



**ORGANISATIONAL GOVERNANCE:
A PRAXIOGRAPHY OF THREE CRICKET CLUBS
IN LANCASHIRE**

by

Christopher Neil Gunn

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Abstract

Sport governance has provoked much academic and policy interest in recent decades. With claims that voluntary sports clubs (VSCs) are encountering a more challenging environment, and requests for more research into this 'under-theorised' field (King, 2017), an exploratory study of governance was undertaken.

The aim - to develop a critical and comprehensive appreciation of local cricket clubs' governance - was actualised through three qualitative case studies. Observation of practices, interviews with committee members and stakeholders, and scrutiny of documentation generated voluminous qualitative data. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO 12) was utilised to facilitate collation and analysis of data.

Social practice theory (SPT) was adopted as the underpinning conceptual lens. Fused with a critical realist (CR) paradigm, this created an innovative, cogent and supportive theoretical framework. Social practices, when perceived as an entity within the 'real' domain, comprise components such as traditions from previous practices, and associated understandings, values, meanings, ideals and purposes, or what Bhaskar (1989) refers to as 'generative mechanisms'. Manifesting within the 'actual' domain, these underpin and guide performances (Heisserer and Rau, 2015) to create outcomes and effects (the 'empirical' domain). Attention to these different levels of reality (Collier, 1994) and a primary emphasis on practices, as opposed to agentic or structural dimensions, arguably evinced a deeper understanding of governing in this context.

This theoretical framework facilitated elucidation of this complex organisational phenomenon, opening up the 'black box' of governing to reveal contemporary and insightful findings. All cases are sites of a comprehensive bundle of governance practices, comprising a blend of formal, informal and pragmatic activities, perceived as contributory to positive organisational outcomes. Research disclosed unexpected significant homogeneity across the cases, at all levels of reality, including pre-existing and emerging 'conditions' (Sayer, 1999), purposes, processes, and principles of governing and consequences therefrom.

A combination of thematic and in-vivo coding was utilised to develop common key governing activity areas: communicating and engaging with stakeholders; reviewing and

planning and structuring and organising; and addressing finances and facilities. From these, praxis was subsequently conceptualised as domains, summarised in a mnemonic (7F's), aspiring to support practitioners. These domains - fields of action, thought, influence – aim to epitomise the ethos, key activities and purposes of practices and represent those regarded by practitioners and stakeholders as more significant and consequential.

Since presented at several practitioner and academic conferences, the '7F's governance framework' © now forms the basis for a series of online club support workshops delivered by the researcher. Feedback about this model has been extremely positive, bringing Laplume et al.'s (2008) comments, 'a theory that moves us', to mind. Additional empirically informed governance recommendations for practitioners have also been formulated.

Overall, it is believed the original aim has been attained. This research makes novel, compelling and perceptive evidence-based theoretical and practical knowledge contributions. A more nuanced, contemporary and critical appreciation of governing in grassroots sports clubs has been advanced, progressing understanding of how it is performed and to what ends.

The blending of SPT with a CR paradigm is regarded as an appealing theoretical development and a key contribution to knowledge. Researchers should be encouraged from the operationalisation and application of social practice theory: its utility has been demonstrated, within this empirical project, and fusion with critical realism has revealed flexibility, providing illuminating insights for future studies. Proposals for further research are suggested.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Title
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AOB	Any Other Business
ASOIF	Association of Summer Olympic International Federations
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEC	Council of the European Commission
CR	Critical Realism
CS	Case Study
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
EC	Executive Committee
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EGM	Extraordinary General Meeting
EU	European Union
FIFA	Federation of International Football Associations
FRC	Financial Reporting Council
GUs	General Understandings
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ISCA	International Sport and Culture Association
MC	Management Committee
MCC	Marylebone Cricket Club
NGB	National Governing Body
OG	Organisational Governance
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental
PUs	Practical Understandings
SIGA	Sport Integrity Global Alliance
SPT	Social Practice Theory
SRA	Sport and Recreation Alliance
SSIs	Semi-structured Interviews
SU	Strategy Unit
TAS	Teleo-affective structure
UCI	Union Cycliste Internationale
UK	United Kingdom
VC	Vice Chair
VSC	Voluntary Sports Clubs
WADA	World Anti-Doping Agency

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Chapter 1 Introduction

I.1 Introduction and Personal Statement

The initial impetus for this investigation was prompted by concerns emanating from direct personal awareness and experiences of voluntary sports clubs (VSCs). Consummated by preliminary discussions with volunteers in governing roles, their precarious existence became abundantly apparent. Survival often seemed dependent on the dedication and diligence of a small number of volunteers and prudent management of resources and expenditure, reflected in academic literature (Nichols, 2005; Robinson, Minikin and Palmer, 2010; Nichols et al., 2015; Hill, Kerr and Kobayashi, 2019).

Robson (2011) says real world research tends to be initiated by a problem observed which, in this case, related to the expiration of some cricket and sports clubs in my locality. Concerns intensified when a cursory analysis of UK regional press revealed the moribundity of VSCs across various sports, alluded to previously by Nichols (2013). Initial early research into academic, governing body and sport sector literature, produced a slightly contrasting, but also somewhat bleak perspective (ECB, 2009; 2012; Nichols, 2013; SRA, 2013; 2015). Elder-Vass helpfully articulates my position and predicament,

We always have reasons for investigating our topics of interest, and both these reasons and our investigations always depend on prior knowledge of those topics. In the case of social theory this is typically derived from prior experience of the phenomena concerned and exposure to both lay thinking about the topic and the related literature (2015, p.82).

These readings and observations of clubs and their environment seemed compounded by a rather paradoxical set of forces. Successive governments have perceived sport's instrumental value (Coakley and Pike, 2014; Harris and Houlihan, 2016) and sought participation increases. Clubs and governing bodies, as delivery vehicles (Dowling, et al., 2014; Klenk et al., 2017), have been required to modernise and professionalise (Adams, 2011; DCMS, 2012). Heightened administrative and regulatory burdens have ensued (Sam, 2009; Robinson et al., 2010; SRA, 2015). Additionally, 'social shifts' towards more individual or casual forms of participation (Enjolras, 2002; Stenling, 2014) have been complemented by rising costs and increased competition for volunteers and members (SRA, 2013; 2015; Macrae, 2017; Nichols and James, 2017).

These circumstances, in combination, have created almost a perfect storm for many local sports clubs. If they, and their volunteers, are unable to address these more complex, competitive and demanding times (Skille, 2008; 2010; Sam, 2009; Adams, 2011; Vamplew, 2016), it is likely more will expire, reducing participation opportunities in the process and jeopardising achievement of government policy targets.

Adams (2011), Reid (2012) and Kay (2013), however, remark on VSCs' durable, resilient qualities with others observing the longevity of some (SRA, 2013; 2015; 2018; Davies and Light, 2015; Ibsen et al., 2016; Nichols and James, 2017). Notwithstanding, while a number of clubs seem to have prospered, others have struggled or expired (SRA, 2013; 2015; Auld, 2018), leading to speculation about explanations for this outcome and a personal desire to try and help, if possible. It is contended this significant organisational form does not always receive the recognition or support perhaps merited.

Organisational (sport) governance (OG) has been advocated as a potential mechanism to alleviate some of these encountered pressures. Many have espoused its cruciality to an organisation's effective and efficient operation, reputation, sustainability and perpetuity (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; DCMS 2015; Kirkeby, 2016; Sport England/UK Sport, 2016; Sport England 2019; Bradbury and O'Boyle, 2017; King 2017). A salient and fertile field for academic and professional research in recent years, OG has become a 'central issue for the sector' (Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald, 2009, p.246), and relevant to all sports organisations (Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald, 2005; Kirkeby, 2016; Sport England/UK Sport, 2016). Increased political, stakeholder and academic interest in the sport sector, owing partly to frequent revelations of corrupt and unethical practices (Pielke, 2013; DCMS, 2015; Transparency International, 2016; Kihl, Skinner and Engelberg, 2017), has produced myriad prescriptive governance codes (Chappelet and Mrkonjic, 2013; Chappelet, 2018; Parent and Hoye, 2018; Walters and Tacon, 2018). Their impact upon praxis, however, has been questioned (Smallman, 2007; Parent and Hoye, *ibid.*).

Much academic governance literature has focused on the corporate or national/international context (Lowther et al., 2016; Tacon and Walters, 2016). Given the numerous (good) governance codes by governing bodies across the UK (and the world), the dearth of domestic organisational grassroots governance research is somewhat surprising. Many call for greater attention to this sector (Hoye and Inglis, 2003; Robinson

and Palmer, 2010; Dowling et al., 2014; Hill, et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017; Walters and Tacon, 2018). Lowther et al. concur, saying 'true grassroots clubs do not seem to be accounted for in a realistic and practical way in current [sport] governance arrangements' (2016, p.81) while Hill et al. (2016; 2019) contend much governance research has neglected the local perspective.

There is also some personal scepticism of the applicability, suitability, and relevance of some prescriptive governance codes to volunteer-run sports organisations, supported by others (Tottman and Larsen, 2013; Hill et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017), especially when those volunteers are often compromised by additional demands (Slack, 1985; Taylor et al., 2003; Robinson and Palmer, 2010).

Thus, there seems a gap between the very corporate-centric publications and prescriptive suggestions of governance codes and the 'kitchen-table' or 'executive office' (Kikulis, 2000; Auld, 2018) portrayal of sports organisations, with claims that VSCs very much orient towards the former (Hill et al., 2019) and national organisations the latter (Kikulis, *ibid.*; Auld, *ibid.*). Hoye and Inglis (2003) and Tacon and Walters (2016) cite previous research that has been critical and deprecatory of the management and governance practices within voluntary organisations for its traditionally cumbersome, haphazard or outdated nature (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Hoye et al., 2006; Robinson and Palmer, 2010). Bradbury and O'Boyle (2013) allege improvement is needed, to be fit for purpose, in the current environment, alluded to previously (DCMS/SU, 2002; DCMS, 2012). Recent personal interactions with sports clubs, however, has revealed many seem more 'professional' and more 'business-like'. So, perhaps a more nuanced, and hybridised understanding of VSCs and their governance is required. Hence, the research intends to draw attention to contemporary governing in VSCs, focusing on their activities, seeking to reconcile this schism between perceptions, theory, and practice, deriving new knowledge in the process.

Kirkeby (2016, p.88) argues 'governance is a topic ... equally important for the grassroots sport sector, as a prerequisite for organisational legitimacy, autonomy and – ultimately – survival' and performance (O'Boyle, Shilbury and Ferkins, 2019). Yet, a recent scoping review of sport governance literature by Dowling, Leopkey and Smith (2018) identified little research into governance within the context of local cricket clubs. The latter call for

more studies of the voluntary sport sector, suggesting this 'could provide fertile grounds for future research' (ibid., p.447). This thesis intends to address the above and lend weight to these perspectives.

Together, these circumstances led to several questions, concerning how VSCs are governed, what they do when governing and how best might empirical evidence of this be gathered. Research may potentially shed light on why some clubs are surviving and seemingly prospering. Such knowledge could have value and utility for other clubs and their practitioners (Golsorkhi, et al., 2014; Feldman and Worline, 2016). Furthermore, why is the local picture somewhat neglected, especially when successive governments have viewed their contribution to raising sport participation and other externalities as substantive. Consequently, it is argued this research is needed, timely and prescient.

It is these circumstances and questions that have formed the basis and inspiration for this thesis, culminating in development of a research aim and objectives.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the research is *to develop a critical and comprehensive appreciation of local cricket clubs' governance*. This will be achieved through a critical, empirical, and theoretical exploration and analysis of clubs' practice and praxis, aspiring to make theoretical and practical knowledge contributions.

Based on the context and aim, the following objectives have been devised:

1. Critically explore the nature of, and relations between, situated governance practice and praxis, and how these are enacted, in three case studies;
2. Critically analyse governance practices and praxis, identifying examples considered consequential to the organisation and the outcomes sought;
3. Critically evaluate SPT as a conceptual lens and its utility within the context of organisational governance, making suggestions for theoretical development;
4. Devise a framework that encapsulates the focus of governing practice and praxis;
5. Make governance practice and praxis recommendations to other cricket clubs.

I.3 Theoretical underpinnings

Recently there has been discernible growing application of social practice theory (SPT) to various social and organisational phenomena, begetting beneficial empirical and epistemological outcomes (Rivera and Cox, 2014; Lequesne, 2015; Hui et al., 2017). Having been criticised for reliance upon a limited theoretical range (Smallman, 2007; King, 2017; O'Boyle, 2017), often producing partial and narrow analyses, it is suggested OG research could equally prosper from this (re)turn to practice (Schatzki, 2001; Raelin, 2011; Lammi, 2018). There are justifiable calls for academic innovation and expansion in this field (King, *ibid.*) with some advocating SPT (Smallman, 2007; Ahrens, Chapman and Khalifa, 2010; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015).

Given the intention to focus on human action, social practice theory is adopted as a conceivably apposite and conducive theoretical partner and prism. Presupposing the primacy of practices within situated contexts, the role of practitioners and their environments are also acknowledged (Reckwitz, 2002; Hargreaves, 2011; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018; Liuberte, 2018). Allowing close scrutiny of what practitioners actually do and the processes (Whittington, 2006; Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015) when governing clubs, it is contended a practice orientation¹, is better suited to more accurately describe and explain complex social action than traditional individualistic or institutional analyses, furnishing a more relational, subjective and all-encompassing analysis (Heisserer and Rau, *ibid.*; Blue et al., 2016; Liuberte, 2018). As Whittington says, SPT 'responds well to the realities reported back from the field' (2011, p. 184). Additionally, at the time of writing, there is no known evidence of this combination of the application of SPT to this context and organisational phenomenon; therefore, it represents a novel, original and innovative approach.

Schatzkian practice concepts have been adopted but are supplemented and coalesced with those from Nicolini (2012) and Whittington (2006) to generate a flexible, comprehensive theoretical framework. Nicolini contends, practice theories 'question how such practices are performed, and how such connected practices make a difference' (2012, p.8).

¹ Nicolini (2017) refers to a practice orientation as an approach whereby practices as the primary focus and unit of research and analysis.

Furthermore, this practice orientation² reveals the bundles of governance practices within each site, including those perceived as done well and consequential to the organisation (Barnes 2001; Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007).

Social practice theory, as a philosophical, conceptual and methodological package (Nicolini, 2017), therefore seems to offer much towards achievement of the research aim and objectives.

1.4 Research paradigm and methods

The aim and objectives, and the underpinning theoretical framework, require a suitably commensurate and facilitative research paradigm and strategy (Hallebone and Priest, 2009). It is proposed critical realism (CR) provides such, furnishing capacity to reveal how and why something occurs (Byers et al., 2021).

CR perceives the social world as an 'open system' (Bhaskar, 1989, Sayer, 1999): a dynamic world in flux, whereby an external reality exists independent of actors (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 1999) whose senses are fallible (Bhaskar, 1989) and experiences of this reality are subjective. This implies knowledge of reality is always incomplete, relative, and fluid (Collier, 1994; Maxwell, 2012).

Reality is conceptualised as stratified or layered, comprising unobservable, deeper mechanisms and underlying structures that influence, but do not determine, the social (transitive) dimension: actual events and empirical perceptions and effects. This suggests potential to accommodate both practice-as-performance and practice-as-entity, along with other generative mechanisms and forces, that may facilitate or restrict performances, including scope for agency (Whittington, 2006; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015; Garcia, 2018). Reality occurs at the nexus of agency and structure with potential for transformative implications to all elements (Bhaskar, 1989; Easterby-Smith et al, 2012).

This consideration and understanding of all levels of reality (Bhaskar, 1994; Blaikie, 2007), and how these various elements and conditions (Sayer, 1999) dynamically interact to produce events and outcomes, can provide an explanatory dimension (Byers et al., 2021) through abductive and retroductive processes (Danermark, et al., 2002; Ackroyd, 2010;

² Nicolini (2017, p.31) also argues a practice orientation '... is a sociological project that promises to offer a better understanding of social phenomena by re-specifying in terms of practices and their associations'.

O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). This explanatory potential, a perceived advantage of a CR paradigm, combined with capacity to account for stability and/or change in practices (Maller, 2012) -'structural elaboration' (Archer, 2010; Robson, 2011) - can beget novel, more conclusive or realistic insights (Ackroyd, 2010; Robson, 2011; Elder-Vass, 2015, Byers, et al., 2021).

CR's objectivist ontological orientation but subjectivist and relativist epistemological thread (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2012; Byers et al., 2021) infers understanding (verstehen) rather than prediction (erklaren) is sought. This steers research towards qualitative data which can furnish in-depth knowledge of the geo-historical context and inherent structures (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Cresswell and Poth, 2018); the importance of which seem shared by SPT and CR thinkers (see chapters three and four respectively). Hence, SPT fused with a CR research paradigm arguably creates a cogent, malleable, and facilitative conceptual and methodological framework for the thesis and possibly future research endeavours.

1.4.1 Research Strategy and Design

The thesis adopted an exploratory qualitative cross-case study strategy and design. It is argued that this approach, quite prevalent in sport and organisation-based research, accommodates the aim, context and subject matter. As Silverman contends, it permits investigation of the 'whats' and 'hows' of lived experience and enables the exploration of circumstances and situations that 'escape the gaze of quantitative research' (2013, p.87).

Case studies are deemed effective for enabling better understanding of organisational processes and complex social phenomena (Merriam, 1998; Opie, 2007; Yin 2018) 'in their real-life contexts' and 'can tease out the ways in which particular settings shape social processes (Small 2009b)' as cited in Tacon (2019, p.886). Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010) argue case studies, grounded in people's experiences and practices, are strong in reality, more persuasive, and offer potential for wider relevance and application. Furthermore, a multiple case study approach, enabling scrutiny of what was done and why and, thus a deeper understanding of practice in each site (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), allows comparisons and contrasts to be drawn across cases (Merriam, 1998; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014).

I.4.2 Research Methods

Quite common among SPT and CR researchers is a blending of various qualitative research methods, allowing triangulation of data and checking of meaning across different sources (Byers, 2013; Smith and Elger, 2014; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018; Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021). Group and one to one semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis have been utilised to allow close attention to the setting, practices, and practitioners (Flick 2014; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). These research methods proved successful in procuring voluminous rich and thick qualitative data from a purposive sample (Oliver, 2006; King and Horrocks, 2010; Walters and Tacon, 2010). Data were securely stored and analysed with the support of CAQDAS³ (NVIVO12) (Woolf and Silver, 2017; Jackson and Bazeley, 2019).

I.4.3 Sample Choice and Rationale

Cricket clubs have been chosen as a sample and research context for several reasons. Firstly, as Dowling et al.'s (2018) research demonstrated there has been little academic research into cricket and its governance, particularly at the local club level (Hill et al., 2016). Secondly, governance within cricket has encountered enduring criticism from journalists, authors, politicians and stakeholders; albeit typically directed at certain historical clubs or the sport's various governing bodies (see 2.2.4). Thirdly, while there are numerous cricket clubs in Lancashire, the three selected was partly because of their geographical diffusion, accessibility, reputation, size and age which, in combination, implies potentially rich research sites.

These clubs are sufficiently widely dispersed to suggest independence from one another in various senses. For example, although it is acknowledged they are all affiliated to the same national and county governing bodies, they do not look to draw members, players or sponsors from the same catchment area and all play in different competitions⁴. Geographically, Club A is located within an affluent coastal town and having an older demographic than the other cases (Lancashire County Council, 2019; Fylde Council, 2019). Club B is positioned close to the centre of a market town, while Club C's home is within the

³ Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

⁴ This changed during the course of the study – after the primary data collection phase. Club C moved to play in the semi-professional league which also contained Club B.

suburbs of a city (estimated population of over 130,000 [Lancashire County Council, 2019]). The latter two have more indicators of deprivation than Club A (Consumer Data Research Centre, 2019). It was felt these local material and contextual differences (Wicker and Breuer, 2015) could impact governance practices.

Accessibility and a willingness to participate were factors influencing choice: all sites are located within five and twenty-five miles from the researcher, with good transport links, and signified their consent to involvement in the research. Additionally, each club has a positive image within both the cricket and local community and had attained Clubmark status several years earlier (Cutt, 2018). This, along with their hundred year plus existence, inferring established traditions of organisational governance processes, suggested positive opportunities to investigate the phenomenon of interest within real world settings (Yin, 2018). Notably, however, the cases also diverge on various metrics, including the number of sports offered, committee and membership size, and income, inferring potential for heterogeneity in governance activities and processes which could also be of interest.

Initial preparatory investigations confirmed each club's structural governance arrangements, including existence of a committee and subcommittees that meet on a regular basis. This would facilitate observation of, and interview with, persons who conduct governing practices and have knowledge and experience of the subject matter (Carter and Little, 2007). In combination, this implied potential to further understanding of both how and why in each context (Bishop, 2012; Yin, 2018), addressing research objectives. Similarly, following Coule (2015), the cases were selected partly based on their potential to illuminate the organisational phenomenon of interest, knowing that there would be sufficient opportunity to research governance practice in these sites. In essence it was assumed these organisations would offer more valuable learning opportunities.

In hindsight it may have been enlightening to include a fourth 'critical' case (Rolland and Herstad, 2000), producing alternative or contrasting perspectives. This, however, would have caused logistical, time and data volume difficulties. Nonetheless, it was felt a focus on the three selected, with their positive reputations, longevity, and recent evidence of growth, may furnish stronger indications of effective governance practices; this being the preeminent rationale for their selection, given the strong desire to evince knowledge that could be of value to other practitioners and clubs. The sites' similarities and differences

might reveal some commonalities that can be drawn across the cases (Bishop, 2012), while also acknowledging situational idiosyncrasies (Yin, 2018). It was anticipated that an in-depth scrutiny of these three sites may uncover new insights into governance within grassroots sport, affording some generalization to other similar concrete contexts (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). A multiple case study research design is argued to be more robust, producing evidence that is more compelling with potential for practical and theoretical development (Yin, *ibid.*). As alluded to, in turn, this study could prove insightful for practitioners of similar organisations, addressing another of the research objectives.

1.5 Significance and contribution to knowledge

This thesis is of significance and contributes to the field for the following reasons.

Firstly, governance has rarely been studied within the context of grassroots sport (Hill et al., 2016; 2019): the sector is under-researched and under-theorised (King, 2017). There are no known instances of such studies with this specific focus in England. New insights are provided, including a model of governance with specific recommendations for practitioners (see 7.3.2).

Secondly, the application of SPT to governance remains a rarer academic occurrence and typically apparent within the corporate sphere. SPT has allowed close focus on the act of governing (Ahrens, et al., 2010) which, combined with data from primary and secondary sources, has generated comprehensive empirical evidence of praxis in this context. Overall, this suggests the suitability of SPT for studying this phenomenon. Additionally, application of SPT within the voluntary sport sector brings a less researched field (King, 2017) into practice theorists' arena.

Furthermore, the blending of SPT and CR, particularly the models of Bhaskar, Sayer and Archer suggests innovation, being potentially theoretically and empirically illuminating. It is contended this conjoining of both theory (SPT) and paradigm (CR) has created a new conceptual framework (see table 4.5) and avenue for future empirical studies of organisations or social phenomena. This, at the time of writing, having not been attempted previously in empirical research, and especially in this field and context, bestows guidance for researchers.

The purpose of the study - to investigate governance and governing praxis within local sports clubs to identify empirical evidence to develop theoretical and practical knowledge

- may also be of much interest to other researchers and practitioners: there being no known similar studies conducted in the UK. While the heterogeneity of the voluntary sport sector is recognised (May, Harris and Collins, 2013), there is potential for some transferable generalisation to other similar organisations, given the similarities of findings from the cases investigated and the practice descriptions provided (Merriam, 1998; Greene, 2010). From a practitioner perspective, the study provides valuable insights into VSC governance. There is extensive depiction and illustration of how each case enacts governance, including the processes and underpinning principles, motivations, procedures, and purposes.

Each site comprises a comprehensive bundle of governing practices. Headed by an ultimate decision-making body (committee), and supported by various subcommittees, committees were found to comprise loyal, reflexive, and purposeful, complementarily skilled agents who execute and sustain practices. Very evident were shared understandings, across all cases, with praxis operating within ethically informed acceptable rules and parameters. Traditions were acknowledged but also with recognition of the need for change, owing to internal and external pressures.

A slightly unexpected research finding was the homogeneity of clubs' practices and praxis, and their associated sought outcomes, evident within both the actual and empirical levels of reality. These have been conceptualised as governance domains and formulated into a mnemonic for practitioners: the 7F's framework (see 7.3.2). Addressed in all meetings, finances were a constant topic supported by a more proactive approach to fundraising, either through regular social events or applications for funding and grants. In turn this enabled the ongoing development of facilities (playing and social) which was highly prevalent in all cases and informed by stakeholders. Additionally, clubs had eschewed any traditions of parochialism or insularity, adopting a more outward facing, responsive and inclusive orientation; this being particularly evident in the diverse range of social activities now undertaken. This approach was also visible in the attention to a future vision and aims. All invest heavily in junior teams and infrastructures, ensuring a throughput of players, coaches and officials, gaining formal external recognition for their efforts. The facilitative and flexible approach to governing, involving regular communication with, and expedient responses to, stakeholders combined with facility improvement seems to have led to high levels of member satisfaction. Governance and committee members were lauded and complimented with evidence of membership revenue growth in recent years. New

programmes and services, combined with a friendly and family-oriented ethos, may also have contributed to this outcome.

Together, these F's seem to encapsulate the more intensive foci of governing praxis and are regarded by interviewees as significant and consequential to the organisation and its survival. This framework is considered particularly insightful and comparatively memorable, summarising those activities and associated principles and ends around which practices and practitioners seemed to cohere.

It is proposed this study differs from much extant governance research. Rather than concentrating on prescribing principles (of good governance), it has produced descriptions of actual praxis and guidance for practitioners, indication of the ends sought, and the means used to procure their achievement. Further recommendations to practitioners are summarised and included (see 7.3.2).

1.6 Chapter Structure

Chapter two discusses the nature and significance of grassroots sports clubs and the current environment, including a specific focus on sport governance. It concludes VSCs, and the governance thereof, are comparatively under-researched and under-theorised with a need for further studies to address knowledge gaps (Hill et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017).

Chapter three demonstrates how application of social practice theory (SPT) to OG could be multifariously illuminative, being particularly suited to exploratory organisation-centric research into the processual and prosaic. It examines and critically appraises philosophical and empirical SPT literature, contending that, while not without limitations, it offers conducive and valuable conceptual resources, overcoming some apparent deficiencies of previous theoretical approaches (Smallman, 2007). SPT, potentially providing a more nuanced and extensive understanding of this world and the governing praxis therein, is summarised to provide the beginnings of a conceptual framework to effect subsequent theoretical scrutiny and analysis.

Chapter four aims to explicate and justify the research paradigm and methodology. It contends critical realism (CR) can be synthesised with SPT's philosophical assumptions to generate a cogent and coherent methodology. It also suggests a qualitative cross-case study research strategy and design provides a commensurable and socially scientific

means to accomplish the project's objectives. A theory of logic is proposed along with congruent data collection methods which correspond with methodological orientations and the research aim (Bryman, 2012). Chapter four then critically describes the individual data collection methods utilised and the means of data storage, organisation, and analysis (NVIVO12). Coding strategies are also discussed along with sampling decisions and ethical considerations, aspiring to ensure the entire research process is systematic, transparent, and rigorous (Meyers and Sylvester, 2006; Silverman, 2008).

Chapter five presents the primary research findings for each case study. Key elements of each club's recent history, governance practice and governing praxis are described, abducting apparent similarities across sites (Downward, 2005) and identifying subtle differences. Common structural mechanisms are also denoted, including traditions and wider contextual, material factors. These mechanisms begin to suggest reasons for structural elaborations which, along with the shared sought purposes and outcomes of governing praxis, provide a clearer and more comprehensive insight into governance and governing in this field. Additionally, central themes materialise, around which practices, practitioners and praxis coalesce.

Chapter six applies the conceptual framework devised earlier (chapters three and four) to elucidate and critically analyse findings. Abductive and retroductive analysis and discussion of the findings, evaluating their significance in relation to extant VSC and governance literature and knowledge, provides coherence and an explanatory dimension to the study. Consideration of influential mechanisms within the 'real', intransitive domain and attention to the 'actual' domain revealed significant convergence across the cases (Kesslet and Bach, 2014). This was a little surprising, given the traditional heterogeneous portrayal of the sector (May et al., 2013).

Chapter seven draws together the entire thesis, revisiting the research aim and objectives. Claims are made for contributions to theoretical knowledge. There is critical evaluation of the conceptual framework with suggestions for theoretical development. Claims for practical knowledge are also presented, incorporating a practitioners' governance framework (7F's) and recommendations for other clubs' governance. Axiological elements and limitations are acknowledged with proposals for future research endeavours.

Chapter 2 Voluntary Sports Clubs & Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the significance, nature and relevance of grassroots sports clubs and the current environment, accommodating macro, meso and micro perspectives. It includes specific focus on sports governance: a topic of increasing political and academic attention and scrutiny in recent decades (Green and Houlihan, 2006; Adams, 2011; Auld, 2018; O'Boyle, et al., 2019). Despite the proliferation of prescriptive good governance codes, there has been limited research into local clubs' governance (Hill, et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017). The acronym VSC will be adopted henceforth, partly owing to its prevalence within UK literature. Also, it reminds that the focus is the local form of sports organisation, perceived as having comparatively modest incomes and informal structures⁵ these being assumed as lower and less defined as specified (Harris, Mori and Collins 2009; May, Harris and Collins 2013; Vamplew; 2013; Doherty, Misener and Cuskelly, 2014; Auld, 2018), than regional, national or international non-profit sports bodies, often the focus of academic research (Lowther et al., 2016; Hill, et al., 2019).

2.2 Significance of grassroots VSCs

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

Nelson Mandela's quote alludes to sport's alleged numerous positive externalities. Others profess sport's potential for benefits upon individuals and communities (Burgess and Bingley, 2013; Vamplew, 2013; Sherry, Schulenkorf and Phillips, 2016; Robertson, Eime and Westerbeek, 2018). ISCA offer similar support, referring to grassroots sport as 'traditionally organised within voluntary sport associations, mainly small, local sports clubs, where members join a local community hence generating cooperation and collective initiatives and sense of ownership' (2013, p.10).

⁵ Various authors comment on the lower levels on income generated within VSCs and assert management and operations are typified by a more ad hoc or casual arrangement, owing partly to their reliance on voluntary labour, when compared to sports organisations within the public or commercial sectors

Vamplew (2013) estimates sports clubs comprise 40% of the British voluntary sector. This connotes not only their proliferation, but also the instrumental significance of local, amateur VSCs in sport provision: its 'lifeblood' says Hill (2002, p.130), citing a House of Lords report (1973). Many others proffer comparable assessments (DCMS, 2000; DCMS/SU, 2002; Watt, 2003; Sport England, 2008; Vamplew; 2013; Coates, et al., 2014; Filo, Cuskelly and Wicker, 2015; Auld, 2018). The corpus of VSC oriented academic literature has blossomed considerably, in recent years, perhaps indicating further the increasing salience of this 'highly valuable context' (Tacon, 2019).

Thus, it seems these ubiquitous institutions are key drivers of sports participation: crucial to playing, volunteering, social association, competition and personal development opportunities (Houlihan and White, 2002; Taylor et al., 2003; Nichols, 2005; Sport England, 2008; Koutrou and Kohe, 2021). They contribute considerably to sport delivery and government social policy (Misener and Doherty, 2009; Harris et al; 2009; Skille, 2010; Hoyer et al., 2011; Macrae, 2017; Robertson, et al., 2018). There also appears some consensus among academic, political and sports communities regarding their historical, sociocultural and economic significance (Allison, 2001; DCMS/SU, 2002; Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Council of the European Commission, 2007; Nichols and James, 2017; Auld, 2018; Robertson et al., *ibid.*).

Yet, while much academic and policy literature lauds VSCs, countervailing perspectives exist. Watt (2003) refers to the dangers of hegemonic small, powerful, and introverted cliques or individuals. Pitchford and Colman (2009) observe historically gender-restricted orientations, as do Kay (2013) and Tacon (2019). Vamplew (2016) mentions multifarious progressive outputs, but also recognises traditions of social insularity and exclusivity which chimes with Coalter's (2007) argument: clubs can act as the preserve of dominant classes and hinder 'bridging' social capital. So, collectively, traditions of membership restricted to exclusive groups (Maxwell, et al., 2013), or 'closed systems' (Stone, 2012), the promotion of anachronistic, unethical or inequitable practices and values (Coalter, 2007; Stone, *ibid.*; Kitchin and Howe, 2013; Grix, 2016), suggest VSCs are a contested phenomenon. These concerns were reinforced by Spaaij, Knoppers and Jeanes (2020) in their recent research into diversity within Australian VSCs.

Similar criticisms and disparaging claims have also been made of cricket clubs (Malcolm, 2002; Major, 2007; Stone, 2012). They are particularly conspicuous in CLR James' (2005) sociologically and politically informed critiques, observing membership was contingent upon social class and occupation. Birley's (1999) fastidiously researched '*Social History of English Cricket*' and Lewis's (1987) apologetic '*Double Century: The History of MCC and Cricket*' provide further condemnatory examples and evidence. Davies and Light (2015) offer similar analysis, but then also identify the formation and growth of democratic and socially inclusive clubs in the late 19th century.

Hence, for the purposes of this research, it will be considered VSCs are a highly significant institutional form, offering rich potential for investigation (Tacon, 2019), owing to their quite unique traditions, idiosyncrasies, and nature. This will be discussed further below.

2.2.1 VSCs: Quantity and Diversity

The SRA (2013) estimate UK VSC numbers around 151,000. Differences, however, in definitions, measuring instruments and the informal and/or unaffiliated nature of many (Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Kay, 2013; Nichols et al., 2015) causes difficulty gauging precise numbers. This hints at their diversity and the polymorphic nature of VSCs (Pitchford and Colman, 2009; Vamplew, 2016; Auld, 2018), evidenced partly by the extensive range of variables used in their categorisation: size (Amis and Slack, 1996); history (Vamplew, 2013); aims, values and purpose (Allison, 2001; Kay, 2013); and, extent of formalisation and professionalisation (Nichols and James, 2008; Dowling et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2019).

Overall, the number of clubs, combined with their variety, suggests a potentially interesting research phenomenon (Dowling et al., 2018), but also one which, by dint of this heterogeneity, carries implications for potential generalisation.

2.2.2 VSCs: Characteristics and Definition

Various authors (Nichols et al., 2005; Pitchford and Colman, 2009; Ibsen et al., 2016; Nichols and James, 2017) discuss the voluntary formation of small local clubs, habitually single sport (Watt, 2003), occurring predominantly in the 19th century. A period prior to significant public/policy involvement, clubs became a key organisational component and vehicle of sport participation (Reid, 2012). This freedom to associate facilitated a multiplicity of supportive founding forces which helps explain the diversity of cultures,

traditions, and values inherent within VSCs (Vamplew, 2013; Davies and Light, 2015). Vamplew (2016) suggests VSCs' expressive functions – 'conviviality' and 'mutual social interests' - provided a strong bonding agent, echoed recently by Tacon (2019), which along with their instrumental capacities, helps explicate their rapid proliferation. Smith (2002) encapsulates much of this in his analysis of the significance of works-based VSCs in Coventry in the mid-20th century and the concomitant mutual economic and social benefits.

Vamplew (2013), Musso et al. (2016), Ibsen et al. (2016) and Auld's (2018) work in this field reveals potential to identify and consolidate various characteristics to form an 'ideal type' sports club. Typically, these include:

- **An 'amateur' ethos and tradition with reliance on voluntary input and endeavour** (Allison, 2001; Taylor, 2003; Pitchford and Colman, 2009; Reid, 2012; Cordery and Davies, 2016). Ibsen et al. (2016) comment on the strong amateur tradition associated with sports in the 19th century, inducing management of clubs by amateur volunteers. Stone (2012) also identifies this, particularly in relation to the administration (management and organisation) of both cricket clubs and leagues and the assimilation of amateur values therein; very much reflective of the hegemony of privileged social classes and their ideals (including autocratic and exclusivity elements). The adjective 'amateur' is also relevant given that many VSCs have no or very few paid staff (Robinson and Palmer, 2010; SRA, 2013; SRA, 2015; Hill et al., 2019) although there are identifiable changes in this respect (Seippel, 2002; Doherty and Carron, 2003; Houlihan and Green 2011; Nagel et al., 2015; Auld, 2018).
- **Profits are neither the primary purpose nor redistributed to members** but typically invested in facility maintenance or development (Shibli, 2010; Vamplew, 2013; Auld, 2018; Hill et al., 2019).
- **Organisation.** VSCs will usually have some degree of internal organisational structure, often codified within a constituting document (Vamplew, 2013; Sport England, 2016; SRA, 2019). Hill et al. (2019) observe governing structures are typically a small group of people, elected or self-appointed, working collectively to administer operations, often quite informally.
- **Informality.** Hoerber and Hoerber (2012, p.213) state clubs 'tend to be characterized by a culture of tradition and informality, resulting in a governance strategy that is often

reactive and pragmatic, as opposed to proactive and strategic (Taylor, 2004)'. Others concur (Allison, 2001; Nichols, 2005; Thiel and Mayer, 2009).

Traditionally, VSCs' organisation and management has been conceptualised as 'kitchen table': ad-hoc, informal and amateurish (Kikulis, 2000; Sam, 2009; Auld, 2018). Taylor et al. (2003) found clubs lie on a spectrum located somewhere between 'traditional, informal organisations' and 'contemporary formal organisations' with Nichols, et al. (2012) saying most clubs lie somewhere between. Literature also suggests that more, typically the larger, clubs are formalising and professionalising (Adams, 2011; Sherry et al., 2016; Nichols and James, 2017; SRA, 2018).

- **Private, independent, self-governing** Many assert VSCs are traditionally autonomous and self-governing: 'by the members, for the members' (Garrett, 2004, p.27). There is, however, some acknowledgement of gradual erosion, replaced by 'earned autonomy' (Houlihan and Green, 2009) and resource dependency relationships (King, 2009; Partington and Robson, 2016) with the advent of conditional public funding and support (King, *ibid.*; Harris and Houlihan, 2016).
- **Collective interests and/or shared needs and values** (Slack and Parent, 2006; Reid, 2012; Coates, et al., 2014). Vamplew explains this fundamental component and attraction of VSCs, a 'community of interest' (2016, p.455), whose prime purpose is to meet the needs of members, not those of exogenous bodies (Houlihan and White, 2002; Nichols et al., 2015; Musso et al, 2016). Adams' (2011) qualitative study of VSCs revealed a mutual-aid orientation, *qua* self-organised productive collectives, predominantly consuming their own products. This can be paradoxical, serving as an inclusive and binding force, yet also exclusionary (Reid, 2012; Cragoe, 2017).

Collective interests can include socialising, volunteering, spectating, or playing (Slack and Parent, 2006; Vamplew, 2013). Wicker, Filo and Cuskelly (2013) particularly draw attention to the importance of the social aspect. Kay (2013) and MacLean (2013) concur and partly attribute the growth of this organisational movement to its capability to meet multiple member motivations, including those for sociability, play and competition, to different socioeconomic classes (Vamplew, 2013). (See Birley 1999; Major 2007, in relation to cricket clubs).

- **Democratic ideals** (Enjolras, 2002; Ibsen and Seippel, 2010; Davies and Light, 2015; Auld, 2018). Influenced by the hegemonic political ideology (Hovden, 2015; Ibsen et al.,

ibid.), decision-making is typically based on one member, one vote (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), allowing their perspectives to be heard (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Tottman and Larsen, 2013). Elections occur and are often enshrined within the governing document (Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Vamplew, 2013).

Kihl and Schull (2020) discuss the importance of participative democracy within sports organisations, albeit not referring to VSCs, stating how these underpin [good] sport governance, stressing the need for an engaged membership able to hold the governing body to account (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; Kihl and Schull, *ibid.*). Robertson et al., (2018), however, warn of dangers of interpersonal relations being a prominent factor in elections with members often lacking the necessary skills and experience (O'Boyle et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2019).

This legion of varying characteristics exposes further the idiosyncrasies, nature, and traditions of this sector. For the purposes of this research, VSCs will be interpreted as local, self-governing, membership-serving clubs where, mainly, volunteers collectively provide various sporting opportunities at amateur level. The traditionally applied 'non-profit' label seems slightly anachronistic: many recognise the need to make a surplus to support internal re-investment.

2.2.3 VSCs: Cricket clubs

There are numerous references asserting the sporting, historical and sociocultural significance of local cricket clubs (Dixon and Garnham, 1993; Marqusee, 1994; Birley, 1999; Atherton, 2003; James, 2005; Davies and Light, 2015; Cragoe, 2017). The ECB (2012; 2018; 2020) signify the importance of grassroots cricket and the need for a robust and inclusive club structure. While Marqusee (1994) was critical of the governing body, for their neglect of the grassroots game, the ECB (2012) developed a formal plan singularly addressing this level, partly in recognition of the problems affecting this crucial tier of participation (*ibid.*).

Estimates of numbers range between 4,000 to 6,500 (Carmichael, 2011; Davies and Light, 2015; ECB, 2020) affiliated clubs, and up to 15,000 in total (Davies and Light, *ibid.*). This, their English geographical ubiquity (Bowen, 1970; Birley, 1999), and the age of some, suggests an organisational phenomenon meriting investigation.

Various theories have been propounded for the formation and increase in cricket and sports clubs. Birley (1999) identified social, religious, economic, and demographic changes

in the 14th-16th centuries with Brookes (1978) and Terry (2000) also recognising the significance of social circumstances. Major (2007) and Cragoe (2017) highlighted the role of aristocratic patronage; whereas Bowen (1970) denoted public schools and universities. Davies and Light's (2015) illustrative historical analysis of cricket and community asserts opportunity for the development of formalised cricket clubs, particularly in the mid to late 19th century, occurred through the complex interplay of demographic, social, political, and economic factors. Heywood (2012), quite similarly, shows how Victorian infrastructure, industrial legislation and large employer support facilitated local cricket clubs' development in east Lancashire while Stone (2008, p.505) asserted 'The industrial revolution ... was a catalyst in the transformation of cricket's popularity and accessibility'. Hill (1987) says, by the late 19th century, cricket was played by many thousands of people organised in clubs throughout the country. This heyday was not to last.

James (2005) argues the downturn for recreational, grassroots cricket began in the early 20th century. Davies and Light (2015) and Marqusee (1994) also analyse periods of decline, but later that century, linked to changes in direct employer patronage (see Smith, 2002), evolving work and domestic routines and competition for participants' time. They also recognise, however, opportunities for clubs, particularly in relation to recruitment of different demographics, for example younger and female players and those of BAME heritage (Malcolm, 2002; James 2005).

This extant research reveals an interplay between sports clubs and their environment: the local and macro social, cultural, political, legal and economic circumstances they have endured and how it can impact their ethos, status and resources. There is further contemporary evidence of this below.

2.2.4 Criticisms of Clubs and Governing Bodies

Within some of the acclaimed literature on the histories of renowned cricket clubs, for example Star and Garter Cricket Club, the MCC, Hambledon and I Zingari, many recurring themes are often pejorative, alluded to above. Allegations include social or racial exclusivity, conservatism and obduracy, autocratic behaviour, recalcitrance, amateurism and inertia (Cardus, 1950; Bowen, 1970; Marqusee, 1994; Malcolm, 2002; James 2005; Major, 2007; Stone, 2008; 2012; Heywood, 2012). Brookes (1978) provides a convincing example, referring to MCC AGM minutes from 1875, whereby the raising of admission fees

is proposed to guarantee predominantly upper-class audiences. Typically, these cricket clubs have been governed and dominated by establishment or aristocratic figures and often permeated by related hegemonic values and ideologies (Bowen, 1970; Kay, 1974; Brookes, 1978; Hill, 1987; Lewis, 1987; Bradley, 1990; Birley, 1999). Marqusee (1994) refers to criticism of the MCC for its dearth of transparency and democratic elements, echoed by others (Bowen, 1970; Lewis, 1987; Bradley, 1990; Birley, 1999; Major, 2007; Stone, 2012). Stone (ibid.) criticises the amateurish behaviour of cricket's governing body, this percolating throughout all levels, citing elections with positions decided by social standing not competence.

Bradley (1990) argues all clubs are prone to cabals and cliques, dedicated to self-perpetuation in their own image with Cragoe (2017) observing their apparent exclusive nature in the 18th century and Cardus (1950) claiming this was still manifest in clubs during his youth (early 20th century). While Kay (1974) criticised Lancashire County Cricket Club's committee for its history of undemocratic, autocratic activities, Vamplew (2016, p.455) cites Tomlinson (1979, p.39) 'Men can simply reconstruct tyrannies on a smaller scale in clubs' implying this perennial issue needs resolution. Sandiford (1985, p.276) argued 'cricket administrators everywhere, ... , recognised that they had now to operate in a more professional manner'. Many of these criticisms relate to, and arguably justify, principles advocated in governance codes and literature.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), has received similarly censorious appraisals. Prodger, as cited in Evans (2018), and Heywood (2012), is critical of the ECB and leagues and many clubs' inability to adapt to modern times. Marqusee (1994) and Birley (1999) are also disapproving of both governance and governors. The ECB, 'incapable of rational management' (Birley, ibid., p.333), are perceived as primarily culpable for the malaise within the sport. Similarly, Wright (2011) cites Povey "what you have to have is a governance model that works haven't you" (2011, p.155). Hyde (2018) also highlights this, quoting Andy Nash (a former ECB Board member), "I've recently become concerned that the standards of corporate governance at the ECB are falling well short of what's acceptable ...", reiterating Wagg (2011).

This groundswell of denigration, coalescing around the domestic governing body, is neither a contemporary phenomenon nor peculiar to the UK. There is extensive literature

highlighting governance concerns within various sporting governing bodies, including the IOC, UCI, IAAF, WADA and FIFA (ISCA, 2013; Pielke, 2013; Minikin, 2015; Transparency International, 2016). There is equally strong denunciation of the International Cricket Council, alleging a paucity of transparency, accountability, democratic practice, and stakeholder involvement (Radford, 2011; Collins 2016). Critiques of the West Indies Cricket Board (Wu, 2015) and Cricket Australia (2018) have also surfaced more recently. Thus, it seems arguable that sport, and cricket at all levels, has a recurring governance dilemma.

Cricket clubs and those involved in their governance can perhaps no longer afford accusations of insularity, recalcitrance and non-inclusivity (Wright, 2011), especially given the more complex environment (Wright, 2011; ECB, 2012; SRA, 2013; 2015; 2018). This, combined with alleged misgovernment and corruption, could jeopardise a sport's integrity and, ultimately, its existence. Together, it lends support to John Major's argument that 'cricket must fight for its future' ⁶ (2007, p.15).

2.3 Problems and Difficulties:

2.3.1 General Overview

There seems broad agreement that sports organisations, and VSCs in particular, face a more demanding era than any hitherto (Sam, 2009; Adams, 2011; Hoyer et al., 2011; Vamplew, 2016; Misener and Misener, 2017; Auld, 2018). The SRA say clubs face 'well-resourced' and 'well-organised' competition (2015, p.3), warning future funding will become increasingly competitive as it will for consumers, volunteers, and members (see also Enjolras, 2002; Macrae, 2017; Misener and Misener, 2017). Upon closer analysis, however, the various SRA surveys (2013; 2015; 2018) show a contrasting picture across the VSC landscape. Membership numbers show comparative stability or slight growth, albeit with considerable difference between larger and smaller clubs (Nichols and James, 2008; Nichols, 2013; Nichols and James, 2017). The 2018 survey reveals some positives, but also key challenges: member and coach recruitment and retention; increasing costs/reduced funding; and, the need for facility maintenance or development. These are recurrent themes in much academic research.

⁶ This is a reference to the competitive nature of the current environment. Some, including John Major (2007) and Mike Marqusee (1994), consider cricket and its governing body are slow to adapt and need to be more proactive to ensure survival.

2.3.2 Clubs dying out and other concerns

Some interpret these difficulties as the outcome of greater political involvement, legislation, and economic circumstances with Vamplew (2016) arguing these can undermine sports clubs' existence. There has been much recent discourse pertaining to the moribundity of local sports clubs, demonstrated by continuous media references, across a range of sports and localities (Court, 2013; Engel, 2013; Gibson, 2014; Hoults, 2014; Hunter, 2014; Walker, 2015; Dunsmuir, 2016a; 2016b; Kemp, 2016 and Evans 2017; 2018). There is evidence of cricket clubs and leagues expiring or amalgamating (Evans, 2017; 2018) with Randall (2017, np.) observing 'A few clubs disappear every year through shortage of players, financial problems or sheer complacency'. Nichols (2013) suggests VSCs reduced by approximately twenty per cent between 2002 and 2009.

The ECB National Club Strategy (2012) recognised the parlous and precarious state of many cricket clubs and the 'growing risk to many clubs' security of tenure', listing social, economic, environmental and legal challenges. Evans (2017, np.) argues 'Club cricket is scrapping to stay relevant in an ever-changing world' with former England captain Michael Vaughan, writing of the ailing 'club game' (2014). Dwyer (2018) says "clubs have to be aware of that changing landscape; otherwise they will wither on the vine" (also cited in Randall, 2018).

Some of the current problems and dangers are summarised by Prodger, as cited in Evans (2018, np.),

...bigger clubs gobbling up smaller ones, a booming marketplace that breeds disloyalty, Premier Leagues and organisational restructures, dwindling participation figures, hectic lifestyles, societal and behavioural shifts – these factors have reshaped club cricket. All these things eat away at the kind of family, community club environment, that used to be more prevalent.

From personal experience much of this rings true. Several local sports clubs no longer exist. Of those that have survived some are prospering; others are in quite precarious states. It seems that some larger clubs, qua those with the capacity to gain accreditation, are progressing while many smaller clubs are struggling, being left to 'wither on the vine' (ObsB3AGM, 2019). Ultimately this affects participation and future opportunities, being a somewhat paradoxical effect of recent sport policy.

2.4 The VSC Environment

The SRA recently insisted ‘sport does not exist in a vacuum and the inescapable social, political and media pressures for greater transparency, greater inclusivity and accountability to members and the public as a default will all have consequences for us’ (2019, p.4). Kay’s (2013) historical analysis of clubs found their oscillating fortunes linked to prevailing conditions in the wider economy (see also Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Vamplew, 2016). Further research has also argued an inextricable link exists between a club’s internal and external environments (Reid, 2012; Winand et al., 2014; Wicker and Breuer, 2015; Partington and Robson, 2016).

A number of authors advocate and/or observe modernisation and professionalisation within VSCs (Enjolras, 2002; King, 2009; Adams, 2011; Dowling et al., 2014; Auld, 2018; O’Boyle, et al., 2019), including effective management and analysis of their environments (Slack and Parent, 2006; Robinson and Schneider, 2015a; Partington and Robson, 2016). However, this is considered sporadic, and more typical within larger clubs (Nichols and James, 2008; 2017; Hill et al., 2019). Partington and Robson (2016) specifically advocate the need for greater awareness of external forces and trends. Yet, VSCs do not have a tradition of, nor may possess the capacity for, practices such as the critical strategic external environment evaluation (Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Nichols and James, 2008; Houlihan and Green, 2011; ECB, 2012; SRA, 2015; Auld, 2018; Hill et al., 2019). Notably, Partington and Robson (2016) suggest some club officials have this knowledge, acquired through their professions, as discussed also by Shibli et al. (1999), Reid Howie Associates (ibid.) and Nichols and James (ibid.).

With this research focusing on identifiable governance practice and praxis in local clubs, and acknowledging the significance of the situated context for both SPT and CR perspectives, the potential relevance of macro, meso and micro-environments for an organisation’s practices are accepted (Schatzki, 2001; 2012; Whittington, 2006; Nicolini, 2012). Not considered necessarily as structural and deterministic, these forces are interpreted akin to those of the critical realist ontology of Herepath (2014) whereby local phenomena, including praxis, may be shaped by and interact with meso and macro elements (Seidl and Whittington, 2014). Randles and Warde (2006, p.229) seemingly offer support, ‘Practices do not float free of technological, institutional and infrastructural contexts’ as cited in Ropke (2009, p. 2493) who suggests societal patterns and practices

provide a context for the performance of practices and should be integrated within empirical analyses. Similarly, Millar and Doherty's (2016) empirical research into capacity building within VSCs leads them to assert changes in organisational practices can occur as a result of changes in an organisation's environment with Wicker and Breuer (2015), O'Boyle et al. (2019) and Tacon (2019) all equally stressing the importance of context for VSCs. Given that this research adopts a multiple case study design, this dimension is analytically imperative (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Feldman and Worline, 2016; Flick, 2018).

Biscomb et al. (2016) adopt PESTLE factors as a helpful analytical framework (Johnson, Whittington and Scholes, 2011). This will be applied with additional reference to meso and micro trends to provide a more comprehensive perspective (Nagel et al., 2015; Tacon, 2019).

2.4.1 Macro environmental factors and forces

Sport's relationship with politics has deep historical foundations (Hargreaves, 1986). Various authors denote sport's inherent instrumental capacities to facilitate political ends and identify a burgeoning trend of political intervention in sport (ibid.; Andrews, 2005; Green, 2006; Houlihan and Green, 2009; Biscomb et al., 2016; Grix, 2016). Alluded to by Tony Blair as a 'tool that can help Government to achieve a number of ambitious goals' (DCMS/SU, 2002, p.5) state intervention is justified by sport's capacity for positive wider externalities (Wolsey and Abrams, 2013; Coates, et al., 2014). Politicians and sporting bodies contentiously (Coalter, 1996; 2015; Coakley and Pike, 2014) acclaim the utility of VSCs' potential in these respects (DCMS, 2000; DCMS/SU, 2002; Nichols et al., 2005; Skille, 2008).

Concerns, however, about the the amateurish, ineffective and fragmented nature of UK sport (Houlihan and Green, 2009) induced policy developments, targeting the sector, including its voluntary arm (DCMS, 2000; DCMS/SU, 2002; DCMS, 2008; Sport England, 2008; Adams, 2011; Alcock, 2012). Improved administration, governance, accountability and efficiency were sought to facilitate political outcomes (Bell, 2009; Houlihan and Green, 2009; Sam, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010). 'A modern network of sports clubs will be the centrepiece of people's sporting experience' (Sport England, 2008, p. 3), leading to

greater investment (King, 2009; Wolsey and Abrams, *ibid.*). Funds were to be made available for 'well-run' sports clubs, to improve youth sports participation (DCMS, 2012).

Increased investment, however, begets increased public scrutiny and heightened expectations (SRA, 2015; 2019; Sherry, et al., 2016). With concomitant ramifications for NGBs and their affiliated clubs (DCMS, 2008; Sport England, 2008; Adams, 2011; Alcock, 2012) they were expected to become 'fit for purpose' (Houlihan and Green, 2009, p.686). Funding became linked to measurable policy objectives (Hoye et al., 2011; Grix, 2016), trying to engender compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness (Garrett, 2004; Adams, 2011).

Some authors highlighted opportunities (Hudson, 2009; Hoye et al., 2011) but also the additional exigencies upon clubs. Funding body conditionality, associated rules and regulations (SRA, 2013; DCMS, 2015; Sport England 2016), with potential for growing resource dependency, jeopardises autonomy and independence (Vamplew, 2016). Garrett (2004) suggests the independence and self-interested nature of clubs may make them less susceptible and open to external interventions, whereas contrastingly King (2009) remarks 'The antipathy of the volunteers towards professionalism, commercialisation and state involvement in sport has gradually receded...' (2009, p.73). This could be a recognition of the benefits of this approach or the price of investment and funding but is difficult to identify. Nonetheless, authors (Nichols and James, 2008; Sam, 2009; Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011) argue this represents a change of ethos, from a volunteer to a professional or commercial logic, with inherent implications (Hoye et al., 2011; Philpotts and Grix, 2014; Cordery and Davies, 2016; Grix, 2016; Gérard et al., 2020). There is strong evidence of this increased onus on clubs and volunteers to formalise, modernise and professionalise particularly in the 2015 UK government sports policy.

Growing concerns, for a number of years, about sport governance (Transparency International, 2011; 2016; Chappelet and Mrkonjic, 2013; King, 2017) has led to increased interest from academic, state and professional independent bodies (Geeraert et al., 2013). Many call for better sport governance (Tottman and Larsen, 2013; Geeraert and Bruyninckx, 2014; Transparency International, 2016; King, 2017). Policy responses include development of governance codes (Sport England/UK Sport, 2016; SRA, 2017; 2019) and conditional funding as a potential compliance mechanism (Grix, 2016; Ibsen et al., 2016).

Many prescriptive governance codes and guides have been published in recent years (Chappelet and Mrkonjic, 2013; Chappelet, 2018; Parent and Hoye, 2018).

Seminally, Henry and Lee (2004) identified three forms of governance: systemic (collaborative, federated or network); political; and, organisational governance (OG) which is the focus of this research. OG concentrates on the structures, activities and processes involved in the direction, performance and control (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), or the leadership, direction and management (Dowling et al., 2014), of an organisation. More simply, Shilbury et al. (2013) and King (2017) refer to governance as how an organisation is 'steered'.

Numerous definitions of governance have been devised and propounded, demonstrated by Dowling et al. (2018) in their scoping review of sport governance literature. For this research, OG will be defined as the processes and practices by which an organisation is led, directed and controlled partly for purposes of brevity, but also for encapsulation of performance and conformance elements with both being relevant to OG (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Hoye et al., 2011).

Often OG is equated with 'good governance'. Underpinned by ethical standards or principles of behaviour - for example, democracy and stakeholder involvement, transparency, and accountability (Rhodes, 1997; ISCA, 2013) - this confers normativity (King, 2017). Robinson and Palmer claim this provides a 'framework' for organisation management, ensuring it is 'effective, transparent and ethical' (2010 p.69), but add much governance practice is outdated.

Various governing bodies and academic authors claim 'good governance' can address the inherent failings within sport and facilitate positive outcomes (Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Transparency International, 2011; ISCA, 2013; Play the Game, 2013; Coates et al. 2014; Sport England/UK Sport, 2016; Council of Europe, 2018a;2018b; O'Boyle et al., 2019). At the micro - individual club - level the SRA (2017; 2019) argue it is 'the foundation for success in any organisation' (2019, p.3), providing long-term security. Sport England (2016; 2019) suggest well-governed organisations enhance their reputation, engender trust and thus attractiveness to stakeholders, facilitate better decision-making and are more efficient and effective in management of resources and risk. Similarly asserted by Sport Ireland (2016) and Sport New Zealand (2017).

Others refer to a compliance element, helping to ensure legislative and administrative responsibilities are met (Sport Ireland, 2016; Boggis, 2017) while Sport New Zealand (2017) and Sport Canada (2019) espouse ethical, accountable and inclusive organisations, reflective of stakeholders' interests, are more likely to be secure and stable. The Council of Europe (2018a, p.1) add '... , common basic criteria of good governance should apply to all – from the smallest clubs to international umbrella organisations'. This is echoed by Kirkeby who argues it is 'a prerequisite for organisational legitimacy, autonomy and – ultimately – survival (2016, p.120).

Hence, it appears unequivocal that governance is perceived as a key instrument across the sport delivery system with almost Platonic universal agreement that 'good governance' will procure a range of positive outcomes. Parent and Hoye (2018), however, decry the lack of hard, substantive evidence to justify these claims, as does Smallman (2007) albeit writing from a corporate governance perspective.

Review of seventeen published governance codes reveals commonalities (table 2.1 below), but also discernible differences in terms of which principles supposedly underpin good governance. This implies a more localised, socially constructed and negotiable essence, partly argued by Chappelet and Mrkonjic (2013) and Hill et al. (2016; 2019).

Analysis suggests the most oft-cited principles are accountability, transparency and democracy, stakeholder involvement/ representation, checks and balances, linked to ensuring Montesquieuan⁷ power diffusion, and financial and decision-making integrity. Further prevalent principles include the need for a single, strategic decision-making fiduciary body (often called a board) which seems to respond to Hoye, et al.'s observations,

the typical governance structure adopted by non-profit sport organisations has been criticised for being unwieldy and cumbersome, slow to react to changes in market conditions, subject to potentially damaging politics or power plays between delegates, and imposing significant constraints on organisations wishing to change (2006, p.169).

⁷ This refers to Charles de Montesquieu's argument that political power be separated to maintain liberty and offer protection against despotism. This became influential in many liberal democracies and their constitutions (Hazo, 1968) and subsequently in good governance doctrines: advocacy of power diffusion between boards and the executive, providing necessary checks and balances, prevents power concentration (Enjolras, 2009; Alm, 2013; King, 2017).

Another immediate observation is the abundance of extant governance codes and, thus, the extent to which this could create confusion across the sports sector, especially when updates or amendments occur (SRA, 2011; 2017; 2019). Additionally, as alluded to above, there also seems evidence to suggest this abstract phenomenon, and its array of good governance concepts, is difficult to conceptualise and define, connoting difficulty for operationalisation and quantification (Chappelet and Mrknojjic, 2013).

Table 2.1: Governance Codes and Principles

Overview of Governance Codes

Author/ Publishing Body

	Henry and Lee (2004)	Chappelet, And Kubler-Mahbott (2008)	Sport and Rec. Alliance (2015; 2017)	UK Sport/ Sport England Code 2016	Ireland (2016)	Wales (2015)	SIGA (2015)	Council of Europe (2005a; 2018b)	EU EXPERT GROUP ON GG (2013)	AGGIS/ Play the Game/ DISS (2013) Alm (Ed)	Good Gov. in Grassroots Sport (ISCA) (2013)	BIGBIS (2013)	ASC (2012) / AIS (2015)	NZ (2017)	Canada	IOC (2008)	ASOIF (2017/ 2018)	
Principles/ Components																		
Board as Lead & ultimate strategy & decision-making body			✓	✓		✓			✓				✓✓		✓			
Board diversity/ balance, size			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓✓					
Integrity (financial, generic)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓✓	✓	✓		✓	
Vision, Mission, Purpose, Plan			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ _b	✓	✓			✓✓		✓	✓		
Objectivity			✓			✓												
Accountability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ _a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Transparency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓✓			✓	✓	
Landscape/ External focus			✓			✓								✓		✓		
Standards and controls, risk and checks and balances, compliance, C of I policy			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ _b	✓	✓		✓	✓✓		✓	✓	✓	

Stakeholder involvement/ engagement			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓ _b	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		
Inclusivity (stakeholders)				✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		
Separation of powers: Bd/ CEO			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓✓	✓				
Democracy	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓ _b	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
Values/ Ethical values			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		
Fairness/ Equity	✓				✓		✓	✓ _a										
Responsibility	✓	✓						✓ _b										
Solidarity										✓		✓				✓		
Effectiveness and Efficiency	✓												✓					
Autonomy		✓																
Principles/ Components																		
	Henry and Lee (2004)	Chappelet, And Kubler-Mahbott (2008)	Sport and Recreation Alliance 2015; 2017	UK Sport/ Sport England Code 2016	Ireland (2016)	Wales (2015)	SIGA (2015)	Council of Europe (2005; 2018)	EU EXPERT GROUP ON GG (2012)	AGGIS/ Play the Game/ DISS (2013) Alm (Ed)	Good Gov. in Grassroots Sport (ISCA)	BIGBIS	ASC/ AIS	NZ	Canada	IOC (2008)	ASOIF (2017/ 2018)	

There are also concerns that many smaller grassroots organisations do not have the necessary capacity to address all prescriptive governance actions and principles (Hill et al., 2016; 2019). This was found by the SRA (2019) who questioned its time-consuming nature and efficacy, preventing clubs focusing on other developmental activities (see also SIGA, 2015; ASOIF, 2017). Clearer guidance may help which, for balance, several bodies endeavour to provide (Tottman and Larsen, 2013; SIGA, 2015; Sport England, 2016; SRA, 2019). These are often differentiated to reflect the heterogeneity of the sports sector with the more comprehensive and stringent criteria typically prescribed for larger, more formal organisations. Closer analysis, however, reveals these tend to assume all organisations fall within one of three categories. As Chappelet and Mrkonjic (2013, p.4) say ‘Recognising these differences [across the sport sector], we therefore assume that “good governance” is too context sensitive to be applied universally across all sport organisations, locally, nationally or internationally’.

Another related finding of the SRA (2019) research is the increasingly bureaucratic and unrealistic demands on ‘administrators’ who are often volunteers. This, when combined with the more complex environment (Sam, 2009), suggests need for highly skilled and experienced individuals with conducive personal characteristics. The SRA (2019) say recruitment of knowledgeable, values driven ethical people is imperative, especially for the governance of an organisation. While a more strategic recruitment process may be beneficial, not all VSCs may find this straightforward (Taylor and McGraw, 2010) nor find such readily available volunteers (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; Houlihan and Green, 2011; Fahlén and Sjöblom, 2012).

Furthermore, when consideration of the prescriptive nature of board size and composition (independent non-executive directors, gender diversity), stakeholder and annual surveys (SRA, 2017) and term limits, for example, are considered, the complexity and costs of compliance could be prohibitive (King, 2017). As Alexander and Weiner (1998) suggested, non-profit organisations may struggle to adopt corporate governance models owing to their traditional values and partly reinforced by Hill et al.’s (2016; 2019) more recent research into VSCs in New Zealand. Beeston (2016) criticises some governance codes, such as Sport England (2016), for lack of diversity requirements, but should these demands increase this may only further complicate matters for smaller clubs.

These governance requirements are just one of several pressures being exerted on the governing bodies and the clubs within their sport. A range of other macro forces have also been argued to burden VSCs.

