager for the last three years of the program, funded by the ministry. The profile of the consultancy firm fitted the program. Both experience in sport and social themes were important in this program.

Diagnosis. The nine NSOs within the program all delivered a project planning before entering the program. The consultant started with analyzing all the plans and the background of the involved stakeholders. The NSOs were involved earlier in the program and the consultant diagnosed what the goals were, what already happened, which problems arose and what kind of help would be necessary. In this phase the consultant had the role of sounding board, asking questions, giving suggestions and guarding the project broadly as a process consultant.

Action planning and implementation. During planning it was important to work on a common language between the different stakeholders to improve cooperation. NSOs are normally internally focused and needed opening up for the social themes as long as these did not conflict with their mission. The regular visits with the different stakeholders were important for meeting the programs goals. Further, the consultant facilitated meetings in which sharing experiences and knowledge over the various projects stood central. He also seized new opportunities by involving other organizations from the sport network into the program. One of the important factors was facilitating the cooperation between the various NSOs and municipalities. This
teambuilding and enthusiasm role were critical success factors for the consultant in this process consultation role.

**Termination.** In the last round along all partners within the program, the consultant focused on the sustainability of the program. What could the organizations do when the program would be terminated and there would be no more funding from the ministry? Could they still meet the goals in involving more (immigrant) children in participative sports? The program was evaluated very positively, surpassing all formulated goals. The consultant played a role in the strategic question, what will be next?

### 6.2.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS

Within the subsidized project the respondents’ answers lie closer together than in the first case. The consultant was hired for leading a network of organizations striving for common goals. In this case the expertise on sport policy and organizations as well as network power is mentioned as important by both the consultant and the NSO respondent (table 5).

| TABLE 5 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Answers given by respondents in free association (case 2: national sport development program) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (swimming association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What factors related to your characteristics gave opportunity to influence the behavior of stakeholders within the change project?</td>
<td>What factors related to the management consultant’s characteristics contributed to the implementation of the change project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My experience in both national and local sport policy, understanding of organized sports and sport clubs is crucial in this project.” (=sport expert power).</td>
<td>“The consultant helped us by using process consultation or by subject-matter expertise. He defended our interests towards policy makers, because of his understanding of the sport world and organizations. (=sport expert power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My communicative skills were important, because of the many meetings and conversations necessary for progressing in the program.” (=communicative skills)</td>
<td>“He brought the NSOs closer towards partner organizations in working together in cooperation. His role was to mediate between partner organizations. (=network power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sport organizations have certain output directed energy, while governmental organizations are more reflective. These organizations need each other to successfully implement this program. My role is to direct this mechanism.” (=network power)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The management consultant respondent makes a clear distinction between the power bases necessary in the entry phase of the project for obtaining the assignment and the implementation of the project. For the Client organization respondent this is not interesting, because the consultant was hired by a third party. Further, there are no striking differences between the viewpoints of the consultant respondent and the client organization respondent. They do not disagree, they only come up with different specific aspects which are not labeled as very important. The consultant does have some more emphasis on sharing knowledge and trying to help the organizations in their learning process by giving feedback. For the client organization respondent establishing connections between various network partners was more important than the learning aspect (table 6).
### TABLE 6
Answers given by respondents in structured questions (case 2: national sport development program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (swimming association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport expert power (H1a)</td>
<td>Sport expert power (H1a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Understanding the background of NSOs and opening them up for a more external focus gained support.</td>
<td>Yes. Experience and expertise in sports is valuable for bringing the project to a higher level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting expert power (H1b)</td>
<td>Consulting expert power (H1b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Yes. Expertise outside sports is even more valuable than sport expertise, knowledge from other industries is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal power (H2)</td>
<td>Personal power (H2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Experience in governmental policy helps in gaining the trust of the NSO project managers.</td>
<td>Yes. Speaking the sport’s language for easier connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Reputation and earlier cooperation between firm and ministry play a role in the start of the project.</td>
<td>Yes. Reputation and track record increases persuasiveness towards the client organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Personal contacts and reputation with the principal played a role in obtaining the assignment.</td>
<td>Yes. Too formal clothing does not suit the sport world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependencies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dependencies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network power (H6)</td>
<td>Network power (H6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Involving the right persons within and outside the organization when problems arise.</td>
<td>Yes. Networks are especially useful in projects with many participating organizations for establishing connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means for exchange (H7)</td>
<td>Means for exchange (H7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Facilitating knowledge sharing between stakeholders was useful for the participating stakeholders.</td>
<td>No. Feedback power (H8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback power (H8)</td>
<td>Feedback power (H8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. For an independent consultant it is easier to give feedback to partners within the network.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General consulting skills (H9)</td>
<td>General consulting skills (H9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Writing skills for articles to attract attention.</td>
<td>Yes. Listening and getting to the core of subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Teambuilding and stimulating cooperation.</td>
<td>Yes. Writing, reporting, and analytical skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Agenda setting brought the project in right direction</td>
<td>Yes. Political skills for convincing the principal of the methods used inside the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Translating ideas, language, and customs into shared visions and a base for cooperation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Political skills and subtle influential skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.3 CASE SUMMARY

