Strategy and Strategising

"An examination of sport clubs privatisation strategy in Saudi Arabia"

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in Sport Management and Economy

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Allah "God" almighty then my family and friends for their guidance and blessing on all aspects of life, including this work, which could have not been accomplished without Allah, then anyone have helped and supported me to complete this work.

ABSTRACT

For over a decade, the Saudi government has been actively promoting a privatisation strategy for Saudi sport clubs as part of ongoing wider policies aimed at stimulating the national economy through the privatisation of various economic sectors. Other 'declared' underlying objectives of the privatisation plan include reducing direct government spending, diversifying sources of income and increasing efficiency through greater involvement of the private sector. However, despite multi-millions of investments and years of political rhetoric, the progress made to-date has been very limited.

This study adopts a theoretical framework based on the three key domains of strategising (i.e. the 3Ps) (e.g. Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Strategising differs from conventional strategy in that it regards strategy work as a pattern in a stream of goal-directed activity (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006). The deployment of the strategy-as-practice research agenda is recent and limited in sport management research, and empirical type of studies are noticeably scant. Hence, this study addresses part of this existing gap. On a practical level, the study puts forward policy recommendations towards enhanced understanding of strategising dynamics within sport organisations.

Through holistic, embedded multiple-case study research design, comprising a sample of eighteen case studies, this study addresses the relationship between strategy and strategising through all phases of the strategy journey. In particular, the study aims to reveal how strategising practices are manifested in the strategising work around the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs and evaluate the various strategising actors' roles at macro, meso and micro levels.

The main findings are reported along two broad levels, firstly in terms of the three domains of strategising, and secondly with regards to the key patterns of strategising. Consistent with the predictions of theoretical framework, overall findings provide strong evidence for the key role played by the 3Ps and their strong interconnectedness within the overall dynamics of the strategising activity system. The second level of findings documents the dominance of the procedural type of strategising, which is mainly enacted through the widespread use of long-established formal administrative practices that came to typify centralised policymaking in Saudi Arabia. These findings are not surprising and are entirely consistent with existing evidence (for example, Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whittington, 2003) when considering the high levels of 'embeddedness' and 'persistence' of this type of strategising within the wider functioning and organisational culture of these entities. Hence, various facets of this prevailing situation could be seen as a the major obstacle in the face of any attempt to successfully introduce new ways of organising and strategising within the Saudi sport sector in general, and the sport club privatisation policy in particular.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, strategy and strategising, sport, privatisation policy, practitioners, practices, praxis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

$: The United States Dollar is the official currency of the United States
5YNDP: The Five Years National Development Plans
AC.: AL Arouba Sports Club
AMF: The Arab Monetary Fund
ARAMCO: Arabian-American Oil Company, officially the Saudi Arabian Oil Company
BSR: Basic System of Rules in Saudi Arabia
CDSI: The Central Department of Statistics and Information
CO.: The General Presidency for Youth Welfare office in Riyadh (Centre)
CSS: The Council of Senior Scholars (the highest religious body in Saudi Arabia for advises the king and society on religious matters.
EC. : Al-Ettifaq Sports Club
EC. : The Supreme Economic Council
EO. : The General Presidency for Youth Welfare office in Dammam (East)
FF.: Saudi Football Federation
GDP: The Gross domestic product
GNI: The Gross domestic income
GNP: The Gross national product
GP. : The General Presidency for Youth Welfare (Ministry of Youth and Sport)
GPYW: The General Presidency for Youth Welfare (Ministry of Youth and Sport)
HC. : AL Hailal Sports Club
IC.: AL Ittihad Sports Club
IMF: The International Monetary Fund "IMF Annual Report"
KF. : Karate Federation
MEP: The Ministry of Economic and Planning
MP. : Ministry of Economy and Planning
NDP: The National Development Plans
NO. : The General Presidency for Youth Welfare office in Al-Jouf (North)
NSF: National Sports Federations
OC.: Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee
SAFF: Saudi Arabia Football Federation
SAKF: Saudi Arabia Karate Federation
SAOC: The Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee
SAR: Saudi Arabia Riyal is the official currency of Saudi Arabia
SATF: Saudi Arabia Tennis Federation
SAVF: Saudi Arabia Volleyball Federation
SDR: Special drawing rights
SEC: The Supreme Economic Council
SO. : The General Presidency for Youth Welfare office in Jazan (South)
TC. : AL Tohami Sports Club
TF. : Tennis Federation
VF. : Volleyball Federation
WCY: World Currency Yearbook
WKF: World Karate Federation
WO. : The General Presidency for Youth Welfare office in Jeddah (West)

GLOSSARY

ALLAH: God "There is *no god except Allah* and Muhammad is a messenger of Allah"

AL-TAFSIR: Interpretation of Quran texts

AYAT: Quran verses

FAQIH: Is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic sciences

HAJJ: Pilgrimage

IMAM: Is an Islamic leadership position in Muslim community or/and Islamic sciences.

IMAN: Faith

MAJLIS: A place of gathering people for a common purpose

PBUH: Peace be upon him

Rizk: Basic sustenance

SAUDIS: Saudi citizens

SHARI'A: Islam law

SHURA'A: Consultation

SUNNAH: Sayings and actions of the Muslim prophet

SURAT: Chapter of the holy Quran

TAWHID: Monotheism

ULAMA: The Muslim scholars in several fields of Islamic studies who are polymaths engaged Quranic and Hadith sciences.

WASTAH: Personal recommendation or reference

ZAKAT: Contribution to the poor based on accumulated wealth

FIRST PART - RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

This research addresses major elements of the "Saudi government strategy in the sport sector". As the title suggests, the main unit of analysis is the privatisation programmes of Saudi sport clubs. Hence, a key objective is to conduct a comprehensive analysis and offer a critical evaluation of Saudi government longstanding efforts to implement this privatisation programme.

The roots of the sport club privatisation programme can be traced back to the early 1990s. In 1993, the Saudi government commissioned and sponsored a development project specifically for the sports sector entitled the 'professional sports project' (SAOC, 2009), with the aim of professionalising the sector, by developing the professional performance of sport athletes on the one hand, and professionalising the general conditions of work and employment within sport organisations on the other. The professional sports project enjoyed some relative success particularly with the regards to professionalising various aspects of the sport athletes' work, such as players' contracts, but the project failed to bring any tangible results with regards to its wider objectives to professionalise the activities and operations of sport organisations as was originally intended. Hence, after nine years of implementation efforts (i.e. around 2003), the professional sports project was assimilated into the sport club privatisation policy which came about as a key component within the wider five-year national development plans in Saudi Arabia. The national development plans were first introduced through the work of the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) and represent a key indicator of the government's future vision and strategic direction for the whole of the Saudi economy. In terms of implementation, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare (GPYW) (equivalent to the Ministry of Youth and Sport) is a key government body, at the macro level, with significant responsibility for the implementation of the sport club privatisation strategy.

However, after more than a decade of implementation efforts, multi-millions of investments and years of political rhetoric, the progress made to-date has been very limited. The results have been nothing but poor, with most of the original policy objectives not yet delivered or adequately met. Naturally, the privatisation project of Saudi sport clubs still nowadays faces considerable criticism from within and outside sport circles. Hence, the idea behind the proposed study came about seeing the

policymakers' sincere intentions to undergo a kind of revolution, albeit a gradual one, in the sport sector to develop and professionalise it and bring it to the ranks of its regional and international counterparts. Thus, one of the many aims of the proposed research (further elaborated upon in Sections 1.2 through 1.4) is to enlighten the debate by shedding light, through a scientific and methodological approach, on what has been achieved so far with regards to the privatisation policy and the important milestones in the journey up to this point. Moreover, the study has the promise to generate key lessons for future direction by making original recommendations for policymakers towards a more informed understanding of not only what constitutes organisational daily life within sport organisations, but also what it would take to make successful an ambitious undertaking the size of the sport club privatisation project. To our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive study of the sport management practices in Saudi Arabia as manifested through the sport club privatisation project. The novelty of the study also stems from its underlying scientific approach to the study of a subject that is often infested with subjective appraisals and fanciful political rhetoric.

After this brief general introduction, the rest of this introductory chapter is organised as follows. Section 1.2 discusses the research background, rationale and motivation behind the proposed study. Section 1.3 then preset the key research aims, objectives, and research questions including primary and secondary questions. Section 1.4 follows by highlighting key areas of contribution of the research hence cementing the positioning and importance of the study. The final subsection (1.5) summarises the overall structure of the rest of the thesis.

1.2 Study background, motivation and rationale

In conventional first-generation management research, strategy had long been perceived to be an exclusively top management activity related to 'rational' strategic planning (Hall, 2003; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Strategy has also been considered as a predominantly macro-level phenomenon, largely detached activity by top management within the organisation, as a kind of a purely analytical tool without great influence from either the internal dynamics of the organisation, nor the wider external context. The subsequent introduction of various other alternative approaches to researching strategy, such as notably process research[1], has greatly improved our understanding of this powerful management concept. These alternative approaches have also helped researchers

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[1] Processual research regards strategy formation as a situated collective understanding of the organisation, stemming from interacting individuals (social interaction) within a given social context.

and practitioners recognise various previously little understood aspects of the inherent complexity of strategy. As Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington (2001) said about the contribution of processual research in strategy; "[it helped to] open up the black box of the firm, and to humanise the field of strategic management" (Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington, 2001, p. 12). However, and while recognising the benefits brought by such advances in strategy research, there still remained some notable shortcomings, such as the separation of process from outcome and the over focus on the role of the macro level. Hence, the strategising (or strategy-as-practice) research agenda came about as an alternative and fruitful extension of these approaches (Johnson., Melin, & Whittington, 2003).

According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), strategy-as-practice is not the first research agenda to attempt to depart from the assumptions and longstanding dominance of the economics-based approach over strategy research. Moreover, the problem with conventional strategy is not just that it is formal or deliberate, but that it can be too analytical and too detached (see, for example, Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Starbuck (2006) argues that organisational strategy as practiced may indeed differ from organisational strategy as theorised, which complicates the process of matching leadership to strategy. This can happen when daily decisions do not match written organisational strategy.

Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl (2007) suggests that from a strategy-as-practice perspective, "strategy is conceptualised as a situated, socially accomplished activity, while strategising comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity" (p.7-8). Thus, the concept of strategising regards strategy as a pattern in a stream of goal-directed activity over time, consisting of various goal-directed activities taking place in and outside of the organisation.

Accordingly, the main theoretical framework adopted in this research is chiefly inspired and built around the three key domains of strategising (the 3Ps), as first proposed by Whittington (2006). Whittington identified three broad and closely interrelated domains of the strategising research agenda (called the domains of activity system dynamics), namely practitioners, practices and praxis. The concept of practitioners can be thought of as the actors or agents who actually do the work of strategy formulation; practices as the tools through which strategising is carried out; and praxis as the flow of strategising activity(ies) and which may occur at more than one level of praxis. The 3Ps are closely interconnected whereby praxis forms practitioners and successful practices are in turn

carried out by influential practitioners, all in the context of intra-organisational praxis being marked by extra-organisational practices (Whittington, 2006). Strategising therefore occurs at the nexus between these three key domains. Hence, instead of focusing on just one aspect of the overall activity dynamics system, a common approach by many previous studies in the field, taking into account all of the 3Ps, as recommended by the likes of Whittington and Jarzabkowski, provides a more holistic and more comprehensive framework through which to study any given unit of analysis.

The proposed study aims to investigate the relationship between strategy and strategising as two distinctive sides of the policy process concerned with all phases of policy and strategy making and implementation. The main unit of analysis in this study is the sport clubs privatisation policy/ strategy, which came about as part of wider national economic development plans in Saudi Arabia.

In particular, the study aims to understand and evaluate how strategising practices are manifested in the strategising work around the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs, as well as the various strategising actors' roles at macro, meso and micro levels in shaping and implementing the process and outcomes of this privatisation strategy.

The proposed study makes a significant contribution in its original objective by applying a novel and relatively new perspective in strategy research, i.e. strategising or strategy-as-practice, in the field of sport management. Additionally, Saudi Arabia offers a potentially fascinating case for assessing the aforementioned issues. Houlihan (1997) believes that there exists an ever-expanding body of literature on the subject within developed countries, while other countries have very little research on the nature and scope of management practices, and on the profession of management, planning and strategising in sport and leisure sectors. Houlihan argues that drawing on various studies and body of knowledge about this subject from different viewpoints, contexts and nations can help countries learn from other political systems facing similar issues.

In the last few years, the Saudi government has taken major initiatives, mainly through the five-year national development plans, to streamline various economic sectors including the sport sector. The sport club privatisation programme represents the pinnacle of such efforts. These development efforts in sports go back to the early 1990s when the GPYW implemented the Sports Professional Project in sports clubs. The main aim of this project was to develop the performance of professional players and all staff. Nine years later (in 2002), the Supreme Economic Council had the consent of the Ministers' Council to develop a list of public sector and government facilities to be targeted in the privatisation project. The Saudi government spent considerable sums of money on

initiating and implementing these various plans for the sports sector, particularly in its seventh and eighth development plans (period 2000-2010).[2] It is also worth pointing out that such spending on the sport sector is constantly accompanied by some major changes in the regulatory and legal environments governing the sector. However, despite multi-million investments and constant political and media rhetoric regarding the privatisation programme, the progress made to-date has been very limited, by the own admission of key policymakers and various other policy/ strategy actors at all decision-making and implementation levels.

At the time of writing the thesis, all sport clubs in Saudi Arabia, including the sample case clubs in this research, are still considered part of the public sector. This is due to the fact that these clubs are still largely funded (through subsidies and grants) and controlled (either directly or indirectly) by the state - usually via the GPYW - and are also predominantly accountable to the government authorities.[3] Additionally, most Saudi sport clubs do share some of the features of non-profit organisations (NPOs) due to the fact that shareholders and the clubs donors do not typically expect and do not take out any excess cash flows or profits made by these clubs.

NPOs have a distinctive nature and a far more complex setting compared to for-profit organisations (see, for example, Helmig, Jegers, & Lapsley, 2004; Houlihan, 1997). Hence, the proposed research questions (see next subsection) may hold even greater significance given the predominantly non-profit and/or public sector study context, comprising predominantly social organisations that work towards improving the society's overall welfare. Without strong supervision to achieve the strategic outcomes of an organisational strategy, managers of such organisations may fail to guide their departments according to the strategy of the organisation that employs them (Houlihan, 1997).

This, combined with the increased exposure of the public sector to greater competition and external market mechanisms, as is the case in Saudi Arabia, poses pertinent and unique issues relevant to the study of any phenomenon concerning sport clubs. In Saudi Arabia, the government's privatisation initiative was largely dictated by external market factors in the form of the financial difficulties facing the clubs and the increased focus on

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[2] Exact figures and amounts numbers spent cannot be precisely provided due to the lack of disclosure of such numbers (e.g. absence of annual financial reports).

[3] It is worth noting that in Saudi Arabia, sport clubs, and whilst considered as public sector organisations, they however differ from other 'conventional' public-sector organisations (such as the local authorities) in that they enjoy (are given) far greater levels of autonomy compared to other public-sector organisations.

commercial exploitation coupled with strong desire to increase the involvement of private business within the sports sector.

As a Ministry of Planning report stated:

> *"Civil society institutions have been assuming an increasingly important role in providing youth activities and programmes, with the help of GPYW. These institutions include the Saudi Olympic Committee, 24 sports federations, and 153 private sports clubs that undertake all kinds of sports, social, cultural and scientific activities in all parts of the Kingdom"*

(Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2006, p. 631)

On the same page, the report adds: "Club privatisations are expected to lead to the enhancement of the role of the private sector. Major clubs are due to be privatised, as an initial stage, with subsidies to clubs being gradually phased out".

Saudi Arabian planning advocates a future vision to "…encourage participation of the private sector in youth activities and privatising sports clubs to make them self-financing and reduce their dependence on government subsidies" (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2006, p. 631).

This privatisation strategy also aims to diversify the national economy through the investment of funds allocated to sport clubs in promoting wider economic growth through investment of mutual trade interests between clubs and private companies.

In terms of the theoretical contextualisation of the proposed research, and as briefly explained above (see also the rest of the thesis and Chapters 3 and 4 in particular), the proposed research follows some specific choices regarding the adopted main theoretical framework and overall study approach. A number of other alternative approaches[4] could have been followed, particularly a policy-based one such as policy implementation. A brief review of the development in policy implementation research highlighted that this field of policy research may be considered as an antithesis to the strategising research agenda. This can be attributed to the fact that research methods within policy implementation research tend to overly focus on process, whereas strategising is more concerned with a number of factors taking place between the development of the plan and its implementation across different strategy praxes. However, given the context of the study it was deemed that the strategising or strategy-as-practice approach is the most appropriate research paradigm upon which to develop the key premise of the original

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[4] In addition to policy-making and implementation, and to state just a few, other possible alternative approaches include policy analysis, policy process, the management of change, and various other sociology or politics based approaches.

research questions. The fundamental differences between the strategising research agenda and policy implementation analysis, as well as a number of other strategic management schools for that matter, is that strategising is about the daily production and reproduction of strategic actions and strategic practices that take place at multi levels within the organisation in different social, cultural and economic contexts, whereas most of the other alternative approaches tend to focus on explaining strategic change and firm performance at the macro level of organisation (see, for example, Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

1.3 Research aims and objectives and questions

The main subject of this study is the privatisation policy of Saudi sport clubs.[5] The study subject is analysed within the basic context and theoretical framework of strategy and strategising from the viewpoint of various strategising actors at different levels of organisational praxes.

Therefore this study, and through an holistic, embedded multiple-case study research design (see, for example, Yin 2003, 2009), primarily aims to address the relationship between strategy and strategising as two distinctive sides of the policy process concerned with all phases of policy and strategy making and implementation. In particular, the study aims to understand how strategising practices are manifested in the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs. A related research objective is to understand and evaluate the various strategising actors' roles at macro, meso and micro levels in shaping and implementing the sport club privatisation strategy, including how key aspects of strategising work are actually manifested in the daily work of various organisational actors at different strategising praxes.

These stated primary research aims and objectives are employed as the basis upon which an overall evaluation of the strategising activity system dynamics (see Chapter 3) in the context of the study is ultimately generated. This will allow the researcher to identify the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising occurring in the context of the main unit of analysis in this study, i.e. the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs. Moreover, the proposed research framework will allow the researcher to provide an overall critical evaluation of the Saudi sport club privatisation policy development, process, as well as progress to-date, with a view to adding to existing understanding of the topic, as well as learning valuable lessons and generating useful policy recommendations.

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[5] The main subject of the study can also alternatively be thought of as the 'basic unit of analysis.'

To sum up and put it more succinctly, the primary basic research questions of the proposed study are twofold:

1. Firstly, how patterns, types and categories of strategising are manifested in the daily strategising work of various strategising actors at different levels of strategising praxis?

2. Secondly, what is the precise relationship between strategy and strategising in the context of the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia? In other words, what are the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising as applicable to the sport club privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia?

Additionally, the following research sub- (or secondary) questions will naturally follow and will be addressed in order to enrich and widen the overall scope of the study:

- *What has been the progress to-date of the Saudi government's development policies for the sports sector in general, and in relation to the sport club privatisation programme in particular?*

- *How, in practice, has the privatisation policy been translated into implementation strategies to achieve the policymakers' goals and key objectives?*

- *How do various organisational strategising actors at macro, meso and micro levels interpret and implement the privatisation strategy, and what is their role in shaping and implementing the strategy?*

- *What is the overall assessment of the progress to-date of the of privatisation strategy implementation as part of the wider national development plans?*

1.4 Importance of the study

As already stated, strategising as a research agenda is a relatively new perspective in management research in general and strategy research in particular. On a purely theoretical level, the main premise of the strategising research agenda is towards better understanding of how organisational strategy is formulated through a focus on daily processes, interactions and practices across different organisational levels (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington 2006). The strategising approach can therefore contribute towards a better understanding of how daily behaviour within the organisation can be responsible for creating meaningful and purposeful strategic choices and consequences. In particular, the proposed research investigates various strategising actors' daily strategic activities and practices at different strategising levels and their role in shaping and implementing the government's privatisation strategy in sport. Thus, a key contribution of the strategising perspective is that it shifts the focus

towards organisational processes, practices and inter-individual interactions, and the related strategic outcomes (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003).

However, in spite of recent increased interest, a comprehensive review of the theory and application of strategising studies within management research (see Chapter 3 in particular) confirmed that the active deployment of the strategy-as-practice research agenda is very recent and rather limited in the field of sport management in particular. There is limited literature that examines the manifestation of strategising practices, especially in the sport sector and which recognises a variety of issues about practitioners, practices and praxis (Johnson & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, Molloy, Mayer & Smith, 2006). Moreover, there is specifically a notable lack of empirical type of research in this area. Hence, on a theoretical level, it is envisaged that this study will at least make a modest contribution towards addressing some of this existing gap. Additionally, and in the case of Saudi Arabia in particular, as well as many other regional and emerging economies, there is very scant literature about the precise dynamics or factors that shape the strategy actors' daily activities and practices in the field of sport management. Hence, the proposed study will contribute towards alleviating some of these gaps and concerns, as well as enriching and adding to the existing body of knowledge in this area. Ultimately, the theoretical framework used in this study can be further expanded and applied to countries and economies that share similar characteristics to the Saudi system, such as other Arab countries.

In addition to the above-mentioned theoretical aspects, the proposed research also has the potential for further contribution in terms of methodological and practical avenues.

Researching strategising entails the empirical investigation of everyday processes, practices and activities, making the strategising research agenda a predominantly empirically-driven domain of research. Moreover, the work of everyday strategy is 'distributed' in nature and is not only confined to top management (Jarzabkowski, 2005). It is, instead, a multi-level phenomenon involving various organisational actors at various levels of strategising praxes (micro, meso, and macro). Hence, to enable a theoretically-sound application of the proposed research, this study, and based predominantly on the seminal works of Yin (for example, 2003, 2009), adopts a 'modified' and 'augmented' case study design, thereby making original contribution on a methodological level. The adopted research deign is holistic in nature and combines embedded, multiple-case study design (see, for example, Yin 2003, 2009), comprising a total study sample of 18 organisations, or strategising actors (see Chapter 4). Hence, on a methodological level, this study follows a research strategy that is practically oriented and empirically focused

with a solid theoretical foundation. Moreover, the adopted research design is holistic thereby covering all the key stages in the strategising journey and encompassing all of the relevant actors and stakeholders involved. These precise methodological choices and the augmented holistic, embedded multiple-case design within is one major aspect of original contribution of the proposed study.

Furthermore, and on a more practical level, one of the several potential contributions of the proposed study is to come up with original recommendations for practitioners, policy-makers and academics alike towards a better understanding of what constitutes organisational daily life within sport organisations. Not only that, but the research findings reported here have the potential to provide the platform for some useful insights and lessons for policymakers to devise more effective future policies for the sports sector, as well as improve key management and governance aspects within the field.

1.5 Organisation of the study

The thesis consists of four main parts comprising a total of nine chapters (see also Figure 1-1). The first part offers a general background to the study (Chapter 1), as well as a comprehensive review of the relevant theoretical context (Chapters 2 and 3). The introductory background includes discussion of research motivation and rationale, primary and secondary research questions, and key research aims and objectives. The theoretical context is developed and discussed over two extended chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on wider issues related to the political economy of sport club privatisation in Saudi Arabia, including related contextual factors such as socio-cultural aspects. Chapter 3, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive review of strategy and strategising literature as relevant to the proposed study, including a mixture of new and older studies, as well as most of the prominent and seminal works in the area. This first part of the thesis is essential in laying an adequate theoretical foundation upon which to base the research paradigm proposed in this study, as well as to develop subsequent methodology, discussion and analyses chapters.

The second part is exclusively dedicated to issues related to methodology, research methods and all aspects data of data collection. All of these issues are discussed in detail within Chapter 4, with a particular focus on critical evaluation of the alternative methods of doing such study and highlighting areas of strength and potential limitation.

The third part of the study deals with the key research findings (Chapters 5 through 7). These three findings respectively discuss the empirical findings within each of the three strategising praxis levels, i.e. macro, meso, and micro. The analyses and discussion in this

part follows the precise theoretical framework and methodological choices put forward in the two previous parts. There is a particular focus in this part on the strategy-as-practice framework (i.e. the three domains of strategising or the '3Ps') developed in previous parts, hence a detailed discussion of the role of strategising practitioners and practices as relevant to the eighteen sample case studies.

The fourth and final part offers further discussion and synthesis of findings (in Chapter 8), based on the analyses conducted in Part 3, as well as a whole chapter (Chapter 9) on study overall conclusions. Chapter 8 complements and enhances the previous three chapters by presenting further discussion through the synthesis of the key common findings from each of the three previous chapters (strategising praxes and cross-case synthesis). The study then concludes with Chapter 9 by offering overall conclusions to the research, including summary of key research findings, answers to the primary and secondary questions, a discussion of potential study contributions as well as some forward-looking conclusions.

Figure 1-1 The thesis structure and chapter order and organisation

Part	Principal	Chapters Themes		
FIRST	RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT	Chapter.1 Introduction	Chapter.2 The political economy of sports clubs privatisation in Saudi Arabia	Chapter.3 Strategy and Strategising
SECOND	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Chapter.4 Research Methodology		
THIRD	RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	Chapter.5 Strategy and Strategising at Macro level case studies: Supreme Economic Council, Ministry of Economy and Planning General Presidency of Youth Welfare.	Chapter.6 Strategy and Strategising at Meso level case studies: Saudi Arabian Olympic committee Two Team Sport Federations Two Individual Sport Federations.	Chapter.7 Strategy and Strategising at Micro level case studies: Five Regions office Five Sport Clubs.
FOURTH	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	Chapter.8 Analysis and Discussion Analysis and Synthesising of research finding in Macro, Meso and Micro levels		
		Chapter.9 Conclusions and Recommendations Discussion and conclude of the research finding and recommendations		

Chapter 2 The Political Economy of Sports Clubs Privatisation in Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

Drawing on political, religious, historical and cultural aspects, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive literature review of the political economy accounting for the privatisation of sports clubs in Saudi Arabia. To this purpose, the literature review was directed on the one hand to drawing a broad overview of the political economy and the key actors involved, in an attempt to reveal their areas of interest in sports clubs, with a focus on the Saudi Arabian environment. On the other hand, it intended to reduce the scope of the research by focusing more narrowly on the political economy and the policies regulating the privatisation of sports clubs.

Therefore, structured into four subsections, with an introduction and conclusions, the chapter was directed at exploring several aspects related to the analysis of the actors and factors involved in the privatisation of sports clubs within a Saudi Arabian context. Therefore, in discussing the political and social developments in Saudi Arabia, issues of authority, ownership and administration were considered by broadly tackling the themes of religion and state, the monarchy, societal issues as well as national developments plans, all grafted onto the lessons drawn from the Saudi and international privatisation projects. Furthermore, the chapter restricts its scope and tackles the background of Saudi sports, discussing sports both in the context of the wider Arabian Peninsula and Islam, and specifically in relation to the Saudi state. Equally, the place of sports organisations in Saudi development plans as well as the national plans for the privatisation of sports clubs were discussed. Finally, conclusions were drawn with respect to the political economy of sports clubs privatisations in Saudi Arabia.

More specifically, in order to discuss the sources available on the issue of Saudi Arabian political economy and privatisation, a brief overview was drawn on the social, political and economic context of Saudi Arabia. This contextualisation was necessary to account for the important place the public policy occupies among the Saudi privatisation policies. Among these drivers of change and privatisation, aspects such as the state, Islam, issues of tribalism and monarchy within the field of sports economy were debated with a view to reach a better understanding on the privatisation of sports clubs in Saudi Arabia.

As extensively discussed in the literature review chapter, the focus on these areas, as well as the sports history within the Saudi Arabian context can be accounted for by their prominence in the broader field of decision-making and implementation of the policies

adopted in the sport sector. These include the impact of Islamic religious texts, the importance of the cultural norms regulating sports policies and activities, the role of the government and its power and control over the sports world – including as regards the initiatives taken to boost the sports economy and politics as part of the strategy entitled "The Political-economy and National-welfare Perspectives" (Hillman, Long, & Moser, 1995) aimed at the privatisation of sports clubs.

Thus, in order to understand the broader issue of sports clubs privatisation, several notional aspects were clarified in relation to the political system of Saudi Arabia, by laying the grounds of its religious, political, cultural and societal bases. This is equally useful in the attempt to clarify the power relations governing the policy implementation at the level of the Saudi sports clubs within the broader political context.

Therefore, the chapter has made important considerations on the Saudi political system, examined in its evolution across time. First of all, given the fact that the Saudi state emerged through a gradual process that went on up to the 1960s (Metz, 1993), issues of Islam independence, monarchy and tribalism acquired great significance, specifically given their contribution to the establishment of the new state and the inherent governance model (Metz, 1993). Second of all, in order to account for the development of the Saudi political system, it was necessary to mention the political reforms undergone at the beginning of the 1990, in terms of their influence in the shaping on the contemporary Saudi state, which accounted, at the same time, for the way in which decisions were informed and made within the public policies delivery.

Therefore, considering the fact that this research was directed to the Saudi government privatisation strategies, before tackling in more detail the Saudi governmental plans, the Saudi political and social development was explored. Hence, the issue of political economy and social development – which encompasses the above mentioned aspects of religion, monarchy and sovereignty, and society, all grafted onto the national privatisation plans – was addressed at the beginning of the chapter.

2.2 Political economy and social development in the Saudi state

Before engaging in the analysis of the political economy and social development of sports clubs privatisation in Saudi Arabia, discussions focused on the political system established in the Saudi state. The analysis of the Saudi political economy considered the evolution of the economic and the political systems, as well as the ways in which the underlying structures emerged and underwent changes, in particular throughout the period marking the centralisation of the Saudi Arabian state.

The section has shown how, economically speaking, the place occupied by Saudi Arabia in the Arab and Islamic world was accounted for by its geographical location, which assigned it the strategic role of mediator between Asia, Africa and Europe, contributing thus to the accomplishment of the globalisation of trade (Guiso, Sapienza, Zingales, & Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2006). Furthermore, the section has pointed to the country's contribution to the development and economic growth of the Arab Peninsula (Fain, 2008), and the importance of religious status (also supported by economic wealth – relying on the country's energy reserves), and the political system (Fox, Sabbah, & Al Mutawa, 2006).

From a political point of view, according to the Basic Law of Government (articles 1 and 5) of 1992, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy, "a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion shall be Islam and its constitution shall be the Book of God and the Sunnah (Traditions) of His Messenger Mohammad, may God's blessings and peace be upon him (PBUH). Its language shall be Arabic and its capital shall be the city of Riyadh" (Basic Law of Governance, 1992, p. 2).

As posited by the two excerpts of the Basic Law of Government (1992), it can be inferred that the identity of the Saudi State, just as the power system and the governmental framework, as well as the structures and policies underlying it reside in the structures can be relegated to the above-mentioned articles. The prominence the Basic Law of Government assigns to the issues of religion, allegiance to a tribal form of organisation, but to an equal extent to the monarchy characterising the governance system in Saudi Arabia, testifies to their role in understanding and evolution of the Saudi political system, as well as the forces that contributed to shaping it (Metz, 1993). As argued by Metz (1993), all these elements were equally important in the evolution of the Saudi state ever since its foundation as a modern state and, consequently, each of them will be addressed in what follows.

2.2.1 Religion and the State

As shown in the Basic Law of Saudi Arabia, research on the issue of religion in the context of the Saudi state has pointed to the close connection between religion and the power structures (Bowen, 2007). Thus, as revealed by the scholars interested in this topic, Saudi Arabia was established as a state on grounds of the mission assumed by religion, by the Islam (Bowen, 2007). This mission, clearly expressed by Bowen (2007), recognised Allah as the only God, and Muhammad as the accepted and final Messenger of God. The same belief is equally ascertained by the Basic Law of Government (1992, p. 2).

Moreover, based on these religious precepts, the citizens of the state are compelled to obey the King (1992, p. 3).

Furthermore, according to Vassiliev (2000) and the Basic Law of Governance, the role of religion is visible in its instrumentation of the Saudi Governance system and the participation in society development. As posited in the Basic Law of Governance, the key aspects of the Saudi governance, namely justice, equality and consultation (shura) draw on the "Islamic Shari'ah" (1992, p. 3). Thus, in agreement with the writings of Al-Rasheed (2010), and Long & Maisel (2010), all actions taken by the government, just as the legislation approved and the transactions facilitated should comply to the percept and teachings of the Islamic religion.

Equally, the chapter shows that the link between the religious factor and the state has constituted a feature of Saudi Arabia, but also of the Arabian Peninsula, since the second half of the 17th century (Bowen, 2007). According to the scholars looking into the issue of religion and state, the division of power in the Saudi state was characterised by a relation of interdependence between the political leader the 'imam' and the religious one the 'Al ash Shaykh' (Vassiliev, 2000).

However, the unification of the Saudi country was achieved towards the 1932, the state acquiring the name of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, covering in broad lines the frontiers of the present day state (Bowen, 2007), under the rule of the founder of the Saudi modern state in the person of King Abdul-Aziz (Bowen, 2007). The relationship between monarchy and religion is further pointed at by Long (1997), who argues that monarchs (King Abdul-Aziz and his followers) would rely on religion – on the Islam – in their desire to acquire legitimacy and preserve their sovereign rights, monarchs strengthening their position by placing strong emphasis on their role of guardians and patrons of the holy places, promoting the Islam all over the world.

Research on the topic has shown that religion has been long perceived as part and parcel of the Saudi system of governance (Bowen, 2007;Esposito., 1998; Long., 1997). In addition, as argued in the literature in the field, ever since the 17th century, and, more prominently, since the emergence of the modern state, the Islam has constituted the basis of the governance system, legitimising the state and directing its actions, informing its decisions and policies, accounting for its responsibilities, and, to an equal extent, the responsibilities of its citizens (Bowen, 2007; Esposito, 1998; Long, 1997).

Following the position taken by Esposito (1998) the chapter has argued that, although monarchy is not inherently an Islamic governance form, it is nevertheless guided by the belief that all citizens, including the king "are subservient to Islamic law" (p. 108). What

is more, religion was instrumental in policy-making and implementation. The Basic Law of Government (1992) clearly shows that the Islam is at the core of both the legal and the political system (article 67, p.11). This position was supported by Al-Mehaimeed (1993), or Long (1997), who argue that in Saudi Arabia, Islam has come to be more than a mere religion, turning into a "self-contained cosmic system" (Long 1997, p. 42).

Having seen the above observations, it can be concluded that the Islam is an intrinsic part of the Saudi Arabian system, with strong connections to both the governance form – the monarchy – and the societal organisation, as shown in the following subchapters. What is more, it has been posited that (Bowen, 2007; Esposito, 1998; Long, 1997) it is deeply embedded into the functioning of the system of the Saudi Arabian governance, encompassing all areas of policy – economic, political, societal. Religion governs the establishment of rules, regulations and policies, guiding their implementation and follow-up. As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Islam – as a matter of fact the Islamic law – functions as the constitution of the Saudi state, the source of both the political and the legal power.

The analysis conducted in this chapter on religion and monarchy has pointed to their role of key actors composing the Saudi Arabian system, which function interdependently, supporting each other's actions. Considering this threefold disposition of power relations within the Saudi Arabian state, namely religious, monarchical and societal – the issue of monarchy was also brought into discussion.

2.2.2 Monarchy and the State

As accounted for by the literature on the political history of the Arab Peninsula, characterised, according to several scholars (Algar, 2002; Palmer, 2002; Black, 2001; Esposito, 1998; Long, 1997; Metz, 1993; Cole, 1973), it is based on very strong tribal interconnections. As posited by Long (1997), these links are defined in terms of "genealogical ties" (p. 16), which show how blood connections regulate the relationships in the Saudi power structures, a state of affairs preserved until present day (Al-Khariji, 1983). Additionally, the same lineage-based power distribution is extended at the level of the Saudi societal structures.

As far as the power distribution at the level of the Saudi monarchy is concerned, the government system takes the form of absolute monarchy, where the King – appointed prime minister – is president of the 'Council of Ministers' (Long, 1997). Majlis Ash-Sura in 2013, identified the components of the Council of Minister as follows: the president and the vice-president of the Council, together State Ministers (who are equally members

in the Council of Ministers, appointed by royal decree), and the king's adviser. Figure **2-1**.shows that all constituents revolve around the 'king' – the central power in the system, and points to the closed structure of the monarchy in Saudi Arabia. However, as shown in the Basic Law of Government, starting with 2005, some changes were made to this organisation, such as the introduction of an "Allegiance Commission" – an organism in charge of choosing the Crown Prince – the following king.

Figure 2-1 The power structures of the Saudi Arabian political system
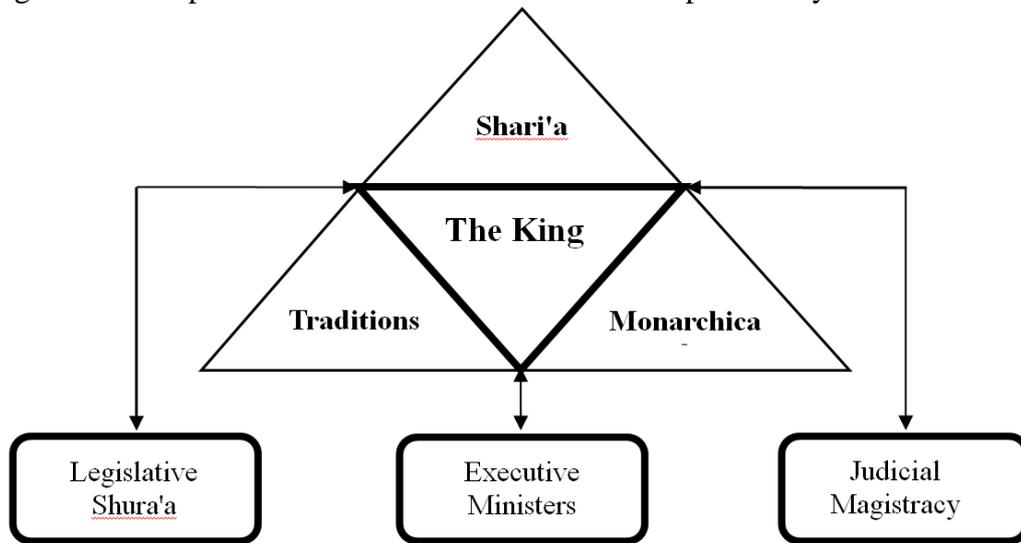
Source: Accomplished by the Author.

These considerations, as well as the information provided in Figure 2-2 below point to the closed structure of the monarchy in Saudi Arabia. Within this structure, power is solely relegated to the members of the royal family and their branches and wings. Moreover, power is transmitted from one generation to another, to members of royal descent.

Figure 2-2 Al Su'ud royal family genealogical and structure include its branches (**Holden & Johns, 1982**).

Saud

| Thunayyan | Mohammad (1744-65) | Farahan | Mishari |

Ibrahim — Abdul Aziz (1765-1803) — Abdulh — Al Farahan Branch — Al Mishari Branch

Thunayyan

Abdulah (1841-43) — Saud (1803-14) — *Turki (1823-34)*

Al Thunayyan Branch

Khalid (1838-41)* — Abdullah (1814-18) — Juluwi / Al Juluwi Branch

Faisal (1834-38; 1843-65)

Abdullah (1865-71; 71-73; 76-89) — *Abdul Rahman 1875-6; 1889-91* — *Saud (1871;1873-75)* / Saud Al-Kabir Branch

Abdul Aziz (1902-53)**

Bushra	Mushari 1932-2000		**King Saud 1902-1964**	Turki (I) 1900–1919	Alraiar	Alshik	**King Faisal 1906-175**				**King Abdualh 1924-2015**	Alshamary
			(1953-64)				(1964-75)				(2005-*precent*)	
Alyamanih	Hazlowal 1941-2012		**King Khalid 1913-1982**	Muhamad 1910-1988	Aljaluy	Bazah	Nasir 1913-1984					
			(1975-82)									
		Abdulmuhsin 1925-1985	Musad 1923-2013	Sad 1915-1993	Alsidiray	Alsidiray	**King Fahad 1920-2005**	Sultan 1931-2011	Abdarahman 1931-	Turki(II) 1932-	Naif 1933-2012	**Salman 1935-**	Ahmad 1941-
							(1982-2005)					
		Mitab 1931-	Mshal 1926-	Mansur 1922 -51	Shahidah	Althiny	Bandar 1923-	Fawaz 1934-2008				
		Badir 1932-2013	Abdulailah 1939-	Abdulmajied 1942-2007	Alsidiray	Monirh	Talal 1931-	Nawaf 1933-			Mgrin 1945-	Alyamanih
Fatimah	Humud 1947-1994		Satam 1941-2013	Majied 1938-2003	Mudhi	Alshalan	Thamir 1938 - 58	Mmduh 1939-	Mshhor			

Legend   U   imams of the first Saudi dynasty or Stat   *I imams of the second Saudi dynasty or Stat*   B Kings of Saudi Arabia   Gray future Kings of Saudi Arabia
*Ruled as Ottoman viceroy   **Various titles until 1932; King of Saudi Arabia

Source: Update by Author for "Genealogical table of the leaders of the Al Saud" as adopted in House of Saud book by David Holden and Richard Johns, 1982.p.117.

The involvement of the monarchy in the political system is described by Bowen (2008) as a government controlled by Al Saud royal family kings who are the key actors of decision-making with slow evolution and radical processes. Saudi king has complete rule and defines the relationship between government agencies and the state structure over his ruling period. According to the Basic Law of Government, royal decisions could be classified as follows:

Table 2-1 Saudi Royal Decisions Classification

Decision	Terminology
Royal Decree	A written decision taken in certain form and signed by the king, which has been previously approved by the Council of Ministers, such as a regulation ratified by Royal Decree. E.g.: The Football League live broadcast TV rights were granted to the National Television (2011-2012) and the government paid for that.
Royal Order	A written decision taken in certain form and signed by the king, which however has never been approved or presented to the Council of Ministers, such as the Royal Order for appointing a minister. E.g.: Appointment of the president of GPYW.
Royal Directive	A verbal or written order by the Kings head of the state or head of the executive authority. E.g.: The financial support granted to sport clubs in 2011.
Supreme Order	A verbally or written order issued by the King as head of the Council of Ministers or by one of the Vice Prime Minister without a particular form. E.g.: Additional subsidies granted to sports club or federations.

Source: Developed by Author based on The Basic Law of Government.

The same dynamics of power relations can also be applied to the relationship between sports and the monarchy. That is, as regards the introduction of sports within the government bodies, this occurred in the second half of the 20th century. Monarchy – the supreme power – decides upon the accepted practices and regulates the implementation of changes. The presidency of the sports organisations established was assigned to members of the royal family, in the person of sons and grandsons of the kings (Rashid and Shaheen, 1987), in the 1950s the state gradually starting to acquire ownership over sport, through the guidlines offered on policy and structural issues, as well as the funding granted.

2.2.3 Society and the state

Within the Saudi political economy underlying the state policy adopted by Saudi Arabia, religion equally contributes to shaping society, or even fighting possible social resistance (Al-Rasheed, 2010). In other words, as stipulated in the Basic Law of Governance, religion contributes to defining and guiding societal participation, setting the ground for the Saudi society (1992, p. 4).

As seen in the previous section, the power relations governing the relationship between the monarchy and the state can be extrapolated to the societal structure. As Esposito

(1998) argues, "the extended family is the most influential social institution in Saudi Arabia, and loyalty to it probably exceeds even loyalty to the state" (p. 16). Following the same line of argument, Palmer (2002) claims that "loyalty to the family continues to compete with loyalty to the state" (p. 14). In other words, this strong sense of family and the importance placed on family roots constitute one of the key features of the Muslim world, and a prominent feature of the Islam, similarly to the political life of Saudi Arabia. Fain (2008) suggests that there are some old provinces where families have political power and play an important role in Saudi government public policy regarding historical, geographical, religious, economic and cultural aspectsas shown in Figure 2-3. The centrally-placed Najd province has Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia and the cradle of the state where Al-Saud's family roots can be traced (Boeri, Castanheira, Faini, & Galasso, 2006). Najd tribes and its residents were close to the decision-makers and main actors in the Saudi government agencies. Hejaz residents were more educated people with a mixture of cultures background appointed by the Saudi government to manage of Hajj and foreign affairs (al-Rasheed, 2006).

Figure 2-3 Division of Saudi Arabian Administration Regions (1932-1992).

Source: Developed by Author.

As Lorimer (1970) argues, the social culture has traditionally laid the ground for the division of political power on the territory of the Arabian Peninsula. Even more so, the social and the cultural growth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia points to the instrumental role played by the Council of Ministers to the development of sports(see table 2-1).

The Council of Ministers was initially under the exclusive control of the royal family. Later on, Lorimer (1970) shows, the expansion of the council's responsibilities called for the admission of local representatives, who were now required to participate in the decision-making processes, although their role was mainly consultative. This allows inferring that the Saudi political power system was highly reliant on the division of power. The analysis conducted in the present research has revealed that the power distribution within the government of Saudi Arabia is based on the social background of the ministers (see table 2-2). The presidency of the Council of Ministers is relegated to the King, or the Crown Prince of the country. In addition, until the 1960s, the other members of the council were mainly appointed from the royal family members, which points to a striking majority of royal descent members (see table 2-3). Nevertheless, monarchy representation within the council started to decrease gradually over the last decades of the 20th century (see table 2-3).

The power distribution within the Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia points to the fact that political orientation, political wings are likely to impact decision-making and, at the same time, it brings to the fore the main actors involved in the Saudi political system (Lorimer, 1970). In addition, it can be argued that the most important functions in the state are assigned to members of royal descent, with the most important function occupied by the king himself, followed by the Crown Prince, the other princes. Another factor taken into account in assigning a political role consists in the social background of origin, in other words, the area the prospective officials come from, the vicinity to the government main city constituting a prerequisite for appointment (Lorimer, 1970).

Table 2-2 Ministerial reshuffles of the Saudi Council of Ministers based on their social background is at the discretion of the monarchy*

Position/ Date	1932 - 1953	1953	1960	1961	1962	1970	1975	1995	2003	2011	2013
Prime-Minister	C**	K	K	K	C	K	K	K	K	K	K
Deputy Prime-Minister	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
2nd Deputy Prime-Minister	Non-existent					P	P	P	P	P	P
Foreign Affairs	P	C	01	C	C	K	P	P	P	P	P
Defence	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	C
Interior	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
National Guard	Non-existent										P
Municipal and Rural Affairs	Non-existent						P	P	P	P	P
Public Works	Non-existent						P	Non-existent			
Health	P	P	02	02	01	01	02	02	04	01	01
Finance	01		P	P	P	P	01	01	01	01	01
Economy	Non-existent								03	01	01
Planning	Non-existent						02	03			
Education	Non-existent	P	01	01	01	01	01	01	01	P	P
Transport	Non-existent	P	P	01	02	02	02	01	02	02	02
Commerce	Non-existent	02	02	02	02	03	01	02	02	01	01
Industry	Non-existent						03	02			
Electricity	Non-existent								03	01	01
Water	Non-existent						01	02			
Agriculture	Non-existent	P	02	01	01	01			03	03	03
Petroleum	Non-existent		01	02	02	02	02	03	03	03	03
Mineral Resources	Non-existent										
Labour	Non-existent	P	01	01	01	01	01	01	03	02	02
Social Affairs	Non-existent								01	01	01
Pilgrimage	Non-existent			02	02	02	02	02	02	02	02
Endowments	Non-existent							01	01	01	01
Islamic Affairs	Non-existent										
Media	Non-existent				01	01	02	02	02	02	02
Justice	Non-existent					01	01	01	01	01	01
Post	Non-existent					02	02	02	02	02	02
Telephone	Non-existent										
Higher Education	Non-existent						01	01	01	01	01
Civil Service	Non-existent								04	04	04
Housing	Non-existent										01

Keys code

King = K
Crown Prince= C
Prince = P
Central (NAJD) = 01
Western (ALHIJAZ) = 02
Eastern = 03
North = 04
South = 07

Notes

*These are the main formations issued by Royal Decrees but there are a number of simple changes.

**This selection was at founder King time, but he did not preside regard to his illness and turns his soon Crown Prince to the Chair

Source: Developed by Author.

Source: Accomplished by Author.

The table above presents ministerial reshuffles of the Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia, a distribution broken down by social background. It points to the fact that political orientation, political wings are likely to impact decision-making and, at the same time, it brings to the fore the main actors involved in the Saudi political system (Lorimer, 1970). In addition, it can be argued that the most important functions in the state are assigned to members of royal descent, with the most important function occupied by the king himself, followed by the Crown Prince, the other princes. Another factor take into account in assigning a political role consists in the social background of origin, in other words, the area the prospective officials come from, the vicinity to the government main city constituting a prerequisite for appointment (Lorimer, 1970).

Table 2-3 The distribution of cabinet positions based on minister's social or tribes/regional backgrounds

Social background/ Date	1932 - 1953	1953	1960	1961	1962	1970	1975	1995	2003	2011	2013
King = K	None	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Crown Prince= C	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	2
Prince = P	4	6	5	3	3	4	6	5	5	5	6
Central (NAJD) = 01	1	None	3	4	4	6	7	7	6	9	9
Western(ALHIJAZ)= 02	None	1/10	3	4	4	4	7	7	5	5	5
Eastern = 03	None	None	None	None	None	1	1	2	5	2	2
North = 04	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	2	1	2
South = 07	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Total of the cabinet positions "Cabinet ministers"	7	10	13	14	15	18	23	23	25	25	27

Source: Developed by Author based on the analyses of the previous table.

Table 2.2 furthers the discussion on the power relations within the Saudi government and the distribution of cabinet positions on grounds of social or regional provenance. The data presented in the table above is consistent with information gathered from the literature in the field, which points to the social segmentation of the governmental structures (Khoury & Kostiner, 1991; Niblock., 2006).

Nevertheless, as shown in the literature, the representation of the Saudi provinces was not simultaneous. It occurred rather diachronically, with the development of the Saudi state and the introduction of the Basic Law of Government (1992) (e.g. the Ahsa province), which still points to imbalanced representations from the various regions. Even more so, as several scholars and research instantiation have equally pointed out (Boeri, Tabellini, & CentreforEconomicPolicyResearch, 2005), the shift of tasks from minister to minister, as well as the often reconfigurations of the cabinet organisation and representatives involves increased effort for the reorganisation of the ministry, as well as lengthening procedures and delays in the government plans implementation in various governmental sectors.