These include economic developments (SRA, 2013; 2015; 2018; Wicker and Breuer, 2015; Ibsen et al., 2016; Gérard et al., 2020). ISCA agree, saying that ‘the grassroots sport sector differs from other economic sectors, however it responds to economic forces just like any other sector with funding being one of the biggest challenges...’ (2013, p.12). This is reinforced in the historical analyses provided by Smith (2002), Kay (2013) and Vamplew (2016) and the contemporary empirical research of Wicker and Breuer (2015) and Gérard et al. (2020). The latter observe the rising costs to clubs and members of facility hire and usage, with many dependent on local authority services which have also been affected by austerity policies (Widdop et al., 2018), impacting clubs’ costs, capacity and provision potential (see also Macrae, 2017).

The SRA (2018) club survey, upholds others’ findings, that finances are a concern for many grassroots clubs. May et al. (2013) and Biscomb, et al. (2016) also argued austerity measures have created difficulties for VSCs, especially those in resource dependent relationships (Balduck et al., 2015). Clarke (ECB, 2014) alluded to funding contractions in cricket, confirmed by Lancashire Cricket Foundation (Cutt, 2019), and the potential detrimental effect on clubs’ facility maintenance and development plans. From a positive perspective, recent governments have provided some tax relief and financial benefits, for example through CASC status (Gray and James, 2010; Ibsen et al., 2016).

This combination of circumstances suggests VSC need to be more strategic, efficient, and effective in their finance and funding operations. Cordery et al. (2013) found amateur sports clubs in New Zealand must operate in a more financially sustainable manner to survive, especially given the increasing competition for members, their time and money (Enjolras, 2002; Harris et al., 2009). Biscomb et al. (2016) demonstrated some clubs developed internal capacity (cf. Macrae, 2017) to exploit economic opportunities (see also Kay, 2013; Davies and Light, 2015) while others developed mutually beneficial external partnerships for exchangeable resources; although this can create dependencies and may ‘crowd out’ other income (Enjolras, 2002; Coates et al., 2014). Wicker et al. (2013b) say this boundary spanning activity is becoming commonplace and a means of reducing

vulnerability, found also by Slack and Parent (2006) but may potentially jeopardise autonomy and independence (ibid.). Thus, it seems many clubs are no longer so insular but more outward facing, seeking external partnerships and collaboration, to secure necessary resources.

Sport is also contingent upon lifestyle, participation, and consumption trends: 'On-going social change and changing social interactions are causing a shift in our engagement with sport' (Biscomb, et al., 2016, p.5). The growth of e-sports (Reitman, et al., 2020) provides a prime example of a shift in consumption, affecting traditional VSCs. Changing demographics (Hoerber and Hoerber, 2014), greater leisure choice (Nichols and James, 2017), work and family time constraints (Rochester, 1999; Hoyer et al., 2011) as well as rising income inequality (Biscomb et al., 2016) all carry inherent implications for sports clubs.

Other social shifts include moves away from formal and time-consuming sports to those of a more informal, individualistic, and less rigid format (Stenling, 2014; Nichols et al., 2016) and towards more casual forms of volunteering (Nichols and James, 2017). This, combined with competition for participants, suggests difficulties for VSCs to recruit and retain members and volunteers (Taylor, et al., 2003; Machin and Paine, 2008; SRA, 2015) who may need to be more proactive in recruitment, with potential risks to loss of membership fees, income and organisational capacity (Misener and Doherty, 2009; Balduck et al., 2015). Some of the above does not bode well for cricket clubs, given the sport's time-consuming nature with Dobell (2014), Fordyce (2015) and Evans (2017; 2018) providing various stories and warnings of the dangers to sports/cricket clubs of these changes to social and domestic routines and habits. Sport England (2016) assert good governance can help address membership and volunteer problems.

These pressures are compounded by those of a legal and regulatory nature (Gray and James, 2010; Nichols and James, 2017), including safeguarding, tax, employment, health and safety and insurance stipulations. Reid Howie Associates (2006) also report these considerable challenges, finding many clubs' administrators struggling to keep pace. While technology can also be a useful tool (Van Zyl, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010), enabling stakeholder interaction and communication (Burgess and Bingley, 2013; Lancashire Cricket Foundation 2020), it also consumes resources (Nichols et al., 2005) with risks for public

image and reputation (Van Zyl, 2009). Although there is some academic research into professional clubs' use of communication technology, the literature relating to VSCs seems deficient. A final macro factor, especially for cricket clubs, relates to environmental matters with various journalists and bodies warning of the threat of poor weather and pitches to club finances and sustainability (Wicker et al., 2013; The Climate Coalition, 2018).

2.4.2 Meso and Micro factors and forces

External (macro) factors and forces are compounded by field-level pressures, interpreted as those emanating from local authorities and the local community, the governing body, county foundations and league/s as well as other clubs. The SRA (2015; 2017; 2019), Sport England (2016) and Boggis (2017) referring to the competitive climate for customers, proffer that safe, ethical and reputable VSCs, achieved through good governance, are more likely to attract and retain members. Clubmark accreditation is purported to provide quality assurance indicators (Nichols et al., 2015), help recruitment (Sport England, 2019) and funding applications (Pitchford and Colman, 2009; Hoye et al., 2011; Cutt, 2019), albeit a resource-intensive process (Harris, et al., 2009; Evans, 2017).

Nichols and James (2008) and Hoye et al. (ibid.) also refer to governing body participation initiatives and policy demands, to which funding is tied, and require compliance. Hums and MacLean (2017) and Ibsen et al. (2016) observe this form of hierarchical systemic governance creates normative and coercive pressures for clubs, alluded to by Garrett (2004) and Sam (2009), and confirmed by Cutt (2019) from a local (Lancashire) perspective. This suggests clubs that do not align with this policy objective may lose future funding and/or potential capacity.

Further pressures include heightened costs and administrative burdens from leagues and local county boards/foundations (Evans, 2017), necessitating an outward-facing perspective to ensure awareness of governing body requirements in these and other respects. These multifarious problems again extol an external 'boundary spanning' focus: a need to forge and maintain links with numerous organisations. All, however, bring resource implications.

Hoerber and Hoerber (2012) discuss endogenously derived challenges, partly emanating from clubs' tradition of dependence on voluntary labour which is inherently dichotomous

and a potential risk. Volunteer and member loyalty and labour (Schulz, Nichols and Auld, 2010; Kay, 2013; SRA, 2013; 2015) provides continuity and security, allowing VSCs to compete on price and value for money (Nowy, et al., 2015; Cordery and Davies, 2016; Macrae, 2017). This, however, can also be intrinsically problematic. Volunteers may be competence and/or time constrained (Slack, 1985; Taylor et al., 2003; Sport England, 2016; Nichols and James, 2017); unreliable (Schulz et al., 2011); intransigent or apathetic towards change (Allison, 2001; Watt, 2003; Nagel et al., 2015) and, thus, anathema to current pressures and challenges.

Furthermore, heightened member expectations and demands requires provision of a competitive service or product (Enjolras, 2002; Skille, 2008; Robinson et al., 2010) and innovation (Wemmer and Koenigstorfer, 2015). Some suggest this behoves a shift from a volunteer to a professional logic (O'Brien and Slack, 2003; 2004; Dowling et al., 2014; Gérard et al., 2020), a 'service delivery' orientation (Auld, 2018), exacerbating pressures to upskill, professionalise and formalise (Watt, 2003; Nichols, 2005; Hoerber and Hoerber, 2012; Sherry et al., 2016). Nagel et al. (2015) and the SRA (2015) observe typically larger sports organisations have adopted more 'professional' practices, with many seeming to have had little choice but to adapt. Optimistically, research by Reid (2012), Kay (2013) and Nichols and James (2017) reveals many clubs have shown resilience and tenacity to survive, although Nichols (2013) warns they may need help to do so.

A difficult conundrum for those in governance positions is meeting these bureaucratic, conformance and compliance demands, trying to balance rising expectations with volunteer commitment (Sakires, et al., 2009) while minimising potential for overload (Gaskin, 2003) and 'burnout' (Auld, 2018). Many advocate good governance to help address member satisfaction and sustainability (Robinson, et al., 2010; SRA, 2015; 2019; Sport England, 2016; Auld, 2018) with Grix (2016) concluding it ensures a better return on investment, procuring benefits for both clubs and their stakeholders.

2.5 Conclusions

*There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night
Ten to make and the match to win
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'*

Sir Henry Newbolt, Vitai Lampada

Newbolt's poem 'Torch of Life' recounts the heroic deeds of a soldier, reminiscing about sporting experiences at school. The cricket match is used as a metaphor for war and the former schoolboy is encouraged to succeed against adversity. Its relevance here, arguably, is that many now feel it is time for cricket to 'play up' and overcome prevailing traditions to provide inclusive opportunities to participate in the sport. Or, will it continue to play a 'game' and succumb to the overriding dangers of autocratic, unaccountable, exclusionary, and opaque governance and operating practices, making the sport and clubs less accessible and welcoming?

This chapter asserted the significance of voluntary sports clubs as an organisational phenomenon and value as a context for academic investigation. It also contains arguments pertaining to the universal existence, relevance, and benefits of governance to all sports organisations.

Governance can [and will be] be conceptualised as a process (Smallman, 2007; Shilbury et al., 2013), consisting of teleologically and sequentially connected activities (Ahrens et al., 2010); practices and arrangements that unfold over time, much of which may be mundane, routine and prosaic. Despite this, governing practice and praxis are arguably critical to the ongoing functioning and survival of an organisation (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Tottman and Larsen, 2013; Lowther et al., 2016; Sport England, 2016; King, 2017). Given government intentions, policy pronouncements, and the nature and traditions of VSCs, researching grassroots cricket clubs through a governance lens could be illuminating and fruitful; more so when acknowledging the paucity of grassroots governance studies. Additionally, given the history of mis-governance or poor governance practice in sport, including cricket, and the potential to jeopardise its integrity and future, a study of current VSCs' governance practice and praxis seems apposite and needed. Rich and timely knowledge may ensue.

Chapter 3 Conceptual Chapter: Social Practice Theory

3.1 Introduction

At the time of writing there are conspicuous omissions within the academic sport governance literature. Firstly, there is a dearth of governance-oriented research into local VSCs (Ferkins, et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017). Secondly, and particularly apposite for this research, is the absence of the application of social practice theory (SPT) to the investigation of grassroots sports clubs and their governance. Hitherto, only limited governance studies have adopted SPT as a conceptual lens (Smallman, 2007; Ahrens et al., 2010; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015). Often the focus, rather than as a holistic unit of analysis (Ahrens et al., *ibid.*), has been on components of corporate governance practice, for example audit committees, which are not manifest within VSCs.

This combination of the application of SPT to governance coupled to the context of VSCs is, arguably, quite innovative, offering potential for new theoretical and empirical insights. Although there is occasional reference to governance practices in the histories of illustrious clubs, for example Lancashire County Cricket Club (Kay, 1974), Hambledon and the MCC (Lewis, 1987; Birley 1999; Major, 2007), it seems no identified empirical studies, focusing exclusively on current grassroots cricket clubs' governance, exist. This thesis intends to address these extant deficiencies, undertaking an exploratory study of OG, a 'complex social phenomena' (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010, p.220), within three selected VSCs.

The aim is to *develop a critical and comprehensive appreciation of local cricket clubs' governance*, including what is done, how and why. Praxeologisation⁸ of this organisational phenomenon behoves close attention to, 'zooming in' (Nicolini, 2012; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) on, not just what *should be* done, 'good governance' (Brennan and Kirwan, 2015), but also what *is* done (Whittington, 2006). It will seek to identify and analyse governing practices and those considered consequential within their geo-historically situated contexts (Schatzki, 2012; Nicolini, 2012). This praxeologisation will hopefully reveal insightful empirical similarities and variations across the sites (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Kesslet and Bach, 2014), while also acknowledging the significance of

⁸ A term used by Trowler (2014), Korica et al. (2017) and Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) to refer to when empirical studies of social phenomena, eg leadership, are undertaken through a focus upon leadership practices as opposed to individuals or structures.

context upon actors, organisations, and practices (Schatzki, 2001; 2012; Whittington, 2006; Kupers, 2011; Nicolini, 2012). Hence, SPT appears a logical and facilitative conceptual lens to realise the aim of the thesis, as it 'directs attention to the assembly and re-assembly of the elements of practices in their always localised performance' (Seyfang et al., 2010, p.8).

Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) also contend practices possess an interconnected, routinised quality, offering capacity for stability and normativity, yet also modification, owing to influences from structural forces and skilful, knowledgeable, and artful agents. This lens, thus, also appears apposite for the analysis of governance in dynamic environments: sites where individuals and organisations may be constrained by notions of tradition, but also perhaps conscious of the need for change, or even creativity (Kupers, 2011). This could be for various reasons, for example macro forces such as public policy (Ally et al., 2016; Hill, et al., 2016) or social 'shifts' (Houlihan and White, 2002; Biscomb et al., 2016), aiming to ensure adaptation of the organisation and its governance practices to the internal and external sport environment (Bradbury and O'Boyle, 2017). This research could prove revealing and significant, identifying examples of Archerian stasis⁹ and/or modification along with some explanatory insight (Bhaskar, 1989; Archer, 2010; Robson, 2011).

This chapter will summarise previous conceptual lenses applied to governance literature, highlighting respective deficiencies. It will then assert SPT provides a pertinent alternative to hitherto unsatisfactory and uninspiring predominantly individualist or structuralist accounts (Emirbayer, 1997; Schatzki, 2001; Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2011; Reckwitz, 2017). There will then be clarification of the key concepts and elements of SPT to be applied. The aspiration is for strong theoretical analysis of empirical data (Nicolini, 2012) and transparency in the research process (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2008).

3.2 Previous conceptual lenses applied to governance and problems therein

While OG research has increased dramatically in the last twenty years (O'Boyle, 2017), there has been criticism of the partial or restricted accounts and insights produced (Hung,

⁹ This refers to Margaret Archer's notion within the morphogenetic cycle whereby pre-existing structures and action/s may be reproduced by agents without any evident change or evolution (see Fleetwood, 2005); agents merely preserve and maintain, rather than modify, those structures (Kesslet and Bach, 2014).

1998; Smallman, 2007). This arises partly from the application of, and reliance upon, a relatively limited number of theoretical frameworks to analyse and conceptualise this significant organisational phenomenon (Smallman, *ibid*; King, 2017; Shilbury, 2021). The more prevalent include principal-agent (or 'agency theory'), stewardship, institutional (and neo-institutional), resource dependency, inter-organisational and network and stakeholder theory (Hung, 1998; Cornforth, 2003; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; King, 2017; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2016; O'Boyle, 2012; 2017; Shilbury *ibid.*). A generic criticism levelled is these often involve broad assumptions about human behaviour or perceive organisations as generalisable entities.

A further, related shortcoming suggests governance, management and organisation literature is predominantly prescriptive in approach (Ferkins et al., 2005). Typically underpinned by a logic of scientific rationality (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011), complexities of human relations, emotions and real life are ignored (Tengblad, 2012; Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Further criticism of the extant literature includes reference to the adoption of a normative or universalist tone, habitually involving description or prescription of principles that underpin 'good governance' practice (Smallman, 2007) - such as democracy, inclusion, transparency, integrity, accountability and honesty - often with minimal reference to implementation in practice or empirical support (*ibid.*). Carroll et al. (2008) make a similar comment and criticism of leadership research, observing a propensity to focus on the 'what' and 'why' rather than the 'how'. This investigation aspires to address this, identifying and analysing practice and praxis, governing in situ, within the case studies.

Many of the aforementioned theoretical approaches reveal deficiencies, lacking scope for insight into what clubs and their committee members, individually and collectively, actually do: the mundane, prosaic and everyday activities (Byers, 2009). To date there has been only limited published academic or policy research that focuses on the practical activity of individuals and committees (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Cornforth, 2012; King, 2017; Dowling et al., 2018), with inclusion of the 'how': the temporal and spatial aspects and the 'social technologies' (Mardahl-Hansen, 2019) adopted, and why. Tottman and Larsen (2013) provide empirically informed insight into some operational aspects of governance, in the form of case studies, but their focus is national governing bodies (see also Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2007). Tacon and Walters' (2016) review of governance research alludes to these omissions 'none of the studies involved direct observation of

board practices or in-depth interviews with board members exploring their roles; instead, they all relied on questionnaire surveys' (ibid., p.368). They suggest a need for greater focus on governance processes and practices, including deeper, qualitative research from insiders' perspectives, echoing Ferkins and Shilbury (2012; 2015). Walters and Tacon reinforce this later, citing LeBlanc and Schwartz (2007) 'most research on OG has failed to open the 'black box' of board process' (2018, p.483). Again, this research aims to address this shortcoming.

Individualistic theoretical analyses, based on agency theory or stewardship theory, potentially offer a solution. Criticism has surfaced, however, for their neglect of the social and material context, including exogenous - macro and meso - elements (Warde, 2005; Heisserer and Rau, 2015). The antithetical ontology, that of a structural or 'societist' world view (Schatzki, 2005), as cited in Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015, p.342), prioritises external, systemic, and environmental factors (Chia and Holt, 2006). These assume individual and organisational behaviour is influenced and determined by elements beyond their locus of control (Hung, 1998) and analyse changes exclusively in relation to these perceived external pressures and challenges (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; King, 2017). Prevalent are institutional, research dependency and inter-organisational, and network theory.

Institutional theory posits that organisations adopt and/or conform to accepted or required practices (Hung, 1998; Kikulis, 2000; Gazley, 2014) through coercive, mimetic, or normative institutional pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Resource dependency theory (RDT) and inter-organisational theory (IOR) perceive the need for external partnerships. Respectively, this might be to facilitate acquisition of scarce resources (Wicker et al., 2013; Coates et al., 2014, p.234) or in relation to contingencies, including efficiency, stability and legitimacy (Oliver, 1990), or, from a sport sector perspective, for purposes of competition, collaboration and coordination (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; King, 2017). Similarly, network theory also attempts to demonstrate why and how organisations develop external relationships: to provide benefits and opportunities (Naraine, Schenk and Parent, 2016); or, realise purposes unachievable independently (Shilbury et al., 2013). While Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) assert the value of these theories in affording examination of governance in terms of the external pressures and ensuing organisational changes, the corollary is evident disregard of individual, internal, or non-systemic factors.

Differing somewhat from the above, stakeholder theory conceptualises organisations as a constellation of relationships, suggesting OG should recognise the interests of a range of constituents, not merely shareholders (Freeman and Phillips, 2002; Walters and Tacon, 2010). Freeman (1984) and Hung (1998) propose this involves knowledge of, and reference to, a wider range of societal groups, not solely those within the organisation (Fassin, 2012). As Senaux (2008) propounds, boards should consider and include the organisation's various constituencies and their respective needs which may enable or constrain governance capability (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015). This alone purports stakeholder theory's significance for sport organisations and their good governance (McDonald and Sherry, 2010; Byers, et al., 2012). Difficulties posed, however, by stakeholder theory include disagreements regarding who counts as stakeholders (Hasnas, 2013) and whose priorities and needs should take precedence and be accorded more resources (Mitchell, Agle and Wood, 1997). Additionally, even recognisable constituent groups will not necessarily have homogeneous needs, values, or aspirations (Etzioni, 1998; Ferkins et al., 2005; Gammelsaeter, 2010). While Laplume, Sonpar and Litz (2008) assert the salience of the theory for organisations, they acknowledge a lack of empirical validity and difficulty of implementation, implying a need for research in non-profit or smaller organisations. Evident operational difficulties for VSCs are the resource implications required (Nichols and James, 2008; Robinson and Palmer, 2010).

From an ontological perspective, there is criticism of the current organisation and governance research which can be categorised as those which predominantly, in turn, presuppose either: primacy of human agency and individual behaviour or cognitive dimensions; or, macro, environmental, structural factors (Schatzki, 2001; Smallman, 2007; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). Barnes (2001) discusses a similar distinction between individualist/psychological and collectivist/sociological approaches which can lead to aggregates of separate individuals or unitary collective identities; both world views have inherent deficiencies (Schatzki, 2001; Maller, 2012; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016). Seyfang et al. (2010) and Krasny et al. (2015) contend SPT provides a third way, occupying the middle ground between this individual:structural dualism. There is evidence of the former in studies that adopt either principal-agent/agency theory or stewardship theory as the conceptual basis for understanding OG behaviour and practices.

Agency theory, the theoretical bedrock for much corporate governance research (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson; 1990; Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008; Ahrens and Khalifa, 2013), assumes a 'goal conflict' arises (Van Puyvelde et al., 2012, p.435) whereby managers' (agents) interests differ from those who should take precedence (the principals [owners]) (Hung, 1998, Ferkins et al., 2009). Thus, owner/investor protection through control, conformance and compliance focused governance is required and recommended (Cornforth, 2003; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), intimating lesser attention upon performance. There are obvious limitations of this theory for the non-profit sector given the absence of shareholders, reliance on voluntary labour and member orientation (Taylor, 2003; Vamplew, 2013). Provision and consumption of the club's products (Enjolras, 2002), or organisational survival (Harris et al., 2009; Kay, 2013), may be the objective rather than profit-seeking and shareholder privilege (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). Smallman (2007), critical of this theoretical approach to governance, cites Ghoshal (2005, p.81) who questions the fixation of corporate governance research with agency theory given it's 'lack of both face validity and empirical support'.

At a prima facie level, stewardship theory, offering a contrasting perspective of human nature and behaviour, might appear more suitable and appealing for the non-profit sector (Cornforth, 2003; Ferkins and Shilbury, 2010). Assumptions comprise a likelihood of shared, aligned motivations and values between managers and principals, the organisation and stakeholders (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Ferkins, et al., 2005). The former are driven by a desire for recognition, success and achievement (Hung, 1998; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Ferkins et al., 2009). This implies governance should adopt a more supportive and collaborative dimension, focusing on performance, vision, and mission (Hung, 1998; Shilbury, et al., 2013). Tricker (1994; 2000) is somewhat sceptical, considering stewardship theory assumes rational or legal behaviours. Furthermore, the concerns about agency theory also apply given the nature of the non-profit sector and heterogeneity of sports clubs (Watt, 2003; Vamplew, 2013; 2016).

The above alludes to another valid critical assessment of extant governance literature: fixation with corporate governance and/or the public sector (Cornforth, 2003; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; King 2017; O'Boyle, 2012; 2017). Several question its relevance and suitability to the voluntary sector, owing to some apparent differences (Drucker, 1990; Alexander and Weiner, 1998; Hoye, et al., 2006; O'Boyle, 2017); although recent

arguments refer to a ‘blurring’ of boundaries between sectors (Misener and Misener, 2017; Rossi, Breuer and Feiler, 2020). Nonetheless, taken together these observations suggest much research is not necessarily attuned to the nature, diversity or idiosyncrasies of the sport sector. According to Smith and Stewart (1999; 2010) this can include the more intense affective relationships between sports and their consumers, difficulties in meeting hikes in demand, or guarantees of delivery of a satisfactory product, and notions such as ‘coopetition’¹⁰ (Watt, 2003), and, more specifically, its voluntary component (Nichols and James, 2008; Tottman and Larsen, 2013).

Various authors call for more governance research into non-profit organisations, owing partly to it being a comparatively under-theorised sector, its heterogeneity and distinctiveness (Cornforth, 2003; Ferkins et al., 2005; King, 2017). This does not, however, deny the potentially useful analyses these more predominant conceptual lenses offer. They have facilitated identification of changes in the voluntary (including sports) sector in recent years, including adoption of more modern, professional and/or commercial management practices (Robinson, et al., 2010; Shilbury et al., 2013; Tottman and Larsen, 2013; Dowling et al., 2014; Sherry et al., 2016; Tacon and Walters, 2016; Auld, 2018). Despite this, it is suggested an alternative theoretical lens would be apposite: one which overcomes some of the extant theories’ deficiencies and may provide new insights.

Schatzki makes the case for social practice theory, arguing it can ‘present pluralistic and flexible pictures of the constitution of social life that generally oppose hypostatized unities, root order in local contexts, and/or successfully accommodate complexities, differences and particularities’ (1996, p.12). This alludes to the potential of SPT to consider features of the micro and macro environments (Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018) and the relational nature of phenomena (Feldman and Worline, 2016), allowing a more holistic and broader perspective.

Furthermore, Golsorkhi et al. argue ‘practice’ is a very special concept, allowing researchers to engage in a direct dialogue with practitioners and the study of practices to ‘advance our theoretical understanding in a way that has practical relevance for managers and other organisational members’ (2014, p.3). This connotes instant attraction and

¹⁰ Watt (2003) discusses the need for sports teams to simultaneously collaborate and compete within league structures to facilitate the event and sustain existence.

appeal: it enables theorising of practical matters for the benefit of practitioners. Additionally, Nicolini's assertion that social science's aim is to 'provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the world' (2012, p.215), necessitates an appropriately facilitative and sufficiently malleable theoretical lens to explore, understand and analyse these complex and integrated social (governance) practices.

It is proposed SPT has potential to provide an insightful, illustrative and critical conceptual partner; one that can open up this 'black box' of VSCs' committees' governance practice and praxis (Whittington, 2006), furnishing opportunity for comprehensive scrutiny and analysis. Given the ubiquity of VSCs across the sporting and communal landscape in the UK (Allison, 2001; MacLean, 2013), the dearth of academic research into their governance implores a response.

3.3 Social Practice Theory

3.3.1 Overview

Governance is often explained and defined by reference to structures, policies, processes, and underpinning principles. Smallman (2007), however, strongly asserts despite the numerous best practice and good corporate governance publications, there is a paucity of empirical evidence to suggest the efficacy of these prescriptions and asks whether, paraphrasing Ghoshal (2005), 'bad governance theories are destroying good governance practice' (2007, p.238).

Perhaps, then, rather than prioritising prescriptive good governance checklists, it is to the practice, practitioners and praxis within organisations that researchers should look (Whittington, 2006), to find evidence of effective governance (Smallman, 2007; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015). Hui, Schatzki and Shove (2017) insist on the centrality of practice to social life and, as Wenger (1998, p.243) states, 'practice is where policies, procedures, authority relations and other institutional structures become effective. It is practice that produces results not the policies or procedures'. Brown and Duguid (2001) and Golosorkhi et al. (2014) offer support, attesting to the significance of practices to organisations while Erden et al. argue practice-based research has been instructive in illuminating key organisational dilemmas, 'providing a theoretical, philosophical and empirical program to understand in social, material and historical contexts what people actually do' (2014, p.712). Lammi (2018) criticises much academic work for ignoring practice and practical

affairs, calling for the expansion thereof. Thus, there appears a persuasive argument that practices are significant social activities and their examination can ameliorate both understanding of such matters and theoretical development. As Brown and Duguid (2001, p.204) purport 'knowledge, in short, runs on rails laid by practice'.

Social practice theory offers a means to try and comprehend and explain social and cultural phenomena. It does this through prioritising attention upon human activity in the form of identifiable and regularised practices, such as showering or cooking. It is argued this provides opportunity to study reality through these social arrangements (Balke et al., 2014). Practices comprise what people say and do in particular everyday situations (Hui et al., 2017). Typically, these require materials as well as skills, understandings, rules, norms and ends/purposes (Shove et al., 2012; Guzman, 2013). In combination these form a recognisable and acceptable set of actions within a particular setting (Warde, 2005; Korica et al., 2017), providing a basis for social order. Individuals and groups acquire understanding and knowledge through their interaction with these practices which then inform, enable and constrain their actions and behaviours (Balke et al., 2014). It is these enduring, but evolving, practices that become the focal point of research and analysis.

This practice approach seeks to combine knowledge of the actions of agents and of the material and social structures in which they act and with which they interact, acknowledging their impact upon one another (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Balke et al., 2014). As the latter contend SPT aims to 'strike a balance between structure and agency' (ibid., p.1). From this viewpoint these elements are not regarded as separate phenomena but continuously combining to influence and reconstitute one another (Giddens, 1984): a recursive, co-co-creative relationship (Maller, 2012). It is this dynamic that gives rise to both stability and development, whereby practices are faithfully reproduced or transformed (Trowler, 2014).

Practice theories offset traditional research approaches that focus predominantly on individuals or structures, aiming to overcome their respective deficiencies (Arnaud et al., 2018). SPT assumes that individuals shape and are, in turn, shaped by the various structures, norms and traditions encountered (Wilkinson and Kemmis, 2015) and attention to this, various authors assert, can provide a more fluid and encompassing perspective of

social phenomena (Golsorkhi et al., 2014; Nicolini, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

According to Schatzki (2001) and Reckwitz (2002), practice theorists have been making substantive contributions to the social sciences and understandings of diverse contemporary issues. Many allude to recent growth in SPT-based analyses of organisation-related phenomena, including: leadership-as-practice (Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008; Raelin, 2011; 2017; Balke et al., 2014; Raelin, et al., 2018; Cox and Hassard, 2018); strategy-as-practice (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Golsorkhi et al., 2014); managerial work (Korica et al., 2017) and management-as-practice (Tengblad, 2012); and, aspects of governance (Smallman, 2007; Ahrens et al., 2010; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015). Golsorkhi et al. (2014) commend SPT's potential to develop appreciation of organisational strategy. Owing to some similarities, conceivably organisational governance may equally benefit, as Smallman contends (*ibid.*).

The range of other social phenomena recently investigated through an SPT lens (See for example: Warde, 2005; 2014; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Burk, 2007; Orlikowski, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Ropke, 2009; Ahrens et al., 2010; Seyfang, et al., 2010; Bryer, 2011; Hargreaves, 2011; Maller, 2012; Shove et al., 2012; Trowler, 2014; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015; Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Krasny et al., 2015; Lequesne, 2015; Moran, 2015; Spotswood et al., 2015; Spurling and Blue, 2017; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018; Luring et al., 2018; Mardahl-Hansen, 2019) further indicate its potential and capacity as an apposite conceptual partner.

Letiche and Statler (2005) and Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) believe contemporary organisation can be envisaged as complex, dynamic and fluid. The latter suggest this impels empirical approaches that will help capture and theorize indeterminate and emergent phenomena, recommending SPT, with its focus on processes, relations, and enactment, as a powerful analytical lens. Additionally, Nicolini (2012) and Loscher, Seidl and Splitter (2019) assert practice theories provide an innovative and valuable means to understand complex social and organisational activity, incorporating the capability to illustrate and highlight situational components of practices and capture their enduring, yet fluid, nature (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Rivera and Cox, 2014). Evidence of this is exhibited within

Jarzabkowski and Bednarek's (2018) research into relational competing¹¹ which demonstrates the contextual, contingent, dynamic, and Protean reality of the global reinsurance market and the myriad linked practices, at both organisation and practitioner level.

Relatedly, and of much significance, Nicolini (2012; 2017) also refers to practice theorists questioning and scrutinising how practices are performed and how these can have significant impactful ends (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Feldman and Orlikowski (2011, p.1249) concur, suggesting 'practice theory theorizes the stages/processes to understand how actions produce outcomes'. Geilinger et al. reiterate many of these arguments, suggesting that a focus on the social practices permits greater analysis and understanding of an organisation's processes: 'of doing, being and knowing for the production of ... it's "internal goods" (MacIntyre, 1981)' as cited in Geilinger et al. (2016, p.320). These capacities and affordances of SPT seem congruent with the aim of the thesis, the context and topic, and will provide a useful analytic.

Raelin et al. (2018) echo the above, and the research of Smallman (2007) and Maller (2012), when they argue a focus on practice as it materialises may generate new understandings: evident in some of the environment (See Seyfang et al., 2010; Burk, 2016) or consumption practice-oriented literature (Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Ally et al., 2016; Meier, Warde and Holmes, 2018). Similarly, Cox and Hassard (2018) and Arnaud et al. (2018) suggest attention to how people do things, within local contexts, evinces improved appreciation of social phenomena. Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) elaborate a little further, asserting practice approaches allow organisations to be studied processually, facilitating envisioning of 'configurations of activities' in their 'historically, temporally and socially situated context' (ibid., p.2); a view supported by Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) and Fein (2015).

Thus, it seems from the above, there is conceivable synergy between SPT and governance, especially when the latter is conceptualised as a process and instrument: a range of actions that contribute to outcomes, relating to the direction, performance and control of an

¹¹ See Chen and Miller (2015) for discussion. Relational competing refers to how organisations and agents may compete and collaborate simultaneously and comprises social and ideological elements as opposed to mere economic dimensions, serving to complement previous studies of competitive dynamics within the corporate sector.

organisation (Cornforth, 2003; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Lee, 2008). While governance appears a universal organisational activity, there may be enlightening, empirically identifiable homogeneity, albeit with localised nuances (Hill et al., 2016), that SPT may help reveal.

A further argument for the adoption of SPT is the capacity to focus on the banal: activity that is often ignored or taken-for-granted (Arnaud, et al., 2018). De Certeau's (1984) 'The Practice of Everyday Life' is typically cited as a seminal and illustrative example (Carroll et al., 2008; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). 'Practice theories ... show the central role of mundane activities' says Nicolini (2012, p.13). Chia and Holt (2006) concur, asserting they beseech a focus on the prosaic: the internal, micro-practices and organizational daily goings-on, further supported by Carroll et al. (2008) from a leadership-as-practice perspective. These authors advocate SPT for capacity to incorporate elements of lived experiences, enabling observation and scrutiny of practitioners' actions and researchers to delve deeper into what is actually happening.

OG could arguably be perceived as quite a mundane and dry activity, often involving procedural activities and meetings but the approach prescribed above, combined with the benefits offered, suggests SPT could provide more valuable, critical and realistic insights (Golsorkhi et al. 2014; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Higginson et al., 2015). As Orlikowski (2010, p. 25) states, '... practices matter and thus must be empirically engaged with ... to understand and improve organisational reality' being particularly insightful for other practitioners.

An ancillary aim of the research is to identify the organisational reality of governing praxis within these VSCs. With sports clubs increasingly being encouraged or coerced into adopting more formal or commercial practices (Harris et al., 2009; Robinson, et al., 2010; Hill, et al., 2016; 2019; Sherry et al., 2016) evidence of such changes may be detected.

The above discussion suggests growing popularity and acceptance of SPT as a recognised theoretical development within a range of social or organisation studies. Additionally, this diversity insinuates flexibility and potential utility as a conceptual lens and, thus, suitability to the study of OG.

Analysis of SPT-informed studies will be synthesised with non-empirical literature to identify how authors have defined, interpreted, and applied the myriad associated concepts to provide critical empirical reference points.

3.3.2 Social Practice Theory: Definitions, Key Principles and Concepts

SPT is a heterogeneous field, unified neither in definition nor application (Schatzki, 2001; 2012; 2016; Ropke, 2009; Lammi, 2018; Schmidt, 2018). This stems partly from disparate philosophical antecedents and diverse contributory social theorists (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Schatzki, 2012; Guzman, 2013; Golsorkhi et al., 2014). Reference to SPT in the plural or as a family of theories (Meier, Warde and Holmes, 2018; Reckwitz, 2017; Schmidt, 2018) denotes shared or common foundations and perspectives (Guzman, 2013). Yet, even the seemingly innocuous noun and concept of 'practice', a 'rich polysemic word' (Hui, Shove and Schatzki, 2017, p.3), has proven contentious (Schmidt, 2018) and difficult to define (Corradi, et al., 2010). A logical question that therefore arises is SPT's practicality: its empirical utility (Warde, 2005; Heisserer and Rau, 2015). This research will provide opportunity to critically analyse SPT from its application within an empirical project, enabling assessment of its value and bequeathing counsel to future researchers.

Definitions, models, and research approaches will be coalesced to provide philosophical, conceptual, and methodological guidance and resources (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Spaargaren Lammers and Weenink, 2016). It is intended these will facilitate a rigorous and analytical investigation of the case study sites, aspiring to ensure rich, strong, and robust research (Nicolini 2012).

3.3.2.1 Definitions and Distinctions: Practice Theory

Nicolini and Monteiro's (2017) twelve definitions connote diversity, potential for flexibility, but also possible incertitude and ambiguity (See Schmidt, 2018 for a critique). Identifiable themes include: focus on the primacy of individual and collective human social activity that comprises mental, affective and physical components; situatedness (historical, social and physical); and, an interconnected, routinised and repeated aspect with capacity for stability and normativity, yet also change, owing to influence from structural forces and reflexive agents and their recursive relationship. It, therefore, seems practices are recognisable, coordinated, but also mutable entities and performances, bound and bonded by various elements (Schatzki, 2001; 2002; Reckwitz, 2002; Shove and Pantzar,

2005; Warde, 2005). Inconveniently, these elements differ in name and quantity, depending on the model and author (Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Guzman, 2013).

Various studies adopt Schatzki's influential (Caldwell, 2012) definition of practice, 'a temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings linked by practical understanding, rules, teleo-affective structure and general understanding' (Schatzki, 2002, p.87). Given its diffuse acknowledgement and comprehensive nature, this could be particularly helpful for analysis of OG. Compared with Reckwitz's (2002) almost universally recognised definition (Trowler, 2014), there is similarity, but also divergence. Differentially, Schatzki's definition contains a telic dimension: a purposive, goal-oriented aspect (Nicolini, 2017). Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) elaborate, contending practices carry an implicit end, only acquiring meaning when organised around an aim or objective, implying an instrumental nature, partly encapsulated by Schatzki's notion of 'teleo-affective structure'. Raelin (2011) provides some additional reference, in that practices are a cooperative effort among participants who choose, through their own rules, to achieve distinctive outcomes with Ahrens et al. (2010) helpfully offering a similar interpretation, from the field of corporate governance. This could be a very insightful analytic. For, as Korica, Nicolini and Johnson (2017) assert, this aspect can procure a deeper explanatory understanding and is of relevance to the study given that organisations are assumed to have certain collective aims and ends, for example survival (Taylor et al., 2003) or growth, towards which governance [practices] may be contributory and consequential (SRA, 2013; Kartakoullis et al., 2015; Sport England, 2016).

As well as social and relational components, Schatzki and Reckwitz both also encompass the notion of repetition and the linking of practices in a sequential, interrelated and recursively informative manner. Spurling and Blue's (2017) study provides an illustrative example. They draw on the notion of 'connective tissue' to demonstrate and conceptualise the interrelatedness of practices, and the significance thereof, for 'hospital life'. Trowler (2014) comments on this ontological position whereby current practices are pervaded by the ethos and actions of previous iterations which, in turn, become the source of future episodes (Rivera and Cox, 2014). Hendry and Seidl (2003) theorise this in relation to strategic 'episodes' within the context of organisational change. Arguably, there is apparent significance here also for OG (Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015). This ontological perception is suggestive of the critical realist notion of generative

mechanisms or 'structural conditioning' (Fleetwood, 2005; Archer, 2010), and, therefore, of relevance for this research. Each case has been in existence for over one hundred years and comprises enduring traditions of practices; hence, they offer situational and genealogical insights (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017).

Additionally, and helpfully, Schatzki and Reckwitz's definitions refer to components of practices; albeit the former's concepts are not easily empirically assimilated (Warde, 2005; Spargaaren et al., 2016). Notably, Nicolini (2017) suggests both definitions seem more fixated on the contents of a practice, suggestive of an entitative being, reification, albeit anathema to the very philosophy of SPT says Collinson (2018). Nicolini (ibid.) suggests a simpler definition of practices, 'regimes of a mediated object-oriented performance of an organised set of sayings and doings' (2017, p. 21), which focuses on practices' performative, rather than entitative, nature.

This alludes to an obvious distinction, evident in both empirical and non-empirical literatures, between practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance. Schatzki (1996), as cited in Warde (2005), differentiates these by referring to the former as having a structured and normative form of existence, an organising dimension, that endures and informs how practices should be conducted (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012), whereas the latter has an activity dimension, 'practice as doing' (Shove and Pantzar, 2007).

Caletrio (2012) suggests practice-as-entity is evocative of a template or ideal type. Warde (2005), Kuijer (2014), Trowler (2014) and Heisserer and Rau (2015) all provide some affirmation that these coordinating, constitutive elements implying stability and routinisation, specify how practices should proceed, incorporating what is acceptable and to what purpose and aim. This entity, however, relies on continued performance and carrying practitioners to survive and evolve (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Ropke, 2009).

The performing of practices - particular instantiations of what people do and say - contains potential for heterogeneity and variation with each localised practitioner enactment (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Higginson, et al., 2015). More so even when practitioners are conceived of as artful, improvising and reflexive (Chia and Holt, 2006; Whittington, 2006; Seidman, 2008; Farrugia, 2013).

Thus, it seems one (entity) acts as a preservative, a guiding template and means of coherence and stasis; whereas the other (performance) offers opportunity for

development, being susceptible to variation and alteration. According to Trowler (2014) and Feldman and Worline (2016), this is dependent on circumstances and practitioners' know-how, understandings, responses to rules, and the values and aspirations attached, and generated through their relational and recursive relationship with the practice. It is this potential for heterogeneity and difference, agents combining with these other factors or conditions (Sayer, 1999) in subsequent enactments, that provides some of the potential for change (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

These two distinctive but mutually co-constituting and symbiotically interdependent phenomena (Warde, 2005; Maller, 2012; Kuijer, 2014) provide opportunity for comparisons and contrasts between what should and what does happen or the expected and the unexpected (Caletrio, 2012; Heisserer and Rau, 2015). The latter suggest this entity:performance distinction merits attention for its capacity to investigate existing practices. One (performance) provides evidence of what happens in situ and the actions that comprise the practice, whereas the other (entity) can provide opportunity to understand the rules, motivations, purposes, and beliefs that guide those happenings. This distinction also reveals an example of consideration of both agentic and structural forces, as demonstrated by Heisserer and Rau (2015) who uncover the multifarious factors that impact commuting practices.

Concept	Description
Twofold practice concept (performance and entity)	<p><i>The performance of a practice describes . . .</i> A set of actions belonging to a practice The ways in which these actions are carried out</p> <p><i>Practice as entity:</i> Doings and sayings which belong to a practice and which are organised by . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rules - General and practical understandings - Teleoaffective structure - Built and natural material context, bodies and objects involved in practice

(Heisserer and Rau, 2015, p.8)

Informatively, the authors counsel that although performances can be observed, understandings and rules are acquired 'by proxy', through qualitative inquiry of practitioners' perceptions of what they deem acceptable to the practice¹². This seems

¹² It is argued that document analysis might also provide some of this understanding.

slightly contentious as, for this study, some understandings of motivations, purposes or rules may also be articulated by practitioners during performances and, therefore, possibly identifiable through observation. Nonetheless, and as Warde (2005) and Trowler (2014) advocate, access to practical activity is essential for analytical purposes. Higginson et al. (2015) suggest a requisite obligation to investigate both dimensions and to identify where governance lives, paraphrasing Trowler (*ibid.*). Furthermore, as practices will be considered enduring sources of stability, yet mutable and susceptible to modification with each iteration (Cox and Hassard, 2018), it will also facilitate identification of instantiations of these variations or changes in the case study sites. With potential for analysis of how these may have unfolded and the variants or changes practitioners perceive effective (Higginson et al., 2015; Fletcher, 2017), this could prove valuable and insightful. For this research both practice notions will be considered empirically significant. As Trowler argues ‘an emphasis on uncovering the changing nature of practice-as-entities through their articulation in local performances is important in praxiography’ (2014, p.23). This research focus includes interest in the praxis elements as defined by Reckwitz (2000), rather than Warde (2005), and evident in the work of Whittington (2006), Jarzabkowski et al., (2007) and Brennan and Kirwan (2015). The latter adopt Whittington’s (2006) 3Ps SPT model in their methodologically scant but critical review of governance audit committees, whereby praxis is interpreted as ‘what you did’ as opposed to the normative, best practice ‘what you [should] do’ (Whittington, 2006, p.473). A combination of praxis and evidence of situational and possibly configurational elements (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) will hopefully facilitate the informed praxeologisation of governance, allowing comparisons and contrasts across the cases (*ibid.*). This organisational praxis is likely to consist of intra-organisational episodes or sequences of formal and informal, routine and non-routine activity, such as meetings and more casual events (Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008, Tacon, 2019).

Various publications allude to the potential significance of the practice of meetings and their contribution to the effective governance of, or development of strategy within, organisations (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Hoyer and Cuskelly, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Dittrich, Guerard, Seidl, 2011; The Financial Reporting Council [FRC], 2016). Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) contend these purposeful, ubiquitous, and malleable social phenomena (meetings), that regularly occur and take myriad forms, are a key micro-

component and 'focal point' of strategizing. Their longitudinal study in three universities, concluded strategy meetings actively create impetus for change or means of stabilisation and are consequential to an organisation's strategy. This has relevance for the current study given that meetings are considered an observable constituent (Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008). Attention to the initiation, conduct and termination of a meeting (Hendry and Seidl, 2003) may reveal its contents and what is considered significant, including problems and solutions (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008).

It is arguable meetings can be of equal relevance to governance when framed as a leading and directing process, involving various activities (Financial Reporting Council, 2018). This shares similarities with strategy-as-practice when defined as 'situated, socially accomplished activity focusing upon the unfolding nature of strategy as interplay between wider social practices and the micro-level of situated actions, interactions and negotiations' (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008, p. 1416). Furthermore, Hendry and Seidl's (2003) conceptual framework, combined with Dittrich et al.'s (2011) argument: that meetings are a critical practical element in the shaping of organisational processes suggest potentially fruitful analytical opportunities to study this practice and its contribution to the overall bundle of governance practices within the organisation. More so if considering the coordinating, social (Dittrich et al., 2011) and instrumental functions of meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008) and the contingencies - environmental, organisational and individual - that may impact these practices (Whittington, 2006; Dittrich et al., 2011). This perspective contends organisational praxis may be influenced by external and internal forces and is of relevance to the study, especially when acknowledging the traditional autonomy or insularity of VSCs (Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Vamplew, 2013). In recent years, changes, however, have been discerned with suggestions that clubs are less insular and more inclined to structural forces and 'best practice' in their desire to be competitive and sustainable (Harris, et al. 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; King, 2017; Hill et al., 2019).

3.3.2.2 Practices as central, the prime unit of analysis and practice ontology

Perhaps the most singularly unifying element within the literature is a world view that proposes significant, fundamental features of social life, including organisation, can be understood through a focus on practices (Schatzki, 2001; Nicolini, 2017; Loscher, et al., 2019). Practices become the centrepiece, the essential phenomenon (Orlikowski, 2010),

of investigation, analysis and/or theoretical development (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Schatzki, 2012; Rinkinen, 2015; Hui et al., 2017). This represents a predominant (and return to) focus upon human action and the practical (Meier, et al., 2018) rather than more abstract, theoretical predilections often favoured in academia (Lammi, 2018). It also indicates resurgent interest in what does, rather than what should, happen (Rivera and Cox, 2014). Hence, there is also orientation towards description and understanding (*verstehen*) rather than prediction (*erklaren*) and prescription, addressing an assumed 'gap' between scientific knowledge and lived reality (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Orlikowski, 2010). As Waehrens and Riis (2010) assert organisations, as sites of social life, are far more complex than mere abstractions can convey.

There is evidence of this practice '(re)turn' (Vaara and Whittington, 2012) in a variety of organisation-centric research, including insightful studies by Bryer (2011), Rivera and Cox (2014), Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) and Mardahl-Hansen (2019). Albeit contrasting appreciably in size and structure, profession and geographical location of organisation, these studies reveal enlightened new perspectives and commonalities. The latter's school-based research atypically conceptualises teaching as a social practice: a relational balancing act, involving continual interpretation of, and reaction to, innumerable social daily goings-on. This differs significantly from a functionalist perception that perceives teaching as an independent variable adjustable to enhance student learning. There are similarities with Bryer's (2011) depiction of accounting which, rather than an objective, rational and linear procedural activity, is interpreted as a learnt, situated social practice with creative, collaborative, and relational components. Additionally, Wilkinson and Kemmis' (2015) longitudinal case studies of 'leading' in selected Australian schools exhibit how, in its unfolding, fluid and contextualised form, a more relational, dispersed and collective nature is revealed than might, for example, an emphasis on formal hierarchical structures. This also alludes to a redirection of perceptions, noticeable within leadership and strategy fields, from a noun to a verb form: from a possessed entity, a strategy, to an activity, strategizing, or from leadership to leading. In turn, this has engendered greater scrutiny of practices and praxis, demonstrating a more processual perspective.

So, while it is acknowledged that many practice-oriented authors and studies have different philosophical, theoretical, empirical and methodological preferences and emphases (Warde, 2005; Orlikowski, 2010; Rivera and Cox, 2014; Schmidt, 2018), evident

within the literature is this primacy of practice, usually within localised contexts. To paraphrase Raelin (2011), to find governance we must look to the practice within which it is occurring and the social sites in which clusters of events, people and meaning compose one another (Schatzki, 2005; 2006).

Orlikowski (2010) and Krasny et al., (2015) contend this commitment to practice is founded upon replacement of traditional ontological and epistemological perspectives with a practice ontology. As alluded to above, rather than conceptualising society and reality as comprising individuals, and their cognitions and behaviour, or external, objective structural forces and social laws (Reckwitz, 2002; Seidman, 2008), practices are given primacy and considered constitutive of social reality (Schatzki, 2001; Caldwell, 2012; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016). Thus, individuals, while still significant, are de-centred (Trowler, 2014; Fein, 2015) and viewed as ‘carriers’¹³ (Reckwitz, 2002; Maller, 2017). Acting as practitioners, they are guided, enabled, or constrained by the practices that become embedded and patterned into organisations and society (Whittington, 2006; Golsorkhi et al., 2014). Accordingly, practices are the site of the social, a source of social regulation: ‘Social order is established within social practices’ (Schatzki, 2001, p.50; Seidman, 2008). This is demonstrated by Rivera and Cox (2014) in their study of technology adoption within a reciprocal arrangement and exchange between structures and agents, enabling both to be accommodated in accounts of social action.

Practices, therefore, take precedence and not individuals or structures (Schatzki, 2006; Seidman, 2008). Emirbayer (1997, p. 296) and Schmidt (2017, p.150) both cite Goffman (1967, p.3) who encapsulates this perspective, saying the spotlight is “Not, then, men and their moments. Rather, moments and their men” or as Spargaaren et al., (2016, p.4) suggest ‘practices and their participants’. Practices and their material arrangements, or bundles thereof, are the key element that constitutes and preserves the complex emergent processes and systems in which they are embedded. Corradi et al. (2010) and Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) concur, perceiving practices as meaning-making, order-producing and reality-shaping activities. Hence, researchers’ attention to practices in situ

¹³ A term used by numerous SPT authors to de-emphasise the role of humans and agency. Human carriers, however, are considered essential to the production and reproduction of practices through the knowledge and meaning acquired: ‘people are not central in practice approaches other than as carriers of practices’ (Reckwitz, 2002, p.256).

and their interplay with other practices, and other forces, has provided much guidance for this study of governance.

Brennan and Kirwan (2015) contend this rekindled practice emphasis and development could benefit governance research. Their rhizomatic study of governance praxis provides illustration of its subcomponents - the relationships within and with other organisational practices - to reveal a more relational and comprehensive overall depiction, arguably, than a focus solely on individuals or structures. This is also evident in Spurling and Blue's (2017) hospital-based research which shows how change and stability occurs, not through individual or collective human cognitions and behaviours or the result of changes in structural hierarchies, but through a multidimensional framework of interconnections - a 'connective tissue' - comprising jurisdictional, temporal and material-spatial qualities, between the complexes of practices. This, and other studies, have demonstrated how a focus on practices and a practice ontology can provide fresh and revealing insights.

3.3.2.3 Relational Ontology

Closely associated with the above, and alluded to already, is another key practice concept: relationality or relational ontology¹⁴ (Emirbayer, 1997; Rouse, 2007). Referring to the inseparability and interconnectedness of phenomena (Feldman and Worline, 2016; Rovelli, 2021), relationality further encourages a non-individualistic perspective. This interrelatedness of phenomena infers a recursive and dynamic interplay between people, other practices, and the social, historical, and structural context.

The situated context is considered an influential element within SPT: 'Context is not merely treated as a background, rather as constituting and interacting with the phenomenon under investigation' (Rivera and Cox, 2014, p.890). Fein (2015) contends context must be accommodated as behaviour is always embedded within a web of relations and practices. Wilkinson and Kemmis' (2015) case studies of universities demonstrate the significance of internal and external - 'cultural-discursive, material-economic or social-political' - arrangements which interact in a recursive relationship with practices to enable and

¹⁴ Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) explain relationality as a view of reality whereby 'phenomena always exist in relation to each other, produced through a process of mutual constitution' (p.1242): 'no phenomenon can be taken to be independent of other phenomena' (ibid.).

constrain changes in teaching, learning and leading practices. Thus, macro and micro dimensions can be simultaneously considered.

This acknowledgement of mutually constituting interrelations between practices and their endogenous and exogenous environments further reveals the potential benefits of SPT as a conceptual lens (Loscher et al., 2019) to illustrate and understand governance praxis, potentially providing a more all-inclusive perspective (Smallman, 2007; Fein, 2015). 'The relational approach captures the messiness of real-world phenomena, avoiding reductionist tendencies to define discrete variables with predictable relations' (Rivera and Cox, 2014, p.891). SPT allows concentration on the micro-level social activities, processes and practices (Carroll et al., 2014) that, for example, represent and symbolise organisational strategy and strategizing (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007; Golsorkhi et al., 2014), accommodating both the organizational and processual perspectives to be combined while recognising micro, meso and macro influences upon practices and actors (Whittington, 2006; Welch and Yates, 2018). The latter argue this focus on strategy practices, and the adoption of practice theories, has helped develop a more empirical and theoretically nuanced approach, including a better understanding of how strategy develops.

Feldman and Worline (2016) suggest meaning is acquired when enacted or used within practices and in relation to these other forces. Similarly, Nicolini et al. say, 'only when looking at the totality of interconnected practices, events and entities, can one grasp the meaning of human action' (2003, p.8). Meaning, however, can also change as demonstrated by Shove et al. (2012) their studies of cycling and commuting. Meanings, interacting with other elements, including practitioners and their skills, materials, and infrastructure, evolved (ibid.), confirming further this relational component.

Not always apparent in other ontologies (Emirbayer, 1997; Schatzki, 2001), relationality can, therefore, address questions of how agency and social structures interplay to explain organisational and individual action, eschewing traditional mutually exclusive individualistic or structural analyses (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Fein, 2015). This is effectively demonstrated by Burk (2017) whose longitudinal survey study (across sixty-two US cities) identifies the significance of political and infrastructural factors and wider sociocultural processes in recruitment to, or defection from, bicycle commuting practices.

Similarly, Shove and Pantzar's (2005) seminal study demonstrated how changes in these macro structural factors combined with others, relating to meanings, competence, images, and equipment, led to the emergence of a new practice: Nordic walking. Further research by Hargreaves (2011) reveals how practice-based approaches provide a broader account than typical studies of behaviour change interventions. He shows how changes to 'meanings, skills and stuff' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) had been achieved to result in subtle, but positive, pro-environmental workplace practices and behaviours, albeit based upon a single case study. These sentiments are also visible within Seyfang et al.'s (2010) research who adapt the same model, within a multi-theoretic approach, to uncover how 'grassroots' sustainability innovations are generated in civil society as new meanings and materials are adopted or amended. They argue the benefits of the practice approach shows context, community and culture interact, combining with practitioners, and the components of practices, to create opportunities for innovation, offering a much more panoramic perspective than individual behaviour change studies.

Further evidence of this exists in research by Gram-Hanssen (2011) and Heisserer and Rau (2015). The former applies a variety of SPT notions to illustrate differences between families' household energy consumption and how practices can change or not. Her work is important in illustrating the myriad factors, including agentic, technological, and infrastructural elements, as well as meanings and knowledge (episteme), that can impact on practices which, in turn, can affect other practices and future episodes (Hendry and Seidl, 2003; Trowler, 2014). Showing some similarities with Gram-Hanssen's (2011) creative melding of SPT concepts, Heisserer and Rau's (2015) research into commuting, reframed as the 'consumption of distance', is equally instructive. They demonstrate how the various sociocultural and infrastructural elements of travel can be assimilated into the research, providing opportunities to make hitherto inaccessible connections between these dimensions. They assert people respond to, reflect, and shape their social and material context and act on their understandings to reproduce a practice. Consideration of both agentic and structural elements enabled development of their 'two-stage typology of commuting practices' (Heisserer and Rau, 2015, p. 13). This research illustrates the diversity within commuting practices and identification of key influences upon the context and practitioners, including personal and structural difficulties of replacing car use with other modes of transport, carrying obvious implications for policymakers.

While, at times, Heisserer and Rau's research could arguably drift into Sandberg and Tsoukas' (2016) warning of practice theorists falling into the trap of individualism, their adoption of Schatzki's (1996) notions of practices as performances and entities allows a dual focus on both agents' appropriate (and inappropriate) actions and behaviours during enactment and the foundational structure of those performances: its entitative state. What is tellingly instructive of this work is how both notions can be applicable for research into OG, using qualitative research methods such as observations, interviews, and document analysis (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). This permits a focus on the real-time actions that comprise the practice (performance), but also access to the supporting understandings, rules, telos, emotions, motivations and values (as entity) that inform and structure that performance, while acknowledging their recursive, co-constituting nature (Shove, et al., 2012).

This is evident in Jarzabkowski and Bednarek's (2018) extensive ethnographic study of the global reinsurance industry. They also employ qualitative methods to emphasise the inherent relationality of SPT and the constantly shifting nature of the competitive practices of practitioners and organisations. Revealed is the dynamic recursive relationship, consisting of numerous motivations and factors, between practitioners and the varying strategies adopted, contingent within each instantiation of micro-competition, and uncovering the complex and fluctuating nature of the field. Interestingly, it was not just economic motivations they discover, but also those of an ideological or social nature, including how shared normativised values and beliefs, attached to the practice, can facilitate changes in competing strategies. This provides deeper insights into this field than, for example, a homo economicus interpretation might afford (Reckwitz, 2002), enabling elaboration of the concept of 'relational competing'.

This study carries multi-level significance for this research. It provides methodological counsel, indications of how to respond to criticism of Strategy-As-Practice and demonstrates one of the key elements of SPT: that individual strategic action shapes and is shaped by the wider social order of institutions (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018). Of interest is how praxis in these organisations develops, including reference to genealogical, situational, and configurational aspects (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) and extra-organisational influences (Whittington, 2006, Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

A relational element is also apparent within Whittington's (2006) alliterative metatheoretical framework: practice, practitioners, and praxis (PPP). Whittington conceptualises practice as the shared norms, traditions, and recognised interpretations appropriate for an activity, or socially accepted ways of acting (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Loscher et al., 2019), whereas praxis refers to what happens in situ, what practitioners actually do in making strategy (Whittington, 2006). He acknowledges the critical role of 'artful' (ibid., p.615) and improvising practitioners who convert practice into praxis, able to adjust to situated circumstances (Alkemeyer and Buschmann, 2017) and changes in thinking and behaviour. This, Whittington argues, embodies the organizational along with macro and micro dimensions and their respective potential influences on strategists, reconciling, to some extent, the agency-structure dichotomy (Caldwell, 2012; Golosorkhi et al., 2014). The model affords scrutiny of practitioners, not as purely agentic isolated individuals but, rather as dynamic pieces within a wider network of professionals and practices, relationships and influences (Fein, 2015), all of which attests to the relationality of SPT (Feldman and Worline, 2016).

Whittington (2006) also implies that a focus on praxis and the agents, not only provides insights into performance of the activities and interpretations thereupon, but also allows opportunity to become more deeply immersed and closer to the 'action', including the everyday or mundane (Chia and Holt, 2006). Furthermore, the flat ontology Schatzki (2016b) discusses suggests all practices, while potentially differing in scale and subtleties, are part of a plenum. This intimates that the wider social sphere, within which organisations are an active constituent, offers potential for recursivity and co-constitution linked together by practitioners who inhabit both fields and may advocate adoption and adaptation accordingly, depending on their local context and habitus (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018). Emirbayer (1997) made this point, suggesting individuals act, not as isolated entities, but as inseparable elements within the unfolding dynamics of situations: individuals who are shapers and shaped by the context, demonstrating a situationally embedded agency (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018). Finally, Whittington's (2006) quite liberal definition of practices, to include reference to both the formal and informal, the routine and nonroutine, could also be particularly apposite within VSCs, given their idiosyncrasies and traditions.

Brundin and Nordqvist (2008) and Brennan and Kirwan (2015) state much current governance research fails to adequately identify and reproduce its more fluid, emotive, social, and interconnected nature. A relational ontology, conferring consideration of the iterative dynamic between practitioners, the different elements that comprise practices, and the local and wider dimensions to reveal collective, routine, and interconnected features, offers potential to provide a more comprehensive, in-depth analysis of what takes place and why. It may help better reveal the complexity of OG, as demonstrated by Brennan and Kirwan's (2015) practice theory-informed study of governance, evincing a more nuanced interpretation than hitherto, and new insights.

3.3.2.4 Practitioners and Praxis

'For practice theory, people count' (Whittington, 2006, p.613), for it is their sayings and doings and embodied competencies, motivations and understandings that enable practices to be performed. This perception is shared by Schatzki (2001) who portends the skilled body requires consideration: it is the nexus of mind and action and of individual activity and society. Rouse (2007) and Reckwitz (2002) echo Whittington and Schatzki, the latter referring to the practice of playing football as a helpful illustration. To be accomplished and sustained, it requires practical and mental skill and craft, shared understandings of rules and behaviours, combined with acceptable emotions and shared purpose, applied by agents in a routinised fashion, and materials (Reckwitz, *ibid.*). For SPT, however, these mental and physical elements are held by the practice with participants conceived of as 'carriers' (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002; Maller, 2017). As Nicolini (2017) observes, individuals may have their own personal motives, but once they join a practice they also attune to the goal and object, as porters, 'homo practicus' (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 256), suggesting capacity for alignment, normativity and meaning-making among practitioners (cf. Barnes, 2001; Krasny et al., 2015; Lammi, 2018).

This notion of participants as 'carriers', however, is a little problematic with potential pejorative or inconsequential connotations. Potentially, agents could be perceived as a vacuous, negligible element, merely conveying contents without any form of meaningful mutual interaction or impact, akin to a delivery vehicle or plastic casing. This somewhat negative perception, more typically redolent of objectivist or structuralist ontologies, views individuals as passive dupes, or cultural dopes (Spaargaren et al., 2016) beholden to structures (Seyfang et al., 2010; Nicolini, 2012). Garcia (2018) is particularly critical of SPT

authors who relegate agents' impact on practices, drawing on examples from *costaleros* in Seville and skateboarders, he argues agents facilitate evolution to practices. Shove and Pantzar (2007) refer to and show the intimate, mutually dependent, but complex, relationship between practitioners and practices. This is also implied by Whittington (2006) and Vaara and Whittington (2012) in their (PPP) model whereby practitioners are considered crucial: the fulcrum that link micro, meso and macro forms of practice. As Nicolini (2012, p.4) proffers 'Social practices thus provide a precise space for agent and agency, accepting 'all three sides of the [...] triangle: that society is a system; that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction (Ortner 1984, p. 159)'. So, for many practice theorists, the practitioner and his/her body are a critical element.

From the preceding discussion and literature, it is apparent that various authors, including Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), Brennan and Kirwan (2015) and Garcia (2018), perceive practitioners as integral to praxis, containing the wherewithal to amend that praxis. Nicolini and Monteiro (ibid.) contend humans can often follow practices blindly or non-reflexively, likened to Heidegger's 'dwelling' mode (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and Rasche, 2010), but are not mere automatons. Rather, as active integrators of the elements, they 'adapt, improvise and experiment' (Kuijjer, 2014, p.30) and, thereby do not just reproduce, but also transform practices through reflection and creativity (Whittington, 2006; Seidman, 2008; Kupers, 2011). Farrugia (2013) argues individual reflexivity, developed through personal experiential structural interactions and relations with the world, integrates with the logic of practical intelligibility to help devise suitably contingent practical outcomes. Thus, humans are conceived of as skilful agents (Reckwitz, 2002; Seidman, 2008; Schatzki, 2012): knowledgeable and experienced (Nicolini, 2012; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018), combining various mental and physical capacities in a resourceful, creative and reflexive manner, a Giddensian view (Seidman, 2008).

Additionally, as practices leave space for initiative, creativity and individual performance (Nicolini, 2012) it is this co-constituting, recursive relationship between practices and competent, motivated participants that creates the potential for mutual development, or 'structural elaboration' from a critical realist perspective (Fleetwood, 2005; Archer, 2010). Shove and Pantzar in their autoethnographic study, demonstrate these practitioner qualities and processes in reference to digital photography and floorball, 'devoted

practitioners actively shape the games they play' (2007, p.163) which also reveals the significance of experienced practitioners to the recruitment and reproduction and, hence, survival of practices.

Equally insightful, Brennan and Kirwan's (2015) study of the 'disconnect' between industry practice (shared understandings), or "best practice", and the praxis of audit committees demonstrates how practitioners' interpretations, actions, skills and initiative convert practice into praxis. They argue practitioners combine, coordinate, and adapt governance (best) practices to their needs and context, contending these can be improved through this iterative, recursive relationship between these distinct but co-constituting elements. Referring to the importance of this dynamic between the structural and agentic, they contend a better understanding of this nexus may lead to improvements in corporate governance practice overall. Advocating this inherent capacity of SPT, they call for its application to governance, as do Smallman (2007) and Ahrens, et al. (2010), for the potential benefits derivable.

So, while individuals are considered 'carriers' of a practice, it is their recruitment, retention and embodied capacity for skilful, artistic and reflexive behaviour that are essential for practice (re)production and (re)creation (Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Seyfang et al., 2010; Shove et al., 2012). Some critical assumptions ensue, however. Firstly, it is perceived that these bodies are capable of acquiring the feelings, and being trained, socialised and conditioned with the competencies needed by the practice (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003). And, secondly, that they can and will intelligibly and creatively deploy these, for example as a steward, trustee or fiduciary, to ensure effectiveness or 'excellence' (MacIntyre, 1981) as cited in Nicolini (2012, pp.83). Warde (2005) makes a similar observation when he says that contrasting understandings, levels of practical competence, commitment and involvement can engender behavioural heterogeneity. As several authors observe, especially in relation to governance roles and VSCs, positions of power and authority may be acquired through personal characteristics rather than competence (Slack, 1985; Allison, 2001; Thiel and Mayer, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Nichols, 2013). Additionally, according to Baldock et al. (2010) and Wemmer and Koenigstorfer (2015), VSCs now crucially require highly skilled volunteers to help address the more competitive, complex, and challenging environment (Sam 2009; Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011; Auld, 2018).