In this case the respondents agree upon the importance of sport expert power over consulting expert power. The complex surroundings of the program make that the consultant needs to understand the background and roles of the various stakeholders. Further, also affinity with sports helps building a power position based on personal power. The consultant brings forward that a passion for sports make it easier to get a personal click with people from sport organizations. ‘Understanding the culture of sports and some affinity with sports helps building relationships’.

The consultant gives more insight on the differences between firm reputation and consultant reputation for large and small consultancy firms. ‘For small firms the personal status of the consultant, as a manager or consultant in sports, is more important’. The respondent from the NSO recognizes that the personal track record helped the consultant in gaining trust with the various stakeholders. Status symbols are not mentioned as very important, only too formal clothing can damage the consultant’s power position.

‘In sports, people in sports are highly passionate about their profession, just like most creative industries. What differs from other industries is that personal involvement and network contacts are essential,’ said the consultant. Especially in this project, with many involved stakeholders, network power is essential to both respondents. Means for exchange and feedback power are considered less important. Only the consultant emphasizes that it is sometimes easier for a relative outsider to give negative feedback than for the regular manager.

Both respondents recognize the general consulting abilities as important. It is really interesting to see that in this large subsidized program the client respondent and the consultant agree on most power bases.
6.3 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

One of the tasks of a sport association is education. The Dutch Soccer Association (KNVB) was working on a program for managers in professional soccer clubs. The management consultant was hired for building this new education, fitting the profile of this professional group, and meeting the demands of potential students. Besides developing the program, the consultant played also an important role in organizing the course and taking part as a core lecturer.

### 6.3.1 CASE DESCRIPTION

**Project.** The focus of the project was on developing a curriculum for the educational program. This education was developed by the association without external financing. This project had gained little attention in the media. It was quite a small project, where the client organization worked with the consultant and his junior consultant assistant. Some other parties were interviewed and involved in the project, but played no role in the execution of the project. Within the client organization the head of the research center was the principal of this assignment. Within the project the consultant also worked with the educational department of the association.

**Consultant.** The sport-specialized practitioner runs a small firm with himself as the most important consultant, one junior and some administrative support. This small consultancy firm does not work with standard methods or techniques and the most important asset is the consultant himself. He is a highly experienced consultant and well-known within the Dutch sport business. He was one of the first consultants working in the field of sport management in the Netherlands and he played an important role in developing this profession in the Netherlands.

**Entry.** Within the hiring process there were several candidates for this assignment. There were larger firms experienced in building educational programs or firms experienced in a more business-centered approach. One of the most important reasons for hiring the sport-specialized practitioner was hired mainly because of his experience in both the world of soccer and building educational programs. Further, the client organization worked with the consultant before. Often, the sport association works with tenders and presentations before choosing for a certain firm. In some cases, when there is already a relationship between client and consultant, this process is less formal. When there are tenders, the sole practitioner consultant points out that his chances are small, because large firms can invest more time and energy in tendering processes. The tender process is chosen for projects where the consultant as a person is less important and where the tool or techniques of the consultancy firm plays a larger role.

**Diagnosis.** In three full day sessions, involving the principal, people from the field, the consultant and his junior assistant, the profile of competences was developed. The goal was translating distinctive roles within the professional soccer club into the most important competences. This document is a shared vision on this profession and was translated in to practical courses. The consultant developed a profile of competences and a course outline. This theoretic base of the program was developed in cooperation with a network of contacts.