Figure 2-4 Government Offices in different location of Modern Administration Regions (1992-present)
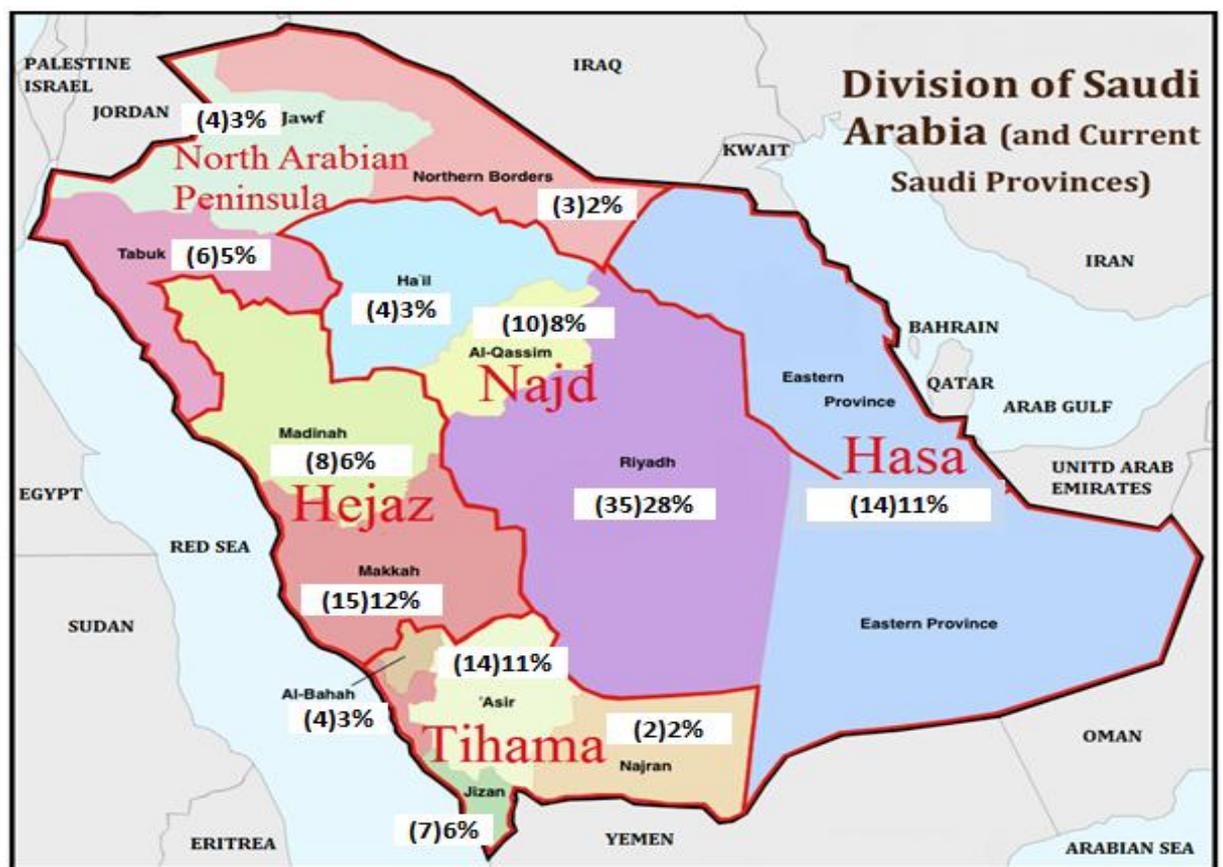
Source: Developed by Author.

As shown in the present analysis, the 13 regions of the Saudi state account for 126 administrative offices of the government, within which the political power tends to be concentrated in some regions, while others are a lot less represented, which has deep implications in the implementation of the policies at the level of the entire Saudi territory. It can thus be inferred that the design and implementation of policies within a given country is likely to stir diverse interest in the various stakeholders. Given the implications

these policies generally have for the country, it is the government's responsibility to determine the most appropriate action course so as to meet the demands of the majority, by taking into account the possible effects these actions are likely to have.

Therefore, meeting the objectives of the present chapter in the attempt to answer questions regarding the political economy of sports clubs privatisation has called for a close examining of the power relations established (between the three important aspects – namely religion, monarchy and society). These discussions were necessarily complemented with the analysis of the economic difficulties the implementation of sport clubs privatisation plans may face at macro and micro levels, as well as the investigation of the role that managers may get at various stages of the privatisation policies and strategies application.

2.3 National development plans (NDPs)

The literature in the field has brought to the fore the fact that public policy has a long-term effect on living conditions. According to (Levine, Peters, & Thompso, 1990), through public policy, it is possible to deal with a variety of day-to-day problems society is facing, such as mediating, negotiating, introducing, and eventually abandoning unfavourable social agendas. Several attempts were made in providing a definition of public policy (Birkland, 2010, pp. 8-9), Birkland finally concluding that while government is in charge of designing policies – deciding what to do or not – implementation can also be relegated to other public, or even private actors – stakeholders interested in the development of the given policy.

In close connection to the discussions in the previous sections, it can be argued that the tribal model traditionally used at the level of the Saudi administration and governmental structures can be extrapolated to the national development plans. During the reign of King Faisal, who ruled from 1964 to 1975 and was credited for rescuing the country from a financial crisis in 1964 (Niblock., 2006; Taher, 2011; Vassiliev, 2000). In anticipation of the crisis, the leader's vision was to implement a policy of modernisation and reform. The Saudi government plan, later called Five-Year Development Plan or "5-YDP or NDPs" was aimed to transfer the oil revenues exports to industry, creating a renaissance and helping the government directly to create a welfare state. However, the oil prices collapsed and fluctuation from the mid-1980s to 2000, marked a shift in the Saudi political economy by adopting new policies, such as the petrochemical industries investments and alternative strategies – such as, for instance, privatisation (Niblock, 2006; Taher, 2011; Vassiliev, 2000).

The figure 2-5, table 2-4 and table 2-5 summarise the main causes and effects of the Saudi national development plans. The goal of these plans is to achieve better economic performance. It should be pointed out at this point that, although directed to other industry branches also, the national development plans were still highly reliant on the developments in the oil industry, pointing to a strong correlation between the plans developed and the revenues obtained from oil transactions on the global market.

Figure 2-5 Major Events and Real World Oil Prices, 1970-Present.
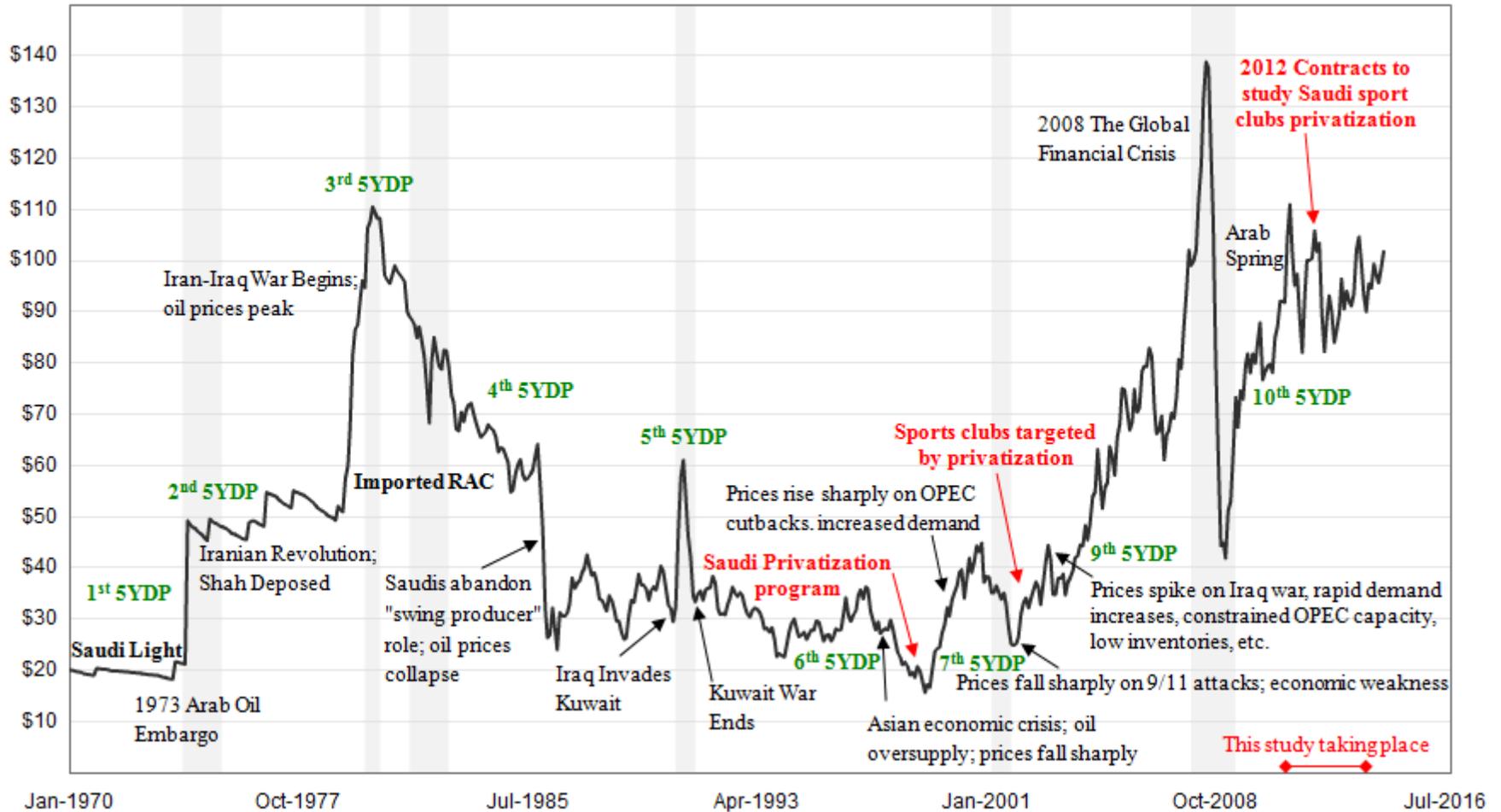
Source: After Energy Information Administration (EIA, 2012)developed by author.

On these grounds, it can thus be inferred a connection between the national development plans and the international economic initiatives, which leads to an interdependent relation likely to impact the development of the Saudi development plans, with deep implications for the public policy in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the development of national plans allow for the implementation of the public policies, by means of the administrative and discursive input they provide. However, external sources (such as international economic factors, religion, historical or geographical power relations, cultural background or society) are likely to hinder their progress (Niblock, 2006).

Table 2-4 Saudi National development plans, Monarchs and their Period of Rules

Saudi Kings	Period	NDP	Period	Focus
King Abdul Aziz *Monotheistic vision*	1932-1953	None	None	None
King Saud *Constituents vision*	1953-1964	None	None	None
King Faisal *Planning vision*	1964-1975	None	1964-1970	- Facing the financial crisis in 1964. - Modernisation and reform. - Creates a state welfare system.
		1st	1970-1975	- Rise in the standard of living. -Maintain security. -Economic and social stability.
King Khalid *Well-being vision*	1975-1982	2nd	1975-1980	-Economic growth. -Manpower development. -Social welfare. -Infrastructure development. -Economic freedom.
		3rd	1980-1985	- Change in the economic structure. -Participation in development and social welfare. - Increase in the economic and administrative efficiency.
King Fahd *Business vision*	1982-2005	4th	1985-1990	- Change in the economic structure. - Diversification in economy. - Reform government role in sectors. - Use of technology in sectors.
		5th	1990-1995	- Facing the financial crisis in 1990. -Reduce dependence on oil. - Stability in social and economic sectors. - Support the role of private sector in GDP. - Diversification in economic sources. -Regional Development.
		6th	1995-2000	-Human resource development. - Economic efficiency and performance. - Rationalisation of government subsidies. - Support the role of private sector in GDP and privatisation.
		7th	2000-2005	-Education and services development. -Human resource development. - Improve the standard of living. - Diversify economy and focus on the industry. - The contribution of the private sector. - Development in technology and research. -Environmental protection and water conservation - The international role of KSA.
King Abdullah *Economist vision*	2005 to present	8th	2005-2010	-Increase in the economic growth. -Development of Saudi employment. -Contribution of the private sector. -Diversify the economic via privatisation. -Improve the balance of payments. -Balanced development in all regions.
		9th	2010-2015	- Education and services development. - Improve the standard of living. - Balanced development in all regions. - Diversify economic and focus on the SMEs. -Improving knowledge economy. - The contribution of the private sector. - Natural resource development.

Source: Developed by Author based on the Saudi National development plans.

The information provided in table 2-4 and table 2-5 allows drawing the administrative and discursive framework, which explains and provides information to the stakeholders on how to implement strategy and practice. Furthermore, this framework is useful in showing the gradual involvement of sports within the national development plans.

Table 2-5 Saudi Arabia General Budgets (2007-2014)[6]

Year	General Budgets						General Debts	
	Revenues		Expenses		Surplus/Deficit		Debt	
	SAR.Billion	$.Billion	SAR.Billion	$.Billion	SAR.Billion	$.Billion	SAR.Billion	$.Billion
2014	SAR 855.00	$228.00	SAR 855.00	$228.00				
2013	SAR 829.00	$221.07	SAR 820.00	$218.67	SAR 9.00	$2.40	SAR 75.00	$20.00
2012	SAR 702.00	$187.20	SAR 690.00	$184.00	SAR 12.00	$3.20	SAR 98.00	$26.13
2011	SAR 540.00	$144.00	SAR 580.00	$154.67	-SAR 40.00	-$10.67	SAR 135.00	$36.00
2010	SAR 470.00	$125.33	SAR 540.00	$144.00	-SAR 70.00	-$18.67	SAR 167.00	$44.53
2009	SAR 410.00	$109.33	SAR 475.00	$126.67	-SAR 65.00	-$17.33	SAR 225.00	$60.00
2008	SAR 1,100.00	$293.33	SAR 510.00	$136.00	SAR 590.00	$157.33	SAR 237.00	$63.20
2007	SAR 621.50	$165.73	SAR 443.00	$118.13	SAR 178.50	$47.60	SAR 267.00	$71.20

Source: Riyadh Centre for Information Consultative Studies(2013).

2.4 Lessons learned from Saudi and international privatisation projects

In order to account to the political economy of sports clubs privatisation, this section has drawn on some international privatisation experiences, identifying the causes, methods, advantages, and difficulties of the privatisation of governmental organisations in states such as the USA, the UK, and the Arab ones including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Kuwait.

Privatisation was defined according to Moore (1992) as a capitalist policy directed at boosting the economy through increased emphasis on regulations and ownership. Previous researchers pointed to a number of arguments for privatisation. According to Ramandham (1989), poor industrial relations records, non-commercial positions and limited concern for customer interests and needs were cited as major causes of an increasing public attitude against nationalisation and in favour of denationalisation. According to Bortolotti and Siniscalco (2004), privatisation was seen as an overall process occurring in numerous countries and occasionally in a spontaneous manner or more frequently under the pressure of budgetary and economic constraints.

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[6] It is important to mention that this study uses the U.S. dollar in translating the amounts of money discussed during this study due to the long connection of the Saudi Riyal exchange rate to the U.S. dollar ($ 1 = SAR 3.75). This exchange rate has not changed since the date of the Saudi state's foundation, which makes estimates of rates more understandable in terms of the real value of the amounts mentioned in this study.

In the context of Arab states, as Shakir (2010) claimed, under this new global phenomenon pressure, some countries started to implement privatisation in the late 1980s (Shakir , 2010). In Bin Hatboro's perspective (1997), in the Arab states, the privatisation was turned into an instrument to ensure, nationally and internationally, the equilibrium between the economic performance and corrective policy so that the economic reform would obtain admissible levels of economic expansion.

The present analysis has revealed the chain of cause and effect in the Saudi governmental development plans, which moulds the Saudi public policy. These national development schemes supply administrative and discursive functions which mould action routines meant to apply the public policy. The national reasons such as ethnicity, language, religion, historical and geographical capacity, religious and cultural background and social structure frequently associated with international motives such as the oil market and the political developments and consequences on the acquisition of the progress registered by the Saudi governmental development schemes.

Furthermore, this research has shown how the Saudi government implemented three principles tackling the planning of the private sector in its third national development plan. In the first instance, the State admits the private sector potential and its capacity to facilitate the acquisition of national development objectives. In the second instance, the state intended to promote the private sector and its development. Finally, the State aimed at pursuing a policy of engagement in the economic processes. In certain cases, the engagement of the private sector has proven to be required for national strategic motives. Specifically, the Saudi government started to transfer the country's shares in numerous governmental investments and companies to the private sector by selling stocks to Saudi citizens in 2002.

According to Clarke & Pitelis (1993) and Abbas (2010) in the international context, numerous methods were further applied for the purpose of privatisation, such as selling shares on the stock market or allocating ownership shares to all the citizens, setting-up new private businesses in previously socialist states, (totally or partially) selling organisational bodies to strategic investors (Abbas A. , 2010; Abbas K. M., 2010; Abbas & CentreforEconomicPolicyReserch, 2010).

According to the Arab Monetary Fund "AMF" (2002), the Joint Arab Economic Report from 2002 indicated that Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt represented the leading Arab countries in the process of decision-making and subsequent effects regarding privatisation, and suggested that this tendency is followed by numerous Arab Gulf countries (AMF, 2002). Until 2002, privatisation was implemented by these states to some

degree in the Arab countries. However, privatisation was extended after 2002 in many other Arab countries including the Arab Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, taking into account the experience of the leading countries but without realising a complete process. Furthermore, certain Arab states suggested attempts to unsuccessfully privatise government organisations (partially or totally) for many years. According to Rhouma (2006), the privatisation progress in the leading Arab states appears as an example that constitutes the main parameter in this international context.

Table 2-6 The privatisation in some Arab countries.

State	Decision	Progress summary
Morocco	Law No.93 in 1989.	- Whereby government target to sale (112) commercial, industrial institutions and hotel to the private sector. - Up to 2002, privatised around (65) institution, including (26) hotels. - 60% of privatisation revenue from the telecom sector by $ 2.1 billion as 35 % of government stake in the telecommunications company and provide mobile phone services by $1.1 billion.
Tunisia	Law No. 9 in 1989.	- The government targeted (44) public institution to be privatised with total value of $ 1 billion. - Up to 2002, (4) cement production companies accounted for more than 50% of the total privatisation revenues, while the rest of other revenue is made up from the sale (146) small company.
Egypt	Public Business Sector Law No.203 in 1991.	- Turned (314) public sector companies from the Law No. (97) to the Law No. (203), where these companies named as public business sector under 27 holding companies and have been reduced to 17 holding companies. - Up to 2002 government privatised nearly 185 institutions partially or completely with total value of about $ 5.2 billion.
Kuwait	The Kuwaiti Public Authority for Investment decided to sell state-owned shares in 1994.	- Privatisation revenue to eliminate the budget deficit after the Kuwait war. - The government has sold part or all the state's share at about (33) public institution and companies with total value of $ 4 billion. - Up to 2002, the government currently owns shares in about 21 companies listed on the stock exchange.
Jordan	Establishment a special unit for privatisation in 1996.	- Privatisation programme was the most successful in the Arab countries because of the speed of implemented it. - Up to 2002, the government has sold (44) public institution and companies.

(Rhouma, 2006)

In the context of Saudi Arabia, used by the government to apply the privatisation programme was to fraction the issue of privatisation (Ramady, 2010). Saudi Arabian privatisation allows partial or complete transfer of public enterprises to the private sector through the sale or lease of these agencies. As Ramady (2010) further explains, the Saudi government decided to privatise public services such as the Saudi telecom company (STC), the Postal office, the Saudi Arabian Airlines, the Saudi Railways, the Saudi Ports, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), and the Saudi Arabian Mineral Company (MAADEN).

In Saudi Arabia, some privatisation strategic plans were represented successfully, but others have yet to deliver tangible results. The degrees of concern for disclosure and credibility levels were different in each case. Studying privatisation models in different Saudi services and manufacturing sectors could provide more understanding of the Saudi political economy (Abu Shair, 1997).This research has pointed to a number of benefits that could be extracted through privatisation. Table 2-7 represents a useful assistance in the diagnosis on the reality of Saudi Arabia privatisation projects across different areas, which could further understanding of the political economy of privatisation in Saudi Arabia include a number of benefits and challenges of privatisation..For instance, according to Roy(2003), the privatisation process could result in positive changes in the behaviour and attitudes of public managers. Moreover, according to Kikeri(1998) privatisation programmes aimed to improve the efficiency of state enterprises to free up resources for social services and mobilise capital for expansion and modernisation. Finally, Omran, (2004) highlighted that privatisation could provide better allocation of resources and an improvement in operating efficiency of the organisation. In general, privatisation has helped many countries improve and develop their economic activities, e.g. telecommunication, water, electricity, offering an incentive for other countries to implement privatisation programmes (Young, 1998).

Table 2-7 The evolution of Saudi government ownership models in some companies and sectors targeted by privatisation policy (* Million).

Sectors	Start	Institution	Capital*	Ownership	Change to	Date	Capital*	Ownership
Telecommunications	1926	Directorate of Telegraph, Post and Telephone	Unknown	Government	SaudiTelecomCompany (STC)	1998	20,000	70.0% Government
					Saudi Post Corporation (Saudi Post)	2002	Unknown	Government
Transport	1953	Ministry of Transport	Unknown	Government	The Saudi Ports Authority (Saudi Ports)	1997	Unknown	Government
					The Saudi Railways Organization (SARO)	1966	Unknown	Government
					The Saudi Railway Company (SAR)	2007	Unknown	Government
	1979	Transport Public company	1,000	Government	Saudi Public Transport Company (SAPTCO)	2007	1,250	30.0% Government
	1978	Shipping Public company	500	28.0%	The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (Bahri known as NSCSA)	2006	3,150	28.0% Government
	1945	The Ministry of Defence and Aviation And General Organization for Saudi Arabian Airlines (1963- 1996)	Unknown	Government	General Authority of Civil Aviation(GACA)	2011	Unknown	Government
					Saudi Airlines company (historically Saudia name used from 1972 and reintroduced in 1997)	2011	Unknown	Government
					Saudi Ground Services Company (SGS)	2011	Unknown	Government
					Saudia Aerospace Engineering Industries	2009	Unknown	70.0% Government
					Saudia Cargo company	2011	Unknown	Government
					Saudi Airlines catering company	2008	820	70.0% Government
					Prince Sultan Academy for Aviation Sciences	2004	Unknown	Government
Serveries	1953	Ministry of Education	Unknown	Government	Education Holding Company (Tatweer or THC)	2008	100	100% Government
	1951	Ministry of Health	Unknown	Government	General Organization for King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre	2002	Unknown	Government
	1975	Government hotels	Unknown	Government	Government hotels	2002	Unknown	Government
	1927	Sport clubs	Unknown	Unknown	Sport clubs	2002	Unknown	Unknown
Industry	1933	CASOC	Unknown	SOCAL	ARAMCO (name used from 1944)	1980	Unknown	Government
	1960	Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources	Unknown	Government	SABIC	1977	30,000	70.0% Government
					MAADEN	1997	9,250	50.0% Government
	1963	National Gas Companies	Unknown	Government	National manufacturing and Gas Company (GASCO)	1975	750	15.5% Government
	1953	Ministry of Agriculture and Water	Unknown	Government	Grain Silos and Flour Mills Organization	1972	Unknown	Government
	2003	Ministry of Electrical and water						
			Unknown	Government	National Water Company (NWC)	2008	6,848	100% Government
			Unknown	Government	Saudi Electricity Company	2000	41,665	74.3% Government
	1974	Ministry of Commerce and Industry						

Source: Accomplished by the Author.

Akoum (2009) provided the Saudi privatisation model for administrative and implementation procedure. As Figure 2-6 suggested the main actors in the Saudi privatisation model is the Privatisation Committee at the Supreme Economic Council (SEC) which cooperates with other government agencies to develop a strategic plan and timetable for each sector separately. This model expecting continuing communication and participation between the Privatisation Commission and other government agencies in develop a strategic plan and monitoring implementation progress.

Figure 2-6 Saudi Privatisation Model: Administrative and Implementation Procedure
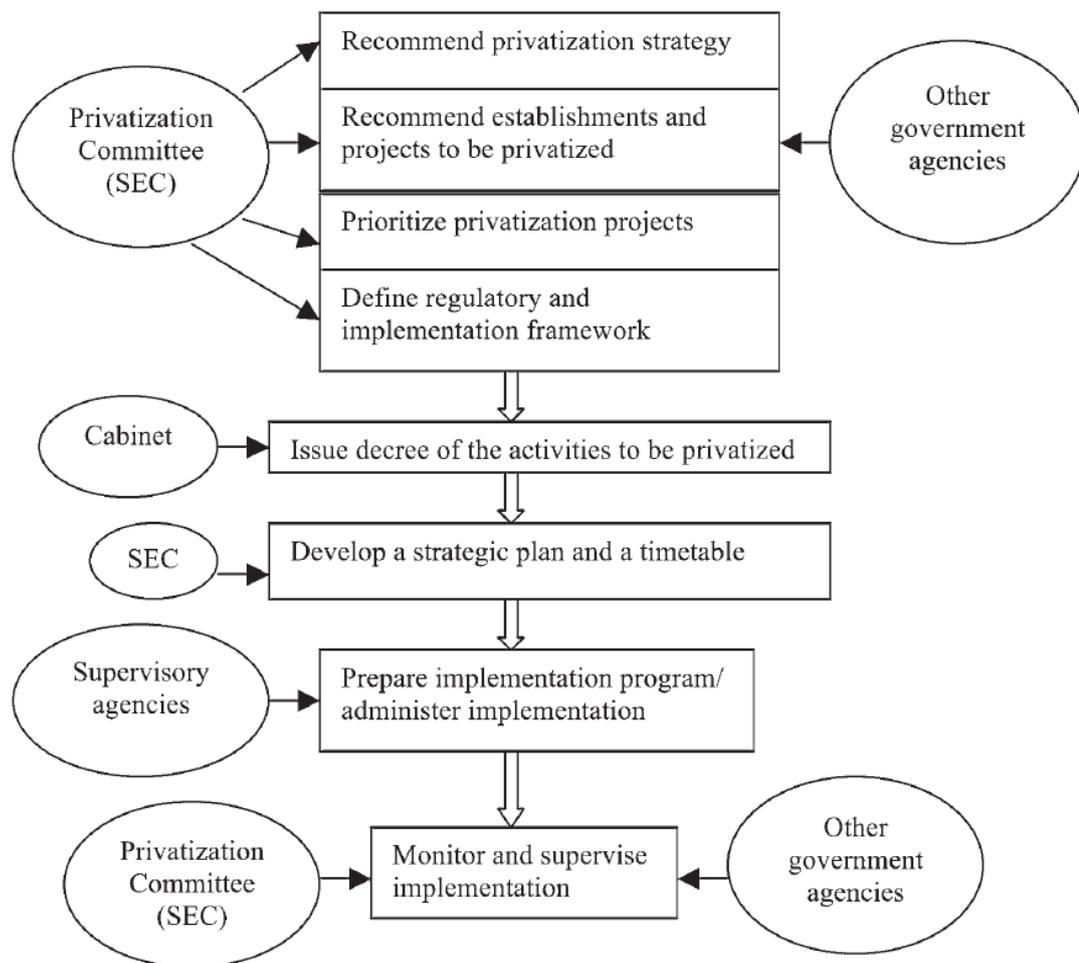
(Akoum, 2009, p. 431)

According to Abu Shair (1997), in spite of the benefits of privatisation, stark challenges do exist and they include: threats to the working staff; downsizing caused by lack of resources and unemployment; increased restrictions on various stakeholders by profit-minded investors who tend to be less concerned with ethics. However, in practice, these factors could simultaneously affect the privatisation process in a country. The challenges of privatisation cited in the literature may be classified as follows: the *political factor* - one of the major factors that can affect the process, and may result in failure of the

programme (Ariyo & Jerome, 1999), *management barriers* (Fage, 2001; Young, 1998)the *private sector barriers* (Manzetti, 2000), the *legal and regulatory barriers* (Ariyo and Jerome, 1999), or the *opposition from employees* (Hensley & White, 1993).

As regards the challenges of privatisation in the Saudi context, the *religious compliance* of legislation in relation to the privatisation programme and the Saudi government's concern with respect to the effects on society and its economic welfare was discussed in the present section. In addition, according to Ramady (2010), the *delay in approving the privatisation policy* in Saudi Arabia was due to the government's request to review the international experience of privatisation and beneficial models in a number of countries such as the United Kingdom (Ramady, 2010). According to the comparative study conducted by Rhouma (2006), a number of these Arab countries intended to complete the privatisation programme in 2002 (Rhouma, 2006). These views advance the ambition of the Saudi government to benefit from the experiences of western and Arab countries by examining different multi-privatisation models and methods in various sectors until 2002.

Moreover, the private sector contribution to the GDP over the past four decades has increased significantly and the role of this sector in the national economy has grown. According to Aghion and Blachard (1998), and Bel (1999), the GDP value has doubled and has increased nine fold, increasing steadily from SR 54.3 billion (14.4 billion) in 1969 to about SR 481.8 billion (128.4billion) in 2009. The rate of contribution on GDP in 2009 was about 57.3% compared to 34.7% in 1969. According to Bel (1999), the *private sector continues to remain insecure* in terms of maintaining a balance its business and the public concern for a greater level of durability, which subsequently gives credibility to the analysis on the ways western countries manage the issue of privatisation in their respective jurisdictions (Bel, 1999).

According to Niblock and Malik (2007), the *lack of developed capital markets* represented the country's main difficulty, in compliance with the government's efforts to enhance the function of the private sector through the privatisation programme. A deeper and more efficient capital market, with an active debt and equity secondary market, is a prerequisite for a successful Saudi privatisation, especially as wealth distribution and the widening of ownership structure among citizens are primary objectives of privatisation. Though the formal stock market commenced operations in 1984, it was not until 2003 that a capital market law was enacted, followed by establishing a regulatory body, the Capital Market Authority (CMA), in 2004. Deepening the capital market and enhancing its efficiency requires measures to improve disclosure and transparency norms, strengthen institutional investment, and adopt appropriate corporate governance standards. The

decision taken by the CMA in December 2007 to partially liberalise the market by allowing foreigners to invest in initial public offerings (IPOs) through mutual funds is a positive step toward enabling the Saudi capital market.

The challenges previously mentioned in literature are also indentified in a recent study conducted by Ramady (2010).

As Ramady (2010) listed the possible obstacles of privatisation in Saudi Arabian context. Table 2-8 summarises the possible impediments to Saudi privatisation, such as difficulties of public asset rating, the inflexibility of pay scales in the public sector, the potential for social issues in the absence of government subsidies for public services, the lack of a regulatory framework relating to privatisation, the absence of credible accounting standards, the lack of depth in the current capital market and possible unemployment in the country.

Table 2-8 Saudi privatisation policy possible obstacles

Obstacles	Rationale
Fair book value for public assets	A wide gap could arise between the fair book value and the market price. There could be limited availability of information concerning government operations and future risk factors, thus affecting the valuation method.
Rigid pay structure	Government employee pay scales are higher than in the private sector, and sometimes are not related to productivity. There is the problem of adjusting wages and reducing employment numbers, and of allowing the private sector to strike a balance between wages and productivity expectations.
Government subsidies	The removal of government subsidies on basic service such as utilities or health care could cause social problems. At the same time, artificially imposing low price levels will affect the most efficient allocation of private sector resources. Other forms of support for those who are less well-off will have to be found.
Lack of regulatory framework	The government needs to address this major concern to ensure consumer protection and a degree of competition after privatisation. Major progress has been made since the privatisation process picked pace and experience has been gained.
Updating public sector accounting standards	These need to be updated so as to allow prospective investors to evaluate the true worth of these privatised public corporations
Financial resources	There is a lack of depth in the current capital market structure that will make it more difficult to transfer public to private ownership. However, the growth in the numbers of new IPOs as well as their size indicates that this might not be such a critical impediment Domestic banks have an aversion to long-term risk capital and there is an uncertain commercial/legal framework.
Employment	Potential unemployment becomes an issue, as the government faces pressure to reduce current unemployment levels.

Source: (Ramady, 2010, p. 324)

Summary

Saudi Arabia is a modern state displaying a mix of historical, religious and cultural values which play a key role in the Saudi political economy decisions. Specifically, the key actors involved in the Saudi political economy are: religion, the monarchy and the Saudi state – all the actors have different interests and influence on the political economy of Saudi Arabia. Serving the interests of each actor constitutes a challenge in implementing a privatisation strategy in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter has reviewed national and international privatisation experiences, as well as the privatisation experiences of Saudi Arabia. A number of methods of privatisation exist, such as selling shares on the stock market or distributing ownership shares to all citizens, the start-up of new private businesses in formerly socialist countries, selling an entire organisation to a strategic investor. However, the Saudi government began to move the state owned shares in many government investments and enterprises to the private sector via selling shares to Saudi citizens. However, the transfer of ownership is not the main issue in the privatisation strategy – it is the implementation of privatisation and extracting benefits of privatisation for the sports clubs and their stakeholders.

Globally, privatisations were implemented as a result of poor industrial relations records, non-commercial attitudes and limited concern for customer interests and needs, and under the pressure of budgetary and economic constraints. In the context of Saudi Arabia, the State recognises the potential of the private sector and its ability to contribute to the achievement of national development goals.

The literature reviewed highlighted a number of benefits and challenges of privatisation. The benefits of privatisations are manifold, and they range from improving efficiency, changing management, liberalising the economy, introducing competition, and improving the level of services. The challenges of privatisation include: lack of political commitment, delay in implementation by managers, lack of a strong private sector, lack of proper regulations. In the context of Saudi Arabia, a number of challenges exist, including: the delay in approving privatisation strategies, the absence of a strong capital market, the lack of regulatory framework relating to privatisation, the lack of credible accounting standards.

Based on the above discussion, this study could conclude that privatisation is a challenging task for any state, including Saudi Arabia. The challenges identified in the literature are also expected to influence the privatisation of sports clubs in Saudi Arabia.

2.5 Background of Saudi sports

The Saudi sports evolution is based on the historical and social developments in the Arabian Peninsula. These developments formed the society's view on sports. The sport activity formed in the Arabian Peninsula is influenced by the Islam, the receptive culture and the development of the Saudi state. These factors shaped the sport participation and sports practices norms, customs, traditions and restrictions. Moreover, the social, political and economic principles must be understood and taken into consideration in understanding the political economy of sports in the Saudi context.

2.5.1 **Sport in the Arabian Peninsula and Islam**

The present paper has shown that Islam has a strong implication on sport in Saudi Arabia. According to the Islam, individuals are responsible for their health, which makes them accountable for the entire society, the Islam having a direct influence on Saudi sports development and sports related policy.

Giulianotti & McArdle (2006) noted that some sports and physical activities violate the key cannons of Islamic law and culture, whereas other members of the Islamic tribes in the Arabian Peninsula continue to practice them. The camel racing is one of the most popular sports in several countries of the Arabian Peninsula that arguably goes against Islam, since small children are preferred as jockeys but there is a high risk of injury and death. Regardless, this disparity is due to the differing interpretations of Islamic sharia texts which are dialectical with Arab tribe's culture. Arab tribes see any change in these sports as affecting their identity and traditions (Bromber, Krawietz, & Maguire, 2013).

Despite their slow development of sports, communities in the Arabian Peninsula are historically known to love physical exercise (Lewis, 2000; Schulte-Peevers, Shearer, Walker, Butler, & Ham, 2010). This receptive cultural background has opened the gates of social acceptance to modern sports and games. As such, colonialism and migrants in some Arabian Peninsula regions, commercial convoys and pilgrim's community's convoys to the Holy Land, have played a major role in defining the modern sports in the region (Deady, 2005; Gordon & Broberg, 2003; Ben Sulayem, O'Connor, & Hassan, 2013). Moreover, historically, sport has been a civic institution in Saudi Arabia, supported by the Islam. Therefore, the perception of sports in the Arab states is influenced by historical traditions and the receptive culture.

2.5.2 **Sport in the Saudi state**

As regards the origins of the official sports movement, it started in 1924, when the modern state began exercising its constitutional functions. Saudi sports have undergone gradual development following the formation of the first football team in the city of Makah by members of the Indonesian community in 1926 (Alqdadey, 2012; Alsaatey,1999). As Alsaatey (2000) noted at the time, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, had some sports teams managed by individual who were interested in the revitalisation of the sports movement, especially football clubs. The first club in Riyadh was AlShabab Sports Club, founded in 1948. Thus, sports activities were managed by voluntary sector.

In the 1950s, sports clubs were frequented by more and more local residents, especially by the Saudi Arabian youth. According to Alsaatey, the sports participant boom led to sports social development, government agencies founding social and sports clubs for their members (Alsaatey, 2010). As a reaction to this social development in sport, the Minister of Interior decided to establish a sports organisation "The General Department of Sport and Scouting" to developing the first regulations and competitions in 1953. Because of individual efforts in sports management and conflicts of opinions, an advisory committee was appointed for studying sports policy in Saudi Arabia. Since that time, Saudi Arabia's sports clubs have been state-supported entities in terms of funding and supervision of sport clubs activities (Alsaatey, 2010). In 1974 sport in Saudi Arabia had independent organisation through the General Presidency of Youth Welfare[7], a different direction was taken by this organisation, which helped to advance the standard of sports in the country. As figure 2-8 shows, the GPYW and its administrative units are directly linked to the King.

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[7]The Council of Ministers decision number 560 in 16 May, 1974.

Figure 2-7 Government's Network Structure in Saudi Sport System
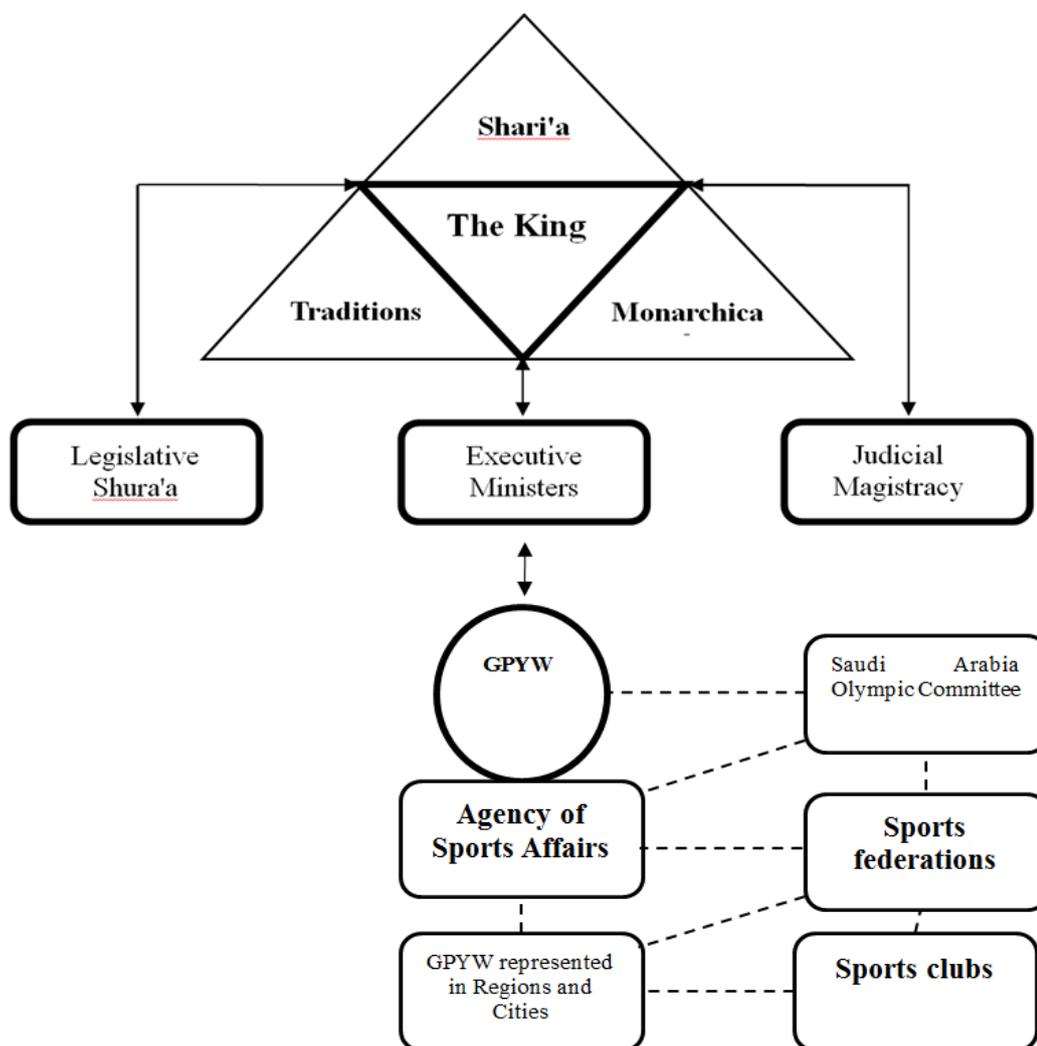
Source: Accomplished by the Author.

Developments in the field of sport management in the second half of the 20th century resulted into sports incorporation in the national development plan as a social and political issue of great interest, which led to expanding of organisations. The Saudi sport federations are active members who lead Saudi sport movements by volunteer government officials "part-time employees in western concept".

Sporting events and athletes have continuously been supported by the Saudi Arabia government, which has built sports and leisure facilities in all key cities. The Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee is, for instance, a key sports organisation that has always made great efforts to send athletes to international competitions, including Asian tournaments. Since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia footballers have participated in the Gulf Counties Soccer Cup and even won the championship three times (in 1994, 2002, and 2003) (Dawood, 2005). As highlighted by Dawood, their success may be directly attributed to the GPYW and Olympic Committee's proper management at national level (Dawood, 2005, p. 11).

These national sport achievements have attracted the media, and they resulted in the creation of sports and national heroes. Due to the contracts signed with various international players, sports clubs were massively advertised in the media, gaining the public's attention (Alkhames, 2011). However, downsides consisted in the increased expenses of the Saudi sports clubs (Alsaatey, 1990). A lack of ability by founders of sports club in financing the increased expense of the club and a reduced government subsidy following the Kuwait war in 1990 made the honourary members (e.g. royal family members and businessman) acting owners and controllers of many sports clubs (Alkhames, 2011). When faced with ownership claims over these clubs, that Saudi government decided to include sports clubs in its national privatisation strategy. This decision was also aimed at diversifying income sources and improving the national economy performance plan.

The Saudi Arabia's sports history provides important lessons in terms of understanding the political factors influencing sports decision-making and policy implementation in the country. The first lesson is that the Islamic faith and its rulings always provide the framework for decisions (Shavit & Winter, 2011).

Understanding of religious texts is important for the formulation of proper sports policy decisions. The second lesson is that Arab tribal customs and traditions provide for the spirit for implementing decisions. In light of these lessons, development and change plans must take into consideration the Saudi society and its identity in order to come up with acceptable implementation policies. Understanding Saudi regional demographics shows a suitable way to implement sports policy. The third lesson relates to Saudi government's prohibition of parties and political groupings.

As visible in Table 2.9, the government is the sovereign authority and should constantly exercise the ultimate power over all sectors. It is arguable that controlling sports clubs under official government bodies is a strategic political objective. Sports are used as a way of becoming influential in society and politics. This applies to the Saudi case where many leading figures compete to become involved in sports. Princes, businessmen and tribal or immigrant elders have established and managed sport clubs throughout the Saudi sports history. The widespread affinity with sports prompted Weiner (2009) to discuss the different motivations behind this state of affairs and individual readiness for change "organizational readiness as a shared psychological state in which organizational members feel committed to implementing an organizational change and confident in their collective abilities to do so." (Weiner, 2009, p. 6). Historically, sport shows-off the political power of some Saudi royal family member by imposition of some sports policies.

Table 2-9 Sport organisational development in Saudi state

Saudi Kings	Period	President	Status	Funding	Social representation	Place
King Abdul Aziz 1932-1953	1932-1953	Non	Non-government organization	Personal investment	Volunteers	Social activities place
King Saud 1953-1964	1953-1960	*H.R. Prince Abdullah Al Faisal	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister in cabinet	Interior Ministry
	1960-1962	H.R. Prince Fahd (King later)	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister in cabinet	Ministry of Education
King Faisal 1964-1975	1962-1971	*H.R. Prince Khalid Al Faisal	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister in cabinet	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (included in the first five-year plan)
King Khalid 1975-1982	1971-1982	*H.R. Prince Faisal Bin Fahad	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister in cabinet	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
King Fahd 1982-2005	2000-2011	*H.R. Prince Sultan Bin Fahd	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister not in cabinet	General Presidency for Youth Welfare
King Abdullah 2005-2015	2011- 2014	*H.R. Prince Nawaf Bin Faisal Bin Fahd	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister not in cabinet	General Presidency for Youth Welfare
King Salman 2015-present	2014-present	H.R. Prince Abdullah Bin Musaad	Government agency	Individual & Gov. Subsidies	Minister not in cabinet	General Presidency for Youth Welfare

* Kings son or grandson.

Source: Accomplished by the Author.

In summary, Saudi sports have several values including cultural, religious, political, economical, traditional and contemporary sporting events based on historical social development in the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia's government has encouraged sporting events as part of the youth welfare policy including building sports and leisure facilities in all key towns. The government owned the sport clubs facilities but sport clubs were generally founded by private individuals. The GPYW and the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee are the key sports organisations that have existed for five decades in the country.

2.5.3 Sport organisations in Saudi development plans

Sports clubs plans have always involved the development of sponsorship programmers for sponsoring youth in Saudi Arabia. This link can be explained in the Saudi government's vision of sport as a kind of social welfare and a reaction to the increasing young population in the community. As discussed in previous section, the *first five years development plan* focused on further raising the level of coordination between ministries and government agencies in the field of Sports and Youth Welfare (First Saudi Development Plan Report, 1970. p.175). Under this plan, a network of sports and recreational centres and organisation of programmes for young people were set up. In addition, the focus was more on promoting the establishment of clubs for sports and youth. Continuing to focus on developing sport and youth activities at national and regional levels, the plan has contributed to increasing the status and acceptance of sports across the country. To achieve that, a budget of SAR 36.4 million ($ 9,696,582.22 USD) was provided for youth welfare under overall Ministry of Social Affairs' budget. Around 85% of this budget was allocated for the building of youth welfare and sport centres (see table 2.10).

Table 2-10 Funds for the proposed programmes of youth welfare in first development plan

The Programme	Estimated costs (million)	
	SAR	$
Youth welfare centres category (A) Jeddah, Dammam	20.4	5.44
Youth welfare centres category (C) x 3	10.5	2.8
Strengthen the existing provisions of the activities	1.0	0.27
Allowances of staff	4.5	1.2
Total	36.4	9.71

Source: (MEP, 1970)

Under the second development plan, the government completed the first ten youth centres in different cities (second development plan report 1975, p.600). It also established 53 sport clubs and 9 sports federations including; football, basketball, volleyball, cycling, handball, table tennis, swimming, swordsmanship and athletics. There were officially registered and eligible for subsidies approved by the Council of Ministers in 1974[8]. These subsidies were as follows:

Table 2-11 The GPYW subsidies to sport clubs and sport federations approved by the Council of Ministers in 1974.

Classification	Subsidy	
	(SAR)	($)
Set-up	10,000	2666.67
Equipment and Tools	10,000	2666.67
Maintenance	5,000	1333.33
Any events approved by GPYW	2,000 – 5,000	533.33 - 1333.33

Source: (MEP, 1975)

This plan confirmed the important of religious and social vision in the practice of physical activity. In addition, the table shows goals related to economic development and excellence in sports at all levels including; local, national and international levels. As this report shows, government used broadcasting, television and radio competitions and tours for foreign teams has been in use to motivate youth to participate in sports. As a result, youth have been invited to training, organising tournaments and festivals in sports clubs with holding equipment and identifying sports as well as official sport laws being at the forefront towards the noble initiative.

Table 2-12 Annual budgets for GPYW (Million).during second development plan

Annual budgets	1975		1976		1977		1978		1979		1980		Total	
	SAR	$	SAR	$	SAR	$	SAR	$	SAR	$	SAR	$	SAR	$
Appropriations	56,4	15	108,5	28,9	116,2	31	135,8	36,2	138,3	36,9	164,3	43,8	660,1	176
Projects	86,5	23,1	465,3	124	490,0	130,6	413,0	110,1	315,5	84,1	215,5	57,5	1899,3	506,5
Total	142,9	38,1	570,8	153	606,2	161,6	548,8	146,3	453,8	121	379,8	101,3	2559,4	682,5

Source: (MEP, 1975)

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[8]The Council of Ministers decision number 500 in 1974.

These efforts have prompted Saudi sports to start international partnerships, and the budget approved by the Saudi government aimed to spend SR 2225, 4 million on sport and youth, according to this plan (Second Development Plan Report 1975, p.608).

In *the third development plan* (197-1984), the number of sports clubs increased from 128 with 35,000 participants in 1979, to 154 clubs and 53,000 participants in 1983 (Fourth Development Plan Report, 1985. p.370). The results achieved by the Saudi sports teams increased the interest of government investment in sports (*Fourth Development Plan Report*, 1985, p. 378). The plan involved the private sector support for sporting activities and aimed to work on an economic feasibility study for private sector participation in sports. The budget for Youth Welfare reached SR 7,599,6 million distributed as described in the following table:

Table 2-13 Expenses of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare (Million)

programme names	SAR	$
Construction	4,157.8	1108.7
Maintenance, materials and equipment	1,130.9	301.6
Sport	1,013.5	270.3
Operating and administration	545.7	145.5
Social services	132.6	35.3
Training, research and public information	88.0	44.0
Total	7,599,6	1905.4

Source: (MEP, 1980)

The number of participants in Saudi sport clubs programmes increased to about 81, 000, at the beginning of *the Fifth Plan*. At the same time, the Saudi Arabian teams won the Asian Cup for the second time in 1988 and the World Youth Cup in 1989. The plan allowed for the establishment of 16 youth clubs and 4 sport centres. Throughout the plans, government spending policies had practically defined the national sports economy and with similar objectives to the previous plans, almost 15,166 young people have been enrolled in clubs. The results achieved also played a positive role in bringing international sports teams to Saudi Arabia, even though a lot still needs to be done in projecting the country to international levels (Janin & Besheer, 2003). In spite of the fact that the country continues to grapple with international challenges, the Saudi government shows an interest for sports. This could be explained through the significant socio-economic potential of the sector to the growth of the national economy. Sport teams benefitted from substantial attention and support in the early 1990s, during the Kuwait War. Meanwhile, the government was struggling hard to find an end to deficit in budgets.

Table 2-14 The allocation of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare in the Fifth Development Plan (million).

Expenses (million)	SAR	$
Salaries, supplies and services	2,115	564
Operating & Maintenance	2,119	565
Projects	1,023	272.8
Total	5,257	1401.8

Source: (MEP, 1990)

Notably, the government deficit in the fifth development plan halted construction projects, but sports construction remained constant. As such, government deficit and public debt brought government spending to its lowest level during *the Sixth Development Plan* (MEP M. o., 2011). As a result, clubs experienced delays in the enforcement of governmental subsidies and lack of resources occasioned by budget shortfalls. Moreover, it was shown that the better, projected opportunities (GPYW, 2005) could not prevent sponsorship from decreasing significantly during this period.

The new changing plan in players' contracts to be professional rather than amateur was certainly prevented from being implemented by the fact that honourary members were reluctant to offer financial support. At the end of the Fifth development plan no growth of sport and youth welfare facilities was to be expected. Moreover, government intended to limit sport subsidies, and important reservations on the budgets and funds for sports and youth welfare sector (MEP, 1995; 2000) were included in the reports of the Sixth and Seventh development plans. In the 7th plan, the mission of sport clubs began to shift from government subsidies and social welfare to relying on their own finance sources and investment. It was clear in the seventh development plan that the government desires to encourage the private investment in Saudi sport field with from SR 5926.7 million ($ 1580.5 million) as a budget for the youth and sports sector.

The Government planned to spend SR 5114.9 million ($ 1364 million) in *the Eighth Development Plan* for the activities of sport and youth. This budget was allocated to fund management, operation, maintenance and manpower as well as sports facilities. The Saudi government's decision to reduce spending on youth and sports was due to poor performance of the national teams in the international competitions.

Rashid & Shaheen (1987; 1995) monitored the Saudi government budgets in the sports and yourth sector during the Five-year plan. They stated that in order to encourage sports development physical education teachers have been trained, as part of larger sports, culture, artistic and social activities. Many gymnasiums and Sports fields were built and

the government gave financial support to the various youth and sport clubs in the second five-year plan.The amount of money allocated to the general presidency for youth welfare increased sharply from SAR 22.3 million ($ 5.94 million) in 1973-1974 to SAR 142.9 million ($ 38.1 million) in 1974-1975. In 1976-1977 the amount allocated for this sector was SAR 1,500 million ($ 400 million), by 1981-1982 it jumped again, to nearly two billion Riyals ($ 53 Billion). In the 192 clubs of the country young people could thus benefit from a whole range of recreational and educational activities.