Nonetheless, a focus on practitioners, their individual and collective praxis, could prove fruitful. Acknowledging their role/s and actions, along with consideration of intra and extra-organisational dimensions (Whittington, 2006; Raelin, 2011), might provide a more comprehensive analysis of governance practices within the case studies.

3.3.3 Components of a Practice: What can be taken from different models?

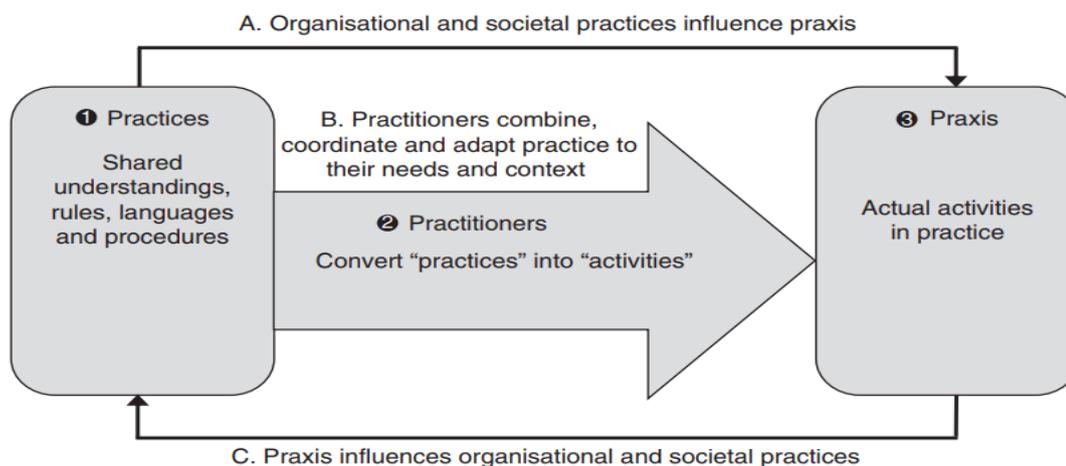
Partly already evident is how many authors have adapted SPT, or elements thereof, to their circumstances, world view and needs, often foregrounding some aspects while bracketing and neglecting others (cf. Whittington, 2006; 2011; Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Maller, 2012; Spargaaren et al., 2016). It is suggested this conjoining of SPT elements, and borrowing ideas from different authors, might engender sufficiently helpful and malleable conceptual resources to facilitate more beneficial analyses. As Lammi (2018) observes, practices are the context in which a practitioner participates and requires a sense of intelligibility and normativity, typically derived from the absorption, recognition and application of rules, practical and general understanding and teleo-affective structure (Schatzki, 2001; 2002; 2012). Some of these notions might prove more illuminating and insightful than others but, as Warde (2005) and Krasny et al. (2015) suggest, it is through these elements and their interaction and interrelation that practices can be fruitfully scrutinised.

Critical of much extant corporate governance literature for its prescriptive nature, Ahrens, et al. use Schatzki's (2002) 'three determinants of practices' (Ahrens et al., 2010, p.6): 'practical understandings, rules and 'teleo-affective structures' (ibid., p.3), to illustrate how audit committee members can develop shared evaluative assessments of 'good/bad governance behaviours' to create opportunity for innovation and reflection, assuming improvements to corporate governance will ensue. While not discussing 'general understandings' (Schatzki, 2001), they contend that the other organising elements combine to provide a subtending platform that does not necessarily determine practitioners' actions, but helps them make sense of what is happening and how to proceed appropriately. The significance of this for the current research project is two-fold. Firstly, it interprets and directly applies dimensions of practices, using Schatzki's terminology and, secondly, it reveals the capacity of SPT to encompass and reveal the recursive relationship between the structural and agentic, providing the means to

illustrate the overall context and how change and stability can be actively generated (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

Gram-Hanssen (2011) and Heisserer and Rau (2015) also provide illustrative examples of SPT application and integration in empirical studies. Within the former's research there is helpful reference to different authors' interpretations of key elements of practices, some of which she employs and fuses in her study of domestic consumption practices. She adapts Shove and Pantzar's (2005) 'competence' which she incorporates into Schatzki's 'rules' element of a practice to show how this can impact on changes in thinking which, in turn, can effect adjustments in domestic consumption practices. Heisserer and Rau (ibid.) also helpfully define and operationalise elements of Schatzkian SPT in their study of commuting practices and show how performances are influenced by elements of practice-as-entity while acknowledging their recursive and co-constituting nature with the context.

Schatzkian (2001; 2002; 2006) SPT concepts, supplemented by Whittington (2006) and Nicolini (2012), will provide the theoretical and analytical basis for this research. Schatzki's definition, and organising components of a practice, will form the fundamental inspiration for the conceptual framework. These will shed light on associated understandings, rules, ends, and motivations underpinning governing practices and praxis. Acknowledgement of Whittington's (2006) conceptualisation of practice theory will also provide some guidance, as adapted and employed by Brennan and Kirwan (2015) in their study of corporate governance.



Source: Adapted from Whittington's (2006) core tenets of practice theory

(Brennan and Kirwan, 2015, p. 469)

Accommodating practices, practitioners and praxis will facilitate the praxeologisation of governance in the three case studies. Furthermore, the distinction between practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance offers opportunity for comparisons between these two concepts, providing not only potential comprehension and explanation, but also indication of variation and change. Furthermore, 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' (Nicolini, 2012) on practices may serve as a complementary aid, illuminating aspects of their situational, genealogical, and configurational dimensions. Schatzki's components of a practice will now be discussed before a final conceptual framework will be presented.

3.3.3.1 Practical Understandings

Schatzki's notion of practical understandings (PUs), 'complexes of know-hows' (Schatzki, 2006, p.1868), are perceived as the embodied knowledge, abilities or skills that underpin and facilitate the execution of a practical activity (Ahrens et al., 2010; Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016; Welch and Warde, 2017; Lammi, 2018; Loscher, et al., 2019). Examples cited include knowing how to chair an audit committee (Ahrens et al., 2010), recognising anomalies in balance sheets (Loscher et al., 2019) or competence at kicking a football (Reckwitz, 2002). Schatzki (2006) also provides mundane examples of practical understandings, adding these must be comprehensible to others, have a shared, contextual element and be applied to effect the practice. PUs, however, are not independent of a practice but, rather, a component thereof (Schatzki, 2002; Ahrens et al., 2010) and can be acquired through participation in the practices themselves (Ropke, 2009; Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Additionally, they are informed by the practical intelligibility possessed by individuals which helps determine 'what a person does next in the flow of conduct' (Schatzki, 2010, p.114) as cited in Welch and Warde (2017, p.187). As Schatzki (2006) contends, the shared, situated, and informed awareness nature of PUs enables both individuals and groups (Barnes, 2001) to know how to (re)act appropriately within the circumstances.

In a governance context, examples of PUs might include knowing how to take turns in meetings, schedule agendas, take succinct and accurate minutes, or chair a meeting in a manner commensurate for the proceedings to eventuate acceptably, recognisably and normatively among those taking part. This hints at a requirement for accepted procedures and rules. So, while shared practical understandings allow the practice to take place and

proceed, there is also a need for similar attention to, and understanding of, rules (Gram-Hanssen, 2011).

3.3.3.2 Rules

Rules are codified and prescribed 'oughts' (Lammi, 2018), qua what should (and should not) be done when undertaking, and constitutive of, the practice (Ahrens et al., 2010). These explicit instructions and edicts provide a normative, but not deterministic, structure and guide (Schatzki, 2002; Caldwell, 2012; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016).

Schatzki (2012), Caldwell (2012) and Nicolini (2012) refer to the influence of Wittgenstein's notion of rule-following whereby obeying a rule is a practical accomplishment, with consideration of the context and experiential knowledge, rather than a rational, pre-meditated and determining procedure. This hints at more of a social, collective, interpretive, and transient view of rules, not an objective entity with causal power. Crossley (2001) observes similarities with Bourdieu's view which portrays the 'messy and strategic nature of social life' (2001, p.82) where rules may be broken or amended in practice, but within socially acceptable parameters. Schmidt (2018) provides some highly critical insights into practice theorists' conceptualisation of rule following, citing the ambiguity apparent in their arguments.

Nonetheless, attention to 'rules' could be an illuminating insight for this research. Given that the prescribed nature of governance seems predicated on a more objective and instrumental view of rules, seeking compliance and conformance to universal principles and regulations and procedures which accords with the underpinning assumptions of agency theory (Hung, 1998; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007). Within the governance context, while rules may be unwritten, they might also be formulated within a constituting document that stipulates proceedings for elections, financial processes, and formal meeting procedures. Loscher et al. (2019) provide helpful guidance, albeit in relation to rules for accounting rather than governing.

3.3.3.3 Teleo-affective structure

Combined with the above is the teleo-affective structure (TAS) of a practice which also develops and informs practitioners' underpinning practical intelligibility (Ahrens et al., 2010; Welch and Yates, 2018). Dismembering this into its pre-conjoined elements: telos refers to ends or aims (Shove, 2011; Nicolini, 2012) or what matters (Ahrens et al., 2010);

affectivity relates to motivations and feelings (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002; 2017), or how much it matters (Ahrens et al., 2010), and can include the emotions attached to practices (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Schatzki (1996, p.89) defined TAS as 'embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods', as cited in Ropke (2009, pp.2491-2492). Sandberg and Tsoukas supplement this, conceptualising it as a 'range of normative and hierarchically related ends its practitioners are supposed to pursue' (2016, p.192). Reckwitz (2017) counsels practitioners can become 'affected by', absorbed or attuned to the mood of, the practice, providing motivation and a focus of attention.

Teleo-affective structure could prove a particularly fruitful concept and analytic: an effective means to understand and scrutinise practices and data. It may provide access to the acceptable ends, tasks and purposes engendered by the bundle of governance practices, along with the emotions and motivations attached, and uncover the extent to which these are communal among practitioners (Heisserer and Rau, 2015).

Gram-Hanssen (2011) and Kuijer (2014) partly equate this notion of teleo-affective structures with 'images' or 'meanings', originally developed and operationalised by Shove and Pantzar (2005). Kuijer (2014) suggests these 'images' are common ideas or concepts associated with the practice that provide meaning for engagement, including purposes and ends. Shove and Pantzar (2005) demonstrate how the context and practitioners' creative use of 'materials' (equipment) synthesise to generate new meanings, for example health and fun, that become part of the practice. This is equally evident in work by Harries and Rettie (2016) who explain how, through reference to materials (technology), meanings attributed to dispersed walking practices changed, providing a teleo-affective structure and, in turn, motivating practitioners. Krasny et al.'s (2015) research into urban environmental stewardship also revealed how a practice's positive meanings can motivate volunteers, facilitate participation and, thus, sustain a practice. Importantly, especially for policymakers and practice recruiters, Krasny et al. (ibid.) and Harries and Rettie (ibid.) argue it is this symbolic mental aspect of practices that might encourage uptake and retention, discouraging defection. A further related point made by the latter, citing Southerton (2006), is practices that require the involvement of others (co-participation), or are temporally interdependent with other practices, are more likely to be prioritised by practitioners.

Cognisance of these insights could prove beneficial when seeking to better understand and explain the rationale underpinning governing praxis within the cases.

3.3.3.4 General Understandings

Schatzki's final organising conceptual element of a practice, general understandings (GUs), is considered somewhat equivocal and indefinite (Caldwell, 2012; Welch and Warde, 2017), and not always easily empirically identifiable (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Welch and Warde (*ibid.*) and Welch and Yates (2018) contend they may be articulated discursively within the performance of practices and offer insight into larger configurational phenomena, including values and aesthetics (Loscher et al., 2019). Welch and Warde (2017) observe how these underpinning beliefs and values (Caldwell, 2012) inform, organise and structure a practice, echoing Schatzki's (2006) comments. GUs 'play a central role in the ideational and affective integration of practices ..., through identities, values and organising concepts' (Welch and Yates, 2018, p.5), with Lammi (2018) suggesting they 'tint' and condition practices.

Schatzki (2012) refers to GUs as abstract senses, not aspirations and aims, but rather ideational connotations of the value or significance of something that inform practical intelligibility which, in turn, informs individual conduct. In his research into the Shaker community, Schatzki (2002) talks of common understandings that influence those within and are articulated during practices. Later (2006) he gives an example of teaching practices being influenced by a sense of propriety, whereby there is an expectation of good manners and correct behaviour by students. Caldwell (2012), while critical of Schatzki's ambiguity at times, suggests GUs are linked to shared beliefs, goals or values within a group; although it is not clear whether everyone within the practice is supposed to share these same 'common understandings' (*ibid.*, p.291).

Thus, there appears some disparity among authors. Welch and Warde (2017) offer a helpful interpretation. Intimating that GUs hint at meta or broader concepts and forms of understanding, which are common among many practices and transferable, they cite 'nation', 'identities' and 'sustainability' as examples. These more widely held ideas may be apparent across diverse groups of practitioners and can be acquired during, but also prior to, participation in a practice (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016) and transferred from other practices and contexts.

In this research project this could manifest in GUs concerning principles, including concepts such as democracy, accountability, transparency, equity and honesty, and stakeholder inclusivity (or exclusivity, even). Arguably, these might act as cultural or historical generative mechanisms (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Fletcher, 2017), that underpin, guide or inform inherent norms and actions within the governance practices and praxis of the case studies. Trowler (2014) makes a similar point, stating an ontological and epistemological element of SPT infers that current practices, in any specific context, are both legacies of previous and bestowers of future iterations. He recommends researchers grasp an understanding of both current and previous forms. This will potentially illustrate how changes in the nature of practice-as-entities are revealed through local performances, which might include reference to, 'Ideologies and discursive dispositions associated with neo liberalism and managerialism ..., but they are often found in mixes with the legacy of older rules and different resources' (Trowler, 2014, p.23); this being essential when 'producing a praxiography' (ibid.).

It is recognised that this, arguably 'external' (Nicolini, 2012), configuring element of a practice is contentious (Caldwell, 2012; Welch and Warde, 2017), especially if 'misconstrued as anterior drivers of the subject's activity' (Whitford, 2002) as cited in Welch and Warde (ibid., p.188). The latter question the ontological nature of GUs, observing potential for incongruence with Schatzki's (2016b) 'flat ontology' if considered an entity that operates 'supra-practice', a point similarly made by Caldwell (ibid.). Nonetheless, Welch and Warde (2017) acknowledge the positive potential of GUs for being able to identify how cultural dispositions may transfer to localised activity and potential links between situationally distant or closer practices, including evidence of assimilation or change. It will be interesting for this research the extent to which GUs condition practices and praxis and, if so, how.

3.3.3.5 Summary

The above analysis exposes the fundamental constituents of a practice (as entity) and demonstrates how they interrelate and interact to inform performances. The first three components discussed, in combination, define and explain that a practice requires practical know-how and guiding rules and procedural 'oughts' to help inform and achieve shared sought outcomes in an emotionally, procedurally, and ethically acceptable manner. These synthesise with more general understandings to further inform these prioritised

ends and how they should be rightfully achieved within that site and time-space. Thus, according to various authors, this should be supplemented with consideration of micro, meso and macro circumstances which all interlock within a co-constituting and dynamic relationship.

Discussion of SPT literature has provided guidance on how these components can be interpreted and defined for empirical purposes. Trowler helpfully summarises SPT, saying it 'looks at the social world as ensembles of practices; regular sets of behaviours, ways of understanding and know-how and states of emotion that are enacted by groups configured to achieve specific outcomes through their activities' (2014, p.21). Drawing on these insights, a conceptual framework will be partly developed and presented at the end of the chapter to inform the research and analysis of the case studies' governing practices and praxis.

3.3.3.6 Bundles of practices

Nicolini (2012) and Schatzki (2002; 2006) contend organisations can be conceptualised as bundles of practices. Schatzki (2002) refers to a site ontology: the spatial and temporal location where practices arise and inhere, often occurring simultaneously or in combinations, coalescing to form bundles. These collections of connected practices that hang or knot together with others (Feldman and Worline, 2016) are defined by Shove et al. (2012, p.81) as 'loose-knit patterns based on co-location and co-existence'. This concept will be adopted within this research. Providing a 'source of meaning and normativity' (Schatzki, 2001, p.12), bundles also possess potential for changes in direction as human activity is never fully determined, predictable or guaranteed (Schatzki, 2012).

In an illustrative study Meier, et al. (2018) apply Shove et al.'s (2012) practice framework, blended with Southerton's (2006) notion of 'everyday timespaces', to show how alcohol consumption is synergistically and temporally connected with other practice bundles, relating to work, relaxing, celebrating, socialising and eating, to provide new insights and intervention opportunities. Their emphasis on Schatzki's (2001) notion that practices should be viewed as 'bundles', held together by 'habitual temporal sequences which are similar across large sections of society' (Meier, et al., 2018, p. 210), infers a need to 'zoom in' and 'zoom out' (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) to look at the package of integrative governance praxis within each organisation, including temporal arrangements and

connections with other practices. This links to Nicolini's (2012; 2017) observations, regarding situational, genealogical, and configurational approaches to studying practices within organisations. Carroll et al. (2008) contend a benefit of a practice ontology is the potential offered for illustration of this bundle, including internal and external connections (Corradi et al., 2010; Fein, 2015), and the possibility to reveal similarities and variations across sites (Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Hui, 2017).

3.4 Key concepts to be adopted and applied

As previously inferred, practice theories can be philosophical and abstract but Heisserer and Rau (2015), and other empirical researchers, in operationalising SPT have provided helpful exemplification. Their counsel suggests these conceptualisations can be converted into more concrete, transparent and practical premises to facilitate empirical investigation. Table 3.1 stipulates the concepts and their interpretation. This will be enhanced in chapter four (methodology) to include the research methods and types of data sources that will be implemented and collected.

As implied above, Schatzki's SPT will be the dominant theoretical lens, supplemented with other concepts. This will allow attention to practitioners, the components of practice (practice-as-entity) and praxis (practice-as-performance). Hence, both the visible action patterns (sayings and doings) of practitioners and the structural foundations of practices (Heisserer and Rau, 2015) will be combined, while also acknowledging contextual elements.

'Zooming in' (Nicolini, 2012; 2017) will help identify the situational aspects of praxis: 'to focus on the concerted accomplishment of practices within orderly scenes of actions such as meetings' (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017, p.11). Observing instantiations of practices in situ (Nicolini, 2017) will facilitate visualisation of what is done, how, and when, providing some understanding of 'what makes sense' (Korica et al., 2017, p. 165) in these situated performances, as recommended by Lequesne (2015). Closer scrutiny of performances will also offer some elucidation of entitative aspects, revealing, for example, the underpinning rules and their interpretation, understandings, and teleo-affective structures (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017; Collinson, 2018).

Additionally, the bundle of practices in each organisation and how these knot together, through temporal and spatial connections, will be indicated. Nicolini and Monteiro (2017)

contend practices are trans-situated which foregrounds the notion that there is a larger perspective of which governing in VSCs is a part and, thus, ‘zooming out’ may allow greater understanding and identification of some configurational dimensions, including relationships with other practices and wider social dimensions and circumstances (Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Geilinger et al., 2016). The identification of this configurational panorama¹⁵ combined with the situational component will hopefully provide a deeper, more thorough illustration of governing than currently exists. Furthermore, interviews with practitioners and document analysis may also shed light on the genealogy of practices, including evidence of shifts away from tradition and more recent innovations adopted (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). It is anticipated that this comprehensive approach to investigation will deliver rich, thick data for analysis.

Table 3.1: Key concepts and interpretations for empirical purposes

Concept	Interpretations for empirical purposes
Practice-as-entity	Components of a practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Understandings: ‘know-hows’; the ability to, and knowledge of, what to do. How to conduct governance activities appropriately and acceptably within that setting; • Rules: explicit and implicit procedural rules, norms, <u>oughts</u>, and instructions (that may influence actions and proceedings, written or unwritten). • Teleo-affective structure: the <u>normativized</u> and accepted ends, aims, meanings, and motivations attached to, and pursued through, the practice. • General Understandings: commonly held broader concepts and principles, including values, ideas, and ideals, that frame and underpin governance practices and praxis.
Practice-as-performance	The audible and visible sayings and doings of situated practices. What people actually do and what actually happens in praxis.
Bundles of practices	Collections of practices based on co-location, co-dependence, and co-existence.

¹⁵ This refers to a wider perspective. It gives a broader view and how practices may be linked to and have connections with other practices and activities within and beyond that immediate context and may influence one another. Within governance this could include instances whereby actors transfer experiences of practices from one environment to another and where similarities and differences may be evident.

3.5 Limitations of Social Practice Theory

As alluded to above, despite having potential to illuminate governance, it is acknowledged that SPT also has various limitations, especially in its capacity to explain organisational actions and practices or changes thereto. Schmidt (2018) is particularly critical of SPT not only for its lack of philosophical and theoretical homogeneity, but also the logic that underpins its accounts of social structures, at least in the sense of those advanced by Bourdieu. He contends Bourdieu's generative schemes, that comprise habitus, are granted explanatory power but lack independent empirical evidence. Thus, Bourdieu's reasoning adopts a form of unprovable 'circularity'. This leads Schmidt (ibid.) to doubt SPT's capabilities to explain social order, which was its original purpose, concluding it has little to offer certain fields¹⁶, providing only 'pseudoexplanation' (Schmidt, 2018, p.,29). Reed (2000) is equally sceptical of the explanatory potential of social theories, such as SPT, where structure and agency are collapsed (see also Mutch 2017; 2018).

These shortcomings insinuate a need for theoretical pluralism, integrating practice theory/ies with more traditional organisation and governance theories, advocated by Cornforth (2003) and O'Boyle and Shilbury (2016), as demonstrated by Coule (2015). The latter employs several theories to show how mainstream, unitarist interpretations of accountability can be challenged, broadened and enhanced for beneficial purposes within a non-profit organisational governance environment. Working within a different discipline, but a similar context, Seyfang et al. (2010) also show how practice theory can be combined with social movements theories to explore potential for transitions in civil society towards energy and consumption practices.

In reference to this study, it is accepted that a multi-theoretical approach could ameliorate and augment understandings of governance within this non-profit context, as some have suggested (Cornforth, 2003; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2016). For example, institutional theory could help reveal how homogeneity in governance practices across the cases may have arisen (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), owing to, for example, coercive pressures from governing bodies or normative influences from practitioners with experiences from their other organisational affiliations or previous training (Nagel et al., 2015). It was identified that almost all practitioners were skilled, experienced professionals with accomplished

¹⁶ Such as *Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)*, *Information Systems (IS)* and *Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)* (Schmidt, 2018).

backgrounds in public services, management, finance, business, accounting or law. Additionally, resource dependency theory and/or inter-organisational theory could also be invoked to reveal why clubs' governance practices appear more outwardly focused and less insular, than previous observations of VSCs, and whether that be for purposes of resource acquisition or mutually productive collaboration (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; King, 2017).

Furthermore, OG could also perhaps be combined with a network/systemic/collaborative and/or political governance orientation (Henry and Lee, 2004; Ferkins and Shilbury 2010; Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011). This could illustrate evolutions in relations (and practices) between clubs, leagues and regional and national governing bodies (Dowling et al., 2014), particularly as all cases now seem a little more acquiescent, amenable and compliant than some previous observations (Skille, 2008; Ibsen et al., 2016; Klenk et al., 2017; Nichols and James, 2017).

From a more local/ micro perspective, stakeholder theory may also help explain how clubs' governance seems to have changed, including being more aware of and responsive to the variety of stakeholders: social members, players (all demographics), parents, supporters, sponsors, trustees, volunteers, and coaches (Freeman and Phillips, 2002; Byers et al. 2012). There is evidence that cases not only acknowledge and welcome this breadth of stakeholders, but also recognise their significance (Mitchell et al., 1997), and respond more effectively to the diversity in their motivations and transactional requirements (Senaux, 2008; Fassin, 2012). Democratic theory (Coule, 2015) could be an equally facilitative and insightful lens here, enabling explanation of the processes by which decision-making occurs and becomes a source of legitimate (and good) governance, ensuring representation of the assortment of stakeholders and their needs (ibid.; Kihl and Schull, 2020).

Furthermore, stewardship theory, as described by Davidson et al. (1990), Hung (1998) and Tricker (2000), may support explication of the loyal, enduring, selfless commitment of those charged with steering and governing the organisation: the committee members and especially those in the more senior positions of chair, vice chair and treasurer which seemed the most powerful. These officers who devote much time and energy, and

undertake their fiduciary responsibilities very seriously (Healy, 2012), are seemingly driven by strong values and a desire to improve the club's offering to stakeholders (Hung, 1998).

Although it is also accepted that inclusion of these various theories may have been highly constructive and complementary, space and time constraints obviated their inclusion within the overall discussion and analysis.

Alluded to above is indication of a certain level of agency, operated by some practitioners, and their power to inform and influence practices. It is arguable that chairs and treasurers have capacity to amend, refine and steer praxis within the context of their sports club, owing to their skills, knowledge and experiences especially when combined with reflexivity (Seidman, 2008; Farrugia, 2013). However, some forms of practice theory minimise the role of the agent, backgrounding both structure and agency (Guzman, 2013). When practices become the focal point for analysis 'individual agency and/or [societal] structure are no longer accorded ontological primacy in this explanatory scheme of things' (Seidl and Whittington, 2014, p.1412). Schmidt (2018), in his readings of Bourdieu's version of practice theory, questions the absence of agency; although this contrasts a little with Seidman (2008) and Walther's (2014) interpretations of Bourdieu.

Mutch (2017; 2018) also acknowledges this difficulty with SPT and invokes Margaret Archer's (1995) criticism of practice theories: that structure and agency are centrally conflated. With both being collapsed into practices, it suggests action is primarily habitual and relegates agents into the role of 'zombies' (Mutch, 2017). Arguing that practitioners inhabit and traverse multiple contexts, making them aware of potential opportunities, he proffers this, in turn, can induce critical reflection upon the practices in which they engage, thus effecting change. 'Practices cannot deny the role of agential choice' (Mutch, 2017), albeit referring more to domestic routines. This perspective is supported by Jarzabkowski et al. who assert agents 'shape strategic activity through who they are, how they act and what practices they draw upon in that action' (2007, p.10), effectively co-creating and amending practices into praxis. This outlook is also evident in works by Whittington (2006),

Brennan and Kirwan (2015)¹⁷ and Jarzabkowski and Bednarek (2018) who write about related organisational phenomena but within differing contexts.

The issue of central conflationism, within SPT is, therefore, a concern potentially compromising explanation of why events or changes may occur. To address this deficiency, Mutch (2017; 2018) advocates SPT be supplemented through reference to the morphogenetic cycle, within a critical realist paradigm. This facilitates accommodation of different levels of reality, situational circumstances, and micro, meso and macro factors, coalescing to influence praxis. According to Mutch (ibid.) which of these elements are more influential is an empirical issue (ibid.). Guzman (2013) extols a similar argument, describing an 'inside' view of SPT. This prioritises practitioners' perspectives and the various internal and external influences that emerge, including skills and knowledge (or ignorance), artefacts, other individuals, and power relations and dynamics, which all intersect to inform action. Changes within and across these diverse variables however means praxis is always uncertain and unpredictable, containing potential for conflict, continuity and evolution with various authors perceiving agents as possessing the capacity to adapt accordingly and to amend and co-create praxis (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Seidman, 2008; Maller, 2012; Kuijer, 2014; Garcia, 2018).

Thus, partly to try and enhance the explanatory potential of SPT, this research will adopt a critical realist paradigm, drawing on related theories to help illustrate governance and explain any identifiable changes in practices. Furthermore, a multiple case study research design will be employed. This allows an in-depth investigation of organisational processes (Yin, 2018) and is responsive to 'why' and 'how' research questions, according to Mills et al. (2012).

Intimated above is a further criticism of practice theory: an absence of attention to power and politics within organisations, as observed by Ezzamel and Willmott (2004). Carter, Clegg and Kornberger (2008) continue this argument and cite the former (ibid.), saying that the strategy as practice movement has lost 'its capacity to analyse power as effectively'

¹⁷ This is also reiterated by Seidman (2008), Seidl and Whittington (2014) and Jarzabkowski and Bednarek (2018), the latter showing how agents impact practices and make changes, responding to dynamic and ongoing circumstances.

(2008, p.91). More recently, Heidenstrøm (2021) has observed a tendency to understate reflexivity and inattention to power relations, recommending practice orientations would benefit from other concepts, such as governmentality, to provide a more critical perspective of the practices of those in power positions. Ezzamel and Willmott (2004) and Clegg and Kornberger (2015) advocate Foucauldian discourse analysis. This could have opened up the 'black box' of governance within the case studies, offering potentially illuminative and insightful perspectives on how committees shape and use certain narratives to procure sought objectives or preserve the status quo (see Spaaij et al., 2017). There are evident symmetries here with political governance, when applying definitions from Lasswell (1936) 'Who gets what, when, how?' or Crick (1993, p.21) 'politics is a distinctive form of rule whereby people act together through institutionalized procedures to resolve differences, to conciliate diverse interests and values and to make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes' which could have helped determine whether some stakeholder groups seem less resourced or empowered as a result of governance decision-making.

Although accepted that power, relationship dynamics and politics are significant phenomena in governance (Hoye et al., 2006; Lee, 2008; Schoenberg, Cuskelly and Auld, 2016; Hassan and O'Boyle, 2017), particularly when various corporate or good governance policies advocate power diffusion to avoid concentration and preserve liberty and democracy (Hazo, 1968; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2006), a deliberate decision was taken not to involve these as analytics owing to the initial aim and objectives as well as space constraints.

3.6 Closing remarks

It has been argued that OG is a consequential, ubiquitous social and organisational phenomenon. Traditionally dissected and conceptualised through a relatively small number of theoretical lenses, culminating in narrow or etiolated analyses, with allegations of limited impact upon governance practice, requests for theoretical innovation in this field have been made.

It has also been asserted organisations can be conceptualised as bundles of situated practices, fundamental to the (re)production and transformation of organisational matters (Nicolini, 2012). Given the aspirations of the research: to develop theoretical and practical

insights and knowledge, SPT appears sufficiently commensurate and facilitative. 'The type of representations produced by practice-based approaches are what practitioners often ask for' says Nicolini (2017, p.113). Similarly, Reckwitz portends, the aim of practice theories is 'to obtain a heuristic aid and stimulus to empirical research capable of rendering visible phenomena and contexts that were previously off the radar, thus providing new knowledge and understanding in contemporary organisation' (2017, p.115). Hence, it seems SPT possesses a critical dual faculty: a practice ontology that affords close empirical scrutiny of governing practices and praxis; and, cogent conceptual analytical resources. Together this suggests a potent and coherent conceptual partner. Adaptable for empirical purposes, it seems well suited for elucidation of complex organisational activity (Reckwitz, 2002; Orlikowski, 2010).

It appears VSCs' governance has been predominantly off the academic radar, particularly when contrasted with the attention to corporate or larger institutional forms. Hill et al. (2016; 2019) and King (2017) implore more research of this topic, in this context. Voluntary sector organisations, when perceived as sites, bundles of practices, with longstanding traditions and histories (Salipante and Golden-Biddle, 1995; Major, 2007; Ibsen and Seippel, 2010), provide a potentially interesting and insightful research environment.

Smallman (2007) and Roberts (2005) have called for attention to practices and their effects to provide potential recommendations to support and improve knowledge and understanding of situated governance praxis. It has been argued governance research needs SPT: firstly, to open up this 'black box' (LeBlanc and Schwartz, 2007; Ahrens and Khalifa, 2013); and, secondly, to furnish novel insights and a more realistic perspective (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Given assumed similarities between governing and strategizing, and other organisational fields, it has been suggested that OG research can benefit from SPT application.

It has also been intimated a natural affinity exists between OG and SPT: feasible when the former is considered a discursive and collective processual and purposeful activity (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015; Tacon and Walters, 2016; Walters and Tacon, 2018). Even more so, perhaps, when conceptualising OG as a relational activity, consisting of myriad individual and collective interconnected actions and co-dependent and co-constituting factors. Arguably, SPT can also provide an elixir (Nicolini,

2012; 2017) to the previously unresolved issues associated with more traditional research orientations and their inherent dichotomies (Shove, et al., 2012; Erden et al., 2014). SPT offers a middle ground and an approach that assimilates 'the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social' (Whittington, 2006, p.614) and capacity to widen analyses to include micro, meso and macro environmental elements within exploratory research. From all this, it seems difficult to refute that SPT-oriented literature has provided valuable conceptual, and methodological resources, with potential to generate fresh or comprehensive insights into social and organisational activity.

Collectively, these arguments portray SPT as a potentially powerful theoretical and analytical ally and it appears there is a groundswell for a need to focus on OG practices which, combined with the potential of SPT, may shed new light on governing within the context of VSCs. It is maintained that this combination of theory, discipline and context is quite innovative and, given the more complex and challenging environment confronting VSCs, it is contended this study is prescient and apposite.

It is hoped the study of governance practices - as performances and entities - will provide revealing insights with potential for conceptual development and be of assistance to other practitioners, as Smallman (2007), Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) and Golsorkhi et al. (2014) request. Similarly, Corley and Gioia (2011) assert theoretical studies benefit from a praxis dimension, providing novel insights and, thus, opportunity to inform future practice; this being an objective of this research. The next chapter will focus on how OG will be researched, including the research paradigm, strategy, and design.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to provide a coherent, logical rationale for, and description of, the research process. It endeavours to explicate and justify philosophical and methodological foundations and assumptions that inform consequent research strategy and design decisions (Crotty, 1998; Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Data collection methods, means of data analysis, sampling choices and ethical and axiological considerations are expounded, aspiring for rigour and transparency (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). The intention is to ensure commensurability and compatibility across methodological and research components and the research aim (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Burrell and Morgan, 2011; Grix, 2010; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012; Yin, 2018).

4.2 Research aims and objectives

'Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory astray into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.'

Marx (1845) Theses on Feuerbach

Robson (2011) and Elder-Vass (2015) allude to personal interest and observations being catalysts for real world or social research. Knowledge and experience of grassroots sports clubs has confirmed their social significance, but also their precarious existence and the challenging environment. Further, much extant prescriptive and theoretical governance literature and policy seems somewhat less relevant, inapplicable or unattainable, certainly for some VSCs. Hence, the research draws attention to contemporary issues of governance and governing in VSCs, seeking to bridge the gap between the theory and practice with the overall research aim ***to develop a critical and comprehensive appreciation of local cricket clubs' governance.***

Associated objectives are to:

1. Critically explore the nature of, and relations between, situated governance practice and praxis, and how these are enacted, in three case studies;
2. Critically analyse governance practices and praxis, identifying examples considered consequential to the organisation and the outcomes sought;
3. Critically evaluate SPT as a conceptual lens and its utility within the context of organisational governance, making suggestions for theoretical development;
4. Devise a framework that encapsulates the focus of governing practice and praxis;
5. Make governance practice and praxis recommendations to other cricket clubs.

4.3 Research Paradigm & Philosophical Orientations

For this research, it is assumed a paradigmatic position or research philosophy (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) comprises: the nature of being and reality (ontology); knowledge of that reality, and how best to acquire (epistemology); beliefs and values brought by the researcher (axiology); and, methodological decisions and preferences, including a logic of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Blaikie, 2007; Burrell and Morgan, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). This 'basic belief system or world view' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105) provides an informative philosophical platform to guide research and action, influencing subsequent strategic and tactical research decisions (Lincoln and Guba, 1988; Crotty, 1998; Silverman, 2004; Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Saunders et al. (2015) concur, and echo Bhaskar's (1989) earlier assertion that, while complementary, philosophical considerations (the intransitive dimension) are paramount and provide the parameters for empirical investigations (the transitive dimension). Heeding this, ontology will now be discussed.

4.3.1 Ontology

For critical realists, ontology, as a metatheoretical dimension, assumes primacy (Bhaskar, 1989; Weber, 2004; Fleetwood, 2005; Grix, 2010). An ontology, 'assumptions about the world' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 5), includes perceptions of the nature of reality which shapes the way researchers perceive the world and objects studied (Saunders et al., 2015), informing epistemologies (Fleetwood, 2005). Thus, all ontologies have epistemological and methodological implications. For this investigation, ontology will be interpreted as referring to the nature and structure of existence and reality (Crotty, 1998; Saunders et al.,

2009), including social entities (Bryman and Bell, 2015), and our assumptions about these which pertain.

This study concurs with, and is informed by, Grix (ibid.) and Goodwin and Grix (2011) who contend much ‘real world’ research takes place between paradigmatic extremes, portrayed in table 4.1. Albeit referring to governance from the field of political science, Grix’s (2010) suggestion that ‘soft’ critical realism can embody actors, their beliefs, and ideas, but also structural and institutional elements provides some initial guidance.

Table 4.1: Selected contrasting ontologies

	Ontology	
	Objectivism, Positivism	Subjectivism, Constructionism, Constructivism and Social Constructivism
Meaning	Reality and social phenomena exist, but independent, separate, and external to social actors. Social entities are considered an entity, object, and have an objective, concrete-like, stable, and fixed reality. Some argue these entities have a deterministic (cause and effect) impact upon human behaviour and variables can be isolated and identified.	Social phenomena and reality/ realities are not independent, but are actively created by agents (individuals, groups); a product of cognitions, perceptions, and discursive activity. Agents devise (construct), negotiate, revise and apply meanings they attach to social entities. Reality is viewed as intangible, ephemeral, plural, contingent and contextualised.
Implications for epistemology	This reality, its meaning, and the relationships between phenomena can be uncovered/ discovered and, ultimately, predictions can be made about the behaviour of entities and their impact.	A desire and need to understand individual, subjective perspectives and experiences (an insider’s view).

(Informed with reference to Hughes and Sharrock, 1997; Bryman and Bell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009; Lincoln, et al., 2011; Burrell and Morgan, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012.)

Besides critical realist orientations, the ontology for this study is also informed and influenced by practice, relational, and open systems ‘theoretical perspectives’ (Crotty, 1998), providing a comprehensive and supportive ‘philosophy of science’ (Hallebone and Priest, 2009). It is conceived these share synergies, inferring compatibility. Collier (1994) and Fleetwood (2013) discuss the processual, relational nature of CR with Bhaskar (1989) asserting realists often seek an understanding of the relationship between structural and agentic elements which underpins the transformational conception of social activity (TMSA). Referring to social practices, Bhaskar (1989, p.4) writes ‘Society is the ensemble

of positioned practices and networked interrelationships which individuals never create but in their practical activity always presuppose, and in doing so everywhere reproduce or transform'. As Danermark et al. (2002, p.45) suggest, 'the objects of social science are relational'. This chimes with governance, often described as a processual and relational activity (Garcia and Welford, 2015; King, 2017), and SPT which facilitates a theoretical focus on the practical, underpinned by a relational orientation (Feldman and Worline, 2016). Elder-Vass (2015, p.15) argues, 'Our ontology must accurately reflect the relational characteristics of the kinds of things being studied'.

4.3.2 Critical Realism: assumptions and applicability

For these reasons, this research adopts a critical realist world view: a significant and befitting paradigm for social science research (Sayer, 1999; Robson, 2011; Maxwell, 2012; Byers, 2013; Fletcher, 2017), including qualitative (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010). Mutch (2020) propounds CR can work effectively with various social theories, referring to examples of practice-oriented research from Whittington (1989) and Herepath (2014). It is attractive for this research, alluded to above by Grix (2010), because it offers an alternative philosophy of science, a middle or third way (Collier, 1994; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Byers, 2021), that reconciles an objective ontology with a constructivist, relativist epistemology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2012). It has also recently been hailed by Byers et al. (2021) who recommend its application within sport governance to identify how and why something occurs, enabling more comprehensive panoramas of social phenomena.

While Bhaskar's work (1989) might occasionally be somewhat esoteric, various authors identify key assumptions which will inform this research. These include:

- 1). Existence of an independent, intransitive 'out there' (Easton, 2010) reality, separate of humans and their cognitions, beliefs, and discursive activity (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 1999). Knowledge thereof, however, is social, incomplete, subjective, fallible, contextualised and fluid (Collier, *ibid.*; Sayer, *ibid.*; Outhwaite, 2000).

- 2). 'Reality' is stratified, comprising three levels: the real or deep (hidden structures and relations); the actual (behaviours, events and actions); and, the empirical (consequences, effects, outcomes, and perceptions thereof) (Fletcher, 2017; McAvoy and Butler, 2018). Critical realists suggest an accurate understanding of reality takes account of all levels

(Byers, 2013). Appreciation of the deeper, underlying structures and mechanisms enables fuller grasp of social events and phenomena (Robson, 2011; Byers et al., 2021).

3). The social world is conceptualised as an 'open system' which is 'irreducibly geo-historical' and processual (Easton, 2010), fluid and dynamic (Duberley and Johnson, 2000; Archer, 2010). It comprises mechanisms and structures often operating dialectically which combine to produce events; however, these are difficult to isolate and measure separately (Kemp and Holmwood, 2003; Fleetwood, 2013; Edwards et al., 2014). Open systems implies difficulty for prediction, but rich and thick research that identifies causal mechanisms in contexts can make plausible explanation possible (Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 1999; Robson, 2011).

4). The social world is reproduced and/or transformed through the interplay of pre-existing and emerging structural forces and reflexive, purposeful active agents (Bhaskar, 1989; Danermark, et al., 2002; Fleetwood, 2013). Social structures provide the foundation and context, as they provide the rules and resources for meaningful interaction (Willmott, 2000), but are dependent on human activity for reproduction (Bhaskar, 1989). This, again, demonstrates similarities with SPT's ontology.

Thus, a CR approach to governance research suggests it should not be understood purely by a focus on structural nor agentic aspects alone, but rather it recognises their respective recursive interplay, leading to reproduction or transformation of entities (Archer, 2010).

5). Knowledge of the intransitive dimension of the world cannot be reduced purely to epistemology - the transitive dimension (Sayer, 1999) – this being the 'epistemic fallacy' of positivism (Bhaskar, 1989; Downward, 2005). Reality and mechanisms cannot be reduced to mere social constructions (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

6). Furthermore, CR research aims to identify and explain, but not predict, the 'real': structures and powers (Fleetwood, 2013), acknowledging emergent properties and other forces at play and how these interrelate and enable or constrain subsequent events and experiences (Danermark et al., 2002; Kempster and Parry, 2014).

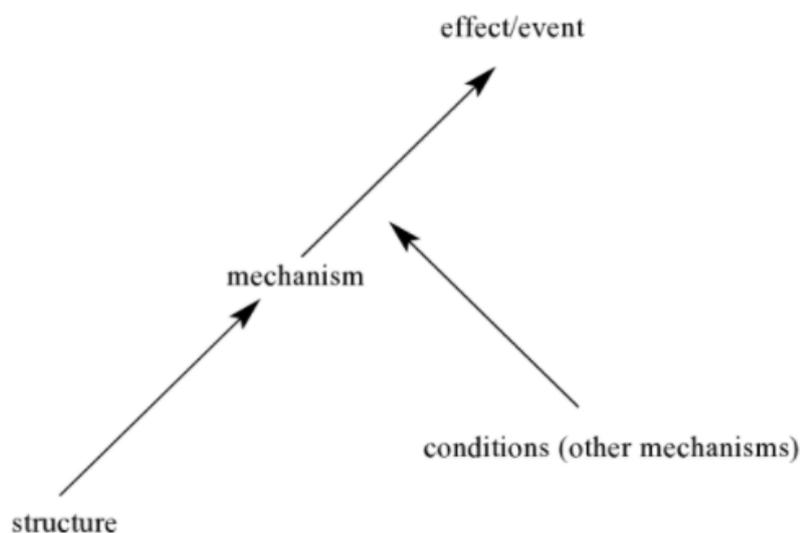
This relates to SPT and how previous iterations inform performances. As Easton (2010) suggests, critical realists focus attention on the processes that produce and reproduce the ordering of events and the social scientist's task is to derive knowledge that reflects and

explains these structures (Blaikie, 2007). Hence, a better understanding of the social, transitive world only emerges once the intransitive domain is understood (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Fletcher, 2017). Byers (2013, p.12) helpfully clarifies and summarises this perspective.

It is the relationship between the actors and these mechanisms, notably the interpretation by actors of their environment and of each other's behaviour. However, relationships and social phenomena cannot be always understood by causal statements and the researcher must also interpret the social structural context that underpins and shapes the control mechanisms active in the organisations under investigation.

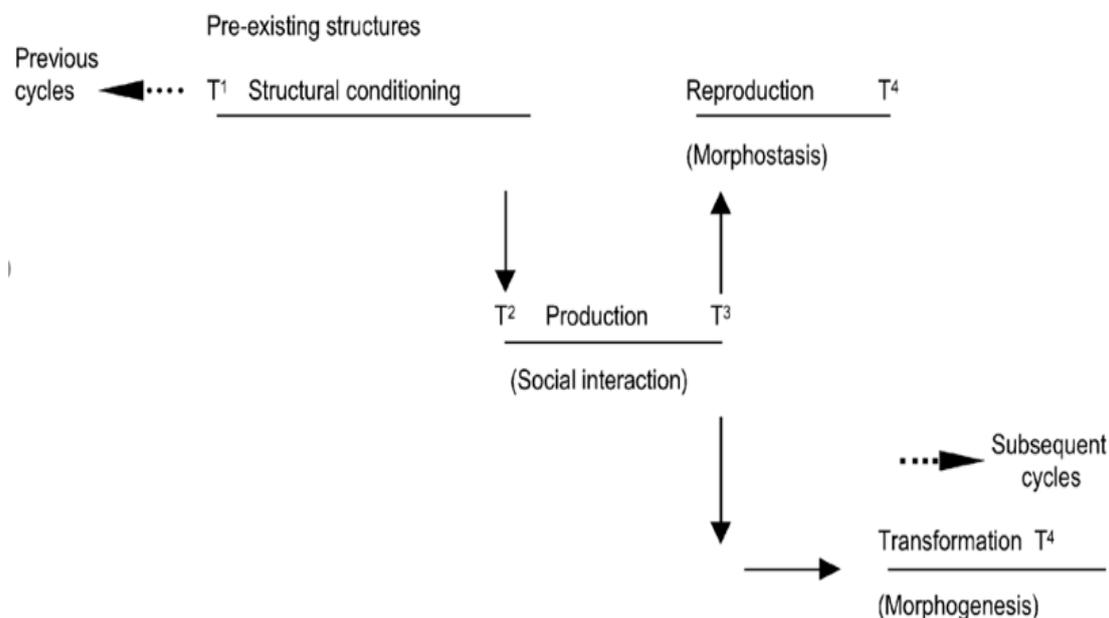
This chimes with SPT's concept of 'practical intelligibility' whereby knowing agents act and react accordingly and appropriately to the prevailing circumstances within a situated context. Sayer's (1999, p.15) conceptual model (figure 4.1) visually captures this dynamic and process.

Figure 4.1: Critical Realist view of Causation



This is incorporated within the conceptual framework to facilitate acknowledgement of structures and 'conditions' such as identifiable internal or external forces which can have effects or outcomes (the empirical domain). This will be supplemented with reference to Archer (1995; 1998) which provides additional theoretical resources (figure 4.2), explaining and identifying stability or change with recourse to the structural and agentic elements, thus avoiding the trap of central conflation (Mutch, 2017; 2020).

Figure 4.2. Based on Archer’s Superimposition of the Transformational Model of Social Action and the Morphogenetic/ Static Cycle (Archer, 1998, p.376).



Application of the above two models provides opportunity to recognise that previous practices (as entity), which although cannot be observed, ‘structurally condition’ subsequent practice-as-performances. When also considering ‘conditions’ this facilitates identification of reproduction (morphostasis) or transformation (morphogenesis) and under which circumstances that ensues (Ackroyd, 2010; Elder-Vass, 2015).

These theoretical models have been coalesced and synthesised with SPT concepts (table 4.2). Mutch (2017; 2020) argues a morphogenetic approach is applicable to a variety of social phenomena and offers rich resources for those who look to connect practices to their broader context, citing the work of Herepath (2014), while counselling this is not easy.

Table 4.2: Critical Realism’s stratified ontology linked to research opportunities and Archer’s morphogenetic cycle and Sayer’s model of causation

CR Concept	Meaning	Research Implications linked to practice and praxis.	Archer’s morphogenetic/ morphostatic cycle Sayer’s model of causation
Real domain	Entities, mechanisms, structures have causal powers and can produce consequences & effects.	Pre-existing structures not observable: Previous practices (as-entity): understandings, rules and teleo-affective structures; and, the pre-existing macro, meso and micro conditions.	Structural conditioning T1 Pre-existing practices and norms predate actions. Structure
Actual domain	Events and actions that take place.	Observations of events (practices-as-performance) and influences from pre-existing structures and emergent macro, meso, micro and agentic forces.	T2 – T3 Social interaction brings together pre-existing, emergent structural and agentic elements Mechanism and conditions
Empirical domain	The experiences and perceptions of people	Identify the effects and outcomes of praxis, including perceptions of practitioners and stakeholders (rule interpretations, meanings and motives within the practices) through observation, interviews, focus groups and documentation. Identification of changes to praxis or repetition.	T4 Structural elaboration: morphogenesis or morphostasis. T4 becomes the new T1. Effect/ Event

Alluded to above are potential benefits to a CR approach to organisational analysis, including explanatory and causal capacity and insight, not just expansive description (Danermark, et al., 2002; Mutch, 2017). Various authors (Robson, 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) suggest explanation of how these governing practices are generated, their operation within different contexts, and the attached meanings, purposes and sought outcomes ensures an analytic as well as descriptive component, strengthening the research. As Mutch (2020, p.8) says, ‘While rich descriptions of practice are often illuminating, they get their full power from being placed in the cultural and structural circumstances of their performance’. This aligns with Bhaskar:

a practically oriented critical realist approach would seek to determine to what extent enduring and underlying structures are being reproduced in novel forms and to what extent the structures themselves are being modified or even transformed. This is an open empirical question' (1989, p.191).

This links to the research objectives and knowledge of the transitive domain.

4.3.3 Epistemology

Bhaskar states 'realism is a theory of being, but with epistemological implications' (1989, p.13). Among authors there seems some agreement that epistemology, this theory of knowing (Sprague 2010), refers to what can be accepted as knowledge, its nature and essence, and how it can be researched.

Epistemologies are often explained by reference to contrasting assumptions about the natural and social worlds and how these can be investigated (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; 2011; Blaikie, 2007; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Saunders et al. (2015, p.136) illustrate the 'research philosophies' of positivism, CR and interpretivism and their differing metatheoretical and research dimensions.

Ontology (nature of reality or being)	Epistemology (what constitutes acceptable knowledge)	Axiology (role of values)	Typical methods
Positivism			
Real, external, independent One true reality (universalism) Granular (things) Ordered	Scientific method Observable and measurable facts Law-like generalisations Numbers Causal explanation and prediction as contribution	Value-free research Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched Researcher maintains objective stance	Typically deductive, highly structured, large samples, measurement, typically quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed
Critical realism			
Stratified/layered (the empirical, the actual and the real) External, independent Intransient Objective structures Causal mechanisms	Epistemological relativism Knowledge historically situated and transient Facts are social constructions Historical causal explanation as contribution	Value-laden research Researcher acknowledges bias by world views, cultural experience and upbringing Researcher tries to minimise bias and errors Researcher is as objective as possible	Retroductive, in-depth historically situated analysis of pre-existing structures and emerging agency. Range of methods and data types to fit subject matter
Interpretivism			
Complex, rich Socially constructed through culture and language Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities Flux of processes, experiences, practices	Theories and concepts too simplistic Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations New understandings and worldviews as contribution	Value-bound research Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective Researcher interpretations key to contribution Researcher reflexive	Typically inductive. Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted

Positivism might initially seem an apposite epistemology given its objectivist ontology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012), sharing similarities with CR. The notions, assumptions and claims of positivism have been attacked, however, at ontological, epistemological, operational, and practical levels. Human sense fallibility is an immediate hurdle (Bhaskar, 1989). Philosophers like Dilthey, as cited in Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 8), suggested human discourse and action cannot be analysed with the methods of the natural sciences, while Schon (1983) not only criticised positivism’s epistemological basis, but also its practical impact and relevance to managers. The various limitations of positivism induced the development of post-positivism (Crotty, 1998), but many called for a more appropriate

epistemology: one that captures understanding of human behaviour and is more attuned to the complexities of the social world (Saunders, et al., 2009; 2015). This epistemology is typically termed interpretivism or anti-positivism.

Ontologically, interpretivism is situated within an anti-foundationalist, constructionist world view (Grix, 2010; Burrell and Morgan, 2011). Reality is constructed socially (Greene, 2010), a product of individuals and their social, discursive and cognitive interactions and processes, having 'no existence independent of social actors' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.2). Other recognised differences postulate social actors have a choice, agency (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bryman and Bell, 2007), whereas inanimate objects do not (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997), and meaning is context specific and negotiated, not universal (Cresswell, 2009; Easton, 2010). These assumptions prevent notions of simple causal laws (Hughes and Sharrock, *ibid.*) and 'social facts' (Herzog, 2018).

Knowledge of the social world, and its meaning for actors, requires access to this subjective thinking and the meanings constructed at a deeper, more personal level (Cresswell, 2009; Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012). The aim is description and comprehension, 'verstehen', of social phenomena: idiosyncratic, socially constructed realities, producing atypical, ideographic, and contextualised knowledge (Silverman, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007; Hallebone and Priest, 2009). Accordingly, different inquiry methodologies are propounded (Cresswell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2015), suited to identifying, capturing and representing this subjective nature and the realities that transpire (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative methods, emphasising words rather than numbers (*ibid.*), are typically advocated (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Saunders et al., 2009), including case study, interview, and observation (Silverman, 2009; Byers, 2013).

A CR paradigm shares many of these qualitative methodological and epistemological orientations (Duberley and Johnson, 2000; Byers, *ibid.*; Saunders et al., 2015). Taking the previously discussed assumptions of CR into account, overall, it implies and impels knowledge of social phenomena requires consideration of both the more immediate context and the deeper, underlying structures that may constrain and enable praxis. Thus, CR seems to offer potential solutions: a safer channel between the Scylla of positivism and

its disregard of the subjective nature of the world and the Charybdis of interpretivism¹⁸ which refutes and neglects the external, independent nature of entities and reality. Furthermore, the assumptions of SPT and CR suggest some philosophical congruency and symmetry, including an anti-foundationalist and relational orientation combined with respect of the geo-historical and material field which frames observable and 'actual' events and processes. It is suggested a blending of these presumptions provides a robust and coherent philosophical basis for subsequent research decisions.

4.4 Research Strategy and Design

Henceforth focus will be on more specific operational research elements, including strategy and design, logic of inquiry, and methods of data collection and analysis.

4.4.1 Qualitative Case Study

A multiple case study (CS) research design, as utilised by many authors in sport organisation investigations, was adopted. This is considered congruent with the research aim and exploratory purpose, data sought, the topic, context and paradigm (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2018). Easton (2010) and Saunders et al. (2015) suggest this design is appropriate when a better understanding of a bounded, but complex, phenomenon within a particular field is sought, especially when existing theories are deficient or underdeveloped (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Cresswell, 2009), as with governance in VSCs (Hill et al., 2016; 2019; King, 2017). Morse (1991), as cited in Cresswell (2009, p.98), recommends an exploratory approach, particularly when theory development is the purpose. Exploratory research enables synthesis of description and explanation (Blaxter et al., 2010) to derive practical and theoretical knowledge about the phenomenon of interest (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011), aligning with the study's objectives.

CS was adopted for capacity to intensely focus on a phenomenon and enable deep engagement within a setting, opportunity to 'zoom in' (Nicolini, 2012; 2017), and scrutinise and observe real-time processes and activities (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Or, rather practices and praxis in this case, as Smallman (2007) and Trowler (2014) recommend. This feature of case studies, to reveal real-life issues in detail,

¹⁸ This is a reference to Homer's *Odyssey* and Odysseus' navigation between two unappealing dangers. It is suggested for this piece of research neither positivism nor interpretivism represents a suitable paradigm, owing to their ontologies, and therefore critical realism offers a safer pathway.

within local contexts (Yin, 2018), and how practitioners try to overcome problems, was attractive, accessible, and possibly more persuasive (Blaxter et al., 2010).

Kesslet and Bach (2014) and Yin (2018) argue organisations are particularly suited to CS research. They offer potential for observation of processes (the actual domain) and effects and outcomes (empirical domain), having identifiable characteristics such as boundaries, structural relations and roles, as well as access to different data sources (Byers, 2013; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). This was supported by Hill et al. (2019) and evident in their multiple case study research into VSCs' governance. Data from people's experiences can be considered strong in reality, allowing researchers to focus on actions, but also contain insights that can lead to change (Ackroyd, 2010; Blaxter et al., 2010).

A qualitative research strategy was adopted. Merriam (1998) and Atkinson and Wallace (2012) assert this strategy is potentially more illuminating, providing valid, real, and rich data through naturalistic observation. Furthermore, as Flick (2018) argues, complexity within different contexts can be accommodated while Bryman (2012) contends this research strategy assumes a more fluid, emergent and processual view of social reality. Researchers can become attuned 'to the unfolding of events over time and to the interconnections between the actions of participants of social settings' (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.426), enabling contextualised understanding and explanation of social phenomena under investigation (Merriam, 1998). This suggests alignment with both the praxis of governing and the ontology of CR.

Hence, overall, this strategy offered contingency to acquire a better understanding of the social and historical context, and the relational aspects of the meanings constructed and apparent within practices. It was felt important to research not just what happens in each site, but also why clubs are governed that way (Hill et al., 2019), acknowledging internal and external elements, with opportunity to identify inherent underlying structures and mechanisms that influence the 'actual' and 'empirical' levels of social reality. This provides some explanatory insight (Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 1999) of this 'real world problem' (Robson, 2011). As Schatzki (2012) says 'studying daily doings without addressing their telos ('aim'), tools, rules and the wider institutional context means only scratching the explanatory surface' as cited in Korica et al. (2017, p.166).

Further beneficial outcomes of this design include potential identification of similarities and differences or variations in mechanisms, processes, and outcomes (Danermark et al., 2002; Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Hui et al., 2017). Findings and conclusions may then be drawn more effectively (Ackroyd and Karlsson, *ibid.*; McAvoy and Butler, 2018; Yin, 2018), revealing indications of sector convergence (Kesslet and Bach, 2014). These considerations and affordances are significant and proved illuminating.

4.4.2 Theory of Logic of Inquiry

A theory of logic connects theoretical and empirical components (Grix, 2010). Various authors (Ackroyd, 2010; Robson, 2011; O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014) eschew traditional deductive and inductive approaches for realist research. Concurring with Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014), it is contended case studies provide realists with opportunity to describe and establish events, identify patterns and the operation of mechanisms which can help explain a process or outcome (Ackroyd, 2010). Abduction involves the description and redescription of observable events, using theoretical concepts (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Ackroyd, 2010; Fletcher, 2017) which takes place in chapter six. This allows some identification of demi-regularities or patterns which can then lead to conjecture as to the conditions that brought about their existence (retroduction). As McAvoy and Butler concisely state 'The retroduction process allows the researcher to identify mechanisms, what activates them and their impact' (2018, p.172). This involves looking backwards and asking what is it that facilitates and causes the event (Downward, 2005; Easton, 2010).

Critical realists blend these two explanatory logics to develop hypothetical models of structures and mechanisms (Hallebone and Priest, 2009) and provide more realistic explanation of social phenomena and novel insights (Danermark et al., 2002; Ackroyd, 2010; O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014).

4.5 Data Collection Methods

Grix (2010) and Flick (2014) portend topics of investigation and data requirements assume primacy over method. Acknowledging this, along with paradigmatic assumptions and practical considerations (Bryman and Bell, 2007), semi-structured interviews (SSIs), non-participant observations, and document analysis were undertaken (Byers, 2013; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). These can furnish rich, thick data (Hammersley, 2008; Flick, 2013) and allow the researcher to gain situated understandings (Grix, 2010; Cresswell and Poth,

2018) from their close proximity to participants and the observation of practices and processes (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Additionally, these methods supplement one another, enabling verification of concepts and processes. Byers (2013) and Millar and Doherty (2018) suggest triangulation of multiple data sources increases the credibility of the data collected and builds the reality of cases.

Each research instrument will now be briefly discussed, recognising respective utilities and deficiencies.

4.5.1 Interviews

According to Miller and Glassner (2006) and Roberts (2014), realist researchers can use semi-structured interviews (SSIs) to gain deep and vivid insights into social phenomena, elucidating the context and pre-existing structures and relations. SSIs can also facilitate access to 'things' beyond the capacity of other instruments (Wellington, 2000; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and help interpret and clarify data from other sources (Hammersley, 2008; Grix, 2010; Millar and Doherty, 2018). This might include 'argot': context specific language, or vague references encountered in documentation (Grix, *ibid.*).

This was borne out during primary research. Interviewees clarified some of the processes adopted within performances and the terminology within constitutions. This facilitated stronger appreciation of rules and procedures, explaining how and why these are applied and interpreted in praxis. Additionally, Loscher et al. (2019), citing Schatzki (2012), advocate interviews to enable access to elements of the teleo-affective structure of practices, including the goals of their activities, and underpinning attached rationales.

The benefits and disadvantages to both individual and group interviews are summarised below with due consideration of numerous authors (table 4.3). To address potential shortcomings and issues of quality, honesty and transparency, protocols and procedures were implemented (Cresswell, 2014), heeding the advice from these authors.

Table 4.3: Advantages and Disadvantages of Interview types and Advice to Researchers

Interview Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	How to conduct: advice to researcher
Individual (Semi-structured)	Flexibility (time, place, topic) Access to individual perceptions, values, attitudes, understandings, experiences, interpretations; phenomena that can be difficult to observe Accommodate depth and complexity Produce rich, illuminating and contextual insights and detail Can include those not previously represented or excluded and permit purposive sampling – access to ‘experts’ or ‘elites’ who can provide context and process knowledge Synchronous and face to face with potential to address misunderstanding (verbal and nonverbal congruence)	Does not provide direct access to facts, but rather representations Not reliable as sole sources of data, must be qualified further Difficulty in ascertaining verisimilitude of accounts. Requires a range of skills on behalf of interviewer Concerns about reliability of information and open to bias Difficulty of access to ‘experts’ or ‘elites’ Possible argot or esoteric language Potential for misunderstandings Possible interviewer/ respondent fatigue Travel, transcription, field notes, are time consuming	Develop an interview protocol explaining aims, purposes, topic of the research “Talk a little, listen a lot”. Develop an interview guide Be empathic, flexible Establish rapport and trust Avoid leading or long questions, & esoteric language Make notes during and after the interview. Audio-tape and transcribe asap. Ensure appropriate, conducive environment
Group (Semi-structured)	Many of the above plus: Economical Self-correcting dynamic; internal consistency In-group stimulation Members may have an interest in the topic Can be enjoyable for participants	Can be dominated by the articulate or vociferous. Can be difficult to coordinate and control and unpredictable Difficult to take notes (and determine who is speaking at times) Data can be difficult to transcribe (people speaking at the same time) and assign. Individual views can be suppressed. Limited number of questions/topics within timeframe. Requires high level of interviewer skills.	As above. Develop expectations, ground rules, procedures and protocols. Decide between directive and non-directive role

(Adapted from: Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Eisner and Peshkin, 1990; Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Wellington, 2000; Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Holstein and Gubrium, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007; Silverman, 2008; Hammersley, 2008; Silverman, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010; Robson, 2011; Flick, 2014; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Hill et al., 2019)

In total nineteen (two pilot and seventeen actual) one to one SSIs were conducted. Five group SSIs were also conducted.

4.5.1.1 Pilot Interviews

Possible participants were selected carefully (Alvesson, 2011), and interview guides for each devised. Pilot interviewees’ preferences and circumstances were considered (King and Horrocks, 2010; Hill et al. 2019) which may have helped procure their involvement.

Advocated by Rowley (2012), pilot interviews provided first-hand insights into subjective perceptions (Silverman, 2008) of the perceived problems confronting VSCs (Appendix A) and their governance practices, providing much valuable initial information.

Interviews were face-to-face, allowing observance of potentially important nonverbal behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2007), reducing ambiguity of interpretations (Baroud-Nabhani, 2003). Gratitude and explanation were incorporated, seeking to build trust and confidence (Merriam, 1998; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), with the intention to 'talk a little, listen a lot' (Wolcott, nd) as cited in Eisner and Peshkin (1990, p.127). It was hoped honest insights would result (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and did so. Recording devices were used and field notes were made during interviews with further reflections immediately afterwards (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Savenye and Robinson, 2001).

Transcription was conducted and the data reviewed for key themes (Appendix A). The process was reflected upon (Roulston, 2010), refined, and an interview schedule, informed by numerous authors, was finalised (Appendix D). These initial insights and reflection upon interview practices provided some momentum, arguably resulting in improved 'craftsmanship' (Alvesson, 2011; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

4.5.1.2 Non-pilot Interviews

During subsequent interviews, the above processes were repeated. Seventeen (one to one) interviews were completed, lasting between approximately forty to seventy-one minutes. Hearteningly, no one cancelled; all interviewees were thoroughly interested and supportive. A table of interviewees is provided (Appendix B). Group interviews, of between three and nine participants, were also conducted (two at clubs A and C, one at club B). The same protocols were adopted. Permission to record and consent to participation was sought. Attendance comprised full club members of between four and over fifty years' membership. They included parents, social, playing, coaching, and former committee members, representing various stakeholder identities. There were occasional difficulties with their organisation and execution and transcription (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Flick, 2014), including someone needing to leave early and occasional interruptions or background noise. Rarely were audio recordings affected, but field notes provided valuable supplementary support (Appendices E and G).