**Action planning and implementation.** The focus was on the practical side of the program, fitting the working schedules of the students, and translating the theories into the specific practices of the students. After the preliminary research phase, the consultant was also hired for filling the curriculum, organizing the course and playing a part as a core lecturer.

**Termination.** After the project was finished, the consultant got involved in the implementation as one of the core teachers. The consultant has the role of a consulting professor and a writer of management books. These kinds of projects can give access to other assignments for the sole practitioner.
6.3.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS

In this case it is interesting to see that both the client and the consultant tend to focus on the entry phase of the project and the reasons for getting the assignment (table 7). Both respondents emphasize expertise and reputation as the striking characteristics in successfully obtaining and completing the project.

### TABLE 7
Answers given by respondents in free association (case 3: educational program development)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (soccer association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What factors related to your characteristics gave opportunity to influence the behavior of stakeholders within the change project?</td>
<td>What factors related to the management consultant’s characteristics contributed to the implementation of the change project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My personal reputation and network is important for getting assignments like these, ninety percent of our assignments come from the consultants network. In this case the consultant worked with the client organization before.” (=consultant reputation)</td>
<td>“We choose a certain consultant not only for their expertise, but also based on earlier experiences with this consultant or experiences form network partners with this consultant.” (=consulting expert power/ consultant reputation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We understand the dynamics of the business of professional soccer better than other candidates: pressure to achieve, short term policy, ad hoc, media exposure. All factors that hinder learning and we focused on getting over these problems.” (=sport expert power)</td>
<td>“We never hire a consultancy firm, but always a person. Especially when the project can be a part of a long-lasting relationship between client and consultant. Shared values, knowledge of the market, and experience in these kinds of projects are most important.” (=consultant reputation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am experienced in developing educations in other sport professions. The mix between educational experience and sport experience was crucial.” (=consulting expert power)</td>
<td>“For larger (research) projects we don’t want to be too much dependent on one person. For smaller projects we tend to hire smaller firms for their personal and flexible approach.” (=firm/consultant reputation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The management consultant respondent and the client organization respondent both agree at most power bases within this case description. They both bring forward interesting specifications. The consultant brings forward that for larger firms the firm reputation plays an important role and that for a small firm the consultants’ reputation attributes more to the power position of the consultant. The young management consultant also brings forward that clothing and behaving a bit more formal helps in creating a power position by the means of status symbols. Another interesting point is that the consultant understanding the sport industry is a must, but also that management knowledge might be less important than in other businesses. Both the consultant and the client respondent bring forward the importance of getting along personally (table 8).
### TABLE 8

**Answers given by respondents in structured questions (case 3: educational program development)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent (soccer association)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport expert power (H1a)</td>
<td>Yes. Knowledge on the sport industry is important because of the complexity of this industry.</td>
<td>Yes. Understanding the sport network and organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting expert power (H1b)</td>
<td>No. Management knowledge is less important in sport organizations than in business.</td>
<td>Yes. Showed expertise in other assignments is important for gaining support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal power (H2)</td>
<td>Yes. Being a nice person as a consultant helps establishing a personal connection. In sports, especially enthusiasm works.</td>
<td>Personal power (H2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
<td>Yes. Image and size of the consultancy firm build reputation.</td>
<td>Firm reputation (H3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
<td>Yes. Personal reputation is especially important for a small firm or a sole practitioner.</td>
<td>Consultant reputation (H4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
<td>Yes. For a young consultant a bit formal clothes help. Yes. Sport organizations do not like a very expensive car and do not charge too much for one hour.</td>
<td>Status symbols (H5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network power (H6)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means for exchange (H7)</td>
<td>Yes. Time as a mean for exchange, the consultant is hired to work out certain documents.</td>
<td>Yes. Bringing in contacts for the organization of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback power (H8)</td>
<td>Yes. Feedback is important in handling resistance to change.</td>
<td>Yes. Sharing knowledge with the clubs within the project, resulting in satisfied customers for the client.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abilities</th>
<th>Management consultant respondent</th>
<th>Client organization respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General consulting skills (H9)</td>
<td>Yes. Finding the right role and the real question. Yes. Analytical skills and communication skills. Yes. Political skills also play a small part.</td>
<td>General consulting skills (H9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abilities</td>
<td>Yes. Showing sincere involvement with the client organization and other stakeholders. Yes. Building trust and investing in long term relationship. Yes. Flexibility and client centered focus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter: 6. Results
6.3.3 CASE SUMMARY

In this case the expertise and reputation are considered most important by both respondents. Again, the consultant stresses the importance of sport expertise: ‘Flows of money, who knows who, interests of organization, sport content, these are difficult to understand and this is something that requires a lot of experience’. For the consultant his background in education was also important in this specific assignment. He also declares that business knowledge is less important in the sports industry than in other industries. The respondent from the NSO clearly does not agree with this viewpoint.