According to the Council members, about 5% of GPYW budget had been allocated to sport facilities projects. However, 95% of GPYW budget went to maintenance and administrative matters, which were revealed to be the real reason behind the delay in many projects.

After having reviewed the modalities in which sports clubs development has been dealt with in Saudi Arabia, the present chapter examined the challenges and problems the authorities met with during the implementation of the development plans, over the last nine decades. However, it has revealed that the level of accountability and disclosure provided by the government regarding the GPYW budgets has been very scanty. Even if these budgets, paid by the king's office, were considered "open budget", the public had no access to the information have presented so far in this study.

As should has shown, in 2002, the Saudi Government adopted a strategy with a central objective of privatisation of sports clubs, which critical opinion readily termed as fastening government control of the industry. In light of the latter argument, Saudi Arabia's economic improvement plan could be attributed to the increase in private investment in telecommunications and lower government control of sports rather than more political influence of the whole process. The Shura Council report published in 2008 shows interest of many companies to buy or own some sports clubs (Aleqtesadia, 2008). The Council and Saudi Sport Street have constantly called for complete privatisation of sport clubs in order to project greater level of growth in the country.

The Shura Council in 2010 discussed the GPYW reports and how the budget was spent, plans for operation and development. In this context, according to GPYW annual report for the fiscal year 2009, the apparent decline in performance of many sports and youth activities comparing with the previous reports could be accounted for by the inappropriate government priority in sport and youth sector (Shura Council Report, 2010). In light of this debate, this paper has identified calls to restructure this sector including rationalising spending on offices and sports facilities maintenance and cleaning contracts. In addition, Shura members stated that it was essential to speed up the privatisation plan for sports

clubs and sports cities, transforming plans into profitable businesses run by the private sector as a way to serving the largest number of community (Deady, 2005; Gordon & Broberg, 2003).

In summary, it can be argued that the Saudi's sports economy is characterised by substantial fluctuations at the level of government funding of different youth clubs including sport clubs. Therefore, owing to the slow government response to the development of the country's sports industry, private sport clubs and gyms have strived to fill the gap by investment in the modern sport facilities and services. As a result, the culture of spending high amount of money in order to get involved in private sports club or gym has increasingly become part and parcel of the Saudi sports economy. Nevertheless, the Saudi goverment and many people within the Saudi society remain focussed on ensuring the success of public sport clubs privatisation strategy as a main engine of the Saudi sports economy (Gordon & Broberg, 2003).

A summary of the development plans in the Saudi sports sector reveals how, throughout the country and sport development history, there has been an increase in the number of sports clubs including various youth activities. However, the decline in the number of sports clubs across the country towards the end of the 20th century was triggered by dwindling investment opportunities in this field, as was evident in the government's gradual reduction of subsidies for sports. The Kuwait war of the early nineties and its economic impacts is partly responsible for the slow development of the Saudi sports economy. Eventually, the government opted to put the management of sports clubs in private hands. However, the privatisation decision was implemented without proper plans to back up this initiative. The challenge then raises the issue of who should decide when sports privatisation is ripe in the country and how to go about the issue. The shortfalls of a government-led management of sports have turned sports analysts to believe in the capacity of the private sector. Interestingly, the private sector has its own short-term interests in sports development, which could affect the long-term goals of sustainable sports even as the government rolled out its plans.

2.6 National plans for privatisation sport clubs

Discussions regarding the national plans for the privatisation of sport clubs have revealed the unique characteristics of the sport industry, which may not be in complete agreement with conventional practices within the business world. Neale (1964) described professional team sports as having 'peculiar economics', due to the unique nature of professional sport organisations which makes them different from other conventional

business organisations (Neale, 1964). As shown in the paper, conflicts between sporting objectives and economic objectives have limited sports growth in Saudi Arabia.

The regulation of the sport industry differs slightly from other sectors of the economy, a strategy that has inherently evaded Saudi sports managers and policy makers. Saudi sports regulatory authorities impose various restrictions on issues which may affect the competitive behaviour in clubs such as the transfer system and restrictions on the cross ownership of clubs. Formulating economic policies for stabilising and growing a sports economy can be complicated by opposing interests of various stakeholders in the industry (Dakhil, 1988). Whereas the investors in the sports sector, such as sport sponsorship, tend to be keen on maximising its investment income by showing the sector is self-sufficient in a country where taxes do not exist and without regulation for corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the professional sport industry. Sheth and Babiak (2010) study examined a number of important factors influenced organisational variables for sport (winning, revenues, and team value). Moreover, Carroll (1979) argued that "companies must profit in order for remain in business and benefit society in the professional sport industry" (Carroll, 1979). Also, these study highlight professional sport executives define practice relationship with reported corporate social responsibility (CSR) involvement (Sheth & Babiak, 2010, p. 434).As a result, the sport investors often blame the government regulations as the reason for the lack of return from investments in the sports sector. However, in an attempt to trade-off revenue collection and motivation of the income generators, the government normally implements subsidies for the Saudi clubs and players and the manufacturers respectively.

In the context of Saudi sports, sport clubs have been compared to any other business organisations, despite the fact that there is a special relationship between a club and not only the local community, but the generations of fans as well (Kelly, Lewis, & Mortimer, 2012). Owing to the lack of competent staffing of sports club officials and key players in the sports industry, there is need for Saudi Arabia to bolster professionalism of clubs in order to expand the fan-base and revenue.

Moreover, in recent years the sports industry has become more business oriented. As Morrow (1999) noted, excessive business-mindedness may affect the quality of sports by prompting profit maximisation (Morrow, 1999).

As far as the government plan for privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia is concern, it is arguably aimed at enabling the private sector to maximise profits. The government intends to privatise major sports clubs by enticing potential investors with subsidy removal from the equation. Similarly, there are some proprietors and presidents of some

sport clubs in Saudi Arabia who want to be assured of their ownership rights. The claims build on the grounds that the state had asked owners to transfer those clubs activities to new facilities and the state does not buy them ownership. As the government asserted, the sports clubs ownership is not transferred to private parties, but its management is unprofessional. This argument is practical, especially for proprietors with long-term investment plans in the industry tracing to five decades ago; however, critics argue that such confusion has the potential to damage if not completely discard sports in the country. As such, the government has spent large sums of money on sport clubs, as its owner and, it is presumably responsible for their slow development. On the other hand, there are also the sports clubs founders, who see their right to ownership of clubs as the ultimate goal, despite the fact that they too have parochial interests.

Alkhames (2011) and Alsaatey(2000) suggested that donations and financial assistance from honourary members still constitute a major source of income for football clubs in Saudi Arabia. This reflects the desire to continue having central control of clubs as a way of achieving prominence and fame by individual persons or group of persons, but one that should be complemented by concern for sports in order to ensure practical success. Choosing the right model for transferring sport clubs ownership is really important, to begin with, in designing a strategy to not only for achieving privatisation of sports clubs in Saudi Arabia, but ensuring their effective management in the new hands.

Sports privatisation is both advantageous and disadvantageous to the general management and performance of the sector. Opponents of the practice cite a disruption of social policies, which governments have put in place to guide sports management within their respective jurisdictions. This implies that moderate political control of sports will technically reassign sports management to the government.

The western countries are at the forefront in ensuring that their respective sports industries are privatised for more positive outcomes in the form of modernising the sports facilities, proper remuneration of the sportspersons and the technical teams, and remission of tax revenue to the government (Burgn & Prinznn, 2005).

A number of sports privatisation models were successfully implemented in around the world. For instance, in the UK, sports contributed by $14 billion to the budget as of 2013, which translates into 2% of the economy. With sport-related employment opportunities being more than 900,000 or 4% of all jobs in the country, the sector is one of the top 15 best performers in Britain and well above key sectors of the economy such as automobile, telecommunications services, publishing, and advertising among others (Yongfeng, 2013).

Nourayi (2006) argues that unlike the widely publicised privatisation processes of other companies, Western countries have witnessed more silent change of ownership of sports clubs from public to private investors (Nourayi, 2006). However, this does not mean the handing over processes have been carried out under unclear circumstances. Farag and Brittain (2009) noted the clear handing over procedures and the positive economic impacts of sports activities, which extend to better health among the population are some of the most vital outcomes of better management of sports by private parties. The reviewing and understanding of Western privatisation models could be useful in understanding the challenges of sports privatisation in Saudi Arabia (Wilmath, 2003).

A significant body of research in sports privatisation shows that globally, almost all countries tend to favour the impacts and prospects of sports privatisation due to the underlying potential to turn the social events into important business tools for better economic development (Holman, 2008; Brewer, 2006; Contavespi & Jaffe, 1994; Cohen A. D., 1992; Sloane, 1984). Generally, most states that have recorded important successes in sports have taken measures aimed at facilitating privatisation of sports because such initiatives lead to better management of the sector. Besides, privatisation fosters intra-club and inter-club competition and brings value to the economy in as much the same way as other conventional sectors of the economy (Foley, Frew, McGillivray, McIntosh, & McPherson, 2004). But, without a proper system of privatisation and management of sports, the strategy can register modest gains if not turn out as a total flop.

2.7 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to review and discuss the political economy of sports clubs privatisation in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, the dynamics of the Saudi political economy have been discussed, including the key stakeholders and practitioners involved in the privatisation process, with a focus on the Saudi Arabian context.

Therefore, after establishing the more general framework for analysis, the chapter has reviewed a series of successful privatisation initiatives, finally reducing the scope and addressing the background to Saudi sports, discussing sports both in the context of the wider Arabian Peninsula and Islam, and specifically in relation to the Saudi state. Equally, the places of sports organisations in Saudi development plans, as well as the national plans for the privatisation of sports clubs have been discussed.

Saudi sport is based on historical and social developments in the Arabian Peninsula. The sport activity in the Arabian Peninsula is influenced by religion, receptive culture and the Saudi state. These factors shaped the sport participation and sports practices norms,

customs, traditions and restrictions. Moreover, in order to understand the sports in Saudi Arabia, the social, political and economic principles must understood and taken into account in studying Saudi context.

One of the key aspects involved in the present analysis consisted in identifying the role of *practitioners*, *practices* and *praxis* in implementation of the Saudi sport clubs privatisation strategy. As pointed out in the present research, the main actors involved in the privatisation of sports clubs in Saudi Arabia are religion, monarchy and the wider society, all likely to have deep implication in the running of sports clubs and, implicitly, on their privatisation.

Additionally, the specialised literature has pointed to the benefits, but also the possible problems posed by privatisation. Among the privatisation benefits discussed there are efficiency improvement, management shift, economy liberalisation, competitiveness, and an improved service level. However, there are also potential problems in the way of privatisation comprise lack of, or insufficient political commitment, implementation delay caused by managers, the absence of a well-established private sector, and the absence of adequate regulations. For the purposes of the present analysis and in the context of the Saudi state, this chapter has pointed to a series of challenges specific to this case, namely delays in the privatisation strategy approval, lack of a strong capital market, the absence of a regulatory framework likely to facilitate privatisation, or the absence of viable accounting standards.

Moreover, the tension between ownership of sport clubs and their management was identified as an important barrier to privatisation. That is, the lack of formal management – up to the 1950s – the scarcity of regulations and the reduced role of the government were detrimental to the management of sports activities. Furthermore, as seen in the present research, these problems went as far as to led to the banning of the sporting activity between 1939 and 1946, a state of affairs which still persists nowadays in the form of the antagonises that still pervade between the clubs ownership and their management. Based on the above discussion, study could conclude that privatisation is a challenging task for any state including Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the present analysis has shown that the privatisation of sport clubs is a political project, which is designed to serve particular interests, and as such it always creates tensions between different actors involved.

The Saudi government experience in planning management via the 5-year national development plans was effective for managing sports at the early stages. Poor performance of the government management in sports as evidenced in the fewer spectator

attendances at live sports events and the poor performance of national teams in various international competitions led the beginning of privatisation of sports club in Saudi Arabia. The government management of the sport sector was no longer socially and economically acceptable regarding to the levels of inefficiencies in the handling of sports services. Also, sport sector under-performing government officials tend to get a greater level of reprieve when they are answerable to a business-inclined private investor.

Furthermore, this study has shown that NDP as important instruments for shaping the 'praxis' of privatisation, which was seen as a solution to the government's decision to end its subsidising of the sports clubs. Saudi government has taken the option of combining sports clubs to the privatisation policy in 2002. This governmental practice to strengthen the role of the private sector in ensuring moderate regulation of the several sectors consistent with national policy working on improve the national economy and social services.

Another important aspect that should be brought to the fore in the present analysis refers to the fact that, historically and traditionally sport administrative managers and employees are not professionals they working part time as volunteers to manage clubs as part of their social responsibility in Saudi society.

On the whole, this privatisation sport clubs strategy progress was not satisfactory so far. Therefore, further research is required to identify the relationship between strategy and strategising and the obstacles in sports privatisation and to recommend possible solutions in resolving the obstacles in Saudi Arabian context.

Chapter 3 Strategy and Strategising

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses issues that are central to the understanding of the core concepts of 'strategy' and 'strategising'. The chapter also complements and completes the previous chapter by critically reviewing relevant literature with the aim of developing an appropriate theoretical framework upon which the subsequent empirical study will be based. The main units of analysis for the empirical part are also developed in this chapter.

The chapter comprises two main parts. The first part critically reviews the conceptual definitions of strategy and strategising. The two concepts are then compared and contrasted based on a review of the existing literature. Here, the study pays particular attention to the evolution of the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts throughout many years of strategy and management research as well as practice. Important milestones in this evolution will be discussed, thus helping understand past progress and future research directions. In this context, the key features and contribution of the strategy-as-practice (i.e. strategising), as a novel research agenda, are particularly highlighted. Part one concludes by critically reviewing some of the existing research on strategy and strategising within the field of sport management.

The second part examines in more depth the concept and practice of strategising through comparing and contrasting the various existing approaches to studying strategising. This part is split into two main sections. Firstly, the activity-based view is explained in detail as it constitutes the preferred approach adopted for the purposes of this research. Here, various key theoretical concepts of strategising are discussed in detail including the various strategising patterns, types of strategising, forms of legitimacy as well as the strategising matrix. Many of these concepts subsequently form the main units of analysis to be applied in the empirical part. In order to complete the theoretical framework, the second section builds on the previous one by discussing the three key domains of strategising as identified in strategy research, namely practitioners, praxis, and practices. The section also reviews the different categories of practices as well as the level of interconnectedness between the three domains of strategising.

3.2 Overview of the strategy and strategising debate

This section critically discusses issues related to the theoretical underpinning of strategy and strategising. Several issues that are still subject to debate within academia are also highlighted. Summary tables are used in order to highlight the key developments in

strategy research as well as important milestones supported by a comprehensive review of the existing empirical and theoretical evidence.

3.2.1 **Strategy**

Conceptual definitions of strategy have changed over time to the current meaning of the term as it is used in academia and practice. Moreover, different schools of thought and different academic disciplines vary in the definition and conceptual meaning of 'strategy'. The original usage of the term strategy was in the eighteenth century when it was linked with military phenomenon before it spread to ordinary usage in language (Chris, Stewart, & Martin, 2008; Gartner, 1997; Matloff, 1996). In its military usage, the term referred to the main terms and conditions that a battle or war is fought on and whether it is prudent for the army to engage in the war at all (Chris, Stewart, & Martin, 2008; Matloff, 1996). Linguistically, the word strategy comes from the Greek word *strategia* which refers to a commander or the office of the army general (Carpenter, 2005). It may also derive from another related Greek word, namely *stratos* which literally means "army" (Chris, Stewart, & Martin, 2008).

The term has had several changes in meaning and usage especially in the nineteenth century. The several meanings of the word strategy have been developed to accommodate the various contexts in which the term is used, such as in games, leadership and management as well as in planning (Matloff, 1996; Mintzberg, 1987; Carpenter, 2005).Al-Bader (2008)strongly believed that the actual root of strategy was related to the Arabic word for tactics which referred to the action of achieving or implementing one or more specific tasks and included several subsets of skills (Al-Bader , 2008). This is evidence of the existence of the concept of strategy in the Arab context.

In addition to the linguistic origins of strategy, and before reviewing the various conceptual definitions of the term within contemporary management literature, it is worth briefly understanding the origins and development of this concept in the context of Islamic thought. As has already been discussed in previous chapter, in the context of Saudi Arabia, principles of Islamic thought have had some effect on the understating of strategic management as well as on the practitioners of strategy. This highlights the fact that the concept of strategy can indeed have different interpretations depending on different cultural contexts within which it is studied. Hence, the understanding of the

context of Islamic thought is deemed to be beneficial in the contextual positioning of the proposed research.[9]

At a very basic level, Islamic thought and practice assigns significant importance to the concept of planning. It urges those who follow and practice the Islamic creed to think and adequately prepare for the future. The concept of planning in Islam can be described as a process of organising and choosing the best means to reach a particular goal.

An obvious similarity in the understanding of the strategy concept between Western and Islamic schools of thought is that they both originate and are often closely related to the art of military warfare. In this context, one can find in the holy Quran and various other Islamic texts that the word 'strategy' appears frequently to symbolise the importance of planning and preparing for war. Likewise, one can find in the Quran a number of passages stressing the importance of planning in order to face times of hardship such as in the storey of the Prophet Yûsuf (Joseph):

> *"[(Yûsuf (Joseph)]* said: "For seven consecutive years, you shall sow as usual and that (the harvest) which you reap you shall leave it in the ears, (all) except a little of it which you may eat. (47) Then will come after that, seven hard (years), which will devour what you have laid by in advance for them, (all) except a little of that which you have guarded (stored). (48) Then thereafter will come a year in which people will have abundant rain and in which they will press (wine and oil). (49)."* (Quran 12:47-492)

Hence, the concept of planning in Islamic thought can be seen as the optimal use of resources, possibilities and conditions for the development and improvement of the individual and society in all its aspects. Moreover, and on a spiritual level, planning in this way can be considered as a form of worship and becoming closer to God.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, it can be interestingly noticed that within policy-making and administrative circles, arguments based on religious grounds are often used as an important *vehicle* in the communication and implementation of official decrees and strategic decision-making. In many instances, the deployment of such religious underpinnings can be interpreted as a form of seeking credibility and a sort of legitimacy to serve the decision making process.

By synthesising the linguistic origins of the strategy concept within both contemporary and Islamic literatures, a common basic definition is that strategy can be understood as:

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[9] See Chapter two for more details on the political economy context of this research.

the art and science of advance planning (set of stratagems) for achieving success in targeted situations such as war, politics, business, industry or games.

Within academia and professional practice, the field of strategy has long traditions and has been a well-established scientific discipline for more than forty years. Conventional definitions of strategy explain it as a plan of action designed to achieve the basic goals and objectives of an enterprise (Mintzberg.,1987). Strategy is also defined as a long-range planning tool with the aim of achieving specific long-term organisational goals (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The latter is highlighted for instance by the rise in related concepts such as 'strategic planning' and 'strategic management'.

More advanced definitions of the concept explore deeper issues. Slack & Parent (2006) argue that "strategy is more than goals and objectives, it also involves the means by which goals are to be achieved", (p. 111). Moreover, strategy promotes coordination of organisational activities and focuses efforts towards achieving specific organisational objectives. It also reduces ambiguity and defines how organisations should be working towards these objectives (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998). Das (1990) cited in (Slack, 1997) define strategy along similar lines:

> *"Strategy is a comprehensive and integrated plan with relatively long-term implications designed to achieve the basic objectives of the organization. It incorporates the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and takes into account the environmental realities and trends. It includes decisions to compete in specific product-market segments, to diversify, to expand, to reduce or even close down specific operations or sub-units" (p.249).*

Chandler (1962) asserts that "strategy can be defined as the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals" (p.13). As both Chandler and Das had put it, the main role of strategy is to chart out the course of an organisation. Chandler and Das' definitions include other important issues, such as decisions, determination, environmental realities, trends and courses of action.

Other alternative definitions of strategy exist such as that of Bryson (1988)in which strategy is described as "a pattern of purposes, policies, programmes, actions, decisions and/or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does and why it does it" (p.77). The author points out that "[his] definition is purposely broad in order to focus attention on the creation of consistency across rhetoric (what people say), choices (what people decide and are willing to pay for) and actions (what people do)". This highlights three important issues in the context of the proposed research, namely attitudes,

reactions, and behaviours of organisational actors. Hence, "effective strategy formulation and implementation processes will link rhetoric, choices and actions into a coherent and consistent pattern across levels, functions and time" (Bryson, 1988, p. 77).

Strategy is also defined as "a pattern in a stream of goal-directed activity over time" (Lounsbury M. , 2006, p. 97) giving the notion of strategy a kind of 'durability'. A clear limitation of the various conventional definitions of strategy up to this point is that strategy formulation is rather detached from the action plans by which various organisational agents can achieve those goals.

At a basic organisational context level, strategy is concerned with classical questions such as 'where do we want to go?' and 'how do we organise to get there?' These may seem rather simple at a first glance, but they underpin deeper issues of strategy and organisation. Pye & Pettigrew (2006) argue that these types of questions "seem to prioritize strategy over structure" (p.583), in other words structure ought to follow strategy. Moreover, it seems rather intuitive to argue that "you need to know where you want to go to before you decide how to organize to get there" (Pye & Pettigrew, 2006, p. 583). This stance has had almost universal support over many decades of strategy research and practice, however the authors posit that some of the basic assumptions underpinning this Chandlerian view may need revising and further probing in light of some key recent developments in strategy research and practice.

3.2.2 **Strategising**

Strategising is comprehensively and critically discussed in this part as a relatively recent concept within management research and practice. Strategising is also put in a historical context in this section. Furthermore, various misunderstandings and potential conflicts between the concepts of strategy and strategising are further clarified and discussed by systematically comparing and contrasting the main features of the two concepts.

3.2.2.1 Strategising, processual research and the resource-based view
The practice-based research agenda in strategy partly builds on the processual research perspective. Process research in strategy is a longstanding tradition in the field and was pioneered by Bower, Mintzberg and Pettigrew among others in the 1970s and 1980s.

> *"The tradition of process research has evolved to examine the dynamic study of behaviour in organizations, seeking to understand how things evolve over time and why they evolve in this way. Critical to this approach is a focus upon sequences of incidents, activities and actions as they unfold, and a careful analysis of the contexts in which they are situated."* (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003, p. 111)

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) argue that there is some debate about the extent to which the 'strategy-as-practice' research agenda is distinct from traditional strategy process research. For instance, some researchers claim that the terms 'practice' and 'process' are in fact used interchangeably, while others suggest that the practice-based approach is just a sub-category of process research. According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), and based on prior work, there exist some key differences between the two research agendas.

Firstly, the practice-based view differs from traditional process research in "its focus on the production and reproduction of strategic action, rather than seeking to explain strategic change and firm performance" (p.70). Secondly, the practice-based approach addresses multi levels of action and interaction within the organisation not just the macro level of firms and markets. A further distinction is that the practice-based approach "provides insights beyond studying organizational processes and embeds strategising activities in the wider practices of societies" (p.70). This latter point regarding the tacit link between strategising activities and the wider social, cultural and economic context is envisaged to be quite pertinent to the proposed research. This is highlighted, for instance, by the important role of religious beliefs, culture, customs and traditions in shaping the wider context within Saudi society.

Loosely, but still importantly related to the discussion of process research, another traditional perspective within strategy research that is worth highlighting is the resource-based view. This view of strategy assumes that firms can be conceptualised as bundles of resources, that those resources are heterogeneously distributed across firms, and that resource differences persist over time (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Hence, according to the resource-based view, organisational strategy places important significance on comprehending how various firms attract, allocate, develop and bundle available resources, as well as transforming them into organisation-specific, valuable and unique resource bases (Wernerfelt, 1984). Based on these fundamental assumptions, research has identified a series of qualities that characterise a resource base that creates the potential for the firm to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984). In this perspective, the actual strategising practice of attracting, allocating and developing firm resources thus will substantially shape the resulting firm strategy and performance (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). It is quite evident that the strategy-as-practice agenda does indeed incorporate various key elements of the resource-based view even though the scope is much wider. Hence, in the context of the proposed research, some elements of the resource-based view will be incorporated into the study in order to achieve a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

Finally, the practice-based perspective research agenda also partly builds on advances in social theory as represented by Weick (1979). The social theory research agenda places organisational actors and actions at the centre of attention in organisational life. Bourdieu (1977) and de Certeau (1988), for instance, assert that "the social theory of practice approaches phenomena not as properties of particular groups, organisations or societies, but fundamentally as things that people do" (cited in Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p.617). A discussion of various linkages between practice-based strategy and social theory research is indeed useful but beyond the scope of the proposed research.

3.2.2.2 Strategising defined

Strategising means "the continuous formation and transformation of strategic and organisational patterns of activities" (Melin, Ericson, & Müllern, 1999, p.5). The alternative term to strategising is the 'activity-based view', which was originally used by Johnson, Melin, & Whittington (2003) and has since been subsumed within the broader 'strategy-as-practice' research agenda (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Within the existing academic literature, the strategising concept also tends to be associated with another alternative widely-used concept, namely 'strategy-as-practice' (Whittington, 2002; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whittington, Johnson, & Merlin, 2004). Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl (2007) states that "from a strategy-as-practice perspective, strategy is conceptualised as a situated, socially accomplished activity, while strategising comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity" (p.7).

The strategising concept entails that strategy formation evolves from the continuous flow of practices, processes and interactions in any given organisational daily life. These practices and interactions are embedded within the ongoing organisational process, which is different from one organisation to another (Whittington, 1999; Nygaard & Bengtsson, 2002; Johnson & Scholes, 2002; Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003). Furthermore, the strategising concept also entails that strategy formation can either be deliberate or emergent and can be formed through both formal and informal means (Eden & Ackermann, 1998; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003). Eden & Ackermann(1998) assert that emergent or informal strategising should not, however, be understood as random.

The strategising perspective shifts the focus towards organisational processes, practices and inter-individual interactions occurring at different levels in different organisational contexts, and the related strategic outcomes (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003). Hence, the strategising perspective is not only concerned with organisational macro level

but is instead a multi-level approach with significant emphasis also placed on the micro organisational level, therefore addressing issues and activities not always taken into account by the macro-perspectives of strategy formation. The 'practice' part in strategising "refers both to the situated doings of the individual human beings (micro) and to the different socially defined practices (macro) that the individuals are drawing upon in these doings (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p.6-7). Therefore, strategising, as a research agenda, focuses on "the activities of individuals, groups, and networks of people upon which these key processes and practices depend" (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003, p.14). The strategising perspective necessitates that a micro focus is essential for understanding the social, interactive, socio-cultural and socio-psychological aspects of strategy formulation and the role of organisational agents. Consequently, this approach places significant importance on developing stronger, practice-based links between micro- and macro-phenomena (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Furthermore, "a substantial part of the strategising agenda is about understanding tacit, deeply embedded, and therefore hard to get at phenomena" (Balogun, Anne, & Phyl, 2003, p. 199). Issues related to organisational culture such as norms and values are examples of tacit and embedded phenomena.

3.2.2.3 Features of the strategising school of thought

The strategising or strategy-as-practice school of thought is characterised by a number of features, some of which exhibit a departure from the traditional ways of thinking and doing research associated with strategy. The main features as well as the potential benefits and contribution of this research agenda are briefly summarised in the subsequent two sub-sections.

The first key feature worth highlighting is that the proponents of this school of thought, such as Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006), adopt a practice-based view whereby concepts and terms such as 'strategy' and 'organisation' are replaced by more dynamic process ones such as 'strategising' and 'organising'. For instance, the concept of organising goes beyond organisational structure; and the way an organisation is organised affects its ability to strategise (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006). Hence, there is clear emphasis on a practice-based approach and 'doing' strategy as well as the importance of practical activities in strategy formulation and analysis.[10] "Strategy-as-practice...as a research topic is concerned with the doing of strategy; who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use, and what implications this has for shaping

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[10] See later sections in this chapter for a more specific discussion of various strategising activities.

strategy" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 69). Furthermore, according to this view, strategy is not something that an organisation 'has' but something its members 'do' (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). Hence, 'strategising' can be equated to the 'doing of strategy' with a re-shifting of the focus towards human activity. Therefore strategising practices/ activities, on the one hand, and organisational practitioners/ actors on the other become two fundamental components in the strategising framework.[11] This approach exhibits a significant departure from traditional formal strategy making and analysis.

The second feature of strategising is that it shows some clear and important differences from the traditional view of strategy as strict and orderly sequences between the analytical formulations of strategy along various stages until its smooth implementation. Instead, strategising requires the continuous adjustment of organisational strategies and thus it becomes a constantly evolving and changing activity. It requires "the mastery of the skills and tools of organizing and reorganizing" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p. 617) which then become just as important as organisational design and formal strategy formulation. The concept and practice of strategising becomes not only evident but also a necessary response tool if one considers the nature of modern organisations and the wider business environment. The latter is crucially characterised by fiercely competitive environments and a notable acceleration of change processes. These characteristics are further amplified as we have seen by the widespread globalisation phenomenon particularly over the last two decades (Nadler & Nadler, 1998; Wilson, 1992). Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006) argue that "this acceleration of change promotes a practice perspective on strategy and organisation that is attentive to the hands-on skills of practical activity" (p. 617).

To shed further light on the more subtle differences between strategising and the traditional view of strategy, Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith(2006) adopt the middle view that whilst formal strategy analysis is still relevant to the organisation, it is nevertheless required to be continuously renewed through a "greater appreciation of the everyday practical, non-analytical skills required to carry it out" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p. 2). This view is not as extreme as that of Mintzberg's classical 'crafting' metaphor in which formal strategy analysis is seen as no more than a distraction. In his stance, Mintzberg uses the famous analogy of a strategist being compared to a potter. He therefore considers strategy as being 'crafted' through emergent

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[11]See figures 3-1and 3-3 in later parts of this chapter for more on this point.

processes as opposed to deliberate strategy formation. Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith(2006) extend and support the idea that organisational agents and managers are seen as 'craftspeople', adopting a hands-on approach and thus shaping strategic goals and directions in an almost intuitive fashion. Various authors make use of Mintzberg's 'crafting' metaphor in order to emphasise the importance of practical tools whereby the 'potter's wheel' in Mintzberg's metaphor is simply replaced by mundane practical tools within modern organisations such as flipcharts, mobile phones, computers, Power points and so on. Furthermore, this crafting metaphor is then applied to formal strategy making, which is paradoxically the very notion that Mintzberg's theory attempts to critique (Mintzberg, 1987; Weick, 1987; Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008).

Additional features of the strategy-as-practice school of thought are further discussed by Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006). The authors argue that the strategising agenda and perspective entail three major shifts in focus. Firstly, the shift from "states to activities" whereby organisational strategy is seen as a continuous set of strategising and organising activities performed strenuously and sometimes artfully by organisational agents including but not restricted to those at the management level. The second major shift is the move from the "the analytical to the practical" whereby routine activities become the focal point of strategy making not just the traditional analytical sequence from strategy formulation to implementation. Strategising is intensely practical and "detached [formal] analysis" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p. 618) takes lesser importance due to the intensity of rapid change. Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006) clarify this observation further; "to strategise or to organize both require a command of interpersonal skills, communications technologies, software modelling and scheduling devices that are easily taken for granted" (p.618). The third and final important shift according to Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006) is the shift from "dualism to duality" whereby strategising and organising "become very similar or even common", often running together as simultaneous activities in an organisational environment shaped by interdependencies, not separation, complexity rather than superficial simplification, and the untidy reality of organisations rather than simple analytical clarity.

One remaining issue that is worth highlighting is the role and importance of context in the strategy-as-practice agenda. As Hall (2003) asserts, strategising entails sensitivity to context. Despite the fact that prior research in the strategy and management fields did pay significant attention to contextual issues such as cognition, power, learning, culture, and politics as important features of strategy (Hall, 2003), the strategising approach puts even

more emphasis on the importance of contextualisation. Strategising requires that micro phenomena are to be understood in their wider social, political, and economic contexts in which strategic action has occurred; "actors are not acting in isolation but are drawing upon the regular, socially defined modes of acting that arise from the plural social institutions to which they belong" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 6). "Much of the social infrastructure, such as tools, technologies and discourses, through which micro-actions are constructed, has macro, institutionalized properties that enable its transmission within and between contexts" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 6).

3.2.2.4 Development and contribution of the strategising research agenda

"The field of strategy-as-practice research has grown rapidly in recent years..." (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 5). There exist a number of reasons behind the rise of this approach to conducting strategy research.

Firstly, since the pioneering work of a number of strategy scholars such as Porter (2008), Hamel (2000)and Eisenhardt & Sull (2001), strategy research has mostly focused on and been largely based on the micro-economics research tradition. A prime drawback of this research tradition is the marginalisation of the human being in an organisational context. Related to this is the resulting over-focus on the macro level of firms and markets, thus reducing strategy analysis and formulation to a few causally related variables in which human action is scarcely taken into account (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007).

Secondly, many proponents of the practice-based approach argue that the field of strategy research has seen an increasing dissatisfaction with conventional strategy research (see, for instance, Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Hence, strategy-as-practice challenges some of the assumptions of the conventional approach and offers renewed avenues for research in the field.

Thirdly, a major concern about conventional strategy research is that strategy theorising and formulation is mostly based on macro level variables such as industry-level effects, economic considerations and firm performance. This particular focus of conventional strategy research on economic foundations has, according to Johnson, Melin, & Whittington (2003), led to a major limitation in that there is too little or not enough attention paid to micro-level events and the internal dynamics of the firm. Additionally and more importantly, one can quite clearly notice the apparent absence and marginalisation of the role of human agents, their actions as well as their interactions within the firm (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). "Strategy-as-practice may thus be seen as part of a broader concern to humanize

management and organization research" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 6); (also Weick, 1979; Pettigrew, Thomas, & Whittington, 2002). The strategy-as-practice research agenda is therefore primarily concerned with "living beings whose emotions, motivations and actions shape strategy" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 70). It is also worth noting that, in an organisational sense, these 'living beings' are not just confined to one group of elite organisational actors such as top managers only, a 'bias' that is frequently encountered even in those prior studies that explicitly incorporate the role of human actors. Thus, in order to reemphasise and as already postulated in this chapter, the practice-based perspective on strategy addresses multiple levels of action and interaction rather than just the wider macro firm level.

In addition to what has already been discussed, the strategising research agenda has numerous potential benefits and contribution. Firstly, the strategising approach can contribute towards a better understanding of how daily behaviour in organisations creates strategic choices and consequences. This becomes particularly important when realising that strategic advantage is most often found in embedded, idiosyncratic routines (Barney, 1995; Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001). Furthermore, by explicitly factoring the relationships between strategies and everyday actions in the study of strategising, this approach will allow for a better understanding of the social dynamics involved in strategy making and formulation (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Secondly, the study of strategising entails a practical-evaluation bridging the gap between the strategy actors, activities and strategy target achievement. It also provides a conceptual bridge between a range of dichotomies within organisational life such as strategic thinking and acting, and strategy formulation and implementation. "Practical-evaluative agency is thus a way that managers bridge the gap between strategic thinking and acting and strategy formulation and implementation in practice" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 32).

Thirdly, another clear contribution of the strategy-as-practice approach is that by being sensitive to the practicalities involved in strategising and organising, the approach can "identify the concrete skills and practices that managers actually use, as they are adapted to the needs of particular contexts" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p. 618). The strategising research agenda "has thus been proposed as a means of furthering the study of social complexity and causal ambiguity in the resource-based view, unpacking the dynamism in dynamic capabilities theory and explaining the practice that constitutes strategy process" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 70).

In summary, Table 3-1 traces the evolution in strategy research and academic literature over the past four decades, and highlights the key milestones in this journey. It can be clearly noticed from the summary table that current attention received by the strategy-as-practice, or strategising research agenda is a natural culmination of various stages in the development of strategy research over the years. Strategising is therefore a relatively new concept, when compared to other longstanding strategic concepts such as strategic planning. This implies that it will be some time before researchers see its wider applications in strategy research including in the sport management domain. This latter point is clearly evident within the discussion that follows in the next section regarding the current status of research on strategy and strategising within the sport management field.

Table 3-1 A summary of the key theoretical and empirical developments in strategy and strategising research (1970-2014).

Author(s)	Study and concept development	Findings and conceptual contribution
(Andrews R. R., 1971; Uyterhoeven, 1972; Hofer & Schendel, 1978; MacMillan, 1978; Steiner, 1979; Moskow, 1987)	Corporate strategy concept; Strategy and organisation; Strategy formulations; Strategic behaviourin business and government; Strategic planning.	Export the concept of strategy to strategic planning in the business world.

The confusion surrounding strategy contributed to the demise of strategic planning in the late 1980s.

	The corporate strategy concept.	The concept of "realised" or emergent strategy; Business strategy as the basis of competition.
(Summer, 1980; Andrews K. R., 1980; Tregoe & Zimmerman, 1980; Pettigrew A. M., 1985; Pettigrew., 1987; Pettigrew A. M., 1992; Porter., 1986; Porter ,. M., 1998; Hambrick, 1989; Van de Ven, 1992) (Pettigrew A. M., 1992; Van de Ven, 1992; Mintzberg., 1994; Yin_, 1994; Treacy & Wiersema, 1995; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Tsoukas, 1996; Whittington., 1996; Porter ,. M., 1998)	Top Management Strategy; Strategic leadership.	Strategy as framework that guides choices determining organisational nature and direction; Companies pursue leadership positions;
	What is Strategy?; Competitive Strategy.	Strategy is about competitive positioning; need choice of different activities to deliver a unique mix of value; Competitive strategy as "a combination of the ends (goals) and the means (policies)".
	Studying strategy process; Strategy process research; What is processual analysis?	The sequence of 'individual and collective events, actions, and activities over time'
	Case study research: design and methods.	studying the strategy process from the perspective of centre strategy team
	The rise and fall of strategic planning.	Strategic management and thinking strategically; Strategy is a plan, a pattern in actions over time, position, perspective; Strategy emerges over time; Organisations benefit from using both transactive and generative modes of strategising.
	The discipline of market leaders.	The basis of strategy formulation; Companies achieve leadership positions by narrowing, not broadening their business focus;
	Strategy-as-practice.	Raises the issue of distributed strategy activity; Studying strategising activities of strategy teams across multi organisational levels.

In the beginning of the 21st Century, various strategy concepts became the norm in management research and practice as well as other disciplines

(Brown & Duguid, 2001)	Knowledge and organisation: A social practice perspective.	The detailed actions that constitute a strategy process.

Author(s)	Study and concept development	Findings and conceptual contribution
(Orlikowski, 2002)	Knowing in practice: Enacting a collective capability in distributive organizing.	raises the issue of distributed strategy activity; Studying the strategising activities of strategy teams across multiple levels.
(Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Salvato, 2003; Whittington-, 2003; Johnson., Melin, & Whittington, 2003)	Failure in organisational strategising; Strategising as lived experience; Role of micro-strategies and strategising; Activity-based view.	Emergence of the area of strategy as practice.
(Jarzabkowski., 2003; Jarzabkowski ,. P., 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Wilson. & Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington_, 2006; Balogun. & Johnson, 2005; Paroutis & Pettigrew, 2007)	Strategy-as-practice; Activity-based view; Strategic practices; Thinking and acting strategically; From intended strategies to unintended outcomes.	Role of managerial agency and situated action; strategising activities and what actors 'do'during the strategy process; Strategising as a socially accomplished, situated activity arising from the actions and interactions of multiple level actors; Actions and interactions.

Current studies emphasise the practice-based approach in 'doing' strategy and the importance of practical activities in strategy formulation and analysis.

Source: (Developed by author, 2014)

To sum up this review of strategising as a theoretical concept, it can be said that strategising, unlike conventional understandings of strategy, shifts the focus from the purely organisational and formal strategy making towards a greater focus on daily organisational processes, practices and behaviours, including actions, reactions and interactions of various actors across different levels within the organisation. A cornerstone of strategising is that this daily behaviour ultimately results in strategic choices and strategic consequences with clear goal-directed outcomes. Hence, strategising as a school of thought views organisational actors as living beings whose actions, interactions, emotions and behaviours play a fundamental role in actively shaping organisational strategy over time. Therefore, one can surmise that the strategising research approach does not reject conventional formal strategy altogether, but only shifts the emphasis in the strategy making journey by allowing conventional strategy discourse, tools and concepts to be continuously renewed and refined.

3.2.2.5 Strategy and strategising in sport studies

For the specific purposes of this research, and in order to further complement the overview of the strategy and strategising debate, it is worth critically reviewing to what extent the strategy and strategising concepts have been discussed within the sport studies literature.

The introduction of the concepts of strategy creation and strategic thinking within sport management and especially within sport policy development can be argued to be a relatively recent phenomenon (see, for example, Robson, Simpson, & Tucker, 2013)[12]. At a fundamental level, and just like any other organisation within the wider economy, sport organisations will have in place some kind of a strategy to guide their goals and activities (see, for example, Slack & Parent, 2006). Likewise, such strategy will adopt a certain process, actors and organisational context, and can be either planned or emergent.

As already established in this chapter, there exists a number of different approaches that a researcher can adopt to study strategy in any given organisation. Process research, the resource-based view and the various economics-based approaches are just some of the most widely used approaches within strategy research over the years.

Within the sport studies literature, Byers, Slack, & Parent (2012) report that "…there have been a number of studies focusing on the concept of strategy" (p.167). A brief review of existing literature within the field nonetheless reveals that the number of studies is rather

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[12] In the United Kingdom (UK) for example, (Robson, Simpson, & Tucker, 2013) attribute this to the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) at the end of the 1980s.

scant (Slack & Parent, 2006), in addition to characteristically being rather fragmented. As the review of relevant literature below indicates, most studies tended to narrowly focus on the 'conventional' concept of strategy and/ or some specific element(s) of the strategy process (see also, for example: Beech & Chadwick, 2013; Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, & Stewart, 2012; Robinson & Palmer, 2011; Smith & Stewart, 1999).

Thibault, Slack, & Hinings (1993) developed a theoretical framework identifying four main strategy types that could be adopted by national sport organisations. Using a matrix approach, the authors identified these four types: enhancers, innovators, refiners, and explorers. In a subsequent study, Thibault, Slack, & Hinings (1994) conducted an empirical verification of their previous theoretical framework in the context of a sample of Canadian national sport organisations.

Slack & Parent (2006) reviewed two types of strategy formulations that are commonly found in sport organisations, namely corporate-level strategies, and business-level strategies. The former type refers to strategies that aim to enhance and exploit synergies between business units through growth, stability, defensive strategies, or a combination of these. Corporate and business unit acquisitions are one example of growth strategies. The latter type refers to strategies that occur at a divisional level within the organisation, with the main aim of creating and sustaining a competitive advantage in a specific market or business segment. Such strategies mainly tend to be in the form of differentiation, cots leadership, or business focus (Porter, 1980), with the evident caveat that these strategies should all fit with the overarching corporate-level strategies. Slack and Parent (2006) also examined the strategy-structure relationship and the various factors that can influence this relationship.

Other studies used the resource-based view approach to examine specific aspects of strategy within sport organisations. Amis, Pant, & Slack (1997) is such a study in which the authors examined the aspect of sport sponsorship as a strategy tool for gaining a competitive advantage. Similarly, Mauws, Mason, & Foster (2003) used the resource-based view of the firm to examine organisational performance and competitive advantage within professional sport franchises. In this study, the authors advocate the role of effective corporate strategies, as opposed to individual business strategies, for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage in sport franchises. The authors also highlight the contribution of the resource-based view towards a better understanding of strategic issues within sport franchises.

Robson, Simpson, & Tucker (2013) review various approaches to the study of strategy within the sport management field, with a particular focus on strategic sport development

and policy. The authors advocate the '4Ps model'[13] as an overall framework that captures the core elements of strategic sport development. In this model, it should be noted that the dimension of 'practice' is the one that reflects to some extent strategising and strategy-as-practice concepts. Robson, Simpson, & Tucker (2013) conclude that the choice of approach in strategy making within sport organisations is a crucial one and that effective strategy in sport development "…should direct and channel new activity and be flexible enough to respond to new circumstances and challenges that arise over time" (p.15).Table 3-2 summarises of some key studies on strategy in the field of sport studies.

Table 3-2 A sample summary of some key research on strategy within sport studies

Author(s)	Study approach/ context	Concept development
(Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1992)	Strategy as organisational change (various theoretical approaches); national sport organisations	Organisational change; organisational structure, strategy and processes;
(Thibault, Slack, & Hinings, 1993; 1994)	Non-profit sport organisations; national sport organisations	A (new) theoretical framework with four strategy types subsequently empirically verified.
(Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997)	Resource-based view of the firm; case studies of major sponsorship agreements	Application of resource-based approach to corporate sport sponsorship; Sponsorship as a strategic tool for gaining a competitive advantage.
(Thibault & Harvey, 1997)	Resource dependence theory; amateur sport organisations; government, non-profit and private sectors	Role of (formal) strategies for inter-organisational linkages and collaboration.
(Byers & Slack, 2001)	Strategic decision-making; small leisure firms	The constraining factors in decision-making; strategic planning; the 'hobby motive'.
(Mauws, Mason, & Foster, 2003)	Resource-based view of the firm; Structure-Conduct-Performance (SCP) paradigm	Organisational performance and competitive advantage within professional sport franchises; Business vs. corporate strategies.
(Slack & Parent, 2006)	Organisational theory; organisational behaviour; organisations within the sport industry	Levels of organisational strategy; strategy formulation and implementation; strategy-structure relationship.
(Robson, Simpson, & Tucker, 2013)	Strategic sport development; sport policy; strategic management	Types of strategy (deliberate, emergent, mixed, flexible, dual strategy); strategic planning; the '4Ps model'; role of stakeholders.

Source: (Developed by author, 2014)

At present and in spite of the increased attention that strategy has received over the past decade across many knowledge fields, "…few studies focus specifically on strategy in

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[13] The 4Ps refer to 'People, Process, Product, and Practice' – in this order (from Robson, Simpson, & Tucker, 2013).

sport organizations" (Slack & Parent, 2006, p. 127). Robson, Simpson, & Tucker (2013) agree that "…within sport development, there is limited literature available that gives an insight into the management of the strategic processes…" (p.2).

Virtually, all known studies of strategy in the sport management field adopt the conventional mainstream view of strategy, with all its limitations as already highlighted in previous parts of this chapter. The unique environment and context of sport organisations may indeed render traditional methods of strategic management less relevant and less appropriate (Robson, Simpson, & Tucker, 2013). Moreover, one notices a rather narrow focus on 'strategy process' including strategy formulation, strategic planning and implementation, rather than on the whole strategy making 'journey'. Byers, Slack, & Parent (2012) share this view about the status of strategy research within sport studies. Also pertinent to this research is the observation regarding the virtual non-existence of research addressing the potential contribution of strategising (or the strategy-as-practice school of thought), a useful new concept as well as a novel research paradigm. The linkage and interplay between strategy and strategising is consequently rarely studied within the field of sport management. Part of the explanation for this lack of interest in strategising within sport management studies may well be due to the relatively recent emergence of this concept even in long-established fields of management research.

Finally, and of particular relevance to the proposed research, academic studies of strategy and strategising in sport in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, are virtually non-existent (Hassan & Lusted, 2013; Amara, 2012). The same can be said about studies conducted in Arabic language (Abdul-Ghani & Sharafaldin, 2010; Abdul-Maksoud, 1981; Darwish, Alhamamy, & Almohandes, 1993; Matar, 1997; Molokhia, 1988; Sharaf, 1990). This state of affairs makes the proposed study even more timely and relevant with the aim of contributing towards addressing this observed gap in the literature, as well as making a valuable theoretical and empirical contribution to this field of research. Additionally, the study also has the potential to open academic debate and pave the way for new avenues for future research in the field.

Summary

This section provided a comprehensive overview of the strategy and strategising debate, with a view towards developing a sound theoretical framework in the second part of this chapter. The section started by comparing and contrasting the various developments in the conceptual definition of organisational strategy within management and strategy research and practice. The key milestones in this journey were reviewed and highlighted including concepts such as strategic planning, strategy formulation, and strategic

management. The two concepts of strategy and strategising were subsequently compared and contrasted based on a review of existing academic literature. In doing this, the key features and contribution of the strategy-as-practice or strategising, as an alternative research agenda, were succinctly presented. In this context, it was asserted that the strategising perspective has a number of useful features that can help address many of the limitations of other more conventional approaches. The strategising perspective is characterised by being a multi-level approach with significant emphasis put on the micro organisational level. Additionally, it is a practice-based approach, focusing on a wide range of activities undertaken by various organisational actors. These actors are seen as living beings with motivations, actions and choices that all result in outcomes and strategic consequences, which in turn ultimately play a crucial role in the shaping of organisational strategy.

The section concluded by critically discussing some of the existing research on strategy and strategising specifically within the field of sport management. It was argued that despite the increased attention over the past decade from researchers and practitioners regarding strategy as a subject of research, the number of studies on strategy within sport organisations still remains limited. Specific research on the relatively recent concepts of strategising and strategy-as-practice is even more negligible. While this situation poses some limitations in the context of this research, it is nevertheless envisaged that this will open more interesting avenues for further focused research as well as enhance the potential contribution of this study.

3.3 Strategising: a conceptual framework

As discussed so far in earlier parts for this chapter, this research adopts an 'activity-based' approach towards the analysis of strategising within non-profit sports organisations. In previous sections, the strategising research agenda, as a new research paradigm, was explored in some detail. The key features, promises as well as the pros and cons of this way of doing strategy research have been discussed.

This section has some inevitable overlaps with some aspects of that previous section. In particular, the main aim here is to discuss in more depth and within the particular context of the proposed research, the key constituent elements and components of strategising as a research agenda. It has previously been established that strategising practices are what really shape strategy over time. In this context, strategising can be described as a set of 'goal-directed activities or practices' which generate specific intended outcomes. In turn, these outcomes represent the realised strategy content of an organisation (Jarzabkowski,

2005). Hence, the main aim of this section is to discuss in depth the activity-based view of strategy-as-practice.

3.3.1 **Activity-based view of strategising**

The activity-based view of strategising is concerned with the study of 'practice' as a flow of activity. It addresses the detailed daily organisational activities as they relate to strategic outcomes. These activities are demonstrated in the shape of various organisational processes and practices (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Whittington, Johnson, & Merlin, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2005).

In the context of strategy and strategising, an activity can broadly be defined as "...the day to day stuff of management. It is what managers do and what they manage. It is also what organizational actors engage in more widely" (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003, p.15). The key features of the activity-based view can be summarised as follows:

- It is concerned with strategy as a broad organisational activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

- It is a multi-level phenomenon, i.e. it occurs at and across all organisational levels, from the macro to the micro and involving a wide range of organisational actors.

- It is something that these organisational actors do.

- It is mainly concerned with activities that clearly relate to strategic outcomes (consequential activities), hence the necessary distinction between the strategic and the purely operational (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003).

- Activities relating to strategic outcomes necessarily imply some notion of 'intentionality' (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Intentionality here means that the activity is intended[14] (or at least hoped) to lead to a certain outcome and this outcome will in turn be consequential for the organisation as a whole (Jarzabkowski, 2005). In other words, the activity will one way or another, directly or indirectly, contribute to shaping the strategy of an organisation, for instance in terms of survival, competitive positioning, or financial health.