Group interviews proved illuminating and provided a different dynamic and perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Flick, 2014): often enjoyable, jovial, with evidence of internal self-checking and a self-generating dynamic (Flick, *ibid.*). Imperative for this research was a desire to gain impressions of these non-committee personnel and relevant stakeholders (Millar and Doherty, 2018), and their insights into their club's governance for two purposes. Firstly, for the checks and balances provided (Bryman and Bell, 2007) on the descriptions and narratives of committee members and, secondly, a personal moral obligation to include different perspectives, including 'marginal groups' (Burr, 1998): those often ignored in research (Hood, 2016; Shannon-Baker, 2016). Other governance research inclines to omit rank and file organisation members, often prioritising leadership roles.

The potential deficiencies of, and danger of overreliance on, interview as a method was recognised (Hammersley, 2008; Silverman, 2009; Alvesson, 2011). Data were collected from other sources not just to enable comparisons and contrasts (Hammersley, 2008) and data triangulation (Grix, 2010; Flick 2018; Millar and Doherty, 2018) but, crucially, to prevent uncritical assimilation and false conclusions (Roberts, 2014; Smith and Elger, 2014).

Interviews took place after scrutiny of organisation documents and online sources and the observation of some, but not all, meetings in each site. This allowed for verbal clarification and verification of certain terminology, elements of practice, and processes, referred to in other data sources. (NB AGMs typically occurred at the end of the research cycle for each club, owing to their seasonal occurrence).

4.5.2 Observations (of Meetings)

Cooper, Lewis and Urquhart (2004), Hammersley (2007), and Bernstein and Lysniak (2017) all suggest observations complement and supplement other methods. Tacon, Walters and Cornforth (2017), in a study of accountability in non-profit governance, directly observed events, justified from their belief that 'there are always important differences between what people say they do and what they actually do' (*ibid.*, p.686). This research shared similar concerns and undertook measures to address these, for example the group interviews with stakeholders.

An accepted instrument within CS research (Yin, 2018; Hill et al., 2019; Tacon, 2019), observation is imperative for praxiography (Smallman, 2007; Trowler, 2014). As Flick

argues 'practices are accessible only through observation' (2018, p.308). Envisaging events, processes and the capture of dynamic interactions reduces 'artificiality' (Robson, 2011), provides a direct understanding of a phenomenon in its natural context (Vinten, 1994; Palmer and Grecic, 2014), and enabled first-hand witnessing of what actually happens in performances (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; Trowler, 2014).

Conducted over the course of nine months, the ten observations included AGMs, committee meetings and sub-committee meetings (NB in one club a specialist ideas generation event was also observed; deemed appropriate given its proximal timing and links to the previous meeting observed).

Action was taken to mitigate the inherent dangers of this method (Hammersely, 2008; Robson, 2011): such as observer presence (Liu and Maitlis, 2012; Flick, 2018) and 'procedural' and 'personal reactivity' (Hammersely, 2008). The 'non-participant observer' role was always adopted (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018), 'sitting out of the way' (Robson, 2011, p.331). Being less obtrusive seemed the most logical to witness the natural flow of activity. Also, comprehensive field notes could be made (Cresswell, 2014), from a more removed perspective (Liu and Maitlis, 2012, Cresswell and Poth, 2018). An observation template (Appendix G) was used, informed by Lofland and Lofland (1984) and Flick (2018). Hammersley (2008) suggests these undertakings combined with reflection can induce more consistency in data interpretation.

On all occasions, talking to many of the other members, later in their clubhouse (Tacon, 2019), provided additional insights and, while not recorded, these provided wider perspectives and occasional clarification of historical events and idiosyncrasies.

4.5.3 Document Analysis

Primary organisational documentation (Scott, 1990) was collected and perused, including club constitutions and year handbooks, minutes of meetings and club policies (Hill et al., 2019). Web sites were also scrutinised (Burgess and Bingley, 2013; Millar and Doherty, 2016).

These sources proved useful, providing qualitative data (Merriam, 1998; Bowen, 2009; Prior 2016) and information about aspects of each club's governance activities and procedures, and helpful when 'making sense of social and organisational practices' (Coffey,

2014, p.367). The latter cites May (2001, p.176) 'documents, read as the sediments of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure decisions which people make...'. This aligns with Bowen (2009) and Coffey (2014) who counsel documents can provide data on the context, including historical insight; the former also remarking they can reveal changes over time (Bowen, *ibid.*). This reflects Schatzkian and Archerian conceptualisations of SPT and CR, respectively.

Bowen (2009) and Coffey (2014) both recommend adoption of a critical approach to documents. Grix (2010) and Hill et al. (2019) suggest triangulation with data from other sources, while Jacobsson (2016) advises observation of their application in practices. This was implemented during primary research data collection.

Additionally, secondary documents were also consulted and collected, including archival local newspaper articles and online sources, pertaining to historical club achievements and developments. These provided material background information, supplementing interview narratives.

Overall, the various documents and methods addressed many concerns discussed above and facilitated comparisons between practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance and some evidence of change.

4.6 Cases: Selection and Sampling Strategy

Cohen et al. (2007) and Silverman (2009) contend qualitative research samples are typically small and always involve compromise (Wellington, 2000). The sample choice was founded on a purposive, non-probability rationale (Merriam, 1998; Kesslet and Bach, 2014). Selections were made on likelihood to furnish opportunity and access to the data needed to address the research aim (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Site choice was also influenced by consideration of the Lindy Effect (Taleb, 2012), relating to the longevity of organisations and their potential for pre-existing practices and structures, providing opportunity to identify change. Hill et al., (2019, p.6) cite Yin (2009) who suggests 'robust' case studies stem from replication which includes organisations of sufficient similarity to generate comparable evidence. Hence, the sample, with deference to Hill et al. (*ibid.*), comprised clubs whose primary or only sport was cricket, were geographically accessible and shared some similarity in age. Differences, however, also existed, including locality, multisport/single sport and size (members and turnover),

suggesting potential for variation in the phenomenon under investigation (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014; Hui et al., 2017).

Committee members, 'key decision makers' (Millar and Doherty, 2016), were interviewed based on possession of specific particularities (McQueen and Zimmerman, 2006). This purposive approach enabled access to 'knowledgeable people' (Cohen et al., *ibid*, p.110), considering Tacon and Walters' view 'it is the perceptions, actions and, ultimately, the decision-making processes of board members that constitute organisational governance' (2016, p.367). Practitioners were interviewed because they 'may provide their own account of the mechanisms, contexts and outcomes implicated in efforts to implement policies and practices' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) as cited in Smith and Elger (2014, p.120). Group interviews consisted of whoever was available at the time visited and, therefore, very much a convenience sample (Cresswell, 2009). A table of interviewees is provided (Appendix B).

4.7 Data Collection, Management and Analysis

4.7.1 Data Collection, Recording and Transcription

All interviews and observations were audio recorded (Blaxter et al., 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010), using two devices, enabling greater focus on the process. Participants' permission was sought prior to the event; there was not a single objection.

Transcription, the process of transforming recorded information into text, is the precursor to [more formal] analysis (Gibbs, 2007; King and Horrocks, 2010). Flick (2014; 2018) advises a detailed database for analysis can be developed from transcribing audio sources, although Gibbs (2007) warns of potential decontextualization during this phase. Hopefully, procedures outlined below address concerns. Brinkmann and Kvale counsel researchers ask, 'what is a useful transcription for my research purposes' (2015, p.213). Thus, the aim of the research, storage, analytic and coding strategies were all considered prior to deciding how, what, and when to transcribe.

Consistency in transcription approach and style was sought (King and Horrocks, 2010). Transcription was undertaken personally, listening and re-listening to the recordings (Flick, 2014) while also referring to field notes (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; King and Horrocks, 2010). Transcription always occurred within 24-36 hours of the event, while memories were still vivid. This facilitated immediate opportunity to become immersed in the data,

kick-starting analysis, and interpretation. Followed throughout, this strategy helped gain a sense of the 'whole' (Hycner, 1985), as cited in Hammersley (2008). Silverman (2006) asserts this approach positively impacts reliability.

Full transcriptions of observations, group and one to one interviews, aiming for verbatim accounts wherever possible, were produced (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The aim was 'a faithful reproduction of the aural record' (Poland, 1995, p.291), albeit acknowledging that not every aspect of the event or context can be captured (ibid.; Fontana and Frey, 1994). Occasionally, background noise, a speaker's accent or two simultaneous utterances in group interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Flick, 2014) required occasional tidying up of the transcript (Gibbs, 2007). This tactic was felt acceptable: it was kept to a minimum and always double-checked to ensure nothing significant was lost (Poland, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

The intention was to gain meaning and understanding of the participant's story, suitable for thematic (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2018) and in vivo coding (Saldana, 2014; Manning, 2017). A "literary style" was adopted (Brinkmann and Kvale, ibid.), aiming to achieve 'trustworthiness of transcripts as research data' (Poland, 1995, p.294), while acknowledging they cannot be fully reflective of the three-dimensional world in which the events occurred (ibid.). Liu and Maitlis (2012) suggest a rigorous approach to field notes, transcription and analysis can increase trustworthiness of data, combining with other data sources to ensure a collaborative view of the phenomenon.

It is hoped this prompt, consistent and diligent manner secured verisimilitude between the transcript, and the speaker's voice and intonation, and the emotional and physical context (Poland, 1995; Morse and Richards, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.7.2 Data Storage, Analysis and Coding

The need to secure, store and organise the mass and variety of data and sources encouraged use of computer aided qualitative data analysis software (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Woolf and Silver, 2017; Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). Rigour, robustness, efficiency, and transparency were sought throughout, especially in data analysis (Gibbs, 2007; Woolf and Silver, ibid.; Jackson and Bazeley, ibid.). Data sources were uploaded to NVIVO(12), logically and systematically named, and organised into

NVIVO files (Jackson and Bazeley, *ibid.*), facilitating swift identification. Concurrently, separate project and data memos were constructed, enabling recording of progress and conceptualisations, ideas, codes, and key themes (Bazeley and Richards, 2011).

Cohen, et al. (2007) advise researcher clarity as to the aim and purpose of analysis. Here, the intention was to describe, portray and identify themes which shed light on the case studies' practice and praxis, aiming to: identify similarities and nuanced differences; possible explanations; generate theory; and, original insight (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Gibbs, 2007). It is noted, however, that cross-case analysis might lose some of the 'individual' within the collective (Cohen, et al., 2007).

Field notes along with initial ideas for codes or key themes, generated during transcription, began the early stages of the coding process (Gibbs, 2007). As the primary data collection phase proceeded, this memo-ing strategy was maintained, enabling construction of a bank of key ideas, themes (Coffey, 2014) and highlighting of 'in vivo' codes (Saldana, 2014; Manning, 2017) that were beginning to take shape across the cases and sources. Bazeley and Richards (2011), Woolf and Silver (2017) and Braun and Clarke (2018) suggest this is very much a cyclical process, moving backwards and forwards between each interview and observation, 'the results or findings..., ... emerge as parts develop in an iterative manner' (Woolf and Silver, *ibid.*, pp.14-15). This enables a 'firmer sense of what is going on' (Bazeley and Richards, 2011, p.2).

NVIVO (12) software facilitated analysis of each data source, enabling identification of the significant, and worthy of focus from the more conversational or trivial (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). This links partly to the data reduction phase (Roulston, 2014) with Merriam advising the process of making sense out of the data involves 'consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said' (1998, p.178).

Data were then analysed again descriptively to identify specific cases, individuals and relevant topics, chunks with similarities, relating to the research aim and question (Morse and Richards, 2002; Roulston, 2014). The final phase - data interpretation (Gibbs, 2007; Roulston, *ibid.*) - Houghton et al., (2016) and Jackson and Bazeley (2019) suggest can be supported by NVIVO software for both within-case and cross-case analysis, helping to pinpoint higher order themes (Gratton and Jones, 2015). As analysis proceeded, themes and 'in vivo' codes were identified, using the *node* function. This allowed collection of

references to a specific theme or topic (Morse and Richards, 2002; Paulus et al., 2017), relating to the literature and conceptual framework (and part of abduction), but also those themes developing during the course of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2018). Gibbs (2007) writes this is common in many researchers' approaches.

It is suggested analysis of data benefited from blending thematic codes - pervasive, common threads that run through the data - with 'in vivo' codes - actual words of participants (Manning 2017; Cresswell and Poth, 2018). Cresswell (2014, p.201) contends '... if themes established are based on converging several sources of data or perspectives of participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the value of the study'. Manning (ibid.) and Saldana (2014) attest 'in vivo' codes are particularly apposite for case studies: when there is a need to understand the context and the social practices within, and where there may be benefit from maintaining the authenticity of the participants' responses. Advantages of thematic coding include depiction of the 'essences and essentials of humans' lived experiences' (Saldana, 2014, p.596), which links to the aim and principles of the research and researcher. Advocated also by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012), it is a means to 'identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the data' (ibid., 2006, p.79).

Thematic coding has been utilised and/or explicated by Morse and Richards (2002), Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2018) and King and Horrocks (2010). Flick (2014) argues it is suited to cross-case analysis. While Braun and Clarke elaborate a little more, the (iterative) data analysis process tends to involve three distinct phases (table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Coding Stages

Stages	Morse and Richards (2002)	King and Horrocks (2010)	Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012)
1	Descriptive coding (organises the data systematically eg by site, event)	Descriptive coding (Used to identify relevant pieces of data, stay close to the data)	Become familiar with the data and generate initial (semantic and latent) 'close to the data' codes
2	Topic coding (helps categorise and order all data related to specific, identified topics)	Interpretive coding (clusters of descriptive codes that link to the research question and share common meaning)	Search for and then refine and review themes (data-driven or theory-driven) by collecting and sorting the above codes
3	Analytic coding (helps development of categories or themes and concepts)	Thematic coding (overarching themes characterising key concepts in analysis, based on theoretical or applied aspects)	Define, name and report themes

This approach seems congruent with realist and practice ontologies whereby it can report the experiences, meanings and reality of participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2018), incorporating both individual and structural elements and their recursive interplay (ibid.). These authors' helpful guidance and 'checklist for good thematic analysis' (2006, p.96) was heeded, hoping this and the combination of data analysis strategies engender authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

During the coding process, the conceptual framework provided a basic roadmap from which data analysis proceeded (Woolf and Silver, 2017). Data were organised into layers of reality (Appendix J), corresponding to Critical Realism's depth ontology (Edwards et al., 2014). For example, pre-existing structures and norms, such as traditions and organisation histories were grouped together under assigned codes, representing the deep/real domain (T1). Also, practice-as-entity elements, comprising Rules, Practical Understandings, emotions, meanings and purposes (Teleo-affective Structures), and principles such as democracy and accountability, conceptualised as General Understandings, were included within this category. Taken from the literature, these a priori concepts were believed significant in their potential to impact performances (Higginson et al., 2015). This was borne out in actual reality (T2) and were evident not only in observations of performances, but also in documentation and interview data. Attention to the content, structure and purposes of meetings (Hendry and Seidl, 2003) included scope to acknowledge indications of agency and emerging conditions (T3). It was at this nexus, this interaction between these various elements (Sayer, 1999), that the more significant themes, reflecting governing within these organisations, began to formulate. An iterative approach, moving backwards and forwards between data, concepts and theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007), cemented theme development as they became more prominent with each stage (document analysis, interviews and observations) of the primary data collection research phase. A list of codes and themes have been appended (Appendix I) and their application to the data can be seen in Appendix J.

Alluded to above is the value of the individual data collection methods. Each, as a unique source of data, proved beneficial. Organisational web sites and accessible documentation, such as minutes and handbooks, were scrutinised prior to undertaking observations and interviews. Coffey and Atkinson (2004) and Bowen (2009) commend the value of documentation for intensive case studies and capacity to provide data on the context and

historical insights to help researchers understand traditions and pre-existing conditions. These sources were treated 'very seriously indeed' (Coffey and Atkinson, 2004, p. 58) but their ultimate utility, however, only became more apparent when employed in combination, offering a means to verify perceptions, understandings or terminology from a specific source (Bowen, 2009). It was also imperative however that these be read critically, as Silverman (2008) counsels, recognising their potential purposes and use by those in positions of power. Hence, their claims and pronouncements were cross-checked with interviews and events observed.

It was assumed that observations provided accurate insights into the dynamics of organisational processes, how they unfold in real-time, and the meanings attached by practitioners (Liu and Maitlis, 2012) given the normative nature of practices (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). Comprehensive field notes taken during performances also garnered useful supporting evidence (Cresswell, 2014), especially during transcription. For these reasons observations and group interviews were accorded particular significance and especially valued, enabling critical scrutiny of the narratives provided by governing practitioners and organisational documentation as Bryman and Bell (2007) recommend. The latter suggest this form of triangulation improves the reliability of the data. It is proposed future researchers follow this process to ensure rigour, transparency and credibility (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Bazeley and Jackson, 2013).

4.8 Addressing Quality and Ethical Considerations

Cresswell and Poth's (2018, p.281) evaluative criteria for case study research will be applied to address criticisms of qualitative research and the quality thereof (Johnson and Duberley, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Gibbs, 2007).

Cases are identified and described in detail in chapter five with a rationale for their selection. Themes begin to be identified and formulated in chapter five, abducting patterns that develop during description and discussion of each case (Ackroyd, 2010). Cross-case analysis then occurs in chapter six. Drawing on the conceptual framework (see below: table 4.5), thematic generalizations are illuminated, representing governance practice and governing praxis. Strong similarities are revealed across all cases. There is some brief researcher reflexivity and disclosure below with further reference in the concluding

chapter (see 7.4). It is therefore contended, during the course of the thesis, all of Cresswell and Poth's (2018) criteria are met.

The intention has been to achieve sincerity, transparency, and rigour. This is felt incumbent upon the researcher, mainly out of due respect to all those admirable practitioners who volunteer their time freely to ensure others have opportunity to play and socialise at their respective club. There has been a fervent desire to stay true to the data and to portray cases as honestly as possible, within the obvious constraints of the dimensions of the study.

Upholding the highest ethical standards has been an aim (Yin, 2018). Case studies have been conducted with respect, care, and sensitivity (*ibid.*). A guiding beacon throughout has been Soltis' words 'honesty is essential to research quality' as cited in Eisner and Peshkin (1990, p.247). There has been a strong aspiration to attain trust and transparency (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), adopting good research practice throughout. Wellington (2000), Walford (2001), Bogdan and Biklen (2003), and Yin's (2018) recommendations regarding access, integrity and ethicality, harm or deception have been followed, along with university research protocols. Individuals' personal data and identifiable information were stored electronically, and password protected, with pseudonyms applied to ensure anonymisation.

While not explicitly using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) qualitative evaluative criteria, it is hoped that these admissions and disclosures provide additional evidence to suggest the project, its procedures and findings are accurate, trustworthy and authentic.

4.9 Conclusions

This chapter has aimed to explicate and justify the research paradigm, arguing CR can be synthesised with SPT's philosophical assumptions and methodological orientations to generate a coherent methodology, befitting the research aim, subject matter, and context. It has also aimed to demonstrate how a qualitative cross-case study research strategy and design provides a commensurable and socially scientific means to achieve accomplishment of the project's objectives. Based on these assumptions and the methodology, a theory of logic has been proposed that reflects CR and SPT ontologies. All this has been combined

(table 4.5) to provide a cogent, flexible conceptual framework to research, analyse, and theorise governing in these locales.

Table 4.5: Conceptual framework: ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological research elements. (Simplified Version)

CR Level of Reality	Social Practice Theory Concepts	Empirical Interpretation
Real Domain (not observable)	Practice-as-entity (practical understandings, rules, <u>teleo</u> -affective structure, general understandings)	What are the practical and procedural know-hows, norms, aims, meanings and motivations, and broader values and principles that inform practices and performances?
Actual Domain (observable)	Practice-as-performance (sayings and doings during governing activities)	What happens when actually doing governing? Do variations occur? Why?
Empirical Domain	Outcomes, Effects and Perceptions thereof	What outcomes, effects, and changes do and do not ensue? Why? What perceptions pertain?

Table 4.5: Conceptual framework: ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological research elements. (Full Version)

<p>Critical Realist stratified ontology: concept and meaning</p> <p>Archer's cycle stages</p> <p>Sayer's (1999) model of causation stages</p>	<p>Social Practice Theory Concepts &</p> <p>Epistemological component</p>	<p>Research Project:</p> <p>Linking aims to Methods and Data Collection Opportunities and Sources (indicative examples)</p>
<p>Real domain (Entities, generative mechanisms, structures)</p> <p>T1 Structural conditioning</p> <p>Pre-existing practices, norms, conditions (not observable)</p> <p>Structure</p>	<p>Practice-as-entity: understandings, rules, teleo-affective structures and pre-existing conditions.</p> <p>Knowledge of norms: what should happen, how practices should be conducted and why (rationale, purposes, meanings); pre-existing conditions (macro, meso and micro).</p> <p>Knowledge of practitioner insights.</p>	<p>Opportunity to identify constraining and enabling impact/s of practice-as-entity and structural conditions.</p> <p>Opportunity for abduction and retroduction.</p> <p>Acquired through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation eg Club Constitution • One to one and group interviews • Observations of current iterations
<p>Actual domain (Events and actions that take place)</p> <p>T2 – T3</p> <p>Social interaction brings together pre-existing, emergent structural and agentic elements</p> <p>Mechanism and conditions</p>	<p>Practice-as-performance: the doings and sayings of situated practices.</p> <p>Knowledge of what does happen: how actually conducted and why. Indications of influences from pre-existing and emergent macro, meso, micro and agentic forces in each context.</p> <p>Knowledge of practitioner insights.</p> <p>Evidence of similarities and differences between entity and performance.</p> <p>Insights into possible reasons for change.</p> <p>Bundles of practices & links between practices.</p> <p>Evidence of how various practices spatially and temporally knot together to form aggregated governance praxis within sites.</p>	<p>Opportunity to witness what happens, how practices unfold in real-time; components of practice-as-entity in application/ activation, other forces at work; evidence of why.</p> <p>Opportunity for abduction and retroduction.</p> <p>Acquired through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews: interpretations/ understandings and application of, structuring entities and mechanisms. <p>Indications of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agentic and structural influences; • reasons for change; • how practices integrate and combine.
<p>Empirical domain (Outcomes, effects, consequences, and perceptions thereof)</p> <p>T4</p> <p>Structural elaboration: morphogenesis or morphostasis.</p> <p>Effect/ Event</p>	<p>The effects and outcomes of practices and praxis.</p> <p>Perceptions of practitioners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Changes to elements of practice and praxis: new understandings, meanings, rules, telos.</p> <p>Knowledge of what and why, including the effects, outcomes, telos and rationale in each context, considering structural conditions and forces.</p> <p>Knowledge of structural elaboration: repetition, modification, innovation; possible explanatory dimensions.</p>	<p>Opportunity to retroduce and identify generative mechanisms and potential explanations.</p> <p>And,</p> <p>Practitioner and stakeholder perceptions of outcomes (positive or negative) and the attached underpinning meanings, rationale, and telos.</p> <p>Acquired through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations of meetings • One-to-one and group interviews • Documentation

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter documents primary research findings. Focusing predominantly on research objective one, with some contribution to objective two, it proceeds on a case-by-case basis, adopting the same format for coherence and accessibility.

Applying the conceptual framework, this chapter principally addresses the ‘actual domain’, although there is also evidence relating to both the ‘actual’ and ‘empirical’. Each club’s bundle of governance practices is revealed, identifying and describing those enacted, with indications of the outcomes sought and their consequential nature. The chapter also enables comparisons and contrasts to be drawn across the sites (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Through abduction, it culminates in identification of similarities (Yin, *ibid.*) and demi-regularities (patterns), assisting later retroductive analysis and explanation (Byers, 2013; Fletcher, 2017).

The case studies’ characteristics are documented, revealing some commonalities (table 5.1). Each club is over a hundred years old, owns extensive grounds with sporting and social accommodation held in trust and employs a small number of staff, supplemented by casual bar persons and numerous volunteers.

Table 5.1: Case Study Characteristics

Criterion	Club A	Club B	Club C
1. Founded	1855	1909	1909
2. Club Type	Multisport	Single sport	Single sport (recently multisport summer 2021)
3. Trustees	Yes (5)	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
4. Tax Year	1 st Sept – 31 st August	1 st April – 31 st March	1 st October – 30 th September
5. Income indicator	£180K pa (2018)	£122k pa (2018)	£210K (2018)
6. Net Current Assets	£60K (ditto) + £40-42K (charity)	£38K (ditto)	£20K (ditto)
7. Clubmark Accreditation	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. Staffing	1 FTE; 1PT; 1 seasonal; numerous volunteers	2 PT; 1 seasonal; numerous volunteers	1 FTE; 2PT; 1 seasonal; numerous volunteers

NB Each interviewee as well as the group interviewees and observation events have been given a pseudonym to enable identification (Appendix B).

5.2 Club A

5.2.1 Introduction

With overall membership recently growing and now exceeding 1,000 (ObsA3AGM), implying success in their attraction and retention, the club would be categorised as 'large' for English VSCs (Nichols and James, 2008; SRA, 2018). The club is renowned for its successful junior provision, attaining Clubmark then further recognition and awards more recently (Club web site, 2019). Despite various positive stability, growth and success indicators, primary research revealed an enlarging range of prevailing external challenges, mirroring extant literature (chapter two), as well as problems caused by the weather, "a huge factor" (A2). Additionally, a key internal tension, "shared outdoor spaces" (A3), became apparent, as the partly overlapping pitches cause logistical problems, at times (A1;A2;A3;A4;A5;A6;ObsA1;ObsA3AGM) exacerbated by membership growth. This source of dissatisfaction (A1;A2;A3;A5;ObsA1;ObsA2) led to candid discussions as to which priority is paramount: playing sport or bar income. These dilemmas and the age and condition of the social, hospitality and changing accommodation compounded the urgency for its redevelopment, and the financing thereof, according to interviewees and observations.

Furthermore, bank reserves were of critical concern on several occasions, representing a potential existential crisis (A1;A2). The treasurer would regularly supplement club accounts with his own resources, during the winter months when income was very low, to maintain the club's viability and existence (A1).

It is believed the above circumstances are important contextual and material considerations, in accord with case study, SPT and CR premises, providing some structuring framework for practices and current praxis which will now be discussed.

5.2.2 Governance practices

Three types of meeting were observed: Executive Committee (EC); Management Committee (MC); and an AGM. All are routine events and a long-held tradition within the club (A1;A3;A4;A5;A6;Club Constitution, 2018). An EGM was not observed; none was conducted within the period of data collection. There were, however, various local media and internal references to a significant previous iteration (December, 2014) and the need

for another soon, when substantive facility investment and development decisions will need to be made by members (A1;ObsA1;ObsA2;ObsA3AGM).

When discussing contextual issues and the club's recent history, repeatedly mentioned was a custom of very long, acrimonious and adversarial "Exec" EC meetings. Deemed ineffective, these were a cause of frustration and inertia (A1;A2;A4;A6;FGA2). "... some of the scraps we used to have at Exec were mind-blowing, I mean some of the Exec meetings could go on for hours. ... they could be legendary; they could go on all bloody night." (A1). "So, in the past the [section] chairs, if they did speak to each other it was mostly swear words" (A4).

This situation and atmosphere was colourfully illuminated by a former honorary secretary (FGA2),

I'd come in on a Thursday evening and there's three blokes with dossiers under their arm, and this is the highpoint of their fucking month, to pardon my French [laughter]. But, quite seriously, I can remember a time, dictating minutes in my office to my secretary: matters discussed eighteen, decisions reached bloody one, matters carried forward seventeen. Nothing would get agreed. We'd be here for three and a half hours and nothing would get agreed! That was when there were four very strong sections, all of whom had their own agendas as to what they wanted to do. ... the debate was just exhausting.

This combative, insular and egocentric propensity (A1;A2;A4) no longer seems apparent with evidence of recent change (ObsA1;ObsA3AGM), partly attributed to different personnel, including the club chair (A2;A4). The latter (A1) disclosed his perspective towards meetings "I tend to try and keep them to not much more than an hour, otherwise you're just going over the same ground. We've got to get it away from being a talking shop for white, middle-aged blokes... ."

Interviewees (A1;A2;A3;A4) affirmed this change, claiming a more collaborative, cooperative, and productive climate now exists. "the Exec per se doesn't pull in different directions" (A2), partly attributed to new committee members also broadening the demographic composition (A1). Other outcomes include "... shorter Exec meetings [laughter], less aggravation over matters, covered by people having a reasonable conversation, rather than people shouting at each other" (A4). He further explained

Now there's a more collegial approach, more partnership between the sections. Basically, with having the right people, people without their own personal agendas who listen to their own players and members. It was one of the things I tried to address (ibid.).

Some of these personnel changes occurred after an emotive EGM (A1) where the club consulted members (December 2014) on a proposal to sell some of its estate. The motion was rejected, and the previous chair resigned. The new chair (A1) was quoted, in the local newspaper (2015),

In the run-up to the EGM, the club canvassed the views of the membership with an online survey, Following on from that, a new charity is being formed to foster the provision and enhancement of sporting facilities. Now, after the decision by members, the club is pushing on with plans to improve its 50-year-old clubhouse. We need to retain the unique family atmosphere that is much loved by members and visitors alike, but we desperately need to modernise our facilities.

Observation 1 (ObsA1): Executive Committee (EC)

EC meetings have a set structure and format (A1): apologies; previous meeting minutes; matters arising; various key reports and AOB. The treasurer (A2) confirmed this, adding "... the main item is clubhouse development. We all know what's on the agenda. But matters arising are interesting."

The meeting began punctually with agenda circulation. Matters arising involved quite lengthy discussion of various, mostly operational matters, including sponsorship monies still due and upcoming fundraising events. People volunteered relevant information, possible solutions and offered to resolve outstanding matters.

The chair (A1) then proposed a change of order, suggesting the treasurer's report immediately follow, saying he would combine his chair's report with "finance and developments" to "save time." Everyone agreed.

The treasurer (A2) provided a very succinct, informative update on the club's current financial position. This was "profiled" (A2) qua measured against forecasts and targets, comparing it to previous years' quarterly statements. Open discussion and questions from participants ensued. There was focus particularly on the poor winter weather's impact on

attendance and sales. However, with late spring/early summer seeing “record bar sales” and a very profitable testimonial fundraiser, the treasurer was “optimistic” the financial year would show “a slight profit and surplus”. This incited further discussions of the need for more fundraising ventures. Others voiced concern, one event “almost cost me my marriage”, indicating the time, effort and volunteering commitment involved. Some had taken holidays from work to help.

The chair offered his gratitude and referred to the “excellent” collaboration and support within the club, leading to its resounding success and considerable profits. He alluded to the positive impact on individual sections’ targets*, echoed by the treasurer. The latter reiterated winter income was a key concern and needed to be addressed; others agreed. [* NB These are the amounts of money [paid by the different sports sections to the central club for upkeep of facilities: “a tradition” (A1).]

Next, the chair gave a report titled “Finance and Development”, concisely updating attendees on recent communication and meetings with numerous external organisations, along with some funding opportunities. A significant issue was the possible enlargement of the club through incorporation of “a new section” (a local bridge club), bringing hundreds of new members: “a key opportunity for the whole Club”. Positive impacts, especially over the winter months, were outlined. The requirement for constitutional change and membership agreement through an EGM was stated (ObsA2; Club Constitution, 2018). Views were requested, conceding he may not have thought of “every issue”.

There was analytical probing and consideration of numerous ramifications with concerns raised. This coalesced around the dialectic posed by possible loss of the existing intimate and friendly atmosphere, but concomitant membership and income growth opportunities. The chair summarised and thanked all, saying “the beauty of chucking this out to ten or more people, you lot will come up with things I haven’t thought of”. Approval to further these externally located opportunities was requested; it was fully supported by all attendees. The latest clubhouse redevelopment plans were then disseminated, with ensuing discussion about costings and options.

Each sport section plus the ‘ground’ and ‘bar’ chairs then provided updates, highlighting recent or significant events. All reports were succinct and centred around current financial

positions and upcoming sporting, social and/or fundraising activities. The bar report included reference to a problematic staffing issue. Within the tennis section report was a complaint about Friday nights and space; solutions were mooted. Ultimately, this would only be effectively resolved when “the new developments were in place”. Other frustrations were aired, including non-payment of monies by sponsors and members.

With AOB having already been addressed, dates of future events and meetings were agreed. Noticeably, numerous attendees splintered into smaller groups afterwards to discuss and clarify matters or follow up actions. These were not observed.

Observation 2 (ObsA2): Management Committee (MC): Cricket section

Although there was no printed agenda, there was a recognisable structure and focus to the meeting. The atmosphere was friendly and informal.

Operational, practical issues were discussed before quickly orienting towards money matters. There was some confusion of the section’s current financial position with “a need” of more information from the section treasurer who was absent, owing to work commitments. The need for a “bookkeeper” was mentioned.

The senior cricket report was dominated by reference to recent ground developments and innovations. Very positive feedback had been received from players about the new practice facilities and the recently contracted overseas coach. Subscription non-payment was a concern. Comments indicated its perennial nature and obvious irritation to attendees; various solutions were proposed.

Junior cricket and its operation included a review of the season’s performance and future plans, particularly the need of a “junior manager/coordinator” with potential candidates proposed. The report indicated much positive progress with suggestions for future developments.

Updates from the recent EC “Exec” meeting were provided, focusing particularly on the new clubhouse designs and possible club expansion (new section). The consequences for the club’s Constitution and need of an EGM to consult members were stressed.

AOB concentrated on upcoming social events and fundraising activities, with reference to the recent successful testimonial event and the substantial monies raised. The impending ECB Clubmark review was also discussed. Recent low section representation at EC

meetings generated comment about the quantity of meetings, “too many for anyone”, especially those with families, sporting, and work commitments (A5); an observation accepted by others.

Observation 3 (ObsA3AGM): Annual General Meeting

Members, notified of the event as per the requirements of the club’s Constitution (2018), were provided with an agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and the year’s financial statements. After being welcomed, and other procedural matters, the chair suggested a change to the agenda. The previous treasurer, deputising on the night, was asked to review the club’s financial statements. A clear and informed explanation occurred. A difficult winter, owing partly to the weather and coinciding with significant facility investment (tennis courts and new cricket practice areas), was followed by a record spring/summer period, including very successful fundraisers. Summarised as “Overall, the club is in a healthy financial position”, citing bank accounts’ reserves, questions were then invited. One asked how the new cricket practices facilities had been funded to which the chair replied with explanation: their relocation vacated space for the planned new extended clubhouse.

The chair, thanking various people for their hard work, emphasised how the club had “come together” and cooperated, especially at major events, substantially positively impacting aggregate income during that quarter. The chair’s personal interpretation of the overall financial position was enunciated, claiming the significant facility investments meant playing surfaces were now “excellent”. Concern was expressed at the “hefty bank fees” increase and the importance of membership subscriptions and the bar as income sources were highlighted, with requests for peoples’ support.

Frustrations regarding the new clubhouse development were aired: the loss of a possible (nursery) partner, meaning removal of substantial funding, had caused regression, but a potential new nursery partner had surfaced with further upcoming meetings. Soon three proposals “will be put to the membership” via EGM; each option involved varying, but considerable, outlay. Summarising, he reiterated “we are in a very good place, with some great facilities for playing, but it’s the social and changing areas as well as car parking that are the issues”, mentioning the local Bridge club’s potential capital injection and additional

membership income as a positive opportunity. Again, questions were invited; only one arose which received an informed response.

Officers' elections followed. No-one had been proposed formally. With all current officers were "happy to continue", a proposal that this be accepted "en bloc" was suggested and expedited. The club secretary vacancy was announced with requests for volunteers. There being no other nominations or proposals and no AOB, after approximately forty-five minutes, the meeting was closed. Quite a few said, "well done."

Throughout the meeting, the atmosphere seemed cordial and respectful with no interruptions or interventions, although attendance was slightly lower than expected.

[Additional/Informal meetings](#)

The above refers to the more ceremonial and routine governance activities. During interviews there was ample reference to other consequential activity, occurring beyond that formal sphere. The cricket chair (A4) explained "..., you have lots of ad-hoc meetings We tend to have a few of us sit round the table in the bar, more informal..." citing facilities, players, income and budgets as key topics.

This alludes partly to the various subcommittees which address operational club elements (A1;A2:A4). The bar subcommittee, for example, comprises only four members, convening as often as required, but is not minuted (A1;A2). A1 explained,

I think the little informal management type committee that we have, that is totally informal, with me, [named others] works because it allows us to ... to short circuit some stuff. So, having said we are open and inclusive, we're not totally [laughs]. But, you've just some areas you need to debate and some areas you don't, because I mean if you get it out there into the Exec or ask for views amongst the members, you go round and round the bloody houses and just end up with the answer you first thought of.

A2 concurred, adding "There's an awful lot of conversations going on outside the [Exec] Committee, for instance the bar, ... and regular meetings and a lot of emails going around ... that goes on outside Committee." He provided a specific example of how certain governance decisions are made by this group, relating to a staffing issue "... we will report it to the Exec Committee, but we've been dealing with it". This process was further

explained and reiterated by the chair (A1) whereby decisions are made more expediently but still reported to the EC. The treasurer referenced a similar arrangement with the “ground subcommittee”, but if a larger outlay is required then it is referred to the EC.

Another informal governance activity deemed extremely effective, by the chair, was that of almost constant contact and communication with the treasurer “we are on the case pretty much all the time. And I think that’s important. ... So, I think the chairman and treasurer working closely together works”. Interestingly, he also divulged the negative implications, of all these regular practices, for his daytime profession, outputs, and personal finances.

These subcommittees and informal or ad-hoc working practices, rooted in tradition (A2), seem to provide the necessary attention to specific issues, while operating within the overarching and ultimate decision-making structural framework provided by the EC and the Constitution (2018).

Policies and Norms

The above observations and discussion imply existence of governance structures and prescribed governing procedures, predominantly outlined within the club’s formal written governing document: The Constitution (2018). There was regular reference to this, often from a positive, complimentary perspective and of the need for its updating, dependent on the new external [bridge] club’s future incorporation (A1; A2; ObsA1; ObsA2; ObsA3AGM).

The Constitution contains rules, explicit prescriptions, and expectations, specifying how the organisation should be directed, operated, and controlled (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), including:

- i) the aims and objects of the club:

‘To foster and promote the sport of cricket at all levels ...’; and, ‘principally to provide facilities for members ... and generally to promote, encourage and facilitate the playing of ...’(2018, p.1). Each interviewee alluded to these aims, attaching similar sentiments and understandings along with reference to the new clubhouse development and its financing.

ii) the decision-making and authority structure.

The governing structure is stipulated: an Executive Committee is the principal governing body in the organisation, supported by four separate sports Management Committees with other subcommittees (ground, bar) appointed as necessary. The EC composition is also stated. Interviewee A2 harboured reservations, intimating unwieldiness, if all (17) persons attended.

This quite formal and sophisticated decision-making structure, comprising different committees and their respective jurisdictions, was explicitly mentioned and explained by all individual and group interviewees, often stressing its strengths and influence:

The Constitution, ... , the way the club was set up, whoever did that really did a very good job. The Constitution, the way it works for us, ... with the monthly [EC] meetings, ... three members from each of the different sections, then you've got your main office holders of chairman, treasurer, secretary, ground chairman and bar chairman. So that set up works quite well. (A1)

Appreciative of capacity to ensure equal representation of each section, the chair said, "I like the fact the we've got the checks and balances and the way we work at the moment" and "... no one can ride roughshod over anyone else. You need a consensus to get things done, For us, this sort of proportional representation: everyone has one vote, for us, works well."

Group interviewees (current players) (FGA1) implied this practice enabled effective representation of their perspectives, evidencing the new cricket facilities and the overseas coach appointment. Players felt their voices are heard (FGA1), saying links to the Committee work well. All were very positive about their (EC and MC) representatives (ibid.).

The treasurer elaborated upon the governance structure with reference to sport sections and the tennis Management Committee, in particular, adding "The tennis section is run very well" (A2). A3 and A4 confirmed a very similar set up within, and positive evaluation of, the cricket section and its governance activities, mentioning a recent innovation: a new role "chair of selectors" which aims to provide independence to procedures (A5) and has been "very effective" (ibid.). A cricket yearbook contains information about these roles and structures, as well as policies, and other governing processes.

In terms of powers and responsibilities of committees and officers, there is explicit indication within the Constitution of expectations and norms. The duties of the Executive Committee include 'to control the affairs of the club on behalf of the members' and 'to keep accurate accounts of the finances of the club through the treasurer' (2018, p.2). It stipulates these must be audited and provided to members before every AGM; a responsibility of the treasurer along with providing regular reports to the EC about the club's finances. It also confers powers upon the EC to appoint subcommittees and co-opt advisers whenever necessary. Officers' appointments and term lengths are also stated with prescription of the nomination procedure.

iii) Meeting Prescriptions (for the Executive Committee; Management Committees; AGMS; EGMs)

Prescriptions included relate to their periodic regularity '[Executive] Meetings will be convened by the Secretary of the club and should take place no less than twelve times per annum', their content and how they should be conducted. This requirement and structure was reiterated by interviewees, commenting how this helps address and progress the club's aims and objectives (A2;A3;A4;A5). A former cricket section participant (A6) reinforced these understandings, explaining the regularity of the meetings and their "quite formal" nature, outlining also their purposes and benefits which was echoed by the current cricket chair (A4).

This seemingly quite elaborate, structured and prescribed aggregate (bundle) of meeting arrangements, "... each section has their own AGM and then the main club has their AGM" (A3), stems from a tradition dating back to its development as a multisport club (1967) (A1). When asked why adopt this commitment, A2 replied "Not sure really, just what we've done."

The timing, purposes and content of AGMs and EGMs are also outlined, including election procedures, founded on the principle of one member one vote, with the chair having a casting vote. The latter alluded to the custom of holding EGMs on significant matters, especially when the membership needs to be consulted. Referring to the next iteration, a major decision (new clubhouse development) requires the involvement of members "... I think it's important at that level that the members are involved and get to have their say ... " and would require a "two thirds majority ... to get something through" (A1). Stressing

the importance, and his appreciation, of these “checks and balances”, he referred to the voting structures and inherent control mechanisms, and the benefits they afford.

iv) Operational practices

These referred to the club’s property, finances and accounts and related practices, including independent auditing, constitutional amendments, and the dissolution of the club (and subsequent asset resolution). ‘The Club is a non-profit making organisation. All surpluses will be used to maintain or improve the Club’s facilities and in furtherance of the Club’s objects’ (2018, p.1).

v) Membership

There is description of membership categories and application ‘open to anyone interested ... regardless of characteristics’, stipulating grounds for refusal or termination, behavioural expectations and norms, as well as disciplinary and appeals procedures.

5.2.3 Conclusions

Overall, governance activities seem consequential, supporting progress to the club’s current position. Members seem positive and happy (A2;FGA1;FGA2) and the finances are “healthy” (ObsA3AGM) with recent substantial facility investment and proposals of significant amenity works to improve social and changing accommodation looming. That new members and potential partners (nursery and bridge club) are being attracted also seems a positive indicator.

A strong tradition of specific governance activities, informed by an influential and comprehensive Constitution, exists. There is an elaborate governing structure, underpinned by a web of less formal activity, with subcommittees addressing specific, significant operations. This seems to ensure constant communication and effective representation of stakeholders’ interests (FGA1;FGA2) through regularised meeting cycles and their involvement and inclusion (ibid.).

Meetings had well understood and established agendas and structures, were adjusted to immediate circumstances and conducted in a recognisably and accepted purposeful, attentive, yet relaxed, atmosphere. Respectful open discussion seemed the norm with counter-perspectives provided, often focusing on actions, solutions, and decisions, not

“talking shops” (A1). There was evidence of shared aims, values, behaviours, and understandings with social, playing and committee members acknowledging the significance and consequentiality of meetings (A1;A2;A5;A6); although the volume created tensions for some. Practitioners regularly conceded the demands of volunteering and governance practices proved burdensome at times, compromising professional work commitments and personal relationships.

Observation and interview data suggest these practices help the club progress towards shared values and sought ends; albeit some have concerns about the potential negative consequences of proposed future developments and expansion. Unequivocally, the financial implications were significant, but also were those of the “friendly feel” (A2;ObsA1) of the club which many seemed reluctant to imperil; although others seemed more pragmatic.

The more formal election processes did not procure additional nominations (ObsA3AGM). Some interviewees alluded to an informal direct, personal approach to potential candidates seemed more productive (A1;A4;ObsA2).

The data also reveal a common overall goal: a forceful and passionate conviction to ensure the club’s ultimate survival and prosperity. Focus on specific outcomes and issues, within governance practices, suggest these help provide a means to this end. This seemed to be summarised effectively by one interviewee when asked what is important “... the right people in charge, people with leadership skills, having a good facility, including bar and playing surfaces and ... a good bar and playing of good quality, and being welcoming” (A6).

5.3 Club B

5.3.1 Introduction

During the mid-1990s the club enjoyed repeated national success and accompanying acclamation. By the early 21st century, however, the club’s Committee had shrunk, and its financial position became “dire” and critical (Club web site, 2019). “It [the Committee] had got to a fairly narrow base and those people were putting their own money in to keep it going” (B5); an “unhealthy position” (B1). This was jeopardising achievement of the club’s primary objective, “to ensure the club is sustained, secure and develops facilities for members” (B1). A potential solution to resolve the ‘growing crisis’ was proposed: sell the

ground and relocate (Club web site, 2019). B5, present during that time, recalled a momentous, heavily-attended EGM whereby members voted overwhelmingly to reject the proposal, leading to ‘an influx of new committee members’ (Club web site, 2019). These new personnel “breathed new life into the club” (B5) and sought to address the club’s precarious financial position through a variety of restorative and more commercial measures (ibid.; B1).

The chair (B1) and membership secretary (B5) recalled another downturn and financial crisis (2008-2010). “A restructuring job was needed. So, we embarked on a programme of tight control to stabilise the club, adopted a business model where there was more focus on finances and tighter control on outgoings. Stability was needed and tighter finances” (B1).

Another period of regeneration ensued. Attributed by B5 to a much-revered, long-standing committee member personally approaching a variety of people with particular skills and experience, “a few of us came onto the Committee, around 2009 ... and ... did a lot of work and got the club on a sound footing on an administrative level.” He also spoke of a more recent influx of younger “talented” individuals and their injection of new ideas and energy. Simultaneously, there was a renewed focus on investing resources in young, local players which was very successful (B1;B3;B4;B5), some progressing to county professional level. This, along with Clubmark status, has helped the club and enhanced its reputation in both the local and cricket community (Club web site, 2019; B1;B2;B3;B4;B5), attracting other young players too, owing to the successes of its junior programme (B2;B3;B4).

It is believed the above are meaningful contextual and material considerations, framing current practices and praxis (Schatzki, 2006; 2012). Like Club A, Club B, while smaller on various metrics, also comprises a comprehensive bundle of governance practices.

5.3.2 Governance practices

B1 explained the rationale underpinning current Committee meeting arrangements, including fewer occurrences than hitherto which, he considered, reduced inertia, duplication, and absences. He elucidated further “I’d rather make it punchy ... so [we now meet] probably about 5 or 6 times a year” typically after league meetings so representatives can inform of relevant outcomes (ibid.). B5 confirmed this change, “... he

[the chair] quickly tired of that, all [Committee] members discussing every issue, ..., it was a bad advert for committees.”

Three formal meetings were observed: a general Committee meeting; a dedicated planning/facility investment meeting; and, the AGM. The more sporadic variants (EGMs and “subgroups”) were not observed, although there was regular reference to these in interviews and primary and secondary documentation.

Observation 1 (ObsB1): Committee meeting

A standard agenda had been emailed prior to the meeting along with previous meeting minutes. The chair (B1) explained members were free to raise issues at “the table” while preferring advance notice, wherever possible.

The immediate focus was (senior) cricket which included a review of progress followed by succinct summaries of external (cricket) meetings. Various developments and proposals emanating from league meetings were reported. These had varying practical and resource implications for the following season. The chair welcomed opinions; solutions were proposed. There was thorough discussion of the various ramifications, perceived through logistical, sporting, and financial (viability) lenses. There was also debate about the professional’s employment and the club’s longstanding tradition (B1) of a matchday entry fee policy with contrasting opinions aired (B1;B2;B3;ObsB3AGM). The chair asked for the latter topic’s deferment to a future meeting; all acquiesced.

The focus moved to junior cricket. A concise overview of the season’s performances, achievements, and progress on facility developments was given. It was considered a very successful season. The chair, highly complimentary, said “all your work ... will help the club and its future ... the future is bright ... it bears fruit for the club”, with verbal support from others.

“Club Management” was the next agenda item. A finance report ensued, and the accounts were summarised. Comprehensive data [on paper] were distributed, detailing profit and loss, balance sheets and monthly takings. A big increase in net profits compared to the previous year was highlighted; perceived as the outcome of more winter functions, room bookings, and the season’s good weather, bringing higher attendances and bar sales. Funding and grant monies were also pinpointed and identified as substantial contributors to the planned expenditure on ground works, for which cost quotations were provided.

Within this report, a key facility development was discussed: creation of an additional dedicated junior cricket pitch, necessitating sacrifice of some spectating viewpoints. The treasurer concluded that the club's finances "are decent ..., solid." During interviews B3 explained "We always look at where we are at financially" at each meeting, confirmed by the chair "We are also heavily involved in reviewing and monitoring our finances."

While the focus was on expenditure, the chair mentioned the social facilities: the function room and adjoining toilets. This room, "essential" to income generation through bookings and events, required refurbishment and thus expenditure. All concurred. Various tales of the inadequacy of ablutions and associated negative experiences at other venues ensued, providing much amusement. It is hard to imagine these conversations being typical in other governance research.

The chair summarised discussions around facilities and finances, stressing the current optimistic outlook, stating investments on the function room and ground "will bear fruit" and "produce positive results."

There was a brief report on subscriptions income and membership numbers; "a mixed picture." Overall numbers (approximately 250) were slightly down, but income had increased, owing to more "family" memberships.

The final major issue: fundraising and social events, included evaluation of very successful recent activity and suitable dates for future events. With specific focus there was lengthy discussion about the next beer festival. Evident was not only the voluntary effort and coordination required, but also its significance in terms of income from sales, raffles and generation of new members (B1;B2;B3;ObsB1;ObsB3AGM).

AOB included an issue which, after debating the costs and affordability, was suggested be deferred to the next AGM for member consultation. Some operational issues were also decided before agreement of the next meeting date.

Observation 2 (ObsB2): Facilities Investment Ideas and Proposals

This meeting had one main objective: to discuss and evaluate short and medium-term potential facility developments and projects.

The chair deferred to the treasurer. He outlined the current, very positive financial position, seeking "consensus on what the group felt should be the [facility development]

priorities for the club”, believing these investments would help “secure” its future. A “£10,000 budget” for facility improvements had been calculated along with draft works’ costings. Comments were invited. The VC voiced agreement, on the proviso that reserves [£30k] were maintained “as a contingency benchmark” (B4). Others agreed, before the chair exclaimed this outcome arose from many volunteers’ dedication.

Numerous proposals were then discussed linked to social, spectating and playing aspects; some had been broached in the previous meeting (ObsB1) with costings obtained since. It was a comprehensive list; each proposal was analysed thoroughly. Some required “second quotes” (Club Rules, 2013) while others may be eligible for (external) grants and funding, said B3, suggesting this all be brought to the next full Committee meeting when informed decisions could be made and voted upon. All agreed.

While discussing finances, the VC (B4) mentioned the beer festival, asking for a “mini financial review” and a “profit and loss on it as there had been a lot of questions at last year’s AGM.” B3 informed this was already completed. The VC was grateful, adding “It’s good for us to know how profitable it was ...” and “members ... are entitled to ask us questions, but it’s also good to know where the money comes and goes.”

Within the broad issue of investment and expenditure, an insightful conversation followed. Other clubs’ inability to fulfil lower leagues fixtures, during the recent season, was highlighted. Suggestions included excessive player expenditure was the root of the problem, breeding disloyalty among players and reducing investment in home-grown youth. Several commented successful, progressive clubs have good junior sections. There was further impassioned discussion with criticism of leagues’ and governing bodies’ governance. The club’s policy of investment in youth was reiterated. All agreed, remarking some clubs would spend this budget [£10k] on players, neglecting their facilities, too. The oldest, longest-standing committee member proffered

well, I think what we are doing is the right way forward. Looking at how we spend our budget and what we can improve and spending money on improving the club, juniors, ... is the right way, building on the infrastructure of the club, trying to support a good junior set up.

The chair thanked everyone, saying he would collate the quotes before the next Committee meeting, aiming to finalise projects and inform members at the next AGM.

Observation 3 (ObsB3AGM): AGM

The meeting was called to order and the various documentation listed (an agenda, authorised financial statements, minutes of the previous AGM, and a letter, containing a proposal for a formal rule change). It was explained these procedures were constitutional requirements. There was also a survey “to improve overall standards” seeking suggestions and member feedback on facilities and services. As per Club Rules (2013), advance notice of the meeting and documentation had been given.

Then, explicitly referring to macro and meso difficulties, the chair detailed examples of pressures, a “plethora of rules and regulations” from various sources which “creates a large administrative burden” saying “demands have increased.” He outlined work undertaken by committee members whose “tireless” efforts had secured new funding, this being “a massive help to the club and its aim to improve.” Complimentary of all the Committee, including “an energetic new bunch” he added “they all do it for the love of the club and the desire that the club perpetuates and continues as the town club” with “the club’s best interests at heart.” Gratitude for the support from the members, through sponsorship, donations and subscriptions, was also voiced.

Framed within the context of a “national problem” the chair warned local cricket is “withering on the vine”, supplementing this with anecdotes of other clubs’ recent demise or difficulties. He outlined the junior policy and programme and various positive outcomes. Saluting the efforts of the junior chair and coaches, it was summarised that the club is in a very “healthy” position and “... our main thrust has got to be our junior programme and an aim to bring them through.”

Before finishing, he also mentioned a recent innovation: “astute” use of social media. This had enabled regular communication with members, providing more information, and had been positively received, according to the chair (evidenced also in the group interview).

Next, minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising therefrom were quickly expedited. When invited, only one question arose from the floor which was speedily addressed. A proposer and seconder were requested to authorise accuracy with names recorded.

During officers and committee members' elections, the chair explained the traditional [required] practice of asking for nominations (posting a notice within the clubhouse for the requisite period) had not proven successful. Announcing all current postholders were "happy to continue", which had also been informally suggested by members, he asked for any other nominations [none arose], before asking "we formally put these into place en bloc?" This was proposed, seconded and minuted.

The treasurer then recounted the financial results and position, stating it had been "a really good year" with the weather having "helped a lot" and excellent bar sales resulting. He extolled the benefits of fundraising events, explaining these had enabled greater reinvestment in facilities, with the plan being "to keep re-investing the profits." Summarising, he said "Overall, we are in a really healthy place at the minute" before asking for questions. There was probing of the costs and profits of the beer festival. These were fielded thoroughly with reference to the mini financial review, as requested by B3 (ObsB2), to the apparent satisfaction of stakeholders.

It was then explained a need to amend the Club Rules, which are "quite historical" but need updating to ensure alignment with ECB (diversity and inclusion policy) requirements and Clubmark criteria. Asking for a proposer, seconder, and any objections, this was executed and minuted.

Questions or comments from the floor were invited within AOB. The new junior pitch development was raised. A comprehensive response was provided, incorporating the rationale, funding, investment, and progress. Another asked about a "wooden structure going up out there" with the chair reassuring "it's not a gallows." B3 explained the loss of some viewing capacity, owing to the new junior pitch, would be compensated by "a [new] decking area, new banking, picnic benches, ... with the overall aim to make it better viewing and spectating facilities." All this was well received with the chair adding some items were beyond the budget, hence the decision "to make changes that we could afford."

There were other questions relating to matchday attendance policy and charges: a tradition of the Club (B1), but a contentious issue for some (B2; B3) with potential impact on income. The treasurer explained the forthcoming trial (change), partly influenced by competitive pressures, and both he and the chair said increased bar sales and sponsorship efforts are expected to offset admission fee income reductions. A final topic related to a

proposal to purchase a sports TV subscription, involving “considerable outlay” was rejected by members. The treasurer said their consultation was important, it being “a members’ club.” The chair explained how both B2 and B3 were constantly evaluating new ideas “with both being accountants, they look after the books very carefully and make sure the club is ... well-run” before adding “overall the club, its Committee and committee members are scrutinising spending much more now than ever before”, voicing his approval of these practices.

The meeting closed, after only forty-five minutes, with the chair exclaiming “it’s a vibrant and healthy club” and thanking all for attending.

Additional/ Informal Meetings

Often referred to as “subgroups” focusing on particular operational or functional elements, all interviewees commented on their role and existence. When talking about the club and its governance structure, B5 helpfully elaborated,

..., there’s only one Committee, ... then subgroups: a cricket subgroup, a junior subgroup, a management subgroup, sponsorship subgroup, ... , I mean it’s all fairly loose. These individual subgroups don’t always have a nominated chair, but they get on with it and report to the overall Committee. ... the subgroups don’t have formal meetings, they just get on with things, it’s a small club,

The chair, treasurer and vice chair mirrored these observations. During interviews, B1 and B2 discussed the “Administration group” and its significance. Comprising only five members (the executive officers of the Committee), with its remit being “club finances” (B1), it meets only “as and when needed” but all are in constant communication (ibid.). This partly traditional arrangement had been quite critical, said the chair, “making sure we always kept an eye on finances” and concluding “... the finances have benefited significantly from that” (B1), alluding to the additional scrutiny and focus provided.

These subcommittees and informal or ad-hoc activities bestow the necessary attention to specific issues or operations but remain within their remit, aligning with the club’s Constitution, and the overarching and ultimate decision-making structural framework of the Committee (B1; B4; B5).

Policies and Norms

Like Club A, Club B's Constitution, "Club Rules", also contains thorough reference to rules and explicit prescriptions, specifying how it should be directed, operated, and controlled (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007).

Within the document there is reference to:

i) the aims and objects of the club: 'to provide facilities to play cricket' and 'to develop and extend the amenities of [name] and grounds' and 'to promote social and recreational activities amongst members' (2013, p.1). It also states the club shall be non-profit making with surpluses to be reinvested in the club. Interviewees alluded to or paraphrased these, indicating influence on performances.

ii) the decision-making and authority structure.

The governing structure of the club is stated within. The Committee has ultimate decision-making power (Rule 38, p.6), responsible for 'providing leadership, policies and strategies to enable the effective management of the Club' (2013, p.3). Other responsibilities include: 'control of finances' and pricing; regulatory obligations and duties; and, the power to call an EGM 'when any question of urgent importance arises' (2013, p.5).

Committee composition is also outlined, referencing (nine) positions and roles. In practice not all roles are fulfilled exclusively by one individual: the current chair is also secretary. Precise, formal election and nomination procedures and associated democratic processes are also stipulated as well as term lengths and re-election. Interestingly, B1, B4 and B5 alluded to more informal, direct personal approaches procured their initial involvement.

iii) Meeting Prescriptions (for the Committee; AGMS; EGMs)

This included similarities with Club A, for example minimum numbers (4) of meetings per annum and quorum requirements (7).

The chair, when asked about the Committee's meetings, referred to their structure and agenda and the influence of traditions within cricket clubs. There was a standardised agenda structure (B1) with minutes, matters arising and actions (ObsB1). B4 said this ensures "everything is covered" and also described a "helpful" practice, adopted by the chair and secretary: an agenda and minutes of the previous meeting are sent prior to the

next event, acting as a reminder, then after the latest iteration minutes and agreed actions are promptly distributed.

During all observations (ObsB1;ObsB2;ObsB3AGM) there was a convention of decision-making based on open discourse and a free vote: “we do things by a vote and if we needed to, we would consult the membership” (B1), fully substantiated by the VC (B4). They attested this provides checks and balances, B4 adding “we are held to account by an active membership” and “it works.”

The chair reiterated opportunities for stakeholders to scrutinise and “have their say” particularly at AGMs and stressed “that there will be a democratic vote on significant topics.” When discussing issues of accountability, communication and transparency, there was much mention of AGMs and EGMs with interviewees (B1;B2;B3;B4) describing a tradition of being “interrogated” or “questioned” at the AGM. The VC (B4), in relation to the beer festival, added “we got loads of questions which was really good, but we did have all the answers”, suggesting it was an effective means of providing accountability, checks and balances and stakeholder inclusion. Although no EGM was observed, the Club Rules (2013) require their invocation whenever membership needs to be consulted on a substantive issue, as discussed above, or if called by a certain quota of members.

Within the Constitution there were very strong similarities to Club A in relation to stipulation regarding both:

- iv) Operational practices; and
- v) Membership

5.3.3 Conclusion

Similarities with club A are immediately apparent. After two periods of worrying financial instability and two significant cycles of Committee attrition and upheaval, there have been several recruits to the governing personnel and practices. The current Committee and their efforts are highly regarded and appreciated (FGB1). Fresh insight, ideas, and enthusiasm (B1;B4;B5;ObsB1;ObsB2;ObsB3AGM) and a different focus within praxis has been highlighted, perceived as contributing to the current “healthy” and “vibrant” state (B1;FGB1;ObsB3AGM). With recent considerable increases in income and profits, there has been extensive investment in facility development (ObsB2; ObsB3AGM).

Club B is also a site of comprehensive governance activities. Similarly, this comprises policies, formal and informal discursive routines and actions: a blend of quite methodical and systematic praxis supported by pragmatic, more informal activity from a network of “subgroups” that connects the different functions and operations to the more strategic focus of the Committee. The latter meets regularly, although less frequently than hitherto, under an established agenda, to review sporting and non-sporting performance. While differences of opinion arise, these do not seem counterproductive or cataclysmic. Decisions are always made by a free vote after discursive analysis of the implications and always seem in accord with the ‘objects’ of the Club (Club Rules, 2013).

Increased focus on youth and facility development, financial controls and fundraising activities, which appear commonly held values, aims and understandings, appear to be bearing “fruit for the club” (B1). Interviewees outlined various positive outcomes of the governance decision to invest considerably in youth cricket. This was clearly an emotive issue with strong views aired, revealing consensus among practitioners. There was reference to increased junior membership and income, more potential adult players, volunteers, and even future committee members (eg B2; B3). The youth policy was commended by the chair and members (ObsB1;ObsB3AGM;FGB1).

Equally prominent is a stakeholder orientation: a compulsion to listen to members and the other voices within the Committee. This contrasts with a remark from a long-standing member “people used to say, ..., it was called the RAC club after three members who were chair, secretary and treasurer. People reckoned they suited themselves and not other members” (FGB1). These stakeholders talked positively about the Club, its potential and strong social and family ethos, saying they said they felt consulted and communicated with, especially since the advent of the regular newsletter, use of Twitter and Facebook posts.

Another related outcome, attributed partly to recent changes in committee personnel, has been greater attention to social and fundraising events (beer and music festivals) and pursuit of external investment, sponsorship and funding (B2;B3;B5;FGB1;ObsB2), combined with strategic use of social media to promote the club and its activities (B1;B4;B5). According to all interviewees and observations, these practices have been extremely successful and positively impacted the club’s current financial position.

5.4 Club C

5.4.1 Introduction

In the late 20th century club C was regularly winning trophies at all age groups, accorded partly to ‘the consistent production of top-quality homegrown players’ (Centenary Brochure, 2009). 2005 saw unprecedented and unparalleled success, generating much local publicity. Coinciding with the momentous Ashes series, junior membership applications escalated (C5), reaching a critical mass, owing to the size of the estate (C3;C5). The issue of physical space and capacity was a constant theme, restricting the volume of sporting provision and consequentially junior membership and income (C1;C2;C3;C5). Further propitious circumstances and events exacerbated this inability to meet demand (Centenary Brochure, 2009), leading to concerted efforts to acquire adjacent land when the opportunity resurfaced (C1;C2;C3;C6).

During 2017-2018, the club experienced two momentous events. After player consultation, it moved to a higher (premier) league (C1;C3;C4). This represented a major challenge (C2) and paradox: there being greater administrative burdens and additional costs, but also higher income potential (C1;C2;ObsC1;ObsC4AGM). Then, in 2018, following a very well-attended EGM and debates spanning generations (C1;C3), six acres of adjoining land were purchased, providing much needed additional capacity (C1;C2;C5). The resolution “That the Committee be authorised to buy the land to the east of the existing club, once sufficient funds have been raised, in order that this can be used for future ground development” (Club presentation, 2017) was supported by an overwhelming majority of members (C1). Development plans included new additional ground and practice facilities, car park and improved social and changing accommodation. C3 felt this considerable phased expansion would “take us forward”, reiterated by peers. By 2019 changes included a new car park, participation in the higher league, large crowds, sizeable increases in income, but also significant additional costs (C1;C2;ObsC1;ObsC4AGM).

Thus, the three years 2017-2019 represent a period of considerable progress; although with some concerns about the additional pressures and burdens upon the Club and its current Committee (C6) with one respected ‘stalwart’ (Nichols, 2005) resigning abruptly

(C6). Nonetheless, all interviewees and members spoke very positively about these developments and achievements.

This had not always been so. A number vividly recounted extreme financial difficulty (C1;C2;C3;C6;FGC2). The current chair (C1) recalled two significant events: an EGM when, out of desperation, members were asked for additional monetary contributions; and, a frugal former treasurer who kept paper plates in the safe to reduce unnecessary expenditure. Serious financial concerns resurfaced in the early 2000s, assuaged only through the strenuous and highly acclaimed efforts of a newly appointed (now former) treasurer (C1;C2;C3) who “got it in order” (C6).

This has continued under the current, highly respected (C1;C3;C4;C6), treasurer to a financial position that is now “solid” (C2), with C1 saying “financially, we are doing very well.” Confirmed by others this has enabled reinvestment “in facilities” (C1;C2;C3).