For establishing a personal connection some specific cultural aspects come forward. In sports it helps to being updated in the latest sport developments, being an enthusiastic person and being nice and fun to be with. Both respondents have similar viewpoints on this power base.

Firm reputation is less relevant for small consultancy firms. The consultant points out that the status of a small consultancy firm is dependent on the consultant’s reputation working for this firm. The NSO principal discussed the importance of a background in active sports: ‘a background as an athlete could be a disadvantage because when we enter higher policy levels in sports, these athletes might be taken less seriously’. The consultant’s reputation should come from a relevant track record in sport projects. ‘Personal contacts and my reputation within the sport industry helped me in getting this assignment and to get support from the people involved,’ which also emphasizes the importance of a strong network.

The consultant said that he really thought over his use of status symbols as a junior consultant. In his clothing, choice of car, and watch, he tries to create the optimal amount of distance with members of the client organization. The price could also be a status symbol for consultants: ‘In sports it is better to use a lower price an hour and write some extra hours than to charge high costs’. This confirms the image that people from sport do not like overuse of status symbols.

The consultant tries to use means for exchange for obtaining future assignments: ‘After creating the curriculum, it seemed logical that my partner would be hired for execution of some of these lessons’. Within this case the consultant was hired just for writing a report, because the client organization lacks time. Time and knowledge are important means for exchange, and therefore power bases for the management consultant.

Although the consultant uses feedback for handling resistance for change, feedback power is not considered very important within this case. Once more, the general consulting skills are recognized as abilities contributing to the power position of the consultant.
7. DISCUSSION

"The truth is never exactly how you thought it would be."

Johan Cruijff
legendary soccer player and coach

In the first paragraph of this chapter conclusions are drawn on the nine hypothesis. This results in theoretical implications of this study, and answering the research question. In the later paragraphs the practical implications and limitations of this research are discussed.

7.1 CONCLUSION

Organizational politics exist in every organization and are especially involved in change projects (Cobb & Margulies, 1981). Consultants can use several power resources (Pettigrew, 1975), but it is also known that the more power is used, the more opposition the consultant will encounter. The consultants’ power bases add to the acceptability of influencing tactics and actually reduce the perception of the use of organizational politics (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). The consultants’ power bases help the consultants to obtain assignments and reduce resistance to change, raising the chances of successful completion of change projects.

The three case studies give an illuminating insight in the way power bases contribute to the power position of management consultants within change projects involving NSOs. In the open questions of the interviews almost all power bases are mentioned to be important in one or more cases for enhancing the power position of the management consultant. The respondents recognized most of the power bases in the structured questions, underscoring that the concept of consulting power plays a role in sport consulting projects just as well as in other businesses.

Although all hypotheses are confirmed to play a role within one or more cases, they do not come forward in all three cases. The characteristics of the three cases indicates that there are differences in the importance of the various power bases, due to the nature of the project. For the management consultant working in the sport business, there are two important kinds of consultancy projects: (1) the internally focused change project and (2) the externally focused project.

In change projects aiming for organizational development, the background in business is often important for the NSO. The sport organizations claim to have enough knowledge on sports and they hire consultants for specific business expertise or new viewpoints on their contemporary approaches. In order to gain trust in all parts of the organization, a strong firm reputation or personal reputation can help in gaining a strong power position. The distinctive management consultants’ power bases should be the knowledge of management and the ability to use consulting and reflecting techniques.

For projects with an external focus, for example the subsidized sport development projects, other power bases become important. Here sport expertise and knowledge on sport management become more evident. Understanding specific details within the sport industry is important in the political landscape between all kinds of sport organizations. Because the consultant is often hired for lining up several partners together, a personal
network becomes evident. The sport industry in a country like the Netherlands is quite small and sport specialized consultants have many personal contacts which can be used as a dependency within these projects.