Now that the main features of the activity-based view are outlined, it is fitting to deduce that the main benefit of this way of conducting research is that it allows any particular flow of activity to be examined and studied empirically by the researcher. "From this starting point it is possible to examine who contributes to the activity, how it is

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[14] (Jarzabkowski, 2005) notes that 'intentionality' here does not necessarily imply that intentions will always be met, i.e. turn into strategic outcomes.

constructed, what dynamics of influence shape the activity, and with what consequences" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 13).

Figure 3-1 An activity theory framework for strategy as practice
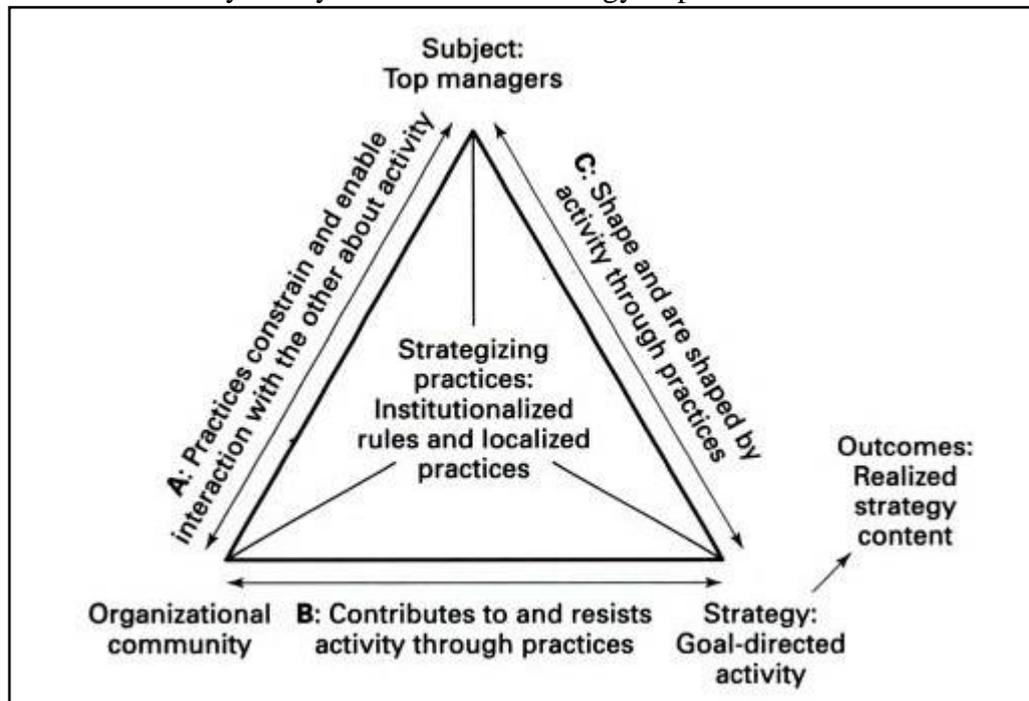
<div align="right">Source: (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 43).</div>

A key feature of the activity system framework within Figure 3-1 is the 'reciprocal' nature of the strategising practices. These practices give top managers agency, which allows them to shape activity but they also enable activity to shape managerial agency. 'Inertial' patterns of activity, discussed in a later part of this section, provide a pertinent example of how this notion of reciprocity takes place within the activity system framework. Another important feature of this activity system framework is that it allows the researcher to identify the overall dynamics of the activity system occurring between all the elements of the framework such as top managers, the organisational community and the strategising practices. This feature is extremely important as it has already been established in earlier parts that strategising does not indeed occur in isolation. The remainder of this sub-section discusses the types and patterns of goal-directed activity.

As discussed in chapter 2, Saudi context are very complexes in term of politics, religion and social which aspect that will reflect on this research data interpretation. However, this theory dealing with highly structure and highly formalised and very professional entities. As this study discussed in Saudi case, sport club not highly structure and highly formalised or very professional. As results do not have clear responsibility lines and do not have very professional class of managers working in sport clubs. Simply, this study

cannot apply this framework as it is or not aspect the same level of result by definition sport club not highly structured and highly formalised or very professional.

3.3.1.1 Patterns of strategising activity

In order to show how the dynamics of interaction shape goal-directed activity over time (as shown in the framework within Figure 3-1), Jarzabkowski (2005)surveyed existing strategy literature and identified five main patterns of activity, namely 'emergent', 'inertial', 'changing', 'realised', and 'unresolved'. A brief discussion of each of these five patterns follows in this sub-section.

Emerging patterns of activity may occur where an organisation engages in an activity without explicit, pre-determined formal goals. However, as the activity gains momentum and legitimacy, sometimes even unintentionally, the activity then becomes goal-directed and eventually attracts resources, procedures as well as the attention of top management (Jarzabkowski, 2005). It is worth noting that this activity pattern has a lot in common with 'emergent strategy', as was originally coined by Mintzberg and which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Emerging activity is therefore characterised by firstly being shaped from the bottom-up. Secondly, there exists a lack of coherence and minimal managerial influence, making the actions of 'distributed community' strongly influential (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Thirdly, emergent activity is initiated through weak interaction between top managers and their community, but this interaction is later greatly increased and strengthened.

Another main pattern of goal-directed activity is in the form of *inertial* activity. A key feature of this pattern of activity is that it is embedded within a 'strategic context', in the form of existing historical, cultural and procedural relationships within the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Unlike the previous emerging activity, inertial activity may well initially start out with a formal, explicit goal (such as achieving certain growth or firm profitability position) but over time, this activity pattern exhibits the tendency towards inertia. What is meant by inertia here is that this pattern of activity is chiefly characterised by being 'persistent' over time and therefore difficult to change (Miller, 1993). This persistence characteristic is made possible – as well as more pronounced – because, as pointed out above, these activities have the feature of being embedded within a strong existing cultural, historical and procedural strategic context. Inertial activities may therefore be regularly observed within the organisation in situations where top managers choose to persist with an existing goal-directed activity, even though that activity may no longer be valid or in line with original intended purpose or goal. A key implication of this

is that inertia tends therefore to be associated with sub-optimal performance and decline because the activity drifts from the original purposes of the goal (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

The third main pattern of goal-directed activity is *changing* activities. This pattern revolves around the concept of (organisational) change in its broadest meaning. "Change involves redirection of a stream of activity away from its initial goal towards a modified or somehow different goal" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 61). The other key feature of changing activities is that change here can be either purposeful or emergent. The purposeful type of change activity is typically initiated and led by top management, i.e. top-down, and the change is purposeful in the sense that it is 'intended', purposively designed and ultimately leads to intended changes trough interactive strategising, sense-giving and commitment from various actors within the organisational community. Then again, organisational change can also be associated with emerging activity. This type of change activity is typically bottom-up and 'unintended' but with positive outcomes. Emergent changing activity can be extremely influential in that it has the potential to reconstruct top managers' intentions and expand their definition of goal-directed activity through 'shifting influences' (Jarzabkowski, 2005). This pattern of activity is typically initiated within the 'peripheries' of the organisation, usually also started by some peripheral organisational actors with no explicit strategic goals or intentions. Initially, top management may not support, ignore, or even suppress this type of activity but over time, as the activity grows in importance, top managers will 'rationalise' this activity as intentional and incorporate it into some goal-directed organisational activity.

The fourth activity pattern differs from the previous three in that it attaches less importance to these strategy elements and instead is more concerned with *realised* activity. In this context, the 'realisation' of goal-directed activity means "...actively constructing and reconstructing activity in ways that prevent inertia and enable goals to be attained without actively occasioning change" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 63). Moreover, realised activity is about the pursuit and realisation of existing goals, which in itself is practically just as important to managers as emergence, inertia and change (Hendry, 2000). Hence, the realised pattern of goal-directed activity is characterised by the active consolidation as well as the continuous adjustment and realignment of the goals and outcomes of activity. This pattern of behaviour takes place between top management and various other players within the organisational community in a purposive and intended, or at least partially intended manner.

The fifth and final pattern of goal-directed activity, as reported within the strategy literature, concerns *unresolved* activity (see, for example, Hinings & Greenwood, 1988).

Here, the organisation and its actors engage in and persist with substantial strategising without necessarily attaining a meaningful or ultimate and concrete goal-directed activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005). This activity pattern is thus associated with a certain lack of direction or some kind of concrete strategic outcome(s). Jarzabkowski (2005) points out that even though; similar to inertial activity, there is an element of failure, the meaning of failure here is rather different. Jarzabkowski argues that strategising under unresolved activity tends to show persistence in searching for 'unfound' goal-directed activity, hence the attribution of the term 'unresolved'. The author also points out that the notion of intentionality, as in emerging activity, does not apply in the same way to unresolved activity pattern. Unresolved activity tends to occur within organisations that are characterised by some degree of fragmentation and distribution, bearing some similarities with (Mintzberg, 1979) notion of adhocracy. In this type of situation, "... strategising goes into continuous attempts to construct commonly understood meanings about activity, leaving little extra capacity to coordinate any goal-directed activity" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 62).

3.3.1.2 Types of strategising activities

This sub-section complements the previous one by briefly discussing the two main types of goal-directed activity, as identified within prior strategy literature, and as relevant to strategy and strategising, namely 'procedural' and 'interactive' strategising.[15]

The notion of 'localised practices'[16], together with that of 'institutionalised rules' (Jarzabkowski, 2005), are enabled through procedural and interactive strategising. Hence, they play a key *mediating* role between the various components of the activity system as shown in Figure 3-1. The movement between these strategising types is what explains the five strategising patterns identified in the previous section. Hence, procedural and interactive strategising can also explain much of the 'localised' dynamics of strategising and strategy formation within this activity-based system. Moreover, in practice, they represent the two dominant ways or forms through which localised practices are enabled between different organisational actors (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

Procedural strategising "deals with the use of formal administrative practices, such as plans, budgets and trend analyses and their associated committees and procedures, through which strategy is coordinated, documented and formally embedded within an

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[15] Jarzabkowski, 2005 identifies two additional types of strategising in the form of 'pre-active' and 'integrative' strategising. See Jarzabkowski (2005), Chapter 5.

[16] In this context, the notion 'localised' can be understood as the firm-specific micro practices of strategy formation (see, for example, Jarzabkowski, 2005).

organization" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 51). As stipulated in this definition, procedural strategising is dominated by the use of 'formal' administrative practices in shaping strategy. These formal and administrative practices, albeit seemingly at odds with emerging strategy, are nevertheless very important and ever-present in organisational life and the conduct of strategic activity (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whittington, 2003). Examples of such formal practices include meetings, committees, budgets, performance targets, reviews, etc. Procedural strategising in the form of formal administrative practices is further characterised by being 'iterative' in nature. According to process research, administrative practices serve the purpose of selection and control mechanisms but once established, require low levels of active involvement and attention from top management (Simons, 1991). An implication of this, according to Jarzabkowski (2005), is that administrative practices are prone to top-down control and inertia.[17] However, and because they are historically situated, these administrative practices also serve the purpose of carrying strategic knowledge and patterns of acting between various actors within the firm over time, hence enabling (more positive) iterative forms of agency.

The second major type or form of goal-directed activity is interactive strategising (see, for example, Achtenhagen, Melin, Müllern, & Ericson, 2003). This form of strategising "...involves direct, purposive, face-to-face interactions between top managers and other actors" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 51). Such social interactions do take place in daily organisational life around and even within formal practices. These interactions incorporate a wide range of closely interrelated patterns of organisational behaviour including social, political, cultural, behavioural, linguistic, and symbolic. While organisational actors tend to use these interactions in a predominantly informal and tacit manner, such interactions do carry profound implications for strategy formation within the organisation. (Jarzabkowski, 2005). It is, however, worth noting that as indicated in the definition above, interactive strategising is specifically concerned with a particular subset of such social interactions, i.e. the purposive face-to-face interactions about strategy between top management and other organisational community actors.

The social norm of face-to-face interaction plays a key role in mediating the continuous shaping of activity between top management and the distributed organisational actors (Jarzabkowski, 2005). This feature of being 'active' can be deduced from the following characteristics of the norms for face-to-face interaction (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

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[17] Inertia in this context is often, but not always, associated with negative consequences.

- These norms, while relatively stable in providing patterns that guide the general character of interactions, they are also essentially 'dynamic' in the sense that these norms are actively constructed and reconstructed through the process of interacting and according to the received responses and reactions. This feature is derived from the notion known within the strategy literature as 'double interacts', describing the interacts and responses by which individuals contribute and react to collective activity (see, for example, Weick, 1979).

- As mentioned above, the features of face-to-face interaction plays a central role in mediating the shaping of activity and strategy, but this interaction can also be used to mediate 'influence' between various organisational actors in the process of negotiating and renegotiating meanings (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Hence, face-to-face interaction can become a powerful form of organisational power and control. It has the feature of being reciprocal and thus accords power to different organisational actors but it tends to favour top management's agency (the dominant group) due to power and information asymmetries[18] (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

- At odds with the previous point, but still cogent with the notion of double interacts described earlier, the organisational set of meanings are not 'durable' nor 'inevitable' (Jarzabkowski, 2005). These two features are also borne out of the nature of goal-directed activity being distributed on the one hand, and potentially divergent on the other. Hence, the notion of the 'durability' of shared meanings is only a temporary state of affairs at best, going through a continuous process of reconfiguration and reconstruction. One implication of this is that "top managers must work continuously at interactive strategising in order to convey their own meanings and renegotiate those meanings in light of others' responses" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 58). Therefore, interactive strategising, unlike procedural strategising, is characterised by the active engagement and continuous involvement of top management in the shaping of strategy.

Before moving on to the next section, and particularly for the purpose of contextualising the discussion on the 'strategising matrix' in the subsequent part, it is worth noting that besides procedural and interactive strategising, there are two additional secondary types, namely 'pre-active' and 'integrative' (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Unlike procedural and interactive strategising, pre-active and integrative types are not considered to be 'polar

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[18]The superiority of top management's agency, in this context, is due to the 'interpretative' nature of interactive strategising (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

types'. "Pre-active strategising involves an activity that has neither structural nor interpretative legitimacy" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 129). Due to this lack of legitimacy, pre-active strategising cannot therefore be considered part of mainstream strategy. Instances of such activity are typically localised to a specific group of actors within the organisation. They generally fall into two main categories of activities: bottom-up strategies that are still emerging, and new strategies that are still at the very early stage of development (Jarzabkowski, 2005). In contrast, "integrative strategising involves activity that is high in structural and interpretative legitimacy...It is called integrative strategising because it calls for high integration between interactive and procedural forms of strategising" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 106). Integrative strategising typically takes form in two ways: stabilising activity and incremental change in activities. Based on the definition, integrative strategising hence exhibits both forms of legitimacy whereby attention is paid to the ongoing construction of frameworks of meaning, but also equally crucial is the continuous modification of administrative practices in order to ensure the continuous alignment between structural and interpretative legitimacy. Therefore, integrative strategising is very dynamic in nature and has the feature of balancing both forms of legitimacy in a continuous 'reciprocal process' (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

3.3.1.3 Strategy formulation and the strategising matrix

This sub-section aims to shed further light on the key underpinnings of the theory of strategy formulation. Key concepts discussed in this subsection include structural and interpretive legitimacy, the interplay between forms of legitimacy and types of strategising over time, multiple streams of activity, core activities, as well as the strategising matrix framework – as proposed by Jarzabkowski(2005).

Strategising and forms of legitimacy

Different types of strategising – as outlined in section 3.3.1.2– confer and impart either structural or interpretative legitimacy; procedural strategising imparts structural legitimacy while interactive strategising imparts interpretative legitimacy. Structural and interpretive legitimacy are fundamental concepts in understanding the underpinnings of the theory of strategy formulation as they explain how goal-directed activity gains *relevance* and *persistence* within an organisation over time (Jarzabkowski, 2005). These two aspects of goal-directed activity are what ultimately confer legitimacy within an organisation, albeit in different ways and for different purposes. Structural and interpretative legitimacy concepts are complementary in the sense that the strengths of

one concept seem to counteract the weaknesses of the other, hence acting as complementary 'polar types' (Jarzabkowski, 2005).[19]

Structural legitimacy "refers to the *social order* displayed in stabilised structural practices, such as routines, hierarchies and roles" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 130). Legitimacy in the context of strategising results from being involved as well as from reinforcing a particular social order within a given organisational setting. Jarzabkowski (2005) succinctly defines legitimacy as "…the right of [an] activity to be part of the organisational profile and to be pursued" (p.86).

Although not sufficient on its own in attaining goal-directed activity, structural legitimacy does provide a powerful means of generating commitment to that activity. This can be explained through a brief discussion of some of the main purposes of this form of legitimacy. The first key feature is that structural legitimacy is largely 'embedded' within routinized strategising practices – also known as 'structural embedding' – which in turn gives it the 'persistence' characteristic as well as a degree of stability over time. The durability feature, and unsurprisingly similar to procedural strategising discussed in section 3.3.1.2, means that once established little active attention from top management is then required. A second important feature of structural legitimacy is that, through procedural strategising, it provides 'diagnostic controls'. The latter are typically inherent within the various administrative practices found within the organisation. These practices are used as vehicles to delegate much of the strategy shaping to be actioned by various organisational actors. Thus, diagnostic controls act as a 'feedback system' whereby the realisation of organisational outcomes, such as for instance performance targets, can be effectively monitored without the active engagement from top management (Simons, 1991). These controls can prove very powerful in shaping strategy as they influence the actions of actors within the organisational community through performance indicators as well as attaching notions of rewards and sanctions. Interpretative legitimacy "refers to those *frameworks of meaning* through which individuals understand what constitutes appropriate action in a community" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 130). Compared to structural legitimacy, interpretative legitimacy requires the continuous involvement and attention of top management. These results from the fact that interpretive legitimacy lacks 'durability', leading to the need for continuous reconstruction through ongoing interactive

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[19]Linked to this, see Jarzabkowski (2005) for more on related concepts, such as 'strategic drift' and 'goals-means displacement'.

strategisingin order to convey, reaffirm and reconstruct meaning. The non-durability observation is not surprising as it was already established in the previous section that this form of legitimacy is imparted by the interactive type of strategising, hence the two concepts share this feature. The main attribute of interpretative legitimacy, however, is that it is associated with 'normative controls' thereby encouraging various organisational actors to align their actions with the strategy or particular goal-directed activity. This is realised due to the role of interactive strategising in building *frameworks of meaning* about strategy, by influencing the actions of various organisational actors and making these actors self-conscious and self-controlling about their actions and behaviour. The aforementioned purposes of interpretative legitimacy, i.e. meanings framing and normative controls, are particularly useful when introducing new strategies into an organisation as well as when the need arises for reinterpreting or realigning existing ones.

The strategising matrix

As previously discussed, the complementarity feature between the two main forms of legitimacy, i.e. structural and interpretative, allows strong linkages between them. After all, strategising consists of the various *combinations* of structural and interpretive legitimacy (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Additionally, different combinations of the two main types of strategising, i.e. procedural and interactive, in fact are what shape strategy over time. Through the strategising theoretical framework or the 'strategising matrix' proposed by Jarzabkowski (2005), this brief sub-section discusses some of these observed linkages and their role in shaping goal-directed activity.

Following from the above, the 'strategising matrix' of Jarzabkowski(2005) has structural and interpretative legitimacy as the two key conceptual building blocks; interpretative and structural legitimacy. The different combinations of these two forms of legitimacy are what helps explain the dynamics of the activity system (shown previously in Figure 3-1). The various components and dimensions of the strategising matrix as proposed by (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 161)

The strategy matrix shows how the four identified types of strategising shown within the four quadrants (i.e. interactive, procedural, integrative, and pre-active) *combine* structural and interpretive legitimacy within the overall dynamics of the activity system. It can be observed from the matrix that, in their role of shaping activity, different types of strategising impart higher or lower degrees of structural and interpretative legitimacy. The key purpose of this strategising matrix is to help explain how strategy, as stream of goal-directed activity, is shaped over time by the various strategising practices, in other

words, how strategising shapes strategy over time. The strategising matrix has valid explanatory power in that it matches various types of strategising with the different phases of goal-directed activity. The interplay between the two forms of legitimacy, the four types of strategising as well as their roles in shaping different phases of activity are concisely summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3-3 Understanding the strategising matrix

Strategising type	Activity system dynamics	Role in shaping phases of activity
Pre-active low structural and interpretative legitimacy	Weak dynamics of influence	• Activities that are localised because they are: s bottom-up; or in the early phases of development, particularly where they are potentially contentious
Procedural high structural and low interpretative legitimacy	Influence is conferred to existing activity and its administrative practices	• Historically embedded activities with goals-means displacement • Activities that have hijacked the administrative practices
Interactive low structural and high interpretative legitimacy	Influence is conferred to top managers, in interaction with the community	• Introducing new activities in order to counteract resistance to change • Existing activities that are overly embedded, needing reframing and realigning with their goals
Integrative high structural and high interpretative legitimacy	Influence is primarily to top managers but tightly linked to interaction with the community, the activity and administrative and interactive practices	• Stabilising activities to prevent slide into strategic drift • Incremental change in activities through ongoing reframing of meanings and modifying of administrative practices

Source: (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 107).

It is also worth pointing out that within the strategising matrix in figure 3-2, the movement between these four strategising types can be further used to explain variation in the five main patterns of strategising over time – as identified in section 3.3.1.1 – i.e. emergent, inertial, changing, realised, and unresolved.

Relationship between multiple streams of activity

Up to this point in the discussion, one might get the impression that the described patterns of goal-directed activity may indeed be 'discrete' and 'mutually exclusive'. This is not the case because the activity system dynamics of strategising – outlined in Figure 3-1 – are 'fluid', 'robust' and continuously changing – as opposed to being static – so that the shaping of strategy over time may incorporate several of these activity patterns (Jarzabkowski, 2005).A closely related thought-provoking issue concerns the idea of 'multiple strategies', or in other words, the multiplicity of streams of goal-directed activity. Allowing for concurrent multiple streams of goal-directed activity within the activity system will undoubtedly add to the complexity of studying such a complex framework. It will also add to the complexity of collective activity particularly if these multiple activities are inherently contradictory, from the viewpoint of different organisational actors. Even though the strategy literature at the theoretical level has the tendency to discuss strategy as a singular construct, the practical organisational daily life supports the observation that organisations pursue several streams of goal-directed activity in a concurrent manner.[20]

Moreover, the coexistence of multiple strategies in any given organisation can be argued to be partly dictated by whether an activity is the 'core activity' in that organisation, or whether it is perceived as 'threatening' to the core activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The concept of core activity is particularly powerful in shaping the dynamics of strategising and daily organisational life. This stems from some of the key features of core activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005)[21].

- It has strong historical association with the organisation and is closely tied to its reputation and (professional) identity.

- It, therefore, has high levels of structural legitimacy.

- It tends to dominate other activities and has the tendency to be shaped by procedural strategising, thus giving it high levels of persistence.

It is also worth pointing out some of the obvious issues inherent in core activity. These, among others, include being highly prone to inertial patterns of activity, observed high levels of resistance to change from the organisational community, as well as potentially sub-optimal performance. Thus, the concepts of core and threats to core activities can

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[20] Jarzabkowski (2005)uses a pertinent example to highlight this specific issue; that of universities that concurrently pursue four different streams of goal-directed activity: research, teaching, commercial activity, and size/ scope.

[21] See Jarzabkowski (2005), Chapters 6 and 7 for more detailed discussion of core activity.

help the researcher contextualise the overall theoretical framework in order to accurately reflect the conditions under which it applies in any given organisation.

Summary

This section has further strengthened the notion that strategising does not and cannot occur in isolation. The activity-based view of strategising regards strategy as a pattern in a stream of goal-directed activity over time. In the same vein, it was also established that goal-directed activity has the feature of being distributed in nature (Jarzabkowski, 2005). These features, combined with the role of strategising practices in mediating influence around the activity system, makes the shaping of strategy not only the task of top managers but also various other organisational actors and community at all levels within the organisation.

This activity-based dynamic of strategising was explored in some detail through the five main patterns of goal-directed activity: emerging, inertial, changing, realised, and unresolved. This section also discussed other equally important dynamics including the key types of strategising activity (procedural, interactive, pre-active, and integrative). Additionally, some key concepts in the theory of strategy making were also discussed including structural and interpretative legitimacy, the relationship between multiple streams of activity including core and threats to core activity, and finally the overall proposed theoretical framework known as the 'strategising matrix'.

3.3.2 **The three domains of strategising**

Strategy researchers identified three broad and closely interrelated research domains of the strategising research agenda, namely practitioners, practices and praxis (originally proposed by Whittington (2006) and later adapted by Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009) (see Figure 3-2 and Whittington 2006, p.621). The concept of practitioners is defined as "those people who do the work of strategy"; practices as "the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done"; and praxis as "the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished" (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, p.70). These three dimensions provide a useful conceptual/ theoretical framework for the analysis proposed in this research not least because "strategising occurs at the nexus between praxis, practices and practitioners" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 10).

Figure 3-2 A conceptual framework for analysing the strategising research agenda: the three domains of strategising
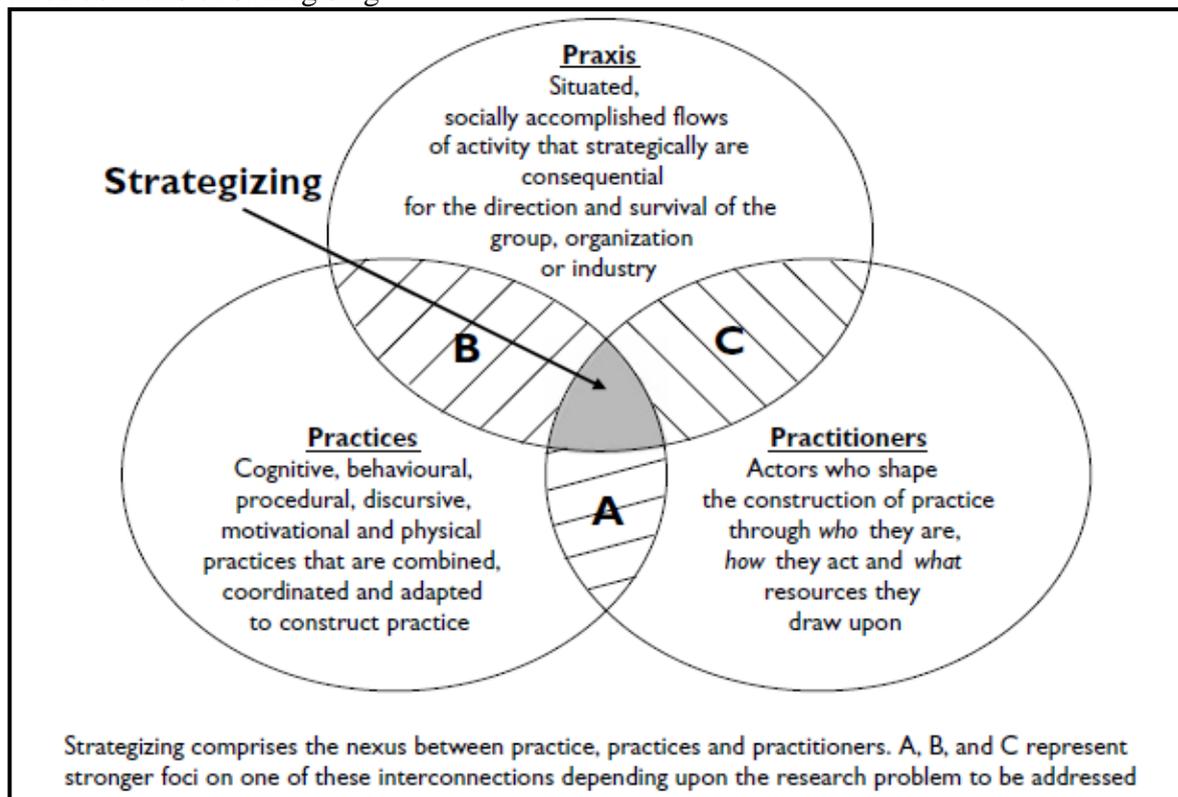
Source: (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, p. 11)

Hence, the following section discusses in some detail these three key domains of strategising.

3.3.2.1 Practitioners

This sub-section identifies the various organisational practitioners –also referred to in places as 'actors' or 'agents' – who are involved in doing strategy which occurs at various levels within the organisation. It also briefly discusses the main roles of these practitioners in strategy making.

Within the strategy literature, it is not always obvious who the strategy practitioners are or who they should be. "Strategy-as-practice research examines strategy as something that people do, indicating an important focus on strategy practitioners. However, the literature indicates very broad definitions of who might be considered a strategy practitioner" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 71). One such definition is given by Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, "practitioners are the actors; those individuals who draw upon practices to act" (p.10). Practitioners are also often referred to as 'strategy's actors', 'prime movers', and those who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies (see, for example, Whittington, 2006). The role of practitioners is central in the strategy process and they can be described as 'the carriers of practices'. Practitioners are "central

in reproducing, transferring and occasionally innovating strategy practices", in other words they can be seen as the "pre-servers, carriers and creators of strategy practices" (Whittington, 2006, p. 625).

Practitioners and organisational agents are of paramount significance within their organisations. They also offer obvious and immensely useful units of analysis and study in the strategising research agenda. Practitioners represent active participants within organisational life and they shape and are shaped by their organisational environment. They are also very important in shaping strategic activities that are essential for the success and continued survival of their organisations. As Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl (2007) put it, practitioners "…shape strategic activity through who they are, how they act and what practices they draw upon in that action" (p.10). In an organisational context, another important dimension of organisational actors is that they derive agency through their use of organisational practices. These practitioners combine, coordinate and adapt these practices to their needs in order to act as well as influence within their organisation (Reckwitz, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007).

In their review of existing literature, Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009) identified two ontological dimensions that have commonly been used to identify strategy practitioners. The first dimension relates to whether the practitioner is an individual or an 'aggregate' actor. This is intended in the sense that activities are either attributed to individuals within the organisation such as the CEO, the Chief Operating Officer, or the finance director, or to an aggregate actor in the form of a group or class of actor such as top managers, senior management, middle management, technicians and so forth. The second ontological dimension allows the categorisation of strategy practitioners in relation to organisational boundaries so practitioners could be either 'internal' or 'external'. An internal practitioner will have a determined hierarchical position *within* the organisation, typically accompanied by specific roles and responsibilities within the overall boundaries of the organisation's structures and systems. Examples of internal practitioners could be in the form of project managers, directors, or line managers. Alternatively, strategy practitioners can be classified as external, placing them outside the core organisation (of interest) (see, for example, Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003). These external practitioners[22] belong to their own organisations but at the same time their actions and interactions have an impact on focal organisation's strategy.

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[22] Within the strategy-as-practice literature, external strategy practitioners are typically conceptualised as aggregate actors as opposed to individual actors Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009).

Examples of external actors include for instance outside consultants, and various institutional actors such as regulatory bodies, trade unions and a range of interest groups. Linked to this is the potential role of 'organisational communities' or 'communities of practice' in shedding some light on the important question of how strategy practitioners can be best produced. Whittington (2006) argues that it is indeed praxis that makes practitioners; a view that is consistent with the conceptual framework in Figure 3-1. The example given to illustrate this argument is that of a member of the board of directors of an organisation. In this context, the organisational actor enters a community of practitioners, the board and its advisers. Before becoming a full member of the group, the organisational actor undergoes a lengthy learning or 'apprenticeship' process throughout which the internal rules and standards of the group are absorbed by the actor.

Finally yet importantly, and of significance to the proposed research especially on a practical level, it is worth asking who these strategy practitioners are. According to Whittington (2006), strategy practitioners are not only confined to senior executives at the macro level such as the chief executive, board members and the senior management, for whom strategy is the core of their work, nor is it the exclusive job of strategic planners. In addition to senior executives and strategic planners, the latter albeit diminishing in importance, the strategy literature also emphasises the key role of various other practitioners in performing strategy work. These include middle managers, external strategy advisers, consultants and consulting firms. If one takes the example of middle managers (often found at the meso level), evidence points out to the fact that this category of practitioners typically finds it difficult to become fully immersed in strategy work (Whittington 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Westley, 1990). This may not be very surprising as even at senior management levels, effective participation in strategy work cannot always be assumed to take place (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003). Hence, in the proposed research, the inclusion of various practitioners across three main levels of organisational structure is theoretically justified and called for. The relevant practitioners here include key officials within the Saudi sports sector at national, regional and local levels. The full description and role of each of these practitioners are fully discussed in subsequent chapters.

The review of the strategy-as-practice theory and literature highlights the role of strategy practitioners within the three-dimensional conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 3-2 and Whittington (2006) p.621. Practitioners play a critical role in providing the key connection between organisational praxis on the one hand and organisational practices on

the other. As Whittington (2006) puts it: "practitioners are crucial mediators between practices and praxis" (p.626).

3.3.2.2 Praxis

On a general level, and according to Reckwitz (2002), praxis[23] "…represents merely an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action, in contrast to 'theory' and mere thinking" (p.249). Whittington (2006) describes strategy praxis as that which strategy practitioners actually do, i.e. all the various activities involved in the deliberate strategy formulation and implementation. Hence, strategy praxis can be understood as "the intra-organisational work required for making strategy and getting it executed" (Whittington, 2006, p. 619). Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) offer a similar definition of praxis as "the stream of activity in which strategy is accomplished over time" (p.73). These activities or streams of activity include the formal and informal, the routine and the non-routine, core activities and peripheral ones. Therefore, the domain of praxis is rather wide and broad in definition, encompassing all these various types of activities.

A further feature of the concept of praxis is that it may occur at more than one level, leading to 'levels' of praxis. By reviewing the existing strategy-as-practice literature, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) identified three distinct levels of strategy praxis, namely micro, meso, and macro. The micro level is predominantly concerned with the individual or group's experience of a specific goal-directed activity or episode. At this level, the activity tends to be relatively proximal to the actor constructing it and can be reasonably considered as part of their micro interactions. Such activities may be manifested in the form of a workshop, a meeting, or a particular decision. The meso level of strategy praxis is more concerned with specific phenomena occurring at the organisational or sub-organisational levels. Examples of strategy praxis occurring at this level could be a change programme, corporate restructuring, or a certain strategy process. The third level which is the macro level is predominantly concerned with strategy praxis occurring at the institutional level such as a specific industry or economic sector. A further important but rather implicit feature of the concept of praxis, which is also pertinent to this research, is that it enables meaningful interconnections linking between these different organisational levels, from the macro/ institutional to the micro, and from the actions of the group actors to those of the individual actor (see, for example, Reckwitz, 2002 and Sztompka,1991).

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[23]'Praxis' can sometimes be referred to as 'practice' in the singular form. It is a Greek word which refers to actual activity, i.e. what people do in practice.

3.3.2.3 Practices

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) regard strategy practices as "…an essential element of the strategy-as-practice research agenda" (p. 81). Strategising practices are the main means to influence agents' commitment to realising organisational strategy. "These practices are the institutionalized rules of strategy formation and their locally-situated realisation as the administrative practices and social norms involved in doing strategy within organizations" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 47). Therefore, the key distinction between the aforementioned dimension of praxis and that of practices is that while praxis can be thought of as a situated and socially accomplished flow of goal-directed activities, practices on the other hand can be described as "a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249).

It is of paramount importance to understand how day-to-day and sometimes mundane behaviours in organisations can be goal-oriented and can also be used to create strategic choices and consequences. Thus, it would be no surprise to see that strategic organisational advantage is often found in embedded, idiosyncratic routines (Barney, 1995; Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001).

Within the practice-based literature of strategy research, the main features of practices can be summarised as follows:

- Practices can be described as a 'bundle' of interrelated social, material and embodied ways of organising and doing within a given organisational context (Reckwitz, 2002; Chia, 2004; Schatzki, 2005).

- These practices are embedded and institutionalised in nature, thus providing common, recognised as well as shared ways of doing strategy. These ways often become even habitual and routine to some extent.

- Practices are regarded as dynamic rather than static concepts. Practices are "a means of doing in which organising is constituted, rather than static concepts or objects to be employed" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, p. 82). Along this line of argument, Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006) support the notion of shifting the focus from 'states' to 'activities' and consider it to be a key benefit of the activity-based approach of the strategising research agenda.

- A further feature is related to the process by which these strategy practices are created. There is evidence to strongly suggest that these practices do display some

element of emergence in their development process. "Strategy practices are typically emergent from praxis" (Whittington, 2006, p. 624).

- Last but not least, a final key feature of practices, which is of particular importance to this research, is that they are multilevel, spanning micro, meso and macro levels of hierarchy (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999; Whittington, 2006).

At this stage, it is also worth pointing out some potential limitations of the practice-based approach. One potentially significant limitation of this approach is the apparent 'open-endedness' in the definition of the practice or activity notion (Lounsbury M. , 2006, p. 907). In this sense, "the notion of activity is defined very broadly as just about everything that managers and other organisational actors do, making it difficult to assess which activities are related to strategy" (Lounsbury M. , 2006, p. 907). Jarzabkowski argues that while this open-endedness may not necessarily pose a serious drawback, nevertheless it requires the researcher to explicitly justify their choice of primary and secondary activity. Linked to this, a further related potential limitation of this approach is that, practically speaking, many of the practices of strategising are very similar and intermingled, and the case is often that it may be difficult to tell them apart in any kind of precision. Jarzabkowski & Spee(2009) stress that "one of the problems with identifying practices is that they are entangled and interrelated elements of activity. It is, therefore, hard to separate one particular 'practice' from the interwoven fabric of practices", (p.81). According to Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith (2006), one way to partly mitigate this problem is to approach strategising/ organising as a dynamic and practical duality. A final drawback, although not as pertinent as the previous two, is that up to now there is little empirical research conducted on strategy practices (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). This obviously can also be seen as a promising avenue for further research.

In sum, it can be asserted that a key feature of the practice-based research approach is that it attempts to translate various conceptual elements of conventional definitions of practices into the practices involved in doing strategy.

Categorising practices

The focus in this sub-section is still on the third research domain of strategising, i.e. practices. The sub-section explores in more specific detail a number of key strategising practices as relevant to the proposed research. Based on a concise review of prior literature, a brief discussion of the main categories and modes of doing strategy are presented below. Each practice is introduced in general terms, establishing its relevance to strategising and organising in an organisational context. The underpinning aim of this

section is to highlight the potential criticality of these practices in the strategising research agenda as well as for formal strategy making.

As already explored in previous parts of this chapter, the concept of strategy within the strategising literature is regarded as a "situated, socially accomplished activity" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 70). The concept of strategising, on the other hand, "comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, pp. 7-8). In order to obtain a holistic understanding of strategising, one needs to explore in some more detail the nature of those 'situated practices' it encompasses. Jarzabkowski (2005) defines strategising practices as "the institutionalized rules of strategy formation and their locally situated realisation as administrative practices and social norms"(p.43). More specifically, 'practices' are defined as those tools and artefacts that people use in doing strategy work (Whittington 2002, 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005). An understanding of the nature of the multiple organisational practitioners involved in such activity/ practice is also of paramount importance. Hence, this sub-section aims to shed further light on these important dimensions of strategising.

The first category of strategising practices concerns those practices that are categorised as *'episodic'* in nature. Under episodic practices, strategy practices can be viewed as concentrated episodes, with their outcomes linking and shaping other episodes of strategy making within the organisation (see also Whittington 2006, p.621). The intra-organisational work involving activities and practices undertaken as part of strategy formulation is often very diffuse (Whittington, 2006), but a large part of this work takes place in more or less extended episodes or sequences of episodes (Whittington 2006; Hendry & Seidl, 2003). Hendry & Seidl (2003) define episodes as "sequence of events structured in terms of a beginning and an ending" (p.180). Organisational episodes may involve various 'episodic' practices ranging from the formal and official such as strategy reviews, workshops, projects and meetings, to the informal and unofficial such as casual conversations (Whittington 2006; Hendry & Seidl, 2003). Organisational episodes are also characterised by three critical aspects: initiation, termination and conduct (Hendry & Seidl, 2003; (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008). "Initiation is the point at which the episode gets 'de-coupled' from the ongoing organizational processes… conduct, deals with activities within the episode... [and] …termination is the point at which the organizational structures are reinstated and the particular [episodic practice] structures are dissolved" (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008, p. 1395).

The second major category of strategising practices is concerned with *'discursive'* practices. Such practices can manifest in the various forms of talk and discourse by strategy practitioners and organisational actors. Strategy discourse and discursive practices within any given organisation can be used and mobilised by particular organisational actors to enhance, protect or resist various organisational strategising agendas such as a major strategic change. The discursive approach brings to the fore the social aspects of strategy and strategising. This is important as strategising consists of social practices and activities and "…always takes place in specific social contexts and is therefore socially structured" (Laine & Vaara, 2007, p. 32).

Thirdly, strategising practices can also be categorised as *'administrative'*. Jarzabkowski (2005) describes administrative practices as also being 'rational' and they "...typically serve the purpose of organizing and coordinating strategy, such as planning mechanisms, budgets, forecasts, control systems, performance indicators and targets", p.9. The apparent 'rationality' feature of administrative practices has been extensively questioned in the literature and it was argued that the purpose of these practices is not necessarily rational; some researchers called this 'false rationality' (see, for example, Mintzberg, 1990; 1994). Despite this and regardless of how rational these administrative practices may be, a number of leading researchers argue that studying them is still important because they still form a key part of the everyday life of organisations in terms of organising and strategising (Hendry, 2000; Grant, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005).

A fourth category of strategising practices concerns *'recursive and adaptive'* practices. Here, practices are viewed as recursive, characterised by being routinized and prone to inertia (Jarzabkowski, 2004). In other words, strategy practice has an inherent routinized nature whereby "interaction between agents and socially produced structures occurs through recursively situated practices that form part of daily routines" (Jarzabkowski, 2004, p.531).

These practices span multiple levels of organisational actors and contexts. They occur at three main levels: individual, organisational, and at the level of social intuitions. Adaptive practice is easily observed within communities of practice or organisational communities in particular as the social nature of these communities constitutes an adaptive learning opportunity. Local or micro-contexts in particular provide further opportunities for adaptive practice and new ways of organising; "micro-contexts are prone to adaptation and learning through internal tensions generated from problems or the displacement and renewal of members" (Jarzabkowski, 2004, p. 534). For instance, social activities such as dialogue and interaction taking place at a local context may give rise to new knowledge

through adaptive social interaction. Hence, in this framework, local practice may be described as a 'social process' characterised by being 'generative' rather than coming from external sources such as institutionally established practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004).

For the purpose of this research, the fifth and final category of strategising practices deals with '*corporate' practices* that are as opposed to '*peripheral'* ones. This categorisation, unlike the previous ones, is based on a more empirical standpoint. Regnér, (2003) examines the question of how managers create and develop strategy. He focuses on the micro-level in particular encompassing activities, practices and organisational actors involved in strategy making. Regner examined how organisational strategy evolves in terms of how it is created and developed across different organisational levels in the context of four multinational corporations. The author finds that strategy making within the organisation occurs through strategy activities taking place both at the 'corporate centre' and the 'organisational periphery'. He contrasts between the practices of peripheral organisational actors, which are described as exploratory, and the practices of corporate organisational actors, described as stability-seeking (Regnér, 2003).

To sum up this sub-section on the various categories of strategising practices, it is important to highlight that the practice research agenda is not necessarily focused on these practices per se. Instead, and as Jarzabkowski (2005) argues, it is more interested in 'practices-in-use', i.e. practices "...as mediators of action, examining their consequences for the strategy, the actors who use them, and the interactions that are conducted" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 10). [24]

Summary

This section discussed in some detail the three key domains of strategising: praxis, practitioners and practices. The features and characteristics of each of these core themes were also discussed. The concept of practitioners was defined as "those people who do the work of strategy"; practices as "the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done"; and praxis as "the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 70). In line with previous literature within the field of strategy-as-practice, it was concluded that strategising occurs at the nexus between these three key domains. It was also concluded that the conceptualisation of strategising along these three dimensions provides a useful and theoretically sound

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[24]For a detailed description, discussion as well as some illustrative examples of this interconnectedness and subsequently proposes an integrated framework that enables the linking together of different subsets of the three domains, see Whittington figure (2006), pp.621-623.

framework as a basis for the remainder of this research including the empirical application and analysis. In addition, the close interconnectedness of each of the three domains of strategising was discussed with the help of an integrated framework that was originally proposed by Whittington (2006). The main benefit of this framework is that it helps interpret particular episodes of strategy making and explain how the three dimensions of strategising are woven together. Whittington (2006) concisely summaries this level of interconnectedness: *"... intra-organizational praxis is marked by extra-organizational practices; successful practices are carried by influential practitioners; praxis forms practitioners"* (p.627).

3.4 Conclusions

Over the past few years, strategising or strategy-as-practice has emerged as an important research agenda within strategy research. According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), strategy-as-practice is not the first research agenda to attempt to depart from the assumptions and longstanding dominance of the economics-based approach over strategy research. The strategising school of thought holds a lot of promise for refining and enriching many of the conventional paradigms in organisational research including the economics-based paradigm. Reviewing the theory and application of strategising studies confirmed that the empirical deployment of this research agenda is even more recent in the field of sport management research, hence opening avenues for original contribution to this field.

The main premise of the strategising research perspective is towards better understanding of how organisational strategy is formulated through a focus on daily processes, interactions and practices across different organisational levels. The strategising approach can therefore contribute towards a better understanding of how daily behaviour within the organisation can be responsible for creating strategic choices as well as strategic consequences. Thus, a key contribution of the strategising perspective is that it shifts the focus towards organisational processes, practices and inter-individual interactions, and the related strategic outcomes (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003). Moreover, the strategising perspective is a multi-level approach where the focus in not just on the macro level but instead putting more emphasis on the micro organisational level and thereby attending to important aspects not always taken into account by the macro-perspectives of traditional strategy research. Strategising, as a school of thought, is primarily concerned with living beings inside and outside the organisation with their interactions, emotions and actions fundamentally responsible for formulating and shaping strategy over time

(Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This entails that organisational strategies must be continually adjusted, resulting in strategising becoming a constant activity. Strategising therefore recognises that strategy formulation is "a dynamic and creative process in which strategy and organisation are closely tied, and where mastery of the practical can make a difference" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, p. 624).

Moreover, the problem with conventional strategy is not just that it is formal or deliberate, as (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) often argued, but that it can be too analytical and too detached. The strategising research approach does not reject conventional formal strategy altogether, but rather it shifts the emphasis by "injecting craft directly into the [strategy formulation and analysis] process" (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006, pp. 624-625). Hence, the strategising approach allows conventional strategy tools and concepts, such as strategic planning, to be continuously renewed and refined. Furthermore, the strategising perspective necessitates a practical approach thereby bridging the gap between strategy actors, strategic activities and strategy target achievement.

One of the potential contributions of the proposed study and the adopted research approach within is to come up with recommendations for practitioners, policy-makers and academics alike towards a better understanding of what constitutes daily life within sport organisations.

Ultimately, it is worth reminding that "the purpose of strategising and organizing is to change the behaviours of people within the organization", rather than being ends in themselves (Price, Roxburgh, & Turnbul, 2006, p. 649), or as Pye &Pettigrew (2006) argue: "the aim of both strategising and organizing (through their interrelationship) is to change behaviour in pursuit of organization purpose and competitive advantage" (p.588). This is a further key recommendation that is anticipated from the proposed research.

This chapter also discussed the three key domains of the strategising research agenda, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis. The concept of practitioners was defined as the actors or agents who actually do the work of strategy formulation. Practices, on the other hand, is seen as the tools through which strategising is carried out, in the form of various ways of behaving, thinking and acting which over time tend to gain prevalence and legitimacy within the organisation. Praxis, in turn, can be thought of as the flow of strategising activity (ies) and which may occur at more than one level of praxis. The micro, meso, and macro levels of strategy praxis, as identified by Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), constitute a fundamental aspect of the proposed research. It was also posited that these three domains of strategising are what constitutes the foundation of the research philosophy developed in the subsequent chapter, as well its ensuing empirical application.

The resultant units of analysis such as the various types and categories of activities, forms of legitimacy, and the strategising matrix all stem from this overarching theoretical framework.

It was asserted in the chapter that these three key domains of strategising are tightly interconnected whereby praxis forms practitioners and successful practices are in turn carried out by influential practitioners, all in the context of intra-organisational praxis being marked by extra-organisational practices (Whittington, 2006). Strategising therefore occurs at the nexus between these three key domains making the overall theoretical concept the main building block of the proposed theoretical framework on which the rest of the research is based.

The chapter also discussed a number of other key concepts within the theory of strategy making. Structural and interpretive legitimacy stand out as two fundamental notions in any attempt to understand the nature of goal-directed activity. It is principally through these two forms of legitimacy that relevance and persistence is typically gained within the organisation. It was also established that structural and interpretative legitimacy are two complementary concepts whereby the strengths of one seems to be counteracted by the weaknesses of the other. When discussing the various patterns of goal-directed activity, it was noted that the activity based framework of strategisingis not fixed or static in nature. Instead, it is characterised by being robust and continuously changing. These features allow for the coexistence of multiple streams of goal-directed activity, which results in ongoing tension between activities, thus causing continuous pressure to adjust strategising in order to shape activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

Finally, the chapter also briefly reviewed a number of existing studies on strategy and strategising within the field of sport management studies. The conclusion here was that in spite of recent increased interest, the extent of existing specific academic literature is rather limited and the notable lack of empirical type of research in particular. It is envisaged that the proposed research will contribute towards addressing some of this existing gap. The next chapter discusses the research philosophy, design and methods adopted in this study.

SECOND PART - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

As already ascertained in previous chapters, the study of strategising is primarily concerned with the understanding of how organisational actors' everyday behaviour, activities and practices create strategic choices and consequences. Hence, the strategising research agenda assigns particular importance to embedded, mundane, and idiosyncratic routines and behaviours of organisational daily life. The empirical work "…suggests that many people are able to describe and theorise about what they do in detail only when they are in the context of their work…" (Balogun, Anne, & Phyl, 2003, p. 198)Hence, it becomes quite evident that a large body of previous strategy research – particularly prior to the last decade – is skewed in favour of macro levels of analysis, consequently therefore failing to provide the necessary detail to understand key strategising practices.

This chapter deals directly with the question of what constitutes the most appropriate methodological approach to studying strategy and strategising within a modern organisational setting. This question, while a crucial one, sport can also pose significant challenges to the researcher. This is due to a number of factors not least because the relatively new topic of strategising poses its own specific challenges due to a range of theoretical and practical considerations. Additionally, the empirical study of such topic raises even more methodological issues for the researcher to consider. A further factor is borne by the fact that a large number of strategising studies tend to choose the modern organisation as the basic unit of analysis. This, however, can raise significant methodological and practical issues due to a number of reasons, such as the increased complexity and diversification of the modern organisational setting, chiefly brought upon by the accelerated globalisation of activities, the increased geographical spread, and modern technology. Thus, the study of strategising within a modern organisational setting can be inherently overly complex, and inevitably subject to a number of contradictory and conflicting pressures (see, for example, Balogun, Anne, & Phyl, 2003). An example of such source of conflict faced by the researcher is the need for the data gathering to be 'deep' but also at the same time have sufficient 'breadth'. A further exacerbating factor in all of this is the numerous theoretic perspectives and methodological approaches available for the researcher to adopt from in the study of strategy and strategising. This is on top of the related observation that there is an increasing *blurring* in the ontological and

epistemological boundaries (i.e. fuzzy boundaries), which characterises this type of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Balogun, Anne, & Phyl, 2003; Locke, 2001).

Thus, it follows that any research into strategising in the context of the modern organisation needs to be based on a solid research paradigm that builds on prior best practice in the field, and at the same time complementing this with new and novel ways of doing research in order to capture previously overlooked aspects. It also follows that the research methods adopted must be well thought-out and theoretically justified, taking into account and addressing the previously identified complexities and potential sources of conflict. To this end, Balogun, Anne, & Phyl (2003) stress that "…strategising research cannot advance significantly without reconceptualising frequently taken-for-granted assumptions about the way to do research…" (p. 197).