As with clubs A and B, these are considered important contextual and material circumstances.

5.4.2 Governance practices

Structurally, the (General) Committee is the ultimate decision-making body (Club Constitution, 2008). The honorary secretary (C6) added “The club really is run from the committee meetings” which, traditionally, occur monthly (Club Constitution, 2008; FGC2). Several (C2;C5;C6) also acknowledged the significance of the trustees: their scrutinising and monitoring role; “they keep an eye on things” said C6, complimenting their input. As with the other cases, various more informal subcommittees exist, dedicated to specific functions or facilities.

At Club C four meetings were observed. An EGM was not, although there was documentation of, and ample reference by interviewees to, the most recent (September 2017).

Observation 1 (ObsC1): General Committee meeting

The meeting began with the usual procedural formalities, including issuing the agenda, taking apologies, and reviewing previous minutes and their accuracy.

There was then a financial performance update, from the treasurer (C2), comparing this with previous years' data. He provided monthly figures, spoke of a very profitable "T20 finals day", before summarising the overall position was "very healthy" despite lower overall profits, owing to increased costs. A concern was matchday expenses which now exceed matchday income, unsustainable in the longer-term (C2). Invited questions received informed explanations.

Brief reports from the bar chair and registrar followed, focusing consecutively on operational issues and new GDPR requirements, hampering email communication to members. Noticeable was the large quantity of volunteers for the successful T20 finals event, facilitating record bar sales (and profits) (C1;C2).

The cricket chair summarised senior teams' performances and mentioned an upcoming meeting: "There's No Such Thing as a Bad Idea Night." He explained this would be an open forum, seeking new initiatives and suggestions linked to cricket and its organisation, sponsorship, and fundraising, partly to address the financial concerns raised by the treasurer. Other peoples' ideas and thoughts about this meeting were requested, the chair voicing concern that committee member attendance may compromise the openness of the discussion. Both the VC and the players' representative were aware of other clubs carrying out similar practices.

Next "Sponsorship" provoked various questions about the main club sponsor. Viewed as an income opportunity, especially with the club's elevated status, rapidly increasing match fees for players could be prohibitive and a deterrent (C1). Hence, it was considered increased sponsorship income might partly address this and the overall matchday losses problem (C1; C2). The chair requested an action point at the next meeting with people bringing their ideas, and the treasurer promising to "look into the figures to provide a clearer picture."

A noteworthy incident occurred, during the "ground" report. It was proposed that scheduled pitch works be partly completed by an external contractor, but there being "no precedent" for this, some consternation was expressed. The cricket chair had received no prior notice and the additional costs seemed paradoxical to the cost-cutting narrative (C4). There was frank and candid discussion. Some intimated accepted processes and traditions were being circumvented.

While outgoings were being discussed, the clubhouse heating problems were mentioned with various solutions proposed and indications of costs. The chair asked the secretary to make an action point for the next meeting: to collate, discuss and agree all building repair and maintenance proposals and costs.

“Social” focused on a variety of upcoming activities and dates, targeting different demographics, including non-members (the local community) and families. Recent events had been “very successful” and with volunteers supplementing staffing, costs had been cut. External “hires” were also strong: “the diary is looking healthy in terms of events and bookings for the next few months.”

The chair then addressed “Fundraising” himself*, saying “potential new partnerships” and opportunities were available, but “a commercial fundraising strategy” was needed. These developments were positively received. (*NB There was no one in post.)

The treasurer gave an update on “Club Development” [the nomenclature adopted when referring to progress on the recently acquired land], summarising outcomes from numerous internal and external meetings. There were notable differences of interpretation of land development regulations and mild disagreements on what was permissible. Some were cautious; others more liberal in their interpretation of the relevant laws. There seemed a clash between epistemic, phronetic and metic thinking. The chair intervened and requested an action point for a separate meeting (the following week) to address the issue, enabling outcomes to be reported at next month’s Committee.

AOB followed with a reminder of the annual Clubmark ‘health check’ and the need to conduct a member survey.

Despite some vigorous discursive activity, the meeting concluded after one hour fifteen minutes. Some remained to address topics from the meeting (not observed).

Observation 2 (ObsC2): General Committee Meeting

This meeting followed the order and format of the previous meeting with the same reports. Revealing was the opportunity to observe how topics and actions were followed up. For example, at different times throughout, the secretary probed action points and progress updates from the previous meeting, recording actions as completed, where appropriate.

There was quite lengthy discussion about the increased cricket expenditure and how this might be addressed. The treasurer identified an unusual, compared to previous years, August “deficit”, but also the much higher revenues and incomes which was inconceivable without higher league status (C1;C2). Opinions about priority differences were expressed: new ground development; or maintenance of premier league status. Consensus emerged, however, when all agreed greater attention to external partnerships was needed as a means to increase sponsorship income (C2) which the chair thought achievable given their status. An ambition was to (re)establish a “Fundraising and Development Subcommittee” and for this to become more formalised and a related action point requested. Linked to these discussions, the VC asked the cricket chair about the outcomes of the open forum meeting (see ObsC3).

An ongoing contentious issue: the new ground development, caused further debate with palpable disagreement and tension as to the order of works and actions. This was exacerbated by planning regulations and restrictions, emanating from different external bodies whose demands seemed to conflict, delay, and confuse (C2; C6). The situation appeared very complex. This substantiated the secretary’s worries, expressed during interview, that the pressures on committee members were increasing exponentially. Relatedly, a long-standing member revealed that, after twenty years, he was relinquishing one of his roles (junior cricket chair), adding he could now focus more on the new ground’s development. He said a suitable replacement had been approached informally whose formal acceptance would be confirmed and ratified at the AGM (ObsC4AGM).

Observation 3 (ObsC3): “There’s No Such Thing as a Bad Idea Night”

Owing to the additional costs concerns, new approaches and practices were needed, especially as the club was now competing with “larger, more professional clubs” (C1). Arranged at relatively short notice, this was an unforeseen, but valuable, observation opportunity.

It was very well attended. The facilitator (not a committee member) explained the aims, asking small groups to discuss and present ideas that might help “move the Club forward.” A sixteen-item list emerged. No critical perspectives or other interventions had been permitted. Groups were then asked to choose one idea that seemed realistic or feasible

and formulate suggestions for its operationalisation within “this environment”, in effect problem-solving the idea’s implementation.

Each group then disclosed their plan. The facilitator made notes, probed for clarification, while also asking others for constructive comments, continuing until each group’s “realistically achievable idea” had been discussed.

There followed a synoptic element, summarising outcomes with requests for volunteers to expedite certain actions. Later, this was posted on the premises to inform absentees.

After a lively and seemingly productive two hours, the facilitator closed the meeting. Many participants stayed behind, discussing ideas further.

A record of the issues and outcomes was procured, redacted, and appended (See Appendix H).

Observation 4 (ObsC4AGM): AGM

Members received advance notice and relevant documentation as the constitution prescribes. Preliminary procedural elements, for example apologies and previous minutes, were addressed.

The chair’s speech quite closely mirrored his counterparts (A1; B1), summarising the year’s progress and showing his gratitude for the considerable efforts of volunteers. This had resulted in the adjacent land acquisition and its subsequent initial development. He stressed the importance of fundraising and social activity, highlighting specific events and a change of approach to marketing, “evidence of the Club being more competitive”, which sought new partners, sponsorship and advertising income. Overall, these developments had raised “the profile of the club throughout the region.”

A new junior chair was introduced who then reviewed the previous season and spoke of new initiatives: a “5-8s group; a girls’ team; and, an aim to recruit more coaches.” This was followed by the senior players’ representative report. The chair thanked both and asked for any questions; none arose.

There was a “written narrative” from the treasurer, accompanied by a verbal summary of the year’s financial performance. The account and content were similar to cases A and B, identifying key trends, highlights, and concerns. After interpreting the ‘Statement of

Accounts' questions were invited, before they their unanimous adoption by members in a vote.

After brief announcements about subscription rates and [no] welfare issues, the election of Officers was addressed. They were "all pleased to stand" and with no other nominations forthcoming, it was requested these be voted in "en bloc" for another year (Club Constitution, 2008). The secretary proceeded through the remaining roles, including the new junior chair. All were elected/re-elected with no other proposals or rejections.

AOB included messages to members of upcoming social events and with no further business or questions, the meeting closed after approximately thirty-five minutes.

Like other cases, prior to the AGM a list of the Club's Officers and Committee members had been posted with indication of vacant positions. The positions of fundraising chair and bar chair remained vacant with no formal nominations for either position; although some of these duties were being carried out on a more casual basis (C1;C3;C4).

[Additional/ Informal Meetings](#)

Like the previous cases, there was much mention of less formal meetings or ad-hoc governance activity with one example witnessed (ObsC3). C1 explained emergent issues, requiring timely responses, would necessitate convening a quorum [of five] who "make decisions outside Committee, as or when required" (C1;C2;C6). C2 recalled the chair instituting this more rapid decision-making/approval process, saying "we can get stuff done quickly without having to wait another four weeks." This will then be reported at the next Committee meeting (C1;C2; C3). This sounded very similar to practices outlined by clubs A and B.

There was also regular mention of subcommittees ("Cricket", "Development", "Fundraising/Marketing" and, "Ground"). C6 stressed their practicality and flexibility, while C5 spoke of the key role played by the Development subcommittee in the recent successful land purchase and progress made.

Echoing the other chairs, C1 stressed the informal practice of continuous communication with committee personnel between meetings, to "keep myself up to date... I talk to them all the time, often informal chats ... so I always have a handle on what's going on." There was also ongoing informal communication between committee members and

stakeholders (C2;C6;FGC1) with positive resultant benefits mentioned by many interviewees.

Policies and Norms

Club C also has a written constitution, 'Club Rules', with very similar content to Clubs A and B to the point whereby suspicions of plagiarism or, at least, collusion would not be unreasonable.

Included are:

- i) the aims and objects of the club;

To 'provide cricket at senior and junior levels for the Members together with a Clubhouse and facilities for recreational and social activities' (2008, p.1). These aims and their influence upon praxis were strongly discernible in interviews and observations. Additionally, 'The Club will be non-profit making and any surplus will be used to maintain or improve Club facilities for the underlying benefit of the Club' (2008, p.1), which also seemed influential: "I'd always like to have more in the bank, but that's always a challenge, ... partly because of the aims of the club, it's not aiming to make a profit, ... we only make a surplus to give ourselves a buffer and to be able to reinvest in facilities ... " (C2).

- ii) the decision-making and authority structure

A clear governing structure for the organisation is outlined whereby responsibility for the 'management of the Club' is entrusted to the General Committee (Club Rules, 2008, p.3) with associated powers conferred. Control and compliance elements, for example with the 2003 Licensing Act, 'Members' access to the finances and accounts of the Club' (2008, p.5) and the role and election of trustees and officers are similarly prescribed. These powers and attached responsibilities were recognised by all interviewees and observed in praxis (ObsC4AGM).

- iii) Meetings (General Committee; AGMs; EGMs)

There is stipulation of meeting regularity and of qualifying (quorum) and procedural requirements which is always achieved and adhered to (C1;C3;C4;C6). No precise meeting content structure is prescribed; although, in practice, the adopted agenda reflects key objectives and operations (ObsC1;ObsC2). For the AGM, contrastingly, there is quite lengthy prescription of content and processes which were followed (ObsC4AGM).

Interviewees alluded to the AGM's significance, necessity, and purpose. When the chair was asked how best interests are managed, he replied "... we have the AGM, people can propose, vote, ... , if we have to raise something the members need to discuss, for example buying the field, we have an EGM. We have to go back to members." C5 confirmed the practice, adding no proposal would ever be accepted without member approval. EGM requirements and processes are also outlined with documentation available of the most recent (September 2017).

The Constitution also prescribes procedures and responsibilities relating to:

- iv) Operational practices, incorporating checks and balances and the need for transparency in activities; and,
- v) Membership, including categories, rights, fees, and expectations.

5.4.3 Conclusions

As with the other cases, a web of governance practices has been revealed through research. Interviewees have perceived a distinct shift in committee meeting tone and style; changes attributed to the advent of a new chair. Meetings are "more focused and action driven" (C5), he "runs the meetings in a more professional, business-like way with actions that are agreed" (C3). A former Committee member (FGC2) highlighted the previous, more laborious decision-making process, "when I was involved you might have the same conversation two months running and another month before its discussed again, so it used to be very, very slow progress and process,"

The chair (C1) said he had reorganised Committee meetings: "The focus is on reporting to others, but keeping it succinct, It's basically now a reporting meeting, It used to be issue driven, I've turned that round, I said I don't want issues bringing to a meeting"; "previously meetings were not action driven, there was no action list produced. So, now minutes go out straight afterwards ... with an action plan as well." He concluded "now people know what they have to do and do it" (C1), emphasising "It's not like the old days, it's very prompt and needs to be." C3 was complimentary of these changes, adding "it works."

When probed about these changes, the chair (C1) said “I manage the Club in the same way I manage project meetings at work. ... , ... , we’re there to do business, we’re there to manage the club.” This change of process, appreciated by peers (C2;C3;C4;C5), was commented upon by C6,

They [meetings] are always well attended, a good turnout, there’s open discussion, ... , everybody has a chance to say their say. It’s a good atmosphere, a good meeting, It’s run in an organised, run as a meeting, not just a jolly, ... , each person has a chance to, ... , there’s always chance to speak and have an input.

Partly as a corollary of the above, another innovation, referred to by many, related to meeting length and a different start time: traditionally 7.30pm, but now deferred by an hour, enabling people to attend to “family matters” (C6). “Meetings now are about an hour, hour and a half max!” (C1; C6), with C3 commenting “he doesn’t let us dwell on rubbish for too long, wasting our Committee time, ... , We concentrate on the big issues.”

This change in practice approach and style was evident in observations. There was greater focus on financial management, fundraising and external possibilities, than some other matters, and within shorter, outcome-oriented meetings. Other prominent shared aims include efforts to create a friendly, welcoming environment, provision of diverse playing opportunities for, and being responsive to, different stakeholders with new ventures, while continuing to promote young players (C1) and provide social and sporting facilities.

It seems club C has made strident progress. From a “small club” (C1) with debts and an overdraft (C3), more recent sustained attention to finances and fundraising has provided some stability with perpetual annual surpluses enabling facility improvements (ibid.; C2). With attention to Clubmark, coaching provision and youth, optimal junior membership has resulted, with many progressing into senior teams. Promotion to the semi-professional league has facilitated recruitment of additional players and supporters, boosting income potential, although at greater expense. Additionally, acquisition of considerable adjacent acreage has added capacity and fostered facility developments.

Much of this has been attributed to the “enthusiastic” (FGC1) efforts and activities of the governing Committee, its capable and resilient members, and other committed volunteers

(C1;ObsC1; ObsC4AGM). A conspicuous Committee characteristic is a tradition of enduring member participation: one served for over fifty years; three for over thirty; several a decade or more; supplemented by newer recruits, increasing its size and diversity (ObsC1; ObsC2).

There was very strong endorsement of governing activities from stakeholders (FGC1; FGC2), praising especially the tenacity to achieve the long-held ambition of owning “the back field” (C3), perceived by some as evidence of Committee capability and competence (C5; C6; FGC2). C3 provided his own evaluation: these are “Well intentioned people who can listen as well as talk a good game, and prepared to actually do things” with similar assessments from others.

5.5 Summary of Practices and Chapter Conclusions

These extensive findings are believed to be somewhat revelatory. Primary research, consisting of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence (Hill et al., 2016; 2019), seems to have penetrated the mundane and the ‘nitty gritty, local routines of practice’ (Whittington, 1996, p.732), as cited in Cox and Hassard (2018, p.540). It has revealed some novel insights into the ‘black box’ of VSC governance (Leblanc and Schwartz, 2007). Each site comprises an expansive bundle of governance practices. Conspicuous in similarity, with identifiable patterns across all cases, illustrated by table 5.2, these intimate almost practical ecumenicism; albeit with slight and subtle variations (Hui et al., 2017).

Table 5.2: Governance Bundle for each club

Criterion	Club A	Club B	Club C
Defined Governing Body (Committee)	Yes "Executive Committee"	Yes	Yes "General Committee"
Appointed Trustees	Yes (5)	Yes (5)	Yes (4)
Regular meetings	Yes, monthly	Yes	Yes, monthly
Minutes of meetings taken	Yes	Yes	Yes
Matters Arising & Actions assigned followed up	Yes	Yes	Yes
Subcommittees	Yes, various	Yes, various "subgroups"	Yes, various
AGM conducted	Yes	Yes	Yes
EGM	Yes, as/ when required	Yes, as/ when required	Yes, as/ when required
Constitution (formal written governing document)	Yes	Yes "Club Rules"	Yes "Club Rules"
Elections (annual)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Policies	Yes (numerous)	Yes (numerous)	Yes (numerous)
Assigned Roles and responsibilities	Yes (not for all positions)	Yes (not for all positions)	Yes (not for all positions)
Independent auditors, Accounts published & provided to members	Yes	Yes	Yes

These bundles of governance practices contain implicit and explicit allusion to pre-existing structures, including traditions and norms, rules, policies, but also discernible more recent changes and innovations. Additionally, these activities could also be located on a spectrum, ranging from more formal and methodical - AGMs and committee meetings - to the equally important informal and pragmatic. The latter, for example the ad-hoc meetings of senior postholders, which aim to accelerate decision-making, are a recently implemented practice, evident at all sites.

As alluded to, these informal activities are conducted by a web of groups (subcommittees), which serve as interconnecting arteries, linking the different operational elements to the more strategic, ultimate decision-making heart of the club: the 'General Committee' or 'Executive Committee'. The latter meets regularly (but now less often in Club B), as is tradition and required by each club's constitution, but instantiations are notably shorter, outcome rather than problem-oriented, with assigned actions pursued at subsequent iterations, knotting them together.

Other notable changes, observed and commented upon by practitioners, include clubs being more "business-like" and commercially oriented with modifications to traditional practices or new practices. This includes a more informed and systematic approach to managing finances, with clubs endeavouring to live within their "means" (A2;B1;B3;C2) which was prevalent throughout. Interviewees A2, B2 and C2, who were all highly experienced and qualified accountants, talked of applying professional practices to their role of treasurer, expounding the benefits thereof to their club. Financial performance is reviewed regularly, profiled against previous years, with continual monitoring of expenditure and income.

Further evidence of a more commercial approach was demonstrated through greater focus on fundraising and the marketing of services, with strenuous efforts to increase income generation. Apparent again was a blend of new and traditional practices, including a more proactive approach to seeking new external sponsors, partnerships, funders, and grants. Also, numerous social activities were conducted with beer festivals and themed nights being examples of more recent innovations, aimed at both existing and attracting new clientele, combined with the hiring out of facilities which was more of a traditional practice. These regular, well-supported social events appear planned and organised, supplemented by large pools of volunteer resources, delivering substantial positive outcomes (increased income, publicity, new members). Clubs advertise and take bookings for their facilities through web sites and various print and social media platforms. They also seem to embrace, rather than shun, external opportunities, for example cooperating and collaborating with other bodies and seeking to be an active element in the local community, cognisant that resources may accrue.

The above also implies a greater focus on a vision and planning; a further noteworthy practice within the cases. While clubs may not have detailed, written strategic plans (A2; B2; C2), all have future-oriented desires and aims with evidence of progress towards their achievement. These visions seem to engender cohesion among committee members and centre around improving their offerings to stakeholders, listening to playing and social members which suggests a facilitative, inclusive, and equitable approach. Clubs A and C have embarked on longer-term major developments, enhancing their estates and facilities, as has club B, on a slightly smaller scale.

Associated with these developments and plans is investment in, and attention to, junior programmes. Achievement and maintenance of the ECB Clubmark by all is further testimony of this disposition. Young female and male players have been recruited bountifully, reaching optimal capacity (A3;B1;C3), with some progressing into senior playing, coaching and/or governing roles. This sustained throughput of talent and volunteers seemingly justifying the enhanced youth focus.

These patterns and themes seem to reflect the foci and purposes of practices, providing the 'connective tissue' (Spurling and Blue, 2017) by which practices hang together along with norms, traditions, rules and common motivations and understandings that seem to cohere practitioners and inform praxis. Very apparent was a stakeholder orientation with all clubs, endeavouring to keep members informed and procure consultation and authorisation for substantive issues. This alludes to a democratic predisposition, apparent throughout and evident within documentation and all meeting practices, with interviewees quoting rules in club constitutions or citing memories of momentous EGMs where members' views were sought. Other notable understandings, relating to governance, include a fiduciary responsibility and a need for accountable and transparent behaviours. This is visible through practices such as individual reports and presentation of information, for example audited accounts, to peers and members during meetings or AGMs, and opportunity for scrutiny thereof.

Throughout, these principles were particularly evident in relation to finance expenditure and facility investment decisions, and the underpinning rationale, where a range of checks and balances are applied. For example, the ad-hoc informal group of senior postholders described above can provide expenditure authorisation, especially in emergencies, but in

all cases this is reported at the next committee meeting, maintaining trust, accountability and transparency (A1;A2;B1;B4;C1;C2). These elements, usually contained within constitutions, and adhered to quite meticulously, ensure compliance with internal policy and external regulations. Practitioners described the various checks and balances in place, recognising the advantages of such for the governance of the club.

These principles were also equally apparent, for example, in EGMs with proposals probed and either accepted or rejected by the membership (A1; B5; C2), informing subsequent action. It was noticeable that in clubs A and B where proposals were rejected resignations and changes in senior governing personnel ensued, including new chairs. In club C, however, there was no evidence of such, perhaps partly explaining the longevity of officers. This suggests that certain circumstances can trigger events (Sayer, 1999). Changes in governing personnel have, according to stakeholders in clubs A and B, been linked to improved financial security, growth in memberships and changes of ethos within practices. These include much greater emphasis on youth (in club B), and member communication and fundraising in all cases. Equally noticeable is that practices recruited very capable and competent professionals to their ultimate committee.

Essentially, each club is aiming to survive and prosper. Despite numerous examples of moribundity among former competitors, the cases have demonstrated resilience and capacity to adapt and grow, on various metrics. It seems difficult to deny that their governance, and changes in governing praxis, have not had positive outcomes and contributed to their recent stability. It is suggested chapter five has addressed objective one, critically exploring the nature of practices, describing their enactment and their interrelatedness. It has also provided indication of the purposes and outcomes sought and those considered consequential to their organisation, relating to objective two. Furthermore, it has identified patterns and similarities, revealing much homogeneity of practice across the cases.

The governance practices described in this chapter, will now be abductively and retroductively analysed, drawing on the conceptual framework to elucidate these findings.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Chapter Introduction

Chapter five revealed clubs are encountering a range of internal and external challenges. It also uncovered that they seek to address these through a comprehensive blend of formal and informal, traditional, and more contemporary practices, demonstrating how governing is conducted within each site. This chapter will incorporate critical analysis of governance practices and praxis, identifying common themes across the cases and those considered most consequential. Hence, this chapter will contribute primarily to objective two.

Three key themes, common within all cases, form the basis of the chapter's structure. These themes – or activity areas – comprise: communicating and engaging with stakeholders; reviewing and planning and structuring and organising; and, addressing finances and facilities. Derived from analysis of all data sources and blending thematic and 'in vivo' codes (see 4.7.2), these activity areas aim to represent and capture the cases' most significant and consequential elements of governing practices and praxis.

The conceptual framework outlined in chapter four will be applied to elucidate each of these phenomena, in turn. Key elements of the framework include the concepts of practice-as-performances, practice-as-entity and identification of outcomes and effects which will be briefly summarised next.

Practices-as-performances represents the actual domain and incorporates practitioners' audible and visible sayings and doings (Nicolini, 2012; Korica et al., 2017) when governing. Performances permit observation which enabled events to be witnessed first-hand (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010). The insight acquired, combined with interviews and documentation furnishing additional perspectives and clarification, facilitated a more comprehensive understanding, including particular material and historical contexts, traditions (pre-existing structures) and purposes (Byers, 2013; Korica et al., 2017). Visualisation and accurate identification of what actually happens, how practices unfold in real-time, provides a foundation and starting point for subsequent analysis and explanation.

Practice-as-entity represents the real domain and includes general and practical understandings, rules, and teleo-affective structure. Practical understandings pertain to

knowing how to conduct governance activities appropriately and acceptably and closely link to the procedural norms and oughts (rules) that imbue and guide practices (Lammi, 2018). The teleo-affective structure relates to acknowledged ends, purposes, meanings, and motivations attached to practices whereas general understandings are perceived as wider, more universal abstract principles and beliefs which in relation to governance might include ideals and connotations of democracy for example.

Discussion and analysis of these constitutive elements of a practice (Schatzki, 2002) facilitates awareness of how they inform, organise, and frame performances (Ahrens et al., 2010; Kuijer, 2014). When combined with practitioners and the practice timespace (Schatzki, 2012) understanding of how practices are enabled, constrained and either sustain or change (Hui et al., 2017) can be acquired. Applying retroduction (Blaikie, 2007; Byers, 2013), these elements provide some explanatory analysis of governing praxis in this context, especially when combined with knowledge of other geo-historical mechanisms and more recent or emerging conditions (Sayer, 1999).

The final element of the triadic conceptual framework, the empirical domain, includes outcomes and effects (and perceptions thereof) of this governance activity which are identified. These outcomes are considered, by practitioners and stakeholders, as significant and contributory to the ultimate object and mission, providing some justification for, and rationale, meaning and purpose to, practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). This domain also furnishes some additional explanation of governing in this context, critically analysing its contribution to these outcomes, with examples of morphostasis and morphogenesis (Archer, 2010).

Comparisons and contrasts will be drawn with extant governance and voluntary sports club (VSC) literature.

6.2 Activity Area I: Communicating and Engaging with Stakeholders (all cases)

Significant effort was dedicated to communicating and engaging with stakeholders. This will now be analysed using the conceptual framework.

6.2.1 Practices-as-Performances: ‘actual’ domain – the what?

Evident within governing performances in chapter five was regular communication and engagement with, and consultation of, members, occurring within a range of formal and informal, regular and sporadic practices. During AGMs stakeholders were appraised of business performance, significant achievements, concerns, and upcoming developments and events (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; Minikin, 2015). Verbal reports and dissemination of documentation, such as audited accounts, were accompanied by analysis with opportunity for questions (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; King, 2017). Stakeholders and attendees, scrutinised information, progress, or decision-making, asking for clarification and explanation, often in relation to resource allocation (Chappelet and Mrkonjic, 2013). This was provided whenever sought.

There was evidence of direct stakeholder involvement in all procedural elements, for example verification of minute accuracy, nominations, or elections. These processes were also prominent within EGMs where, for substantive issues, stakeholder consultation and participation in decision-making was required (Phillips, Freeman and Wicks, 2003; Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015; Harris and Houlihan, 2016; King, 2017). Committee meetings incorporated expression of stakeholder perspectives through appointed representatives (Kihl and Schull, 2020).

Alluded to above, and typical within VSCs (Nichols, 2005; Vamplew, 2013; Auld, 2018), was much evidence of informal stakeholder engagement and communication practices. These occur through spontaneous face-to-face encounters with committee personnel (A1; A3; A5; B2; B3; C3; C4; C6) who continually interact with members in the clubhouse, or even the toilets, responding to questions often concerning committee progress or decisions about facility developments. “There’s constant interaction with members through the sections, the chairs, players, discussions in the bar, X is really good, she keeps everyone in touch” (A4).

Other linked stakeholder communication ‘doings’ include member handbooks (all), newsletters (club B), programmes (all) and notice boards (all). While the latter is a more traditional example of communicating with stakeholders, the previous three are more recent developments. These are supplemented by others. While emailing is also a common practice, much communication also occurs through a more contemporary activity:

comprehensive use of various social media (Kay, 2013; Nichols and James, 2017). These are used to inform members of club news such as upcoming matches, social and fundraising events or outcomes therefrom. Prevalent across all cases was use of web sites (Davies and Light, 2015), Whatsapp groups, Facebook pages and Twitter, as Wemmer and Koenigstorfer (2015) advocate, and found by Burgess, Parker and Bingley (2021) in their investigation of local sports clubs, including cricket. Their findings that 'upper' or 'well-resourced local clubs' (Burgess et al., *ibid.*) have a more developed and sophisticated online presence is supported within this research.

6.2.2 Practice-as-entity: 'real'/ 'deep' domain - why?

Practical Understandings (practical know-hows)

Evidence of practical understandings, the know-hows relating to communicating and engaging with stakeholders, was extensive, particularly in terms of how this can be constructively incorporated within praxis. During meetings and AGMs, for example, stakeholder involvement was always invited and clearly communicated, providing a platform for input and feedback (Gerwick, 2013). Performances proceeded amicably and purposefully, in a manner that seemed mutually acceptable, on all occasions (Ahrens et al., 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016).

As alluded to, the advent of technology had supplemented more traditional means of communication and engagement, increasing interaction opportunities considerably. Nichols and James (2017) contend different members will respond to different communications and media, about which clubs seem to be aware, using a variety thereof. Committee members demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of how to ensure members were informed and given space and chance to participate, using these various media and means, appropriately and supportively. For example, reminder communication of, and relevant documentation for, committee meetings and AGMs (and EGMs) was distributed prior to events (Bryan, 1991; Gerwick 2013) via email, with posters in clubhouses and hard copies available. This gave stakeholders information, enabling preparation, and notice of opportunity to engage. Also the more informal practices, including spontaneous stakeholder-committee member conversations (Nichols and James, 2017; Tacon, 2019), seemed customary and accepted, influenced by inherent traditions. Practitioners recognised the need for, and benefit of, stakeholder inclusion (Freeman et

al. 2010), but also with cognisance of the organisation's formal rules (Lequesne, 2015; Lammi, 2018).

Rules (explicit and implicit procedural rules, norms, oughts, and instructions)

There was identifiable influence of rules within performances, demonstrating compliance with formally prescribed instructions. Many governance processes and requirements were enshrined within constitutions (Thiel and Mayer, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Sport England, 2016) which contain explicit rules codifying what ought to happen (Watson, 2017). That AGM (and EGM) performances, for example, comprised advance notice, provision of specified information and opportunity for stakeholder inclusion and interaction ensured adherence to these stipulated procedures, as Robinson and Palmer (2010) and King (2017) counsel.

Practitioners demonstrated thorough awareness of their club's constitution, explaining how rules informed responsibilities, processes, and actions. A1 said "the club's constitution states how its run... ." Drawing on an historic EGM to exemplify, he explained how members rejected a proposal (to sell off part of club land). "I think it's important at that level that the members are involved and get to have their say and ... you need two-thirds majority at an EGM to get something through, so you can't railroad something through." He, and other practitioners, were appreciative of the "checks and balances" (A1) afforded by these rules. There was particular emphasis that all prescriptions pertaining to financial and election practices, or those involving major organisational decisions, are strictly observed: "if there's a proposal comes along it would go to the members, it would never go through without their approval" (A5), paraphrased by all chairs.

Thus, indicated here is how rules inform individuals' personal and collective praxis (Barnes, 2001; Shove et al., 2012). Interviewees also implied a sense of compulsion, akin to a moral obligation, to ensure their enactment, invoking understandings of related ethical principles and broader beliefs and concepts (Ahrens et al., 2010; Nicolini, 2012), such as accountability and democracy. Several longer-standing personnel told of memorable disagreements between postholders, regarding interpretation and application of rules, whereby their circumvention was proposed. Very occasionally this resulted in someone exiting the committee or the organisation.

Overall, this suggests quite strong influence from 'rules'. Practitioners understood them, felt compelled to ensure their enactment and recognised their utility to facilitate checks and balances, helping ensure governance and decision-making aligns with the best interests of members, the organisation and its mission (Burger and Goslin, 2005; King, 2017). Robinson and Palmer (2010) and King (ibid.) suggest when processes adopted are acceptable and within the rules, competence, legitimacy, and authority are engendered; about which many practitioners seemed cognisant. There were no instances of stakeholders revealing concerns about rule contravention or allegations of such, during group interviews.

There was further evidence of the influence of explicit rules upon performances within the other activity areas.

General Understandings (broader concepts and principles, including values, ideas, and ideals)

Alluded to above was indication of supra-organisational, more abstract values and principles, enabling and constraining stakeholder communication and inclusion and engagement practices. Practitioners, practices, and rules seemed informed by notions of a fiduciary responsibility (Freeman, 2002), describing an obligation to ensure governance activity aligned with the best interests of members and the organisation (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Smith, 2009; Sport England, 2016). Broader understandings also suggested existence of a 'service orientation' (Balduck et al. 2010; Coates et al., 2014) whereby the self-interests of practitioners were presupposed by those of members, which took precedence. Inclusion of the stakeholder voice was viewed, by almost all interviewees, as a necessity, enabling greater understanding (Nichols and James, 2017), and informing governing and decision-making (Kihl and Schull, 2020).

Practitioners provided further illustration of shared general understandings. When asked how their club was governed, comments included: "There's only one word I can use for it: democratically. ... every member is entitled to have their say. ... that's the bedrock really" (B1), being "honest" (B1) and "truthful," (B4; C4), "open and inclusive" (A1), needing to explain the "rationale behind decisions" (B2), and being responsive to members and trustees and their questions (C1; C6). This reflected understandings of accountability, transparency, and democracy; also observed in performances. Not only was recognition of responsibilities to stakeholders apparent across the cases, as well as their aims and mission

(Alm, 2013; Tacon et al., 2017), but also the need for accountability and transparency to those affected by decisions (Henry and Lee, 2004; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; McDonald and Sherry, 2010; Sport England, 2016).

Cases demonstrated various formal and informal means by which the organisation and its constituents could be held to account by internal and external stakeholders (Lu Knutsen and Brower, 2010; Hassan and O'Boyle, 2017). Expressive accountability, as discussed by Lu Knutsen and Brower (ibid.) and Tacon et al. (2017) who associate this partly with an ethical duty to "patrons" [qua stakeholders], was also discernible. This deontologically driven perspective, informed by values and principles, can act according to Lu Knutsen and Brower (ibid.), as a normative internal dynamic which infers a generative, structuring mechanism of praxis. This seemed apparent in observations, and was reiterated within interviews, "In governance, really the key element is about honesty really, and integrity, and being truthful with your membership" (B1). Many respondents (A1; A3; B1; B2; B3; B4; B5; C2; C5; C6) also echoed club C's chair who said "we have to go back to members" whenever discussing really significant organisational issues, describing a responsibility and tradition within the club's governance to inform and consult stakeholders and be transparent (McDonald and Sherry, 2010; Alm, 2013; Kihl and Schull, 2020). Alm (ibid.) argues the compulsion to inform and be accountable to members, links to transparency through explanations of decision-making and information flows which was achieved through the various formal, informal, and mediated means to communicate with members, as described above.

A further recognisable underpinning theme related to inclusion and equity (Alm, 2013; King, 2017) which was visible within policies and practices, was a desire to create a welcoming and safe environment. All clubs took safeguarding seriously, having acquired and retained Clubmark status and implemented appropriate procedures (SRA, 2015; ECB, 2020). Young people, non-members and families were catered for through provision of diverse social events and/or dedicated facilities.

Together these notions and their incorporation within practices and praxis afford various checks and balances to scrutinise decision-making and governing more generally (King, 2017). This was not lost on various practitioners, "you've got to have the checks and

balances we've got" (A1), who recognise the advantages of keeping stakeholders informed and engaged, benefiting from their critical perspectives, ideas, and feedback.

Teleo-affective structure (normativized and accepted ends, aims, meanings, and motivations)

An evident, mutually shared, and prioritised praxis telos was member satisfaction (Auld, 2018): keeping members "happy" (A2; B3) seemed a prevailing motivation. Practitioners united around similar responses when asked how this could be achieved. B2 said "... making them feel like it's their club, which it is" and by "improving facilities and communicating things" others saying, "listening to them" and keeping them "informed" (A1; B1; B3; C3; C6). This suggests governing praxis assumes a responsive (Kartakoullis et al., 2015; King, 2017) and facilitative role, partly alluded to above with more specific evidence below.

This suggests practitioners also seemed motivated to collaborate through some form of shared satisfaction in co-producing and consuming club 'goods' (Enjolras, 2002) aware that others would also benefit. This connotes the concept of mutual aid as discussed by Adams (2011) and Nichols et al. (2005; 2016). There was much evidence of devotion to this cause, for example the long hours volunteered and, therefore, also an implicit altruistic orientation among practitioners (Taylor, 2003; May et al., 2013). Further evidence might be the informal interaction between committee personnel and members, regularly fielding and responding to questions, with practitioners ostensibly acceptant of this constituting part of their role.

Indications of affective elements were arguably signified by many practitioners' enduring involvement, time on committee (Appendix B), and extensive inputs. This sustained and benevolent commitment to practices (Ahrens et al., 2010) was typified by loyalty and longevity of service, observed also by Adams (2011) in his study of grassroots sports clubs. Many practitioners were lifelong members, or from families of "generational members" (FGA2). They, like others, had been serving on governing committees, in various capacities, for considerable time: over fifty years at clubs B and C; A2 over forty; C1 and C3 registering well over thirty; and, many others over a decade. This reflects various authors' observations of sports organisations and their volunteers (Coalter, 2007; Sherry and Shilbury, 2007; Houlihan and Green, 2011; Auld, 2018) and justifies Nichols' (2005) use of the nomenclature 'stalwarts' to describe these hardy volunteers.

This commitment appeared to stem from a genuine affection for their club (Coalter, 2007; Vamplew, 2013; 2016; Tacon, 2019) which seemed to act as a deep motivating force. Many suggested voluntary duties were undertaken for the good of the organisation “...everybody [referring to committee members and volunteers] is doing it for the love and good of the club” (A2), similarly voiced by B1 and A6 “There is a lot of love for the place, myself included.” This partly reflects Allison (2001), Harris et al. (2009) and Smith’s (2009) research into sports clubs which revealed the passion, dedicated and philanthropic nature of practitioners. Many referred to the considerable voluntary hours involved with C2 taking early retirement to devote his energies to club C’s land and accommodation developments. A1 and A5 cited personal and professional sacrifices to benefit club A, with B2 and B3 taking on additional volunteering duties while also working long hours in their professions. Many confessed to effecting club duties and practices during their working hours, sometimes even calling on their colleagues and staff to assist.

Collectively, these dispositions demonstrate the affective elements associated with some of the governing practices and indicate an emotional attachment that has become accepted, routinised and normative (Reckwitz, 2002). All this lends weight to Reckwitz’s (2017) argument that practices can entail specific motivations as integral elements, as seen above, as practitioners become absorbed and attuned to the teleo-affective elements. Furthermore, it implies deficiencies of rational choice theory (Meier, et al., 2018). For example, one practitioner confessed his efforts to execute a major fundraising event almost cost him his marriage (ObsA2) with B1 admitting his wife “no longer rings my mobile, just the club’s telephone number.” Combined this indicates the relevance and emotional salience of practices (Schatzki. 2002).

The above evinces the argument that sport engenders ‘a passion from its fans and various stakeholders that is possibly unlike any other existing industry’ (Agyemang and Williams, 2016, p.445), building on earlier observations by Stewart and Smith (1999; 2010). Furthermore, these findings parallel Houlihan and Green (2011), Vamplew (2013; 2016), Nichols et al. (2015), Tacon (2019), Hill et al. (2019) and Doherty and Cuskelly (2020) who write of the attraction of common interests, causes, beliefs and values and the accompanying social rewards of membership within sports clubs.

These norms and value structures thus seem to provide meaning for engagement (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Kuijer, 2014), begetting attendance, participation, motivation and enthusiasm within practitioners, to sustain the practice (Krasny et al., 2015). It also suggests endorsement of Schatzki's view (2012) of practices' teleo-affective structures: the combination of teleological and affective elements, linking goals and purposes with motivations, values and meanings.

6.2.3 Outcomes (all cases): 'empirical' domain

Evident from the above discussion was a strong stakeholder orientation (Byers et al., 2012; Fassin, 2012) and stakeholder engagement within performances was conspicuous. The athlete voice (International Olympic Committee, 2008) was heard through elected representatives (Bradbury and O'Boyle, 2013; ISCA, 2013; Kihl and Schull, 2020) despite the latter's contention that this is not always the case in sport. Substantive organisational issues, necessitating member consultation (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015) demonstrated evidence of direct influence on decision-making (Robinson and Palmer, 2010; King, 2017), offering an element of stakeholder control (Friedman and Miles, 2006; Walters, 2011). Occasionally this led to resignations or changes in governing personnel when stakeholders rejected certain motions and proposals at EGMs (clubs A and B). This seems to address Walters' (ibid.) concern that stakeholder engagement can often be tokenistic and bear little impact on direction; albeit the case study was a professional football club.

Thus, this research has shown how VSCs ensure stakeholders have an active involvement in decision-making and outcomes (Low and Cowton, 2004) and are effectively incorporated within governance practices and structures. Kreft (2017) argues organisations benefit from inclusion of broader perspectives. Houlihan (2013), as cited in King (2017), concurs, arguing input from various constituents improves decision-making, which seems borne out in this research. Players felt supported by their committees and were positive about their representation with their views communicated and acted upon. Clubs made investments and changes at members' behest. The prioritisation of members' needs supplements Smith's (2009) research into Swedish riding clubs and more recently that of Nichols and James (2017). Similarly, Kenyon, Mason and Rookwood (2018) exclaimed the importance of flexibility within a local sports organisation and

responsiveness to stakeholders' needs through provision of high-quality programmes and facilities.

Stakeholder theory, however, also suggests members' needs are not necessarily homogeneous (Etzioni, 1998). Sports clubs comprise inherent divergent interest groups (Taylor, 2003; SRA, 2013; Vamplew, 2013). Research also suggests membership is diversifying, becoming more discerning with higher expectations (Enjolras, 2002; Hoeber and Hoeber, 2012; Nichols et al., 2017). This complicates governance, begetting awareness of and receptiveness to members' preferences (Hoye and Inglis, 2003; Smith, 2009), implying a need for innovation and adaptability (Houlihan and Green, 2011; Wemmer and Koenigstorfer, 2015; Lowther et al., 2016). Various examples of such praxis and outcomes therefrom surfaced. New programmes and services have been introduced, offering more varied social and sports participation opportunities. Catering for different needs and demographics, this infers a more inclusive ethos advocated by the SRA (2015) and Sport England (2016). This research complements Ibsen and Seippel (2010) who observed similar occurrences, in some Scandinavian VSCs. These changes and developments, with further evidence of such below, signified facilitative, responsive, and innovative approaches to governing. Despite Watt (2003) and Wemmer and Koenigstorfer (2015) suggesting these traits are not necessarily associated with VSCs, this research provides some evidence of the contrary and supports Kenyon et al.'s (2018) findings albeit that was only based on one case study (a CIC in Liverpool).

Retroduced from the above discussion is the influence of tradition, rule adherence and shared understandings, upon these stakeholder inclusion practices. However, it is contended that the frequency of communication efforts and the attentiveness to members has increased considerably, in recent years, benefiting all parties. Stakeholders were highly appreciative of practitioners' efforts to be communicative, transparent, and responsive, encouraging customer interaction, feedback, and feelings of inclusion facilitated by 'astute use' (B1) of various social media and technology (Wemmer and Koenigstorfer, 2015; Agnastopolous et al., 2017). In fact, stakeholders were very complimentary of their club committees overall and the governance practices undertaken. Although one or two group interviewees (in clubs B and C) said the "committee" could be more communicative collectively, individual committee members' openness and approachability were welcomed and appreciated. The regular casual conversations, involving requests for

clarification of committee decisions, business, or procedures, opened up this governance 'black box' to members. This demonstrated accountability and openness to scrutiny which McDonald and Sherry (2010) suggest fosters transparency and trust, also asserting stakeholder inclusiveness is a strong influence upon satisfaction.

These practices have arguably enabled better understanding of members' needs which potentially facilitating more informed decision-making, according to Houlihan and Green (2011). This can also legitimate processes (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; King, 2017) which Houlihan and Green (ibid.) suggest engenders greater harmony. This seems apparent within this research: there was no suggestion of significant friction or hierarchical schism between practitioners themselves or with members. It was quite the opposite; although this had not always been the case, especially in clubs A and B and to lesser extent in club C, according to interviewees. This seems to justify, but then also refute, Watt's (2003) observations of sports clubs dominated by introverted and insular 'cliques'. It also partly addresses Vamplew's (2016) concern that VSCs can become 'static' and tied to traditions, to their ultimate detriment.

In all cases, practices and praxis thus seems commensurate with the governance principles of accountability, transparency, and stakeholder inclusion (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Henry and Lee, 2004; King, 2017; Kreft, 2017) and are recommended within Sport England's (2016) governance code. While knowledge of specific governance policies was not apparent, practitioners seemed cognisant and conscious of these principles, from both conceptual and practical perspectives, and the potential positive ramifications thereof. Boudreaux et al. (2016) cite Olken (2006) who suggests accountability and scrutiny opportunities can prevent issues such as corruption, especially when combined with democratic and stakeholder practices (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Walters and Tacon, 2018). The absence of any impropriety or corruption could reflect the altruistic and fiduciary nature of the volunteers (Allison, 2001; Nichols et al., 2005; Houlihan and Green, 2011), but also evidence of these checks and balances. Together, legitimacy and trust at organisational and committee level can ensue, contributing to enhanced reputation (Pielke, 2013; SRA, 2017).

Lu Knutsen and Brower (2010) argue internal resource providers, including members, when dissatisfied can choose to use "voice" or "exit" ultimately jeopardising organisational

sustainability, but this was not apparent within the cases studied. Various sources (Enjolras, 2002; Nichols et al., 2016; Sport England, 2016) purport a stakeholder orientation can make clubs more attractive to members. This appears supported by this research. While difficult to identify precise causal factors, it could be retrodeduced that stakeholder-oriented practices have contributed to each club's current position. They have demonstrated capacity not only to retain existing members, but also witnessed continuous recent growth, having experienced adverse fluctuations in their histories (A1; B1; B5).

6.3 Activity Area 2: Reviewing and Planning and Structuring and Organising (all cases)

The collective activities of governing practitioners and their doings and sayings, predominantly in committee and subcommittee meetings and AGMs, provides the basis of this subsection. Various authors allude to the potential significance of the practice of meetings for strategy development or governance (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Dittrich et al., 2011). This was reiterated by several interviewees "the club really is run from committee meetings" (A1;C6) and, therefore, seems borne out here. Meetings of each club's lead decision-making body are the primary medium in which governing activities, relating to the overall functioning, performance, direction and control of the organisation (Tricker, 1994; Hoye and Cukelly, 2007; Ferkins et al. 2009), are manifest and performed. It is within this medium where substantive information is divulged, matters discussed and debated, actions and directions decided.

6.3.1 Practices-as-Performances: 'actual' domain – what?

Performances (of meetings) proved illuminating. As Hendry and Seidl (2003) contend, observation of these 'episodes' alert to what is organisationally significant, problems and solutions. Echoed partly also by Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008), they provided insight into the enactment and the real-time doings and sayings of these specific governing activities, revealing contents, processes, and purposes.

Particularly noteworthy was the attention accorded to reviewing performance, sporting and business, a perpetual endeavour considered from various perspectives. During AGMs, chairs and treasurers critically reflected upon and analysed the preceding year. Typically, progress and achievements would be identified, concerns and challenges highlighted, with

links made to foreseeable future developments. Evident in chapter five was the practice of individuals enunciating brief titled reports, updating peers on progress, recent events, or outcomes. C3 summarised “I suppose we review performance virtually every meeting. We debrief on events like the beer festival, ... , we mention where did we go wrong ..., how can we improve it,”Also, secretaries or chairs habitually review matters outstanding and record actions completed (Gerwick, 2013). Similarly, subcommittees also undertake this practice, focusing on their specific remit (A4;A6;B4;C6). Practitioners (A1; B3; ObsC3) described other practices that had been reviewed, including governance elements and meeting processes, expenditure, and ways to increase income (see 6.4).

An equally prominent and related practice was planning, often concerning facilities (ground and/or clubhouse developments), fundraising and events, and sporting provision (teams and related infrastructures). Much planning activity was carried out by subcommittees, relating to their operational locus (ObsA2; ObsB2; ObsC3). A6 described the cricket subcommittee’s practices “planning ahead or reviewing progress in the cricket, looking at what we need in terms of facilities, or equipment, or the ground.” Similarly, B4 referred to club B’s processes “On the subcommittees, there’s areas they look at, with clear areas of responsibility, and they have clear plans of areas they are looking at and future possibilities.” C6 recalled the “extensive efforts of the development subcommittee” detailing the planning undertaken for the new ground project. Reviewing and planning therefore seemed an intrinsic element of all meeting performances.

Typically, almost all meeting performances followed a similar pattern, proceeding prosaically and undemonstratively through long-established agendas (A1;A2;B1;C1;C6). There was an inclusive, liberal and democratic approach to participant contribution adopted by all chairs, in all cases. The mood appeared mutually respectful, often with humour and light-hearted mocking, creating a cordial and collegial ambience (Levin, 2008; Gerwick, 2013), reflecting Lencioni’s (2004, p.221) apposite claim: meetings can be “productive and fun” dependent partly upon participants (ibid.). During reviewing and planning elements however, there could be quite vigorous discussion and debate. Disagreements surfaced, for example, on what should assume priority or the order of works’ execution (ObsC1;ObsC2). This could induce committees sometimes attending to more operational, rather than purely strategic, aspects (Robinson and Palmer, 2010; King, 2017; Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015).

6.3.2 Practice-as-entity: ‘real’/ ‘deep’ domain - why?

Practical Understandings (practical know-hows)

All cases revealed practical understandings of how to conduct (governance) meetings that seemed acceptable to all, in both content and process (Bryan, 1991; Carver, 2006). Meetings occurred in separate areas or rooms: suitably conducive environments, as Levin (2008) and Gerwick (2013) recommend, at mutually convenient times (LeBlanc and Nosick, 2019). Reminder communication and relevant documentation, for example agendas, were sent beforehand (Bryan, 1991). Praxis, according to practitioners, typically adheres to a recognisable pre-planned, agenda-driven structure (Levin, 2008; Hoye et al., 2011), providing stability and focus to proceedings (Bryan, 1991; Reckwitz, 2017). Agendas seemed well established and normative, and agenda items were constant and consistent. Informed by traditions, and constitutions (Salipante and Golden-Biddle, 1995; A1;A2;B1;C1; Hoeber and Hoeber, 2012), these were commensurate with club objectives and assigned committee responsibilities (Bryan, 1991; Carver, 2006); issues that ‘relate to needs of the organisation’ (LeBlanc and Nosik, 2019, p.698).

Review and progress reports, at each meeting, provided practitioners with information and a holistic overview of the club’s current position. Among practitioners there appeared a collective understanding to share relevant information (Henkel, 2007), succinctly (Gerwick, 2013). When asked how this was achieved C1 replied “I’ve trained them” [laughing], citing application of practices acquired from professional experience. This indicates evidence of practices spanning boundaries (Geilinger et al., 2016). Other chairs and many practitioners alluded to implementation and/or adaptation of recognised employment practices, which they considered helpful in developing their practical understandings associated with how to: chair governing activities appropriately (A1; B1; C1); plan events (A5; A6); expedite administrative tasks (A4; C5); minute meetings (C6); or review financial performance (A2; B2; B3; B4; C2). Despite Trowler’s (2014) argument that such transfers between social contexts should be not straightforward and precise processes, this research adds to Jarzabkowski and Bednarek’s (2018) argument of a relational view of phenomena. They perceived those in similar roles, but in different ‘firms’ and ‘locations’ can recognise and undertake similar acceptable and appropriate actions

and responses, owing to practical understandings acquired from common experiences of participation in those practices.

Fetzer (2009) suggests reviewing incorporates an element of checking progress on assigned actions. This was common across the cases, enabling identification of matters completed and those still outstanding, which would be carried forward until resolved (Henkel, 2007). Chairs, secretaries and others commented on the value of this practice in ensuring outstanding matters were more likely to be completed. Additionally, all chairs referred to another practice: adoption of a slightly removed, more objective and independent perspective, suggested by many authors (The Cadbury Report, 1992; SRA, 2017; King, 2017; Walters and Tacon, 2018).

Planning typically comprised practitioners being asked to and then offering contrasting perspectives and differing solutions (Bryan, 1991; Fetzer, 2009). Alluded to in performances was the vigorous debate that could ensue, especially when difficult or contentious topics were addressed (Bryan, *ibid.*). It was noticeable, however, that although discussion could be robust, it never became acrimonious or personal (LeBlanc and Nosick, 2019). According to some at club A, this had been customary until relatively recently. Additionally, whenever planning and related discussions became too protracted or inert chairs would request an 'action point' to be made, with a time frame attached to an individual (Fetzer, 2009; Gutmann, 2013). Other adopted strategies included deferring a decision until more information was provided, delegating to a subcommittee, seeking a consensus, or using a democratic vote to engender progress and decision-making (Bryan, 1991; Rochester, 2003; Carver, 2006; Fetzer, 2009).

These shared practical understandings seemed to enable performance of reviewing and planning practices to proceed in a timely manner, acceptable to other attendees (Ahrens et al., 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016).

Rules (explicit and implicit procedural rules, norms, oughts, and instructions)

Other than the need to appoint auditors to review accounts, constitutions did not contain explicit instruction to conduct reviews. There was, however, prescription within constitutions that required certain practitioners (chairs, treasurers) to provide a report to members at AGMs. Predominant within these reports was reflection upon and review of club and financial performance (Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011; King, 2017); the structure of

which appeared informed by established and accepted practice traditions (A1; B1; C1). The similarity of AGMs, in terms of content, arrangements and topics, across all sites was palpable, revealing much homogeneity although there was some variation in timing (Club B early April, Clubs A and C early and mid-December respectively).

The above suggests some confirmation of Robinson and Palmer's (2010) contention that constitutions direct how sport organisations should operate and conduct their affairs, inferring a prescriptive and normative character and essence (Ahrens et al. 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016). Constitutions, as collections of rules and oughts, seemed to firmly guide, structure, and inform what should or should not be done (Heisserer and Rau, 2015), adding credence to Ahrens et al.'s claim that 'rules often have great influence on action' (2010, p.5).

Contrastingly, whereas constitutions specify in some detail AGM content and processes, there was none such prescription for committee meetings. Nonetheless, the practice of updating peers and reviewing progress in reports seemed more a blend of tradition, accepted norms and 'rules of thumb' (Ahrens et al., 2010), providing a stable reference point for action (ibid.). This was also apparent in another practice: subcommittees, according to practitioners, would always report to the committee at the next juncture. While not explicitly stated in constitutions, this had become established practice and common to all cases. This also reveals some indication of how these practices knot together (Feldman and Worline, 2016) and inform subsequent iterations (Brennan and Kirwan, 2015; 2017). Additionally, it evidences how implicit understandings and unwritten rules can, over time, become formalised, accepted and normative, as Lequesne (2015) argues in a study of EU foreign policy practices.

Together, these activities illustrate the existence and influence of both formal and informal rules (Lequesne, *ibid*; Lammi, 2018) which, especially when combined with other elements of practices, engender understanding of what makes sense to practitioners to do at that time (Schatzki, 2001), enabling and constraining future iterations (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Furthermore, constitutions do not explicitly stipulate specific planning practices. Moreover, there is a requirement that practitioners 'manage' and undertake duties commensurate with the aims and objectives of the organisation, including the provision of facilities, their maintenance and development. This is exemplified by club B's constitution

which states the committee's role is to provide 'leadership, policies and strategies to enable the effective management of the club' (Club Rules, 2013, p.4), implying a need to engage in planning.

This more indirect requirement is supplemented by an external imposition: the production and submission of a 'long-term' club development plan (ECB, 2019b, p.1), as part of Clubmark accreditation (A3; B4; C3). This process not only obligates planning, but also annual reviews of various governance practices and policies, including those relating to stakeholders, finances and safeguarding (ECB, 2019b). All cases undergo this process to maintain this quality benchmark, providing evidence of safe and inclusive provision (Nichols and James, 2008; Davies and Light, 2015).

This future focus was apparent in all clubs and these requirements give some explanation for the extensive planning practices that occur within clubs. This discussion also reveals the significance of internally and externally generated rules, their inherent nature within practices and influence upon future instantiations.

General Understandings (broader concepts and principles, including values, ideas, and ideals)

As stated above, governing constitutions confer a responsibility upon committees to 'manage' the organisation. An accepted understanding among practitioners seemed an interpretation that this necessitates planning and reviewing, evident from the considerable emphasis upon, and effort invested in, these practices. This also perhaps infers a wider understanding of the concept of managing: one that relates to perceptions of classic - Gulickian or Fayolian - management theories whereby planning is a core function (Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Chalekian, 2016; Mullins and Christy, 2016).

A similar argument could be advanced for general understandings of organisational governance, given some recognisable affinity with strategizing (Ferkins et al., 2005; Ferkins and Shilbury, 2012) and managing (Chelladurai et al., 2017; King, 2017). Hence, it is suggested that these abstract beliefs (Schatzki, 2012), concerning the concepts of governance, strategy and management, 'tint' and inform practices and praxis (Lammi, 2018; Welch and Warde, 2018). Thus, it seems arguable there is a general understanding that governing should comprise reviewing and planning which appeared an integral element of all meeting performances.

Also, as alluded to previously, apparent in all performances was an accepted practice that reviews and reports would always incorporate opportunity for questions from attendees, confirming, not only a stakeholder orientation but also, dispositions towards accountability and transparency (Henry and Lee, 2004; Sport England, 2016; King, 2017).

Teleo-affective structure (normativized and accepted ends, aims, meanings, and motivations)

Practitioners unequivocally perceived reviewing and planning practices as necessary and significant, contributing towards an ultimate shared end: organisational sustainability. When aggregated these practices consumed substantial amounts of time within meetings. Chair (B1) commented “There is a review aspect process. We review everything really” reiterated by various interviewees.

While reviews were undoubtedly an important and regular occurrence, they were usually conducted quite impassively. Antithetically, as alluded to above, planning discussions could become quite animated and spirited, revealing greater displays of passion and emotion among practitioners than typical. Disagreements did not usually stem from ultimate purposes or ends, [this could be disputed a little in club A, perhaps], about which there seemed much commonality (Lammi, 2018), but rather which particular means or processes. These differences, however, never escalated to anything above vigorous and impassioned debates, indicating a form of collective understanding among practitioners of appropriate emotions and behaviours for the practice (Samra-Fredericks, 2003), while also providing insight into its affective component (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016).

As stated, planning was viewed as essential to clubs’ overall amelioration and hence accorded additional significance. A2 enthusiastically described all the planning taking place, saying “Yes, because of the [clubhouse] development. That’s the strategic focus of the club. The number one” confirmed within chair’s reports (ObsA1; ObsA3AGM). This planning predilection was confirmed by all at club A, with A3 providing additional insight “there’s a lot to talk ... in the winter really, especially between Christmas and the new season, planning ahead.” Clubs B and C also engaged in various planning practices, similarly involving ground or facility development (ObsB2; ObsC3). As alluded to previously, planning was significant owing to external governing body requirements (B1; B3; B4; C2; C3).

Also discernible was a future focus on another key shared telos: provision of a comprehensive junior section and development of young players (Davies and Light, 2015; Nichols et al., 2015). This topic also induced emission of strong feelings within praxis (ObsB2), directed towards some competitors who eschewed such practices (ObsB1; ObsB2). The importance of junior provision was captured by chair of club C (C1) “Your revenue is important, but my number one is junior cricket” paraphrased also by A3; B1, B3 and B5, and C3 and C6, which was considered essential to clubs’ long-term sustainability, supporting Davies and Light’s (2015) research into cricket clubs. All practitioners seemed fully conversant of this, believing it a wiser investment than expenditure on “professionals” (A1; B1; C2). This purpose was shared by interviewees again procuring insights into the teleo-affective structure of practices.

6.3.3 Outcomes (all cases): ‘empirical’ domain

King (2017) suggests sports organisations use a variety of indicators to evaluate themselves which was borne out in this research. Reviews of sporting performance and provision, combined with stakeholder input, led to new formats and programmes being effected, which Ibsen and Seippel (2010) found, in some Scandinavian VSCs, as a competitive response. As alluded to above, the case studies have adapted provision, seeking to cater for new and different demographics and membership categories (Allison, 2001), providing evidence of responsiveness and flexibility (Sport England, 2016; King, 2017). It could be argued this has also contributed to improving clubs’ attractiveness (Enjolras, 2002; Lunenburg, 2012; SRA, 2015; Musso et al., 2016; Nichols et al., 2016; Sport England, 2016), fomenting their sustained membership growth in recent years.

In reference to outcomes of reflection upon structural arrangements and governance processes, there were several discernible outcomes. A noticeable change - and necessary according to interviewees - is the speed of decision-making. A tradition of more reactive and protracted decision-making and governance (FGA2; FGC2), typical in some sport organisations (Hoye et al., 2006; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Robinson and Palmer, 2010), seems to have been addressed through changes in meeting practice and the ad-hoc variants, comprising a small number of officers. Interviewees contended this has been beneficial, enabling greater expediency than hitherto, while also constitutionally acceptable.

Another common deviation from previous iterations (Kesslet and Bach, 2014; Mutch, 2017) is shorter meetings, with Club B also holding fewer than traditional. Carver (2006) and Levin (2008) countenance shorter, well-run, and interesting meetings can encourage attendance and motivation which seems borne out in this research. Meetings typically lasted between the sixty to ninety minutes recommended (Levin, 2008) and now had an outcomes and action-oriented ethos (Parker and Hoffman, 2006; Henkel, 2007). Matters outstanding were pursued which encouraged their resolution, according to interviewees, which is also argued by Fetzer (2009). AGMs were even shorter, concluding within about fifty minutes.

Interviewees commented positively about these changes, identifying improvements and progress which concurs with Levin "A well-run meeting motivates team members to develop solutions, make improvements and move the practice forward" (2008, p.1126). It also offers support to Henkel (2007, p.21) "Meetings that encourage participation and share information can help your employees work and feel more like a team or community." The positive attendance patterns overall is a possible outcome of these changes, offering justification for Southerton's (2006) claim that practitioners prioritise co-participating practices. With most or all having a contribution and each reliant on another for relevant information, more inclination to attend might be engendered.

That all clubs invested significant time in reviewing activity suggests additional credibility to Shilbury and Ferkin's assertion that 'sport organisations have recognised the need for due diligence in monitoring performance and conformance' (2011, p.110). Given the range of outcomes, perceived positively by practitioners and stakeholders, it implies continual inwardly focused critical reflection has proven consequential. Carver and Carver (1997), Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) and King (2017) associate reviewing and planning with good governance.

A tangible outcome from each club's governing activity is long-term development plans, meeting ECB (2019b) Clubmark requirements. It is difficult to determine whether these would have been produced without this external 'rule' and imposition but, nonetheless, interviewees considered the (planning) process advantageous rather than burdensome. B1 said "there's a ... plan in place... . That has taken us forward and we're certainly in a better position than for many years," detailing numerous recent improvements. C3 offered

a similar perception. “We’ve gone from hand to mouth existence whereas now we’ve got plans in place ... We are doing a lot more of that. There’s no surprises now,” referring to positive impacts from planning activity.

Further claimed outcomes from this stronger future focus include various facility developments (see 6.4) and an oversubscribed and productive junior section. That some then progress into senior teams and/or roles within the club seems to substantiate the diligent and strenuous efforts within each club. Conceivable also is that deliberate investment of considerable resources in developing junior provision, including more qualified coaches and new or better practice facilities, attracts others (B4; C3), contributing to growth and sustainability. This was observed by Jones et al. (2020), as a competitive strategy, in their sports club research. Junior provision was undoubtedly a governance prerequisite across all case studies. In this respect, these findings augments research into VSCs by other authors, including Kay (2013), Nichols et al. (2015) and Davies and Light (2015) who all extol the benefits of such practices, summarised by the latter ‘clubs with healthy junior set-ups are deemed to be healthy clubs’ (2015, p.135), reflected in ECB policies and Clubmark criteria.

Thus, there seems growing evidence of a future focus within the clubs studied: a more considered and strategic orientation. Traditionally perceived as a weakness of sports organisations (Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Chappelet, 2010; Tacon and Walters, 2016), extant literature often portrays sports clubs/organisations as too myopic, reactive and operationally focused (Misener and Doherty, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Auld, 2018; O’Boyle et al., 2019). This does not seem fully justifiable given the findings and outcomes of the case studies’ governing praxis. It also lends weight to similar research in New Zealand by Hill et al. (2016; 2019) and suggests support for Ferkins et al. ‘strategic activities are future focused with an eye to the external community’ (2009, pp.162-3) with clubs’ practices devoting greater attention thereupon. Additionally, this too supplements research by the SRA (2016) which revealed 82% of clubs engage in long-term planning and Adams (2011) who observed some formalisation, in these practices, within clubs.

While the tradition of each organisation, to be governed by a single ultimate, elected decision-making body (Watt, 2003; Nichols et al., 2012; Davies and Light, 2015), has been maintained, evident is growth of the number of subcommittees, concurring with King’s

(2017) observation of larger clubs. The planning undertaken by these dedicated groups reinforces Hill et al. (2016) whereby they enable delegation of, and attention to, specific operational or functional elements while overseen by a general committee. This structural arrangement is equated with better governance, providing a clearer focus of roles and remits, more streamlined decision-making and more efficient use of committee time (Carver, 2006; SRA, 2015; Hill et al., 2016; King, 2017).