Further, personal power based on a background with sports seems less important than presupposed. The respondents from the NSOs stress that this is often not what the consultant is hired for. The consultant should have a track record in sport consulting, not in other sport functions. A background as an active sportsman or coach might even undermine his power position and credibility. Some affinity with sports could help in developing personal relationships with members from the NSOs and creating support for the project.

Besides the nature of the project, also the role of the consultant, and his or her experience and background influences which power bases are more important within a specific case. These nuances are discussed in further detail in the next section.

7.2 DISCUSSION

The case studies gave insight in the functioning of the power bases of sport business consultants within change projects commissioned by NSOs. Besides searching for confirming or rejecting the several hypothesis, also some nuances and theoretical implications are discussed.

7.2.1 DISCUSSION CONSULTANTS’ ATTRIBUTES

All respondents mention the importance of possessing expertise by the consultant, but there is little consensus on what this expertise should be on. Two kinds of expert power have been examined: (1) sport specific knowledge and (2) management consulting knowledge.

H1a: The more attributed knowledge and expertise in the sport industry, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (sport expert power).

H1b: The more attributed knowledge and expertise in management consulting, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (consulting expert power).

Although the interviewed consultants recognize that their knowledge and available management skills and techniques play a role, they value their expertise within the sport industry higher. This corresponds with the opinion of sport management scholars (Masteralexis, Barr and Hums, 2005; Smith & Stewart, 1999; Westerbeek et al., 2006), who emphasize that the complexity of the sport industry asks for specific expert knowledge. According to these sport management scholars the dynamics of sports are different than the dynamics of other businesses, therefore requiring specialized knowledge. Where the consultants focus on demonstrating sport-specific expertise, the members of the client organization bring forward a contrasting viewpoint. They value the consultant’s experience and expertise in management consulting of sport-specific expertise.

The members of the client organizations bring forward the importance of the process role. The consultant facilitates mutual understanding between the members of the organization on their work, approaches and problems. Lippitt & Lippitt (1979) suggested a distinction between consulting roles on a continuum from more directive to non-directive consulting roles. The sport-specific expertise is focused on the content of the project’s subject, corresponding with more directive expert roles. The experience and expertise in management consulting is focused on process specialist and reflector roles, corresponding with more non-directive roles.

The nature of the project is decisive for the required consulting roles. Specific knowledge on the sport industry becomes more important when the projects have a more external focus, involving several stakeholders from...
various organizations. In the national sport development program it was this knowledge that made it possible to find new ways of cooperation between the different stakeholders. In the more internally focused projects (case 1 and 3), the expertise on change management and consulting were more important according to the respondents.

In spite of the required consulting roles caused by the nature of the project, there is still a systematic over valuation of the sport-specific expertise by the consultants. Although the distinctive expert knowledge on sport management (Smith & Stewart, 1999) is recognized by the members of the NSOs, they emphasize that their organizations possess this sport expert knowledge, and that they hire consultants for consulting expert knowledge.

To conclude, expert knowledge is an important power base for sport business consultants. Sport specific knowledge is useful especially in projects with an external focus involving many stakeholders, change management and consulting expertise is in particular useful in internally focused change projects. There is evidence that sport business consultants not fully realize that they overrate the importance of their sport specific knowledge and underestimate the importance of their expertise on change management and consulting.

**H2: The more attributed affinity with sports, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs, by facilitating the personal client-consultant relationship (personal power).**

Affinity with sports is important for establishing relationships within the client organization. For establishing a strong client-consultant relationship it is important for the consultant to build a relationship of trust (Kubr, 2002). According to Lundberg (2004) the person-focus is important in organizational consultancy. Changes are experiences which are complex and emotionally charged. They bring uncertainty, anxiety, and participants reflect on these perceived contexts. Affinity with sports makes it easier for consultant to establish a personal connection with members of sport organizations, although this is not the only characteristic a personal click is based on.

Enthusiasm is also mentioned as a success factor in sport organizations, where highly energetic people work (Hargreaves, 1987). Advisory in sport organizations and building a relationship with people from sport organizations is easier when a consultant is experienced or trained in sports, speaks the language of sports, and fits in the culture of sport organizations.