The research methodology and research design adopted in this study is the main subject of discussion in this chapter. The structure of the chapter consists of three main parts. The first part discusses the overarching research philosophy and framework including epistemological and ontological assumptions. In order to provide a meaningful theoretical grounding for the proposed research, and its empirical application in particular, this part also highlights the theoretical context of the study by critically discussing issues that are pertinent to the methods of research that have been applied in the study of the concept of strategising within management literature.

In the second part of the chapter, a specific discussion of the precise research design and research methods is given. The case study design, as the main research method, is comprehensively and critically reviewed within this section, including a thorough discussion of the multiple-case study design. This is then supplemented by a critical discussion of the semi-structured interview as the main technique for primary data collection within the multiple-case study method. This part of the chapter also offers a detailed description, with appropriate theoretical justifications, of the sampling method used in the fieldwork and data collection stages of the research, along with a detailed discussion of the various steps followed in the sampling process. The nature and scope of the study sample are subsequently explained including data sources and descriptive statistics of both primary and secondary data.

In the final part of the chapter, the detailed process of data analysis is reviewed, along with some practical considerations raised by the proposed research including ethical and practical issues, as well as potential research limitations and suggested ways to mitigate them.

4.2 Research philosophy and framework

This section lays the theoretical underpinnings behind the adopted research philosophy in this study. It starts by setting clear boundaries around the proposed research through a clear demarcation of the key epistemological position of the proposed research, as well as the ontological position of the researcher. This is then followed by a discussion of issues that are helpful in the contextualisation of the chosen research strategy and methods.

4.2.1 **Epistemological and ontological considerations**

Every research is underscored by both ontological and epistemological assumptions. The researcher's way of conducting any kind of investigation is a product of the nature of his/ her own reality and the ways in which these have become known to him/ her. Thus, different views of social reality and different ways of gathering knowledge about this reality exist. Ontological assumptions deal with issues that are related to our beliefs about what constitutes social reality (Blaikie, 2000). The researcher's ontological position cannot be critiqued nor is it possible for it to be refuted empirically, i.e. there are no wrong or right ontologies. Ontological standpoints are more concerned with examining theories and hypotheses rather than seeking the knowledge itself (for more on ontology see, for example, Lowe (2005), p. 670-671).

Epistemology, on the other hand, can be described as "claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8) or in other words the possible ways in which the researcher acquires knowledge about social reality (for more on epistemology see, for example, Hamlyn (2005), p. 259-262). Crotty (1998) suggests that there are three epistemological positions: objectivism, subjectivism, and Constructionist.

Objectivism is the position where the researcher attempts to find causes, effects, and explanations of a certain real phenomenon. Hence, the overall aim here is more about explaining a certain phenomenon rather than describing it. The researcher may achieve this through various methods of investigation such as building theories, models and hypotheses which can then be tested and from which subsequently generalisations and predictions can then be made. A researcher with a subjectivist position will strive to comprehend human behaviour by "reconstructing the self-understandings of those engaged in performing them" (Fay, 1996, p. 113). Fulfiling this task requires the comprehension of what the human actors do which in turn requires the researcher to understand the actors in their own terms. The final epistemological position is constructivism which focuses on the ways that social phenomena develop in a particular social context or environment. This school of thought advocates that social phenomena

and practices are in fact 'artefacts' of the given social context in which they have come to exist in human participants, whether they were individuals or groups. According to the philosophical theory of social constructionism, human beings "participate in the creation of their perceived social reality and this reality" (Sremac, 2013, p. 22); is ever progressing as social interactions occur (Burr, 1995; Crotty, 1998).

The method of enquiry in this research cannot be deterministically associated with just one epistemological stand. Instead, some elements of both the objectivist as well as constructivist stands can be employed, with the latter tending to become more dominant in data gathering and analysis. Hence, on one level, this research can adopt a 'positive management research' approach, which is concerned with explanation and prediction (i.e. what does occur in practice?) as opposed to the normative approach, which is more concerned with prescription (i.e. what ought to happen?). This is following Scapens' (1990) dichotomisation of the two main forms of research within management studies: 'positive' and 'normative'. The positivist school of thought is based on a number of assumptions. One assumption that is worth highlighting is that under positivism, research is a "process of making knowledge claims and then refining or abandoning some of them for claims that are more strongly warranted" (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 31), in other words, the researcher examines a theory, hypothesis or prediction. Another assumption of positivism is that "research seeks to develop relevant true statements-ones that can serve to explain the situation that is of concern or that describes the causal relationship that are the focus of interest" (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 38). The positivist researcher must ultimately examine his/ her methods of inquiry as well as the findings in order to identify potential bias. It is also worth noting that the 'positive' researcher cannot directly assist in or influence the choice of the decision-maker but s/he can assist the decision-maker understand how the relevant variables interact. An obvious advantage of the positivist approach is that it allows the researcher to avoid those value judgements and theoretical speculations usually associated with the normative models (Scapens, 1990).

On another level, and in large parts of it, this research can also be said to adopt the interpretivist perspective, which relies on a constructionist epistemological standpoint. Here, the key assumption being that any phenomenon within social reality must be seen as context-dependent and created through (social) interactions between actors and contexts in which they act; a form of artefact making as discussed in earlier parts. Therefore, the phenomenon under study moves from being an independent variable to becoming a dependent one (i.e., the result of social interactions and context). As this research is going to analyse how organisational actors at different levels within the organisation understand,

interpret and implement strategy, it appears that using the positivism paradigm is inappropriate. This study has no hypothesis or assumptions. As an alternative, interpretivism seems to be more appropriate. Compared to positivism, the interpretivism paradigm provides a deeper understanding of people's perceptions in their own social context. Organisational actors who carry out the strategy and strategising work are more likely to understand and implement their agency and leadership according to their own perspective.

Hence, the combination, as is the case in this research, of rational and interpretive approaches can assist in making the analysis less subjective and alleviate some of the aforementioned problems. The overriding aim of the analysis here is the scientific investigation of a specific management practice from design to implementation phases.

4.2.2 **Theoretical context of the proposed research**

This section provides a brief but necessary theoretical contextual grounding for the proposed research and the chosen research methodology. The section also provides linkages to the previous chapters and starts by explaining some of the key issues raised by researching strategy and strategising in the field of sport management. This is then complimented by a brief discussion of the development in research methods within the field of sport policy implementation.

4.2.2.1 Researching strategising

Conducting academic research on strategising requires the researcher to adequately understand this relatively new concept in strategy and management research. It was asserted in strategy and strategising chapter that the concept of strategising regarded strategy as a pattern in a stream of goal-directed activity over time, consisting of various goal-directed activities taking place in and outside of the organisation. The activity-based dynamics of strategising included the various patterns of goal-directed activity, as well as the different types of strategising and the main forms of legitimacy. It was also established that according to the strategising school of thought, the work of everyday strategy is distributed in nature and is not only confined to top management (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Instead, it is a multi-level phenomenon involving various organisational actors as well as the wider organisational community. In addition, and in terms of academic research on strategising, it was also established in chapter four that three interrelated research domains

tend to shape the strategising research agenda, namely practitioners, practices and praxis (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009).[25]

Thus, it can be argued that researching strategising entails the empirical analysis of everyday processes, practices and activities, making the strategising research agenda an empirically driven domain of research.

The origins of the strategising research framework can be attributed, among other considerations, to the study of the reality of human action and reaction between actors at same or different organisational and managerial levels. A sociological perspective views humans' interactions as very complex and much more complicated in scale in terms of individual interactions (Cummings & Angwin, 2004; Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007; Hoopes, Madsen, & Walker, 2003; Hoskisson, Hitt, Wan, & Yiu, 1999). Hence, established research methods within the field of applied sociology can be adopted by researchers in other disciplines, such as strategy and management. This research approach can help the researcher better understand societies, groups and human interactions as well as daily goal-directed activities (Harrison & St. John, 1998; Hillman & Keim, 2001; Harrison & St.John, 2014). To this effect, and of direct usefulness to the proposed research, the researcher reviewed prominent sociological research and noted that within this discipline, societies, groups and individuals are often grouped into three main levels of practice, namely the macro, meso, and micro levels. These groupings are based on typical organisational hierarchy and reflect the level of authority and influence of the organisational actors within each level vis-à-vis the other levels (Wit & Meyer, 2010; Hall S. , 1997).

The micro level consists of the daily actions and interactions of groups and individual actors at the bottom of the organisational structure (Hillman & Keim, 2001). The proposed study aims to examine how strategising activities are understood, interpreted and implemented by all the actors at this level (Rouleau, 2005). It is worth pointing out that the study of strategising at the micro level in particular does require special attention by the researcher to even the smallest elements of interaction as well as the subtleties of norms of behaviour occurring in daily organisational life. Another important facet of the proposed research at this level is therefore to study the influence of strategising activities on the behaviour, actions and reactions of these actors (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007). The meso level mainly deals with the divisions of organisational activities. The organisational structures and actors at this level tend to act chiefly as administrative and

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[25] See chapter 4 for more in-depth discussion of these three domains of strategising.

operational support links between the other two levels i.e. micro and macro levels. The meso level in this study was mainly in the form of development agencies and policy actors involved in strategic decision-making. Line managers, for instance, acted as the key link in conveying various organising activities. They were regularly invited to present their operational and administrative roles within each organisation, such as The Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee (SAOC) and National Sports Federations (NSF).

The third level at which strategising activities occur is the macro level. It consists of strategic activities related to planning, formulating the overall vision, overseeing the overall progress of implementation, and minimising potential obstacles such as goal ambiguity, strategic drift, and goals-means displacement (see, for example, Jarzabkowski, 2005). The macro level focuses on the key institutions that shape and exert great influence on organisational activities and organisational actors, whether groups or individuals. In this study, macro-level actors are in the form of policy-makers at the national, federal and regional levels. The main strategising activity investigated in this study, namely the government-led sport club privatisation programme, is championed by senior leaders in the Supreme Economic Council, the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), and the General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW).

It therefore follows that researching and making sense of strategising activities is naturally a complex issue, because actions and events at every organisational level are influenced by the contextual interpretations of various organisational actors, as well as the wider context in which these activities occur. The theoretical framework (proposed in strategy and strategising chapter), along with the research approach outlined in this chapter, not only provide a solid theoretical underpinning for the research but are also envisaged to facilitate the management of the complexities expected to be encountered at the stages of fieldwork and analysis in particular. In a more practical sense, the research design - discussed in more detail in subsequent sections - reflects these theoretical foundations by helping devise a simplified framework for data gathering, investigation and analysis. The research design 'network' depicted in Figure 4-1 is precisely devised to this effect. The network encompasses all the actors relevant to the study, organised along the three organisational levels discussed previously in this and prior chapters. The filtering of the various actors within the network (Figure 4-1) takes into account the characteristics and nature of the Saudi context such as the cultural peculiarities and the nature of the hierarchy in the Saudi political and economic systems (see chapter 2 in particular). While aiming to simplify the network as much as possible, a key consideration by the researcher in doing this was to ensure that the scope and level of 'interconnectedness' between the

various actors is not lost or diminished in any way. This can be readily noticed through observing the interrelatedness across the levels as well as within each of the three levels.

Figure 4-1 Research design: macro, meso and micro levels of investigation
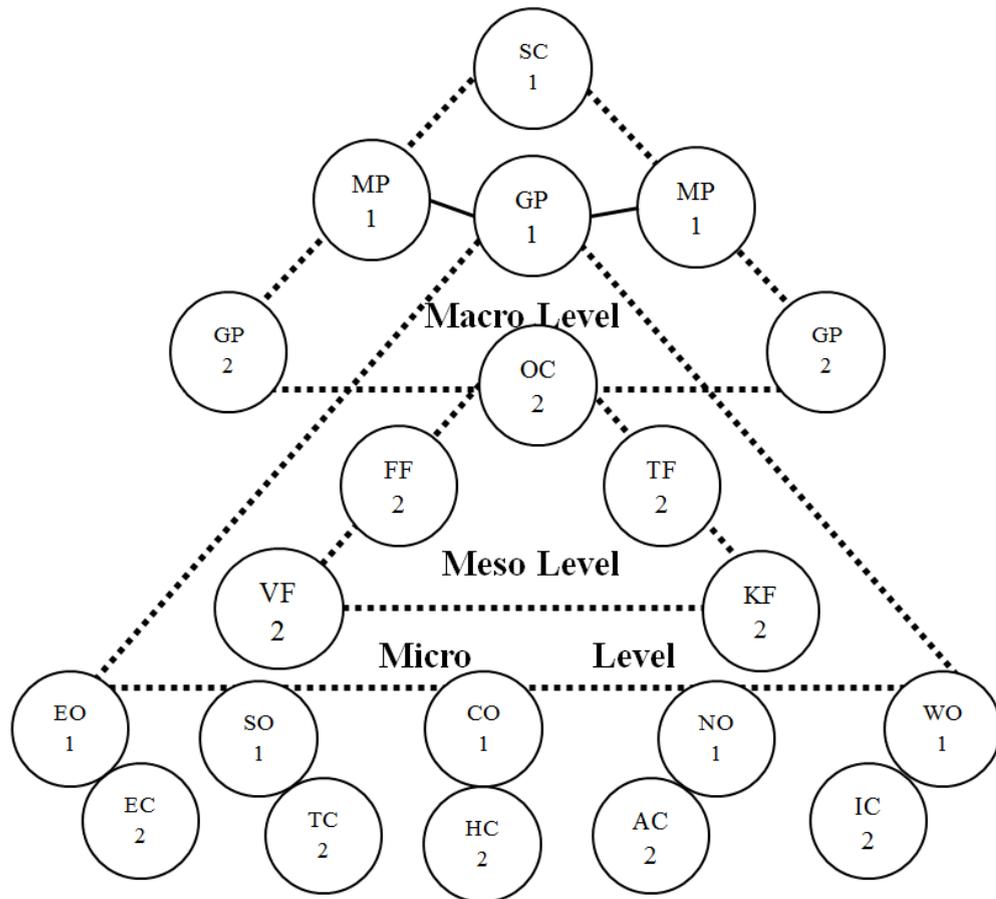
Key to the figure:

Level	Code	Organisation
Macro	EC	The Supreme Economic Council
	MP	Ministry of Economy and Planning
	GP	GPYW
Meso	OC	Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee
	FF	Saudi Football Federation
	VF	Volleyball Federation
	TF	Tennis Federation
	KF	Karate Federation
Micro	EO	GPYW office in Dammam
	EC	Al-Ettifaq Sports Club
	NO	GPYW office in Al-Jouf
	AC	AL Arouba Sports Club
	SO	GPYW office in Jazan
	TC	AL Tohami Sports Club
	WO	GPYW office in Jeddah
	IC	AL Ittihad Sports Club
	CO	GPYW office in Riyadh
	HC	AL Hailal Sports Club

4.3 Research design and methods

This second part of the chapter offers a detailed discussion of the main research methods adopted in this study. It also explains the various steps and procedures followed by the researcher in the various critical stages of research including design, data collection, and data analysis. This part starts by critically discussing the case study as the adopted main research strategy, followed by a brief discussion of the second major method adopted by this research, namely the semi-structured interview. This part ends by a detailed description of the sampling process used in the fieldwork and data collection phases, along with a detailed description of the study data sample and data sources.

4.3.1 The case study research method

Case study, as a research method, can be defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin., 2003, p. 13). Flyvbjerg (2006) agrees with the definition as a "detailed examination of a single example" as in (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34), but he disagrees with regards to the case study not being able "…to provide reliable information about the broader class"[26] (p. 220).

The case study design can also be described as the typical method of process research (Hinings C. S., 1997). This is in contrast to other management studies, which generally tend to prefer the anthropological approach of ethnography (Whittington, 2001). Scapens (1990) and Ryan, Scapens, & Theobold (2002) review the key steps used in conducting case study research. The authors identify five distinct steps: preparation, collecting evidence, assessing evidence, identifying and explaining patterns and finally report writing. In the same vein, Figure 4-2 summarises closely similar steps that are typically followed in doing case study research.[27]

Under the case study design, data is normally gathered through the extensive use of various types of interview techniques in addition to secondary data collection and documentation. Data analysis involves detailed scene setting and content analysis, substantiated through quotations and excerpts from participants in the study.

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[26] 'broader class' here relates to generalisation from case studies, it refers to the wider population.

[27] Note that Figure 4-2 is more applicable to the multiple-case study type in particular. The feedback loops highlight the *replication* feature in such research design. The issue of replication is discussed in more detail in the subsequent sub-section. See also Yin (2003) for further detail.

Figure 4-2 The steps in the design of a case study method

DEFINE & DESIGN   **PREPARE, COLLECT, & ANALYSE**   **ANALYSE & CONCLUDE**
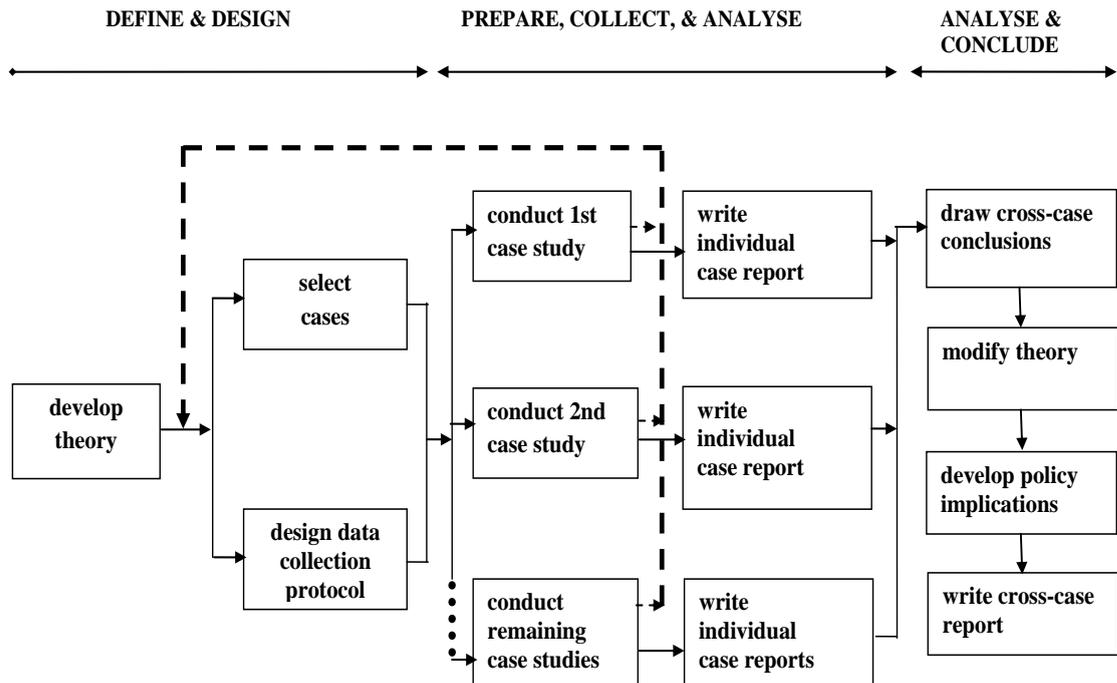
Source: COSMOS Corporation, cited in (Yin, 2003, p.50).

In terms of the general types of case studies used by researchers within social science, there are numerous types (see, for example, Scapens 1990 and Ryan, Scapens, & Theobold 2002). However, they are typically classified into three broad types, namely *descriptive*, *exploratory*, and *explanatory* (Kothari, 2009). Case studies, but more in terms of being used as a research design, can also be classified as *single-* or *multiple-* case studies depending on the number of cases that are evaluated for a research (Gray, 2004; Ketchen & Bergh, 2006; Yin, 2003; 2012). Other classifications of case studies distinguish between *holistic* or *embedded* case studies depending on the presence or absence of sub-units of analysis (Yin, 2003; 2012). These two latter classifications are discussed in more depth in the next sub-section.

Before going into further discussion of the aforementioned types of cases studies, it is worth noting that there is no obvious clear-cut distinction between the various aforementioned types of case studies. Indeed, "Ultimately, it is the intention of the researcher which determines the appropriate classification" (Scapens, 1990, p. 266). Hence, the type of case study used for the purpose of this research is difficult to categorise into just one deterministic type, but rather it can be argued to encompass many elements of the descriptive and explanatory types in particular, and to a much lesser extent the exploratory type.

Descriptive case studies are typically employed to perform an in-depth evaluation of a data sample. Descriptive case studies are important because they tend to be much focused and containing a lot of detail, but their results are not typically meant to be generalised (Eisenhardt, 1989). This type of case uses questions and propositions that are clearly identified prior to the phenomenon being studied, and the articulation of what is already known about a phenomenon gives it the descriptive nature (Yin, 2003). In this research, elements of the descriptive case study are evidently present through, for example, the study of contextual and historical backgrounds of the organisations within the sample cases and their detailed profiles using both secondary and primary data.

Explanatory case studies, on the other hand, are typically concerned with examining cause-effect relationships. They seek to identify theories that explain these cause-effect relationships in the specific context of a certain phenomenon (Jha, 2008).[28] This study makes significant use of the explanatory type case study whereby the theory of strategy and strategising – and its various components – is used as the overarching theoretical framework (see chapter four) which guides both the chosen research approach, as well as the interpretation and analysis of gathered empirical data.

The exploratory type case study is a form of initial research that looks at a phenomenon for which there is little or no prior information (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), and allows the researcher to gain information without having a solid prior knowledge about it. The proposed study may take some of the characteristics of the exploratory type when a new phenomenon or observation is uncovered for which there is limited prior information or knowledge. An example of this could potentially be when identifying a new strategising pattern beyond what is documented in prior strategy literature.

The case study approach, as a research methodology in social sciences, has several merits. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the case study is important in generating theoretical knowledge. In addition, when regarded as a method of investigating a contemporary phenomenon within a certain real-life context, a case study can contribute towards developing some theoretical knowledge by generating certain hypotheses or models (Dogan & Pelassy, 1990; Diamond, 1996). Another merit of the case study method is that it systematically produces exemplars, thus providing important benchmarks and reference points for scholars.

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[28] In the context of this study, an example of a cause-effect relationship is between the concepts of 'strategy' and 'strategising', where strategy can be considered as the cause, whereas strategising as the effect. "Praxis: action and reflection"

There are, however, some limitations when using a case study as a research method. Most of the critiques of the case study centre around issues of theory, reliability, and validity (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The author, however, considers many of these criticisms directed towards the case study approach as 'misunderstandings' and sometimes mere 'oversimplification'. The following section briefly summarises the main critiques of the case study approach and some of the responses within the literature.

Perhaps the strongest critique of the case study approach is the claim that the researcher cannot make meaningful generalisations from case studies as with large samples. This single critique is seen as "…devastating to the case study as a scientific method" (Flyvbjerg, Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research, 2006, p. 223).

Case studies are referred to as 'small sample studies' in management literature (Ryan, Scapens, & Theobold, 2002; Scapens, 1990). This may in turn mean that generalisations about larger populations can be difficult or even impossible to make. This may make the inferences from the analysis less representative of the existing practice. At this important juncture, it is worth reminding that the data sample usedin this study is characterised by being vastly representative as cases were selected across three different levels of investigation and involving different actors from different organisations representing all the geographical regions. Additionally, it certainly remains a reasonable expectation that the reported results and findings may be somewhat different from the average, or compared to findings from much larger studies.

Even though the problem of generalisability is somewhat inherent in case studies as a research strategy, there exist a number of avenues through which the researcher is able to at least partly mitigate this issue. Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests the approach of strategically selecting the cases, hence making the issue of case selection one of paramount importance in this regard. Therefore, and for the purposes of this research, this study adopted a careful and meticulous sampling process (see section 4.3.3 for more on the issue of sampling). The selection of cases in this study followed a mixed approach, using both restricted and random sampling techniques. Indeed this was primarily in tended towards mitigating some of these specific limitations of the case study method in terms of generalisability. Besides, the author argues that even when the case is purely descriptive and phenomenological without any attempt to generalise, it would still be a valuable tool in scientific development, i.e. generalisation is not the only legitimate method of scientific inquiry. Still on the issue of generalisations, Flyvbjerg (2006) concludes that "one can often generalise on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalisation as supplement or alternative to other methods.

But formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 228). Consequently, in this study, some kind of generalisation can still be achieved[29] not least due to the aforementioned meticulous sampling process and the sample size. Despite these obvious limitations of the case study approach as a research method, "…nevertheless case studies are useful in generating hypotheses that can be tested later with large samples" (Scapens, 1990, p. 269), thereby also providing interesting avenues for further research and investigation. Finally but importantly, and as Lampel, Mintzberg, Quinn, & Ghoshal (2013) argued, management research is about context and within this; the case study serves the purpose of being able to capture the specific context of the phenomenon or phenomena under study.

A further critique directed at the case study approach is the accusation of being inherently subjective and biased especially if compared to other methods of scientific inquiry such as the more quantitative and hypothetico-deductive methods. For instance, the argument that the case study approach tends to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions and beliefs. A good example to illustrate this is the tendency of humans in general to favour affirmative evidence rather than negative (also referred to in the literature as the bias for 'verification'). There is substantial evidence, especially from the field of experimental psychology, to support this apparent 'psychological bias' in human behaviour. This psychological bias has also been examined in various settings and contexts from economics to politics and management science. If this criticism is true, then this would cast significant doubt on the scientific value of such a method of scientific inquiry. The brief response to such critique is what many proponents of the case study approach described as a 'fallacious' critique (see, for example, Campbell, 1975; Ragin, 1992; Geertz, 1995). In this study, the researcher is going to reduce perceived bias by using his skills as a good listener, being adaptive to new situations and being free of preconceived notions (Yin, 1994).

4.3.1.1 The multiple-case study research design

Now that the case study as a research method has been defined, and its merits and drawbacks have been discussed, the issue that naturally follows relates to that of research design. This sub-section discusses the case study method and its basic types specifically

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[29] See section 4.4 for a further related discussion regarding the issue of 'analytic generalisation'.

from a research design perspective. It pays particular attention to the features of the multiple-case study as the main research design adopted in this study.

Yin (2003) defines research design as "...the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study. Every empirical study has an implicit, if not explicit, research design", (p.19). Hence, an appropriate design serves as the "blueprint" for doing research, allowing the researcher to avoid common pitfalls in conducting research such as situations where collected evidence fails to address the initial research questions (Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003; 2012) identifies four basic types of case study design. In the 2 x 2 matrix, the first pair consists of single-case and multiple-case designs, whereas the second pair distinguishes between holistic and embedded designs. This second pair is based on the unit(s) of analysis within a given study, and can occur in combination with either of the first pair, thus resulting in four basic types, namely: *single-case* (*holistic*) designs, *single-case* (*embedded*) designs, *multiple-case* (*holistic*) designs, and *multiple-case* (*embedded*) designs. Moreover, this study implied embedded multiple case study designs. It is embedded multiple case study designs not holistic because not involved for whole single unit at this study.

The case study research design adopted in this study is the *multiple-case* (*embedded*) design (*Type 4*). This choice was dictated by several factors including, among others, the context and boundaries of the proposed research, the nature of phenomenon under study and related research questions, the complexity of theoretical issues under study, and the number of relevant subunits of analysis. Therefore, due to these and other related reasons, it was ultimately decided that a single-case approach is not appropriate for this type of study, and would suffer not least from a major issue of misrepresentation. Within the multiple-case approach, the choice between holistic and embedded designs is also briefly explored towards the end of this sub-section.

In multiple-case study design, the researcher selects two or more cases instead of just one single case. Hence, any study that contains more than a single case is judged to have used a multiple-case design. The multiple-case research design provides an in-depth analysis of a situation or a phenomenon even if it does not have a wide breadth. In this study, the subject of empirical research consists of multiple organisations and strategising actors (policymakers, government agencies, policy implementation bodies, sport clubs) directly involved in the sports sector in general and in the privatisation policy in particular. The cases studies are distributed across three levels of investigation, yielding a total of eighteen different case organisations – see Figure 4-1 and Table 4-1). Each organisation is

the subject of an individual case study, and the study as a whole encompasses several organisations thereby resulting in a multiple-case design. Yin (2003) argues that both single and multiple-cased study designs are just variants within the same methodological framework, i.e. they both fall under the case study method; hence, the choice is just that of research design.

From a strategy-as-practice perspective, strategising work consists of socially accomplished activities and practices carried out by various strategising actors at multiple levels of strategising praxis (see, for example, Jarzabkowski, 2005). Hence, this study encompasses various patterns, types and episodes of strategising activities and practices. In its methodological approach, such as in terms of data sampling techniques, the study also pays particular attention to the need to include a wide range of policy/ strategy actors involved with the sport club privatisation policy, from the macro to the meso to the micro levels of strategising praxis. This is reflected both in the rigour (distribution) and scope (size) of the final data sample.

Methodologically speaking, however, and in the overall context of this study, there is no definite precise definition of what constitutes a standalone case study and this is in part due to the conceptual difficulties in setting deterministic, clear-cut boundaries. Thus, instead of dealing with each case study in silo, a more objective approach, as advocated in this research, is to take an holistic perspective, and hence the justification for the adoption of an holistic, embedded multiple case-study design. Additionally, at a conceptual level (see also Chapter 3), strategising work occurs in continuous episodes and represents multiple streams (or flow) of activity over time (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington 2006; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). Hence, thinking of individual cases studies as mere standalone strategy/ policy actors or stakeholders does not convey the full and true picture of organisational reality in the context of this research. Instead, a more useful way of looking at a case study in the overall theoretical positioning of this research is to think of each of the proposed eighteen case studies as part of the context in which the aforementioned various elements of strategising work manifest and take place. Hence, at a basic level, the case studies encompass various elements of strategising activity carried out by different strategising actors at different levels of strategising praxis. Therefore, when taken together (multiple cases), the overall methodological approach becomes more holistic and better representative of both organisational reality as well as the basic theoretical premise.

Table 4-1 Details of the multiple case studies used

No.	Case study	Level	Roles and responsibilities
1.	The Supreme Economic Council	*Macro*	Promote privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia
2.	Ministry of Economy and Planning		Co-promote privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia
3.	General Presidency of Youth Welfare		The core government agency supervising sport club privatisation strategy
4.	The Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee	*Meso*	Agency associated with sport privatisation strategy
5.	Saudi Football Federation		Agency associated with sport privatisation strategy
6.	Volleyball Federation		Agency associated with sport privatisation strategy
7.	Tennis Federation		Agency associated with sport privatisation strategy
8.	Karate Federation		Agency associated with sport privatisation strategy
9.	GPYW office in Dammam	*Micro*	Intermediary office for the communication of government policy overseeing sport clubs in the Eastern region
10.	Al-Ettifaq Sports Club		Sport club subject to the sport privatisation strategy in the East
11.	GPYW office in Al-Jouf		Intermediary office for the communication of government policy overseeing sport clubs in the Northern region
12.	AL Arouba Sports Club		Sport club subject to the sport privatisation strategy in the North
13.	GPYW office in Jazan		Intermediary office for the communication of government policy overseeing sport clubs in the Southern region
14.	AL Tohami Sports Club		Sport club subject to the sport privatisation strategy in the South
15.	GPYW office in Jeddah		Intermediary office for the communication of government policy overseeing sport clubs in the Western region
16.	AL Ittihad Sports Club		Sport club subject to the sport privatisation strategy in the West
17.	GPYW office in Riyadh		Intermediary office for the communication of government policy overseeing sport clubs in the Central region
18.	AL Hailal Sports Club		Sport club subject to the sport privatisation strategy in the Central region

Source: developed by the author

So, why a multiple-case design? The rationale for choosing this type of research design can be understood by closely examining its advantages and merits. It is, however, worth highlighting from the outset the fact that the general rationale for using multiple-case design may fundamentally differ from that of single-case design. For instance, the unique or rare case, the critical case, the typical case, and the revelatory case are all likely to

involve, by definition, only single cases (Yin, 2003). Nevertheless, and compared in general terms to a single-case design, this approach has a number of distinct advantages. The first relates to issues of robustness and reliability. Many academics and researchers consider studies that use multiple cases as being more robust when compared those using single-case designs (Herriott & Firestone, 1983)(see, for example, Herriott & Firestone 1983; Yin 2003; 2012;). Hence, it follows that results and findings generated from multiple cases are often considered to be much stronger. The second, and more important, advantage of the multiple-case design relates to the key issue of 'replication logic'[30] (see, for example, Yin 2003; 2012). Yin (2003) points out that this replication logic is analogous to that used in multiple experiments within various other fields of science. Yin (2011) argues that in multiple-case research design, the researcher selects two or more cases because they are believed to be similar. The researcher can therefore examine whether the same patterns, events, or thematic constructs can be replicated in different contexts and different settings (Yin 2003; 2012). Reporting a detailed protocol for data collection would also enable the researcher to replicate the procedure of a qualitative case study in a different context or setting. More specifically, the researcher ought to look out for two types of replication, 'literal' and 'theoretical' (Yin 2003; 2012). *Literal* (or *direct*) replication implies that the selected case study predicts similar results to the other selected cases, whereas in *theoretical* replication, the predicted results are contrasting but the reasons are predictable. In the case of literal replication, this replication feature becomes stronger the more similar the findings from the cases are, thereby allowing the researcher to make stronger replication claims as well make some kind of generalisations to the wider set of situations. In short, the replication logic achieved through multiple-case study design will most likely add more robustness to the overall study findings, not least because even if the number of cases is not large, the power of corroboration between the different cases will certainly give added strength to the body of evidence (see, for example, Yin 2003).

In the specific context of the proposed study, the researcher aims to generate findings from the multiple cases studies that are robust enough to claim replication *across* the three Levels of investigation (i.e. vertically), as well as (horizontally) among different cases *within* the same level. Hence, under the multiple-case research design, every case needs to be carefully selected so that it serves a specific purpose within the overall context and

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[30] 'Replication logic' differs quite markedly from what is known as 'sampling logic'. See, for example, Yin (2013) for further discussion on this issue.

scope of the research. Each case needs to be selected so that it satisfies either one of the two aforementioned conditions of replication. Additionally, the researcher needs to develop an adequate and rich theoretical framework[31], specifying the conditions under which the phenomenon under study is likely to be found (a literal replication), as well as those conditions under which it is *not* likely to be found (a theoretical replication).

Closely related to the replication feature, the multiple-case study research design can also be useful in generating relevant and useful exemplars – one of the motivations behind the adoption of this research design in this study. Additionally, multiple case studies help enrich research by producing useful and sound theories that are empirically grounded (Yin, 2004; 2012). It is a research design that allows researchers to gain significant expertise in their fields by generating new knowledge that is context-dependent. The multiple-case study design is particularly valuable when it is difficult for the researcher to set a clear boundary between a phenomenon and its context. A further attractive feature of the multiple-case study design is that it is characterised by being very supple and this allows the researcher to make changes and modifications even in the middle of the process of conducting the study (Eisenhardt, 1989). The researcher is allowed to move backwards and forwards in order to adjust the theoretical framework, or even fine-tune it post hoc based on case findings.

An important step in designing and conducting case study research is defining the unit of analysis, which in turn largely shapes the overarching holistic aspects of the case (Yin, 2003). The basic unit of analysis (or the case) can take various forms; it can be an individual, an entity, some event, a programme, a decision, and implementation process, a given policy etc. However, and within the single case study, *subunits* of analyses may also be called for in addition to the main unit, thus resulting in a considerably more complex variant of case-study design – also known as '*embedded*' design. The choice between holistic or embedded design variations is not only confined to the single-case design however. It is also equally applicable in multiple-case studies, as is the instance in the proposed research. This implies that each individual case may indeed be either holistic or embedded, i.e. a multiple-case study may consist of multiple holistic cases, or of multiple embedded cases (see; Yin, 2012). While this will inevitably add an additional layer of complexity to the study, the embedded design has the quality of adding more rigour and extensive analysis into the individual case(s), thereby significantly improving and enriching the insights and findings from such case(s). Another advantage of the multiple

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[31] This specific aspect of research design was dealt with in Chapters 2 and 3 of the study.

embedded-case study design, as is evidently the case in the proposed study, is that it maximises the potential of the study to achieve high levels of replication, both in the literal and theoretical forms. A further merit of the embedded-case study design compared to the holistic approach is that it helps focus the case study inquiry by preserving and keeping relevant the initial research questions as well as the original phenomenon of interest.

Despite these advantages, the researcher needs to be aware of some inherent drawbacks of such research design. One such drawback is the potential subsequent shift in focus towards the subunit level of inquiry, thereby neglecting or failing to return to the larger basic unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). This may then significantly jeopardise the larger, holistic aspects of the case. The proposed study attempts to mitigate this latter pitfall by continuously comparing, contrasting and relating the findings from the subunits of analysis to the larger unit, as well as by conducting cross-case comparisons within, and across the three levels of investigation. A few other wider limitations of the multiple-case study design are also worth taking into account. Yin (2003), for instance, sates that while multiple cases studies, as a research design, have recently become more prevalent, in practice they still tend to suffer from being expensive to conduct often requiring extensive resources and time. A further pitfall of the multiple-case design, albeit comparatively less severe, relates to the number of cases studies one ought to include in the study. Yin (2003) offers some pointers and highlights a number of minimum requirements, but also notes that ultimately the number of cases deemed necessary or sufficient is still largely a matter of discretionary and judgemental choice by the researcher. Yin (2003) adds that similar to the (quantitative) statistical significance requirements, the larger the number of cases, the more *certainty* the researcher can claim about his/ her multiple-case results. On the other hand, however, this needs to be balanced with contingent issues such as complexity and scope of available resources.

Finally yet importantly in terms of research design, it is worth highlighting that this study has deliberately adopted a *flexible* research design approach – as opposed to a *closed* one. This allowed the researcher to make necessary or desirable alterations and modifications to the original design during the study and data collection phases, obviously without compromising the overall rigour of the study.

4.3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

An integral part of the multiple-case study research design – discussed in the previous section, is the nature of the source of evidence/ data for the chosen case studies. Various

sources of evidence have traditionally been used in qualitative research in general, and in the case study approach in particular. Yin (2003), for example, lists *six* common sources of evidence: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts. In this study, interviews – more precisely the semi-structured type – are used as the main source for obtaining relevant *primary* data.[32] Hence, this sub-section specifically discusses this source in little more detail.

The nature of the research questions posed as well as the envisaged aims and objectives of the proposed research play a critical role in choosing the type of interview to be employed (Gray., 2004). Patton (2002) indicates that structured interviews have prepared questions and responses in advance, semi-structured interviews have prepared outlines which allow the researcher to develop more questions as well as respond to issues raised during the interview, while in unstructured interviews "questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things" (p.347).

In designing the interviews, the main consideration was to ultimately address the aims and objectives of the proposed research in an adequate manner. In terms of the semi-structured interview questions generated across the three levels of the study, the researcher developed a systematic, yet flexible guide, which ensured the key aims and objectives of the proposed research could be adequately achieved. In the first phase of the study (chapters 2 and 3), the researcher started by laying the theoretical foundations and overall theoretical framework for the rest of the study. This was achieved by conducting a critical and comprehensive survey of the existing relevant literature, culminating in the development of a workable theoretical framework, which then formed the basis for the ensuing empirical application of the study. Also in this phase of the study, the researcher worked on providing a comprehensive background in terms of the overall context of the study, particularly through the detailed overview of the Saudi political economy, as well the wider cultural and historical contexts pertinent to Saudi Arabia.

Subsequently, and on a more practical level, the researcher made several field visits to the place of the study, i.e. Saudi Arabia, in order to establish useful contacts with key stakeholders thereby building mutual trust prior to the face-to-face interviews and data collection stages. This period allowed the researcher to further refine the research boundaries of the study through finalising its basic research questions and objectives as

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[32] The extent of the use of other cited sources of data, including for secondary data, is subsequently detailed within other parts of this chapter.

well as identifying the important and common themes for investigation, and crosschecking these with the literature review and theoretical framework.

The guide used in generating the semi-structured interview questions followed a progressive approach (see Appendix, 2 and 3). The interview questions started by asking the participants some overall background questions relating to issues such as educational background and qualifications, work position, expertise and experience. This type of question was not only useful in setting the scene for the rest of the interview, but also as a way for engaging the participants and quickly building rapport with them. Moreover, by allowing interview participants to first talk about their achievements, their professional and educational backgrounds and their daily routines, they were made to feel at ease thereby allowing mutual rapport and trust to be established before going into the more specialised questions, especially given the sensitivity in the Saudi context of many of the questions raised by this study.

Following background and general questions, the second part of the interview guide focused on contextual issues in Saudi Arabia relating to the historical, cultural, political, and socio-economic factors that could be linked to public policy issues, and the sport privatisation programme in particular. These questions were naturally informed by the background work carried out in Chapter 2. In the subsequent part of the interview proceedings, the researcher was extra careful in allowing ample opportunity for the participants to express their own views regarding public policy affecting them and their organisations, including questions about pertinent issues such as public policy and privatisation objectives, communication, implementation, monitoring, etc. In this part also, the interview questions were designed such that there is clear progression from the general to the more specific, for instance by asking about public policy in general, followed by questions regarding privatisation in all economic sectors, then questions about the privatisation programme in the sport sector specifically.

The third part of the interview guide was largely based on common themes and issues generated within the literature review and theoretical framework conducted in Chapter 3 of the study. In this part, the interview questions centred around pertinent issues relating to the three key domains of strategy and strategising, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis (as previously established in chapter 3).

The final stage of the interviews was reserved for the discussion of any additional related issues that were deemed important by the participants, or any other issues that may have been overlooked, according to them. This space was also used to allow participants to expand their views if they wished, as well as to make suggestions such as potential ways

to improve this study into strategy and strategising of the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia. This aspect reflects part of the flexibility built into the semi-structured interview as a research method.

In spite of the obvious advantages of semi-structured interviews as the main source for collecting primary data, there are some limitations that are ought to be taken into account by the researcher. Bias seems to be the greatest possible disadvantage of using this technique. For example, should the interviewer utilise 'leading questions', considering that this might lead interviewees to give responses compatible with the interviewer's wishes? (Cohen, Manion., & Morrison, 2011). In this study, the researcher is going to limit bias by avoiding the use of leading questions and, instead, using general guide questions and prompts.

To briefly sum up on the choice of specific research methods adopted in this research, the proposed study is predominantly qualitative in nature, reflecting its appropriateness for investigating the nature of the proposed research questions, for which the use of purely quantitative methods is deemed unsuitable. The choice of a qualitative research design is also consistent with the researcher's own epistemological and ontological standpoints. Hence, in order to procure primary data, this research adopted a multiple-case study research design with the use of semi-structured interviews as the main source obtaining the required evidence. With regards to the choice of case study as the main research method, it can be concluded that most of its critiques are either caused by misunderstandings or mere oversimplifications. In many instances in social science research, and for many research tasks as is the case with this proposed study, the case study method becomes not only an essential but also a sufficient method of research in its own right. This is especially true when the researcher follows a *strategic* selection of samples and cases with a sound theoretical underpinning. Similarly, the choice of semi-structured interviews, as the main source for the collection of primary data, is also consistent with the overall motivations, aims and objectives of the study. The semi-structured interview provides the researcher with the best tools to capture most of the key issues pertinent to the research. It also provides the researcher with a useful degree of flexibility without necessarily compromising the validity or representativeness of the collected data. Moreover, it is subject to far less drawbacks than other comparable data gathering techniques, in addition to these being easier to mitigate by the researcher. Finally, the interview guide and design is built on solid theoretical foundations and follows a progressive approach.

4.3.2 **Sample selection and the sampling method**

The sampling method adopted in this research follows a two-stage approach. In the first stage, a *stratified* or *restricted sample* (Flyvbjerg, 2011; see also Figure 4-1) was developed whereby subgroups were selected from the overall available population sample. The restricted sample was obtained following the application of various initial stratifying criteria (see rest of this section for more detail on these criteria).

One advantage of this two-stage process approach to sample selection is that it allows for some wider generalisations for the subgroups within the population, as well as for the entire population.[33] It is important to note that specifically at the micro level, random sampling was applied to the sub-sample of sport clubs (i.e. case clubs) but not to the sample of interview participants. In this latter, the aim was to include at least two key officials from each participating organisation, a factor that could prove important in capturing different views within the same sport club. Based on official government records of registered sport clubs obtained from the GPYW, the overall population sample consisted of 153 sport clubs, all of which were targeted by the government's privatisation plans as per its initiation in 2002. At this stage, it would also be worth noting that in Saudi Arabia all sport clubs are classified as non-profit organisations (NPOs). Furthermore, all of these clubs are officially registered and provide multiple individual and team sport disciplines under the umbrella of the same club.

In addition to the obvious requirement that each of the clubs within the sample must satisfy the criterion of being included in the government's privatisation plan, the sampling method makes use of other related stratifying criteria as well. One such criterion at the micro level was the deliberate focus on those sport clubs that officially have the most 'popular' and widely practised sports (team and individual). This was done in order to capture as many key stakeholders as possible. The aim was to restrict the sample further to include four sports in total, representing two team sports and two individual ones. The extent of sport club popularity was determined based on the size of club membership, the data for which was obtained from various secondary sources in order to ensure and ascertain authenticity (for some more detail on such secondary sources of data, see Table 4-4, refer to secondary data table). Based on preliminary analysis of these data on club

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[33] Some limitations of these generalisations are discussed in sections 4.3.1 and 4.5.

memberships, it was found that *football* and *volleyball* were the two most popular team sports, while *karate* and *tennis* came out to be the two most popular individual sports.[34]

Moreover, and at the same micro level, an additional stratifying criterion was based on geographical/ regional considerations,[35] whereby only those regions with sport clubs that officially had all the four sports (at the time of the data collection stage) have made it to the final restricted sample. Consequently, 12 out of a total of 13 regions satisfied this criterion, altogether representing 35 sport clubs that fitted all the previously mentioned stratifying criteria. Out of these 12 regions, five represented the Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western regions respectively. This in turn resulted in the final restricted sample of 21 clubs, spread over five geographical regions, all having the aforementioned four most popular sports.

Hence, after all the eligible sport clubs within the five regions were identified, the next step was to randomly sample just one club from each of these five different regions, thus resulting in a final random sample of five clubs (see section 4.3. and 4.2 for brief background into each of the five sport clubs).

Finally, the interviews at the 'micro level' involved key participants at club level from this final random sample of five sport clubs. This is in addition to a total of five participants from the respective GPYW regional and district offices (see Figure 4-1 and Table 4-1for more detail). It is worth noting here that these five participants from the GPYW were also included within this micro level due to the nature of their roles which required of them direct communications with all the other actors at the rest of the levels. Their roles are of significant importance as they represent the axis link between the various levels.

At the macro and meso levels, which include many of the key policy-makers, sample selection was made based on specific stratifying criteria including the degree of involvement of participants with regards to strategic planning and policy-making. The participants were solicited to take part in the study within the ethical framework of the proposed research method.

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[34] Following this specific stratifying criteria, sport clubs which did not have all of the identified four most popular sports were disregarded.

[35] The related stratifying criterion that the final data sample must represent all of the geographical regions/ provinces that made it into the final restricted sample was used is in order to capture the different contextual, geographic and socio-economic factors such as local culture, economic, and demographic variations. To illustrate this point further (also discussed in Chapter 2), the Eastern region is closely affected by the neighbouring Arabian Gulf countries, the Western region is directly influenced by annual pilgrimage convoys and neighbouring East Africa, whereas the Southern region is closely linked to the neighbouring Yemen. Meanwhile, the Northern region is influenced by the neighbouring countries of the Levant, and finally the Midland and Riyadh region is impacted by being the Kingdom's capital city and the centre of government decision-making.

The 'macro level' consisted of key public policy organisations involved in the government's privatisation programme predominantly at the national and federal levels. Therefore, this dictated the inclusion at this level of key policy-makers from three government organisations, namely the Supreme Economic Council (EC), the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), and the General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW) (see the details in Figure 4-1 and Table 4-1). The study participants included a number of key policy-maker from each of these three organisations, such as the Secretary-General of the Supreme Economic Council, two deputy-ministers from the MEP, two key policy-makers from the GPYW, in addition to the president and some members of the privatisation project team operating at the GPYW level.

The 'meso level' consisted of development agencies and policy actors involved in decision-making operations of sport clubs from the National Sports Federations (NSF) and Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (SAOC) (see Table 4-1). Two senior officials from the SAOC, including the SAOC Secretary-General, participated in the interviews at this level. Also included at this level were two key officials from the four National Sport Federations (NSF) in the form of the President and the General Secretary.[36]

Therefore, the ultimate number of interview participants across the three levels of investigation reached 33 in total (see Figure 4-1).

Building from the previous part of the chapter, a brief description of the five sample sport clubs used to enhances this section. Al-Hilal club is based in the Saudi capital city Riyadh. Alhilal is one of the biggest sport clubs in Saudi Arabia due to a number of factors such as its central location, its many sporting achievements and vast business partnerships. It also has the highest number of honourary members from the Saudi Royal family. Alittihad is another big sport club, which is based in the city of Jeddah, the Western economic gateway of Saudi Arabia. Alittihad is the oldest club in Saudi Arabia and is famous for being widely supported by powerful business people from the region. In the Eastern region meanwhile, the presence of a large number of oil companies in that region helped facilitate the establishment and growth of many sport clubs over the years, making it the region with the highest number of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia. Alettifaq is another renowned Saudi sport club offering many sports and enjoying wide support particularly from the middle classes. In the north of the Kingdom, a desert border region with limited business and private investments, there is the Alarouba sport club. In the far south, the

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[36] Here, reference is made to the final sample of the four sport disciplines resulting from the sampling method, namely football, volleyball, karate and tennis. Two officials from the NSF of each sport discipline were sought for interview, resulting in a total of 8 NSF participants.

main sport club is the Altouhami club, which is suffering from financial problems affected by the economic situation of the southern regions (see Chapter 7 for more information).

Table 4-2 Descriptive statistics of players officially registered at the five sample sport clubs

Sport Clubs	Region/ location	Est.	Sports	Football	Volleyball	Karate	Tennis	Total
Al-Hilal	Midland/ Riyadh	1957	9	162	48	63	42	315
Al-Ittihad	Western/ Makka/ Jeddah	1927	12	289	62	78	47	476
Al-Arouba	Northern/ Jouf	1976	8	115	71	34	16	236
Al-Ittifaq	Eastern/ Dammam	1947	11	89	53	46	32	220
Al-Touhami	Southern/ Jazan	1950	9	95	34	44	20	193
Total			49	750	268	265	157	1440

Source: GPYW regions offices registration sheets (2013)

The nature of the proposed study dictates that the choice of the sampling method (more in section 4.3.2) ought to be based on the previous contextual and theoretical work provided in Chapters 2 and 3. Hence, it necessarily follows that the ultimate selection of the 18 different cases studies, including the five sport clubs, as well as the corresponding geographical regions, are directly informed by the contextual and theoretical boundaries determined in the previous chapters. The final study sample of five sport clubs in each level and region represent different realities and interests of the implementation of the privatisation programme, thereby helping provide a wide and representative picture of the state of sport club privatisation in Saudi Arabia. The sampling of cases studies, therefore, tries to capture the unique characteristics and interests of each constituent case in relation to the wider privatisation programme. The final data sample of cases included a wide-range of sport clubs including, for example, those with particular interests among the royal family or the business community, clubs with a wide fan base and popular support, clubs based in important investment hubs, or those possessing considerable assets and sport facilities. Such issues then become very pertinent to the main phenomenon under investigation in this study, i.e. privatisation.