Furthermore, contentions that a weakness among sports 'boards' being too operationally focused (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2019) does not seem fully applicable within the clubs' governing praxis. Meetings seemed aligned with clubs' and members' best interests, addressing both strategic and operational issues, a 'balance' (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015) depending on the circumstances at the time which supports Cornforth (2003) and emulates March and Olsen's (1989) contention 'Governance is primarily driven by context' as cited in Gammelsæter (2010, p.570). This research, therefore, complements previous observations whereby committees focus predominantly on policy matters, but were also involved in some operational aspects (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Parker, 2007; King, 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2019). While this pragmatic dual focus, typical of smaller non-profit organisations (De Zwart and Gilligan, 2009; Balduck et al., 2010), does not strictly adhere to good governance/policy governance stipulations (Carver, 2006; Hoyer and Cuskelly, 2007; King, 2017), it seems to ensure each committee has an intimate understanding of problems with concomitant positive implications (Edwards and Cornforth, 2003; Parker, 2007). Ferkins et al. (2009) and Ferkins and Shilbury (2015) allude to the benefits of operational knowledge for subsequent strategy-making which seems substantiated by this research.

Dowling et al. (2014) would consider these reviewing and planning practices as evidence of a more professional approach.

6.4 Activity Area 3: Addressing Finances and Facilities (all cases)

As alluded to previously and the triangulation of data sources, there was considerable focus on the themes of finances and facilities within all practices.

6.4.1 Practices-as-Performances: 'actual' domain – the what?

Noticeable within chapter five, was for treasurers to give financial reports during AGMs and committee meetings, detailing income, expenditure, and accounts data, accompanied

by some analysis, and comparisons with previous years or periods. Attendees scrutinised information and received clear, informed responses to questions (ObsA3AGM; ObsB3AGM; ObsC4AGM). Interviewees (A2;B3;B4;C2) clarified the process adopted at an AGM, with B2 and B4 referring to the “active interest” of members, recalling instances where they “get a grilling” from members, especially in relation to the finances and the beer festival. Contrastingly, club C’s treasurer (C2) admitted he would prefer more questions from members at AGMs.

Also, during AGMs, chairs typically discuss and summarise progress, achievements and performance, during the preceding year. Club A’s chair, for example, provided some analysis, explanation and personal interpretation, mainly through an economic lens. He referred to the significant investments on grounds or facilities, and fundraising successes, but also expressed concern at the increased burdens and costs (ObsA3AGM). This closely resembled elements of club B and C chairs’ comments and assessments. There was much unease about heightened costs, mirroring numerous previous VSC studies.

The above intimates other key themes addressed during all meeting performances: facilities and their development; and, social and fundraising activity. Outcomes from the latter were always reported to members. Chairs and treasurers spoke of their “positive” (A1; B1) impact upon overall club finances (ObsA3AGM; ObsB3AGM; ObsC4AGM). Additionally, income from private functions was discussed, often from the perspective of the resultant profits which, in turn, supports facility developments (A1;A2;B1;B2;B3;C1;C2). Updates on links with numerous external bodies and progress thereupon were also included. Typically, this related to funding opportunities, sporting provision, or facility developments.

Perceptible during all performances was this attention to maintaining and developing social and sporting facilities. Each (eg clubhouse, ground) was usually analysed in terms of any identified problems, ongoing works, or planned improvements, with solutions invited and provided, often with indicative costs (ObsA1; ObsA2; ObsB1; ObsB2; ObsC1; ObsC2). An example of such praxis in club B (ObsB2) provided much insight into the process. A proposed budget was scrutinised by attendees and various ideas mooted, some with indicative costings and quotes; all was thoroughly discussed. There was agreement that investment in facilities should occur, but with a proviso “... it’s right we invest in facilities

and keep the 30K as a contingency benchmark, as a rainy-day amount to keep in the accounts” (B4). This was also the performance when other clubs’ different approaches, and perceptions of their shortcomings, revealed impassioned insights (see 5.3.2 ObsB2). Several months later, during the AGM (ObsB3AGM), B2 informed attendees how much had been invested and listed various improvements, explaining “the plan is to keep re-investing the profits” reiterated by other interviewees (B2; C2; C4).

The above description further evidence of how practices inform one another and hang together, materialising into co-dependent webs or bundles (Shove et al., 2012). The close associations made by practitioners between finances, fundraising and the improvement of facilities, and the extensive emphasis thereupon, indicated the prevalence of these themes in performances, providing a form of cohesive substance and structure to future iterations.

6.4.2 Practices-as-Entity: ‘real’ / ‘deep’ domain – why?

Practical Understandings (practical know-hows)

The common practice and standing agenda item of a treasurer’s report, in all AGMs and committee meetings, is a long-held tradition, according to interviewees. Noticeable was that all timetabled this comparatively early in proceedings. Bryan (1991) and LeBlanc and Nosik (2019) recommend important topics are scheduled early, ensuring there is sufficient time for their discussion. Treasurers’ reports were never rushed, with dedicated time for attendees’ questions and comments. Additionally, LeBlanc and Nosik (ibid.) contend (re)ordering of significant topics, depending on critical participant’s availability, which was witnessed in praxis (ObsA3AGM). That meeting performances always occurred within recommended timespans (Levin, 2008) again provided evidence of practical understandings of how to conduct meetings expediently.

The above also infers some agreement among practitioners about certain norms. Another example was an informal common convention that a “rump of cash” (A1) or “rainy day amount” (B4) should be maintained in bank accounts “come hell or high water” (A1), confirmed also by C1 and C2. More formal, agreed arrangements and financial processes were explained in detail by treasurers, including software used (Sage) and choice of tax year end which, interestingly, differed slightly across the cases. When probed about this there was explanation and rationale for their choice, partly influenced by particular local

circumstances and traditions (Rouse, 2007), although the other auditing and accounting practices undertaken shared many similarities. B2 referred to a “partnership approach” comprising “a group of knowledgeable people who all have their roles and can see what is going on.” C2 also spoke of a similar arrangement and suggested continual analysis of finances helps to “concentrate the mind”, enabling recognition of when losses are incurred, intimated also by A2 and A5. Interviewees accepted performances and actions were strongly informed by experiences of professional practice (A2; B2; C2; FGA2) and, arguably, epistemic knowledge (Nicolini, 2012). B4 said it helped having three qualified accountants on the committee, who bring their professional expertise to practices, with A4, A5 and C3 and C6 echoing these perceptions, indicating similarity in their clubs. Much of this alludes to the trans-situated nature of, and connections between, practices (Nicolini, 2017), especially those shared by membership of the same occupation (Wilkinson and Kemmis, 2015; Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

Fundraising practices took myriad forms which reflects previous VSC research (Kay, 2013; Vamplew, 2013; Wicker and Breuer, 2014; Davies and Light, 2015). Practical understandings were demonstrated in the capacity to successfully diversify income streams through forging new partnerships, acquiring new sponsors or finding new funding bodies. Furthermore, that fundraising events were successful and lucrative reveals evidence of practical understanding relating to their promotion and execution. Events were expedited with volunteer resources, supporting previous studies (Schulz, et al., 2010; Hoeber and Hoeber, 2012; Vamplew, 2013; 2016). Accommodating all the requirements, but within the context of dependence upon voluntary labour, had proven very challenging, causing “sleepless nights”, recounted A5, despite being an experienced, professional project manager, revealing the extent of practical understandings required by the practice. It also reinforces Hoeber and Hoeber (2012), Nowy et al. (2015) and Cordery and Davies (2016) who comment on the associated benefits and difficulties of volunteer labour.

Facility developments, another prominent theme within performances, was always analysed from, and influenced by, economic implications. Expenditure authorisation was dependent upon what was mutually acceptable “not committing ourselves to things we can’t afford” (ObsB3AGM) and potential positive financial outcomes (B2; C2; B4). C2 explained “it’s a question of what sort of payback, what sort of return there is on that investment.” Universal was that expenditure on professional playing staff must be

financially sustainable “We'll discuss it absolutely, but there'll only be reasonable amount of money we can afford to pay We don't overcommit” (B4), echoed by many governing practitioners in all clubs.

This discussion suggests shared practical understandings of how to address elements perceived as very significant within their respective sports clubs. Practitioners seemed fully cognisant of how facilities, fundraising and finances impacted and supported one another, as discussed in extant VSC literature (Allison, 2001; Robinson, 2009). There was continual focus within praxis on these matters, reflecting constitutions and unwritten norms.

Rules (explicit and implicit procedural rules, norms, oughts, and instructions)

As with the previous activity areas, and from the evidence above, rules informed praxis: formalised prescriptions were adhered to, providing guidance and structure (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). “Well we have all the usual financial controls” whereby there is “segregation of responsibilities” and internal scrutineers (B2): delegated personnel can access statements and check outgoings, but cannot authorise payments (A2;B2;B3;B4). C2 divulged similar practices “There are financial ones [controls] obviously, nothing gets spent without approval” (C2) which was typical, especially for expenditure on facility developments where two quotes were usually required (A2;B2;ObsB2).

Other rules of financial practices included regular stocktakes, quotation procurement procedures and two signatories on cheques, as well as appointed trustees and external auditors, providing additional oversight, as recommended by the EU (2013) and Sport England (2019). External auditors assist treasurers verifying and approving accounts for presentation to stakeholders (Sport England, 2016; SRA, 2017). These, and the other practices adopted, suggest they all met constitutional requirements. Interviewees were understanding of the various controls adopted, recognising these as prerequisites of financial practices and non-negotiable.

There was also influence from unwritten rules and accepted norms. As mentioned previously, a more recent innovation in club C (C2), but now practised across all, had been instituted to enable expedient authorisation of expenditure when essential issues arose, dependent upon agreement among an informal quorum of officers (A1;B1;C1). This action, however, would always be reported at the next full committee meeting (A1;A2;B1;B2;B4;C1;C2), as the constitution requires.

These explicit and implicit rules provided checks and balances for all financial aspects (Sport England, 2016; King, 2017); although some also voiced an element of trust existed among practitioners, informed partly by length of relationship, but also awareness of others' fiduciary predilections (A2;B1;C1;C3). The explicit constitutional axiom that profits or surpluses must be reinvested in club programmes and facilities (Auld, 2018) was strongly evident; this being a very apparent purpose of practices.

General Understandings (broader concepts and principles, including values, ideas, and ideals)

The strive to improve facilities (and capacity) was not just informed by tradition and constitutional objectives, but also a wider, shared understanding of the need to provide a competitive product and customer experience. Continuous improvement of facilities and capacity, through investment, was regarded partly as a competitive response, enabling clubs to retain or attract members (Macrae, 2017). Many authors have observed, within the voluntary sport sector, the competitive environment for players, volunteers and customers, advocating or observing adoption of more commercial and contemporary business approaches (Enjolras, 2002; Nichols, 2005; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Davies and Light, 2015; Nichols et al., 2015; Rossi et al., 2020). This was emphasised by various individual and group interviewees who talked of "a more commercial footing" (B1; C3) with A1 stressing the progress made in recent years while also regaling an anecdote of a meeting with the football chair. "As I said, I don't get involved in the day to day running, but when they're being stupid... you can't afford, we can't afford to go backwards on stuff like that" referring to the football section being encouraged to seek more sponsorship, offsetting facility costs (A1). Similarly, chair C1, within the AGM, stressed the need for a fundraising and marketing strategy to enable it "to compete" in the new league with clubs perceived as having better facilities and greater incomes. This ongoing focus on facilities, their maintenance and improvement, was apparent within financial accounts (expenditure items), interviews and AGMs, and dedicated EGMs.

There are also links to wider notions, as discussed above, of transparency, democracy and stakeholder inclusion, keeping members informed: "So, it's really just about trying to be more open and inclusive, ... you don't want EGMs about everything, but if there's something important [capital developments] then we need to get people interested and

involved.” (A1). C5 talked of the need to be transparent with the membership, especially regarding major facility developments and accounts which was echoed by practitioners within club B. B3 spoke of “... make sure you've got good controls in place. Make sure you are compliant with club rules, getting your accounts out, Clubmark accreditation, that kind of thing” indicating various forms of accountability, as described by Tacon, et al. (2017) while B2, B4 and C2 alluded to welcoming the opportunity provided for surveillance and scrutiny.

There was a common general understanding across clubs and practitioners of the need to provide this information to members and be accountable and transparent, especially in relation to financial matters (DCMS, 2015; Nichols and James, 2017). An almost reflexive inclination towards transparency was indicated by treasurers who, without request, offered to furnish financial records and accounts during interview. C2 summarised the perspective of many, when after much thought, he said “at the end of the day, it’s doing things the right way, ethically.” This was apparent regarding the common practice of the smaller, informal ad-hoc subgroup of officers, mentioned earlier. Perhaps initially at variance with some good governance principles (transparency, integrity, and accountability), chairs and treasurers stated all decisions taken under these circumstances would always be communicated to the committee at the very next juncture for full authorisation. Recommended within the EU Workplan for Sport (European Union, 2013), this praxis hence addresses transparency concerns, and demonstrates phronesis (Nicolini, 2012).

Teleo-affective structure (normativized and accepted ends, aims, meanings, and motivations)

From the evidence, a common, inherent purpose of governing in this context is seeking financial security or “solidity.” This was supported by various practices, including monitoring, analysis, and scrutiny of accounts, and explaining and justifying processes and balances to stakeholders (Henry and Lee, 2004). Treasurers’ reports early timetabling in all proceedings indicates paramouncy, reflecting recommendations from LeBlanc and Nosik (2019). Practitioners and stakeholders appeared unified in the prominence of, and attention to, club finances “Obviously, financially, we need to be stable, that’s the underlying, the bottom line, we have to be financially stable” (FGC2). A1 summarised this

inclination, betraying its normative and hierarchical significance (Schatzki, 2002), when saying

So, the single most important factor ..., always, is keeping the money sorted, keeping everything ... in check with the bank balance side of things. I will always ask ... at every meeting what's in the bank account and do we have any nasty surprises. We can try and do whatever we want, but if we run out of money we're knackered. So that for me, always, has to be the main aim, to make sure we're financially stable.

The link between financial stability, profit generation and facility reinvestment was equally prevalent: "the main aim ... is to get a new clubhouse and being financially secure" (A2). Mirrored by A1 and A4, the latter said, it's necessary "To ensure that the club makes a profit, so that it can invest in the facilities and developments." This appeared universal across the cases. B1 and B2 were unequivocal: "... all profits ... secured with the aim to ensure the club is sustained, secure and develops facilities for members within the budget constraints" (B1) and reiterated by B2. Similarly, C6 said "the key focus is making a surplus, getting the funds right. Without that you can't go anywhere" confirmed by club C's chair "We also focus on finances and growth ... and new developments and facilities" (C1).

This, and previous statements, imply the significance of facilities and their improvement, a key aim summarised by A4 being "To provide top class facilities for local people." This was a palpable, shared priority, funded through profits from social and fundraising practices, extolled by various interviewees (A1;A2;B1;B2;B3;C1;C2). Confirming observation data, B4 said, within meetings, "there' a key focus on finance and fundraising" stated also by C2 almost verbatim. The concerted effort and commitment applied to fundraising and the question for other possible income and funding sources was equally palpable.

This alludes to the emphasis placed on the practices associated with the social component within each club. Regular events and socialising and drinking in the bar, after games, a tradition in sports and cricket clubs (Davies and Light, 2015; Vamplew, 2016) were key income sources (ObsA3AGM; ObsB3AGM; ObsC4AGM). Many highlighted their club's social orientation, with C1 confirming an aim "To ensure there is a vibrant social club where people enjoy themselves." Group interviewees concurred "The social side of it is a big

aspect of it, ... , ... a big part” (FGA1). This reflects and complements considerable extant literature, drawing attention to the role of VSCs in facilitating ‘sociability’ (MacLean, 2013), friendship and social capital (Darcy et al., 2014; Nichols et al., 2015; SRA, 2016; Vamplew, 2013; 2016; Tacon, 2019). Nichols et al. commented ‘... sport’s ‘sociable’ dimension is a recurring emotional component’ (2015 p.52). This, however, is dependent upon having suitably conducive, functional and operational accommodation.

Some, however, questioned these purposes and priorities and differences of opinion were not uncommon, concerning which ‘ends’ (Schatzki, 2001) would best serve members and club interests. Occasionally discussion became more “vigorous” or intense (A1; A2; B1; B2; C5; C6) with more evident passion and emotion; although there was no enmity or antagonism, always remaining within what seemed acceptable parameters for that practice (Schatzki, 2006; Gerwick 2019). Emotive topics included newly acquired adjoining land developments (ObsC1;ObsC2), entry fee traditions (ObsB1) and whether playing sport or bar income from social activities should be prioritised (ObsA1). B5 conceded “Now and again there’s been some tension: is it a cricket club with social members, or a social club where cricket is played?” which relates to Vamplew’s observation that some sports clubs’ members ‘are perhaps social animals first and sportspersons second’ (2016, p.462). This social element, while unequivocally significant, therefore revealed a stronger affective component within praxis (Schatzki, 2002).

Interviewees also attached heightened emphasis upon the intention to provide a friendly, welcoming club for all; personal experiences, during the primary research phase, provided strong support (See also Tacon, 2019). Clubs were fondly and energetically described as: “a family and inclusive environment” (C1); “..., we are a friendly club” (B5); “a good friendly environment” (C3); “it’s a very friendly family orientated club which I think you can understand from the number of generations ... of members from the same families” (A5). Group interviewees provided further unequivocal testimony. All clubs had inclusivity aims and statements within their constitutions of which many practitioners were aware and supportive (cf. Spaaij et al., 2017 for research into diversity within VSCs). A slight concern, however, about possible club expansion and potential influx of new members at club A was expressed “What I like about this club – is the feel of the club, knowing other people by face. Would we lose that ... feel? Would we lose that unique feel?” (A3).

Within all interviews was a common belief that the sporting and social aspects form a kind of symbiotic relationship, summarised by one stakeholder “the club needs the cricket, and the cricket needs the club” (FGC2), referring to how these two potentially dichotomous elements, occasionally apparent in club A, can also support one another as Davies and Light suggest (2015). B4 summed up practices, alluding to these various prioritised purposes, saying “We talk about the sponsorship and social side every meeting, we talk about the cricket ground and facilities.” The motivations, meanings, ends and moods associated with practices have been revealed by this teleo-affective structure, demonstrated much commonality of purpose across the cases.

6.4.3 Outcomes

The well documented financial challenges encountered by many VSCs was replicated within this research (Allison, 2001; Reid Howie Associates, 2006; ECB, 2012; Cordery et al., 2013; May et al., 2013; SRA, 2013; Davies and Light, 2015; SRA, 2015; Biscoomb et al., 2016; Kenyon et al., 2018; Doherty and Cuskelly, 2020; Gérard et al. 2020; Rossi et al., 2020).

Practitioners admitted to cyclical periods of financial instability, within the last decade and previously. This was unexpected given each club’s reputation, age and longevity and Mile’s (2012) contention that older organisations tend to be more stable and secure (cf. Hannan, 1998 for contrasting discussions on this issue). These periodic downturns arguably acted as a deep or real mechanism with causal and structuring powers (Danermark et al., 2002; Byers, 2013), partially explaining the empirically observed sustained focus on finances and fundraising within governing activity. From this praxis, certain outcomes and changes are detectable, summarised by C3, who with over thirty years’ experience as a committee member, said

The former treasurer took us from a position of hand to mouth running to basically, he got rid of all the tie-in debts such as the brewery loans and put us on a commercial footing and took us from rattling along on the bottom of the overdraft, he took us in about five years to running quite a profitable little business. And we are now in a position where we are running a very profitable business. He basically stopped all spending for about 3 years, so we could get rid of the brewery loan, then took out a commercial bank loan The key was getting rid of brewery loans on silly percentages, going on a commercial footing changed it dramatically.

Common were perceptions of a more professional, “business-like” or “commercial” (A1; B1; C3) approach as Enjolras (2002), Nichols et al. (2005), Smith (2009) and Nichols and James (2017) observed in their studies of sports clubs.

Examples of morphogenesis included cost reduction activities, including negotiating better loan terms and supplier contract rates (A1; B1; C2; C3). Club A’s new practice of monitoring and auditing matchday income was considered very successful; it ensured losses are no longer incurred (A5). Reassessment of ‘bar gross margin’ led to price increases which, in turn, “helped increase profit margins” (A2; ObsA3AGM). Interestingly, this specific practice and outcome occurred at other clubs, almost concurrently (ObsB3AGM; ObsC4AGM). Equally, claims of greater emphasis on fundraising led to increased income from social events and sponsorship. Parnell et al. (2018) found similar practices adopted by non-profit facility providers, including income diversification and new pricing strategies. All clubs alluded to more stringent approaches to chasing monies outstanding.

Clubs now report “healthy” or “solid” financial positions with reserves in bank accounts. A1 said “the club at the moment is probably in the best financial state it’s been in, virtually ever.” Reiterated by B1, he said, “we are in a good place [financially]” and termed “solid” by B2 and C2, this appears to have been achieved partly through reprioritisation of aims, including greater focus on financial status and expenditure (Mowbray, 2011; Doherty and Cuskelly, 2020), strenuous fundraising efforts and a desire to provide a competitive product (Enjolras, 2002; Nichols et al., 2005; Cordery and Davies, 2016; Jones et al., 2020).

This research, therefore, supports various previous research findings relating to grassroots clubs. Cordery et al.’s (2013) study of local sports clubs in New Zealand found that, to survive, clubs must manage their financial resources prudently, operating in a financially sustainable manner, also suggested by Reid Howie Associates (2006). Doherty and Cuskelly (2020) found financial management is now a strength for many local sports clubs which is also arguable within this research. These studies relied on larger clubs for empirical purposes which, as Mile (2012), Winand et al. (2014) and Doherty and Cuskelly (2020) comment, are more likely to possess sufficiently skilled, willing volunteers and the financial capacity to facilitate acquisition of more resources, inferring growth is good. All cases sought to grow income. Enjolras (2002), Gray and James (2010), SRA (2013), Musso et al. (2016), Hill et al. (2016) and Auld (2018) advocate continuous monitoring of expenditure,

combined with attempts to diversify incomes, which seems bolstered by this research. The case studies now operate quite stringent financial management, including checks and balances, to ensure compliance, rigour and transparency, regularly reviewing performance. Recommended by Mowbray (2011) and Doherty and Cuskelly, the latter saying clubs should 'focus on maintaining their ... fiscal responsibility' (2020 p.252).

These financial practices resemble prescriptions of good governance (Mowbray, *ibid.*; Healey, 2012; Tacon and Walters, 2016). It replicates Ferkins et al. (2009) who refer to the importance of financial security for sport organisations. They observe this is now prioritised within governance much more than hitherto, reinforced more recently by Tacon and Walters (2016). This seems strongly endorsed within this study's findings with Thiel and Mayer's (2009, p.89) assertion 'so-called financial management in sports clubs is only of secondary importance' appearing a little anachronistic. While it is acknowledged that, as Auld (2018) says, this form of professionalisation can be 'patchy' at local club level, this research accords more with Doherty and Cuskelly's (2020) observations of VSCs. With each club now more financially stable and healthy it seems to justify the attention, within practices and praxis, to this purpose.

Further associated outcomes include no evidence or history of financial wrongdoing with audited accounts always being approved and accepted by stakeholders at AGMs, as well as more external sponsorship and grants income. Sport England (2016) contend organisations with reputations for inclusivity, transparency and trustworthiness are more likely to attract external resources which seems borne out here also.

The perceived more positive financial status has benefited from diversified and concerted fundraising effort and activity, reflecting various authors' findings or suggestions (Gallagher, Gilmore and Stolz, 2012; Musso et al., 2016; Walker and Hayton, 2017; Doherty and Cuskelly, 2020) whose research appears strengthened by these findings. Case studies revealed evidence of new fundraising practices (morphogenesis) blended with the more traditional (morphostasis), replicating previous research (Allison, 2001; Misener and Doherty, 2009; Kay, 2013; SRA, 2013; Davies and Light, 2015). While Gallagher et al. (2012) warn of potential for 'crowding out' whereby one source of income induces reductions in another, the case studies orient more towards viewing this activity as requisite and contributing to their financial security. These practices further indicate the more

commercial approach adopted within VSCs (Enjolras, 2002; Robinson and Schneider, 2015a; Musso et al., 2016).

While there was ample evidence of a more coordinated and pro-active fundraising approach, it was no longer purely internally oriented (Kay, 2013). What appears different from this research, and indicative of a change in emphasis, is the greater boundary spanning focus. All three cases have undoubtedly become more outward facing, seeking to develop external links as advocated by various authors (Misener and Doherty, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; ECB, 2012; Gallagher et al., 2012). This has included aiming to increase membership (through new cohorts, services, and programmes), income (via new partnerships and sponsors) and closer, more regular contact with the governing body, county foundation and leagues. The ECB (2012, p.36) advised clubs should 'communicate regularly with, and utilise the available advice and support from ourselves, county boards, leagues and local communities'. All cases reported stronger, more productive relationships with their county foundation boards, not always previously so according to Allott (2018), as well as seeking to grow their presence locally. Doherty and Cuskelly (2020) encourage this, especially if seeking to enhance organisational capacity. This also links to Rochester's (2003) third sector governance research: successful boards access and utilise external sources of information, advice and support; an issue about which all committees seemed aware and willing to deploy resources to this effect.

Various authors (Lock et al., 2013; Winand et al., 2014; Wicker and Breuer, 2015) advocate greater external focus for other potential benefits which might accrue, including organisational legitimacy and positive external perceptions which seems borne out here. Cutt (2018) spoke of the case studies' positive reputations. Club also reported increased external investment and success in acquiring new sponsors and/or grants from funding applications. Enjolras's (2002) concerns that this can adversely impact volunteering within sports clubs does not seem present, with all clubs benefiting from large numbers of volunteers. The research also suggests confirmation of Reid Howie Associates' (2006) findings that some clubs have developed expertise in accessing external funding.

The above suggests much evidence of growing boundary spanning (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007) and interorganisational collaboration (Jones et al., 2020; Millar and Doherty, 2020), contrasting with much extant literature that refers to the parochial and insular traditions

of VSCs (Houlihan and White, 2002; James, 2005; Coalter, 2007; Pitchford and Colman, 2009; King, 2017; Robertson, et al., 2018). There was no indication of exclusionary practices within the cases, unlike certain 'closed' (Stone, 2012) cricket clubs (Kay, 1974; Lewis, 1987; Marqusee, 1994; James 2005; Major, 2007).

As alluded to previously, many of the above practices were justified from the assumption that this will: facilitate maintenance of programmes (Jones et al., 2020); enhance capacity (Millar and Doherty, 2020); and, improve services to members (Thiel and Mayer, 2009; Auld, 2018). As many observe (Salamon and Anheier, 1996; Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Shibli, 2010; Vamplew, 2013) while profits are not the primary purpose of voluntary organisations these are necessary to enable investment in facility maintenance or development; a recurring issue within this research. The sentiments attached to governing praxis justify Hoye and Inglis' observation (2003, p.369) 'These organizations exist for the purposes of program or service delivery to enhance participants' quality of life, with financial surpluses used to enhance organizational goals rather than distribute profits to members'. Practitioners talked of a duty-like obligation and mission in these respects, partly evidenced by continual facility developments, envisioning improvements for members, as Misener and Doherty (2009), Sport England (2016) and Macrae (2017) recommend.

Doherty and Cuskelly (2020) stress the significance of high-quality facilities within the clubs they researched as did the ECB (2012), assuming greater stakeholder satisfaction and organisational sustainability will accrue. This seems reflected in this research with stakeholders highly appreciative of facility and service improvements (FGA1; FGB1; FGC1; FGC2). Success in stabilising finances and growing incomes through social and fundraising activity has enabled continued investment in programmes and facilities. All clubs regularly refurbished function rooms and hospitality facilities which were regularly hired out, contributing appreciably to club finances (A1; A2; B1; B2; C1; C2). This concurs with various authors' assertion of the role clubhouses and facilities play in income generation, membership satisfaction and social activity (Enjolras, 2002; SRA, 2013; Vamplew, 2013; Davies and Light, 2015). From this research, social accommodation is a significant means to generate income (Enjolras, 2002; Musso et al., 2016; Nichols and James, 2017; SRA, 2018) which all clubs aim to improve. Much of this suggests justification for Davies and

Light's (2015) argument that development of facilities coincides with the general growth of clubs.

Sport (and cricket's) tradition of this close relationship with conviviality and socialising (Vamplew, 2013; 2016; Davies and Light, 2015; Nichols et al., 2016) was equally evident within this project. There seemed a collective will to ensure an inclusive, sociable atmosphere, emphasised by national governing bodies (ECB, 2009; Sport England, 2020). The primary research conducted within the clubs was enjoyable, owing to the welcoming and friendly ambience (Tacon, 2019). This affective and social element, and the attention it was accorded, supports Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) who suggest sport organisations should 'facilitate fun through participation'. It also offers credence to MacLean (2013), Lock et al. (2013), Wicker et al. (2013), Nichols et al. (2016) and Vamplew (2013; 2016) who stress the significance of the social element within clubs, serving as a magnetic force and attracting or retaining members. Having experienced fluctuations in membership numbers in their histories, all clubs reported growth in recent years, particularly among juniors. All clubs have Clubmark accreditation and safeguarding measures in place, conveying 'child-friendly' values (Davie and Light, 2015) and regular family-oriented social events. An additional benefit of this, not lost on practitioners, is the potential for generating a wider diversity of future volunteers.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter has critically discussed, with reference to the conceptual framework, the practices and praxis of the case studies. It is contended that it has opened up the 'black box' of governing in the context of grassroots sports clubs. Much extant [sport] governance literature is prescriptive, focusing on what organisations should do, while eschewing praxis. Notable exceptions, for example Tottman and Larsen (2013), include illuminating case studies but these are governing body rather than grassroots oriented. Nichols and James' (2017) more recent study of sports clubs includes elements of governance, albeit within a primary focus upon volunteering and social inclusion. Additionally, while 'good' governance codes prescribe foundational principles, typically there is little reference to their operationalisation and implementation, or interpretation by practitioners. Additionally, governance literature predilection with larger or corporate entities has led to

use of terminology (CEOs, directors), or focus upon structural elements (audit committees), not applicable to many grassroots sports' clubs.

Using social practice theory, combined with critical realism, this research has aimed to turn this around. Observing performances, the sayings and doings that occur (actual domain), has revealed how practices are carried out in real-time, including where and when as well as changes or variations. This, combined with interviews and documentation, revealed entitative constitutive components of governing practices, providing indications of why practices are, and how they should be, conducted (the real domain). This led to an understanding of changes and resultant outcomes (table 6.2), and perceptions thereof (the empirical domain). It has scrutinised the mundane and processual activities associated with governing in clubs, accommodating genealogical, situational and configurational aspects (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). This close-up and intense cross-case investigation has furnished deep, insightful and comprehensive insights.

It has shown sites contain comprehensive bundles of governing practices linked to directing and controlling the organisation (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007). These take various forms, including policies, formal and informal discursive routines, and actions. The more formal include regular committee meetings and AGMs, auditing, and financial procedures, demonstrating conformance with internal and external obligations; other practices are less regular, for example EGMs, or less formal such as subcommittees, occurring as or when required to address specific issues or functions. The themes also identified all clubs undertake myriad dispersed communication practices, such as explaining and describing organisational performance and decision-making processes to stakeholders and regularly updating them of news and events. Collectively these formed a more integrative and coherent overall practice bundle (Warde, 2005; Harries and Rettie, 2016). Reviewing and planning was also a very apparent component of many performances, knotting together with the previous activity area (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). A final theme and activity area - addressing finances and facilities - seemed to provide the unifying underpinning purpose or 'connective tissue' (Spurling and Blue, 2017) around which practitioners and praxis cohered and coalesced.

This alludes to how the research also demonstrated sequencing of activities and how practices were bound together by temporal and spatial similarities, such as co-location and

co-existence (Shove et al., 2012). They were also co-dependent, with one meeting informing and structurally conditioning (T1) the next with chained and patterned collective social interaction (Hui, 2017) that share certain affinities (T2/T3). Chains formed whereby meeting outcomes would be followed up and thereby influence subsequent iterations (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). Discernible patterns were identifiable, based on similar content, style, structure, and purposes within the same location, and across all cases, particularly in relation to the key activity areas identified. This indicates support for Shove et al.'s (2012) observations that practices can contain similar elements, for example principles, rules, purposes and understandings, across sites of the same organisation type, creating unity through ubiquitous components. Captured from triangulating all data sources, these are depicted below in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Governance Components (Principles and Practices)

Governance Components	Evidence of (within practices and praxis):		
	Club A	Club B	Club C
An identifiable lead decision-making body or group	Yes (Executive Committee)	Yes (Committee)	Yes (General Committee)
Democratic values & processes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stakeholder inclusion & communication	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accountability	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transparency	Yes	Yes	Yes
Planning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monitoring & Reviewing performance	Yes	Yes	Yes
Diversity within governing committees	Evidence of recent increases.	Evidence of recent increases.	Evidence of recent increases.
Controls, checks and balances (internal and external)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Separation of Powers	Yes	Yes	Yes *
Elections & Voting procedures defined	Yes – one member, one vote. Chair casting vote.	Yes – one member, one vote. Chair casting vote.	Yes – one member, one vote. Chair casting vote.
Fixed Terms	Yes, but can be re-elected	Yes, but can be re-elected	Yes, but can be re-elected
External focus	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethical and equitable practices	Yes	Yes	Yes
Designated Roles and Responsibilities	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent
Fiduciary responsibilities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Altruism	Yes	Yes	Yes

The research, therefore, has shown much (unanticipated) homogeneity across the three sites. Uniformity included commonality in structural arrangements and procedural processes, purposes, and outcomes sought and achieved. Some differences were apparent, for example case A contained more subcommittees, being a multisport club. [NB Club C has very recently become a multisport club]. Further commonalities related to challenges encountered, revolving around internal issues (space and capacity, club mission, facilities and priorities) and external pressures (local circumstances, league and

governing body requirements, competition) and discussed in performances. Research also shed light on common broader principles (general understandings), such as transparency, accountability, democracy and stakeholder-centricity, that seem influential, along with other ‘conditions’ (Sayer, 1999), in providing structure and guidance to performances. This suggests praxis occurs at the nexus of myriad influential forces. These comprise: deep structures (T1), incorporating previous iterations, traditions, values, principles and norms (Collier, 1994; Salipante and Golden-Biddle, 1995; Fleetwood, 2005); practitioners’ understandings, experiences and knowledge (of previous practices, principles, norms and telos); and, internal and external prevailing circumstances (T2/T3) (Sayer, 1999).

Homogeneity was equally evident in terms of both continuation of extant practices (T4: morphostasis) and elaboration (T4: morphogenesis). Certain practices, for example maintenance of a single ultimate decision-making body, regular committee meetings and AGMs, traditional social events, financial audits, use of certain communication means, and informal approaches to potential new committee members, were all reproduced. Evidence of change was also detectable: subtle adaptations to praxis and new practices were instituted at all sites. These more recent modifications and refinements and their associated outcomes, triangulating data from various sources (Byers, 2013; Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021), are depicted below (table 6.2). For all clubs, unless stated, these comprise:

Table 6.2: Changes and Associated Outcomes

Changes in practices/ praxis	Associated outcomes
<p>Changes in committee meeting style and approach: shorter, outcomes focused meetings with prompt communication after meetings and follow-up reminders; a less adversarial, more collegial approach during performances (club A).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more agreements reached on decisions and outcomes • more actions recorded as completed • appreciative and contented committee members • better meeting attendance (than historically remembered) • more demographically diverse committees
<p>More subcommittees; use of a smaller subgroup of officers that meets as/when required (especially for emergent issues).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attention to specific operational issues • Speedier decision-making

<p>A greater stakeholder orientation, including an increase in communication practices and recognition of the need to provide a competitive product and service;</p> <p>Use of various social media to increase member communication and feedback;</p> <p>New programmes, teams, and social events, catering for different demographics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contented and appreciative stakeholders, especially of the: responsive and approachable nature of committees and officers; their efforts to improve and increase communication; and, investment in facilities. • growing membership/ membership income (*Club B's actual membership numbers were not specified precisely, but they reported growing membership revenue.)
<p>Greater focus on reviewing financial incomes and expenditure with additional checks and controls instituted.</p> <p>Implementation of professional practices to managing finances, including use of technology and software.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increases to (bar) profit margins • reductions in some forms of expenditure • stronger and more stable financial positions with reserves accrued
<p>A more pro-active and rigorous approach to income generation opportunities (funding and fundraising);</p> <p>Implementation of professional practices to promotion, events and fundraising, including use of social media;</p> <p>More attention to external matters (outward-facing), including developing (and maintaining) external connections (local community, possible partners and sponsors, and governing bodies).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growing revenues from fundraising activities, sponsors, and funding applications • growth in partners and sponsors • increase in social events • successful, well supported, and profitable social events
<p>Heightened focus on junior members, families and related events and facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in junior memberships (capacity) • New programmes, teams and social events catering for different demographics.
<p>Increased investment in facilities (playing and social); continual facility improvements/ developments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construction of a new clubhouse in advanced negotiation stages (club A); acquisition of adjoining land with progress towards subsequent phased pitch, practice and accommodation development (club C);

	<p>preparation of a new dedicated junior pitch and better spectating and hospitality facilities (club B).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contented and appreciative stakeholders (see above) • growing memberships (see above)
Changes in practices/ praxis	Associated outcomes

These changes and outcomes might be considered partly as a response to what many perceive as a more complex and demanding internal and external environment, reflecting a range of authors' findings (Sam, 2009; Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011; SRA, 2013; Brettell, 2015). These pressures seem to act as an influential, but not necessarily a deterministic, force (Kesslet and Bach, 2014). Some argue this has created pressure for VSCs to modernise: to adopt more managerialist, formal, commercial and professional practices (Enjolras, 2002; Robinson, et al., 2010; Dowling et al., 2014; Newman, 2014; Phillpots and Grix, 2014; Sherry et al., 2016), replicating other sports contexts (Slack, 2005). This seems definitely apparent in this research and is indicative of the wider voluntary sector (Drucker, 2005; Billis, 2010; Brettell, 2015; Ruderham, 2015). While some tensions were occasionally apparent in all clubs, reflecting the debate between the traditions of voluntarism and a more managerialist/commercial approach (Adams, 2011; Auld, 2018), this research supports King's (2017) view that many clubs have begun to relinquish these traditions, as B1 said "... I mean the traditions are ok, but it's about moving forward." This also makes Reid's comments seem prescient 'As sports clubs are encouraged to become more professional and commercially viable the differences between commercial (for-profit) and voluntary (not-for-profit) sports club provision will diminish' (2012, p.224), partly also acknowledged recently by Misener and Misener (2017) and Rossi et al. (2020).

Similarly, while cognisant of Hoeber and Hoeber's (2012) statement that clubs can be havens of tradition and informality, it is disputed that they are merely reactive, with various indications that they are more dynamic in their decision-making, more formally and systematically organised, with a more strategic perspective than previously apparent. The case study clubs are larger than some which bolsters those who observe increasing formalisation and professionalisation occurring in sports organisations, and typically the larger (Adams, 2011; Nagel et al., 2015; Sherry et al., 2016; Nichols and James, 2017; SRA, 2018). While documented long-term business strategies are not evident, all have a vision

and plans to improve facilities and, thus, are not just focusing on sporting values and performance (Chappelet, 2010; Wicker and Breuer, 2013).

To some extent, therefore, this research disputes the slightly pejorative and arguably somewhat anachronistic 'kitchen-table' depiction and conceptualisation of VSCs' organisation and governance (Kikulis, 2000; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Auld, 2018). It provides a more nuanced perspective. It supports and supplements the work of Hill et al. (2016; 2019) into grassroots sports clubs' governance, who said 'small scale clubs can and do develop very distinct and, more importantly, effective governance structures' (2016, p.204). Despite little awareness of the Sport England governance code, practitioners and stakeholders believe "effective" (B2), "good" (A4) or even "exemplary" (C6) governing occurs, justifying this from the headway made towards their mission and aims. It is also argued that practices were sustained by very competent and committed practitioners (Shove et al., 2012; Doherty and Cuskelly, 2020). Often recruited informally, they admitted to transferring professional practices (or at least elements thereof) to their governing roles, justified from the perceived benefits provided. There was much evidence, among practitioners, of shared common perceptions of traditions, understandings, rules, values, aims, purposes, and motivations (Shove et al., *ibid.*; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015).

From the discussion it is apparent that the committees in each club comprise very capable, competent and committed individuals, with successful professional backgrounds and/or careers. It is also arguable that their experiences of professional practices and knowledge gained thereof, through direct immersion and participation (Raelin, 2011; 2017; Vaara and Whittington 2012), seem to have been consequential to clubs through the changes to governing praxis that they have helped implement. There was much evidence of the application of professional practices being transferred to this non-profit context by actors inhabiting both domains (Mutch, 2017), albeit with some adaptation by these skilled reflexive practitioners (Haffenden, 1987; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Whittington, 2006). Particularly poignant and noticeable developments within governance practices seem to have been effected by chairs and treasurers.

The former all alluded to introducing revisions to governing praxis, implementing practices from their work environments. These included adjustments to meeting proceedings, and also how they act in their role as chair of the club: a more removed, impartial and objective

stance, as recommended in much good governance literature. Changes and effects included shorter or fewer instantiations of committee meetings, with a “reporting” rather than “problem” focus, culminating in agreed actions. These recent modifications were identified and received very positively by peers, often contrasted with less effective previous practices.

Additionally, treasurers also spoke of their implementation of workplace practices to their role, perceiving these as instrumental to improvements in their club’s financial position. Other practitioners shared and reinforced these perspectives, indicating their considerable contribution to resolution of previously reported financial problems. Notably, at clubs B and C, qualified accountants were not always in post as treasurers until more recently. However, this had been the case in club A which had still encountered financial difficulties, particularly in winters. Nonetheless, all clubs now had comparatively (with hitherto) significant reserves with practitioners lauding their treasurers and the adjustments they had implemented to financial practices.

This discussion provides some indication of agency and reflexivity, blending understandings from different contexts, with personal intelligibility, to co-create and amend praxis accordingly to suit the various environments they encounter (Mutch, 2017; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). This lends additional gravitas to those, such as Shove and Pantzar (2005), Whittington (2006), Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), Brennan and Kirwan (2015) and Jarzabkowski and Bednarek (2018), who recognise the significance of skilled, reflexive and improvising agents. It also suggests flatter practice ontologies (see Seidl and Whittington, 2014 for a fuller explanation) do not fully enable appreciation of the significant role practitioners play in reproducing and revising practices.

The above indicates governance’s complex, demanding and polymorphic nature (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010; Ahrens and Khalifa, 2013). It also seems arguable that governing practices have proven extremely consequential to each organisation, in various ways. This relates to objective two of the thesis which sought to establish which practices are considered significant, including identifying how they have been enacted and to what ends. A framework, aiming to epitomise and represent governing in this context, is presented in chapter seven (table 7.1), along with recommendations to practitioners and researchers.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter consolidates and synthesises the various elements of the thesis. It will revisit the original aim and objectives and analyse progress thereupon.

Research objectives:

1. Critically explore the nature of, and relations between, situated governance practice and praxis, and how these are enacted, in three case studies;
2. Critically analyse governance practices and praxis, identifying examples considered consequential to the organisation and the outcomes sought;
3. Critically evaluate SPT as a conceptual lens and its utility within the context of organisational governance, making suggestions for theoretical development;
4. Devise a framework that encapsulates the focus of governing practice and praxis;
5. Make governance practice and praxis recommendations to other cricket clubs.

For continuity and coherence each objective will be discussed in order. Initially, findings will be summarised, addressing objectives one and two (7.2). Contributions to knowledge will be advanced (7.3). There will be some critical evaluation of the conceptual framework, including the utility of SPT for governance research, with suggestions for theoretical development (7.3.1), attending to objective three. Claims for practical knowledge will then be presented, incorporating a framework that encapsulates the key foci of practices and praxis and recommendations for other cricket clubs' governance, addressing objectives four and five (7.3.2). Axiological elements and limitations will be acknowledged (7.4) with suggested proposals for future research endeavours (7.5).

It has been argued that voluntary sports clubs (VSCs) are a significant organisational form. Yet, their associated inherent (pre-existing) traditions and structural characteristics, such as independence and autonomy, informality, amateurism and volunteerism, often combined with a perceived reactive, dilatory, and insular orientation, has led to critical and deprecatory judgements (Birley, 1999; James, 2005; Reid Howie Associates, 2006; Houlihan, 2011; Gallagher et al., 2012; Stone, 2012). Some suggest governance and management practices are haphazard, too operationally focused, anachronistic, or lacking

direction (Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Allison, 2001; Hoye and Inglis, 2003; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Gallagher et al., *ibid.*). Furthermore, perceptions of a more challenging, complex, and competitive environment (Sam, 2009; Adams, 2011; SRA, 2013; 2015; Auld, 2018), have led to encouragement and advocacy for, or observation of, increasing formalisation and professionalisation in practices and operations (DCMS/SU, 2002; Hoye and Inglis, 2003; King, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Houlihan, 2011; Dowling et al., 2014; King, 2017). Also recognised and scrutinised is the recent increased emphasis upon sport governance and the ensuing plethora of academic studies and prescriptive policies and codes. Implying universal importance to all sports organisations (Kirkeby, 2016; Sport England, 2016; SRA, 2019), nonetheless there is some concern of these codes' relevance to grassroots clubs (Hill et al., 2016; 2019) with much extant research neglecting this context (Tacon and Walters, 2016; King, 2017). Given VSCs' ubiquity and prominence this is a little surprising, inducing requests for further governance studies in this field (Hill et al., *ibid.*; King, *ibid.*; Walters and Tacon, 2018). This research has responded accordingly. Recognising an absence of academic literature into what actually happens when governing at grassroots level, the overall aim for this research was ***to develop a critical and comprehensive appreciation of local cricket clubs' governance***, culminating in theoretical and practical knowledge contributions. It seems unequivocal that this research was needed and timely.

7.2 Revisiting the aim and objectives

Predominantly in chapter five, application of SPT concepts revealed the nature of situated governance practice and praxis, enabling identification and description of how governing is conducted in each case study: what actually happens in performances as well as their underpinning structuring components.

Findings disclosed the commonality of the challenges encountered but also the similarity of governing processes across the cases, as depicted in tables 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.2. This homogeneity in structures, procedures, principles, purposes and outcomes was not expected prior to the investigation. Research also identified subtle local idiosyncrasies and variations (Hui et al., 2017). For example, club A had more subcommittees that also convened more regularly, club B's General Committee meets slightly less often than A and C, all have different tax years, and all constitutions while very similar, have minor disparities.

Governing practices were also more extensive than anticipated: each case comprised a comprehensive bundle of practices. These were more organised, developed, and expedient than alluded to by some (Allison, 2001; Taylor, 2004; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Stone, 2012; Vamplew, 2016). This research, therefore, aligns more with those who observe evidence of contemporary approaches to governance, management and operations within sports organisations and clubs and influences from other sectors (Smith, 2009; Adams, 2011; Reid, 2012; Nichols et al., 2012; Dowling et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2016; 2019). This was alluded to particularly by chairs, treasurers and others spoke of the introduction and application of practices from different workplaces and contexts (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), with perceptions of beneficial effects and outcomes.

Sites revealed governing comprised a blend of more formal and less formal, pragmatic activities. All have a practice and tradition of an ultimate decision-making body, that meets regularly to address matters relating to their mission, supported by a web of subcommittees. It was also evident that longstanding practices, for example committee meetings had been refined or amended and supplemented with additional practices (see below). Attention to these performances facilitated identification of significant practices, such as addressing finances and fundraising, that were universal, and perceived by interviewees as receiving more assiduous and channelled effort and attention than hitherto. Practitioners made the link between these activities and subsequent capacity, enabling investment in facility maintenance and improvement (Shibli, 2010), trying to ensure members' needs are met without jeopardising financial health.

Social practice theory helped reveal these understandings and their linkages to teleo-affective motivations, goals and purposes, and how informed by prescribed rules and constitutions that, in turn, were influenced by traditions and broader principles (Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Welch and Yates, 2018). These became evident through observation of performances, and the sayings and doings of practitioners, and were supported by interview and document data. Overall, it is considered that objective one has been achieved.

Chapter six provided some critical analysis of governing in this context. Through a process of abduction (Edwards et al., 2014), common 'activity areas' and respective sought outcomes were identified, as well as those practices considered more consequential to the

organisation. Building towards a more generic cross-case explanation (Burns, 2012; Yin, 2018), it aimed to meet objective two.

Critical realism and social practice theory facilitated a combined capacity: to direct attention to reproduced traditional practices, and their constitutive structuring elements; and current iterations, linking these to future goals and intentions 'towards an end from what motivates' (Schatzki, 2010) as cited in Hui (2017, p.59). This enabled identification of structural elaboration and the perceived associated effects and outcomes (Archer, 2010). Traditional practices, such as committee meetings, had been refined or amended and supplemented with additional practices. Examples of the former (refinements/amendments) included changes in meeting tone and style and enhanced foci on specific issues and activities. Committee meetings are now shorter, more decisive and outcomes oriented. Committee members are appreciative of these changes with indications attendance has improved, possibly providing evidence to support Southerton's (2006) claim that practices co-dependent on others may be prioritised. Data also suggested governance decisions are made more expediently, but also with due consideration of multifarious forces: stakeholders, emergent local circumstances, and meso and macro pressures, as prescribed by Robinson and Palmer (2010). Additions included more subcommittees and their increased usage to accelerate decision-making and provide more detailed focus on specific operational issues (King, 2017), introduction of new products and services, and more regular communication and interaction between committee members themselves and also with stakeholders. Members were consulted and their feedback sought through various traditional and new media.

Alluded to within the data were shared understandings, motivations and purposes, among practitioners and stakeholders. Finances were a concern and prudent financial management was paramount, reflecting SRA findings (2013; 2018) and Cordery et al. (2013; 2016). These practices, it is claimed, have led to reductions in some overheads and increased revenues through elimination of expensive loans and raising bar profit margins after stakeholder consultation (EU, 2013) and competitor analysis (unlike other clubs according to Gallagher et al., 2012). Simultaneously, heightened focus on fundraising through social events and seeking new members, external clients, sponsors, or funding agencies have also helped diversify and grow income (see Kay, 2013), as recommended by Sport England (2016). This is linked to another shared understanding: an egocentric or

insular ethos has been replaced by one that looks outward, recognising potential positives may accrue (Musso et al., 2016; SRA, 2017). All declare improved financial stability with “healthy” reserves, contrasting markedly with earlier eras, enabling ongoing investment in social and playing accommodation and pitches.

Notably, all cases have a vision, with short, medium, and/or longer-term plans for significant facility developments, at varying stages of fruition. Similarly, new products and services have been introduced successfully, indicating diversification and innovation (Hoerber and Hoerber, 2012; Wicker and Breuer, 2014). Examples included more family-oriented social events, women’s and girls’ or younger and older age teams; some were undertaken after members’ requests (Allison, 2001). Overall, this revealed a responsive, flexible, and facilitative governing ethos.

Alluded to by these developments has been an aim to beget a more inclusive environment with recognisable consequences and effects. Each club has witnessed cumulative growth in membership and/or membership income, is at or near capacity for junior players, benefits from numerous volunteers, and now has a more demographically diverse membership and committee, as Sport England’s (2016) governance code prescribes. It is acknowledged, however, that Spaaij et al.’s (2020) recent work has revealed the dichotomy and disconnect between many local sports clubs’ rhetoric and actual practices, and the superficial nature by which many claim to address diversity within their organisation.

These advances, combined with the aforementioned increased membership interaction and consultation, occasioned very positive stakeholder reviews. All were highly complimentary and appreciative of the committee, its individuals, and their communication efforts, especially in relation to stakeholder suggestions. Chairs and treasurers, particularly, were very highly acclaimed, receiving numerous commendations.

Much of this suggests these cases are formalising and professionalising in various ways, complementing previous authors (Harris et al., 2009; Sam, 2009; Robinson and Palmer, 2010; Adam, 2011; King, 2017; Auld, 108; Tacon, 2018). The claim that governance: a relevant, fundamental, and critical activity for any organisation to function (Ferkins, et al., 2005; Yeh and Taylor, 2008), ‘properly and legitimately’ (Hoye and Inglis, 2003, p.369), seems borne out in this research. Cases were selected for their positive reputations and

capacity to provide access to the phenomenon of interest. Their governing practices were insightful and illuminating; it is contended that through these practices clubs have, on a range of metrics (Minikin, 2009), variously progressed. Chapter six identified the key and consequential activity areas of governing, changes in practices and praxis, and associated outcomes and effects, indicating which were more consequential in the process. Hence, it is argued objective two has been achieved.

It is proposed this study differs from much extant governance research: rather than concentrating on prescribing principles (of good governance), it has produced descriptions of actual praxis and guidance for practitioners, indication of the ends sought, and the means used to procure their achievement.

This research and the outcomes therefrom suggest potential for valuable contributions to practical and theoretical knowledge which will now be proposed.

7.3 Contributions to Knowledge

7.3.1 Contributions to theory

This subsection will aim to address objective three, critically evaluating social practice theory (SPT) and its utility for this study. It will argue that SPT is a sufficiently capable and facilitative theoretical resource for academic research of organisational governance (OG). It will also be contended that SPT is suited to case study research. Suggestions will be made, advancing SPT can be conceptually enhanced (Nicolini, 2017) through alliance with a critical realist (CR) paradigm, opening new opportunities for the study of social matters.

The application of SPT to governance is quite a rare academic occurrence and typically more apparent within the corporate sphere (Smallman, 2007; Ahrens et al., 2010; Brennan and Kirwan, 2015). Relatedly, the voluntary sector also seems to have received less attention from social practice theorists in recent years. This thesis addresses Smallman's (2007) request for theoretical development within governance research, seeking to enhance its rather limited range (ibid.; O'Boyle, 2012; King, 2017). It also expands the range of organisation-centric potential applications, drawing on a rarely approached field and context: the sport sector and, more precisely, the grassroots (voluntary) level. Nicolini (2017) asserts SPT is an open ontology, benefiting from new conceptual and empirical projects. This thesis responds to some of these extant requests or deficiencies, breaking new ground from various conceptual, theoretical, and practical perspectives.

This thesis argues SPT has proven an apposite theoretical prism for research into OG and, particularly, in this context. It has provided comprehensive conceptual tools to investigate governing in this voluntary sport environment. More specifically, Schatzki's philosophical interpretation of SPT, combined with concepts from other authors (Whittington, Shove et al. and Nicolini), furnished a supportive and combative theoretical foundation. Affording close attention to, and scrutiny of, related human activity (Nicolini, 2012), within different sites, it enabled identification and accommodation of a range of governing practices (Smallman, 2007) and acquisition of data from various sources.

As Trowler (2014) suggests, praxeologisation behoves attention to performances and events. Attention to practice-as-performance, via observation, permitted visualisation of what actually happens during enactment of live (governing) activities and how conducted in real-time (Enjolras and Waldahl, 2010), revealing the skills applied and required. These observations also helped shed light on what mattered and the purposes of practices (Ahrens et al., 2010). Equally, there was apprehension of how rules are applied in situ, but also with reference to traditions and more abstract related values and principles (Ahrens et al., 2010; Welch and Warde, 2017). Hence, performances provided copious empirical evidence with insight into the issues and challenges encountered and how these are addressed within contemporary praxis. Observations, and recordings and field notes thereof, also enabled comparisons and contrasts to be drawn across the cases (Easton, 2010; Kesslet and Bach, 2014).

Alluded to here are the various components of a practice. Conceptualised as 'practice-as-entity', these refer to pre-existing, interrelated elements (Maller, 2012; Higginson, et al., 2015) that provide a stable foundation to guide subsequent performances (Heisserer and Rau, 2015). Interviews and primary and secondary documentary sources within sites supplemented observations (Brennan and Kirwan, 2015; Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) to generate awareness of policies, norms, procedures, and traditions, providing rich and valuable data about practice-as-entity elements (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018). Common (practical and general) understandings of how to coordinate structural arrangements and performances acceptably, orderly, and ethically were revealed. The thesis demonstrated that certain principles and values, for example those associated with good governance (accountability, fiduciary, democracy, transparency) can be conceptualised as general understandings, informing subsequent performances and

behaviours. Similarly, shared sought outcomes and an emotionally conducive and supportive ethos also became more apparent. Furthermore, in all practices there had been strong evidence of constitutions, qua formalised explicit rules and instructions, enabling and constraining governing (Ahrens et al., 2010). Interestingly, there was indication of certain 'rules' being more social in orientation, negotiated by active and engaged agents, becoming legitimated through the course of time. This was seen, for example, in informal recruitment to committees (all clubs) and the formation and actions of the smaller subgroup convened to effect speedier decision-making, but retaining legitimacy by acting within both explicit rules and socially acceptable parameters (Nicolini, 2017). This indicates support for Schatzki's contention that rules form an integral part of social practices, justifying their inclusion (Schatzki, 2001; 2012; Ahrens et al., 2010; Caldwell, 2012; Cox, 2012; Heisserer and Rau, 2015; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2016).

These entitative components combined synergistically, providing a means to inform, unify and cohere practices and practitioners. Many practitioners demonstrated or articulated a form of phronesis: a practical intelligibility guided by certain wider beliefs, principles, and values; an ethically informed praxis (Nicolini, 2012). Interviewees' accounts suggest this develops from various sources, including previous experiences and knowledge of the organisation, its norms, traditions, and practices and from exposure to practices beyond that environment. The influx of experienced and/or professional personnel to committees seems to partly explain some subsequent transportation of workplace practices and routines, indicating 'normative isomorphism' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Gazley, 2014). This also reinforces Whittington (2006) and Shove et al. (2012) in their discussions of how practices circulate and transfer across fields.

In combination this dual analytic of SPT (as performance and entity) (Heisserer and Rau, 2015) revealed governing in its current form and a broader understanding of the background to current practice (Caldwell, 2012; Rivera and Cox, 2014), effectively uncovering what is done, how and why (Ropke, 2009; Maller, 2012). This provided some explanatory insight and evidence of what seems to work and be consequential within this context. Additionally, this distinction helped highlight evidence of 'old and new ways of doing things' (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) or continuity (reproduction and repetition) and development (transformation and innovation) in the case studies (Trowler, 2014). It is these traditions combined with more recent changes of emphasis within governance

praxis, captured within the 7F domains (table 7.1 in 7.3.2), that seem most significant to each organisation.

SPT also offered sufficient flexibility to undertake research within different locations to positive effect, providing a commensurate conceptual lens and ontology for qualitative, multiple case study research (Trowler, 2014; Fein, 2015). Importantly, it supported the 'zooming in' (Nicolini, 2012; 2017) on the nitty-gritty and the more mundane elements of governing in each club, enabling recognition of patterns, similarities, and variations thereof. Illuminated were situational, genealogical, and configurational dimensions (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017) within each case study. Less esoterically, it allowed observation of the accomplishment of practices within specified settings, understanding of their histories and evolution, and the network/s they form within an acknowledgement of the wider environment of which they are part, respectively. Furthermore, it also helped uncover each case's bundle of practices, revealing much structural, procedural and praxis symmetry. SPT, therefore, seems a powerful ally for qualitative case study research, facilitating access to various social and material sources of data and the means for illuminating comparisons and contrasts.

Another contribution to knowledge claimed is that SPT can be ontologically and conceptually combined with critical realism (CR). This innovative theoretical development suggests new opportunities for social practice theory's enhancement, learning from novel conceptual alliances and subsequent applications within empirical projects, as Nicolini (2017) extols. Chapter four explicated the methodology and aligned CR's stratified ontology (Walliman, 2016) with SPT to create an original, mutually supportive, and combative conceptual framework. It is believed this conceptual framework enhances others pertaining to SPT, for example Schatzki (2002), Warde (2005), Shove et al. (2012), and Heisserer and Rau (2015), to provide a more comprehensive empirical directory. The thesis furnishes evidence of this abstract synthesis's operationalisation, bestowing guidance to future research endeavours (Ally et al. 2016).

It is suggested SPT combined with a CR paradigm effected and augmented the study of governance as a holistic unit of analysis (Ahrens et al., 2010) to provide a deeper, broader and explanatory understanding of governing in this context. Alluded to is the surprising level of homogeneity exposed, especially when considering voluntary sport's conventional

heterogeneous depiction (Skille, 2008; May et al., 2013; Auld 2018). Synthesis of these ontologies uncovered homogeneity exists across all three levels of reality (Martin and Wilson, 2016; Fletcher, 2017).

Evidence has shown across all cases comparably similar pre-existing antecedents and structuring mechanisms within the 'real' level (T1), comprising previous problems experienced, traditions of practices, rules, norms, understandings, and principles. For example, given that all clubs reported historic significant financial difficulties, this could explain the greater attention to finances and fundraising than might have occurred hitherto. Equally, practitioners talked of democratic values, their fiduciary responsibility and the need for transparency, which can be conceptualised as mechanisms, which frame their tendencies as they operate and act [phronetically], resulting in observable phenomena (Bhaskar, 1989).

Within the actual layer (T2), events and interactions also disclosed resemblances in both performances and processes and the prevailing influential 'conditions' (Sayer, 1999) experienced (T3). These emanate from various sources: policy and legislation; governing bodies; the local community; and, stakeholders. From the latter, for example, a challenging dilemma for governing practitioners emerged: maintaining a positive financial position while continually seeking to improve facilities for members through investment (Shibli, 2010). This necessitates ongoing equilibration between somewhat paradoxical ideals. That this appears to have been achieved, according to observations, interviews, and stakeholder feedback, across all clubs in recent years, seems noteworthy and laudable. Equally apparent was that 'conditions' were confronted by influences from professional practices imported, to the context of VSCs, by knowledgeable and reflexive practitioners (Chia and Holt, 2006; Whittington, 2006; Seidman, 2008). At the empirical level (T4), similarities were again identifiable both in terms of practice reproduction and transformation, and the outcomes therefrom, supported by retroductive analysis (Easton, 2010; Byers, 2013). The stratification of reality into these three levels, combined with adoption of the morphogenetic cycle (Archer, 2010; Mutch 2017), seems to have unequivocally proven beneficial in helping organise and conceptually analyse empirical data and identify similarities across the cases (Kesslet and Bach, 2014).

A further outcome of this approach was an appreciation of the bundles of practices that co-exist in each location and how these cohere and hang together, providing detailed insights into the governance objectives, processes, and the current plight of clubs (empirical domain). Each case proved a penetrative and insightful research opportunity, partly owing to their age and accessibility as social sites (Schatzki, 2002; Nicolini, 2017). Application of this conceptual framework, accommodating data from a variety of instruments, enabled triangulation and clarification of meanings and processes (Cresswell, 2009; Easton, 2010; Rivera and Cox, 2014).

The thesis supports others (Nicolini, 2017; Byers et al., 2021) in arguing opportunities are provided by opening up social phenomena or ontologies to new theoretical influences and ideas. It is contended the philosophical synergy and congruence between CR and SPT, as demonstrated within this thesis, can provide fruitful avenues for organisational-centric research in different fields and contexts, drawing on this novel development.

Social life and elements thereof, such as governing an organisation, requires, and is a product of, individual and concerted human activity (Barnes, 2001; Ahrens et al., 2010; Kihl and Schull, 2020). SPT 'with its focus on dynamics, relations and enactment' (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011, p.1240), has proven a cogent and malleable conceptual ally, albeit not straightforward in empirical projects (Warde, 2005). This research has demonstrated how it can be operationalised to positive effect, particularly when supported by a critical realist paradigm.

It is believed the thesis has made a contribution to the academic literature on sport governance. It is contended a more comprehensive and nuanced appreciation of governing in this context has ensued. The application of SPT, and its innovative partnering with a CR paradigm, has arguably facilitated valuable and illuminating insights into VSC organisational governance and, more widely, provided evidence of how governance, as an academic field, can benefit from theoretical elaboration, as Smallman (2007) requests. This alludes to a capability to research polymorphic and complex social phenomena, acknowledging both structural and agentic elements within a predominant focus on practices (Raelin, 2011; Welch and Yates, 2018). It has also suggested its suitability for dual purpose empirical exploratory projects which aspire to develop both theoretical and practical knowledge. Practical knowledge contributions will now be made.

7.3.2 Contribution to Practice

This subsection will make claims for contributions to knowledge of sport governance practice. Firstly, a governance framework has been formulated, comprising 7F's (table 7.1): a mnemonic to aid practitioners in their governance of clubs. This is considered particularly original, summarising the key aims, purposes, and activities of practices within a concise and memorisable (ideal-type) structure. Secondly, more specific recommendations follow, providing additional guidance for governing practitioners.

Previously contended is that application of the conceptual framework, particularly teleo-affective structural components, facilitated identification of what mattered and what were perceived significant and consequential governance activities (Ahrens et al., 2010). These have been conceptualised as domains - fields of action, thought, influence – and aim to epitomise the ethos, key activities and purposes of practices. Thus, they intend to represent and encapsulate the 'range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects and tasks, ...' (Schatzki, 2002, p.80) that partly comprise the teleo-affective structure of practices. Interpreted as what was perceived as most valuable to the overall telos of sustaining and growing the organisation, these domains of activity attract heightened focus, seeming to provide motivation to practitioners to sustain the practices (Barnes, 2001; Krasny, et al., 2015). These F's also provide some indication of the meanings and emotions practices possess and engender (Krasny et al., *ibid.*), demonstrated by the enduring and strenuous efforts of volunteers and their arguably irrational levels of commitment, for example towards fundraising practices. Additionally, these seven domains also incorporate and reflect more recent enhancements and changes of emphases within praxis, alluded to above.

Table 7.1: Governance Domains (F's Framework)

Domain	Explanation
Finances (conformance and fiscal frugality)	Continual monitoring of financial position; checks and balances implemented; tighter controls on spending; overheads reduced; compliance with regulatory frameworks and constitutional requirements.
Fundraising and Funding	Regular social and other internally and externally focused fundraising activities, embracing new ideas and opportunities; income diversification; pro-active in seeking funding opportunities and sources.
Facing Outwards	Seeking partnerships and (closer) links with others for purposes of mutual support, aid (intellectual, financial, physical resources) or assistance/guidance.
Facilities (improvements and developments)	Ongoing reinvestment and upgrading of facilities: spectating, playing and practice, social/ hospitality and changing accommodation.
Future Focus	Looking ahead, identifying potential problems, planning future developments; investment in junior teams and infrastructures.
Families and Friendship	Providing a friendly, welcoming, and inclusive atmosphere. A more family-oriented environment, informal and fun, partly through new programmes, events, and social activities.
Facilitative, Flexible and Functional	Listening to and responding to members and stakeholders, embracing innovation, new ideas, new products, new teams and new programmes, linked to club missions/objects.