In summary, all respondents confirm the importance of a personal click between the consultant and involved members of the client organization. The consultant’s affinity with sports as a facilitator for building a relationship between the client and the consultant. Fitting the culture of sport organizations, being an energetic person, and interests in sports, strengthen the power position of the sport business consultant in sport projects.

**H3: The higher the attributed status of the consultancy firms, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (firm reputation).**

The status of the consultancy firm is not only useful within the acquisition phase of the project, but also forms a power base of the consultant during the project. Larger established consultancy firms are associated with quality and reliability (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006), support by these consultants lend the client comfort and security (Kam, 2004). The management task contains a certain amount of uncertainty and consultants play a role in reducing this uncertainty (Fincham, 1999). This reliability is especially important in projects with an internal focus on changing the behavior of members of the client organization and for support from different departments within the client organization.
Summarizing, almost all respondents confirm that the status of the consultancy firm plays a small role in creating a power position for the sport business consultant. For larger firms, the firm’s status helps in acquiring assignments and in creating support for the project within the client organization. For smaller firms, the status of the individual consultants is more important.

**H4:** The higher the attributed status as a consultant in sport projects, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (consultant reputation).

The reputation of the consultant and a relevant track record in sport projects increase the power position of the management consultant. However, both the interviewed consultants and the respondents from the client organizations state that a background as a former athlete or coach has no added value for a sport business consultant. Only when a project is more externally focused or the media plays an important role, this sport background could be added value. In an externally focused project this background could help for the role of figurehead (Wickham, 1999), in an internally focused project in a more professional setting, it could be a disadvantage, could a former top athlete have multiple talents?

Most respondents within the case agree that the reputation as a sport business consultant is valuable for the power position of this consultant. According to Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) larger consultancy firms rely on the status of the consultancy firm for their power position and small firms do not. This theory holds within the sport industry. In smaller firms the consultant reputation is more important. This power base is especially useful in the beginning of the project, for establishing new contacts with various involved stakeholders.

There are no significant differences between sports and regular business within the attribute consultant reputation. Only relevant reputations as a consultant contribute to the power position of the consultant. This is especially important for small consultancy firms and sole practitioners.

**H5:** The more effective use of professional status symbols by consultants, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (status symbols).

Perceived possession of certain knowledge and expertise are essential parts of the consultants claim to professionalism (Kam, 2004). Certain status symbols reflect a professional image, for example clothes, cars, ICT means and the costs connected to a change project. These symbols can increase or reduce distance and form a power position (Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). All respondents from the NSOs agree that sports are a very informal industry, for a consultant it is wise not to dress too formal, because this creates too much distance between consultants and clients.

The junior consultant who had been interviewed in case 3 brings forward that he uses clothes to create more credibility. His senior consulting partner dresses a bit more casual. Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) already found that especially clothes are used for compensation of age by junior consultants. There seems to be an optimum amount of distance by status symbols between the client employees and the consultant, but this distance is sensitive for seniority.

Both the consultants and clients recognize the possibilities for status symbols as a power base and agree that consultants should use this very carefully within the sport industry. This also holds for the use of price mechanisms to create a power position. Except for raising credibility for young consultants, the use of status symbols is not an effective power base within NSOs, due to the informal culture of these sport organizations.

Summarizing, status symbols can raise the distance towards members of the client organization and therefore create a stronger power position. This could especially work for younger consultants. On the other hand consultants can also adjust to the client organization and reduce distance by using less status symbols.
7.2.2 DISCUSSION DEPENDENCIES FROM CONSULTANTS’ RESOURCES

**H6:** The more network contacts within the sport industry valued by members of the client organization, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (network power).

Power derived from the consultant’s network is one of the core power bases within this study. Networks are not only important for getting new assignments, but also for creating dependency and strengthening the relationship with the client.

The nature of the project plays an important role whether network contacts create dependency. In larger projects, often subsidized by the government, focusing on cooperation between institutions, the contacts of the consultant becomes more important. The client organizations confirm the value of this ‘bringing business contacts’ role (Kubr, 2002). The function of network contacts as a power base is not substantially different from other businesses. The only difference is that sport governance form a small community with a dense network. This very specific network is especially valuable for consultants functioning in cross-institution consultancy assignments.