Moreover, this final sample of sport clubs, and consistent with the theoretical framework established in previous chapters, also helps the researcher capture the maximum number of factors relevant to the political, cultural, and socio-economic contexts of the different regions in Saudi Arabia. The issue of context is evidently of paramount importance to this study. For instance, the different social backgrounds found in different cities and regions are an important determining factor in attracting investment to the club.

In addition to the above, data sample background information reveals a number of pertinent issues such as the type and size of the fan base (social support), the nature of ownership interests where for instance the biggest and most powerful clubs tend to enjoy the financial and political support certain of very influential social classes, such as members of the royal family and/ or wealthy business people. The study sample also categorises sport clubs according to the size of the club, using club membership and the number of registered athletes as guides. Other classification criteria include the level and track record of sport achievements of each club, and the level of facilities available at each club. Such wide-ranging issues not only enhance the appropriate contextualisation of the proposed research, but they can also allow the researcher to explore the full spectrum of sport club reality in Saudi Arabia, and thereby provide a much more representative picture of the privatisation programme in general.

Table 4-3 Background of the five sample sport clubs

Club	Region/ location	Social base	Membership	Facilities grade	Achievements
Al-Hilal	Midland/ Riyadh Government headquarter	Royal family and businessmen	Royal family and multiple classes of citizens.	A	Champions of Asian, Arab, Gulf Arab, National and Local Tournaments
Al-Ittihad	Western/ Makka/ Jeddah Pilgrims port	Businessmen and fishermen	Businessmen and multiple classes of citizens.	A	Champions of Asian, Arab, Gulf Arab, National and Local Tournaments
Al-Alarouba	Northern/ Jouf Border area	Shepherds and farmers	Middle and lower class citizens	B	Champions of National and Local Tournaments
Al-Ittifaq	Eastern/ Dammam Oil fields	Businessmen and fishermen	Businessmen and multiple classes of citizens.	A	Champions of Arab, Gulf Arab, National and Local Tournaments
Al-Touhami	Southern/ Jazan Border area	Fishermen and farmers	Middle and lower class citizens	Non	Champions of Local Tournaments

Source: developed by author

It has already been stated that primary data were mainly obtained using the semi-structured interviews technique. In addition to these primary data, a number of other sources such as documents in the form of published annual reports, official government documents, archival records, media and press releases have also been used to collect *secondary data*. Several academic databases were used to gather other additional secondary data. The researcher used both primary and secondary data simultaneously to

inform various stages of research. The secondary data documents were particularly useful in guiding the researcher when preparing interview questions. Additionally, data obtained from these documents allowed the researcher to later ratify, compare and confirm facts and statements obtained through primary fieldwork.

Table 4-4 lists all the documents used to source secondary data across all the three levels and participant organisations within the study. In total, there were more than 470 individual documents used across the three levels, with the macro and meso levels accounting for the vast majority of the number of documents.

1   Table 4-4 A list of all secondary data documents used in the study across the three levels and participant organisations

Document studied at levels and organisations	Macro			Meso					Micro										Total
	EC	MP	GP	OC	FF	VF	KF	TF	CO	EO	NO	SO	WO	HC	EC	AC	TC	IC	
Policy Document	1	21	2																24
Pamphlets, brochures, fliers	2	6	22	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	52
Legal documents	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2											14
Correspondence	3	8	17	4	14	12	7	11	3	4	2		3	4	3			2	97
Minutes of meetings	6	8	1	3	9	6	4	11											48
Newsletters	12	25	28	13	32	8	7	7	2	3	1	1	2	10	8	5	4	11	179
Organisational charts	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
Audiovisual interviews		1	9	1	1														12
Training and Education materials		1		7						5									13
Total	26	72	82	33	63	30	21	34	8	15	5	3	7	17	13	7	6	15	457
	180			181					38					58					

During the secondary data collection and document analysis stages, the researcher noted a number of practical issues and observations, most of which are subsequently summarised (see also table 4.5).[37]Firstly, the amount and availability of secondary data in all the organisations involved in the study were rather limited and scarcely available. Besides, a large portion of the available documents tended to focus on the history and past achievements of the organisations in question, in addition to perceived over exaggeration of claims within many of these printed documents. Secondly, documents that addressed public policy and overall planning issues regarding sport club privatisation project were often documented and made available in organisations at the macro level but such documents and their dissemination were completely missing at the lower levels. Thirdly, documents detailing the various rules and regulations relating to the sport clubs' privatisation projects were seen and obtained at the macro and meso levels but were absent at the lower micro level. One explanation that was put forward to the researcher was that such documents were regarded as confidential and sensitive, hence permission to access them is very limited for the officials and organisations at the lower levels.[38]

The fourth observation was that communication through 'written' documents such as mail and fax correspondence were observed to be some of the most common methods of communication between the organisations across the three levels. Fifthly, the presence and use of organisational (best) practices such as having a formal organisational structure flowcharts, regular progress meetings, and formal minute-taking, were only observed at the macro and meso levels, with differing degrees of utilisation – they were particularly frequently used at the NSFs and SAOC – but such practices were almost non-existent amongst the organisations at the micro level. Finally, the researcher often supplemented document analysis by closely following current news and developments within the Saudi sport arena whether through official public announcements, events reported in the different Saudi media outlets, and any other relevant sources. Additionally, the researcher used every possible opportunity for networking with key stakeholders in order to supplement and authenticate secondary data. For instance, the researcher attended a number of sport related events, conferences and workshops in Saudi Arabia in which valuable secondary data, such as training and educational materials, were obtained. These included a visit to the Institute of Sport Leadership, participation in national conferences

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[37] Some of these issues are further elaborated in the analysis and discussion parts (Chapters 5 through to 8).
[38] This particular issue may signal more substantial concerns regarding matters of trust, communication, and transparency. This issue is flagged up and discussed again in the subsequent discussion chapters.

on Saudi sport, and special workshops on privatisation and investment in the Saudi sport sector in the Central and Eastern regions.

All of the abovementioned secondary sources and data proved extremely useful in conducting the proposed study. Among other uses, the secondary data were useful in performing preliminary and background research into key organisations and individuals, checking and authenticating claims and statements, generating interview questions, as well as cross-checking with primary data and addressing any potential weaknesses encountered in other data source.

4.4 Data analysis

As previously discussed; this study follows the steps described by Scapens (1990) and Ryan, Scapens, & Theobold (2002) in conducting case study research, namely: preparation, collecting evidence, assessing evidence, identifying and explaining patterns and finally report writing. This data analysis part primarily deals with steps 3, 4 and 5 of this process.

This phase of the study (addressed mainly in Chapter 5 through 8) consists of "...examining, categorizing, tabulating, [and] testing...evidence to address the initial propositions of the study" (Yin., 2003, p. 109). Based on previous research, in this study the researcher initially devised a general *analytic strategy*, followed by choosing specific *analytic techniques*. In terms of the general analytic strategy – which underlies the specific analytic techniques – the author attempted to combine various elements from the three main general approaches to data analysis as proposed by Yin (2003). These included firstly, the reliance on theoretical propositions, secondly the inclusion of rival explanations, and thirdly developing case descriptions. This general strategy was then followed by the deployment of several analytic techniques to analyse primary and secondary data including *thematic analysis*, *cross-case synthesis, and content analysis*. These techniques were also supplemented and enriched by employing some of the features of other related forms of analyses such as pattern matching and explanation building (see, for example, Yin 2003; 2012).

Using this general strategy and associated analytic techniques as the backbone, the process of data analysis followed a systematic progression, from the broad to the detailed, and from the general to the specific. Below is a brief description of the main analytic techniques used in this phase of the research.

Thematic analysis constitutes of a generic approach to the analysis of qualitative data, and one that is not necessarily linked to a particular theoretical perspective (Robson., 2011).

Following this analytic technique, all or parts of the collected qualitative data are coded[39] and labelled, whereby codes with the same label are grouped together as a *theme*. The researcher is then able to generate a number of themes that subsequently serve as the basis for further analysis and interpretation. Thematic analysis has a number of advantages including, among others, the features of being very flexible, convenient and practical, and relatively easy to work and communicate with (Robson., 2011).

At the initial stages of thematic analysis, some codes and themes were identified (making them somewhat predetermined)[40] based on the previous theoretical framework, as well as associated research questions and prior literature – as laid-out within Chapters 1 to 3. Additionally, a number of other codes and themes were also inductively identified from reviewing the collected data itself (see Figure 4-3)A number of specific aiding techniques were also followed in identifying themes and sub-themes including, among others, repetitions, metaphors and analogies, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, etc (see, for example, Robson 2011). To illustrate further, the key themes for analysis were extracted through a mixture of longitudinal (or vertical) and hierarchical (or horizontal) modes of analysis The longitudinal mode applied content and thematic analyses *within* each of the three levels (macro, meso, and micro) of study individually, i.e. 'intra-level' (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Meanwhile, the hierarchical mode was subsequently used for deeper analysis of data *across* the three levels, i.e. 'inter-level' (see Chapter 8). Data analysis started by investigating overall issues and findings concerning background information regarding all the case studies and organisations within each of the three levels of study. The analysis became deeper and more specific through the identification, analysis and discussion of the key themes within and across the three levels. Examples of these overarching themes included pertinent common issues and phenomena around the three key domains of strategising – as identified in Chapter 3, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis. Other themes for analysis and discussion included types and patterns of strategising.

As already pointed out, thematic analysis has several merits, but it is also worth at this stage briefly mentioning some specific drawbacks of this analytic technique. These include being frequently limited to description or exploration rather than interpretation,

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[39] Coding here implies that the coded data may represent an issue of potential interest to the aims and objectives of the research.

[40] In this context, and while some may argue that this approach may suffer from researcher's bias towards some particular aspects of the data, it can nevertheless be alternatively argued that the researcher's prior deep engagement with relevant literature put him in a favourable position, by raising his awareness about certain features of the data that might otherwise be easily missed.

and being relatively broad in approach and lacking focus, which in the first place is partly due to the flexibility of this technique in (see, for example, (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson., 2011). Additionally and as already established in the definition, thematic analysis is also often criticised for being rather too generic compared to rival forms of analysis, such as grounded theory or discourse analysis (Robson., 2011). Another common critique is that under this analytic technique, the data may become quite removed from the case(s), resulting in the loss of some of the holistic features of the study/ organisation(s). In this study, the researcher is fully aware of these potential pitfalls, and devising an overall analytic strategy, as well as the combination of several analytic techniques goes some way in mitigating some of these concerns.

Related to the aforementioned issues but on a more practical level, before being able to analyse the collected data the researcher needed to transcribe as well as translate – from Arabic to English – all of the collected responses (i.e. raw data) obtained from the fieldwork.[41] This process of transcribing and translation required significant amount of time and high levels of attention in order to insure accuracy and precision. Following this process, initial groups of interview questions at each level (8 question groups in total, see Appendix 1, 2 and 3on interview design) were organised within individually coded and coloured response cards. These cards were then cross-compared with corresponding responses within each level in order to identify similarities and differences in participant responses. Ideally, and in line with recent developments in qualitative research techniques, analysis of primary data, including content and thematic analyses, can usually be conducted using specialised qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo and MAXQDA. However, in the particular case of this study, unfortunately this was not applicable due to the unavailability of such software in the Arabic language. Furthermore, any analysis of the 'transcribed' data using these software would not have generated results that are reliable enough, mainly due to some loss of meaning in the translation process, but more notably due to significant variations observed in the regional dialects of study participants in Saudi Arabia.[42] Hence, it was judged by the researcher that in order to preserve the authenticity, reliability, and accuracy of the collected data, the alternative conventional choice of data analysis as explained above was the best option.

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[41] For further clarification, 33 interviews were conducted in total (see also 4.3.3 and figure 4-1). Individual interviews averaged approximately one hour per interview, hence totalling approximately 33 hours of total interview time. Transcribing meanwhile time took more than 200 hours. All direct quotations, extracts, passages and excerpts used in the study were fully translated from Arabic to English, along with any other key themes for analysis.

[42] This particular issue regarding regional variations in dialect is also highlighted in section 5.5.

Unlike the two other analytic techniques (i.e. content and thematic analyses), which can be used with either single- or multiple-case studies, the *cross-case synthesis* technique applies specifically to the analysis of multiple cases. Having said that, this technique does have a number of similarities with the two other techniques. The type of research design adopted in this study, i.e. the multiple-case study approach, naturally calls for the analysis of data to be enhanced and amplified with such analytic technique. Yin (2012) asserts that cross-case synthesis "...bring[s] together the findings from individual case studies and are the most critical parts of a multiple-case study", p.158. Under this analytic technique, each individual case study is treated as if it were an independent study. At a more detailed level, and in case of the inclusion of a large number of cases within the study, the cross-case synthesis can adopt some common quantitative technique, such as for example meta-analysis. A multiple-case study will typically, however, only include a relatively small number of cases, as is the instance in this research. In such situation, alternative analytic procedures are called for such as the use of *word tables* (see, for example, Yin 2003; 2012). The use of this latter entails the display of data from individual cases according to some uniform framework (Yin., 2003). This is then followed and augmented by searching for and identifying patterns across the cases. A major benefit of such data analysis approach is that it allows the case study investigator to make solid cross-case comparisons, and ultimately generate plausible findings and broader pattern of conclusions.

In addition to the primary data obtained mainly through semi-structured interviews, and as previously pointed out, this study also made use of a significant amount of secondary data, mainly in the form of text-based documents (almost 500 separate collected documents; see section 4.3.3 and Table 4-4 for more detail). Documentary analysis was largely carried out using the common method of content analysis. This indirect, unobtrusive technique (Robson., 2011), can be defined as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff , 2004, p. 18). It is worth pointing out from the onset that, although the traditional approach to content analysis is essentially quantitative (Robson., 2011), it is still equally and perfectly viable to use most of the approaches that are typically encountered in the analysis of qualitative data, including those adopted in this study. It comes out from the above brief definition that documents used for content analysis are typically in the form of written data, as well as being usually text-based. However, the focus on texts does not necessarily exclude other related types of documentary evidence such as other non-written data including for instance video and

sound data. The definition of the content analysis as an analytic technique also stresses the relationship between content and context, making it particularly pertinent to the subject of this study. Context here refers to the purpose of the document, the underlying overall context of the research itself, as well as any other relevant institutional, social and cultural aspects (Robson., 2011). A further important highlight that comes out from the definition is the emphasis on reliability, accuracy and validity as key issues in content analysis.[43] These particular issues are briefly considered below.

Specifically in this study, the preliminary use of documentary analysis of secondary data was utilised to initially perform background work and generate the interview guide (as outlined in section 4.3.3). Subsequently though, the same secondary data were thoroughly revisited again after the fieldwork and data collection stages were completed. Further document analysis was performed in order to complete, complement, and also cross-compare these with the participants' responses within the primary data obtained from the interviews. This allowed the identification of areas of similarities and differences as well as any potential inconsistencies between the two categories of data. Hence, this additional analysis of secondary data helped improve the overall quality, accuracy and reliability of all of the data used in the study. There were for example instances where participant responses might have been incomplete due to the unwillingness of the respondent to disclose certain information due perhaps to these being perceived as potentially sensitive or confidential. In other cases, further verification of responses revealed some inaccuracies and/ or inconsistencies.

The aforementioned background work involving primary and secondary data resulted in the ratification and finalisation of a final list of themes and sub-themes for further analysis and discussion (Figure 4-3).These themes were then linked to issues raised in previous chapters whether in terms of the literature review part, or the overall context of the Saudi socio-political system. Additionally, these identified themes were discussed and analysed within the overall theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3, i.e. along the three key domains of strategising, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis in order to trace the key elements of the relationship between strategy and strategising in the context of the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia.

As already outlined, data analysis followed progression from the general to the specific, and was performed within and across the three levels of study. The hierarchical, or inter-level, form of analysis (Chapter 8) was particularly useful in identifying areas of

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[43] Robson (2011) provides a word of warning regarding the potential serious concerns about the accuracy and possible bias in cases where a certain document had been produced outside the research context.

similarity (*convergence*), differences (*divergence*), as well as levels of *interconnectedness* within and across the three levels, and this helped the researcher in generating the overall conclusions from the study.

A final but relatively critical aspect to address at the data analysis and interpretation stage concerns the issue of the generalisations of research findings. Although the issue of generalisability has already been touched upon previously in 4.3.1, it is worth revisiting some aspects of it at this important juncture. Yin (2009; 2011) proposes an alternative mode to the more traditional statistical generalisation approach, namely in the form of *analytic generalisation*. The author defines analytic generalisation as:

> *"...a two-step process. The first involves a conceptual claim whereby investigators show how their study's findings are likely to inform a particular set of concepts, theoretical constructs, or hypothesized sequence of events. The second involves applying the same theory to implicate other similar situations where similar concepts might be relevant"* (Yin', 2011, p. 100).

As is the case with laboratory experiments, the use of analytic generalisation is well suited to the purpose of qualitative studies and qualitative research in general. Making analytic generalisations, however, requires a number of important caveats which the researcher ought to always consider (Yin, 2003; 2011). Firstly, such mode of generalisation requires carefully constructed and sound arguments. Secondly, the argument needs to be contextually and appropriately grounded in the existing literature, and not in the specific conditions in the actual study (Yin', 2011). Thirdly, the study findings need to demonstrate to what extent the empirical results supported the theory, or otherwise. A final caveat requires the consideration and examining of plausible rival explanations, an issue already mention within the research design section. Yin (2011) rightly points out that, while analytic generalisation is a commonly practised generalisation mode within academic research circles, it is still not yet recognised to the same degree.

Figure 4-3 A brief guide to the thematic analysis

Abstrac ◄─────────────────────► Concrete

Strategising domains[44]	Categories	Code	Themes for analysis
Practitioners	*Practitioners Background*	1.1	Personal background
		1.2	Qualifications and experience
		1.3	Organisational structure
	Practitioners Interactions	5.1	Practitioners' interaction
		5.2	Practitioners' practices
		5.3	Practitioners' behaviours
		5.4	Practitioners' authority
Praxis	*Praxis context*	3.1	Economic impact
		3.2	Social impact
		3.3	Planning impact
		3.4	
	Praxis Interactions	6.1	Praxis activity
		6.2	Praxis regulatory
		6.3	Praxis obstacles
Practices	*Practices context*	2.1	Influence of legitimacy
		2.2	Existing activities
		2.3	Administrative practices
	Practices Interactions	7.1	Resistance practices
		7.2	Implementation practices
		7.3	Understanding practices

General ◄─────────────────────► Particular
[45]

4.5 Ethical issues

In terms of the ethical issues posed by the proposed research, it is customary for any researcher conducting primary research study involving human subjects to take great care in addressing all ethical considerations.

> *"For the researcher to maintain good relations with subjects in the study and to avoid damaging the prospects for other case study researchers it is essential that all confidences are respected. Thus, a balance must be struck between the need to obtain access to confidential information and the prospects for using that information in a wider arena either in the study or in publishing the results"*

> (Scapens, 1990, p. 277).

All the ethical considerations raised by this study were given high priority and were clarified from the outset with all relevant parties. Necessary approvals regarding ethical

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[44]A conceptual framework for analysing strategy-as-practice.
[45]A streamlined codes -to -theory model for qualitative inquiry.

issues and procedures were systematically obtained from all the relevant stakeholders of this study including the researcher's host institution, the relevant Saudi authorities in KSA and the UK, as well as the participant organisations. All participants in the interview process were identified on the basis of specific selection criteria as already discussed and this assisted to determine their relevance to the research questions. The availability and willingness of the participants to take part in the process were taken into consideration. Hence, participation was completely voluntary and consensual. In addition, no form of coercion or inducement was used, whether financial or non-financial and the recording of primary data with the consent and continuous full awareness of all participants. Letters of confidentiality were issued to all participant organisations and individual prior to the scheduled interviews (see appendix 6 and 7). Full 'anonymity' regarding personal data such as individual's names, identities and their job positions, as well as the trading names of the participant organisations were fully protected. The letters of requests and confidentiality were officially and jointly authorised by the host academic institution in the form of Brunel University, the Saudi authorities in the UK as well as the relevant ministries and government authorities in Saudi Arabia. Commitments were made to safeguard the identity of participants, the confidentiality of any sensitive issues and accurate reporting of information. Moreover, issues surrounding potential conflicts of interest and relating to intellectual property were also planned for and taken into account. Additionally, and as per the host institution's ethics committee's procedures, risk assessment and potential physical or emotional safety hazards were explicitly addressed in order to safeguard the wellbeing and safety of all study participants and the researcher himself. All interviews took place face-to-face in various physical locations with a good amount of flexibility given to the participants in terms of the choice of time and a suitable location.[46]In total, 33 interviews were conducted across the three levels of investigation (see figure 4-1), with each interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes on average at many places such as hotel lobby, workplace offices and meeting rooms. Invitations were also extended to all participating parties in order to potentially disseminate and share any future findings of potential interest.[47]

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[46]The interview schedule and timetable is included in Appendix4.

[47] On completion of this research, follow-up courtesy letters and invitations to share and disseminate findings will be issues again to all of the participants in this study.

4.6 Practical considerations and research limitations

The choice of research strategy, design and methods requires the researcher to take great care in addressing various theoretical and practical issues. The researcher is required to be fully aware not only of the theoretical assumptions, but also the various methodological, practical and ethical issues posed by the research, as well as any potential limitations and possible ways to mitigate them. This section briefly discusses the main theoretical and practical considerations, including a brief discussion of ethical issues posed by this study.

Firstly, at a theoretical level, the scope and number of issues and variables included for investigation in this research may prove to be limited. Although theoretically and empirically justified, a number of critiques can be directed towards this aspect of the research. However, some of these limitations are borne out of the nature of the proposed research and some of the practical limitations associated with it. This limitation can, however, be seen as an avenue for future improvement.

In terms of the chosen research design and methods, the limitations and possible ways to mitigate them have already been discussed in previous parts of this chapter. For instance, it was highlighted that case studies as research method tend to suffer from the problem of lack of 'generalisability' (see, for example, Scapens (1990); Ryan, Scapens, & Theobold (2002) which can in turn make any inferences from the analysis not fully representative of the reality. Other critiques of the cases study method included potential subjectiveness and inherent bias. These limitations were individually discussed along with the some suggested theoretical and practical ways to mitigate them. Likewise, it was noted that the use of semi-structured interviews as a method for collecting primary data has several merits, but a number of limitations too. These were highlighted including researcher bias and lack of flexibility, along with suggested ways to mitigate them.

Secondly, and at a more practical level, Flyvbjerg (2006) highlighted the importance given to the researcher's experience and background in the process of gathering primary data. The nature of this study requires a deep understanding of the peculiarities of the social and cultural characteristics of Saudi society. In this respect, the choice of case study method in the research design was extremely beneficial in terms of bringing out the particular social characteristics of the Saudi context. For instance, local customs and traditions posed highly sensitive issues in some regions. The personal relationships of the researcher, as outlined below, as well as the shared cultural background proved extremely useful in foreseeing and mitigating many of these issues. Hence, this helped create an atmosphere of reassurance and mutual trust during all the interview stages.

Moreover, in Saudi Arabia, the diversity of local dialects makes it difficult for any researcher to conduct studies that span all the geographical regions within the Kingdom.[48] Doing so requires a good grasp of the peculiarities and subtleties of the local dialect and vocabulary encountered in each region. The researcher's personal background and experience proved a great asset in the collection and effective interpretation of primary data from the various regions. The researcher was born and raised in the Saudi capital Riyadh, but comes from a family originally attributed to the tribes of the southern regions of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the researcher's father was born and raised in the north of Saudi Arabia and spoke the northern dialect fluently, while the mother comes from the Saudi midland tribes, who speak the Najd dialect, meanwhile his wife was born and raised in Western Saudi Arabia and speaks the Hejaz dialect. Thus, the researcher's longstanding and daily exposure to different dialects helped him engage in deep dialogue, as well as understand and interpret responses easily and effectively. This also enabled him to accurately access and assesses what was said during the interviews.

Also on a practical level, the researcher had previously worked in some sport organisations and sport clubs in Saudi Arabia in addition to having graduated from the College of Physical Education and Sports in Riyadh – considered as the main venue for the professional training of Saudi government officials and key staff. Consequently, the researcher utilised his previous networks and relationships to build rapport, establish mutual trust, and ultimately gather the necessary data required in this study. Additionally, the researcher made frequent field visits to Saudi Arabia and had the chance to meet up with a number of the key participants in the study prior to the data collection phase. Such field visits also helped to instil added trust and provided further access opportunities to the researcher. High levels of mutual trust, especially in the Saudi context, proved a crucial factor for gaining access to participants and organisations and ensuring high data quality.

Still at the practical level, there exist some limitations associated with the proposed research which are worth flagging up, particularly at the fieldwork and data collection stages. These limitations are simply borne out of practical considerations. For instance, there were adverse issues imposed by the limited time and resources committed to this research, especially considering the sometimes overly cumbersome administrative procedures that the researcher had to go through at various stages during the fieldwork phase. Communication proved very slow on many occasions especially at the level of sport clubs, which was partly due to the limited use of technology such as official email

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[48] The data analysis and discussion parts of this study required formulating responses in one linguistic framework (i.e. classical Arabic).

correspondence at these organisations. Hence, on such occasions the researcher had to resort to alternative, more traditional means of communication including fax, follow up telephone calls, even personal visits whenever necessary and possible, in addition to networking with the relevant stakeholders whenever the opportunity arose.[49] In addition, the widespread geographical locations of the sport clubs and many of the other relevant organisations included in this study posed another challenge to the researcher in terms of timescale, deadlines and costs. It is worth highlighting that the vast majority of these practical limitations shortcomings were nevertheless all successfully overcome with persistence and perseverance from the researcher.

4.7 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to build on the background, review of literature and theoretical framework developed in previous chapters in order to devise a theoretically sound research strategy and research design. Careful consideration was given to the choice of research strategy, design and methods. By laying this crucial foundation, this chapter provides the practical blueprint towards applying this theoretical framework in a real-world context, with the ultimate aim of generating valuable empirical evidence that can in turn be used to test the proposed theoretical framework, as well as provide empirical explanations and potential useful recommendations.

The research paradigm adopted in this study allowed the researcher to address the three pertinent issues of depth, breadth, and diversity that reflect the alleged quality and soundness of any qualitative research design. This paradigm choice, combined with a careful and justified choice of research methods that is strongly grounded in theory and informed by a solid theoretical framework, helped the researcher address potential challenges and complexities, as well as balance sources of conflict. An example of such - area of conflict was between the need from the researcher to be close to the phenomena of study, by concentrating on context and detail, and to simultaneously be broad in the scope of the study, by attending to various parts of the organisations under study.

In the context of this study, where particular attention on micro-level data was required, the choice of the case study as a research method was very opportune. The case study is a very well used and tested method for gathering data on micro-level processes. Moreover, issues related to context are of particular significance to the phenomena under investigation in this study, making the case for the adoption of such research design even more compelling. These phenomena proved to be not only contemporary but also having

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[49] Section 4.2.2.1 cites some examples of such networking efforts.

important socio-economic and historical dimensions. By carefully scrutinising this research method, the researcher arrived at a theoretically justified and solid choice of the type of case study to deploy, namely the embedded multiple-case study. This in combination with a thorough sampling process, as well as augmenting, mixing and combining with a number of other research methods and techniques in the gathering and analysis of primary and secondary data. The adopted research design in this study, and just like any other qualitative research design, is subject to a number of limitations. These were explained and discussed, and the researcher devised possible ways to mitigate them. Ultimately, it became apparent that, when executed with due care, the case study is a reliable methodology.

In terms of data analysis, and regardless of the analytic strategies chosen in this study, the prevailing aim was, as Yin (2003) argued, "…to produce high-quality analyses, which require investigators to attend to all the evidence, display and present the evidence separate from any interpretation, and show adequate concern for exploring alternative interpretations", p. 109. To this end and informed by prior research, the researcher followed a methodical approach, and subsequently built up a comprehensive analytic repertoire with a view to generating compelling case study analyses, and ultimately, compelling case studies.

The two main parts of this chapter discussed key issues surrounding the research philosophy and research design adopted in this study. In the first part of the chapter, the underlying overall research philosophy is detailed starting with a critical discussion concerning the epistemological and ontological positions of the proposed research. This is then followed by a complementary discussion of the wider theoretical context around the motivation behind the adoption of the research philosophy and methods as outlined in this chapter. This 'research context' section focused primarily on the nature and scope of research approaches within strategising studies. It is envisaged that by explicitly addressing such research contextualisation, the transition between the theoretical framework – chapter three –, to the research approach – chapter four – and then to the subsequent empirical findings – chapters five to eight – can be made more logically progressive.

The second major part of this chapter dealt with the detailed discussion and description of the specific research design and research methods adopted in this study. This part starts by offering a critical discussion of the case study design as the main qualitative research method adopted in this study. The definition of the nature and scope of the case study as a research method are outlined, along with the various types of case studies as well as a

summary of the key merits and drawbacks of this method. This subsection is also complemented by a discussion focusing particularly on the multiple-case study research design as the chosen type of case study adopted in this research. Under the second part as well and closely related to research deign and methods, the semi-structured interview, as the main source for obtaining primary data, were also discussed in detail. The underlying motivation behind this choice is explained, along with the detailed descriptions of the key features of semi-structured interviews, as well as its merits and potential limitations. This second part then concluded by offering a detailed discussion of the data sampling and selection process used in the fieldwork and data collection stages, along with a detailed description of the study sample and data sources, both primary and secondary. In its final part, the chapter described the key aspects of the data analysis process and deals with key ethical and practical issues posed by this study, in addition to some potential limitations of the proposed research and suggested ways to mitigate them.

Whilst the nature, the limited scope and resources in the current study dictate certain methodological choices, ideally more novel approaches are called for. The current approach may not reach the level and sophistication of rival approaches, such as those proposed by Balogun, Anne, & Phyl (2003), nevertheless through a well-planned and well-executed effort, it attempts to make an original contribution toward the relatively new field of the empirical study of strategising within a modern organisational context. This state of affairs also opens interesting avenues for future research, for instance by building on this research design and employing more novel research methods such as interactive discussion groups, self-reports and practitioner research (proposed by Balogun, Anne, & Phyl, 2003).

Despite some inherent, albeit rather minor, practical and theoretical shortcomings, the major contribution of the proposed research lies in its originality and ambitious but realistic attempt to investigate key theoretical and empirical aspects of strategy and strategising within the sport sector in Saudi Arabia.. This study follows a research strategy that is practically oriented and empirically focused with a solid theoretical foundation. The adopted research design is holistic thereby covering all the key stages in the strategising journey and encompassing all the relevant actors and stakeholders involved in this journey. Hence, it can be said that the overall research philosophy, design and methods adopted in this study, when perceived in combination, do provide a workable blueprint towards achieving the main goals and objectives of the study.

THIRD PART - RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 5 Strategy and Strategising: Macro-Level Case Studies

5.1 Introduction

This empirical analysis part directly builds on the previous theoretical and methodological foundations. The chapter is the first of four analyses and discussion chapters to follow, aiming to explain, explore and discuss the collected empirical data *within* and *across* the different levels of the study.

On a conceptual level, and as already asserted in Chapter 3, the main components of strategy making and strategising are its practitioners, practices and praxis, i.e. the 3Ps. Organisational activities and patterns of strategising take place at macro and micro levels, passing through the meso level. Goal-directed activities and strategic outcomes play a major role in determining the progress, implementation and ultimately the success level of the Saudi sport clubs' privatisation policy, which is the main unit of analysis in this study. Additionally, this chapter analyses the precise dynamics between strategy and strategising at the macro level of strategising praxis, in the specific context of the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs.

Generally speaking, the sport authorities in Saudi Arabia have made several attempts in the last few years in order accelerate the privatisation of sport clubs, which has been an ever-present part of the Saudi state's consecutive 5-year national development plans since the 1970s. More specifically, this chapter aims to conduct empirical analysis of the collected primary and secondary data *within* the macro level of study.[50]Chapters 6 and 7 that follow offer similar analyses of the two other levels of investigation in this study, i.e. the meso and micro levels.

For the benefit of reiteration, the key aim of this study is to examine Saudi sports clubs' privatisation policy implementation in the context of strategy and strategising from the viewpoint of various strategy practitioners at different levels of organisation. Pertinent issues to be investigated here include, among others and to state just a few, key concepts and theoretical constructs of strategy and strategising such as strategy formulation, strategic outcomes, the nature of goal-directed activity, types and patterns of strategising activities and practices, and forms of legitimacy. At a deeper level, the research seeks to identify and explain similarities and differences, or areas of consistency and variation in

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[50] The focus of this and the subsequent two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) is on intra-level (i.e. within) analysis and discussion, whereas the focus in Chapter 8 is on inter-level analysis (i.e. across).

strategising and strategy implementation *within* each as well as *across* the three levels of investigation.

It is envisaged that through the empirical analysis of strategy practitioners, practices and praxis at the macro level, this study will make a substantial contribution towards a better informed understanding of the dynamics of strategy and strategising as applicable to the sport club privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia.

The chapter consists of two main parts. The first offers a brief, yet necessary, background profile of each of the case study organisations that constitute the study sample at the organisational macro level. Understanding the case profile of each participant organisation is important in terms of appreciating the specific role of each organisation in the context of sport club privatisation in Saudi Arabia, and how various organisations are interlinked with each other. Pertinent issues discussed here include the history, evolution and roles of each case organisation as relevant to the privatisation policy.

Part two then offers an in-depth analysis of the key themes pertinent to the case organisations at this level. The analysis here is primarily informed by key issues that arose from the background and theoretical framework (Chapters 2 and 3), including the three key domains of strategising, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis (the 3Ps). The analysis also closely follows the proposed research design and methods developed in the previous Chapter 4, including the results from of thematic and content analyses techniques.

The chapter concludes by recapitulating and highlighting the key findings from previous sections with a view to understanding the basic dynamics of strategy and strategising at the macro level of strategising. The findings from this chapter, later combined with those from the subsequent chapters 6 and 7, will then be used to inform and complete the rest of cross-case analysis and discussion to be subsequently developed in Chapter 8.

5.2 Case profiles

This part of the chapter provides a brief, yet important, overview of the profiles of the three case organisations at the macro level, namely the Supreme Economic Council (SEC), the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), and the General Presidency for Youth Welfare (GPYW).

The sample three organisations are government organisations mainly involved in national policy-making in Saudi Arabia. The interview participants at this level had overall responsibility and oversight over the sport clubs privatisation policy, including all key aspects of planning, implementation and evaluation.

The GPYW is the main governmental body directly overseeing the sport sector, thereby representing a key link with the other two bodies at this level. Hence, the interview participants at the GPYW included key senior officials directly involved with the privatisation project from the very first stages of planning and implementation.

5.2.1 The Supreme Economic Council (SEC)

As the highest government authority responsible for the oversight and strategic direction of the Saudi economy, the SEC represents a major policymaking body. The SEC was established in 1999 [51], with the main aim of formulating and better coordinating medium- and long-term national economic development plans and policies in order to accelerate economic and institutional reform in Saudi Arabia.[52] Since its inception, the SEC has been under the chairmanship of the highest authority in the country (the King or the Crown Prince) and includes some cabinet members. The Council offices are located inside the corridors of the Royal Court in the capital Riyadh. In order to understand and determine the exact organisational structure of the SEC, the researcher consulted various secondary sources including the SEC's own published documents, in addition to notes taken during various field visits to the SEC's offices. The researcher felt that it was important to understand the precise internal structure of this important government body especially that the exact structure was not evident from the SEC's own publications. Examining the SEC's organisational structure (see figure 14 in appendix), shows the exact nature of the decision-making process, as well as the relationship networks between its constituent divisions. It can be noticed that the SEC's organisational structure is predominantly hierarchical in nature, comprising of several divisions including the 'Standing Committee', 'General Secretariat', and the 'Advisory Board and Privatisation Committee'.

5.2.2 The Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP)

The origins of centralised economic planning in Saudi Arabia go back to the early years following the Kingdom's unification in the 1930s.[53] Since then, economic planning affairs were primarily trusted to the ministry of finance, and occasionally also involving other

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[51] Royal Order Number A/111 on 29/8/1999.

[52] It is worth pointing out that the SEC was established partly in response to the falling revenues for the Saudi economy as a result of the sharp fall in oil prices during the 1980s and 1990s.

[53] The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was proclaimed on 23 September 1932 by Royal Order number 2716 from 19 September 1932.

relevant ministries.[54]Economic planning at the government level is also characterised by the regular and wide use of foreign experts and consultants' services in policy advice and strategic planning (AL-Sunaidi , 1989).[55] Hence, the combination of centralised economic planning, primary via the ministry of finance, with the regular use of foreign experts' consultancy services characterised the early era of economic planning and development policy in Saudi Arabia (AL-Tawīl, 1995).

The initial positive results from the state social welfare programmes, through economic policy and the five-year development plans, helped shape the future trajectory of economic planning in Saudi Arabia. This was subsequently followed by numerous royal decrees relating to the merger and/ or separation of economic planning duties, which involved several government ministries. That was until a major royal decree in 2003, which resulted in the creation of a single independent governmental body under the name of the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP).[56]

The MEP is headquartered in the capital Riyadh. No direct services are provided to citizens, although free public access is given to its buildings and information resources. A number of important government agencies fall under the umbrella of the MEP, such as the National Computer Centre and the Central Department of Statistics (CDSI, 2013). The basic objectives of the MEP are: the preparation and supervision of the national annual economic report, the oversight over the five-year development plans with estimates of the level of investment required for its implementation, the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical data and information in various fields via the periodical national general census. In addition, the MEP helps other state agencies on matters related to the economy, planning and statistics by compiling, analysing and utilising its data (AL-Sunaidi , 1989). Figure 15 (see appendix) shows that the MEP's precise organisational structure is rather complex due to the nature and number of tasks it has been entrusted with (MEP, The Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2013).

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[54]Royal Decree No. 21/1/126 on 4/9/1954 resulted in the reintegration of the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Finance once again.

[55] As one of the very first examples of the use of foreign experts in consultancy in economic planning, the economic and financial crisis that hit the Saudi economy in the early 1930s led the government to employ a renowned Dutch consultant to evaluate the country's economic and financial condition. The successful results of this particular consultation subsequently helped increase the overall level of trust in foreign experts' consultancy services and paved the way for more future collaboration with such experts (AL-Sunaidi , 1989), see also Chapter 2.

Another pertinent example is the signing, in March 2012, of two significant contracts between the GPYW and two international consultancy firms, Deloitte and SNR Denton, totalling SAR 20 million (USD 5.3 million) for advisory on the sports club privatisation strategy.

[56]Royal Order No. A/2 (1/5/2003) transferred economic planning duties from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Economy and Planning.

5.2.3 **The General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW)**

The idea of creating an official government body responsible for youth welfare in Saudi Arabia goes back to the year 1945 during which the game of football started to spread throughout the country (see also Chapter 2). The government felt that there was a real need to establish a body to organise this popular sport. As a result and in 1952, the first department in charge of the Saudi sports movement was created under the wing of the Ministry of Interior (AL-Sunaidi , 1989). Subsequently in 1960, the Youth Welfare Department, under the Ministry of Education at the time, became the authority in charge of youth activities within and outside the schools.

It then followed in 1974 that the Youth Welfare Department became an independent government body under the name of "the General Presidency for Youth Welfare" (GPYW)[57], tasked with overseeing all youth and sport activities and headed by a minister who was not a member of the Ministers Council.[58] The main objective of the GPYW was to oversee and provide support in all areas and aspects related to youth development. As Rashid and Shaheen (1987) observed: "in this manner, youth will make a positive contribution to the social and economic development of the Kingdom" (p.237).

The GPYW began to play an important role in the subsequent five-year development plans, hence taking a core position among the priorities of the central government. One can see this clearly manifested through the significant increases in the budgets allocated to the GPYW over successive planning periods.[59]

5.3 Strategising at macro level

It was previously established (see Chapter 3) that the three key domains of strategising are closely interconnected and are characterised by a reciprocal relationship dynamics, so that praxis provides context and practices are the outcome of practitioners' activities (see also Jarzabkowski, 2005). These interconnectedness and reciprocity are two key features of the principal theoretical framework proposed in this study. Consequently, this makes the analysis immensely insightful on the one hand, but also complex and challenging to clearly define and set the boundaries of each concept, particularly in the unique context of this study.

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[57]The Ministers Council Decision number 560, dated 16/5/1974.

[58]As was stated in Chapter 2, King Fahd who was president of the Higher Council for Youth at the time, appointed his oldest son Prince Faisal to be president of the GPYW.

[59]For instance, the GPYW's annual budget saw almost year-on-year budget increases, starting from a mere SAR 22.3 million (around USD 6 million equivalent) during 1973-1974, to reach more than SAR 1.2 billion (around USD 320 million equivalent) in 2012, and SAR 1.5 billion (~ USD 400 million) in 2013 (Rashid and Shaheen, 1987; Alarabiya, 2012 and 2013).

The underlying aim of this specific section is to discuss how research evidence is deployed to answer the study's main research questions in light of the established theoretical framework. Hence, this section presents key results and findings at the macro level of study based on the analysis of both primary and secondary data collected from three key organisations at this level, namely the SEC, the MEP, and the GPYW. At this macro level of analysis, data relating to each sample case is systematically analysed following precise theoretical framework and methodical choices laid out in previous chapters.

Following the chosen techniques for data analysis, the researcher combined the two main complementary techniques in the form of content and thematic analyses in order to identify the major themes for further analysis and discussion. Table 5.1 below presents the combined set of major themes pertinent at this macro level of investigation.

Table 5-1 Thematic analysis: identified major themes at the macro level

Strategising domains			Key strategising themes
Practitioners	*Background*	1.	Loyalties to region, tribe, or family influences decision-making
		2.	Formal education vs. experience: competency-related conflicts between strategy practitioners with formal qualifications versus those with on-the-job experience
		3.	Social background and social status impacts organisational power and legitimacy, and may be a source of conflicts of interests
	Interactions	4.	The socio-cultural context as an obstacle to strategic discourse and communication process
		5.	Sever lack of the use of modern means in communication of strategy-related work
		6.	Lack of reciprocal trust relationships between the leadership and other organisational agents involved in the privatisation of sport club
Praxis	*Context*	7.	The country's political economy and socio-economic context impacts strategy work at the highest levels of policymaking
		8.	Lack of coherence and presence of ambiguity in the privatisation strategy vision and objectives, leading to conflicts and incoherence between economic and social objectives
		9.	Sport club privatisation policy is generic and lacks in clarity often making it incomprehensible amongst key stakeholders in the sport sector. This filtered through adversely to lower levels of strategising praxis
		10.	Rigid policy implementation framework does not cater for specific needs of sport sector and lack of consultation and effective strategic discourse
	Interactions	11.	High levels of bureaucracy in communication and daily strategy work among organisations at the macro level
		12.	Lack of written (documented) privatisation strategy detailed guidance in relation to key procedures, regulations and implementation guidelines
		13.	Lack of stability and continuity in policy design and implementation
Practices	*Context*	14.	Strategy implementation is characterised by rigid hierarchical top-down approach with noticeable lack of strategic dialogue
		15.	The dominant strategising practice in the Saudi government's privatisation policy is the 'procedural' and 'administrative' type Long, established 'ways of doing things' are prevalent at this level
		16.	Strong variations in macro-level practices depending on nature of strategising work performed by different organisations at this level
	Interactions	17.	Evidence on the existence of some mild resistance practices but mostly in tacit ways, participants avoided discussing these
		18.	Lack of constructive dialogue and continuous consultation between key policymakers and implementation practitioners
		19.	Strategising discourse and communication takes place at and between all macro-level organisations in various forms, but the official documented letter is the dominant form of communication
		20.	Strategising workflow starts off in a planned and goal-directed pattern at the policymaking organisations then becoming mostly routinsed at implementation level, with procedural and administrative practices becoming dominant

5.3.1 **Practitioners**

Strategy practitioners are involved at every stage of strategising including processes of strategy formulation and strategy making, both at the intra- and inter-organisational levels. Practitioners thereby act as the enablers of strategy formulation and implementation in order to achieve strategic outcomes and objectives (see also Chapter 3, Reckwitz, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007, Whittington, 2006).

5.3.1.1Practitioners' background

The King reserves the right to appoint the ministers of the Council of Ministers who historically tended to come from three geographical provinces (see figure 2-3), 'Najd Province' as the birthplace of the royal family, 'Al- Hijaz Province' as land of the Holy Sites and 'Al-Ahsa Province' as the prime location of major oil and gas fields. A substantial number of princes from the Royal family are also regularly appointed as government ministers. In spite of political reforms back in 1992, under which the country was divided into 13 administrative regions or local authorities (Emirates), the original arrangement comprising the three main provinces still nowadays remains the most common at the grassroots level. This initial observation regarding practitioners' background was clearly reflected in the data sample at the macro level in that, out of eight interview participants at this level, two senior officials were princes; four officials came from Najd province; and one official from Al-Hijaz provinces and one official came from Al-Ahsa. Hence, it followed that a large portion of the formal administrative powers were in the hands of officials from the Najd region, including the royal princes working at the macro-level organisations.[60] Consequently, the elevated status that the princes particularly enjoyed gave them some sort of legitimacy in decision-making and interpreting policy-related issues. Further evidence of this came to light when comparing various statements made by senior officials at the macro-level organisations, in which all study participants frequently attributed the legitimacy of interpreting the privatisation policies to the person of the prince, instead of referring to the organisational legitimacy of government agencies at this level as would have been expected.

Based on the analysis of primary and secondary data, most (i.e. six out of a total of ten) of the senior officials who were interview participants at the macro level had been in long service at the organisation under study (i.e. between 15 to 30 years of continuous service).This situation was partly due to the senior officials' personal backgrounds and job

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[60]Royal Order number A/94 in 11/4/2013, the Cabinet approved on 3/12/2013, General President of Youth Welfare decisions in 5/9/2013.

expertise, acquired through extended years of experience, often in the same job, which ultimately enabled them to maintain their positions for such as long time. As one senior official from the GPYW mused by describing "the Youth Welfare" as *"the Elderly Welfare"*, due to the large number of advanced-age senior officials who held their senior positions for twenty years and in some cases even more. Additionally, and in more general terms, this situation regarding the personal, social, cultural and employment backgrounds of the study participants and other key officials at the case organisations within the macro level is not restricted to senior officials within the sport or youth-related organisations only. The researcher equally observed that many other government organisations in various other sectors are also still led and managed by ministers or civil servants who have been continuously in office for more than two decades. The Saudi government has been fully aware of this imbalance, especially in the sport and youth sector, but any attempts for change in this regard were frequently hindered by existing entrenched social, cultural and administrative customs and norms, which characterised the long-established 'ways of doing things' at most of these organisations. This is corroborated by the following statement from a senior GPYW official:

> *"Saudi employment laws do not permit the dismissal of government employees and civil servants solely due to underperformance or some negligence of work duties. Fair dismissal only occurs in the most extreme of circumstances, such as for instance in the cases of clear gross misconduct, or when an employee is absent from work for an unusually extended period of time. Besides, from an ethical and religious viewpoint, it would be quite unconceivable for me personally to dismiss an employee - whatever their performance - thereby cutting off their family's income or 'rizk'[61]"*

(GP.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

In the case of the GPYW, the General President was replaced in 2011 by a much younger prince following under-performance of the sector. The aim was to restructure the entire administrative organisation of the GPYW by the newly appointed minister. In the viewpoint of the MEP officials, this change demonstrated the Saudi government's stated desire to enhance productivity, efficiency and accountability in youth or sport organisations in particular. In this context, another study participant in the form of a senior GPYW official also commented that:

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[61]Meaning 'daily bread' or the equivalent Arabic word 'rizk' meaning 'basic sustenance'.

> *"Productivity is important in some cases but personal background and experience are needed to serve the people by these officials who have known how to do it for long time. Leadership positions in all government departments are reached in a gradual manner. These people have worked for many years and instead of rewarding them with leadership positions, they are deprived of these. In this way you are going to make everyone in your organisation lose their loyalty to this sector and the organisation, especially when you have older people who are able to continue and are serious about their work, this is not justice."*
>
> (SC.official1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

A further key issue emerging from close examination of the internal work of macro-level organisations, data analysis lends support to concerns about potential conflicts of interest in the behaviour of many senior officials at these organisations. For instance, at the level of the GPYW, senior officials saw the 156 sport clubs under its direct oversight as a source of power and organisational status that can in turn enhance the position of the GPYW as a powerful policymaking entity. One GPYW official plainly asserted: "It is difficult to privatise a sport club which represents social and political power." (GP.official3, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013).

These implicit sources of potential conflicts of interest could well lead to various forms of resistance practices in the practitioners' behaviour, albeit a form of mild and tacit resistance. One study participant from the GPYW spoke about his organisation working on a 'dual' model, allowing it to maintain and strengthen controls and power over the large number of member sport clubs on the one hand, and at the same time keeping completely involved in every step of the sport privatisation policy on the other hand:

> *"Here at the GPYW, some things rather work in a dualistic fashion. For instance, whereas we constantly and continuously work on the sport club privatisation programme, our organisation is simultaneously striving to devise an effective model that can allow it to maintain control over member sport clubs and preserve all existing sport activities within these clubs. I compare this to the analogy* [in the Saudi socio-cultural context] *of parents sincerely wanting their grown-up children to become fully independent, but still live with them under the same family house!"*
>
> (GP.official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

Such potential conflicts of interests among key senior officials at these macro-level organisations could, however, have a negative impact on key aspects of the

implementation of the privatisation plan, including aspects of transparency, disclosure and teamwork. Hence, multiple and conflicting sources of interest observed in the work of key policymakers and strategy practitioners at this level could easily lead each organisation to devise a working model that best serve their own interests rather than the overall collective interests.

Another GPYW senior official highlighted the important influence of the region's long-established *social norms and customs*, whereby power for instance can be significantly derived from the person's existing (external) *social status*. Another related important issue, which arose from questions about practitioners' background at the macro level, was the significance of *allegiances* and *loyalties* to one's own tribe or clan. Many of these tribes that most organisational actors belonged to were self-organised and maintained some sort of independence, and the officials often showed strong allegiances and loyalty to the leadership of their respective tribe. Tribe membership was essentially based on genealogical considerations and necessitated a specific ethno-cultural identity. Hence, tribe members had this implicit duty over their lifetime to defend and serve the rights and interests of their respective tribes. This was typically achieved through the direct exercise of *power* within the various domains of Saudi society, politics, religion, and the economy. Sources of such powers ranged from the administrative, to the judicial, to the executive and legislative. Tribal allegiances were part of a much wider and much more complex socio-cultural context in Saudi Arabia, highly and directly influenced by pertinent factors such as culture, history, race, ethnicity, social norms, customs and traditions. This observation was repeatedly encountered by the researcher and was frequently repeated in the participants' responses. Most of these officials stated that their decisions and actions were often dictated, or greatly influenced by such considerations. For instance, a senior official from the GPYW stated that:

> *"We have suffered during some previous periods and episodes, but we cannot change the convictions of individuals. Senior officials in that period truly believed that as if they would lose their positions or power in case they attempted to change traditional methods of running the sector they were in charge of."*

<div align="right">(GP.official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)</div>

This statement also helps illustrate the extreme caution with which the interview participants attempted to criticise managers at the top level due to the perceived elevated social status they enjoyed. It was also observed that the officials' actions, expressions and reactions at these macro-level organisations reflected their strong reluctance to change 'old ways of doing things' that are derived from inherited and long-established

administrative and bureaucratic practices and mindsets (see section 5.3.3 for more on this issue).