These domains share similarities with, and provide some elaboration to, Allison (2001) who argued sports clubs need to focus on members, finance and 'short-term planning'. There is also some symmetry with Misener and Doherty (2009; 2013), Balduck et al. (2015), Millar and Doherty (2018) and Doherty and Cuskelly's (2020) research into the organisational capacities of local sports clubs. Summarising their research, they identified key organisational capacities that facilitate performance, organisational missions and ambitions, including human and financial resources, management, accommodation, external orientations, planning and development, and new 'programs'. This research assimilates many of these capacities, but also offers some extension and definition,

providing a helpful mnemonic for practitioners. As alluded to previously, the case studies are also aiming to improve or grow their organisational capacities through governing practices, summarised within this framework.

Equally, there is some overlap with this research and other recent studies of third sector and community sports organisations. Walker and Hayton (2017) and Parnell et al. (2019) denote more commercial orientations, including new income generation and diversification practices. Macrae's (2017) study of Scottish VSCs identified the need for stakeholder responsiveness, flexibility to accommodate new members and provision of a welcoming, inclusive environment. Her work revealed similarities with Smith (2009) and Kenyon et al. (2018) who also extol the importance of flexibility and responsiveness, especially in relation to the provision of high-quality products and facilities, whereas Brown and Pappous (2018) observed a national sport organisation's prudent management of financial resources and development of closer relationships with external partners as important sustainability tactics. This was also replicated at a more local level, according to Parnell et al. (2019) in their study of community sports facilities and the management thereof. These studies allude to elements of the above F's framework.

This thesis, therefore, builds on and extends research into VSCs. It provides fresh insights into this organisational phenomenon and the governing activities undertaken in this context, as well as the myriad challenges encountered by volunteer practitioners, and how these are intended to be addressed through practices. Research suggests governance in these clubs should not be characterised as antiquated, casual, and desultory (Hoye et al., 2006; Robinson and Palmer, 2009). Rather, evidence indicates practices are considered, structured, and organised, united by specific purposes, principles, and policies (rules). And, in these cases, are conducted by knowledgeable, experienced, ethically imbued, loyal practitioners. VSC practices also seem informed by many workplace practices. Blending these with traditions and 'conditions' (Sayer, 1999), praxis occurred at the nexus of these various interconnecting forces (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2018).

Tacon and Walters (2016) and Walters and Tacon (2018) observe the growing influence of governing principles within sports organisations at a national level. This thesis also provides some evidence of this at the grassroots of sport, supplementing Hill et al.'s (2016; 2019) research into clubs in New Zealand, albeit without any indication of direct influence

from policy. Interviewees conceded ignorance of Sport England's (2016) governance code, reinforcing May et al. (2013), but seemed well informed about related governance principles acquired through professional experiences and/or from participation in previous club practices and knowledge of the constitution. This, therefore, partly reinforces Parent and Hoye (2018) who question the direct impact of governance codes.

Many of the cases' practices suggest adherence to principles of good governance, but with subtle, creative, and pragmatic differences that acknowledge individual contextual histories and recent and current circumstances (Zink, Shaw and Lynch, 2015; Hill et al., 2016; 2019). Practices reflect Sport England's (2016) prescriptions that organisations should have a constitution and clear and appropriate governance structure, a 'properly constituted Board', vested with appropriate powers, that operates effectively with responsibility for its continuance, supported by subcommittees. This structural (committee/subcommittee) arrangement is equated with a more professional approach, engendering a clearer focus of roles and remits, more streamlined decision-making (Hill et al., 2016; King, 2017) and more efficient use of committee time (Carver, 2006). Efforts to ensure more diversity within the committee have also been successful. It is suggested clubs are governed in a manner that indicates compliance and recognition of rules, norms and traditions, and regulations, but also with evidence of becoming more systematic, purposive, financially and commercially-minded, according greater attention to circumstances beyond their organisation and, thus, no longer so insular and short-termist (Allison, 2001; Pitchford, 2009; Gallagher et al., 2012).

To complement the F's framework, recommendations for practice and practitioners are advanced. These were derived from a solid, comprehensive empirical base, triangulated from a variety of sources, supported by conscientious application of SPT and CR concepts. It is recognised these share much similarity with prescriptions from the codes produced by the Sport and Recreation Alliance and Sport England in recent years.

Summary of Recommendations to practitioners:

- Ensure an ultimate decision-making body is in place that meets regularly, addressing issues relating to the objectives of the organisation and the needs of stakeholders, while recognising financial capacities.
- Endeavour to recruit capable, competent, and diversely skilled individuals to key roles with experience of professional practices. NB According to practitioners, an initial informal personal approach is more successful than the formal recruitment processes outlined in constitutions.
- Ensure a constitution, containing the objectives of the organisation and outlining key governance processes, including rules and checks and balances, is formulated. This provides an underpinning policy framework for governing praxis.
- Evidence suggests certain principles - democracy, transparency, and accountability combined with a fiduciary orientation, propriety in financial matters, and stakeholder communication and consultation - endow ethical foundations and guidance for subsequent praxis.
- Maintain continuous communication with members. Ensure an awareness of members' needs and requests is considered within governance. Consult members whenever substantive issues are looming, involving them in the decision-making process.
- Evidence also suggests practices and practitioners coalesce around specific activity domains, captured by the F's framework. It is contended organisations may benefit from a focus on these activities and purposes: particularly prudent financial management, fundraising, an inclusive and democratic ethos, attending to facility maintenance and/or improvement. While there is no link between these and on-field/sporting success, it is suggested they may help continuance and growth of the organisation, encouraging more (players and members) to join.

Prior to the periods of lockdown formal presentations to clubs were carried out, at the request of Lancashire Cricket Foundation and Active Lancashire who were extremely interested in the research. Aggregated numbers of attendees were well over one hundred. On all occasions the research was discussed, providing practical examples of governing in this context, drawing on observations and explanatory anecdotes as well as secondary research from academic and industry sources (ECB, Sport England, the SRA). The 7F's framework was also presented. This resonated strongly with a number of practitioners

who have since invited me to speak to their committees. Practitioners commented that this framework provided a coherent and cohesive focus for governance, reflecting issues and practices in other similar organisations (Pryle, 2021) and their experiences. Lancashire Cricket Foundation have also asked me to present at future events. Active Lancashire have now commissioned online club support workshops throughout 2021-2022, based on this 7F's framework: (<https://www.activelancashire.org.uk/courses/club-support-workshop-fundraising>).

The connections made by the research with the more abstract or generic codes of governance to actual (empirical) examples of governing praxis provided seems to strike a chord with many practitioners and their challenges, particularly when discussing how consequential some of the practices have been. At all times however, it has been made clear to attendees that this framework does not necessarily have any cause-effect relationship with sporting success.

Overall, it is contended this research is quite revelatory – practically and conceptually – with significant knowledge contributions for practitioners and researchers. It hopes to partly address King's (2017) dual concerns that this field is under-researched and under-theorised and offer a response. There being no known similar research previously conducted in the UK, it provides valuable insights into VSC governance. Revealing is the extent of commonality of realities across all cases.

The grassroots sector's heterogeneity however, comprising varied characteristics and traditions (Kay, 2001; Skille, 2008; May et al., 2013; Vamplew, 2013), causes complications for development of a universally applicable theory. Nonetheless, given the similarities of findings from the cases and the practices' descriptions provided (Merriam, 1998; Greene, 2010), it is argued there is potential for some transferable generalisation to other similar organisations (Yore and Rossman, 2012): those governed by volunteers, with their own grounds and facilities, but without wealthy benefactors.

Finally, it is suggested the overall aim of the thesis has been achieved. A more critical and comprehensive appreciation of governance in this context now appears a justifiable claim. Contributions to practical and theoretical knowledge have been developed. SPT suggests theoretical suitability for studying this phenomenon, and in this context. Combining SPT with a CR paradigm, despite initial arcane appearances, has comprehensively elucidated

how grassroots clubs perform governance, incorporating processes, procedures, policies and to what purposes, resulting in a practical framework. Heidegger calls for better propositional knowledge about practical matters: this is partly what this thesis has aimed to achieve, albeit acknowledging that a SPT-inspired universal theory of governance is anathema to its core philosophy (Nicolini, 2017).

7.4 Axiological Statement and Limitations

7.4.1 Axiological Statement

Having made many valued, enduring friendships, through membership of sports clubs, their instrumental and expressive value was compelling but there was genuine unease at the number dying out or struggling to survive. This research hopes to help this often-unhailed organisational form find ways to overcome some of the issues, from a concerned and supportive perspective, while acknowledging the considerable resources now required to govern a sports club. The burgeoning social, academic and policy focus on, and scrutiny of, sports governance led to an intention to conduct research within clubs regarded as robust, resilient, and progressive, hoping to uncover organisational practices that could provide valuable insights and practical and theoretical knowledge.

Transparency with all research participants about the purpose and my role, combined with empathy and a sincere ambition to learn is believed to have engendered trust and support. That no one cancelled or refused an interview, all requests for access and documentary evidence were granted, and time was given of freely, was testimony of the philanthropic nature of the practitioners to whom I am immensely grateful. Allowing me into their world and sharing vivid and honest insights has been crucial to this thesis. Out of respect to the clubs and participants, there has been an inherent determination to stay true to the data, reporting evidence and portraying clubs' practices and practitioners faithfully, reflecting the dedication of these 'stalwarts' with the respect deserved.

7.4.2 Quality and Limitations

Aligned with Denzin and Lincoln (2011), alternative criteria are applied to assess the strength of qualitative research. To counter potential criticisms (cf. Johnson and Duberley, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Gibbs, 2007), Cresswell and Poth's (2018, p.281) counsel has

been heeded and hopefully addressed. The cases have been identified and described in detail (chapter five) with a rationale for their selection. Themes have been articulated and generalisations drawn across all cases (chapters six and seven). Finally, self-disclosure and some reflexivity is included.

It is argued this project's methods and research design are complementary (Silverman, 2004; 2006). Processes and procedures adopted have been made explicit and transparent (Flick, 2014; Rivera and Cox, 2014). Data from numerous sources have been acquired, analysed, and triangulated, enhancing credibility and quality (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Millar and Doherty, 2018; Yin, 2018). Valuable, voluminous data have been generated. Aiming for consistency (King and Horrocks, 2010), the same data collection and management procedures were followed throughout (Flick, 2014).

Endeavouring to be diligent, true, and faithful, Cole et al. (2011) advocate a researcher's inherent values and approach should not remain covert. A reflexive and critical approach (Wellington, 2000; Blaikie, 2007) enables identification and confrontation of personal assumptions, beliefs, and values (Cresswell and Poth, 2018), engendering transparency, trustworthiness, and credibility (ibid.). This is also alluded to by Roberts (2014) from a CR perspective.

CR perhaps most closely aligns with my ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world, including reality and social phenomena, knowledge thereof, and its relational and contextualised nature within an open system. This, however, invoked some abstract, metatheoretical difficulties, trying to reconcile Schatzki's abstract flat ontology (Seidl and Whittington, 2014) which, it is felt, does not quite provide sufficiently comprehensive explanatory conceptual resources to reveal why practices might change; hence incorporation of Sayer and Archer's models.

Additionally, my personal values, informed by a humanist and Kantian perspective, and CR's inherent emancipatory orientation (Bhaskar, 1989) necessitated inclusion of voices not typically included in governance research: ordinary club members. There was a strong desire to ensure these stakeholders' voices were heard; critical realists suggest it is important to give them a platform (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Crucially, they provided insightful complementary perspectives of clubs' governing praxis and opportunity to clarify and/or support practitioners' interpretations and the meanings attached. It allowed

insight into whether differences or contradictions between these cohorts exist. Surprisingly, among stakeholder group interviews much synergy, mutual understanding and respect emerged; any criticism was minimal. Stakeholders' perspectives served to confirm interpretations and added an important checking mechanism to the data acquired from other sources.

As with all research endeavours limitations ensue. Sharing similarities with O'Boyle et al. (2019), this research acknowledges that empirical findings are based on three sports organisations from a single 'network'. While a micro study of only three clubs cannot claim to be representative of the broader population, the homogeneity uncovered was unexpected. The purposive selection of the three case studies, deliberately chosen for their public reputations, longevity, and capacity to provide examples of governance practices, could perhaps be regarded as a strength but also a weakness. It might ultimately have proven more illuminating had one case differed dramatically, revealing greater contrasts and variations between clubs (cf. Byers, 2013). For example, should a case have been chosen that is younger or does not share these characteristics, it may have been insightful to see the extent to which variance pertains (Easton, 2010), revealing more divergence in processes or outcomes (Kesslet and Bach, 2014) than those studied. Other research might reveal greater heterogeneity between clubs in the same 'network'.

It is accepted not all the findings will be immediately applicable to all other non-profit grassroots sport organisations. Trowler (2014) denotes the localised and contextualised nature of practices prevents notions of frictionless isomorphism, these being not easily replicable in different organisations (Barney, 1991) and, especially, within a heterogeneous sector (chapter two). The use, however, of multiple cases, seventeen one to one interviews, five group interviews, ten observations, and documentary evidence gathered from each site enabled triangulation and suggests the findings are reliable and accurate (Cresswell and Poth, 2018; O'Boyle et al., 2019; Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021). O'Boyle et al. (ibid.) argue this increases consistency and potential generalisability. While generalisability to the whole population (of VSCs) is not the aim, it is argued there are relevant and interesting transferable findings, 'broader application' (Millar and Doherty, 2016).

Additionally, in case study research the investigator is not infallible (Merriam, 1998) and personal biases may interfere. Regular supervision and consultancy with more experienced researchers provided on-going guidance. Personal values drove a desire to portray all as truthfully as possible. Time constraints prevented too many observation opportunities but the repetitive nature of practices, as alluded to by practitioners, meant that those witnessed were typical in terms of processes, purposes and principles.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

The findings have generated some appealing possibilities for future research. The marrying of SPT and CR ontologies appears to be a powerful conceptual framework through which to view organisational phenomena. However, it could also be beneficial to combine SPT with other governance theories to address its potential deficiencies in relation to accommodating issues of power and agency. Nicolini (2017) suggests ontologies should be open to refinement or extension; this research has provided a response. It would be interesting to apply this conceptual framework to governance in other sectors to provide further critical assessment of its utility.

Unequivocally governance seems a significant organisational activity with implications for a sports club's perpetuity; further studies of grassroots clubs should be encouraged. While Hill et al.'s (2016; 2019) research provides some helpful governance insights, its limitations of a focus on a small number of grassroots clubs in New Zealand suggests geographically wider studies, incorporating different sports' networks, are required to better understand this phenomenon at this level.

In terms of the framework for practitioners, the 7F's, it might be fruitful to investigate sports clubs that have recently expired, using a governance lens to identify reasons for their demise, providing indications of potential pitfalls that other clubs may seek to avoid. This could enhance this study, clarifying or extending the 7F's and the extent to which these practices and foci were apparent or not and similarities and differences. Equally insightful could be a study and analysis of governance practices of younger clubs: those without the same genealogy and traditions of practices, seeking to identify their processes and scrutinising praxis. Furthermore, if the 7F domains could be operationalised, then quantitative research, adopting survey methodology, may be able to measure the extent

to which these are applicable across a wider population. The number of grassroots sports clubs in the UK alone suggests this could be a welcome and rewarding venture.

A further recommendation, which might prove a rewarding research topic, concerns relationships between clubs and their affiliated governing organisations: leagues, county foundations and/or the NGB. Comments from practitioners revealed apparent frustrations with these external bodies, but also interestingly some improvement in relations, particularly with the county foundation. A more positive shift in perceptions from clubs' practitioners was discernible, but not investigated.

Additionally, an observation across all sites was their growing use of technology and social media to communicate with stakeholders. A range of applications was used, and these efforts were warmly appreciated by members. SPT could be used to provide a conceptual basis for this study, identifying what practices are undertaken, and for what purposes from either a genealogical, situated or configurational perspective (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017).

A final recommendation is that should governance research be conducted in sports clubs, the stakeholder voice: the views of different members, should be included. Whether that be through surveys or group interviews, as in this research. This perspective was extremely helpful. It provided valuable background and contextual information about the club or its governance and, crucially, a cross-checking mechanism to the views and data ascertained from practitioners. It might be interesting to research organisations where less symmetry and agreement between these two potentially opposing cohorts exists and identify underlying causes and reasons.

----- THE END -----

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pilot Interview I

Pilot Interview 1

Interview Schedule and Guide (Pre-amble, Protocols and Procedure)

1. Thank you for taking part in the interview.
2. Would you please complete the interview pro-forma – you can use your first name or just signature or X. (Explain that all data will remain anonymous and data protection applies).
3. I would like to use a voice recorder for the interview. Are you ok with this?
4. This is about wanting to find out about your experiences and your perceptions, views and opinions, please try to be honest. You do not have to answer every question and can withdraw at any stage. Also, if you are unsure of anything please ask. While quotes may be used in the research and report, you will not be quoted overtly and steps will be taken to ensure anonymity.
5. Frame the interview - Explain the purposes of a research study into voluntary ie non-professional cricket clubs, the difficulties they encounter and what they are trying to do about it.
6. Ask if they have any questions before making a start.
7. After the interview thank them and ask if there is anything else they want to add.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), Kvale (1996); Wellington (2000); Bell and Bryman (2007)

Context and Aims

This research aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of those closely involved in the operation, administration, governance and/or managerial functions within grass root, amateur cricket clubs. There is some evidence that these voluntary organisations are operating within and encountering a more complex and demanding environment. Data from Sport England (2013) and the national governing body (ECB, 2014) indicate a significant drop in player numbers in recent years. While the ECB has implemented a quantitatively oriented National Playing Survey (2013, 2014), targeting players directly, there has been no, or very little, identifiable qualitative research on voluntary cricket clubs and their practices.

At this stage, the research, adopting a more exploratory nature, hopes to gain a deeper understanding, from those closely connected to and personally experiencing these social phenomena and circumstances, of how they, as a part of their organisation, perceive the difficulties being encountered and the efforts or strategies adopted to help their club survive and maintain services to their members and local communities.

NB These were the planned topics, themes and questions prepared prior to the interview, not all were asked.

(Notes Made During Course of Interview)

Informed partly by Kvale (1996), Bryman and Bell (2007) and Brinkmann and Kvale (2015).

1. Introductory question:
Can you tell me about how long have you been involved in this particular club (organisation)?
And how long in terms of the administration/management aspects (in what role/capacity?)
(To break the ice a little, establish background, some context and understanding of the person's role/s and standing)
2. Could you describe what you see as being the organisation's main aims?
Follow up questions:
 - If yes, how are/were these determined/arrived at?
 - Are these cricket related/sports? Or more linked to sustainability, business, etc? What does sustainability mean to you? **(Did not address this issue).**
3. Exploratory and probing:
What progress do you consider is being made towards these? What is being done to achieve these?
Clubmark and CASC
4. Could you describe your perceptions on the problems and pressures encountered by the club?
 - **Playing nos, senior player nos, participation and volunteer nos, fund raising, sponsorship, events, regulatory burden, gets worse – small vol run org, legislation, inspections, staffing – qualified, hygiene**
 - **Clubmark – compliance issues, audits, managed – burden, welfare officers**
 - **Employment legislation**
 - **DBS**Specifying and probing follow up questions –
 - a) Internal/external in nature - mix of both?
 - b) Have these changed in recent years? In what way/s ie their diversity, size, etc in recent years and what problems has this created?
 - c) What do you consider to be the drivers and forces behind these changes?
5. How has the club tried to address these - what strategies and tactics have been/ are being adopted?
Eg - changes in practices? Eg management of, etc within the org?
 - **Focus more on junior aspects - key**
 - **Generate further income, looking at ways to increase income, increase involvement,**
 - **New membership structure and positions**
 - **Encourage bringing people in – other events eg beer festival**
 - **Not a lot of 'advertising' formally for membership**
 - **Bar manager and use of incentive schemes – changed, targets**
 - **Looking at other ways of doing things – financial side – contract out the cleaning, reduces risk, operational aspects, took out commercial loan – improved margins**
 - **Cash tight**
 - **Need to run the club on business footing – trying to generate a good surplus**
Which have been effective in your estimation? And which less so?
 - **Issues of retention/attrition – other attractions**
 - **Balance – level of competition, senior cricket introduction.**
Has the organisation sought support from other sources/ organisations?
No, not really could do more networking, sharing best practice
What additional support does the organisation seek/need? Eg from the LCB/ECB - what kind?
Has it helped in any way?

- Affiliated to both
 - Some support – grants and loans
- Other Partnerships? – sponsors, banks, etc. How successful have these efforts been?
6. The future – what do you think the organisation will need to do in order to survive?
 - Nos of clubs reduced, concentrated in fewer clubs
 - A need to maintain and expand what can be offered, facilities and participation, lack of space – looking at adding an additional ground
 - Poss future issues
 7. If you were to apply a metaphor to this organisation – what would it be and why?

Could not think of any.
 8. An additional question that was unintentional prior to the start of the interview was asked around issues associated with the ECB strategy and perceptions of its significance or relevance.

Field Record

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)

These field notes and observations were made partly before,
but mainly approximately one hour after the interview.

Name/ Identifier	Interview Information/ Record/ Observations – ie how did the interview go?
John	<p>The interview seemed to proceed in a positive manner, with some good and relevant information provided by the interviewee who was clearly well-informed, knowledgeable and helpful regarding the subject matter at hand.</p> <p>There were some nerves on my behalf, reflected in questions being poorly worded on occasion (see transcript). The nervousness also caused some additional checking of the voice recorder and viewing of the laptop screen to check the order of questioning. With further practice this would occur less but reduced direct observation of nonverbal behaviour, such as facial expressions and attention to paralanguage/vocalics than recommended by some (King and Horrocks, 2010).</p> <p>The questions provoked some enlightening discussion although there might be a need for some future amendment to the structure/order.</p> <p>There was an additional question asked at the end that was not intended ie the ECB strategy.</p> <p>The interviewee was particularly supportive, interested and helpful. Although after the interview, he mentioned he had not felt particularly alert and may not have been as helpful as he could have been or would have liked.</p> <p>After the interview finished and the recorder was turned off, the interviewee mentioned a dislike of open questions.</p>
<p>Notes about the general process ie environment, timing, room, interruptions</p>	

Prior to the interview an audio-recording device had to be loaned. There was some brief training on its use and operation.

The interview was conducted at 7pm on a Monday night in the interviewee's own home; specifically in a study slightly separated from the rest of the house by a hallway. There were no interruptions or other noises apart from a boiler in an adjoining cupboard. The room was of sufficient size, with appropriate furnishings, well-lit and warm.

The actual interview itself last around forty-two minutes.

The pre-amble, explanation and framing prior to the interview along with a brief discussion afterwards meant the entire process was close to sixty minutes in length.

There were no technical issues once the recorder had been double-checked for volume; the interviewee was quite softly spoken and quiet.

The recording device, borrowed was a small device often used by journalists, was placed equidistant between both parties on a shelf.

Date: 21st March 2016

Venue: Interviewee's house (study)

**Voluntary Informed Consent Form
(Meyers and Sylvester, 2006; Silverman, 2009)**

DBA Research

March 2016

Thank you for taking part in this research.

This information will remain confidential.

It will not be used to identify individuals other than for the purpose of drawing comparative observations and conclusions.

Subject Profile

Name: (Optional)	JOHN [REDACTED]	Sex:	Male Female
Age:	20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69	Ethnicity:	WHITE BRITISH
Period of Time at the organisation (Years)	≤2 2-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21+ 7 TREASURER AS	Position:	TREASURER

I consent to voluntary participation in this research exercise.

Indicative Consent/ Signature (optional):

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

Code: _____

Interview No: 1

Date: 21/3/16

Interview Transcript

(Interview transcribed by placement/internship student and then checked and amended by interviewer)

Comments and Reflections	Interview Transcript Code: C = Interviewer; J = Interviewee/ Subject	Codes
<p>Showing interest and establishing experience and background. Showing personal interest, potential opportunity to establish some rapport and trust, with use of appropriate body language (Bryman and Bell, 2007).</p> <p>But – then needing to check equipment, a little unsure of it's quality, lack of confidence in its usage but possibly disruptive to any flow or momentum gained.</p> <p>Question too long, a little sign of nervousness. Checking role, position, longevity of tenure in role. Possibly indicating credibility, suitability, 'knowledgeable people' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).</p> <p>Use of some closed questions to establish certain facts.</p>	<p>Introductory part of the interview</p> <p>C: Okay so we are going to carry out an interview for some research and first of all, it's just name...?</p> <p>J: My name's John</p> <p>C: John? Thanks John. Could you tell me how long you've been involved in the organisation we're talking about?</p> <p>J: Erm I've been at the club in total just short of 16 years now, erm first as a player, erm I was briefly on the committee I think about a year or so after I joined but only for one season erm and then have been the treasurer for the last 6 and a half years in my seventh season of doing that.</p> <p>C: Ok and ... (checking recording) yeah that looks like it's recording quite well just going to just turn it up a touch... that seems fine now.</p> <p>J: Ok</p> <p>C: Yeah, so in terms of you, so you just mentioned, just reiterating a point then, so you're saying you've been involved in the sort of like administration, the management, the sort of running of the club for, how long was it again?</p> <p>J: Erm, nearly 7 years</p> <p>C: And that is in the role of?</p> <p>J: In the role as treasurer</p> <p>C: Treasurer?</p> <p>J: Yeah</p>	<p>HR/ HRSC</p>
	<p>Start of more significant questions</p>	
<p>Was repetition of the question necessary here?</p> <p>Trying to identify if the organisation has any stated aims –</p>	<p>C: Ok thanks. Right. Moving onto one of the starting key questions, could you describe what you see as being the club's aims? What do you think its aims are?</p> <p>J: Erm, it doesn't have any documented aims in terms of mission statements that I'm aware of, erm it's really to promote cricket. I see it</p>	<p>PS</p> <p>Opp</p>

<p>as suggested by much management literature.</p> <p>Probing and clarifying. Use of more closed style question to check (Bryman and Bell, 2007 quoting Kvale, 1996).</p> <p>Summarising, but then probing potential area of interest.</p> <p>Noticeable that the client began to open up quite a bit here and give his perceptions and interpretations on the aims of the organisation.</p> <p>Wanted to ascertain his personal opinions of progress and positions. Use of further open questions to encourage depth (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012) but possibly leading?</p> <p>Again, some good information with useful insights provided.</p>	<p>as getting people participating in the sport, erm and giving them the opportunity to play it. Erm, in broad terms it's as simple as that I think.</p> <p>C: Ok. So there's been no sort of discussion around the aims of the organisation from within the committee or?</p> <p>J: No, no formal discussions within the committee, erm I think everybody's basically sort of singing off the same hymn sheet though, erm I think everybody recognises those basic aims erm and as such. I don't think there has been any particular debate to alter that, or erm do anything else fundamentally I don't think.</p> <p>C: So you'd say that something around encouraging people to participate in cricket? Is there anything around trying to sustain the service/s to members or keeping the business going?</p> <p>J: Erm, yeah I suppose below that top level aim erm obviously we need to, you know, maintain a good solid membership base. Errr, we need to be secure financially, erm we need to provide good facilities, erm and all that all that really is pointed towards erm being there to give them, give people, that opportunity and obviously giving them the right environment to do it in.</p> <p>C: Ok. So what, what would you consider to be the sort of progress being made towards these aims?</p> <p>J: Erm progress? I think erm, it's quite well, it's quite a difficult environment, I think, for cricket clubs in general. Erm, there are wider issues about participation in the sport erm, nationally. Erm, participation in cricket is dropping off. Although erm the figures indicate according the Lancashire Cricket Board that that's not the case in Lancashire I think, if you like the sort of heartlands of club cricket Lancashire and Yorkshire it's, it's holding up very well erm, but still that's something that nationally is an issue something we all need to be aware of. Erm, so again it's a very difficult environment.</p> <p>I think we, as a club, are erm maintaining our position very well, erm we're on a reasonably sound footing financially, erm and we've worked very hard at achieving that. We, the facilities are good, erm, and we're actually looking at expanding those in terms of developing a second ground, erm to accommodate our third team because we currently run three teams on a Saturday. We have a very good and thriving junior section erm which really we see as as the future of the club in terms of generating the players who are going to come through.</p>	<p>PS</p> <p>PS</p> <p>PS/Opp</p> <p>Opp RM FE/ITP RFS Opp RFS RI</p> <p>CE/PNE A CE A</p> <p>CE/PNE PS/ RI implications</p> <p>FE/ ITP RC RFS RFS Opp</p> <p>J F</p>
<p>Picked up a possibility that</p>	<p>C: Thanks. So you've you've started to touch on some of the areas I'm probably going to probe in more detail. Could you elaborate on any</p>	

<p>there might have been additional developments worth probing.</p> <p>The interviewee again provides useful evidence and information to this question.</p> <p>Wanted to encourage the interviewee to talk further without too much interruption.</p> <p>Some additional insights, indicating initiatives and developments.</p> <p>Possibly should have probed which outside sources or how, here?</p> <p>But addressed this later.</p>	<p>other developments or any other measures that have been adopted to try and achieve the aims that you alluded to earlier?</p> <p>J: Erm, measures we've adopted erm. The club has erm achieved, well a couple of areas I can probably think of: erm, one is 'club mark' which is the, erm, the sort of standard of recognition for a well-run club erm and that's a standard issued by the ECB, I think.</p> <p>C: Yeah?</p> <p>J: Erm and again that's all around the governance of the club; it's aims erm and how it runs runs itself and again particularly with juniors I think erm. The other area is we're registered as a community amateur sports club CASC, erm and that's actually registered with HMRC, the Inland Revenue, and that gives us various advantages erm in terms of 80% business rate relief which you know for a club our size actually saves us around 3 to 3 and a half thousand pounds a year erm; it gives us the ability to claim gift aid on any donations effectively it treats us as really like a charity erm and also gives us to a certain level exemption from corporation tax that without that we, as a club, would have to pay on any income generated from non-members erm and that's, that's important. Also, given that really it's very difficult having, for any club, to survive just on the err the financial contribution from its membership and that you know we look to and do in fact generate a fair bit of income from outside sources erm.</p>	<p>PS/IE/Ad CE RI</p> <p>PS/ RI J</p> <p>Ad/ CE/FE FE/ITP</p> <p>PS ITP</p> <p>FE/ITP PS/ ITP IE</p>
<p>I become aware that I was typing a little and looking at notes/questions on the keyboard more than perhaps was appropriate – a little nerves showing and thus may have missed some body language at times.</p>		
<p>Possibly, too long and needed shorter, more specifically stated question.</p> <p>In-depth and considered response here, providing some interesting insights.</p> <p>Silence - I supplied some</p>	<p>C: Thanks. So that's quite helpful. So, again, these might be some of the areas that we come back to or revisit at some stage again. Also, you've started to touch on perhaps one of the key questions really, so could you describe your sort of perceptions of the kinds of problems and the pressures that are then encountered by the club, the organisation?</p> <p>J: Erm, well some of the key pressures, erm I've mentioned today is, erm, playing numbers. If you actually look round you know for a club that puts out three teams every Saturday erm there actually aren't as many senior playing members as you perhaps imagine there are erm and we're, so we're very reliant on youngsters coming through, erm, and keeping those involved in the club. Erm, so participation is one big issue erm.</p>	<p>PNE</p> <p>A/PNE RP/ J RET PNE</p> <p>RV RI</p>

<p>positive non-verbal feedback and body language to try and encourage the interviewee to continue.</p> <p>Further useful insights and perspectives.</p> <p>Need to note that the perceptions are predominantly from the finance/treasurer perspective on occasion although the interviewee is also a player, coach and parent.</p> <p>Potentially useful data here again.</p>	<p>Again, I think participation of club members in terms of volunteering and within the organisation again is another key one. Erm, a lot of effort does go in in all kinds of areas: erm, in terms of ground, in terms of coaching, erm food preparation erm, all kinds of areas of fundraising erm and organising functions trying to generate sponsorship erm, advertising round the ground, erm. Certainly from my point of view, as treasurer, there's a quite a regulatory burden which isn't certainly hasn't got easier over the last 5-10 years and gets, gets worse. Erm, you know although we're a relatively small, you know, voluntary run organisation. You know there's still issues of you know VAT, VAT returns, erm machine gaming duty on any income generated from fruit machines again which is a source of income, erm all kinds of other areas food hygiene. We're trying to generate income through the kitchen. One that's worked very successfully is, is cooking burgers on Friday nights which is when the junior coaching takes place during the summer erm, and again you know there's a need to have inspections to get food hygiene ratings erm and have staff who have food hygiene certificates erm keep all the documentation in place regarding training of those and erm all the efforts done to keep the kitchen in a good state.</p>	<p>RI, RFS/PS ITP ITP MPA LR RI, CE RV/RI LR & FE/CE/LR ITP IE/ITP LR/ITP/IE PS/IE J RI/ PS/Ad/ HRSC Ad RFS</p>
<p>Further probing and follow-up question (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015)</p> <p>More closed in nature and use of leading question, returning to an issue mentioned previously by the interviewee.</p> <p>Good indicator of additional burdens/ administration imposed and required by national</p>	<p>C: Thanks. So you talked a little bit about the regulatory burden and the lengths needed to having staff that are suitably competent, qualified etc. Do you see any other forms of external pressures and problems?</p> <p>J: They're probably the key ones. Erm, some of those. I'm sure as soon as the interview is finished I will think of others. Just gone out of my mind at the moment.</p> <p>C: Anything from perhaps governing bodies?</p> <p>J: Erm</p> <p>C: Because you touched on club mark.</p> <p>J: Club mark yeah</p> <p>C: And the sort of, or perhaps any other burdens or difficulties pertaining to that?</p> <p>J: There again there are compliance issues there, erm and audits erm. I think I think this next inspection, I think it's every alternate year, so every 2 years. Erm, again, I think that is something we have managed relatively well, erm since we had it, but again there is a burden there in terms of record keeping and erm, coaching ratios and again making</p>	<p>CE Ad/LR RI PS Ad CE/ LR/ RV CE/ RV</p>

governing body – useful evidence.	sure we, we're compliant, and have welfare officers and that kind of thing.	
Use of closed question to establish whether paid/voluntary staff.	C: So you sort of said the word managed erm all this needs managing as such J: Yeah C: With volunteers? J: Yes	RV/ RI
Quite a lengthy intervention here and repetition but also some paraphrasing and repetition of interviewee's words – possible NLP technique to encourage matching and also use of probing for further information. Some additional insight provided here after follow-up question.	C: And you also mentioned a bit earlier about the, sort of, the, in your time, the burden's become worse. So, again these might be some things that we touch upon again in a few minutes. So you said that in in your time this has become worse. So, have you noticed any other changes on top of those that you've mentioned in terms of additional administrative burdens or additional volunteer jobs tasks for the committee or yourself? Or other members? J: Just trying to think round the, erm round the committee table, what everybody's involved in. Erm, so I think, one of, one of the big ones is the one I mentioned in terms of erm, you know, catering income, trying to generate that and the hoops we have to go through there erm again. I mentioned the financial side of it again. I'm not sure there's too much change elsewhere, you know. Obviously there are occasional issues and areas we need to deal with whether it's, you know, employment legislation; we have had issues there in the past that have needed careful consideration. Beyond that I can't immediately think of any others.	Ad/ RV ITP/LR PS/ITP/RI LR RI/HRSC
Could this not have been re-phrased or re-worded and asked more succinctly? Use of silence to encourage further comments on this topic. Alluding to perceptions of changes in social behaviour	C: You also touched on issues around playing numbers and volunteer commitments, burdens. Is there any perception that, erm, there's sort of increased competition from perhaps areas outside the immediate, erm, other cricket clubs or other sports clubs which has made that clubs be a little bit outward looking perhaps or had to market themselves in different ways, had to sort of sell the services, is that something you have sort of noticed? J: I think that pressure's there. It's difficult to identify exactly where it comes from because I think it's from a number of different sources. C: ... J: I don't think it's so much from other clubs. Erm, perhaps other sports and other leisure activities I think.	CE? COE? Misc COE

<p>and perspectives compared to different era – interviewee is 20-30years older than many of the younger senior players.</p>	<p>Eerm, and I think there's also a probably fundamental change in attitude, erm of whether it's attention spans or, you know, of how long people want to be involved in terms of committing to a Saturday afternoon, erm you know. I think looking back to when I was, you know, in teens, early 20s, you know, you effectively accept that a game of cricket on a Saturday is affecting your whole Saturday one way or another as there is very little time to do a great deal else in the morning of it erm, but I'm not sure whether that's necessarily accepted so much these days.</p>	<p>A PNE T/A</p>
<p>A desire to probe this area further.</p> <p>Again, perhaps too lengthy a question.</p> <p>Not particularly productive line of questioning here.</p>	<p>C: Okay. I know you did mention then around not quite so sure what some of the pressures or some of the drivers are as to the changes in the environment, the changes in circumstances. Have you got any examples where perhaps you might be a bit clearer as to where the pressures have come from or where they've been coming from? You've mentioned the legislation, erm the competition from other sports. Is there anything else you can think of?</p> <p>J: In terms of participation or just in...?</p> <p>C: Either that, or other areas from whereby pressures have been imposed or there's been a requirement to make changes?</p> <p>Doesn't matter if there isn't it's just in case anything else comes up but perhaps we could come back to that.</p> <p>J: Yeah, again can't really immediately think of any other</p> <p>C: Yeah, that's fine.</p>	
<p>Structuring question, (Kvale, 1996) – slight change of tack.</p> <p>Need to stop saying 'sort of' – too vague!</p> <p>Open question – has allowed the interviewee to respond with a good insight and level of detail.</p> <p>Useful data and responses here.</p>	<p>C: So, what I'd like to move on to now is, is coming back to something I started to touch on earlier, how the club has tried to change itself to address these pressures or address the demands or the differences. What, sort of, do you see as some of the measures and approaches that have been adopted?</p> <p>J: Erm, I think certainly one of them is that a concentration on the junior side of it. I would say that is absolutely key. Erm, I think realistically any, any club that doesn't bring people through its ranks is going to struggle, erm increasingly struggle as time goes on. Again, as a club, we're always looking to generate further income and get more people involved. You know, we're trying to, as I say, you know we've mentioned the Friday nights and what we offer them in terms you know, trying to put the food on, have a welcoming bar there so you know we want to get junior parents involved as much as possible.</p>	<p>J RI PS ITP/PS RI RFS RM RM/IE J/RM</p>

<p>Further useful data.</p> <p>Some additional potentially useful data</p>	<p>Erm, and one change we're making this year actually in terms of our membership structure, erm, is that every junior must have a parent who is also a junior member, sorry, who is also a social member of the club. And hopefully, that will encourage them to actually get involved a bit more actually come in erm, recognise the fact that that social membership is worth something to them, in terms of cheaper bar prices for example, and actually get them to stay and spend a bit more money and beyond that actually get involved in the club more. Erm, so it's certainly targeting juniors and junior parents more.</p> <p>We've never actively recruited erm or advertised for senior members, erm because I'm not really sure how effective that is erm, but again we're certainly looking at bringing through, in terms of social members again we don't normally advertise, but you know we're trying to make use of as many opportunities to get people through the door and get them into the club.</p> <p>One thing we've done for the last four years I think it is now is have a beer festival around the May bank holiday erm which is advertised I think locally in a number of local publications and certainly from the main road outside the club and that, we know, has actually brought in people who have never actually been up there before. They've liked what they've seen and have actually become social members as a result of it so, erm, that kind of thing.</p>	<p>IE</p> <p>IE ITP IE/J/PS</p> <p>MPA</p> <p>PS/MPA</p> <p>PS/ITP</p> <p>IE/RI MPA</p> <p>IE RET/RM</p>
<p>Interviewer questions a little shorter in this area, allowing further insights and perceptions.</p>	<p>C: Anything around issues of erm paid staff or stewards? Any changes there in how they... , their terms and role?</p> <p>J: Erm, yeah we have one full, full-time paid member of staff which is the bar manager. For a number of years we've had incentive schemes involved there to try encourage them to bring in more revenue. The nature of those schemes is actually changed periodically and is targeted slightly at different things, erm how either because we want to target particular areas or because we feel they're not quite working as we might want them to, but again we're always looking there at getting them fully involved and, and sharing in the income the club generates.</p>	<p>RI/HRM</p> <p>IE/ITP</p> <p>IE</p> <p>PS/ITP</p>
<p>Possible need to again reduce question length but use of open questions has allowed a</p>	<p>C: Have there been any changes in, and there might have not been at all, any changes in committee structure or, erm, rules of operation in that respect?</p>	<p>HRSC/RET</p>

<p>detailed and in-depth response, providing further potential useful data.</p> <p>Use of positive NVC by interviewer throughout this period.</p> <p>It would be interesting to interview another member of the committee, possibly the 'house chair' or the 'chair' to obtain a different perspective: quite finance focused but still useful data.</p>	<p>J: Erm committee structure has been the same certainly during my time, my time there and it's been very stable in terms of erm personnel as well I think, in the sort of, if you look at, the half dozen key positions erm officers: house chairman, grounds chairman, I think they all actually pre-date me. But, in terms of structure nothing's really changed.</p> <p>We're always looking at ways of slightly different ways of doing things, certainly if there's a financial advantage we can gain and also from a financial risk point of view as well. One change we adopted, erm, where are we about 18 months ago now, it was to contract out the club cleaning, erm which used to be an employed position and that certainly reduces financial risk to the business, to the club, even if on the face of it it wouldn't normally produce any immediate financial savings. Erm, any other areas like that whether it's you know utilities, whether it's, we've made a few changes in terms of bar equipment and erm that'll generate savings whether it's erm the gas usage behind the bar or erm electricity usage on the bar. Erm trying to think of any other areas erm.</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>IE PS FE IE HR/FE/ITP RC/ITP</p> <p>PS/RI</p> <p>RC/ITP/FE</p>
<p>Follow-up question but deliberately left hanging to allow the interviewee to take over.</p> <p>Further possibly useful data here.</p> <p>Leading question but also seeking clarification of the interviewee's perspective on</p>	<p>C: Anything around loans or financial erm sort of commitments restructuring those or?</p> <p>J: Erm going back, certainly before my time as treasurer though, although I was involved in the club at the time, one of the things we did, must be going on 15 years ago now, was to take out a commercial bank loan which paid off the brewery loan we had prior to that, which used to operate as, you know, most tied houses do on a barrelage discount erm which wasn't the ideal way really in terms of margin the bar would make and obviously that's probably one of the best moves the club has made. That has enabled us to operate as a free house, effectively make a better margin over the bar, erm, and that, that arrangement is nearly at an end now, that loan we took out should be repaid within about the next 6 months now. That actually will have quite an impact on the cash flow for the club.</p> <p>C: So, so that's looking at sort of quite a positive then?</p> <p>J: That's looking very positive in terms of cash flow. One of the issue's we've had financially erm, is in although the club has made quite a good surplus, certainly in the last two years, erm that hasn't really been reflected in the cash generated by the club; one of the issues being that</p>	<p>FE/ IE</p> <p>ITP</p> <p>RC/ITP</p> <p>RC ITP RC/ITP</p> <p>FE/ITP</p> <p>RC/ITP</p>

<p>this issue. - Has led to some additional useful insights so could arguably be considered appropriate.</p>	<p>there being quite large capital repayments as that loan nears an end. And also, there have been some expected changes to payment terms from our major suppliers round the bar in terms of bar stock, erm so despite some very good surpluses, cash is, is still very tight erm, but really to me that just reinforces the need to actually run the club on a, you know, sensible, sort of business footing, and yeah to make no apologies for actually trying to generate a good surplus. You know I've quite often expected a question to come, at some point, from a member to say 'well, you know, if we're making all this money why are the bar prices so high, or why is the membership what it is? Why don't we make some, you know, reduced cost to the membership?' But really we can't afford to do that you know, we have to, to, erm, run it on a commercial basis</p>	<p>FE FE/ RC CI CI RC/ITP RET FE/ITP PS</p>
<p>Quite long intervention here but some summarising and just following-up to identify whether there are other areas that may be of interest but trying to move away from financial matters. Did not really work!</p>	<p>C: Quite a lot of the literature that has been coming out in recent years has been advocating, or focused on, voluntary organisations adopting a more commercial footing. So, so you've, you've outlined quite a few, erm, sort of tactics and strategies that have been adopted or deployed to try and erm enable the club to maintain its services or to improve them. You've, you've touched on some of the things that, have been particularly effective in terms of, you know, things like loans or generating a surplus. Have there been any other tactics, strategies or measures adopted that you think have been effective or do you think you've covered them there? J: Erm, in terms of financial strategy erm, again it's really to be a question of looking at, you know, regularly looking at, and, and reviewing costs and looking into savings and that that's just an ongoing exercise I think, certainly if you try to run it on a commercial footing you always have to do.</p>	<p>IE/ ITP RC/ITP/PS</p>
<p>Change of approach – had to try to encourage different perspective.</p>	<p>C: And the junior side? You think that's been successful, ...for (a) development? J: Erm I think so. You know you look through the senior teams there are certainly plenty of people there who've, who've come through and actually very few people there in senior teams who, who have actually come in as complete outsiders I think. One issue I think is is there's an inevitable drop off I think as juniors get to, sort of, I don't know, under 13s 14s 15s, numbers tend to drop off and I think really it's a question of maximising the number that we can</p>	<p>RET/ J PN RET RP</p>

<p>Some use of interviewee's own term but following-up on the point made.</p> <p>Again, use of open questions but interesting perspective and interviewee has opened up.</p> <p>Interrupted a little here – not sure if this was appropriate. Empathising with the interviewee and showing some support for the difficulty of the issue.</p>	<p>actually introduce and get hooked on senior cricket and get them playing at weekends.</p> <p>C: Do you have any thoughts as to why there's a drop off?</p> <p>J: Erm, I think, again it's, it's other attractions. I think you get a lot of people, certainly at the younger ages, that do cricket to, to see how they get on with it, they may stick with it for a number of years, erm as an activity to do, as a child really, but without actually having the deeper interest in the sport that they'd actually want to go and play it as adults and I think that's a lot of it certainly.</p> <p>C: Is there anything else that the club, the organisation, can do, do you think to try and reduce that level of attrition or, erm, encourage sustained membership?</p> <p>J: Erm, I think it's always getting a balance of giving the right, the right level of competition, erm, and also it's, it's getting the right time to actually introduce them into senior cricket as well I think. Erm to some degree you can do just as much harm by getting people in too early as you can leaving it too late, erm, and it's quite a difficult balance, I think, and that it'll differ, depending on the individual, I think, and their ability and their attitude erm. So it's always just getting that balance right I'm not sure there's any one particular ... erm</p> <p>C: A difficult one?</p> <p>J: Yeah.</p> <p>C: Again, there's, again the literature where there doesn't seem to be any sort of panacea or silver bullet for that.</p> <p>J: No, erm and similarly in terms of you know age group competitions of the older age groups, erm, you know the better the competition it might suit some of the players of that age group, others might be put off by it, you know, it might be too competitive for some, it might not be competitive enough for others, so it's just a difficult balance.</p>	<p>COE</p> <p>RET</p> <p>PS Opp RET/ RP</p> <p>A PS</p> <p>Opp RET</p>
<p>Moving on to a slightly different topic area.</p> <p>Referring to reference made earlier by the interviewee.</p> <p>The additional question, however, did</p>	<p>C: Mmm. Very difficult. Again, this is something that you've already touched on to some extent, but there might be further thoughts that you've got. Has the organisation sought support from other sources or other organisations?</p> <p>J: Erm, no it hasn't really I don't think, erm and that's probably one area that we're not particularly good at...</p> <p>C: Because you did mention sponsorships?</p> <p>J: Erm, well in terms of financial support yeah we're always looking for that kind of input. Erm, I was thinking more in terms of erm networking, and erm sharing best practice with other clubs and that</p>	<p>PS RI/ PAC</p> <p>FE/ITP</p>

<p>open up a different response that again may prove quite illuminating. Links with other organisations.</p> <p>There is some link with the literature re voluntary organisations here that advocates partnerships and collaboration.</p> <p>More closed question and example of 'argot' ? (Becker and Geer, 1957a)</p> <p>Probing issues related to the literature and also the strategies of the governing body to support grass roots cricket.</p> <p>Some useful response data.</p>	<p>kind of thing. Erm, I think in various areas you know there would be some element of that erm we have people involved at, you know, county level in coaching, involved in forums there and activities, we have a groundsman who's very very involved in, I think it's the institute of groundsmanship, and again he's involved as a county pitch advisor, so erm certainly there's some sort of cross-fertilisation there, but in other areas it's probably limited and probably something we ought to do more of I think.</p> <p>C: What about, erm, any links with either the ECB or any guidance support from them or the LCB (For reader info - Referring to the National Governing Body and its local office)?</p> <p>J: Erm. We're affiliated to both, again, there's a, I think, the, main contact is probably in the areas that I've just mentioned actually.</p> <p>C: So, have you sort of witnessed support from them or, it might be implicit or explicit, any advice or guidance other than perhaps for the groundsman?</p> <p>J: Erm, some. In terms of erm I think sort of grants and loans we did actually take out an interest free loan from the ECB about 3 years ago now for some work on the ground, erm which obviously they supported and provided funding for, they're also involved and certainly aware of, and supportive of, our plan to expand the facilities in terms of an additional ground erm so yes, we, we do get support some support in that sense.</p>	<p>PAC PAC RI</p> <p>PAC</p> <p>PAC PS/ RI</p> <p>PAC, Ad</p> <p>FE/ ITP RFS PAC, ITP</p> <p>F, RI, RFS, PAC</p>
<p>Again, change of topic here – asking the interviewee to project forward. Did not finish the question.</p> <p>This is a big issue within cricket and one of the dilemmas in the literature: opportunities, space, but potential problems for some clubs that may die/lose out -</p>	<p>C: Ok right. Erm so looking ahead. The future, what do you think it might the organisation might need to do to survive or to flourish? What's the, what do you see as being the...?</p> <p>J: Erm, I think it's a personal view I can probably see longer term, I think the number of clubs is going to reduce. Erm, if we can keep the participation levels up that's going to get erm concentrated in fewer clubs. We, we really have to be looking at maintaining, you know, expanding what we can offer in terms of facilities and participation. Certainly one of the issues we have as a club with a thriving junior section is a lack of space, for both practice and fitting in all the erm senior and junior games erm, on a small square, erm and, for that reason, to say we are looking at having an additional ground. But really, once, if that does go ahead, that's just coming up to a planning</p>	<p>F CE COE</p> <p>PS/ RSF</p> <p>RFS</p> <p>Opp</p> <p>PS/ RI/ RFS Ad/ RI PS, RET, RP</p>

<p>Good data.</p> <p>Referring to earlier reference made by the interviewee. Quite specific questions relating purely to the junior aspect of the organisation but seen as crucial by the</p>	<p>application stage, if that does go ahead, I think we need to be looking at running four teams then and expanding to be able to do that. We don't really want to be in a position of having two grounds which can accommodate four teams and find ourselves struggling to get the third team out. We really need to be making the most of that facility and ultimately running four teams.</p> <p>C: Or potentially expanding the junior section is that?</p> <p>J: Erm, well that that would, would and should form a part of that erm. With more space we can, we can accommodate juniors better and provide better facilities and space to, to have more of them, but there it's also a knock-on effect there, in terms of the coaching staff. We need to do it, so we need to encourage more people to volunteer and get involved in the coaching side of it.</p>	<p>RFS RI/ RET</p> <p>RET</p> <p>J, RFS RFS RV, RI Opp, PS, IE, HR/HRSC</p>
<p>Seeking clarification of perceptions and opinion regarding other potential developments that may be considered or needed (partly informed by some authors who have made this observation).</p>	<p>C: So being a club but more resources required to, to manage it?</p> <p>J: Yeah.</p> <p>C: Do you foresee any position in the any stage of the future whereby, not just having the bar manager, but there might need to be some form of paid member of staff to take on some of the responsibility? Do you see that happening?</p> <p>J: It's possible, erm I would like to think we could do it without that but erm, but it could well could well be required. I think you know we have to be open-minded and just erm find a solution that works. If that's what we need to do, that's what we need to do.</p>	<p>RI, PS, HR, RV</p> <p>HR</p> <p>PS, RI, HR</p>
<p>Not very successful, may need to change the wording as use of 'metaphor' seemed to cause some confusion (facial expression). Need to consider revising this aspect.</p>	<p>C: Right. So the last question really. If you were to perhaps apply a metaphor for the organisation, at the moment, what how what would you see it as? What would you see?</p> <p>J: Oh god, I'm not sure what I can think of...</p> <p>C: Well, would you would, you sort of say it's positive, doing well, do you think it's succeeding, moving towards its aims or do you think it's sort of choppy waters or ... ?</p> <p>J: Erm I think ...</p> <p>C: Optimistic?</p> <p>J: I think the waters are always choppy erm, but I think we're negotiating them reasonably well. Erm, there are always going to be challenges, erm, but I think, at the moment, we're on a reasonably</p>	<p>CE/ MA/ PS</p> <p>RC, ITP RC, COE</p>

<p>However, with some prompting and amendment this again proved an interesting insight into perceptions.</p>	<p>sound footing; could be better, but I think we're a lot better off than a lot of clubs are, but there's still a long way to go and a lot of effort needed to, to really move it forward</p>	<p>RI IE/ RI</p>
<p>In hindsight might be better to leave this more open for interpretation by the interviewee although he did touch on some aspects referred to in the academic literature. Maintained silence but provided positive NVC to encourage the interviewee to keep talking here. Some additional useful data here in the later parts of response also.</p>	<p>C: So you're saying a lot better off than a lot of the clubs. What would you put that down to then that little bit of the longevity of the committee, the skills? J: I think I would say certainly stability, erm a reasonably good skill set within the committee, erm you know quite a few professionals involved in it, erm who have reasonable idea what they're doing. I think geographical position is actually quite a big factor erm; we're in a suburb, we are well placed a lot of people can get to the club on foot, we have a function room that gets hired out which is a good source of generating income, good social membership erm, you know, the club's open all year round and not just during the cricket season. So, I think that gives us a good basis, helps us, keeps us on a good financial basis and helps keeping people involved throughout the year so I think that's quite a big factor as well.</p>	<p>HR/ HRSC Att RSF ITP, RM IE ITP/ Att</p>
<p>Wanted to provide the opportunity to remember or bring something up that has, in the light of the discussion, come to mind (King and Horrocks, 2010) but the question again is a little long and needs shortening.</p>	<p>C: Ok. Cheers, so is there anything else that perhaps we've areas that we've touched on that you might that have come back to, to your mind, from any earlier questions. Anything else that you want to add? J: Erm C: J: No nothing really I don't think C: I'm just tempted J: My brain's gone</p>	
<p>Links to some of the professional literature ie strategies published by the ECB.</p>	<p>C: Sorry, sorry, I know it's not supposed to be interrogative. There's one final sort of thing really there, that I'm, sort of, tempted to ask now because of you've, you've broached a lot of these issues, not necessarily using the terminology, but the ECB brought out a sort of</p>	

<p>Quite lengthy exposition here, a move towards checking/ascertaining views re a theory adopted by the governing body.</p> <p>Did help to create useful response from interviewee.</p> <p>Further indications of the difficulties of voluntary organisations and those involved in their operations.</p>	<p>sustainability strategy a few years ago that had three key sort of pillars being: economic, social and environmental. As in look after the social side of the members, make sure that it's a welcoming environment, look after your finances, run it on a commercial footing if possible, and also ensure that you're, you know, the facilities and the surfaces and the equipment that's being used. So, any, any final thoughts on, on that particular strategy? Do you think that those are relatively useful sort of ways of summing up what we've talked about do you think there's anything missing there or ?</p> <p>J: No, I think that's a good strategy. Erm and to hopefully a reasonable degree where, well perhaps not expressed in those terms, as you say, under those three sort of pillars that we would probably hope to be following, following those to the lines.</p> <p>There's always more we could be doing, you know, at the end of the day we're all busy people with families and jobs to do, so, you know, ideally we'd all probably want to be doing more, more for the club and getting things done quicker and a bit, perhaps, in a more organised way, but no, I think generally we're probably moving along, along similar lines to that certainly.</p>	<p>PS</p> <p>RI T</p> <p>PS</p>
<p>Sincere gratitude for participation.</p>	<p>C: Ok. Cheers. Thanks a lot.</p>	

Preliminary Indicative Codes

Code	Data/ Issues	Inferred/ Potential Themes
FE	Financial/Economic	Resources, Management issue – Finance
ITP	Income/ Trade/ Profits	Resources, Management issue – Finance
HR	Human Resources general	Resources, Management issue – HR
HRSC	HR Internal Skills/Competencies	Resources, Management issue – HR
PS	Planning/ Strategy/ Management	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning
PAC	Partnerships/Collaboration	Resources, Management issue – communication/ strategy/ PR & marketing
RI	Resource/ Management Implications	Resources, Management issue
MPA	Marketing/ Promotion/ Advertising	Resources, Management issue - marketing
Ad	Administrative	Resources, Management issue - operations
LR	Legal/ Regulatory	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning

CE	Circumstance – External Pressures/ difficulties (external)	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning, threats
COE	Competition – linked to external pressures	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning, threats
PNE	Player Nos – linked to external pressures	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning, threats
CI	Circumstances – Internal Pressures/ difficulties	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning, weaknesses
IE	Initiatives and Efforts to Address	Resources, Management issue – strategy/ planning, HR, strengths, possible opportunities to address threats
Misc	Other problems encountered/ miscellaneous	Resources,
RC	Resources – cash/income	Management issue – finance, strategy/planning
RM	Resources – members/ ship (social and playing)	Management issue – marketing, strategy/planning
RP	Resources - players	Management issue – marketing, strategy/planning
RV	Resources - volunteers	Management issue – marketing, strategy/planning
RFS	Resources – facilities (space, bar, room, playing, ground, kitchen)	Management issue - operations
RET	Retention/ Recruitment of players/members	Management issue – HR and marketing (internal), strategy/planning
Att	Other internal attributes	Resources – strengths, internal, marketing, USPs
J	Juniors	Resources – HR, internal,
F	The future	Management issue – strategy/planning
MA	Metaphors/ Analogies	Insider interpretations
Opp	Opportunities/ Playing Sport (Cricket)	Services provided
T	Time pressures/constraints	Management issue - Strategy/ planning, threats
A	Attitudes/ Commitment levels	Management issue – strategy/ planning, threats

Appendix B: Interviewee Pseudonyms and Case Codes

Club A: Interviewees, Observations and Codes

Club 1: Code (A)				
Role	Profession/ Experience	Age	Time on Executive Committee	Interviewee Code
Chair	Own business (finance/ investment)	50-60	4 years (had been on other Committees)	A1
Treasurer	Financial Director/Accountant	61+	Approximately 12 years	A2
Secretary/ Manager of Junior	Senior Administrator	40-49	11 years	A3
Cricket Chair	Finance/Book-keeping	61+	18 years	A4
Fixtures Secretary, Senior Cricket Rep	Construction/ Project Management	30-39	6 years	A5
Ex-Fundraising, Social Secretary	Hotel Management	50-60	15 fifteen years overall in different spells	A6

Focus Groups/ Group Interviews	Numbers	Code
1	8	FGA1
2	3	FGA2
Observations	Event Type	Code
1	Executive Committee Meeting	ObsA1
2	Management Committee Meeting (Cricket)	ObsA2
3	AGM	ObsA3AGM

Club B: Interviewees, Observations and Codes

Club 2: Code (B)				
Role	Profession/ Experience	Age	Time on Committee	Interviewee Code
Chair & Secretary	Senior Role Police Force	61+	10 years +	B1
Treasurer	Accountant (Commercial)	30	Nearly 3 years	B2
Junior Manager/ Senior Player	Accountant	30	7-8years	B3
Vice Chair	Accountant	41-50	5 years	B4
Membership Secretary	Director/ Solicitor	51-60	8 years	B5

Focus Groups/ Group Interviews	Numbers	Code
1	5	FGB1
2	N/A	N/A
Observations	Event Type	Code
B1	Committee Meeting	ObsB1
B2	Facility Development/ Expenditure Priorities Meeting	ObsB2
B3	AGM	ObsB3AGM

Club C: Interviewees, Observations and Codes

Club 3: Code (C)				
Role	Profession/ Experience	Age	Time on Committee	Interviewe e Code
Chair	IT/ Software/ Consultancy	51-60	Over 30 years	C1
Treasurer	Accountant	51-60	Over 10 years	C2
Junior Cricket Chair & Ground Chair	Own business	51-60	Approximately 30year	C3
Cricket Chair	Scientist	31-40	Approximately 10years	C4
Registrar, Membership	Retail/ Sales Private Sector	41-50	Approximately 10years	C5
Honorary Secretary	Own business	61+	Approximately 10years	C6

Focus Groups/ Group Interviews	Numbers	Code
C1	5	FGC1
C2	3	FGC2
Observations	Event Type	Code
C1	Committee Meeting	ObsC1
C2	Committee Meeting	ObsC2
C3	Ideas Generation Meeting	ObsC3
C4	AGM	ObsC4AGM

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form



Summer, 2018

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information.

The research title is organisational governance: an exploratory study of governance practices in cricket clubs within Lancashire. In recent years there has been much discussion and publicity relating to governance within sport organisations, culminating in production of various policies and while there has been some research at national and international levels there has been far less that focuses on grass roots organisations and, more specifically, cricket clubs. This research aims to partially address that deficit and to explore the governance practices of cricket clubs and their committee members, hoping to identify which practices they consider are helping their organisation and how are these being enacted.

The study is being conducted in three distinct sites (clubs), all geographically separate, and will involve observing some meetings, interviewing key post-holders and members and analysing club documents such as the constitution.

As a key post-holder your insight into the organisation's governance practices and those you adopt as an individual is highly valued. Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary and it is your decision as to whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Any involvement in the research will be sincerely appreciated, but you can withdraw at any stage without and no reason needs to be provided.

Your involvement is most likely to involve being interviewed; at a time and place of your convenience and this should last between 45 and 60 minutes, depending on responses to questions. The intention is to record the interview to help subsequent transcription and interpretation of data. Please note you do not have to answer all the questions and can terminate (or leave) the interview at any time. If your involvement is by way of interview all data will be anonymised at the transcription process and you can ask for a copy of this. Furthermore, upon production of the research, you can also request a copy of the findings and conclusions should this be of interest. Each participant will be coded individually to ensure confidentiality of information and to protect identification. (If your involvement is as part of a focus group, it is not possible for participants to withdraw their data, based on the group nature, but the above procedures regarding recording, withdrawal at any stage, anonymization and confidentiality will still apply. Should you not consent to being recorded it will not be possible to participate in the focus group).

The research will help to identify examples of governance practices that have been helpful within clubs regarded as successful; those that have managed to sustain themselves and grow during the course of their lifespan. In recent years a number of cricket clubs have struggled to survive and either amalgamated or expired. There has been much research that identifies the challenging times faced by grassroots sports clubs, including the difficulties posed by competition from other sport and leisure activities, growing pressures placed upon volunteers and increasing demands from legislative sources, funding and sport governing bodies, as well as participants and customers. While it is acknowledged that neither clubs nor participants will gain any personal advantage or benefit from involvement in the research, it is hoped that the research

will make a positive contribution to our knowledge and understanding of this element of the sport sector and the sport of cricket in particular.

The results of the research will be used as part of a professional doctoral thesis submission. You can request a copy of this upon final publication by emailing the researcher directly (Chris Gunn email included below). It is also anticipated that findings may also be disseminated at various public forums and presented to the England and Wales Cricket Board.

While no direct risks to participation are anticipated, there being no intention whatsoever to distress or discomfort participants, it is accepted that opinions and ideas provided in focus groups may engender positive and/ or negative feedback or even disagreement; this being a typical occurrence within human interactions and, therefore, any participant has the option to withdraw at any stage in the interview or research process. Additionally, all opinions and information provided will be anonymised and stored securely according to the University's policy. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity and the data will be kept securely in electronic form for 5 years from the end of the project. Should you decide to participate please complete and sign the consent form. You will then be contacted to arrange a time for interview (or membership of the focus group).

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UCLAN BAHSS) and should you have any concerns or require any further information please contact myself or Dr Steve Willcocks (details provided below). Furthermore, should you have any subsequent concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the University Officer for Ethics (OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk).

Your participation is greatly appreciated and highly valued so can I thank you in advance for your support and assistance.

Yours faithfully,

C N Gunn

Chris Gunn

CONSENT FORM

Please read the following statements and initial the boxes to indicate your agreement

**Please
initial box**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated summer 2018 for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my data from the study after final analysis has been undertaken

I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Organisational governance: an exploratory study of governance practices
in cricket clubs within Lancashire

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Chris N Gunn, Lecturer, Sport and Wellbeing, Greenbank 163, UCLan, Preston, PR12HE.

Tel 01772 895491 Email: cngunn@uclan.ac.uk

Interviewee Preliminary & Post Details

Current role on committee	
Previous roles held?	
Time on committee	Current post?
	Overall (if different)?
Overall time at the club itself?	
Skills and experience brought to the role? (personal, professional)	
Induction to the committee received?	Yes / No
Any training for your committee post received?	Yes / No
Completed by researcher: Research anonymisation code	Club Code: A B C

	Person Code: 1 2 3 4 5
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Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Interview Guide – Final (1 to 1)

Key aims:

To investigate and explore how organisations and their key post-holders govern their club.

What practices/ activities are conducted? Why? How? Which are effective? At both organisational and individual level?