In summary, sports are more and more organized in open network structures, making network power one of the main power bases for management consultants. Both their external network contacts as internal contacts within a larger consultancy firm can be valuable. Network power becomes more important in larger sport development projects with many external stakeholders.

**H7:** The more knowledge or information shared with the client and exchanged for support, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (means for exchange).

The consultants not only share specialist knowledge or information to involve client employees in the projects. Sharing knowledge and the facilitation of sharing knowledge between various client organization members, helps to build trust and support. Further, the consultant sometimes uses this position to get future assignments. With his advice a consultant can create new work for himself.

Another thing, in which a client organization can be dependent of the consultant, is time. Kubr (2002) calls this role providing specialist resources; Greiner & Metzger (1983) mention call it supplement skills of staff and management. Some respondents recognize that this could be a reason for hiring a management consultant, but it is not essential for building a strong power position.

Pettigrew (1975) mentions control over information as one of the main aspects of consultants’ power. Both the NSOs and the consultants within this study do not recognize this aspect as essential within the consultancy projects, but they do confirm that it can play a small role.

**H8:** The more psychological rewards and more negative feedback applied by the consultant, the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (feedback power).

Emans and Van Tuuren (1998) mention sanction power as one of the power bases of a manager towards his employees. This is a power base consultants do not have. Consultants can use this formal power within an organization in an indirect way by getting support from the people with hierarchical power within the organization (Boogens-van Griethuijsen et al., 2006). This support is an attribute that only becomes interesting when the employees of the client organization feel that they will be punished if they do not meet the demands of the consultant. This negative feedback can be used to create a sense of urgency.

In general, it is not the negative feedback that appeals to the sport business consultants and the clients from the NSOs. In order to influence people to change the way they work psychological changes in behavior, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs and values are necessary (French & Raven, 1959). The psychological effect of
positive constructive feedback is recognized by the interviewed members of the NSOs and valued. The consultant can help organizations with reflection by giving feedback on what happens within the organization. This aspect especially plays a role in projects where organizational change is the central objective.

To conclude, a consultant can use both positive and negative feedback to increase their power position within the change project. Not all respondents from the client organizations recognize this power base. The consultants do, but do not value this power base as being essential for their power position, they value feedback more as a consulting skill.

### 7.2.3 DISCUSSION CONSULTANTS’ ABILITIES

**H9:** The better general consulting abilities (persuasive skills, communicative skills, and analytical skills), the stronger the power position of management consultants in change projects within NSOs (political skills).

Boogers-van Griethuijsen et al. (2006) mentions three types of abilities: persuasive skills, communication skills and analytical skills. These three general consulting skills are mentioned in all three cases. The communication skills mentioned in theory by Greiner and Metzger (1983) are sensitive listening, writing ability, presentation skills and intervention skills. In the cases interview techniques, listening and writing skills are mentioned. Both clients and consultants mention the importance of analytical skills. A consultant must have a high quality of objectivity, intense curiosity, conceptual and analytical skills and be able to use inductive reasoning. They must be able to treat every situation and case as if it is new and unique (Greiner & Metzger, 1983).

In the sport industry the role of reflector is mentioned several times. The consultant is able to help the NSO to reflect on their policies and operations and have an objective new viewpoint on the most important subjects. Although political skills and creating support are mentioned several times, the respondents find it hard to specify what they mean by these concepts.

Summarizing, general consulting skills are valued by members of the client organization and attribute power to the consultant. Besides persuasive skills, communicative skills, and analytical skills, also reflective skills are mentioned by both the consultants and members of the NSOs.

### 7.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Power bases of management consultants are a meaningful concept to understand the power position of management consultants’ functioning in the sport industry. This study gives a clear overview of power bases which can help consultants building a stronger power position for acquiring new assignments and gaining support for implementing changes in sport organizations. The three cases show that successful consultants already recognize and use these power mechanisms, although there are some marginal notes.

The case studies in this research showed that there is often a difference in opinion between the consultant and members of the client organization on which power bases were most important within the project. When a sport business consultant is aware of his most valuable power bases, this contributes to successfully implementing changes. A pitfall for sport-specialized consultants is to overrate the importance of their expertise on the sport industry. Often the members of the NSOs value their consulting expertise as more important.