A further important factor regarding the macro-level practitioners' backgrounds relates to education and experience. Historically in Saudi Arabia, education among the general population was very limited before the founding of the modern Saudi state (see, for example, Al-Akeel, 2005). The early political environment and economic conditions resulted in high levels of illiteracy among the wider Saudi population. Education opportunities were only sporadically available through modest education establishments such as what is known as the 'Kuttab', which offered reading and writing classes for children in villages and towns, focusing mainly on religious studies. Mecca and Medina in the Hejaz region did however retain some of the educational and scientific legacy from the previous Ottoman rule and early Islamic civilisation (Alkadi, 1981).

With the emergence of the modern Saudi state (circa 1930s), basic reading and writing skills became a prerequisite for working in most government-related roles such as government offices and agencies. This however did not always mean that these officials, managers, and civil servants had any formal qualifications in their fields of work, beyond reading and writing skills. This rather precarious situation led the Saudi government to adopt the development of education policies early on.[62] This lack of formal qualifications at that time made on-job experience a key factor in the choice of promotions to senior leadership positions. As already touched upon in the previous section, and in addition to previously mentioned factors relating to personal background and social status of senior officials, on-job experience still nowadays remains a key criterion in the appointment of senior managers, government officials, and top civil servants in Saudi Arabia.

A senior official from the MEP, when asked about his own educational background and job experience, described the relationship between experience and qualifications in the Saudi context:

> *"The developments brought by Saudi professionals returning from overseas education and training programmes in the seventies made the difference in the education sector and a number of other sectors, giving education background and formal qualifications more value than experience. However, the subsequent decline in the performance of several government sectors during the nineties made the Saudi government rethink its overall strategy of sponsored overseas studies programme for Saudi students and professionals."*
>
> (MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

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[62]The first educationalorganisation was established in 1926 (see Bedaiwi, 1998; Trial and Winder, 1950).

The picture that emerged from the interviews conducted with eight senior officials at macro level is that most officials at this level had both the necessary professional qualifications and experience. All officials at the macro level had university degrees from Saudi Arabia or/ and overseas universities (mainly Western), as well as having experience of servicing their organisations for long periods of time. Further research showed that whilst the GPYW had the lowest number of qualified officials, they were nonetheless the most experienced at that level. Empirical data showed that only 10 officials out of a total of 737 employees at the GPYW held a postgraduate degree at the time of interview. Of this total number of employees 411 never joined any tertiary education programme. Additionally, it was disclosed to the researcher that while the GPYW does benefit from an overseas development and training programmes, this frequently experienced delays and limitations due to unknown reasons.

In contrast to the situation at the GPYW, ministers, senior officials and some of their deputies at the MEP held postgraduate degrees by benefiting from continuous staff training and development programmes that dated back to the 1970s. At the SEC, senior officials were all postgraduate-qualified, even though most of the SEC employees are in the form of consultants hired from outside to undertake specific tasks and/or policy issues of economic and social importance.

One of the GPYW officials reinforced the hypothesis that the GPYW was mainly interested in short-term oriented training courses and programmes for their employees, instead of benefiting from longer-term programmes such as the overseas training and education sponsored through the ministry of higher education. This partly explains the evident shortage, in comparison to the other organisations at this level, of employees and managers with strong credential and expertise in financial, public administrative and especially sport management-related affairs among the GPYW employee force. Thus, most GPYW employees, including many senior managers, were former sport figures (ex-athletes, players, coaches and professional referees) and graduates from specialised local universities and colleges (mostly physical education), who gained their experience mainly through performing on-the-job tasks. The researcher also surprisingly observed that there was complete absence of specialised education or training programmes offered through any of the reputable higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia.[63]

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[63] The researcher encountered instances of some short training courses and intensive workshops (2-3 days) being organised and offered by the Saudi Institute for sports leaders.

An additional aspect of macro-level practitioners' background relates to organisational communication. Many of the study participants at the macro level expressed their pride and satisfaction of the way they handled daily tasks and activities through mainly face-to-face meetings and official written correspondence. Only one out of eight officials at macro level said they had used modern means of communication such as email and social media as official methods of communication. The majority of the participants' viewed modern methods as being no more effective than the more conventional methods they were using before, in addition to these requiring expensive devices, installations and maintenance.

The lack of effectiveness, combined with some degree of ambiguity in the communication procedures between the government agencies and relevant organisational actors tasked with the implementation of the Saudi sports privatisation policy at various levels was the main reason for the lack of interaction between practitioners. The interview participants' arguments put forward in response to concerns about the lack of communication in the implementation of the privatisation policy of Saudi sport clubs included issues such as the unwillingness to intervene in the affairs of other government agencies, the reluctance to talk about any organisation that is headed by a member of the Saudi royal family, and the high levels of bureaucracy and the existing extremely rigid administrative practices and systems.

5.3.1.2 Practitioners interactions

The review of case profiles at the macro level showed that the organisational structure of all the participant organisations at this level typically exhibited a hierarchical, top-down structure. This observation is also prevalent throughout various government agencies across different sectors (see organisations structure in appendix 14-16). The hierarchical organisational structure that dominates and typifies the case organisations largely determines the nature as well as the distribution of power between different organisational actors. Understanding existing organisational structures is important for the analysis of the dynamic relationships that exist between the organisation and its internal actors, in the form of practitioners. These practitioners exhibit routines and behaviours, and perform actions and reactions, exhibited through goal-directed activities and practices, and which ultimately result in strategic outcomes and consequences (Jarzabkowski, 2005, Pye & Pettigrew, 2006, Price, Roxburgh, & Turnbul, 2006)

The researcher observed that whilst most of the participants talked about 'closed' individual meetings between ministers and senior officials, there was little mention of any

periodic meetings that gathered all organisational actors involved in the privatisation process. The views and perspectives among the respondents about key issues relating to organisational behaviour in each organisation were quite mixed. Although the respondents broadly agreed that the work in their respective organisation was mostly stable, the most commonly mentioned obstacle was the experience of too frequent changes among senior key figures at the higher levels of policymaking. The following quote provides an indication of the type of responses given:

"We do good work in a stable manner, but when there is any kind of significant change at the ministerial level, you cannot predict the changes that will happen in policies, which means that we need time to return to stability in our work with every change! A simple reason for that is that government ministers' behaviour in Saudi Arabia is often completely unpredictable and often has no limits or boundaries!"

(MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

Additionally, the respondents' perspective was often that organisational behaviour has not been translated into clear actionable guidance. Other respondents at the macro level focused instead on the organisational actors below them in hierarchy, those particularly taking place at meso level and micro (sport clubs) levels.

A further related key issue that emerged from the interview responses at the macro level relates to issues around *trust*, and potentially more seriously to professional integrity. Key individuals at the level of Saudi sport clubs and sport federations, including influential business people and some lower-profile princes, were often 'accused' by those at the macro level of working to achieve personal ambitions. As noted from some macro-level officials' responses, these ambitions included fame, social status, marketing companies by businesspersons, or to seek closer ties and connections to the King's entourage and key decision makers at the higher levels of hierarchy. Some interviewees tried to prove this by arguing that these individuals continued to sponsor and disburse money and capital to the sport clubs without actually receiving any tangible return, hence making other intangible fringe benefits their main goal behind their actions. One official at the macro level described these behaviours as a form of 'political rivalry' between different groups of key individuals, particularly at the level of sport clubs and sport federations.

> *"The Saudi sport sector is not run in a totally professional manner, particularly from the perspective of key relevant individuals such as princes and business people. These individuals only seek to achieve [trivial] political goals such as sport fans' and media attention, or the attainment of some higher social status and fame as a means to extend their circle of influence among political and business communities."*
>
> (MPOfficial2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

In the same vein, another strongly worded response from a senior GPYW official suggested that:

> *"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a big country with 27 million citizens and huge amount of competencies, but what damaged the Saudi sport sector is the involvement of many people with dubious personal interests. The Saudi sport sector is still greatly suffering from all sorts of discrimination, on the grounds of class, region or social status. All of this gives very little credibility and confidence in the decisions of any elected sport club or sport federation president who is unable to surpass and overcome such negative external influences...at the same time, it is not at all possible to exclude royal princes from presiding over the sport clubs because that is one of their rights as citizens of Saudi Arabia."*
>
> (GPOfficial3, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

This in turn resulted in various conflicts of interests between these actors as a means of exaggerating and boasting, through sport policy, the individuals' abilities and purported success at the political, economic or managerial leadership levels. Many respondents shared the conviction that this situation was not healthy as it could easily cause instability in policy interpretation and implementation, as the following interview excerpt highlighted: "Implementation of the policy of privatisation in sport clubs requires stability in those organisations responsible for implementation, such as clubs and youth welfare. Instability could backfire and this does not serve the policy in the future." (SCofficial1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012).

Finally, questions regarding the understanding of the morals of individual practitioners in terms of responsibilities in the effective implementation of strategic organisational plans and projects had varied responses. A number felt that there was a need to 'standardise' individual behaviour in organisations to cope with the sport clubs' privatisation policies in the future. The macro level participants' responses expressed concern regarding behaviour

in organisations responsible for sport and the implementation of policies. This was evidenced by repeated answers such as: *"I do not know if the clubs are able to...", "are sport federations and their employees able to do so ..." and "depends on the ability of the GPYW to implement."* These differing arguments and perspectives suggest a sense of a certain level of 'distrust' in the organisational behaviour among practitioners at the three levels.

The next section explores the second key domain of strategising, namely strategy praxis. This subsequent discussion provides a logical linkage between the domains of strategising practitioners with that of organisational practices.

5.3.2 **Praxis**

In addition to practitioners and practices, strategising praxis is one of the three key domains of strategising (the 3Ps). Strategising praxis is concerned with that which strategy practitioners actually do in the form of the various activities involved in strategy formulation and implementation (see, for example, Whittington (2006) and Chapter 3). Similarity, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) describe praxis as "the stream of activity in which strategy is accomplished over time" (p.73). Hence, the domain of praxis is quite broad in definition and scope.

The main goal-directed activity as the basic unit of analysis in this part remains the Saudi sport club privatisation policy. The empirical analysis of strategic praxis in this section discusses the practicalities of the strategy implementation of Saudi sport clubs privatisation occurring at the macro level. Analysing the praxis of the privatisation policy is essential for understanding strategy actors' roles in the formulation and implementation of the strategising workflow. It will also eventually put the researcher in a strong position to draw meaningful interconnections linking the various organisational levels.

5.3.2.1 *Praxis in context*

In terms of the wider Saudi political and socio-economic contexts, it was observed that starting from the early 2000s key policymakers at the highest levels of the Saudi government advocated and adopted a proactive national vision that is focused on improving the performance of the Saudi national economy by enhancing the country's economic competitiveness in order to meet the range of environmental challenges. This was evident from the SEC's various strategic planning initiatives over these years. One official from the SEC recounted:

"This issue was clear after the Kuwait or Gulf War in the nineties. A period which saw a severe decrease in state spending due to government budget deficit and hence the state resorted to international borrowing because of weak income from oil exports. The effect on the infrastructure was that many projects and plans were postponed and this led to slower economic growth and weakening in the performance of many economic sectors. This situation necessitated finding a supreme national (planning) body to deal with this acute economic crisis."

(SCofficial1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

This wider national vision for the Saudi economy required the adoption of a number of economic plans and policies, affecting most of the active economic sectors in Saudi Arabia including the sport sector. As researcher reviewed the schedule of SEC meetings shows approval of the sport club privatisation strategy was granted back in 2002. Relevant official policy documents published on the SEC's website as well as various statements by its officials confirmed that the privatisation vision was initiated from the highest political and policymaking authorities in the country. A senior official from the SEC added:

"Based on research and analysis provided by the World Bank - after an extended field visit to Saudi state organisations - there were some major problems in terms of the coordination among the various agencies that formed this Economic Council, requiring the establishment of a higher authority for economic reform projects as well as the privatisation of some state sector".

(SCofficial1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

In hindsight, the key motives behind the government's accelerated attempts to privatise some economic sectors were a combination of various factors. Two key factors were the observed inefficiency and underperformance in some economic sectors, such was the case in the services sector, one the one hand, and the various external pressures the government was under at the time, especially from an international perspective as evidenced by the World Bank's various visits and subsequent recommendations (see also Chapter 2).

It also emerged from fieldwork that many of the economists and experts were proactively advocating a shift towards a more balanced and better well-diversified economy, in which the private sector played a leading role. It became apparent to the researcher that there had been a degree of dissatisfaction among the experts regarding the government system of direct subsidies and support for various economic sectors over many years. The general consensus was that this government approach of direct subsidies had harmed the overall

economic environment by discouraging competition and severely limiting the role of the private sector in the overall economic activity. As one senior official from the SEC for example noted:

> *"The example of the smuggling of state-subsidised goods and products out of Saudi borders does harm to the Saudi economy and the government's finances and is not commensurate with the national strategic economic plans...and we try to combat this through various means including accelerating various privatisation programmes so that they become governed by the laws of supply and demand"*
>
> (SCOfficial1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

Other economic experts argued that direct government subsidies were one of the obstacles to the successful implementation of the privatisation programme. Another official from the SEC said:

> *"As economists we want a clean economy without government subsidies, but the King and those in charge of the policy want to keep the social welfare government model to prevail. Government subsidies do not help because the private sector becomes dependent upon government subsidies."*
>
> (SCOfficial1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

Related to this, it is also worth noting at this conjuncture that the consecutive 5-year national development plans adopted by the Saudi government always had social aspects to them in addition to the stated economic objectives. This was significantly influenced by the government's focus on enhancing social welfare policies as part of these national development plans. This close interrelationship was quite evident in one of the MEP official's statements: "Increasing state revenues and linking them to the country's economic growth, thus allowing the state to carry out its responsibilities with respect to national development and comprehensive social welfare." (MPOfficial2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013).

The problem, however, was that these social and economic objectives, within the overall policy, did not always converge and were often even contradictory (see table 5.1).

Regarding the Saudi sport club privatisation programme in particular, the initial stated objectives of this policy were manifold. The strategy aimed to primarily encourage private sector participation and investment, the diversification and expansion of the ownership of productive assets, and the rationalisation of public finances expenditure ultimately leading to improved productivity and efficiency. The aim was also to ultimately improve the social welfare of citizens through better service provision.

The privatisation strategy defines a number of administrative and implementation procedures in which the Economic Council is the appointed government body responsible for overseeing various privatisation programmes as well as monitoring their implementation and periodic review. Among the top priorities of the Privatisation Committee was recommending those state-owned establishments, projects and services that are deemed fit for privatising. Additionally, the Committee was also tasked with determining the regulatory framework and implementation procedures for the privatisation process, such as the determining contracts for managing, operating, leasing, financing, and selling all or part of the assets in question.

The strategy praxis of the sport club privatisation policy was characterised by a number of practicalities but showed various conflicts and ambiguities. The vision and planning of the privatisation policy at the highest levels of the Saudi government attempted to learn lessons, and be partly based on previous experiences in a number of other sector privatisation projects, as one MEP official put it:

> *"The government want to privatise a large number of sectors, initially those sectors that appear highly competitive. We let a sector invest and develop its income until it shows readiness for more competition and higher levels of investments. Then we start the privatisation of the sector...sports clubs progress is unable to meet the conditions of real economic competitiveness just yet."*

(MPofficial1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2012)

In contrast to this vision, statements from key planners of the Saudi sports clubs' privatisation policy at the GPYW level showed a degree of ambiguity as well as some discrepancies in the understanding and interpretation of privatisation policy objectives. The GPYW officials had multiple doubts regarding whether the SEC officials had the slightest knowledge of the sport domain. Moreover, the researcher observed that the sport club privatisation policy framework was not built on a solid strategic foundation as it was not based on a 'shared vision' which could help create a common ground between the SEC's vision with that of the actors and organisations below in the hierarchy. As one GPYW officials put it:

> *"We have not been consulted in the process of formulating the general framework of the government's privatisation policy, nor have we been consulted regarding the choice of sports as a targeted sector for privatisation. I do not know on what basis the general framework of Saudi privatisation policy has been deemed suitable for all sectors!"*

(GPofficial4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)

The GPYW and its sport clubs privatisation team responses had a negative undertone regarding various important aspects of the policy, from the initial vision, to strategy formulation, to communication and involvement. This was despite numerous deliberations between the macro-level organisations (SEC, MEP and GPYW) about privatisation policy. One example of such divergence in the vision and opinions between these key actors was plain to see from the response of one of the GPYW officials:

> *"Any actions taken to privatise sport clubs should take in account fans, investors and other factors that are concerned by this significant change. The actions taken in the telecommunications or utilities sectors will not necessarily be appropriate in the sport sector."*

(GPofficial3, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

In turn, a number of key officials at the SEC and MEP argued that many specialist teams that had been previously consulted and tasked with formulating an adequate framework for the privatisation of the sport sector did not succeed in doing so, in spite of many years of effort, (see privatising study teams Appendix 16). Moreover, the Shura Council (see Chapter 2) frequently repeated the importance of the urgent need to accelerate the privatisation of the sport clubs, and even criticised the progress made by the GPYW on this front on several occasions.[64] The above diverse views and arguments that emerged from macro-level primary data point to multiple and important areas of divergence and differences of opinion, stemming from variations in the practitioners' strategy perspectives and understanding of the clubs privatisation policy. Having said that, one key overall area of consensus among all study participants was that such economic policies that promote and encourage privatisation would help rebalance the Saudi economy, increase sector competition and improve efficiency, and therefore ultimately provide a net positive benefit to the Saudi economy and society as a whole.

5.3.2.2 Praxis interactions

In Saudi Arabia, the tradition of state-led planning, through unified consecutive national development plans, dates back to 1970s. As senior officials from the MEP explained, the process of drafting a national development plan typically started by inviting various ministries and government agencies to prepare and submit draft proposals, through the work of dedicate working teams. The MEP would then discuss and review these draft plan proposals by evaluating and standardising them based on the overall strategic objectives

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[64] Shura Council regular meetings on 14 May 2000, 17 October 2000, 21 April 2008, and on 4 May 2009.

and in consultation and coordination with the ministries and relevant government agencies. At the end of this process, these plans are then submitted to the Supreme Economic Council and the Shura Council for final review before the Council of Ministers' approval. This was the normal sequence for all activities connected with the formulation and implementation of strategy.

Since 2006, and prior to implementation, the MEP started the online publishing of the 'guide' to the 5-year development plan and thereby making it available to all Saudi organisations as well as to any interested members of the general public. The guide provided a general description behind the preparation of the plan as well as details about the various implementation stages.

At macro level, the degree of participation of various policymakers representing different government agencies at this level varied from one organisation to another. Within the GPYW, for instance, the responses from study participants when prompted about their perceived level of participation in the plan drafting process focused mainly on their experiences in attending strategy meetings, mainly in the form of workshops and seminars. They described these as being often impractical, dry and extremely rigid, comparing them to general lessons in planning and not designed for particular sectors such as sport or youth. Moreover, invitations to participate in such meetings often arrived late due to bureaucratic delays and inadequate communication between government agencies. A further interesting aspect of the participants' responses at the GPYW was the perceived general lack of confidence in the performance of the GPYW by other planning organisations at this level, partly due to them not giving sufficient attention to sport-related issues in these meetings.

The divergence in the participants' views was evident when they were asked to specifically identify the body responsible for formulating the sport clubs privatisation strategy. Although the SEC's and MEP's codes of responsibilities clearly state that the drafting of strategic plans and proposals required the direct involvement of relevant state agencies, the views expressed at the level of the GPYW did not concur with this requirement. It was revealed to the researcher that GPYW officials had been waiting for SEC and MEP strategic proposal for many years: "We have waited for a project on how they want privatisation to be for a long time, but we took the initiative to provide a preliminary draft which was subsequently rejected." (GPofficial1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012).

Regarding the degree of autonomy exercised in the implementation of activities related to the sport clubs privatisation strategy, the picture that emerged from macro-level

organisations reflected various views and perspectives. For instance, many GPYW respondents indicated that they have the power to make the final decision regarding the club's performance or the remedial measures needed to rectify a club problem in isolation from SEC and MEP. This political autonomy manifested itself through the monopolisation of decision-making by each individual organisation as a major show political strength. While, one would expect that this observed high level of political and decision-making autonomy by government agencies at the macro level with regards to implementation activities may be beneficial overall, it nevertheless caused deficiencies in the coordination between these agencies. The latter finding that was interestingly highlighted in a study conducted by the World Bank, as referred to in an earlier part of this chapter.

In more general terms and in order to assess the overall strategy praxis for the sport club privatisation programme, one needs to examine all aspects of interrelatedness between the macro, meso and micro levels of praxis, a task that is addressed within the rest of discussion chapters. Nonetheless, in order to provide a preliminary perspective, the strategy context and praxis observed at the lower levels (i.e. meso and micro) did have serious implications on the praxis found at the macro level. The history, development and regulatory framework of various sport clubs at the micro level is a case in example. In studying this particular aspect of various sport clubs and some sport federations at the micro level, the researcher made the startling observation of the virtual non-existence of any direct reference to the privatisation programme in the regular work of these organisations. This situation supports the comments made by participants at the macro level regarding the fact that sport club regulations are out-of-date and that privatisation plans are still largely absent and not manifested in any meaningful practical terms at these lower levels. Hence, the consensus view of all study participants was that current collaborative efforts between sport federations, the Olympic Committee, and the sport clubs represent some of the initiatives being taken to prepare the ground for the implementation of the sport club privatisation policy and the wider development of the sport sector.

Linked to this is the issue of the sport clubs' long-established and highly entrenched legacies, a situation that has been shaped by their specific histories and context of development. Several study participants argued that these legacies, combined with the role of club founders as additional significant factor, was a key reason behind the lack of clarity in the ownership and running of these clubs, and hence becoming an obstacle in the face of effective strategising praxis at this level. On this issue, one senior official from the GPYW argued that:

" ...unfortunately, club founders believe they are maintaining their control rights over the club by ignoring change programmes such as the privatisation programme, while in fact they themselves pose an obstacle to club progress towards privatisation or any other change process...we cannot squarely put all the blame on them today because there is no clear guidance to determine how ownership and control rights of sport clubs are allocated or exercised, nor how the privatisation programme is going to turn out." (GP.Official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

Closely related to this issue is the additional ambiguity and confusion at the micro level surrounding Saudi sport clubs with regards to their precise legal status and official (declared) affiliation. On this issue, typical responses from some participants included statements such as "do you talk about sport clubs affiliated to the GPYW, or clubs affiliated to the ministry of Social Affairs, or private clubs?" Another GPYW official summarised:

"No fixed data system exists to register sports clubs. There is some evidence of the registration of sport clubs or sports organisations and their activities public, private, voluntary. Some sports clubs are registered with the GPYW, other private clubs are registered with the ministry of Commerce. There are also clubs registered with the ministry of Social Affairs or other ministries, including clubs belonging to government public or private agencies."

(GP.official4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)

From this and further data analyses, it can be concluded that, in its current structure, the regulatory framework of the Saudi sport sector does not adequately cater to or reflect the current realities of Saudi sport clubs. Moreover, existing regulations have not been updated causing difficulty with accountability and monitoring. What exists in terms of statutes and regulations are also skewed in favour of the big sport clubs, and football in particular. Hence, in their current structure, the regulatory and institutional frameworks, as key elements of the overall strategy praxis, do not provide the required stability or context for a successful implementation of major change programmes, such as the sport club privatisation policy initiative.

5.3.3 Practices

As previously stipulated within the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), the third key domain of strategising relates to strategy practices. In the broadest meaning, strategising practices refer to a 'bundle' of interrelated social, material and embodied ways and means of 'organising' and 'doing' within a given organisational context. These practices are

routinized types of behaviour that are embedded and institutionalised, thus providing common, recognised and shared ways of doing strategy within a given organisation and context (see Chapter 3, as well as for example, Reckwitz, 2002; Whittington, 2006; and Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Hence, it is important to appreciate how day-to-day and sometimes even mundane and idiosyncratic behaviours within organisations can become embedded and goal-directed, leading to important strategic choices and consequences. A further feature of the practices domain of strategising, which is of pertinent importance to this study, is that they are 'multilevel' (Whittington, 2006). Strategising practices therefore span the micro, meso and macro levels of strategy praxis and organisational hierarchy, making this domain perhaps the most important facet for further analysis and discussion in the remainder of chapters.

This section closely builds on and complements the previous discussion by addressing pertinent issues, as identified in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), and specifically relating to strategising practices observed at the macro level of study. The basic unit of analysis in this part remains the Saudi sport club privatisation policy as the main goal-directed activity.

The empirical analysis of strategising practices in this section explores key aspects of strategising practices in relation to Saudi sport clubs privatisation policy at the macro level. Understanding the established as well as any potentially new strategising practices of the sport club privatisation policy (see subsequent sections) and how these relate to the other two domains of strategising, constitutes the most important aspect of the proposed study. This will potentially lead to major findings at the theoretical and practical levels, including important policy recommendations in the context of the Saudi sport sector.

5.3.3.1 Practices in context

Data analyses at the macro level revealed a number of important issues and trends associated with the domain of practices in relation to the sport club privatisation policy. In terms of the various organisational practices and established 'ways of doing things' observed at the macro-level organisations, which helped over time shape the current state of the sport club privatisation policy, various elements of ambiguity, confusion and/ or misunderstanding were quite evident from the participants' responses. A key factor in this context, also significantly influenced by the wider Saudi socio-cultural context as argued on previous occasions, was the expectation and internal personal conviction of all organisational actors at this level of the 'implicit' requirement to execute and implement higher directives as direct orders without minimum discussion or objection. The sport

club privatisation was no different especially that it had been initiated from the very highest levels of policymaking, i.e. through orders by the SEC chaired by the King. This state of affairs, combined with a general sense of confusion and ambiguity in the particular case of sport club privatisation, contributed towards opening opportunities for personal interpretations. Many officials at the macro level believed that they had some kind of prerogative allowing them to interpret rules and regulations as part of their organisational daily task. Linked to this, a significant number of participants believed that structural legitimacy imparted to them by being appointed in positions of power gives them the mandate to implement such policy programmes even when the overall objectives lack purpose and clarity. Additionally, these officials felt the compulsory need to deliver on these policy expectations whatever the circumstances. This 'way of doing things' is widespread at the macro level of policymaking and also filtered through to most of the organisations at lower levels of strategy praxis (see Chapters 6 and 7 for more on this). An official from the GPYW presented such a view by asserting that:

> *"When the decision comes from the wise leadership (the government or the person of the King more specifically), each organisation is obliged to implement and execute. All officials and managers at the GPYW have to make decisions in response to these government policies and directives."*

> (GP.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

Another aspect that arose from preliminary evaluation of the observed strategising practices at the macro level revealed important variations. The SEC and MEP practices exhibited the tendency to focus on meeting the wider objectives of national policies based on rational practices. In contrast, the practices at the GPYW tended to be quite routinized focusing on delivering the daily work primarily concerned with the provision of social services for youth and sport sectors. In both cases, there is good amount of daily 'discretionary' practices depending on personal convictions, work environment and the external context. In the practitioners' viewpoints, these observed variations are due to disparities between the collective knowledge, competencies, capabilities as well as experiences within each of the macro level organisations. These disparities consequently influence each organisation's ability to formulate strategic choices and attain important strategic consequences. Linked to this, a few participants at the macro level highlighted the need for organisational creativity when it comes to the sport club privatisation strategy. To illustrate this, an official from the MEP argued that:

"The GPYW was unable to write a report in a professional manner for GPYW future plans. The GPYW reports provide information for media publications. I wonder whether they are not qualified to write a report to the requirements of the MEP...how does one expect them to prepare an economic plan to privatise the club or change voluntary practices to become commercial practices? Privatisation policy is greater than the ability of this government agency."

(MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

That said, and in order to provide a fuller picture, some other study participants at the macro level were of the alternative opinion that strong variations in the practices of macro-level organisations are quite rare in fact. The key reason behind this, they argued, was due to the high degree of the centralisation of policy and decision making, a rather permanent feature of Saudi political and administrative systems. Hence, they believe that key government agencies involved in policymaking and strategic planning, particularly at the macro level, follow the same 'homogenous' structures and procedures in their key organisational practices. "The work of the GPYW is like the work of any government agency, with different tasks but similar daily practices." (GP.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012).

A recurring feature of the nature of strategic discourse and communication between key strategising practitioners at the macro level was the particular style or format used by officials in all strategising-related official communications. Most internal or external official communications repeatedly featured phrases such as '…based on the royal decision...', '...based on the instructions or the minister...', '...referring to our response from the minister's office...', '...referring to the minister's decision number...' etc.

This recurring feature in strategising discourse shows that some practitioners at the macro level lacked proactiveness in their daily strategising work and only acted in response to directives or instruction from higher levels of organisational hierarchy. Moreover, this finding is consistent with the researcher's observation, during the fieldwork phase, regarding the 'limited' daily agendas of work found at some of these organisations. Many practitioners daily work, therefore, was often confined to and limited by higher directives and instructions.

Some macro-level practitioners considered this practice to be important in providing an appropriate context for the decision or directive in question and hence giving it more power and enforceability.

> *"Any 'verbal' guidance or directive needs to be turned into a written document and linked to previous decisions or other documented rules, regulations or frameworks, so that it can be utilised in future decisions and everyone will then abide by them."*

(SC.official1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

Others, however, considered this particular practice to be a symptom of typical widespread bureaucratic practices in Saudi public sector organisations, making it difficult to accept, or even subject to potential internal organisational resistance in some cases. One MEP official said:

> *"The style used in formal communications confirms and sanctions bureaucracy in decision-making especially when references are made to a long list of prior decisions, directives, rules and decrees, which* [to be honest] *are difficult to understand and therefore also difficult to implement."*

(MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

The researcher, and in agreement with the theoretical predictions (see Chapter 3), inferred that the real purpose behind the regular use of such discourse was to attach and confer some sort of legitimacy[65] to various strategic decisions, directives and instructions. Additionally and quite importantly, the views of macro-level practitioners' were in agreement that this type of strategic discourse is deeply entrenched within Saudi administrative practices, becoming some sort of established but 'tacit' tradition or custom within the overall dynamics of the typical Saudi government agency. It was also important to observe that such strategic discourse becomes even more pervasive the higher the level of policymaking and the status of policymakers involved. Consequently, lower levels of hierarchy are directly impacted by this particular 'way of doing things' in the Saudi context, as one of the participants succinctly put it: "...no one dares to change it!"

With regards to the means of strategic discourse and strategic communication, and rather paradoxically, the researcher noticed that despite the fact that most aspects of social interactions in the Saudi context and the society's daily life are manifested through personal or groups meetings (see also Chapter 2), this is not widely used in the regular interactions between Saudi organisations. Instead, most strategic discourse and communication are conducted through official mediums and written documents, such as

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[65] Legitimacy in this particular discussion refers to the 'structural' type of legitimacy, as opposed to interpretative, a key aspect of strategising practices discussed in more detail in later parts of this chapter.

official letters, decrees and directives. This finding is not entirely surprising given, as discussed before, the highly hierarchical organisational as well as socio-cultural contexts in which these practices take place. Additionally, the use of workshops, meetings, presentations, management retreats, consulting activities and team briefings were quite common at the SEC and MEP levels (individually as well as between the two), but very limited at the GPYW level. In addition, these kinds of strategising tools and practices were virtually non-existent in the work between the MEP and SEC on the one hand, and the GPYW on the other.

More specifically, the communication of strategic discourse at macro-level organisations is mostly conducted through written communication, such as official letters, directives and decrees. This was the case with regards to the sport club privatisation policy, where for instance official letters and documents were sent to the GPYW related to various aspects of sport clubs such as investment, use government infrastructure, contracts, and legal issues. As one participant explained when talking about the role of the written official letter:

> *"We have sent a written letter requesting the information we need for formulation plans for the future of the youth and sports sector. unfortunately, after a delayed of response we request a meeting with GPYW officials and we met them once to explained the kinds of the information we needs, but the information they sent was less than the required level. This only the meeting we have with them since 1999, but it did not work and we keep contact as you see via the regular written letter"*

> (MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

These discursive strategising practices and activities[66] represent the typical mode of strategising work and strategy communication in the Saudi context. Study participants attributed this to official legislations requiring documented communication in such activities. Preliminary data analysis, and consistent with theoretical predications (see Chapter 3) and also similar to the format of communication discussed above, reveals that this type of discursive practice through the use of the official letter as a powerful means of strategic discourse is also typically used to attach greater levels of (structural) legitimacy to the strategy process.

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[66] Further discussion of discursive practices can also be found in the subsequent chapter 8.

5.3.3.2 Practices interactions

The unique features of the Saudi political economy as well as other socio-cultural aspects imply that any attempt for a major change was going to be strongly influenced by these entrenched factors. For instance, one of the GPYW officials described the concept of 'privatisation' as an imported Western idea that does not fit in well with the Saudi context and the Saudi society. Such perspectives, albeit mostly borne out of individual convictions, contributed towards some underlying elements of organisational 'resistance' to government plans such as the privatisation policy initiative.

The researcher observed that questions related to resistance practices were, and rather expectedly, met with some degree of reluctance and reservation by most of the study participants at the macro level. Some participants chose to partly ignore answering such questions and were instead content with just citing some examples of previous government project failures or discussing current problems faced by others. Other participants denied altogether the existence of resistance type practices at any level and reiterated that the development plans are proceeding smoothly, albeit with a high degree of bureaucracy in the implementation.

The privatisation policy of Saudi sport clubs is strongly characterised by a strict top-down mode of policymaking. In practice, policy decisions are initially made at the level of the SEC and then filter through a hierarchal structure to the MEP and the GPYW. These latter two agencies are then responsible for translating the policy outline into procedures for actual implementation. The refined policy then moves down via an implementation policy chain of GPYW officials to different sport management levels with the aim of translating policy guidelines into action. Data analysis at the macro level revealed that the actual implementation of the sport club privatisation policy was primarily entrusted to the GPYW, with the MEP being available for advice in setting mechanisms for implementation and evaluation. At the level of the GPYW, a working sub-committee for the privatisation of sport clubs was established, with the role of acting as the major body coordinating all elements of implementation of the policy within the sports sector.

Most views expressed by the macro level officials suggested that the relations between the SEC and MEP were proactive and continuous, especially in term of consultation and preparation of economic plans through regular meetings, workshops and working groups. At the level of the GPYW, however, most study participants see themselves as receivers of orders from the SEC and/ or the MEP, with their viewpoints having little

chance of being considered in matters directly related to the sport club privatisation strategy. GPYW officials stated that the working relationships flow between GPYW managers with planning managers at the SEC and the MEP lacked *continuity*. Moreover, collaboration work between these agencies was heavily based on written correspondence with limited scope for consultation or any meaningful exchange of experiences. In the views of most GPYW officials, such interruptions and ad-hoc mode of working relationships with the SEC and MEP contributed adversely to current problems in the face of implementation activities. Typical of this view was the following statement: "We have good rules, which need further development. We have employees, who they need more training, but our problems are in the implementation and continuous development based on field experiences, not on personal attitudes or copycat from international models." (GP.official4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013).

As to the perceived opinion of macro-level officials towards practitioners directly concerned by the sport club privatisation policy at the lower levels, the expressed views were not that optimistic. Some GPYW officials stated the following regarding the prevailing situation at sport clubs (micro level):

> *"Sport clubs in Saudi Arabia are run according to individual decisions. Presidents of sport club make the money available and want to control everything; clubs have Board of Directors without any active role in actual decision-making. These practices are not commensurate with the privatisation vision."*

> (GP.official4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)

5.4 Conclusions

The three sample case studies at the macro level exhibited different characteristics in terms of their roles within the sport club privatisation policy. The policy was originally set out by the SEC being the highest organism for centralised policymaking not just for the sport sector but all economic sectors. The members of the SEC come from senior figures in government and were not entirely dedicated to ensuring effective implementation of the privatisation policy. For them, the privatisation project within sport represented just another piece within the much bigger picture, i.e. the overall five-year national development plan. Hence, the role of the SEC was largely in a supervisory capacity once the policy had been agreed by the Council and officially launched. This was also evidenced by the absence of a clear, written strategy document even at this highest level of policymaking.

After the SEC, the MEP represented the second highest government policymaking entity. Even though this key policy actor had the necessary mandate and means (in the form of experts, consultants and specialised working groups) to devise short and long term plans for all economic sectors at a national level, the body's proactive participation and involvement in the strategising work around the privatisation policy was surprisingly very limited. Instead, they delegated most planning responsibilities and tasks to the GPYW at the very early phases of policy formulation.

The GPYW represented the third case at the macro level and somehow unexpectedly played a more central and more powerful role in the privatisation policy process, compared to the SEC and the MEP. As highlighted through related findings within this chapter, this central role of the GPYW can be partly attributed to some kind of inherited structure legitimacy enabled via longstanding ways of doing things particularly administrative or procedural practices. The GPYW had this perception of being the direct overseer of all sport- and youth-related activities and policies and thereby utilising this privileged position to exercise high (perhaps excessive) levels of direct control over the privatisation policy process. However, the work of the GPYW around the privatisation policy was plagued by several shortcomings, not least because of the lack of expertise within the GPYW in formulating and communicating such policy initiative. This, in turn, resulted in a very slow pace of progress in terms of the implementation of key policy objectives.

Consistent with the proposed theoretical framework (Chapter 3), research findings at the macro level revealed that the role of strategy practitioners is critical within the dynamics of overall activity system. Examining the practitioners' background and organisational interactions revealed the important role of context in all of the case organisations at the macro level, particularly the socio-cultural aspects that characterise the Saudi society at large. Moreover, further analysis of the practitioners' background and interactions also revealed that the government's dominant top-down model of implementation policies resulted in creating evident separation between policy-formulation actors and those at organisations below them in the hierarchy; *"who is the leader in charge to the direction of Saudi sport clubs privatisation policy"*, one respondent mused. This extremely rigid hierarchal and bureaucratic mode of interaction and communication between relevant organisations and their practitioners meant that the practitioners' implementation process was dominated by a one-way flow of strategising activities and practices. It follows that many of the organisational actors involved in the privatisation policy were predominantly working in *silos*. Many practitioners struggled to ensure that policies are executed as

accurately as possible in terms of achieving their originally intended goals. The managers of decentralised operations at macro-level organisations were often faced with a dilemma when it comes to the accurate interpretation of the privatisation policy key directives and strategies. This was partly due to a noticeable lack of clarity in the strategic direction, further exacerbated by inadequate communication and low levels of coordination in strategising work among key practitioners. Many practitioners did not fully understand their precise position and/ or role within the overall organisational hierarchy as it relates to the sport club privatisation policy. Faced with several dilemmas at once, on top of numerous internal and external pressures to make effective decisions and deliver results, practitioners often resorted to personal interpretation in an attempt to understand what is precisely required of them. The absence of any initiatives involving joint work programmes and the convergence of views between the three key government agencies at this level of strategising praxis strongly highlighted the *mismatch* between what privatisation policymakers wanted and what other organisational practitioners, crucially responsible for policy implementation, at the lower levels of hierarchy could realistically deliver.

Additionally, further analyses at the macro level revealed an overall picture plagued by several areas of deficiency in the praxis domain of strategising, including the drafting, communication and implementation of the sport club privatisation policy. Analyses revealed a *certain lack of clarity*, *continuity* as well as *stability* in planning and implementation activities that contributed to shaping the sport club privatisation policy over the years. These key elements often varied greatly from one organisation to another due to the absence of clarity and purpose from the outset, regarding the key aspects of the privatisation policy objectives. Even at the very highest levels of policymaking, data revealed numerous sources of *conflict* and *ambiguity* in the 'ideology' of government policy. This state of affairs 'filtered through' to lower levels in the policymaking chain, and likewise to lower levels of praxis, decision making and implementation. Many study participants, including those at the macro level, expressed strong views about the presence of conflicting aspects in the government's vision regarding the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia. As one respondent concisely put it:

> *"Sport clubs cannot be privatised when the government is still committed to the principle of sport clubs as a social service* [frequently mentioning the slogan "Sport for All"]. *The sport clubs' voluntary practices need to be separated and* [if necessarily] *replaced by private practices."*

> (GP.official4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)

Research findings relating to the practices domain of strategising at the macro level further revealed a concerning lack of effective communication practices between the various macro level organisations involved in the sport club privatisation programme. Whatever practices that were in application lacked clarity and direction, therefore giving ample room for personal interpretations by strategising actors. Moreover, the communication practices start by administrative planning activities at the level of the SEC and the MEP, but some level of *distrust* between officials at these two planning organisations and the GPYW was evident from the views expressed by officials at these macro-level organisations. Meanwhile, other organisational actors, such as those at the GPYW, argued that the lack of direct involvement in early planning activities at the macro level adversely filtered through to their respective organisations, as well as to lower levels of strategising praxes. This perceived distrust between agencies and organisational actors at the macro level consequently led to the regular interruption and *discontinuity* in the flow of goal-directed activities, making effective strategy formulation and implementation extremely difficult to deliver.

Chapter 6 Strategy and Strategising: Meso-Level Case Studies

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second of the analyses chapters, aiming to explain the collected empirical data *within* and *across* the different levels of the study.

More specifically, this chapter aims to conduct empirical analysis of the collected primary and secondary data *within* the meso level of study.[67]Just like the other two levels, the meso level is a key component of the strategising praxis domain, representing the 'middle' level through which the key strategising activities taking place at the macro and micro levels pass through. Similar to the analysis conducted in Chapter 5, key issues to be investigated in this chapter include, among others, key theoretical constructs of strategy and strategising (see also Chapter 3), such as strategy formulation, strategic outcomes, goal-directed activity, types and patterns of strategising activities and practices, and forms of legitimacy.

Moreover, it is envisaged that through the empirical analysis of the three key domains of strategising at this meso level (i.e. the 3Psof practitioners, practices and praxis), and in combination with parallel findings from Chapters 5 and 7, key similarities and differences in strategising *within* each, as well as *across* the three levels of investigation can be precisely identified and explained.

Closely similar to the structure adopted within the previous Chapter 5, this chapter consists of two main parts. Part one offers a brief, yet necessary, discussion of the background profile of each of the case study organisations that constitute the study sample at this meso level of analysis. The second part then offers detailed discussion of the key themes generated from the analysis of primary and secondary data at this level. The analysis here is again based on the application of the proposed research design and methods previously developed in Chapter 4, including the results from of thematic and content analyses techniques. Additionally, the discussion is also informed by key theoretical constructs based on the previously proposed theoretical framework (Chapters 3), whereby the three key domains of strategising, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis, constitute the basic framework for analysis and discussion in this part. This second part also expands the meso-level analysis further by summarising and bringing together the key findings at this level with regards to identified patterns, types and categories of

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[67]Similar to Chapter 5, the focus of this chapter is on intra-level (i.e. within) analysis and discussion, whereas the focus in Chapter 9 is on inter-level analysis (i.e. across).

strategising, as well as by highlighting any areas of consistency or otherwise of these findings with prior literature.

The chapter concludes by recapitulating and highlighting all of the key findings from previous sections with a view to understanding the basic dynamics of strategy and strategising at the meso level of investigation. Hence, it is envisaged that the findings from this chapter, in combination with those from the other two (Chapters 6 and 7), will then be used to inform and complete the rest of cross-case analysis and discussion to be subsequently developed in Chapter 8.

6.2 Case profiles

This part of the chapter provides a brief, yet important, overview of the background profiles of the five sample case organisations at the meso level. Understanding the background profile of the participant organisations at this level is important in terms of appreciating the specific role of each organisation within the overall context of sport club privatisation in Saudi Arabia, and how various organisations across all the praxis levels are interlinked.

The five sample organisations at this level comprise the key organising body overseeing the overall sport sector in Saudi Arabia in the case of the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (SAOC), as well as bodies that oversee other individual and team sports. These specific sport federations are namely, the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF), the Saudi Arabian Volleyball Federation (SAVF), the Saudi Arabian Karate Federation (SAKF), and the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation (SATF).

These meso-level organisations represent, in the Saudi context, an important link between key policymakers at the macro level and those organisations and practitioners directly overseeing the field implementation of various policies and strategies within the sport sector. Hence, the interview participants at the meso level included key senior officials closely associated with the sport cub privatisation strategy. The SAOC, in particular, is a key independent body in this regard, providing an important link between the different organisations across all the praxis levels, as well as playing an influential external-facing role.

6.2.1 The Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (SAOC)

Tracking the historical developments in Saudi sports reveals that the SAOC came to existence as part of the overall development process of various sport disciplines in Saudi

Arabia. The rapid evolution in a number of sports federations, notably the Football Association[68] necessitated setting up an independent Olympic committee.

The SAOC was officially established in 1964 and was, at the time, organisationally directly affiliated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - the government body that had the overall oversight over the sports movement back then (see also Chapter 2). However, with the subsequent accession of various Saudi sport associations and federations to become members within the relevant international sports federations, including athletics, football, basketball, volleyball and cycling, an independent specialised body was later put in charge to take over the direct running of the SAOC's activities (see also Chapter 2). Shortly after its inception, the SAOC itself gained membership of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1965. The SAOC is headquartered in Riyadh with the 'Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Olympic Complex' as its main premises. At present, the SAOC includes 30 sport federations, up from only 7 federations that had existed prior to the creation of the GPYW in 1974.[69]

The SAOC works along with these federations towards the overall development of the sport sector and the general sports movement in Saudi Arabia by following the guidelines of the Olympic Charter. According to IOC charters, national Olympic committees are responsible for Olympic national-level sport participation. In Saudi Arabia, the SAOC comes under the auspices of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare (GPYW). The 'First Article' of SAOC regulations sates that:

> *"The Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee is the top sports agency with independent legal status, state-sponsored to help it to achieve its goals, the only body representing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the meetings of the International Olympic Committee or any other committees connected to it, including regional, Arab, continental and international Olympic games."*
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> (SAOC, 2009)

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[68]The Football Federation is the oldest sports federation in Saudi Arabia, founded in 1956 as the 'Saudi Arabian Society for Football'.

[69] The researcher could not find any published resources regarding the SAOC's precise finances such as accounts, audits and budget statements. Related to financing, the SAOC, along with 13 different sports federations, signed a significant sponsorship deal with the telecommunications company (Mobily) in 2006. Under the contract, each federation gets between 0.5 and 1 million SAR (around $260,000 and 130,000 USD equivalent). Hence, with the exception of the year 2006, sports federations depended largely on government subsidies (annual amounts of around one million SAR, which covers all the federation's activities and paying for employee salaries. Thus, collected data revealed that most sports federations regularly suffered budget deficits of 20%-30%.

According to the SAOC charter and internal regulations (Article 3, SAOC Regulations 2009), the Committee is composed of the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, the Executive Board, as well as other supporting functions. The members of the General Assembly include representatives from all of the Saudi Sport Federations - usually the federation's president or his representative – as well as the IOC representative in Saudi Arabia, in addition to some individuals with relevant expertise or particular importance.[70] Members of the SAOC's board of directors are elected through the General Assembly. Te Board has 15 to 17 members including a president, vice-president, general secretary, the treasurer, while the rest are ordinary members one of whom is the IOC's representative in Saudi Arabia. The duties and powers of the SAOC's board of directors are stipulated in Article 15 as follows:

- The ratification and approval of the sports federations' strategic plans.
- The approval of financial subsidies to these federations according to specified terms and conditions.
- Oversight over the sports federations and assistance in solving problems.
- Applying sanctions as relevant and according to the SAOC's charter and regulations.
- Oversight over the preparations of national Olympic teams to represent Saudi Arabia at regional, continental, international and Olympic events and tournaments.

6.2.2 The Saudi Arabian Sports Federations

6.2.2.1 Team sports

Football is by far the most popular of all sports in Saudi Arabia; played, followed and enjoyed by millions of Saudis[71]. The SAFF is the principal football governing body in Saudi Arabia founded in 1956, the same year in which it also joined the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA). Its early origins can be traced to the Saudi Arabian Society for Football (SASF). The SAFF later joined the Asian Football Confederation in 1972. Its main activities include, among others, the overall oversight of

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[70] Before 1992, a number of these individuals who were members of the SAOC's General Assembly were in the form of princes.

71 Official FIFA data show that in Saudi Arabia, and as of 2014, there were 1,292 officials working at 153 clubs, with 438,644 players (15,144 registered players and 423,500 non-registered) from different age groups actively participating in football. In addition, there are 531 football referees, including 10 international referees and 260 Saudi football coaches (FIFA, 2014).

all aspects related to the development of the Saudi football sector including setting and implementing relevant laws and regulations, overseeing and organising local, national, regional and international footballing competitions and events, the improvement in the general welfare of football athletes, and the management of various Saudi national teams. Various Saudi football teams have over the years enjoyed varying levels of success and achievements regionally and internationally.[72] At present, 153 different football clubs come under the wing of the SAFF and are regularly involved local, regional and national tournaments, distributed over various leagues and age groups (FIFA, 2014).

The SAFF has a Secretary-General and a board of directors, consisting of 19 members elected by the General Assembly, with the last election taking place in December 2013. The SAFF also has a number of technical, administrative, financial and legal committees (see Appendix 21 on SAFF organisational structure). Similar to the practice in many other countries, the elite football clubs in the Saudi professional football league are represented through the Saudi Professional Clubs Association or 'Saudi Pro League'.[73] The Association is an independent body under the umbrella of the SAFF. It fiercely advocates and promotes the interests of its top-tier club members and it is therefore run on a purely commercial basis in order to ensure independent and sustainable sources of income for their club members.

Volleyball is another team-based sport which has been extremely popular in Saudi Arabia due to many factors such as its relative simplicity and the minimal need for specialised equipment and sport gear.[74] Hence, it held a strong appeal to large parts of the Saudi populations from all age groups. In fact, after football, volleyball is the second most popular sport in Saudi Arabia.

The 'Saudi Arabian Society for Volleyball' was first founded in 1963 and then later became the 'Saudi Arabian Volleyball Federation' (SAVF). SAVF became a member of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) in 1964, a member of the Asian Volleyball Federation (AVF) in 1976, and a member of the Arab Volleyball Association (AVA) in 1976. SAVF is the governing body overseeing all Saudi volleyball-related including the

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72 Saudi football teams won the Gulf Cup three times and qualified for the final of the Asian Cup five times, winning it on three occasions, in 1984, 1988 and 1996. At the international level, Saudi teams qualified for the FIFA World Cup four times, in 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006. Also, the Saudi junior football team won the World Cup for juniors held in Scotland in 1989.

[73]The formation of this body was one of the requirements of Asian football to participate in the AFC Champions League.

[74]Schools and communities volleyball activities, for instance, saw a significant growth in the last 20 years after becoming a nation's 'favourite' and most popular seasonal recreational sport during the holy month of Ramadan.

organisation of various tournaments and competitions. Beach volleyball competitions have also recently become part of the SAVF's responsibilities.

The SAVF is headquartered within the Saudi Olympic Committee (SAOC) complex. As usually is the case in Saudi sports federations and clubs, most of the SAVF employees only work part-time in the evenings. The total number of sports clubs officially taking part in SAVF competitions was 126 in 2013) (SAVF, 2013) and the total number of players participating in SAVF activities was 9,900 in the same year (SAVF, 2013). It is worth mentioning that admissions to watch volleyball events and competitions are free of charge to the general public. Hence, the SAVF does not have many other sources of regular income besides what it receives in annual direct government support, perhaps with the exception of some income from a commercial deal between the Saudi telecom company Mobily which was agreed back in 2006 with the GPYW on behalf of 13 sports federations.[75]

Despite the relative popularity of the volleyball among Saudi sport fans, with attendances averaging 5,000-10,000 spectators per match, the SAVF did not succeed in its attempts to convince and attract a commercial partner to sponsor the Saudi volleyball league or to host tournaments. Moreover, the Saudi national television channels and other sports channels subsequently stopped broadcasting volleyball matches, which further dissuaded companies and investors to enter into partnerships with the SAVF.