Name	Role:	Code Club Person
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Part A Club:

1. What do you see as being the key aims of the club? (Its reason for existence/ purpose/ vision?) – what it is trying to achieve?

Notes

2. A) From your perspective how is the club faring at the moment? (What metrics are used: membership numbers, income, success on the pitch, growth?)
B) What are the key challenges the club faces and
C) Any personal concerns?

TRY TO ENSURE THERE IS REFERENCE TO PLAYING/NON-PLAYING – NOT JUST
A FOCUS ON THE PLAYING/SPORT ASPECT

Notes

Part B Governance:

3. There has been a lot of discussion about governance in a sporting context in recent times, what does the term governance mean to you? What does a well governed club look like to you? Not just outcomes but what it does ie the practices, processes, policies?

Notes

4. How is the club governed? What do you see as being the key governance activities or practices of this club?

Notes

5. **With regard to the Committee:**
 - a) What do you see as being the committee's key tasks and roles?

Eg planning/ strategy, finances/growth, reviewing performance, identifying/ managing risk, stakeholder practices, succession planning (structure and operation could be acquired from the constitution and observations)?

Notes

5b) How does it try to achieve this? What does it actually do ie what activities/ practices does it carry out?

Possible prompts:

- Eg regular meetings? How carried out? Agendas? Chaired? (Can observe some of this)
- **In terms of actual committee meetings, what is the focus of these?** (planning and strategy, policies and procedures, monitoring and control, innovation/growth, finances, facilities, managing risk, compliance, external collaborations, etc)
- **How does the committee try to ensure it operates with the club's best interests and those of members, rather than those of individuals/ the committee?** How does it address potential conflicts of interest (not asked of first three interviewees).
- How does the committee report to, communicate and consult with, and involve stakeholders? (What communication practices are adopted? AGMs/EGMs? Reports?)
- Which fundraising activities/practices work well? External sources? Internal activities?
- Does the committee review its policies and the constitution?
- Does the committee review the performance of the organisation and itself? How?

Notes

6. a) Which of these practices do you think the club finds particularly effective – which do you think have helped to enhance its performance/ achievement of ambitions/goals? Why? Any others?

Notes

7. Have there been any changes in terms of these governance activities? Any new practices in recent years or changes? (If yes, what, why and the outcomes?) Which have/ haven't worked and why?

Notes

8. What do you think has influenced the development of these practices ie where derived from/sources? Eg external policies, workplace practices, traditions within the organisation?

Notes

Part C: Additional questions

In reference to your personal practices and your particular role/post:

9. What practices have you adopted that work for you, how effective are these?

How did you arrive at this/these practices? Influences from?
What do you need to help you in your role?

Notes

10. For you, what makes a sustainable and successful club? How have the (governance) practices of yourself and the committee contributed (if at all)?

Notes

11. Sport England Governance code – knowledge of?

Notes

Additional questions:

- Is there anything you would like to add (or elaborate upon) in relation to governance, the club, your practices or those of the club?
- Is there an anecdote or story that epitomises the club, its particular attraction or uniqueness?

Notes

Thank you for your time, patience and input.

The aim is to provide some feedback and/or a transcription of the recording.

Would this be helpful?

Appendix E: Group Interview Schedule

Questions to stakeholders (Group Interviews)

Date and Time	
Place and Setting	
Nos attending	
Length of mtg	

Questions

1. What for you is the key purpose of the club? What should be its aims and focus?
2. For you as members, what are the key attractions of the club? (the positive elements, why did you join/stay?)

What would you suggest needs improving/changing?

3. How is the club governed?
What are they key activities/ practices?
(If not mentioned, refer to Committee, sub-committees, AGMs/ EGMs, policies, constitution, reports.)

Have there been any changes to these practices in recent years? Positive/worked? Negative/ Not worked?

4. How are members and other stakeholders involved/ included/ consulted/ encouraged to participate?
 - a. What practices are used? (In terms of inputs, feedback, reporting, decision-making?)
 - b. If not mentioned, check how stakeholders are kept informed? (Which communication practices used?)
 - c. Also, are all groups/demographics able to participate or are some ignored/not consulted or considered less significant?
5. Which practices that the club and its committee/s adopt do you think are particularly helpful/effective and why?
6. Are there any changes/ improvements to these practices you would recommend and why?

Other potentially relevant/ miscellaneous notes

Appendix F: Transcript Participant B1

Name:

Role: Chair and Secretary Code Club B Person 1

Been in current post 8 years, on Committee 10 overall.

Joined club in 1992 having been away working but family connection previous generations.

Professional – Police Officer and Management background.

Additional Club information –

From the Chair – it's a trustee's club, with the land vested under trustees and with all profits being secured with the aim to ensure the club is sustained, secure and develops facilities for members within the budget constraints. There is the committee then the Admin group which is the President, Chair, Treasurer and Subscriptions Secretary which meets as/when needed or if there is some urgent finance/money matter. It's not fixed. It focuses on finance. The Administration group focuses on finance. There was a major downturn in the club late 2008 to 2010 and a restructuring job was needed so we embarked on a programme of tight control to stabilise the club, adopted a business model where there was more focus on finances and tighter control on outgoings. Stability was needed and tighter finances.

Part A Club:

1.

CG: What do you see as being the key aims of the club? (Its reason for existence/ purpose/ vision?) – what it is trying to achieve?

B1: A key aim - to adopt a business model and to have a much more stable financial position. One of the key requirements was as a top line objective and a bit of a longer-term plan was to rid the club of the brewery loan; it took some years but we finally Did it a couple of years ago we free ourselves of the brewery loan which was a major achievement major, major achievement in providing some stability freeing ourselves of the loan.

Other aims included developments such as an electronic scoreboard, containers for equipment, storage space, but always within a constrained budget which was the key. It was a case of needing to balance the books it's as simple as that.

What the club has thankfully is a bedrock of mainly senior membership but remains stable, There's quite a few members within the local town who pay the membership they may not always visit the club but the membership is quite stable. So there was a plan to look after them, bring them onboard and keep them informed you know.

So the key really was adopting more of a business model, running the club on a tighter financial ship, ridding the club of the brewery loan and making sure we always kept an eye on finances.

I was asked to come onto the Committee by X, it was difficult to get people to commit at the time but the club was in a downturn and needed turning around.

2. CG: A) From your perspective how is the club faring at the moment? (What metrics are used: membership numbers, income, success on the pitch, growth?)

B) What are the key challenges the club faces and

C) Any personal concerns?

TRY TO ENSURE THERE IS REFERENCE TO PLAYING/NON-PLAYING – NOT JUST A FOCUS ON THE PLAYING/SPORT ASPECT

B1: Well, very well. there's a second phase that has kicked in the last two or 3 years where finally some of the younger end and some of the playing side as well have got an involvement, it's only a smaller group, but the finances have benefited significantly from that. we have run the 3rd Beer festival this weekend and that's certainly taken us forward, it's not all profit but we do very well out of it, it's not all profit, but it's certainly helped us move forward, it's afforded us the opportunity to move forward, certainly on the ground, on the cricketing side, The previous groundsmen who had to work under tremendous constraints, and did a fair enough job but with the influx of some more money, we've spent a lot of money on the drainage of the ground, and there's a four or five year plan in place to improve the square there's a new groundsmen who's very go ahead linked more to the players now and so there's an active participation in that. That has taken us forward and we're certainly in a better position than for many years.

CG: So the extra finances has come through the fund raising activities you have carried out?

B1: Yes, the bedrock support has been retained but it wasn't sufficient in itself to announce and address all that. the function room hitherto has been, and still is the lifeblood of the club, renting that out for activities is absolutely key. But there's other activities built onto that so we've got the added income (these are things like Slimming World hiring out the function room for several hours a week over the course of the year).

CG: Key challenges faced?

B1: First of all maintaining the standards because As we all know anybody connected with cricket or Sports It's volunteer based primarily, But as we all know volunteers aren't contracted and they can blow hot and cold And that's the Risk factor of course and you will have seen it we've all seen it. So maintaining the upward momentum is key And hopefully we will do so and personally I'm comfortable with the senior and the younger end because you need that balance. Does people like Frank, the president and me myself who are mindful of what can happen and what things have been like in the past The younger people are very enthusiastic and committed but circumstances can change People can disappear off the map you can get married get headhunted and so on. So that's a priority to keep to keep the thing in balance But at the same time try and move forward. Also need to maintain standards.

CG: Any personal concerns ?

B1: - well there are some players, in cricket now, who are just chasing the money, its going like football. We all know of certain clubs that are paying more players, the amateur status is not rigidly enforced or rules applied.

Part B Governance:

3. CG: There has been a lot of discussion about governance in a sporting context in recent times, what does the term governance mean to you? What does a well governed club look like to you? Not just outcomes but what it does ie the practices, processes, policies?

B1: Notes Well I think it's an amalgamation of what I've been speaking about mainly Governance is a consciousness of what the club is about I mean the reason I'm in it well there's a family thread, I consider myself working for the club it's about sustaining The named Cricket Club That's over 100 years old so without without looking back I mean the traditions or ok but it's about moving forward But none the less because of the type of membership I've spoken about But my attitude to it was that the only reason I did it was that the club was in trouble and hopefully I could do something with others that would pull it out of that downward spiral .

So, governance is about it's about proper management for the start; that's key but also trying to involve as many people in the process as you can and that's not always easy Because the volunteer base is flexible. What you find at our club particularly is it you can't just conjure up with lists of volunteers We do this every week and do this every week Because what you working and I learnt on the job People will turn up in a casual manner From business perspective what for a management perspective of course that's not ideal but it works.

Cricket force for example I publish it I advertised it, but you never know until the weekend who's going to turn up how many going to turn up. If they turn up they do and when you get some surprises which gives you a bit more, which encourages you to keep going.

So the governance aspect obviously authority is an essential part of it because it is a hierarchical set up inevitably, out of necessity, it's got to be hasn't it. Its two playing as well isn't it?

CG: What does a well governed club look like?

B1: A well-governed club looks like - well I think ours does really. I think ... we're bordering on some of my, some of our concerns really about cricket and club cricket, by that I mean there's club cricket that is starting to follow a trend, that I've known more of in football where chasing the money and enhancing the playing side at a cost is becoming really significant (the players?) well, yes by that I mean by buying players, getting players in. I mean I'm on a personal front here I don't mean from our club I think there's a balance to be struck on the pro side for a start It's a bit of an anachronism now but some clubs are prepared to throw endless money at it And without being too picky at how other clubs run their show It wouldn't be an area that I've been wanting to take our club down. I mean prior to three or 4 years ago the northern League had a requirement That you appointed a professional that I always thought was nonsense anyway. There should be some degree of option which meant that if but if you're pro went home early you were required to go and find sub pros and that's, that's a grey area. And it's a darkened area really because if you're talking about governance, how things should be done It's not always possible to do them under that umbrella. So that's where governance comes in because you're bound by the rules of your Particularly give course you know And I don't think the ECB have helped in terms of the National knockout and the T20 in not broadening their rules But we're onto another topic.

In governance really the key element is about honesty really and integrity and being truthful with your membership And as far as you're concerned doing your job to the best of your ability And also if you've got a sporting background it's help me being a team player . I mean you don't always come out on top but your mind says being a team player I mean I was a team member in my job I was a senior investigating officer I'm used to dealing with people in my job and I'm used

to it cajoling them, encouraging them, getting them to do things They might not want to do so as a management element in it Whether that comes into the title of governance I don't know.

It's a job to me of keeping the club going, maintaining its standard maintaining its profile, maintaining its discipline that's another thing would pretty hot on discipline at our club. All you can hope then is that your reputation within cricket is solid.

4. CG: How is the club governed? What do you see as being the key governance activities or practices of this club?

Notes

B1: The Admin group is President chairman treasurer subscriptions secretary but we don't have a set, we meet as and when priorities are identified and would justify pulling that group together. I mean technology of course, a lot of your work can be done through email of course. In the early stages you know I was a bit averse to letting things run on email with the committee, I've had some experience where things become a mess, things get fabricated, the topic, but nonetheless now We don't have as many committee meetings as we used to do Because I'd rather see jobs identified and things getting on with the job Than spending an endless time talking about them Because then you get repetition.

What we have now is that we have the northern league premier meetings and then we have our committee meetings after that Which are about 5 a year I mean we used to meet once a month but Initially literally the can be a waste of time Because all you're creating is an administrative Burden quite frankly And not reaching sufficient conclusions on topics That justify that degree of attendance Then of course people drop off and you know don't attend so I'd rather make it punchy and have them on the back of that so probably about 5 or 6 time a year.

CG So you do quite a bit by email?

B1: Yes, but its always a democratic vote, anything that's a formal proposal is voted on, for example when the league restructuring was going ahead and we were asked to join the Lancashire league and there were some attractions because where we are at the southern end of the Northern league, geographically there were some advantages, so we discussed it in committee and voted in favour of making an application to join the Lancashire League. We did actually make an application but then the LCB when they made it clear that the Lancashire League would be borderline for any support from them, then ... and as a consequence of the LCB doing that we withdrew our application. The point I'm making is that that wasn't done by one or two that was done by the committee So that's a pleasurable aspect of it. So you go to the league meeting people ask you they ask you what are you going to do about and you say well I'm going to take it back to committee we will discuss it, we will take a vote on it, a democratic vote and I will report back to you in due course on what that vote is. It makes the whole job a lot easier.

We also have AGMs and EGMs although I cannot remember holding an EGM for a long, long time.

The AGM is held in March, it has to be held, has to be held prior to the start of the season. Because we move the financial year back to back to April to March. Why?

Well the request came from the treasurer really not really not really my domain but It didn't make an awful lot of difference to me but we got the request and we moved it back.

We've not had any GM but would not put that label on it but we've not had sufficient of a crisis I mean we've had ups and downs but we've not had not been anything that would warrant calling an egm

5. **CG: With regard to the Committee:**

a) What do you see as being the committee's key tasks and roles?

Eg planning/ strategy, finances/growth, reviewing performance, identifying/ managing risk, stakeholder practices, succession planning (structure and operation could be acquired from the constitution and observations)?

B1: Well there's a planning and strategy element where we are looking at a four or five year plan to improve the ground, we have already started with drainage, and looking to improve the square.

We are also heavily involved in reviewing and monitoring our finances. But we also review performance. There is a review aspect process. we review everything really. I mean it's split into groups its not done rigidly but there's a cricket group: the welfare and club development you might have heard mentioned, and a fundraising group, they are labelled, but its not rigid, its not like those people do that and do not do anything else.

CG: Anything in terms of succession planning?

B1: Well, there hasn't been any really. The reason I came into post was because there hadn't been any succession planning really. Not because there wasn't a will to do it, but there was no one to step forward, so certainly mindful of it, I mean Wayne has come in as vice chairman in the last twelve months, and he took over from David Naden, although Wayne calls it been bushwhacked really. Its something I try to keep an eye on all the time, I mean none of us at the top end are getting any younger and you're always trying to get, to identify potential people to take over.

5b) CG: How does it try to achieve this? What does it actually do ie what activities/ practices does it carry out?

Possible prompts:

- Eg regular meetings? How carried out? Agendas? Chaired? (Can observe some of this)
- **In terms of actual committee meetings, what is the focus of these?** (planning and strategy, policies and procedures, monitoring and control, innovation/growth, finances, facilities, managing risk, compliance, external collaborations, etc)
- **How does the committee try to ensure it operates with the club's best interests and those of members, rather than those of individuals/ the committee?** How does it address potential conflicts of interest (not asked of first three interviewees).
- How does the committee report to, communicate and consult with, and involve stakeholders? (What communication practices are adopted? AGMs/EGMs? Reports?)
- Which fundraising activities/practices work well? External sources? Internal activities?
- Does the committee review its policies and the constitution?
- Does the committee review the performance of the organisation and itself? How?

B1: Well there's a standard agenda with some headings that I put out but there's a rider on the Email that goes out that says if there's anything that you wish to discuss Or if there's anything you wish to flag up before then do so but if not then feel free to bring it to the table . The agenda is we do the cricket group first of all; cricket matters first of all and that includes senior and then we have the welfare and the junior cricket and club development as well in that, then club management as I call it Finance the ground and any financial matters related to that With the ground development Plus the treasurer's report and Alex and Jimmy put that together Each time we meet Should I give an up-to-date report and then there's the fundraising Then anything else comes under AoB.

CG: Best interests?

B1:- There's only one word I can use for it democratically I mean it's not one person's view That overrides it everything is democratically undertaken. I mean with the AGM every member is entitled to have their say, so the Committee is well versed in the knowledge that there will be a democratic vote on significant topics and that's bedrock really, but that's how it works and how it has worked throughout my tenure, and how it will work. I mean you might get one or two new members who might try, but they soon find out that's how it works.

CG: How does the club try to address potential conflicts of interest?

B1: Well, as per previously we do things by a vote and if we needed to we would consult the membership.

CG: So how do you Communicate with/ Consult/Report to Members and Stakeholders?

B1: Well with modern technology there's information that goes out by email but also you've got Twitter There's no nonsense on it thankfully now it's there As a way of providing information would people pick up on that And within the committee as a newsletter that goes out The treasurer writes that that's on the website So that's another method Plus for the first team games we have a good established program with information that covers all that's going on within the club in that along with the cricket. The newsletter (roughly once every two months) plus the scorer also writes a regular piece too.

We used to write letters but with the advent of email on their membership resubmission form each year we ask them to include their email Some more and more we are going down the email line obviously To pass on information plus as good coverage in the local newspaper There's a good connection to the Chorley Guardian They do reasonable coverage in that.

CG: Which fundraising practices have worked well for you as a club?

B1: Well as I said the key one is the Beer Festival In terms of amounts of income but for many years for many years we have run the pound a week Club So for a direct debit of £1 a week that's been running for about 20 years that brings in some regular income we've tried to encourage further participation but it hasn't increased significantly but it's there Plus we have a 100 Club running all the time. Incorporated with the subs information that goes out there's an opportunity to join the 100 Club As you can pay £12 above his subs membership fee and each month as a draw of £40 and periodically there's a £100 drawn in December and that does very well. It's now got well over a hundred members now. We also do a Christmas raffle and make an evening of it and that's a good fundraiser, we also run a race night as well as have occasional bands on. We have live music and we're going to increase that because that's been very successful.

6. CG: a) Which of these practices do you think the club finds particularly effective – which do you think have helped to enhance its performance/ achievement of ambitions/goals? Why? Any others?

B1:I think it's an amalgamation of them all I mean to identify one specific thing he's difficult but overall i'm not so sure really but governance covers the overall running, the capable, honest running of the club.

CG: In terms of ensuring the honest running of the club?

B1: Well we have all the usual financial controls like two signatures on outgoings, checking our budgets, we have two people working on that.

7. CG: Have there been any changes in terms of these governance activities? Any new practices in recent years or changes? (If yes, what, why and the outcomes?)
Which have/ haven't worked and why?

B1: Well I probably have to harp back to getting rid of the brewery loan which was absolutely key, I mean David used to call it the Sword of Damocles hanging over the club. That was paramount and made a hell of a difference and has it has turned out. Thwaites having been taken over by Marstons and thankfully we have the same rep The set-up for the change of the bar the 20 pumps was done through him so that has been key. So, after we paid it off Marston's have been very good to work with. We have a sponsorship package as part of their support for us. So we can opt For a further reduction in price purchasing or we can opt for a lump sum each year which we do we take A sponsorship deal from them along with a more attractive purchasing price Having rid ourselves of The Loan, we paid it off, yep.

8. CG: What do you think has influenced the development of these practices ie where derived from/sources? Eg external policies, workplace practices, traditions within the organisation?

B1: Much of it is part of the tradition of cricket clubs to have a chairman and it's key to the running of any organisation in my view provided it's not autocratic, which hopefully its not, that's my view others may not agree.

The club is over one hundred years old and we did update the rules (the constitution) a few years ago but we haven't really looked at them since.

Part C: Additional questions

In reference to your personal practices and your particular role/post:

9. CG: What practices have you adopted that work for you, how effective are these?
How did you arrive at this/these practices? Influences from?
What do you need to help you in your role?

B1: Well if you're going to be a chairman of something you have to be reasonably assertive for a start and you have to be, as chairman, prepared to put his finger in the dyke and Without blowing my own trumpet it's what you have to do and it's what I did professionally perhaps with diminishing skill some might say (laughs), but also availability is the other key, I mean my wife goes spare at times, but she's very supportive, But going back again to my job Although it's a lot of years ago now but the necessity to be always available to be always available meant, the biggest facet was if there was a problem you Were able to take control of it and nip it in the bud so I've always maintain that That stance throughout this job. It comes at a price because sometimes you can get some dross as well Because you chosen to go down that path but availability is a key. And also maintaining communication, David and I used to share stuff everyday, less so with Wayne now because he's very busy but It's about working together along with the committee but if you have a problem if there's a significant problem and it's only right and proper that the people that are in the posts should have a say in it And ownership of it because ownership of the problem Is key as well as far as I'm concerned.

CG: For you, what makes a sustainable and successful club? How have the (governance) practices of yourself and the committee contributed (if at all)?

Notes

B1: Well it's about looking after your members, keeping them informed.

How do you look after your members? Well it's another broad Church I mean we've talked about newsletters, we've talked about keeping them informed, I mean matchdays, we get as many watching second team, there's more watch our second team than some clubs first teams, but many who come down like to see officials about, to speak to them, to chat to them, they like to see people. For a lot of these people it's a social occasion and every year we get people we get people who come in, they travel quite distance two or three times a year to come and see us at the match and it's like if you're a face (ie on the committee), it's like a landlord in a pub if a landlord that's never there you know, it doesn't look good, but if the landlord is there talking to people. (so referring again to be accessible, available, for people to see, speak to, etc)

Then it's the other things we've talked about, about keeping them informed about what's going on and we've talked about technology, the social media has helped a lot in that regard and the lads run the Twitter and run it very well, it's always full of information and it's always up to date, you go on some of them and they're not been touched, they have a mad dash then it disappears.

CG: Does the club do anything to look after its volunteers?

B1: Not specifically, it's not like we have a club support day, we don't pay people, we look after them but we have many people on a casual basis, some come to the ground to pick litter up of their own volition, but the only way you can thank them is to do it personally and to be available until let people know they are appreciated. I mean we are looking at some sort of remuneration on the coaching side but we've talked about it but we've not got any further than that it's an area that has been considered but then you no volunteers or volunteers If you're doing it for the club then that's what you doing it for If you're doing it just the money then you're not a volunteer. But the subs secretary does have carte blanche for taking that into account along with Alex the junior chairman.

10. CG: Sport England Governance code – knowledge of?

Notes B1: No.

Additional questions:

- CG: Is there anything you would like to add (or elaborate upon) in relation to governance, the club, your practices or those of the club? Is there an anecdote or story that epitomises the club, its particular attraction or uniqueness?

Notes

B1: We are very proud of the club. In an ideal world we would like to do all the terrace in all the sitting in front of the Club House That would be a major project for the future but would need additional funding significantly But the lads are on with creating a junior strip and have secured some significant funding to make a start on that. In house have also run some activities and brought in some monies through that but traditionally it's an attractive ground in its own right.

But it's quite remarkable how many people from the area have been down to a social function and said to me, if I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times, I never knew there was a cricket ground here, it's like a little oasis, it's a super spot to watch cricket, but I do have to say we've never been the best of teams but the lads we've had in the main Been local lads, lads that have grown up together, club products, and they have stuck together, There are plenty of deficiencies in our team but as a group they are stuck together And I admire that because in my time on the field we have never been particularly successful Other than the T20 a few weeks ago

that's the first trophy that we have won in some time since the XXXXX days, and that's not in my time, but that's another key element and borders on to what we are talking about.

There Should be a proper sensible debate ECB in my view on whether you want this conformity to a set structure cricket is a local recreational activity, or there's a full obsession with a pyramid structure, I'm not against promotion and relegation, and whether you want leagues that are free for people to pay whoever you wish. I don't have set views one way or the other, but there's not sufficient debate on it, and people are still in C, hiding behind the notion that this is an amateur game played by amateurs when everybody in C, in league cricket know this is not true so transparency, when we're talking about individual clubs transparency then start with the leagues first of all, start with the ECB, sort that National Knockout out with proper rules, in terms of the financial side of it, we played that team the other year from Rochdale.... a one man band who were just a professional cricket team, funded by one person,.... it's still there, if they are going to do a real proper overview of C, then start with that and equally the amount of stuff that comes out of the ECB, we know how it works in big organisations, if you put a think tank together they're not going to put nothing out that's the very jaundiced cynical view And it cascades down what in my view it is doing, and back at base, And this is my ultimate criticism is that it has eroded the volunteer base.

I think it needs a higher authority to really grasp it constructively we know that cricket in this country is geared to the notion of finding players for England but when you get down to grassroots level the the whole thing becomes blurred people are being paid backhanders and HMRC counter came and looked at us once suddenly they do a little pin prick, they do a little litmus test, they have a little blitz on cricket clubs about the same time, They had the temerity to put out in the Press I wanted list of the 12 people most wanted for tax evasion and they couldn't catch the bastards and at the same time the'yre looking at c clubs, well turn it on its head, The ECB should be looking at cricket clubs and how they are run and how they are financed I'm not saying for senior administrators it will be an easy task but the basic philosophy Needs addressing what are we Seeking to do here are we really thinking That by a set of Rules, a degree of support and that is all it is When you look at what the ECB financially supports really, these prizewinning things and all that or do you want people to be recreationally really enjoying their cricket, make your decisions but do undertake some proper, monumental research.

I think the ECB survey, its an insult to people's intelligence, when the'yre asking you....

Thank you for your time, patience and input.

The aim is to provide some feedback and/or a transcription of the recording. Would this be helpful?

Appendix G: Observation and Field Notes Template

Observation Record

Context:

- What does the site look like? Feel like? How is it set up physically? Take note of this for richness of data
- Draw the site or take a photo (ethics permitting) – this will jog your memory later and can be used as part of the data
- Do you have prior knowledge or experience? How does our background influence the way we see this? (important for reflexivity if you are using more interpretive approaches).

Date and Time	
Place and Setting	
Nos attending	
Length of mtg	

Descriptions portraits of persons, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of setting, a/cs of events	Analysis, Interpretations, Thoughts and Reflections personal thoughts such as speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, etc.

Other potentially relevant/ miscellaneous notes

Diagrams – take photographs if possible.

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Appendix H: Record of Observation ‘There’s No Such Thing as a Bad Idea Night’

Observation Record

Date and Time	18 th September 8pm -
Place and Setting	Fulwood and Broughton CC Function Room
Nos attending	25
Length of mtg	2h 15mins approx.

ON Tuesday 18th September approximately twenty-five members gathered to discuss ideas to help take the club forward over the next year or two.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH ANY OF THE AREAS
BELOW PLEASE CONTACT RELEVANT MEMBERS**

“There’s no such thing as a bad idea night.”

These were the various ideas:

1. Produce a Matchday Programme
2. Hire a Club coach – seniors and help with juniors (paid?)
3. Grass practice surfaces?
4. Girls’ team, more members
5. Junior – senior transition – retention, mentoring?, support
6. All Stars – but not under ECB system – club does not gain anything?
7. Increasing revenue: kit sponsors, sponsorship, brand image
8. Player sponsorship (XXX?)
9. Living benches, more seating?
10. Ground sponsor
11. Membership swipe card – discounts
12. Senior member recruitment – all levels
13. USP
14. Umpires facilities/ changing.
15. Teas/ Catering/ Facilities.
16. Sports clubs/hub/ownership.

Discussions/ Outcomes:

A) Income, Marketing and Promotion Elements

1. There was strong feeling that we need to focus on sponsorship and fundraising (monies which could be used to offset some of the costs to players) and there was mention that two current members were looking to head up a fund raising sub-committee that would take this forward.

Ideas that related to this included: sponsorship/advertising within the matchday programme (3 or 4 advertisers paying £150 (half-page) - £200 (full page), depending on size of advert for the year to appear in each programme. The programmes will contain a number of features, written in a professional style, but with light-hearted elements too – aim being to charge £2 per programme and everyone expected to pay this who attends, incorporating raffle entry for the day too (small prize for winner - £10 bar voucher? – ensures it's spent at F&B). XX and XX to produce programme but need help getting advertisers/sponsors.

Ground sponsorship? Pitchside/team/player sponsorship,

Actions – to convene sub-committee asap and someone to meet Preston Grasshoppers to gain ideas from their recent progress in this area.

There is a need to sell the function room to increase hire/bookings - NB Chorley CC do not charge for their function room hire in Jan-March. Some stated that Black Bull no longer charge for their back room for functions.

This leads onto -

2. Advertising –

- to design a banner for the external area – to include name of club, contact number and its facilities/ availability for hire.

The state of the fencing was pointed out – might need to be addressed. Could we have a banner on X's fence?

- Design a leaflet – with similar logo/style to the above – XXXX will look into this – XX has examples from other clubs – to disseminate to local estates – to include facilities, contact no., membership etc – poss to go out in October and then again in Jan or Feb each year (juniors can help distribute – a Saturday activity, meeting back at XXXX for a talk about cricket/event in an afternoon?)
- Can we update the website and Can the function room be booked online?

3. Charges/Prices/Subscriptions

- There was quite strong feeling that the membership costs especially for social members be reviewed;
- Bar prices should be increased in line with local competitors;
- Membership cards/ swipe cards (Hoppers do this) to be used to access level I, visitors need to be charged level II prices. XXXX to get some info from Ormskirk.

- Charge schools and other users more for matches – there is a cost to the club for its maintenance, toilets, ground preparation/repair.

B) Cricket/ Playing Aspects

It is suggested the cricket sub-group/committee meet as soon as possible to develop:

- A recruitment/retention strategy developed – identify senior players needed for all teams and how to try and attract these players. It was highlighted the difficulty of getting enough players out at certain times in the year.
- Look at possibility of a grass practice area?
- Incentivise people to become coaches – coaches needed – how to incentivise? Look at other methods eg further reduced subs – could be offset if progress made re sponsorship
- Look at possibility of hiring a coach – how to pay for it? To work partly with seniors practices but also help out with under 17s/16s and
- Identify whether local university and college has additional coaches needing hours?
- Run an under 8s or 9s but not under the all stars banner – who will coach? (Fridays 4-5pm for 8 weeks – May to end of June?)
- Look at feasibility of a year 5/6 girls team – XXXX/ YYYY – linked through local schools.
- Junior progression – the need for senior players to mentor/ support – put in the place the mentoring system that we used to have, linking younger players with first team/experienced players.
- Look into devising a timetable of availability (Use Teamer App?)
- Teas – Need to invest in facilities/cooking items/ Rota? – ask people – volunteers? – Janine to ask about possible link with external partner. There is a concern about the quality if left to volunteers and rota and the maintenance of the kitchen and equipment.
- Improve umpires' facility – ground working party.

General –

Communication – there is a need to have closer communication among members – that resources, ideas, etc can be shared. A lot of other clubs are using email to keep in touch - Is there something we can use to pool resources, contact each other, send documents? Is there an online notice board or some other place?

This is a typical example – how do we share this so people can see the outcomes and actions?

XXXX made several very good, positive suggestions. How can we take him up on this?

Organisational Governance (Codebook) from NVIVO

Appendix I: Codes and Themes

Name/ Code	Description
AA How club is doing current situation and general comments	Comments about the club general
Aims of clubs	What they are trying to provide/achieve
Club success	Evidence of club success – any aspect
Examples of other orgs or clubs	Egs of good or poor practices from other orgs/ clubs they know about - links to T1 and meso/field level
Governance reference to principles and concepts (linked to T1 entity ie meanings, general and practical understandings but also T2,T3,T4 possibly too)	Aspects of governance that might be mentioned within entity eg rules, pus, gus, and/or performance aspects
Accountability	Accountable to stakeholders, provide reports, able to be questioned formally and informally
Checks and balances	Financial, signatures, term limits, limits on roles, etc
Committees and Structures	Committees, sub-committees, role descriptions
Importance of a good or effective committee and or leaders	reference to importance of a good leader or good committee
Compliance and controls (internal practices and external issues)	examples of internal practices to address external issues
Constitutions, Policies and Procedures	Constitutions, rules, processes, policies posted/available.
Democratic principles	Open Elections, Nominations, voting rights, one person one vote includes representation eg of members, players, sections, etc.
Diversity	
Fiduciary	Acting in club's best interests; not putting personal gain first.
Planning Vision Mission	Evidence of aims, mission, vision.

Name/ Code	Description
Possible conflicts of interest	Any evidence of corruption or egocentric, personal behaviours?
Power	Separation of? checks? term limits? evidence of abuse of power?
Review progress and performance either sporting or business	examples of when performance reviewed might be business or sports based
Roles and Responsibilities	Identifies what people's roles are and their responsibilities
Separation evidence of or not between Exec and Paid ie Policy governance aspects	Separation between strategic and operational aspects - chairs particularly
Stakeholder engagement involvement inclusion	Valuing them, Inclusion, engagement, involvement, listening and responding to
Stakeholder confusion	
Transparency	Openness - able to be scrutinised, sharing of information, explanation of decisions and decision-making, rationales explained
Trust	Relationships between people based on trust/ friendships
Histories of clubs	Useful background info for the context and intro paragraphs
Key or Effective or Ineffective practices - from mine or practitioners or sh perspectives	Instances of what looks like effective practices and links to part of qns 3 and 4 of interviews
Other interesting snippets but miscellaneous	anything else that might be of interest or use but doesn't fit in to other categories.
Problems faced by clubs eg volunteer nos, weather etc	Forces not linked to PESTLE issues
Local environment and context - impacts of	
Operational issues and practical problems	
Pressures on volunteers	From internal and external sources

Name/ Code	Description
T1 - Micro Mech includes pre-existing structures and traditions	Internal eg crises, internal needs from s/holders, pre-existing structures, and P as entity, Plus TA structures re the meanings, motives, norms, traditions? Plus, general und'gs re democracy, transparency, trust, fiduciary responsibilities, accountability,
T1 Entity Practice As - what should be done and how and why - according to contextual traditions, norms, beliefs, rules, understandings	Enabling/Constraining - prescribes and informs but does not determine what should be done, how and why. Traditions and Norms. Factors and Forces such as common understandings, meanings, rules, beliefs, outcomes sought including traditions and norms.
General Und'gs (of more external type ideas and beliefs but are shared)	beliefs, values, ideals towards broader concepts that inform and underpin the teleo- affective structures and approaches towards practices such as democracy, equality, inclusion, accountability, transparency, honesty, fiduciary responsibility, integrity, etc
Meanings and Teleo-A Structures	what matters: the ends, aims, meanings, motivations and values engendered by, and attached/ appropriate to, comprising the actual practice and pursued by practitioners - try not to confuse with general Us which are more wider beliefs linked to bigger concepts
Practical understanding	knowledge of how governance activities should be conducted (within an accepted manner); evidence of doing things in accord with traditions and norms of practice.
Rules	explicit and procedural rules, norms, oughts, instructions of governance practices - that influence actions/proceedings; may be written or unwritten - how things should be done/in what way. Links to teleo-affective structure and understandings
T1 Macro - causal or general mechs and structures	PESTLE, policy, competition, professional practices
Competition	
T1 Meso ie field level	Pressures from league/LCF/ECB req'ts, other closer stakeholders eg sponsors, etc. Use ECB as meso not macro force as clubs could potentially have some influence over policy, certainly at league/lancs/local levels.
T2 Actual - P as Performance - what actually happens events and actions	Audible and visible sayings and doings of instantiations of situated practices. Events and actions – praxis T2/T3 and evidence of agents' responses and interpretations (actual domain). This mix of challenges (macro/meso/micr) combining the context of the traditions, norms, values of the club, combined with aspects of agency – practitioners' responses, interpretations, ideas etc – this dynamic, recursive and dialectical mix leads to effects – which includes changes in praxis - focus, op

Name/ Code	Description
Capable competent and/or connected people	The need for skilled people
Communication	Forms of communication (to peers, practitioners and stakeholders)
Cooperation and collaboration between people or sections	evidence of close collaboration or agreement between sections and representatives.
lack of collab and cooperation between sections infighting and inertia	examples of previous issues, fights, disagreements, inertia
Meetings	Holding of various meetings eg Committees, Sub Cs, AGMs
Meeting Content/ Focus	What did practitioners focus upon within meetings
Planning and Reviewing	What did practitioners do in terms of future planning? What did practitioners do when reviewing performance (sporting/ non-sporting)
Finances including funding/fundraising	How did practitioners address financial problems, issues? What practices were undertaken in terms of seeking funding and how were funds raised? What activities were involved?
Stakeholder involvements/ inputs/ responding to stakeholders	How were stakeholders given opportunity to voice/ provide inputs? Evidence of being receptive and stakeholder-oriented. What were the perceptions of stakeholders?
Open:different opinions can be voiced	Not necessarily disagreements or tensions just people being able to put forward their views and ideas
Social atmosphere in practices and meetings	Social and friendly atmosphere, fun, etc - different to tensions, etc
Tensions and Arguments: historical or current	Dialectic - differences/ arguments over values, or ideas, etc - this might be a historical reference or current/recent.
Pragmatic approach poss less formal_what works	Things that work - informal aspects
T2 and T3 - Types of thinking and behaviour	Episteme, Techne, Phronesis, Metis

Name/ Code	Description
Episteme	eternal, non-context dependent universals, scientific knowledge, deductive and rational analysis
Metis and creativity linked to agency	practical intelligence: linked to cunning, inventiveness, wily, knowing how to proceed in competitive, emergent, complex circumstances
Phronesis	practical wisdom: localised and contingent form of knowing and acting. The aim of phronesis is to produce praxis or action informed by knowledgeable value-driven deliberation
T2-T3 Agency Evidence of	Examples of agency - individual or collective
T4 - Changes or possible differences between P as E and P as P	Changes in emphasis in clubs, new practices, developments
T4 - Empirical (outcomes effects events)	Outcomes/ Effects/ Changes includes the perceptions of practitioners and stakeholders.
Be Family oriented	Evidence of family orientation - family activities, inclusion, not just males? generations of families.
Facing outwards	boundary spanning - evidence of promotion to outside, reaching beyond, collaboration, external partnerships, league links, new members/partners, no longer isolated
Facilitative, Flexible and Functional	Flexible, facilitative, functional – ie listen and respond to members, look at new ideas and innovations, new products, new programmes, etc
Facilities	New or investment in, updating of, development of - playing/ non-playing (social, etc).
Finances	Fiscally frugal - checks and balances, tight rein on spending and scrutiny of, reports to s/hs, auditors, spending within means.
Fun Inclusive and Friendly Social aspects	fun atmosphere, sociable, open and inclusive, welcoming (families or this separate)?
Funding and Fundraising	internal and external - activities designed to raise funds including sponsorship, events, new ideas, practices, new opportunities, diversification of income, etc
Future focus	Evidence of growth opportunities, planning for future, succession, future investment/spending, planning, juniors, and investment eg facilities, coaches, junior teams, etc

Appendix J: Interviewee B1 Coded Transcript

Key aims:

To investigate and explore how organisations and their key post-holders govern their club.

What practices/ activities are conducted? Why? How? Which are effective? At both organisational and individual level?

Name

Role: Chair and Secretary Code Club B Person 1

Been in current post 8 years, on Committee 10 overall.

Joined club in 1992 having been away working but family connection previous generations.

Professional – Police Officer and Management background.

Additional Club information –

From the Chair - its a trustees club, with the land vested under trustees and with all profits being secured with the aim to ensure the club is sustained, secure and develops facilities for members within the budget constraints. There is the committee then the admin group which is the President, Chair, Treasurer and Subscriptions Secretary which meets as/when needed or if there is some urgent finance/money matter. It's not fixed. It focuses on finance. The Administration group focuses on finance. There was a major downturn in the club late 2008 to 2010 and a restructuring job was needed so embarked on a programme of tight control to stabilise the club, adopted a business model where there was more focus on finances and tighter control on outgoings. Stability was needed and tighter finances.

Part A Club:

1.

CG: What do you see as being the key aims of the club? (Its reason for existence/ purpose/ vision?) – what it is trying to achieve?

B1(CLUB2):

A key aim - to adopt a business model and to have a much more stable financial position.

One of the key requirements was as a top line objective and a bit of a longer-term plan was to rid the club of the brewery loan; it took some years but we finally did it a couple of years ago we freed ourselves of the brewery loan which was a major achievement major, major achievement in providing some stability freeing ourselves of the loan.

Other aims included developments such as an electronic scoreboard, containers for equipment, storage space, but always within a constrained budget which was the key. It was a case of needing to balance the books it's as simple as that.

- AA how club is doing current situation and general comments
- Competition
- Fun inclusive and Friendly Social aspects
- Facilitative, Flexible and Functional and provide sports
- Be family oriented
- Future focus
- Stakeholder engagement involvement inclusion
- Club success
- T1 - Micro Mech includes pre-existing structures and traditions
- Communication
- Facilities
- Funding n Fundraising
- T1 Meets ie field level

- Histories of clubs
- Meetings
- Pragmatic approach poss less formal what works
- Committees and Structures
- Key or Effective or Ineffective practices - from mine or practitioners or ah perspectives
- Meaning and TA Structures (link to qn 3 of interview)
- Finances
- Problems faced by clubs eg volunteer nos, weather etc

• Club B1 PM

Coding Density

What the club has thankfully is a bedrock of mainly senior membership but remains stable, There's quite a few members within the local town who pay the membership they may not always visit the club but the membership is quite stable. So there was a plan to look after them, bring them onboard and keep them informed you know.

So the key really was adopting more of a business model, running the club on a tighter financial ship, ridding the club of the brewery loan and making sure we always kept an eye on finances.

I was asked to come onto the Committee by Frank, it was difficult to get people to commit at the time but the club was in a downturn and needed turning around.

2. CG: A) From your perspective how is the club faring at the moment? (What metrics are used: membership numbers, income, success on the pitch, growth?)
- B) What are the key challenges the club faces and
- C) Any personal concerns?

TRY TO ENSURE THERE IS REFERENCE TO PLAYING/NON-PLAYING – NOT JUST A FOCUS ON THE PLAYING/SPORT ASPECT

B1(CLUB2):

Well, very well. there's a second phase that has kicked in the last two or 3 years where finally some of the younger end and some of the playing side as well have got an involvement, it's only a smaller group, but the finances have benefited significantly from that. We have run the 3rd Beer festival this weekend and that's certainly taken us forward, it's not all profit but we do very well out of it, it's not all profit, but it's certainly helped us move forward, it's afforded us the opportunity to move forward, certainly on the ground, on the cricketing side. The previous groundsman who had to work under tremendous constraints, and did a fair enough job but with the influx of some more money, we've spent a lot of money on the drainage of the ground, and there's a four or five year plan in place to improve the square there's a new groundsman who's very go ahead linked more to the players now and so there's an active participation in that. That has taken us forward and we're certainly in a better position than for many years.

CG: So the extra finances has come through the fund raising activities you have carried out?

B1(CLUB2): Yes, the bedrock support has been retained but it wasn't sufficient in itself to announce and address all that. The function room hitherto has been, and still is the lifeblood of the club, Renting that out for activities is absolutely key. But there's other activities built onto that so we've got the added income (these are things like Slimming World hiring out the function room for several hours a week over the course of the year).

CG: Key challenges faced?

B1(CLUB2): First of all maintaining the standards because As we all know anybody connected with cricket or Sports it's volunteer based primarily, But as we all know volunteers aren't contracted and they can blow hot and cold And that's the Risk factor of course and you will have seen it we've all

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histories of clubs • Competition • Be Family oriented • Stakeholder engagement involvement inclusion • T1 - Micro Meeth includes pre-existing structures and traditions • Meetings • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AA How club is doing current situation and general comments • Fun Inclusive and Friendly Social aspects • Facilitative, Flexible and functional and provide sports • Future focus • Club success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T1 Meso re field level • Key or Effective or Ineffective practices - from mine or practitioners or s/h perspectives • Finances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic approach poss less formal_what works • Committees and Structures • Facilities • Funding n Fundraising • Meanings and TA Structures (links to qn 3 of interview)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club B1 PM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems faced by clubs eg volunteer nos, weather etc
Coding Density	

seen it. So maintaining the upward momentum is key And hopefully we will do so and personally I'm comfortable with the senior and the younger end because you need that balance. Does ... people like Frank, the president and me myself who are mindful of what can happen and what things have been like in the past. The younger people are very enthusiastic and committed but circumstances can change People can disappear off the map you can get married get headhunted and so on. So that's a priority to keep to keep the thing in balance But at the same time try and move forward. Also need to maintain standards.

CG: Any personal concerns ?

B1 (CLUB2): - well there are some players, in cricket now, who are just chasing the money, its going like football. We all know of certain clubs that are paying more players, the amateur status is not rigidly enforced or rules applied.

Part B Governance:

- CG: There has been a lot of discussion about governance in a sporting context in recent times, what does the term governance mean to you? What does a well governed club look like to you? Not just outcomes but what it does ie the practices, processes, policies?

B1 (CLUB2): Notes Well I think it's an amalgamation of what I've been speaking about mainly Governance is a consciousness of what the club is about I mean the reason I'm in it well there's a family thread, I consider myself working for the club it's about sustaining The named Cricket Club That's over 100 years old so without without Looking back I mean the traditions or ok but it's about moving forward But none the less because of the type of membership I've spoken about But my attitude to it was that the only reason I did it was that the club was in trouble and hopefully I could do something with others that would pull it out Of that Downward Spiral .

So governance is about its about proper management for the Start; that's key but also trying to involve as many People in the process as you can and that's not always easy Because the Volunteerbase is flexible. What you find at our club particularly is it you can't just conjure up with lists of volunteers We do this every week and do this every week Because what you working and I learnt on the job People will turn up in a casual manner From business perspective what for a management perspective of course that's not ideal but it works.

Cricketforce for example I publish it, I advertised it, but you never know until the weekend who's going to turn up how many going to turn up. If they turn up they do and when you get some surprises which gives you a bit more, Which encourages you to keep going.

So the governance aspect obviously authority is an essential part of it because it is a hierarchical up inevitably, out of necessity, it's got to be hasn't it.

CG: What does a well governed club look like?

B1 (CLUB2): A well-governed club looks like - well I think ours does really. I think ... we're bordering on some of my, some of our concerns really about cricket and club cricket, by that I mean there's club cricket that is starting to follow a trend, that I've known more of in football where chasing the money and enhancing the playing side at a cost is becoming really significant (the players?) well, yes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AA How club is doing current situation and general comments • Fun Inclusive and Friendly Social aspects • Facilitative, Flexible and functional and provide sports • Stakeholder engagement involvement inclusion • Club success • Meetings • Communication • Facilities • Funding n Fundraising • Pragmatic approach poss less formal what works • Committees and Structures • TL Meso ie field level • Key or Effective or Ineffective practices - from mine or practitioners or th perspectives • Finances • Problems faced by clubs eg volunteer nos, weather etc • Club B1 PM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histories of clubs • Be Family oriented • Future focus • TL - Micro Meso includes pre-existing structures and traditions • Meanings and TA Structures (links to qn 3 of interview)
Coding Density	

by that I mean by buying players, getting players in. I mean I'm on a personal front here I don't mean from our club I think there's a balance to be struck on the pro side for a start It's a bit of an anachronism now but some clubs are prepared to throw endless money at it . And without being too picky at how other clubs run their show It wouldn't be an area that I've been wanting to take our club down. I mean prior to three or 4 years ago the northern League had a requirement That you appointed a professional that I always thought was nonsense anyway. There should be some degree of option which meant that if, But if your pro went home early you were required to go and find sub pros and that's, that's a grey area. And it's a darkened area really because if you're talking about governance, how things should be done It's not always possible to do them under that umbrella. So that's where governance comes in because you're bound by the rules of your particular governance you know And I don't think the ECB have helped in terms of the National knockout and the T20 in not broadening their rules But we're onto another topic.

In governance really the key element is about honesty really and integrity and being truthful with your membership And as far as you're concerned doing your job to the best of your ability And also if you've got a sporting background it's help me being a team player . I mean you don't always come out on top but your mind says being a team player I mean I was a team member in my job I was a senior investigating officer I'm used to dealing with people in my job and I'm used to it cajoling them, encouraging them, getting them to do things They might not want to do so as a management element in it Whether that comes into the title of governance I don't know.

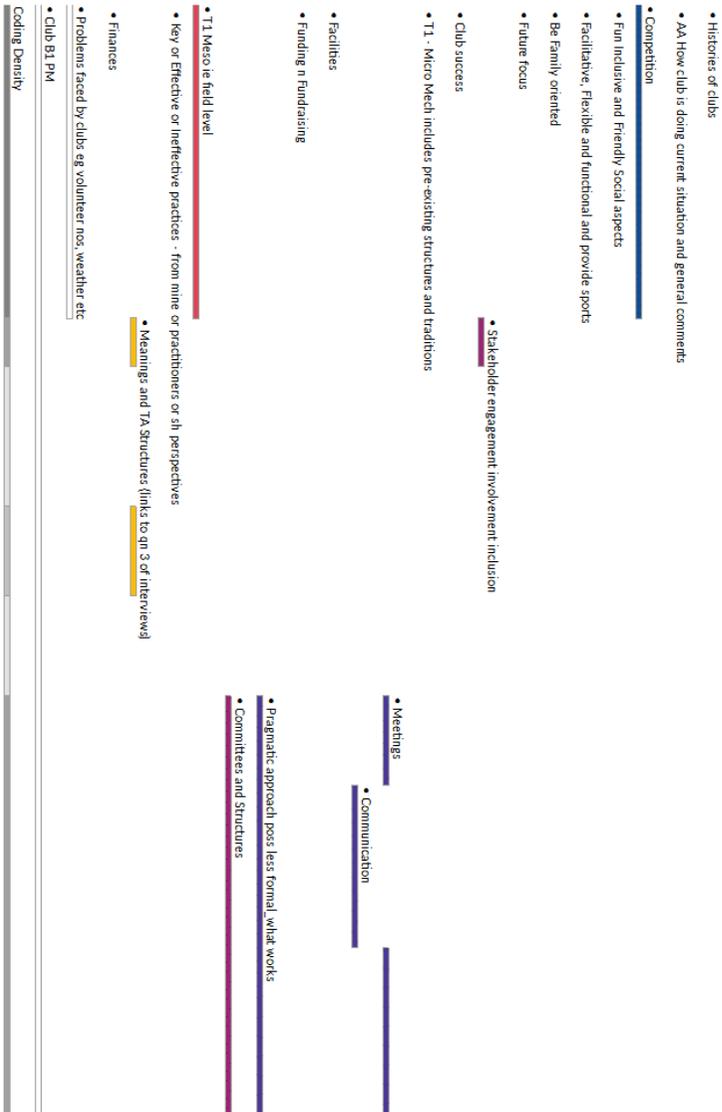
It's a job to me Of keeping the club going maintaining its standard maintaining its profile, Maintaining its discipline that's another thing would pretty hot on discipline at our club, All you can hope then is that your reputation within cricket is solid.

4. CG: How is the club governed? What do you see as being the key governance activities or practices of this club?

B1 (CLUB2): The Admin group is President chairman treasurer subscriptions secretary but we don't have a set, we meet as and when priorities are identified and would justify pulling that group together.

I mean technology of course, a lot of your work can be done through email of course. In the early stages you know I was a bit averse to letting things run on email with the committee, I've had some experience where things become a mess, things get fabricated, the topic, but nonetheless now we don't have as many committee meetings as we used to do Because I'd rather see jobs identified and things getting on with the job Than spending an endless time talking about them Because then you get repetition.

What we have now is that we have the northern league premier meetings and then we have our committee meetings after that Which are about 5 a year I mean we used to meet once a month but Initially literally the can be a waste of time Because all you're creating is an administrative burden quite frankly And not reaching sufficient conclusions on topics That justify that degree of attendance Then of course people drop off and you know don't attend so I'd rather make it punchy and have them on the back of that so probably about 5 or 6 time a year.



CG So you do quite a bit by email?

B1 (CLUB2): Yes, but its always a democratic vote, anything that's a formal proposal is voted on, for example when the league restructuring was going ahead and we were asked to join the Lancashire league and there were some attractions because where we are at the southern end of the Northern league, geographically there were some advantages, so we discussed it in committee and voted in favour of making an application to join the Lancashire League. We did actually make an application but then the LCB when they made it clear that the Lancashire League would be borderline for any support from them, then ... and as a consequence of the LCB doing that we withdrew our application. The point I'm making is that that wasn't done by one or two that was done by the committee So that's a pleasurable aspect of it. So you go to the league meeting people ask you they ask you what are you going to do about and you say well I'm going to take it back to committee we will discuss it, we will take a vote on it, a democratic vote and I will report back to you in due course on what that vote is. It makes the whole job a lot easier.

We also have AGMs and EGMs although I cannot remember holding an EGM for a long, long time.

The AGM is held in March, it has to be held, has to be held prior to the start of the season. Because we move the financial year back to back to April to March.

CG: Why?

B1 (CLUB2): Well the request came from the treasurer really not really not really my domain but it didn't make an awful lot of difference to me but we got the request and we moved it back. We've not had any EGM but would not put that label on it but we've not had sufficient of a crisis I mean we've had ups and downs but we've not had not been anything that would warrant calling an egm

5. CG: With regard to the Committee:

a) What do you see as being the committee's key tasks and roles?

Eg planning/ strategy, finances/growth, reviewing performance, identifying/ managing risk, stakeholder practices, succession planning (structure and operation could be acquired from the constitution and observations)?

B1 (CLUB2): Well there's a planning and strategy element where we are looking at a four or five year plan to improve the ground, we have already started with drainage, and looking to improve the square.

We are also heavily involved in reviewing and monitoring our finances. But we also review performance. There is a review aspect process. we review everythign really. I mean it's split into groups its not done rigidly but there's a cricket group: the welfare and club development you might have heard mentioned, and a fundrasing group, they are labelled, but its not rigid, its not like those people do that and do not do anything else.

CG: Anything in terms of succession planning?

Coding Density

• Club B1 PM

• Problems faced by clubs eg volunteer nos, weather etc

• Pragmatic approach poss less formal_what works

• Committees and Structures

• T1 Mero ie field level

• Communication

• T1 - Micro Mech includes pre-existing structures and traditions

• Meetings

• Club success

• Stakeholder engagement involvement inclusion

• Be Family oriented

• Facilitative, Flexible and functional and provide sports

• Fun Inclusive and Friendly Social aspects

• Competition

• AA How club is doing current situation and general comments

• Histories of clubs

• Future focus

• Facilities

• Funding n Fundraising

• Meanings and TA Structures links to an 3 of inte

• Key or Effective or Ineffective pr

• Finances

B1 (CLUB2): Well, there hasn't been any really. The reason I came into post was because there hadn't been any succession planning really. Not because there wasn't a will to do it, but there was no one to step forward, so certainly mindful of it, I mean Wayne has come in as vice chairman in the last twelve months, and he took over from David Naden, although Wayne calls it been bushwhacked really. It's something I try to keep an eye on all the time, I mean none of us at the top end are getting any younger and you're always trying to get, to identify potential people to take over.

5b) CG: How does it try to achieve this? What does it actually do ie what activities/ practices does it carry out?

Possible prompts:

- Eg regular meetings? How carried out? Agendas? Chaired? (Can observe some of this)
- **In terms of actual committee meetings, what is the focus of these?** (planning and strategy, policies and procedures, monitoring and control, innovation/growth, finances, facilities, managing risk, compliance, external collaborations, etc)
- How does the committee try to ensure it operates with the club's best interests and those of members, rather than those of individuals/ the committee? How does it address potential conflicts of interest (not asked of first three interviewees).
- How does the committee report to, communicate and consult with, and involve stakeholders? (What communication practices are adopted? AGMs/EGMs? Reports?)
- Which fundraising activities/practices work well? External sources? Internal activities?
- Does the committee review its policies and the constitution?
- Does the committee review the performance of the organisation and itself? How?

B1 (CLUB2):

Well there's a standard agenda with some headings that I put out but there's a rider on the Email that goes out that says if there's anything that you wish to discuss Or if there's anything you wish to flag up before then do so but if not then feel free to bring it to the table. The agenda is we do the cricket group first of all; cricket matters first of all and that includes senior and then we have the welfare and the junior cricket and club development as well in that, then club management as I call it Finance the ground and any financial matters related to that With the ground development Plus the treasurer's report and Alex and Jimmy put that together Each time we meet Should I give an up-to-date report and then there's the fundraising Then anything else comes under AoB.

CG: Best interests?

B1 (CLUB2):- There's only one word I can use for it democratically I mean it's not one person's view That overrides it everything is democratically undertaken. I mean with the AGM every member is entitled to have their say, so the Committee is well versed in the knowledge that there will be a democratic vote on significant topics and that's bedrock really, but that's how it works and how it has worked throughout my tenure, and how it will work. I mean you might get one or two new members who might try, but they soon find out that's how it works.

CG: How does the club try to address potential conflicts of interest?

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B1 (CLUB2): Well, as per previously we do things by a vote and if we needed to we would consult the membership.

CG: So how do you Communicate with/ Consult/Report to Members and Stakeholders?

B1 (CLUB2): Well with modern technology there's information that goes out by email but also you've got Twitter There's no nonsense on it thankfully now it's there As a way of providing information would people pick up on that And within the committee as a newsletter that goes out The treasurer writes that that's on the website So that's another method Plus for the first team games we have a good established program with information that covers all that's going on within the club in that along with the cricket. The newsletter (roughly once every two months) plus the scorer also writes a regular piece too.

We used to write letters but with the advent of email On their membership resubmission form each year we ask them to include their email Some more and more we are going down the email line obviously To pass on information plus as good coverage in the local newspaper There's a good connection to the Chorley Guardian They do reasonable coverage in that.

CG: Which fundraising practices have worked well for you as a club?

B1 (CLUB2): Well as I said the key one is the Beer Festival In terms of amounts of income but for many years for many years we have run the pound a week Club So for a direct debit of £1 a week that's been running for about 20 years that brings in some regular income we've tried to encourage further participation but it hasn't increased significantly but it's there Plus we have a 100 Club running all the time. Incorporated with the subs information that goes out there's an opportunity to join the 100 Club As you can pay £12 above his subs membership fee and each month as a draw of £40 and periodically there's a £100 drawn in December and that does very well. It's now got well over a hundred members now. We also do a Christmas raffle and make an evening of it and that's a good fundraiser, we also run a race night as well as have occasional bands on. We have live music and we're going to increase that because that's been very successful.

6. CG: a) Which of these practices do you think the club finds particularly effective – which do you think have helped to enhance its performance/ achievement of ambitions/goals? Why? Any others?

B1 (CLUB2): I think it's an amalgamation of them all I mean to identify one specific thing he's difficult but overall i'm not so sure really but governance covers the overall running, the capable, honest running of the club.

CG: In terms of ensuring the honest running of the club?

B1 (CLUB2): Well we have all the usual financial controls like two signatures on outgoings, checking our budgets, we have two people working on that.

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7. CG: Have there been any changes in terms of these governance activities? Any new practices in recent years or changes? (If yes, what, why and the outcomes?)
Which have/ haven't worked and why?

B1 (CLUB2): Well I probably have to harp back to getting rid of the brewery loan which was absolutely key, I mean David used to call it the Sword of Damocles hanging over the club. That was paramount and made a hell of a difference and has it has turned out. Thwaites having been taken over by marstons and thankfully we have the same rep. The set-up for the change of the bar the 20 pumps was done through him so that has been key. So after we paid it off Marston's have been very good to work with. We have a sponsorship package as part of their support for us. So we can opt for a further reduction in price purchasing or we can opt for a lump sum each year which we do we take a sponsorship deal from them along with a more attractive purchasing price Having rid ourselves of The Loan, we paid it off, yep.

8. CG: What do you think has influenced the development of these practices ie where derived from/sources? Eg external policies, workplace practices, traditions within the organisation?

B1 (CLUB2): Much of it is part of the tradition of cricket clubs to have a chairman and it's key to the running of any organisation in my view provided it's not autocratic, which hopefully it's not, that's my view others may not agree.

The club is over one hundred years old and we did update the rules (the constitution) a few years ago but we haven't really looked at them since.

Part C: Additional questions

In reference to your personal practices and your particular role/post:

9. CG: What practices have you adopted that work for you, how effective are these? How did you arrive at this/these practices? Influences from? What do you need to help you in your role?

B1 (CLUB2): Well if you're going to be a chairman of something you have to be reasonably assertive for a start and you have to be, as chairman, prepared to put his finger in the dyke and Without blowing my own trumpet it's what you have to do and it's what I did professionally perhaps with diminishing skill Some Might Say (laughs), but also availability is the other key, I mean my wife goes spare at times, but she's very supportive, But going back again to my job Although it's a lot of years ago now but the necessity to be always available to be always available meant, the biggest facet was if there was a problem you Were able to take control of it and nip it in the bud so I've always maintain that That stance throughout this job. It comes at a price because sometimes you can get some dross as well Because you chosen to go down that path but availability is a key. And also maintaining communication, David and I used to share stuff everyday, less so with Wayne now because he's very busy but It's about working together along with the committee but if you have a problem if there's a significant problem and it's only right and proper that the people that are in the

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posts should have a say in it And ownership of it because ownership of the problem is key as well as far as I'm concerned.

10. CG: For you, what makes a sustainable and successful club? How have the (governance) practices of yourself and the committee contributed (if at all)?

B1 (CLUB2): Well it's about looking after your members, keeping them informed.

How do you look after your members? Well it's another broad Church I mean we've talked about newsletters, we've talked about keeping them informed, I mean matchdays, we get as many watching second team, there's more watch our second team than some clubs first teams, but many who come down like to see officials about, to speak to them, to chat to them, they like to see people. For a lot of these people it's a social occasion and every year we get people we get people who come in, they travel quite a distance two or three times a year to come and see us at the match and it's like if you're a face (ie on the committee), it's like a landlord in a pub if a landlord that's never there you know, it doesn't look good, but if the landlord is there talking to people. (so referring again to be accessible, available, for people to see, speak to, etc)

Then it's the other things we've talked about, about keeping them informed about what's going on and we've talked about technology, the social media has helped a lot in that regard and the lads run the Twitter and run it very well, it's always full of information and it's always up to date, you go on some of them and they're not been touched, they have a mad dash then it disappears.

CG: Does the club do anything to look after its volunteers?

B1 (CLUB2): Not specifically, it's not like we have a club support day, we don't pay people, we look after them but we have many people on a casual basis, some come to the ground to pick litter up of their own volition, but the only way you can thank them is to do it personally and to be available until let people know they are appreciated. I mean we are looking at some sort of remuneration on the coaching side but we've talked about it but we've not got any further than that it's an area that has been considered but then you no volunteers or volunteers if you're doing it for the club then that's what you do it for if you're doing it just the money then you're not a volunteer. But the sub secretary does have carte blanche for taking that into account along with Alex the junior chairman.

11. CG: Sport England Governance code – knowledge of?

Notes B1 (CLUB2): No.

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- CG: Is there anything you would like to add (or elaborate upon) in relation to governance, the club, your practices or those of the club? Is there an anecdote or story that epitomises the club, its particular attraction or uniqueness?

Notes

B1 (CLUB2): We are very proud of the club. In an ideal world we would like to do all the terrace in all the sitting in front of the Club House That would be a major project for the future but would need additional funding significantly But the lads are on with creating a junior strip and have secured some significant funding to make a start on that. In house have also run some activities and brought in some monies through that but traditionally it's an attractive ground in its own right.

But its quite remarkable how many people from the area have been down to a social function and said to me, if I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times, I never knew there was a cricket ground here, it's like a little oasis, its a super spot to watch cricket, but I do have to say we've never been the best of teams but the lads we've had in the main Been local lads, lads that have grown up together, club products, and they have stuck together, There are plenty of deficiencies in our team but as a group they are stuck together And I admire that because in my time on the field we have never been particularly successful Other than the T20 a few weeks ago that's the first trophy that we have won in some time since the Horridge days, and that's not in my time, but that's another key element and borders on to what we are talking about.

There Should be a proper sensible debate ECB in my view on whether you want this conformity to a set structure cricket is a local recreational activity, or there's a full obsession with a pyramid structure, I'm not against promotion and relegation, and whether you want leagues that are free for people to pay whoever you wish. I don't have set views one way or the other, bu there's not sufficient debate on it, and people are still in C, hiding behind the notion that this is an amateur game played by amateurs when everybody in C, in league cricket know this is not true so transparency, when we're talking about individual clubs transparency then start with the leagues first of all, start with the ECB, sort that National Knockout out with proper rules, in terms of the financial side of it, we played that team the other year from Rochdale.... a one man band who were just a professional cricket team, funded by one person,.... it's still there, if they are going to do a real proper overview of Cricket, then start with that and equally the amount of stuff that comes out of the ECB,we know how it works in big organisations, if you put a think tank together they're not Going to put nothing out that's the very jaundiced cynical view And it cascades down what in my view it is doing, and back at base, And this is my ultimate criticism is that it has eroded the volunteer base.

I think it needs a higher authority to really grasp it constructively we know that cricket in this country is geared to the notion of finding players for England but when you get down to grassroots level the The whole thing becomes blurred people are being paid backhanders and HMRC came and looked at us once suddenly they do a little, a little litmus test, they have a little blitz on cricket clubs about the same time, They had the temerity to put out in the Press I wanted list of the 12 people most wanted for tax evasion and they couldn't catch the bastards and at the same time the'yre looking at c clubs, well turn it on its head, The ECB should be looking at cricket clubs and how they are run and how they are financed I'm not saying for senior administrators it will be an easy task but the basic philosophy Needs addressing what are we Seeking to do here are we really

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thinking That by a set of Rules, a degree of support and that is all it is When you look at what the ECB financially supports really, these prizewinning things and all that or do you want people to be recreationally really enjoying their cricket, make your decisions but do undertake some proper, monumental research.

I think the ECB survey, its an insult to people's intelligence, when the'yre asking you....

Thank you for your time, patience and input.

The aim is to provide some feedback and/or a transcription of the recording.

Would this be helpful?