It is important for the consultant to be aware of the nature of the project. Internally focused change projects require different power bases and expertise than externally focused sport development projects. Further, the consultancy firm where the sport business consultant works for, is influential for the power position of the consultant. NSOs recognize this and hire general management firms and small sport-specialized firms for
different kinds of projects. The status of the consultancy firm and the status of the individual consultant are important foundations for the power position of sport business consultants.

The consultants’ status symbols are seldom mentioned in creating a power position. It seems that showing too much status symbols harms the client-consultant relationship. The consultant should have thought about how they want to present and position themselves. A junior consultant could position themselves more formally when they have to, a senior consultant could do the opposite when they want to build a relationship.

Further, this research brings new insights for people from sport organization planning on hiring a management consultant. When searching for a consultant with the right fit with the sport organization and the change project, considering the nature of the project is important. When more directive roles are required, sport-specific expertise is important and contacting small sport-specialized firms seems obvious to do. When more non-directive roles are required and the focus is on changing the internal organization, tendering for general management firms seems the right thing to do.

Sports seem to be an exceptional business in some cases, but often it is just another type of market on which consultants have to prepare themselves. The concept of power bases helps the consultant understanding which types of power he or she could utilize. It helps the client sport organization in more effectively consideration on which to consultant fits the specific project.

7.4 LIMITATIONS

The strength of this research lies in the fact that both the client and the consultant within the same case contributed to give a better insight in this phenomenon. This brings forward the possibility of checking opposing opinions, from both the client and the consultant perspective, on the same phenomenon. It is hard to find respondents willing to discuss these delicate subjects. In order to gain insight in power bases, in depth interviews are the only data collection method suitable. The number of cases was enough for finding the lateral replication and conclusions towards the hypotheses. The theoretical replication had too little cases to claim empirical evidence for the new contingencies found within sport business consulting.

Further investigation might be useful for finding more evidence on the several contingencies which came forward through the theoretical replication. Especially the nature of the project, needs further investigation. When multiple cases are researched with an external focus involving many stakeholders, do the same power bases come forward empirically distinguishing them from projects with an internal focus?

It would be interesting to further investigate how several power bases are combined with specific influencing styles and tactics such as rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, personal appeals, exchange, assertiveness, sanctions and pressure (Emans, Munduate, Klaver & Van de Vliert, 2003; Yukl & Fable, 1990). Which power bases contribute to the effective use of which influencing styles?

Other topics that are mentioned by respondents are agenda setting, creating support and political skills. It would merit further investigation into the relationship between several power bases and specific political aspects of organizational change. It would be interesting to strive for different research methodologies to gain further insight on this topic, like observations during interventions and meetings. This could lead to even more reliable results.

The power and politics perspective is very useful in a highly political environment like the sport industry. The study of consultants’ power bases and influencing tactics may enlarge our understanding of the specific dynamics of the sport industry and organizational politics in general. This study on the consultant’s power bases is a first start in examining this interesting subject.


### TABLE 9
Types of consulting organizations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. IT-advisory</td>
<td>3. Information technology and e-business consultancies</td>
<td>3. Functionally specialized firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. HRM-advisory</td>
<td>5. Medium-sized generalist and specialist firms</td>
<td>5. Public sector firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Administration and organization</td>
<td>7. Consulting professors</td>
<td>7. Regional and local firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Consulting services of management schools and productivity centers</td>
<td>8. Sole practitioners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Non-traditional suppliers of consulting services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Consulting networks</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 10
Examples of purposes for hiring consultants (based on Kubr, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achieving organizational purposes and objectives</th>
<th>Solving management and business problems</th>
<th>Identifying and seizing new opportunities</th>
<th>Enhancing learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sectoral leadership</td>
<td>Complaining clients</td>
<td>Developing new markets</td>
<td>Technical knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
<td>Poor results</td>
<td>Assessing technologies</td>
<td>Assessing organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Loss of market</td>
<td>Improving quality</td>
<td>Identifying problems and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total quality</td>
<td>Lack of perspective</td>
<td>Developing and motivating staff</td>
<td>Developing improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate excellence</td>
<td>Missed opportunity</td>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>Implementing changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High performance</td>
<td>Reluctance to change</td>
<td>Business contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profitability</td>
<td>High staff turnover</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business results</td>
<td>Lack of cash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Internal conflicts</td>
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