6.2.2.2 Individual sports

The beginnings of the spread of *karate* as a popular individual sport in Saudi Arabia can be traced to the late 1960s. Its introduction in Saudi Arabia was due to a combination of factors such as individual efforts, state support, as well as the social acceptance of karate as a combat and self-defence type of sport, hence hardly conflicting with any social or religious customs or norms. Recognition of karate as an official sport in Saudi Arabia came in1969 after a decision from the GPYW following a Saudi karate team's participation at a tournament in the United States. This decision to officially recognise karate as sport discipline came in the wake of wider efforts by the GPYW to organise other related self-defence sport disciplines such as the establishment of the Saudi Taekwondo Federation in 1975. The Saudi Karate Federation was also established in 1975 (see Appendix 17).

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[75]It is also worth adding that in 2010, the SAVF also signed an agreement for the 'potential' value of SAR 6 million (USD 1.6 million equivalent) with Guinh company in order to find a commercial partner or sponsor, but this agreement did not last long and was subsequently annulled after more than ten months of unsuccessful search.

After the restructuring of the of 24 Saudi sports federations in 2001, the Saudi Arabian Karate Federation (SAKF) was separated from other self-defence sports under this new name (see Appendix 17). In 2013, excluding the state-owned clubs, there are more than 4,000 private[76] self-defence clubs operating in Saudi Arabia (SAKF, 2013). The SAKF's activities centred around hosting and organising competitions tournaments as well as the training of national teams and registered karate clubs. Other objectives of the SAKF include preserving as well as promoting the rules and regulations of the game, including value of fair play and respect, as set out by the World Karate Federations (WKF). Since its inception, the SAKF has succeeded in widening the Saudi public's participation in the sport particularly at local and regional levels and improving the available facilities in doing so. The SAKF, and like other Saudi sports federations, also benefited from direct government subsidies of one million SAR per year (around USD 230,000 equivalent). Additionally, the SAKF was among the 13 sports federations that signed a sponsorship deal in 2006, for the value of one million SAR through the sponsorship contract involving the GPYW with a major Saudi telecommunications company (Mobily). Private clubs had other sources of income themselves, mainly through membership schemes and advertising.

Tennis had been long known in Saudi Arabia as a recreational sport mainly played by migrant workforce who worked in the oil exploration industry. The sport subsequently enjoyed a comparatively significant social base in Saudi Arabia. "When tennis began in Saudi Arabia it was far from the eyes of the citizens because it was practiced by a specific group, but the community was subsequently positively receptive to this sporting practice in general…"(TFofficial2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013).

Additionally, the relative availability of tennis sporting facilities such as tennis courts found in hotels, colleges, universities and sport clubs throughout the Kingdom further helped facilitate the rapid spread of tennis among the Saudi's population. Moreover, the first GCC Tennis Championships, won by Saudi Arabia in 1986, increased the official status and social base of tennis.

The game continued its rapid development in Saudi Arabia and subsequently had its own independent federation in 1993, under the name the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation (SATF). Nowadays, the SATF oversees the organisation of all tennis-related affairs in Saudi Arabia. Tennis is today practised in all of the Saudi regions, with over 4,000

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[76] These private clubs do not come under the oversight of the SAKF but member athletes participate in official SAKF tournaments.

registered players at 92 clubs in different age groups and levels (SATF, 2013).The SATF has 200 tennis referees and 150 qualified tennis coaches. The SATF employees work on a part-time basis except for the Secretary, who works full-time on an annual contract.

In terms of income, and similar to other Saudi sports federations, the SATF receives annual state subsidies of one million SAR (around USD 230,000 equivalent). The SATF's budget is used to finance all SATF activities, including employees' salaries, players' and referees' bonuses as well as organising local tournaments and national team expenses. It is also a usual practice that national teams qualifying for international, regional and continental tournaments receive additional financial support from the government through the GPYW. If hosting any international tournaments, the SATF is itself responsible for finding sponsors for such events.[77] With the exception of the notable period between 2006-2007, in which a major sponsorship deal was signed between 13 sports federations and a major Saudi telecommunication company, the SATF along with many other federations faced severe financial pressures and found major difficulties in generating revenues through commercial business partnerships or sponsorship deals.

Another subsequent development in Saudi tennis was the increased strong regional competition resulting from the rapid progress made in neighbouring Gulf countries, particularly in Qatar (e.g. the Qatar Open) and the UAE (e.g. the Dubai Open). This reduced the SATF's capabilities to host any major international tournaments, in addition to being 'unfavourably' compared to these rather impressive developments made in neighbouring countries.

6.3 Strategising at meso level

The primary aim of the following subsection is to discuss key findings at the meso level of study based on the analysis of collected primary and secondary data.

Data relating to each sample case is systematically analysed following the adopted theoretical framework and methodical choices laid out in previous chapters. The combination of the two main chosen complementary techniques for data analysis at this level, i.e. content and thematic analyses, allowed the researcher to identify and dissect the major themes emanating from this level of analysis. Thus, table 6.1 below presents the combined set of major themes pertinent at the meso level of investigation, which subsequently have served as a guide to analysis.

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[77] The biggest income from international tournament sponsorship was SAR 200,000 (around USD 50,000 equivalent) received by the STF in 2003.

Table 6-1 Thematic analysis: identified major themes at the meso level

Strategising domains			Key strategising themes
Practitioners	*Background*	1.	Variations in the practitioners' personal, education and social backgrounds influence practitioners working relationships and may be a source of conflict of interests
		2.	Formal qualifications and education backgrounds of practitioners are similar and most hold postgraduate university qualifications but with no or little specialisation in sports management
		3.	Most practitioners are employed on a 'voluntary' basis and those affiliated to the GPYW exert undue power and dominance in formal strategising and decision-making
	Interactions	4.	Observed occasional lack of professionalism in performing tasks due to irregular patterns of working hours
		5.	Dominance of communication and strategic discourse through rigid conventional written forms of communication with strategising actors at higher levels of praxis, but more flexibility and use of modern communication means with actors at lower praxis levels
		6.	Very limited active participation and involvement of meso-level practitioners in formulating plans and strategies including the sport club privatisation strategy
Praxis	*Context*	7.	Sport club privatisation policy objectives are unclear and ambiguous at the meso level leading to wrong interpretation of key policy aims and major implementation shortcomings, as well as incoherence between economic and social objectives
		8.	High degree of 'uniformity' and 'standardisation' in strategising work, accompanied by very high levels of 'centralisation' in policy and decision-making
		9.	Meso-level actors historically worked in 'silos' but some noticeable improvements have been made recently
	Interactions	10.	Reservations about the absence of a detailed official written 'strategy document' of the sport club privatisation, causing additional obstacles in attracting commercial partnerships and private investment
		11.	Dominance and high levels of control exerted by the GPYW over strategising practices and activities of the meso-level actors and their continued 'marginalisation' in the strategy formulation process
		12.	Lack of stability and continuity in the strategising activities and practices at the meso level, combined with fragmentation in strategising work at the higher levels
Practices	*Context*	13.	A sense of ambiguity and confusion about privatisation policy objectives led to inadequate interpretation and implementation by meso-level strategising actors
		14.	Inadequacy of the current provisions surrounding strategy work including narrowness of vision and lack of involvement of all relevant stakeholders including key meso-level actors
		15.	High levels of control and dominance exerted by the GPYW in shaping the practices and patterns of strategising with some limited autonomy by the sport federations in generating proposals but still ultimately requiring approval by the GPYW
		16.	Relatively less bureaucratic and more horizontal approach in communication and daily strategy work among organisations at the meso level, but *counteracted* by top-down and highly bureaucratic strategic discourse and practices at the higher levels of hierarchy, particularly the GPYW
	Interactions	17.	Some notable variations in the strategising practices of the Olympic Committee versus those of the sports federations
		18.	Instability or fragmentation in the SAOC and GPYW practices often have direct implications for the federations who regularly have to adjust by adapting their own practices
		19.	Some mild and tacit resistance practices expressed by some meso-level practitioners at the sports federations, particularly the individual sports disciplines, but SAOC practitioners attempted to circumvent the issue

6.3.1 **Practitioners**

Strategy practitioners is one the three key domains of the strategising research agenda. Practitioners are involved at every stage of strategising, both at the intra- and inter-organisational levels. They thereby act as the enablers of strategy formulation and implementation in order to achieve strategic outcomes and objectives (see also Chapter 3).

6.3.1.1 Practitioners' background

Collected primary and secondary data at the meso level organisations regarding strategising practitioners (senior officials within the SAOC and the sample sports federations) revealed that these organisational actors had varying socio-cultural backgrounds. Similar to macro-level findings previously discussed in Chapter 5, the social background and status of strategising practitioners are also found to be equally significant as an factor in shaping strategy work and strategising patterns and activities at the meso level. Secondary data revealed that out of a total of 24 sport federations in Saudi Arabia, 6 federations have royal princes as the federation president. Based on the SAOC's regulations (published in 2009), this implies that members of the Saudi royal family involved in sport federations have had control of a minimum of a fourth (25%) of the SAOC's votes.[78] It is also worth highlighting that recent changes in the existing rules and regulations, such as the introduction of quota memberships whereby half of the members are elected and the other half appointed by the GPYW, have resulted in reducing the proportion of federation presidents who are royal princes by nearly half. It is important to note also that the GPYW still reserves the right to appoint the president or/and his deputy in all of the sports federations. The deep impact of these changes is reflected in one of the Olympic Committee official's statements that: "...the relative proportional change in the sports federations' new boards of directors reached 100% in the case of the federation presidents of team sports,73% for the presidents of individual sports, and 85% in other members" (OCofficial1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012).

Additionally, analysis of collected data reveals that the management, operations as well as the financing of these sports federations are largely based on and closely follow the directives, rules and regulations set by the government, predominantly through the work of the GPYW. Related to this, the researcher observed that that most finance directors and

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[78]Historically, and according to Article 16 of the SAOC's regulations, the Committee's board of directors is composed of 11-15 members, with a minimum 4 members being princes from the royal family (The Saudi Olympic Committee Rules and Regulations, 2009). (SAOC, 2009). Also, The Secretary-General of the SAOC is appointed by the Committee's president who at the same time is the General President of the GPYW.

accountants working at the Olympic committees and sports federations are predominantly volunteers from the GPYW. A senior sports federation official said the following about his role:

> *"Our role as volunteers is to ensure that the work carried out by the sports federations is consistent and in line with the work at the GPYW. This is in order to ensure consistency and smoothness in the work we do and that decisions taken at the federation level do not conflict with those at the GPYW and also so that there are no delays in allocating funds to the various federations"*

(KFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

On the other hand, data analysis also reveals that other volunteers working at the SAOC and sports federations, such as former sports people, some business leaders, and academics, have the objective of contributing in the overall development of the Saudi sport sector through the use of their professional careers and experience, whether in sport, business or academia. Hence, most participants revealed that their role and major contribution is in collaborating with the people involved in the wider sport sector by offering their services and expertise in order to develop all aspects of Saudi sport including achieving performance improvements in national sport teams and enhancing the revenue streams of sports federations.

> *"We work based on personal convictions to serve the country and the Saudi people in order to adequately represent our country in major international events. The work we do stems from professional and scientific ideas acquired through [years of] practical field experience so that the sport sector benefits more widely in the future. We all must share in performing this duty"*

(TFofficial1, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

These viewpoints expressed by volunteer workers outside of those of the GPYW reveal not only significant variations in the personal, educational and social backgrounds of the various practitioners at these meso-level organisations, but also some notable differences and some divergences in relation to the way in which sport development and strategic planning in the sector is viewed by these participants. This was to be expected as the above discussion revealed that contextual factors including strategising practitioners' variations in terms of their education, social and personal backgrounds often had important influence over the observed relationships between different practitioners whether at the level of the organisation, the strategising praxis, or in terms of relationship dynamics with actors at other levels. Common interests – as well as conflicts of interests – some of which are elaborated further in subsequent parts of this chapter, are constantly

manifested through these working relationships of the meso-level practitioners. In one sense, study participants' views all agreed that recent changes in laws and regulations at the GPYW, sports federations and the Olympic Committee (such as introducing elections and voting of board members) all helped achieve greater diversity in competencies, ideas and expertise, in itself a welcome result and a declared goal by the policymakers within the sport sector. This was also consistent with the overall desire by some senior policymakers to allow more autonomy and flexibility in the work of the sports federations. At the same time, however, the researcher observed that differences in the education, experience as well as the social and personal backgrounds of these practitioners, at times, leads to differences in motives, conflicts of interest and divergences in vision, all of which could be at the detriment of working towards achieving the same goal-directed activity. For instance, some practitioners focused on the fact that they work in a volunteering capacity and are mainly motivated by personal convictions, whereas others said that they felt duty towards the government agencies that they worked for and hence worked to achieve their official goals and extend their interests.

Participants' education and experience

Firstly, some general observations highlighted in Chapter 5 regarding the overall development and current state of the Saudi education sector, and how this had influence over the interactions of key strategising practitioners at the macro level, also equally applies to the meso level of study.

Most (7 out of 10) of the practitioners who were study participants at the meso-level organisations work on a voluntary and part-time basis. In addition to being tasked with oversight over the financial aspects of the sports federations and Olympic committees, these employees – particularly those who are affiliated to the GPYW – also ensure the continuity and stability of various strategising practices. In the case of GPYW volunteers, they are appointed in this capacity due to their long years of valuable on-the-job experience in related fields of work at the GPYW. Additionally, the researcher made the observation that during the past five years, candidacy for the presidency and/ or membership of sports federations were widened to include some other professionals from the wider Saudi society, such as academics (out of 10 participants, 2 were doctorate holders and 3 had other postgraduate qualifications), as well as candidates from the business community (1 of the sample participant was as a business person). Prior to this change, candidacy was limited to GPYW employees in the main, in addition to some other employees from the public sector such as education and the army. The motive behind this relaxation and widening of the candidacy criteria was, according to one

participant's view: "...the government's desire to improve the dynamics of decision-making at these sports bodies by benefiting from the inclusion of academics and businesspersons [their experience and expertise] in planning activities" (FFofficial1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013).

Further fieldwork revealed that some practitioners at the meso level believed that this 'positive' change in the candidacy criteria can be traced back to the very first elections in the history of Saudi sport that took place in 2008 to elect members of various sport federations. Hence, this first step led to significant changes in the makeup of the boards of these sports federations. This observation was revealed to the researcher despite some negative connotations that came with these participants' views when discussing the results from these elections:

> *"Despite the fact that the first sport federations elections brought about persons with little understanding of the sport sector, they nevertheless triggered a* [positive] *change in terms of the monopoly and excessive control that characterised the behaviours of many high-level GPYW and Olympic Committee officials in running the Saudi Olympic movement over the years. This, therefore, obliged them to consult with the individual sport federations regarding the future direction of these federations"*

<div align="right">(TFofficial2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)</div>

Overall, in terms of practitioners' educational background, experience and skills at the meso level, despite some positive changes taking place recently such as the widening of the pool of talent and expertise that work within these organisations, it was a common finding throughout all the meso-level sample organisations that voluntary work still dominated the patterns of work at this level. Thus, the overriding finding is that the strategising work conducted at the level of the Olympic Committee and the various sports federations, since their inception, was and still is characterised by practices and activities typical of the non-profit sector, hence manifestly and severely lacking in the professional standards of practice required at this level.

As recently as 2012 there was very little use of modern means of communication or electronic websites in the official daily work of the SAOC and most of the individual sports federations. Repeated field visits revealed the extent of the difficulty and rigidity in the official communication processes at the meso-level organisations. Traditional means of communications substituted modern ones such as the regular use of face-to-face meetings, official correspondence, or telephone conversations. Although these traditional methods of communication were time consuming, slow and largely inefficient,

nevertheless a number of study participants at the meso level expressed their relative satisfaction with the use of these traditional means of communication in their daily activities. The majority of participants attributed the lack of the use of modern communication means, such as electronic mail, to the fact that they are not yet recognised as 'official' means of correspondence between major government agencies in Saudi Arabia, as one official pondered: "What is the benefit of using electronic mail in correspondence when senior officials at most government agencies only acknowledge and reply to written forms of correspondence and they continuously reject dealing with electronic communications?" (KFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012).

Some other study participants added that all official communications specifically relating to the sport club privatisation policy go through the GPYW, which does not recognise the use of electronic communications in its official correspondence. One participant also pointed out the additional bureaucratic barriers and administrative rigidity found at the GPYW, which in his opinion does not encourage GYPW employees to adopt modern means of communication:

> *"The GPYW employees will not be motivated to adopt electronic communications as long as most government agencies still follow the same* [old] *practices. This obliges us to continue using* [old means, such as] *fax as it is more effective in reaching them"*

(TF.official1, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013).

Fieldwork observations made by the researcher at the meso-level organisations also revealed that since 2012, there has been a notable increase in the use of websites by many sports federations and various committees of the SAOC. Additionally, 7 out of ten of the study participants at the meso level revealed that they regularly use electronic mail in administrative and organising daily tasks. Hence, as pointed out before, whereas the use of modern means of communication is still very limited when it comes to dealing with government agencies in an official capacity, communication with other less official parties and entities has seen a significant increase in the use of these modern means. Examples of this include internal communications between federation members through email and the use of social media channels to communicate useful information to interested stakeholders as well as the general public. Additionally, communications with international sport bodies such as the IOC or international sport federations were regularly conducted through electronic means particularly in urgent situations, but with the prior full knowledge of the GPYW and/ or the SAOC of the contents of these communications.

A final overall observation made at the meso level was that communication between the SAOC and the sports federations, regarding the sport club privatisation policy in particular, were in any case quite limited overall.

In brief summary to the communication issue at the meso level, it can be said that the SAOC and the sports federations have seen some improvements towards more effective communication and the adoption of more modern means. This has been influenced by the socio-cultural backgrounds of the employees in combination with the external socio-cultural trends affecting the Saudi society at large. It is envisaged that these 'positive' trends could eventually lead to improvements in the overall strategising practices at this praxis level in the near future.

6.3.1.2 Practitioners' interactions

Part of the researcher's task during fieldwork and data collection phases was to closely observe the 'background' interactions and phenomena influencing the meso-level practitioners' daily strategising work, and how contextual factors play a role in shaping strategising activities and behaviours. Hence, the following subsection discusses the most important findings at the meso level in this regard.

At the meso level of strategising praxis, the practitioners' strategic work and daily routines and behaviours, whether at the SAOC or at the sports federations, exhibited adequate levels of professionalism be it in the practice of work tasks or in the professional conduct of organisational actors. This is despite the fact that most employees worked late hours and only on a voluntary capacity. This is in slight contrast to the findings at the macro-level organisations, where a noticeable lack of professionalism was observed (see Chapter 5). A senior federation official argued that the required levels of professionalism in daily strategy work are difficult to fully achieve, but with extra personal efforts from practitioners, high levels of professionalism can be reached nevertheless, especially in relation to strategic planning:

> *"Strategic planning and daily strategising, that you mention, require high professional standards of work through complete dedication to the work of the* [sport] *federation, in addition to possessing the necessary powers* [of decision-making] *by the federation's president and its members. All these factors and others, such as the availability of qualified administrative and financial competencies, will help improve the work of the federation and strategic planning for future activities."*

> (KFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

Collected data also reveal that observed differences in the level of professionalism in the strategising work performed at the sports federations may be partly due to the variations in the patterns and hours of work of different federation's employees. At the federations' level, two main daily periods of work are in operation, the morning (9am-12noon) and the evening (5pm-9pm), even though employees did not always strictly adhere to them. During the morning period, levels of supervision and control were low compared to the evening period due to the fact that most federation's members were more likely to observe the evening work period. An additional factor is the lack of clear and mandatory rules that may oblige the federation's president or the members of its board to observe specific patterns of work on a daily basis, as one study participant pointed out:

> *"There is no specific rule but only some general guidelines from the GPYW stipulating that volunteers observe the evening work period, or indicative hours within both periods in the case of those employees who are contracted to work all day. Moreover, these guidelines do not explicitly obligate the federation president to attend work on a daily basis due to the fact that his work is voluntary and mostly honourary in nature."*

(VFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

An additional observation was the variations in the expertise and competencies of employees within 'individual sports' federations when compared to those working at the 'team sports' federations. The latter tend to usually have more demanding work, which in turn results in more exposure and interest from external parties such as sponsors. Hence, collected data reveal that team sports federations, such as football or volleyball had employees with much longer work experience and better expertise in sport matters, most of whom came from the GPYW's workforce. These federations also had entrenched interests in raising their external profile due to the high level of interest shown in them by external stakeholders such as the sponsoring companies. In contrast, employees of the individual sports federations had relatively less experience, such as academic volunteers, and they usually preferred to do professional work and not necessarily interested in external exposure or generating outside interest. This is backed up by the following statement from one of the interview participants:

> *"The GPYW officials and employees are* [more] *interested in working at the team sports federations because their activities enjoy more external exposure, publicity as well as popularity among the general public locally and internationally. Moreover, sponsoring companies are more interested in backing up federations of team sports more than those of individual sports due to the lack of fan base and lower interest generated in the Saudi media by these individual sport disciplines."*

(TF official1, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

Closely linked to the issue of professionalism discussed above, issues related to trust and conflicts of interest were also deduced from further data analysis of practitioners' interactions at the meso-level sample organisations. On the surface, the existing laws and regulations of all the Saudi sports federations, and through their Boards of Directors, give these federations the powers and authority to take or approve decisions. However, evidence gathered through data collection (such as interviews and detailed meeting agendas and minutes), show frequent long delays in approving strategic decisions taken by the federations' boards. This was because these decisions required additional approval by the GPYW in any case. The researcher, and through analysis of collected data, observed that virtually all decisions taken at the federations' level are augmented to the GPYW, whether for final approval, for amendments and observations, or in order for funds and budgets to be allocated to support the implementation of these decisions. Such decisions include, among others, those related to the participation of Saudi clubs and national teams in events and tournaments outside of the Kingdom in various sport disciplines. One study participant commented:

> *"As members of the federation's Board of Directors, we have the powers to make decisions based on the working laws and regulations of the sport federations and the unified Olympic committees. But* [the reality is that] *most decisions related to the future plans or new proposals have to be ratified and approved by the GPYW, in order for funds to be allocated accordingly."*

(VF.official1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

This established method of making decisions that typifies the working relationship between the sports federations and the GPYW has, perhaps inadvertently, created some sort of mild resistance at the federations level – and also an atmosphere characterised by an overall lack of mutual trust – particularly within the 'individual sports' federations. This was evident in participant statements, such as the following:

> *"[In the past]* we came forward with several plans and proposals to build new stadia and organise international tournaments, similar to the developments taking place in neighbouring countries such as Qatar and the UAE, but we are still waiting for the GPYW's reply! Privatisation will reduce government financial subventions to the sport sector, hence all *[existing and new]* revenues and income will be allocated to the football clubs, being the most profitable in the eyes of the private investors, and other disciplines will therefore be completely neglected..."*

(TF.official.2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

Hence, strategising practitioners particularly at the individual sports federations, talked about elements of lack of trust in true intentions as well as the decisions and plans made at the higher levels that are going to affect the present and future of the Saudi sport sector. This state of affairs also extended to the views expressed regarding privatisation policy of sport clubs, which many participants saw as a threat to the future of their sport. In the same vein, another study participant was left rather perplexed that the proposed privatisation policy had much to do with the sports federations or many other sport disciplines. In his view, the privatisation initiative is limited and only aimed at the most popular Saudi football clubs (i.e. those with large fan base). The study participant added that, on top of the current problems, the future continuity of many (fringe) sport disciplines could be put in serious jeopardy by these privatisation plans due to the lack of trust of private investors in making adequate financial returns on their investments.

> *"What I am aware of is that various committees and working groups have been formed to look into the privatisation of some football clubs within the Saudi Professional Football League, but other sports federations and clubs have no connection to this policy. And what should be our interest in the privatisation policy of football clubs?! Most sports federations are nowadays still indeed without anybody endorsing their activities..."*

(KF official1, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

At the meso level of strategising praxis, the degree of *participation* of organisations and practitioners in strategy formulation and decision-making is generally very limited at this level. All study participants at this level had the same view that neither them nor their organisations were not invited in any official capacity to participate in the formulation of the sport club privatisation policy, or in any other major development plans for the sector

for that matter.[79] Those meso-level practitioners who worked as volunteers reminded the researcher about the volunteering aspect of their role and hence they do not have the official capability to provide input regarding the privatisation policy. It was argued that the tasks of the federations' members are restricted to working towards developing sports and the Olympic movement in Saudi Arabia in general. These employees did not have the official capacity to enter into dialogue with policymakers at the macro level, such as the MEP or SEC, except indirectly through the GPYW, as one federation official noted:

> *"I do not possess the official capacity that can allow me to communicate with the official agencies in charge of the national development plans or the privatisation programme concerning the sport discipline for which I am responsible...except with* [exceptional] *delegation from the GPYW as the authorised party, along with other relevant government agencies, overseeing the planning aspects of the government's vision of the sport sector."*

> (FFofficial1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013)

Hence overall, analysis of collected data lends support to the fact that strategising practitioners at the meso level are not actively involved or adequately informed about the work being conducted regarding the sport club privatisation programme, which directly impacts the sport disciplines they are directly responsible for.

6.3.2 **Praxis**

To reiterate, strategising praxis is "the stream of activity in which strategy is accomplished over time" (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009, p.73). The empirical analysis of the meso level strategising praxis in this subsection explores the context and practicalities of daily strategy work at the meso-level organisations.

6.3.2.1 Praxis context

In terms of the overall policies and strategies for developing the wider Saudi sport sector and how this has been filtered down to the meso level, the 'stated' key aim of the policy vision is the widening of participation in the sport movement and increasing the popularity of all sport disciplines, both individual and team sports, among the Saudi population. This vision 'statement' was explicitly and repeatedly observed by the

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[79] The notable exception here is the football federation (SAFF) as was revealed to the researcher that some of the federation's members, such as the SAFF's vice-president (who was concurrently also the president of Saudi Professional Football League) did in fact take part in a 'consultation' capacity during some early stages of the formulation of the privatisation policy. It was also noted that the invite was extended in a personal capacity and not through nomination from the federation.

researcher when collecting and examining the official publications and press statements of the Olympic committees and the various sports federations. However, further probing with key officials at the meso-level organisations when asked about more specific strategies, such as investment and financing, or the privatisation programme, revealed obvious elements of ambiguity, confusion and at times even outright obliviousness in the participants' statements. An example of this is this statement by a senior sports federation official:

> *"We do hear about the ideas of privatisation* [of sport clubs] *from the newspapers and media, but up to now nothing official has reached us in this regard with the exception of permissions to invest in commercial advertising during sporting events and tournaments. But this was happening for many years anyways, it is just now that it has come to the forefront and this despite the fact that the aim of the federation is to widen participation and use these advertising revenues in strengthening youth participation in the sport movement."*
>
> *(*KFofficial1, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

Further data analysis corroborates the previous finding as the views of most study participants at the meso level concur about the absence of a clear vision for the future of the sport clubs and sport movement after the proposed privatisation. Moreover, the researcher noted the high levels of 'secrecy' surrounding various policies and strategies for the sport sector over the years, including the privatisation policy. This was quite evident from the lack of informed insight shown by the participants at the meso level whenever the researcher asked them about the sport club privatisation policy. Furthermore, participants regularly asked questions about the precise dynamics of the privatisation policy, such as whether sport federations and clubs would continue providing sport services as a social mission available to everyone to participate in and watch, or whether it will instead be commercialised and become purely for-profit. One such view was:

> *"We are left in limbo! On the one hand, we are expected by the GPYW and SAOC to widen sport participation among the Saudi youth by various means such as free attendance at events and matches in order to convince investors and advertisers to invest in these sports. But on the other hand, we are asked by the government and sport clubs to generate income from league matches and sporting events. Hence,* [as you can see] *even at the state level, there is no clear vision that can allow the formulation of a clear and feasible strategy for the federation either based on a social mission or on a purely commercial basis."*
>
> (TFofficial1, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

Further obstacles in the face of effective implementation of the privatisation policy at the meso level relate to the lack of adequate financing, or sustainable sources of income, and the lack of active interest of policymakers in strategically developing wider sport disciplines outside of the main popular game of football. Thus, with the notable exception of football, all other Saudi sport disciplines currently find themselves in a vicious circle; constantly suffering from a severe lack of adequate financing, exacerbated by a disconcerting lack of interest shown at the higher levels of Saudi sports policymaking. A number of senior officials at the sports federations recounted their previous attempts to attract partners and enter into commercial partnerships with the private sector only to end in failure. According the views expressed by these officials, this was due to the unbalanced attention – including financing, media coverage, and other form of blatant favouritism by higher echelons of government – that is received by football and its federation (the SAFF) at the expense of other 'fringe' sports.

> *"In light of the serious financial pressures faced by all the sports federations, the unwillingness of private investors to partner with us, and in addition to the lack of clarity in the future privatisation vision, I personally made a proposal years ago to the officials at the GPYW ... that all the sports federations – with the exception of the SAFF –, coordinate, unify and work collectively in order to attract a major lucrative sponsorship deal with the private sector; the proceeds of which would then be equally distributed to the member federations. But no one listened to me, all their* [the GPYW officials] *concerns were towards the football federation!"*

(VFofficial1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

The general patterns of daily strategising work at the meso-level organisations, observed through fieldwork as well collected primary and secondary data, reveal a certain degree of 'uniformity' and 'standardisation' across all the sports federations as well as the various Olympic committees and sub-committees. The morning working period is typically reserved for important communications between the General-Secretariat of these federations with the GPYW on one hand, and the SAOC on the other. This period sees patchy attendance by employees particularly those working on voluntary basis and the intensity of work is relatively less compared to the evening period. This latter is instead typically busy with steady employee attendance. As for daily strategising work, the typical flow of activity goes through regular meetings between senior management (directors) and other employees, followed by augmenting these decisions to the boards of directors for ratification, approval or otherwise. This pattern of work is dominant

throughout all the sports federations, perhaps with the exception of the football federation which has dedicated workforce working both morning and evening periods.[80]

Some study participants at the meso level considered this uniformity in strategy work as a reflection of the key role played by the GPYW in guiding the work of the sports federations and the Olympic committee through agreed unified working guidelines, which these organisations pledged to adhere to. In the words of a senior SAOC official: "The unified working guidelines of sports federations organises the Saudi Olympic movement and activities and causes all the federations to pursue the same blueprint in managing daily activities or making decisions." (OCofficial1, personal communication, December 29, 2012).

Alternatively, and equally interesting, some other study participants pointed to a wider issue by attributing this observed uniformity to high levels of centralisation that characterise policy and decision making, which according to them is a permanent feature of Saudi political and administrative practices.[81] Hence, these participants believed that the main government agencies persistently endeavour to preserve their power through 'dictating' specified and fixed patterns and rules of practice over all of the other entities that are affiliated to them. Thus, according to these views, the GPYW is no different and achieves this via a carefully designed and cascaded standard 'way of doing things' that allows it to ensure no, or very little, deviation from its overall general vision for the Saudi sport sector.

A further related finding relates to the level of coordination in planning and decision-making between the SAOC and the sports federations. The observed level of coordination between these organisations is generally very limited, even if it has lately seen some improvements after reforming the mode of membership in the Olympic Committee. This observation is partly attributed to the fact that the SAOC and sports federations have historically had the tendency to work in 'silos'. Moreover, Saudi sports federations are seen as directly affiliated and hence almost entirely dependent on the GPYW in all strategic activities, whereas the role of the Olympic Committee is mainly limited to dealing with external international and regional sports agencies, such as the international sports federations. Further responses from other study participants reiterated the point

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[80] This is just one example of several other ways in which the GPYW 'favoured' football and the SAFF over the other sports and federations. This issue comes out clearly in the study participants' expressed views as highlighted in other parts of the chapter.

[81] This particular finding and associated primary data in the form of interviewee response are strikingly consistent with another finding at the macro level (Chapter 5). The particular issue around 'centralisation' in decision-making is further explored in later parts of this section, see below.

that, on top of decision-making and official approval processes, all of the other necessary needs of Saudi sports federations (e.g. financing, budgets, rules and regulations, etc.) are still closely tied to the GPYW and not to the Olympic Committee. A meso-level practitioner said in this regard:

> *"Concerning our* [sport federation's] *needs in terms of financing, infrastructure and materials, we forward and request these directly from the GPYW, as for sport-related matters, such as technical issues or those relating to hosting and organising events, participating in tournaments, or communicating with the relevant international sport federations; in all of these we coordinate with the Olympic Committee."*

<div align="right">(KFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)</div>

Linked to the above issues, and as already alluded to above, data analysis revealed very high levels of centralisation in decision-making at the meso-level. In addition to the reliance of the sports federations on the GPYW in their sporting and administrative activities, there is also a number of operational factors that further exacerbate this dependence. As was mentioned previously, the vast majority of the work and activities undertaken by the various sports federations and other committees affiliated to the SAOC take place mainly in the Saudi capital Riyadh, where the premises of all the Saudi sports federations and the SAOC are located (also known as the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Olympic Complex). These premises and offices are legally owned by the GPYW, as an extension or proxy of the Saudi government as the ultimate legal owner.[82]

All of the above-mentioned factors further exacerbate the issue of centralisations of decision-making at the meso level. One direct implication of this is the resultant limited role of Olympic committees and sports federations within other regions of the Kingdom aside from Riyadh and the Central province. More crucially for the overall development of the Saudi sport sector is that these observed high levels of centralisation contributed in limiting the available opportunities for spotting and developing local sporting talent and promising sports disciplines whether individual or team based. Hence, any local development was largely entrusted to local agencies such as the sport clubs themselves, who naturally and in comparison to higher-level agencies, lack the resources and powers to adequately plan and strategise the development of local sport. On this important issue, one meso-level official said the following about his sport discipline:

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[82] It is also worth noting that the use of these premises is subject to strict conditions of use including for commercial use such as sponsorship or advertising.

> *"Volleyball teams* [for example] *regularly excel in the Northern region. The sport hall in the Jawf area, for instance, has regularly very good levels of spectator attendance and the hall often reaches full attendance in the league matches.* [Unfortunately] *however, the federation* [i.e. the volleyball federation] *has its 'hands tied' really and cannot build a larger sport arena, thereby foregoing the necessary follow-up development of this local sporting excellence in a sustainable manner...we do not have a local branch for the federation in the Jawf area and the GPYW office is neither well placed nor willing to dedicate all of its resources to just one sport discipline."*

<div align="center">(VF.official1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)</div>

The next subsection completes this discussion by exploring the specific phenomena and interactions found at the meso level of strategising praxis.

6.3.2.2 Praxis interaction

A key finding of the previous subsection was the observed lack of clarity in the Saudi sport club privatisation policy that filtered through to the meso level of strategising praxis. This overall ambiguity has led several strategising practitioners at the meso level to raise questions and doubts about whether an approved privatisation strategy *document* in a *written* format does actually exist. Strategising practitioners within the sports federations overseeing individual sports disciplines stressed the importance of having an approved written strategy document as a basis for formulating the sports federations' future plans, as one federation official highlighted:

> *"*[Policymaking] *officials have been talking about Saudi sport club privatisation policy for more than ten years now...but it is just talk. Is there anything written down and documented that we can refer to and use as the basis to formulate the future plans of the federation and for the future development of these sports?"*

<div align="center">(TFofficial2, personal communication, January 2, 2013)</div>

Alternatively, those meso-level practitioners at the sports federations overseeing team sports focused instead on the link between approved written strategy documents and the ability to attract private investment. In this regard, participant responses stressed the importance of having plans and strategies in official approved and written documents in order to provide 'safe guarantees' to the potential private investors. This would allow secure partnership to be agreed wherein the rights and obligations of each party are clearly determined, recorded and hence adequately protected. As one team sports federation official pointed out:

"Convincing commercial partners to work with the federations and sport clubs is a daunting task that requires the presence of clear strategies, plans and conditions to guarantee and safeguard these partners' rights and the future of their investments...but when you are unable to provide convincing answers to the commercial partner's questions and reservations, based on official written and approved documents, then you are in no position to work effectively on planning and securing the future of sport."

(FFofficial2, Personal Communication, January 19, 2013)

An additional related factor that came out of data analysis at the meso level was the frequent changes over the last few years in the composition and structures of the boards of directors of meso-level organisations. These frequent changes resulted in a lack of stability and continuity in the strategising activities and practices at the meso level, particularly in the period immediately following the change.

Consistent with the findings reported within the previous subsection is the consensus views expressed by all relevant study participants at the meso level that the GPYW has been exercising 'excessive' control and dominance over all strategising activities and practices of the Saudi Olympic Committee. In practice, this dominance is exercised mainly through the persons of the GPYW's General President and his deputy who, at the same time, were the respective president and deputy of the Olympic Committee. This is in addition to most other members of the Committee being concurrently senior officials of the GPYW as well as a number of other sports federations presidents and members of their boards who used to be appointed by the GPYW itself. On this issue, one federation official stated that: "In all honesty, the Olympic Committees is the GPYW! Most employees of the Olympic committee(s) are either also employed by the GPYW or volunteers but those who do the planning are the senior officials of the GPYW." (VF.official2, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013).

It is worth noting however, that despite most of the views expressed by practitioners at the meso level pointing to a continued overall dominance of the GPYW, some participants also highlighted the fact that recent changes being introduced since 2013, such as the recent elections held at the Olympic Committee and the sports federations, as well as the changes in the General Secretariat of the SAOC, all led to some loosening of the GPYW's previous excessive dominance and control. Additionally, other similar plans are currently underway to enhance the role of the sports federations in terms of participation in policy and decision-making. Still though, overall participation levels in strategy formulation are currently very limited including within the specific sport club privatisation strategy.

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> *"The privatisation programme within the sport sector is generally in danger. Companies and commercial sponsors started downsizing their endorsements and strategic partnerships with the sports federations and the clubs. In my opinion, the reason is the lack of organisation and the absence of a clear vision [in the sector]. It is not the sports federations or the Olympic Committee who run the show as we have not been consulted or invited to participate in formulating any of the investment or privatisation plans...besides, all efforts are directed towards the football game."*
>
> (KF.official1, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

Some study participants attributed the dominance of the GYPW and the relative marginalisation of the Olympic Committee and sports federations in major strategising activities within the sport sector to the fact that existing rules and regulatory frameworks are very old and perhaps outdated, as they have not been revised since 1992. Since 2012, consultations with the SAOC and sports federations have been initiated regarding proposed changes to address this specific issue, a development that has not happened in a long time. Other participants were of the view that the current situation has evolved from the high levels of caution and reservation exhibited by the Saudi authorities regarding the sensitive issue – in the Saudi context – of widening participation to include the general public, particularly through the use of elections (voting) to elect members, general assemblies, committees and boards of government agencies such as those of the sport sector.[83] Interestingly, this general topic of voting and elections (in a Western approach) is relevant to many areas of Saudi government and society, and today remains a matter of intense debate in many government circles and among the Saudi society at large. Alternatively, few other participants attributed the current situation and developments to the government's desire to see a 'gradual' shift, over many years, in these practices within the sport sector which would then allow it to observe the implications of these changes on the sport community, as part of the wider Saudi society. This view can be substantiated by various arguments, one of which is – as discussed in Chapter 2 – the Saudi government's preferred approach of observing, from distance, the results and implications (including social and political aspects) of privatisation policies currently being implemented in a number of neighbouring countries as well as internationally.

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[83] Traditionally in the Saudi governance system, it is no permitted for government decisions, decrees and regulations to be subjected to objection or contestation, except through the 'Shura Council' (see Chapter 3) is the only body permitted to question government's decisions, and the Council's decisions are not binding to the government.

In terms of the working relationships, including communication, between meso-level organisations and those of the other praxis levels, collected data shows the existence of two levels of working relationship. The first level takes place between the SAOC and sports federations, on the one hand, and the GPYW (macro level) on the other. This working relationship is characteristically bureaucratic in nature, manifested through official documented channels of communication and follows a rigid and predetermined pyramidal administrative hierarchy.

> *"Our working relationship with the GPYW is conducted in an official capacity and through official channels despite the presence of some GPYW staff as members of our board...but they prefer communications to remain official and documented according to the habitual chain of work that is customary among government agencies."*

(TF.official.2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

The second level of working relationships takes place between the SAOC and sports federations, on the one hand, and the GPYW regional offices (micro level) on the other. Despite this also being subject to the same hierarchical administrative flow of activity and distribution of powers, the researcher nevertheless noticed the presence of some level of flexibility in order to overcome various bureaucratic procedures. Unlike the previous level, many tasks and activities are conducted through direct personal or telephone contact between officials of the SAOC and sports federations with the managers of the regional offices. Many of the communications and discourse at this level contained passages such as "following on from the telephone conversation between the secretary-general and the office manager in the so and so region, ...". Additionally as well, most of the working relationships between sports federations and the sport clubs (micro level) mostly go through the regional GPYW offices as well including regular tasks such as player registrations, management of coaches and referees, and the setting the dates for various tournaments and championships.

6.3.3 **Practices**

To reiterate, strategising practices is the third of the three key domains of strategising and refers to routinized, embedded and institutionalised types of behaviour that serves as means for organising and doing within a given organisational context (see also Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This section extends and complements the previous sections by exploring and discussing further key findings regarding strategising practices observed at the meso level of strategising praxis as relevant to the

main unit of analysis in this study, which is the sport club privatisations policy in Saudi Arabia.

6.3.3.1 Practices context

Analyses of data at the meso level of strategising praxis yielded a number of important findings regarding the context and interactions associated with the domain of strategising practices as relevant to the sport club privatisation policy.

In the previous sections discussing practitioner and praxis domains of strategising, a key findings from data analyses at the meso level was the noticeable lack of clarity, combined with high levels of ambiguity and confusion surrounding the precise aims and objectives of the sport club privatisation policy at this level of strategising praxis. This sense of ambiguity and confusion inevitably led to inadequate interpretation and implementation of the policy by meso-level strategising actors. Many study participants attributed this situation to the organising practices and methods of planning that are prevalent in the strategising work conducted by key government policymaking and planning agencies. According to these views, these established 'ways of working' over the years have become the 'default mode' and the defining characteristic of state-led strategic planning practices in Saudi Arabia. Also consistent with the findings from the previous section, and not entirely surprising, the observed high levels of *centralisation* in strategising practices is another strongly related factor. It even often happens that key strategising work may be entirely based on the 'personal' convictions/ views of the policymaker:

> *"The appointment by the Director-General of a limited group of members to work on formulating an overall strategy for the privatisation of more than a hundred Saudi clubs, encompassing numerous sporting and social activities and games will surely fail to address all of the important issues. This is especially true as all of the committee* [or working group] *members are experienced in managing Riyadh-based clubs, which have become famous and excelled in football in particular. This makes the* [strategising] *work based on an individual's viewpoint about a privatisation strategy suitable for the big clubs."*

> (VFofficial2, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

Most study participants at the meso level felt quite strongly about the inadequacy of the current provisions surrounding strategy work at the highest levels of policymaking. Many of them voiced their concerns to the researcher regarding for instance the appointment of a working group, or specialist committee, where members are appointed through personal

relationships and chosen from a very limited circle of the policymaker's close 'entourage'. As one official considered:

> *"We proposed holding an enlarged national forum to discuss the privatisation of sport clubs, in which all relevant stakeholders of the sport sector would participate. I do not know why there is this persistence in continuously establishing small specialist committees and working groups whose work is lacking in clear direction. It happened that all of them have failed in securing the future of sport club privatisation."*

<div align="right">(TFofficial2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)</div>

Closely related to above, and as was already highlighted in the previous sections, another important finding at the meso level was the high levels of control and dominance excreted by the GPYW, as an influential macro-level strategising actor, in terms of shaping the practices and patterns of strategising activities found at the meso-level organisations, namely the SAOC and the sports federations. As already argued, this undue influence of the GPYW was partly due to the official role assigned to it in terms of overseeing the wider Saudi sport sector, but can also described as an extension of a long-established tradition 'way of doing things' observed in all macro-level organisations including the GPYW (see also Chapter 5). Hence, the observed hierarchical top-down approach characterising the strategy work of macro-level organisations strongly influenced the observed patterns of working relationship between the GPYW on the one hand, and the SAOC and sports federations on the other.

Moreover, some meso-level study participants believe that the 'structural legitimacy' associated with powerful officials at the GPYW gives them the 'personal' authority to control strategising practices and the patterns of strategising work at the lower levels of praxis within the overall hierarchy. This becomes particularly the case when considering that many of the practitioners found at the lower levels of strategising work on a voluntary capacity. As previously highlighted, many of the practices observed at the sports federations follow predetermined norms and criteria set out by the GPYW, as well as being continuously controlled by board members who are at the same time affiliated to the GPYW. This, as one study participant adds, despite such 'imposed' practices not being entirely compatible with the privatisation plans and objectives.

> *"We cannot force the officials of the GPYW to change any of their practices and ways of doing things, nor their complete control and dominance over the main activities in the sport sector. After all, they are official government employees whereas most of our employees in the sport sector and sports federations are* [just] *volunteers."*

(OC.official2, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

Some other participants expressed differing views to the above, by arguing that these practices are based and informed by previous experiences within the sport sector, and the aim is to streamline strategising practices so that they are uniform and goal-directed.

This alternative view can be further substantiated when closely examining the practices within all of the sports federations, which revealed strong uniformity and high degrees of consistency and standardisation. At the sports federations level, examining official (internal) documents and communications related various aspects of strategy work and cross comparing these with the collected primary data from the study participants, shows the precise flow of work at these organisations. A number of these practices are typically initiated at the level of sub-committees inside each sport federation through prearranged official meetings in which working agendas are determined and agreed, then voted on, and finally meeting minutes are augmented to the general-secretariat of the sport federation for final decision-making. Still at the sports federations' level, but specifically within their general-secretariats, strategising practices are often generated and performed in a uniform and standardised fashion, but may appear in different forms. Firstly, practices that are classified as urgent requiring the attention of the federation president are passed on to the him for swift decision and then augmented to either the Olympic Committee or the GPYW for necessary follow-up. Instances of such practices include proposed postponements of certain federation activities or certain events, and other technical decisions regarding official matches and referees for example. Secondly, practices that require a long chain of procedural steps before they can be passed on to the GPYW or similar government agencies. These are typically circulated to the federation's Board of Directors for further deliberation before being augmented to the relevant government agency such as the GPYW. Examples of this type of practices include plans, programmes and projects proposed and approved by the federation's board which require approval from the GPYW. The third type of practices concerns routine daily activities, such as sending out reminders to the GPYW's regional offices. These are typically delegated to federation's Secretary-General to deal with.

Hence, while there is at least the impression that sports federations has some degree of autonomy in 'generating' proposals and decisions, through sub-committees and the boards of directors, the overall picture is still characterised by a significant influence exercised by the GPYW as all of these proposals and decisions require ultimate approval by them. Thus, despite the presence of this bottom-up way of generating proposals and plans at the sports federations level,[84] these practices do not, on their own, ultimately lead to important strategic decisions being taken and implemented without the active involvement of higher agencies in the decision-making hierarchy such as the GPYW.

Further data analysis of the strategising working relationships between the meso-level organisations themselves reveals a somewhat different picture to what has been so far presented above. Research evidence shows less hierarchical modes of strategising work and the existence of more 'horizontal' strategising practices characterising strategising work involving the Olympic Committee and the sports federations. These working relationships allowed the frequent and regular exchange and sharing of ideas and strategy implementation practices between these organisations. At the SAOC, for instance, recently there has been a notable shift towards more dialogue and sharing of ideas when it comes to planning the future activities of the Olympic committees and sports federations. In this regard, participants' responses stated that this 'way of work' was not widespread previously and was only observed quite recently (referring to the previous three months as of the end of 2013), as a result of the changes introduced at the level of the Olympic committees[85]. On this, one federation official said:

> *"Previously, the role of the Olympic Committee was limited and the GPYW was the agency controlling and dominating the work of all the committees and sports federations...during the last few months, the Olympic Committee started showing interest in communicating with us and asking for the views and input of the federation regarding statutes of rules and regulations, employment issues, and planning new strategies...personally, I have recently prepared some notes and observations which I have now forwarded to the Olympic Committee...however, I am concerned that this may be short-lived only generated by the momentum brought by the newly-appointed Secretary-General of the SAOC..."*

(VF.official1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

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[84]In contrast, at the Olympic Committee level this bottom-up approach is not as prevalent. Based on the researcher's observation, practices instead flow in both directions depending on the nature of practice under consideration.

[85]General President of Youth Welfare restructures 11 administrative officials in GPYW and appointment a new secretary-general for the Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee.

These recent new dynamics in the working relationships and strategising practices between the SAOC and the other working committees and sports federations are however still very much counteracted by the bureaucratic dynamics of strategising work found at the higher levels of policymaking hierarchy within the Saudi sport sector. From the meso-level participants' views, it is evident that the rigid top-down strategy work and practices at the macro level, such as the case with the GPYW are extremely difficult to overcome or replace due to previously discussed issues of entrenchment, inertia and persistence (see also Chapter 5). This situation ultimately obliges macro-level strategising actors to resign themselves to 'accepting' these practices even if they may lead to sub-optimal performance, inefficiencies, or sometimes even outright failure. As one SAOC official admitted:

> *"We have been liaising with the various working committees and groups for a few months now in order to do serious work to enhance their role and level of participation in planning the future of sport and the future of games within their own federations, but unfortunately there is sluggishness and delays in taking decisions at the higher levels, which you just cannot change."*

> (OC.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

As for the sport club privatisation strategy more specifically, research evidence at the meso level revealed that the strategy has not yet filtered through to the meso-level strategising organisations and actors. Many of them stated that there have been no efforts to involve the Olympic Committee or the sports federations in the privatisation strategy yet. One federation official even went as far as arguing that the strategy behind the privatisation policy is mainly aimed at 'consumption' by the media, and that there are no serious intentions to see the successful implementation of the privatisation policy in any domain of the Saudi sport sector. In the federation official's own words:

> *"*[Saudi] *media, and over many years, present news and conduct interviews with senior officials who are in charge of the club privatisation project, but there is no serious project that is* [current] *being implemented. It is just a 'media revolution' which lasts for a period of time and then fades away. And the proof is that up until now, there is no direct communication with the sports federations* [about the privatisation policy]. *How is conceivable that there is a project to privatise sport club without the knowledge of the sports federations!"*

> (KF.official2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

6.3.3.2 Practices interaction

Building on from the previous analysis of strategising practices at the meso-level organisations, revealed are some additional related findings in terms of the phenomena and interactions observed at this level of strategising praxis.

Firstly, there are some notable variations in the strategising practices of the Olympic Committee versus those of the sports federations. The SAOC strives to achieve a certain balance between its duties towards the GPYW, as the government 'representative' closely involved in all aspects of the Saudi Olympic movement, and the needs and requirements of the Saudi sports federations as well as those of relevant international bodies.[86] As one Olympic Committee official stated:

> *"The Olympic Committee provides the link between the GPYW and the local and international federations. Our duty at the Committee is to establish working links among all the agencies within this network, and strive to fulfil all the requirements and demands according to the resources made available to us by the GPYW."*
>
> (OC.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

The practices adopted by the sports federations, on the other hand, seek to achieve at least some partial degree of autonomy from the control and dominance exercised upon it by the GPYW. At the same time, views expressed by some federation officials revealed some element of unhappiness and despondency about the practices of the Olympic Committee, arguing that the Committee is not performing its 'designated' role as should be and that there is some degree of 'fragmentation' and 'instability' in its practices.

> *"The Olympic Committee ought to perform its real role in terms of planning the Saudi Olympic movement and facilitating the work of the sports federations, and not interfere too much in the work of the GPYW and federations as this causes us to lose focus of the main objectives of creating the sports federations."*
>
> (VF.official2, Personal Communication, December 31, 2013)

Some other federation officials argued that any instability or fragmentation in the SAOC and GPYW practices often have direct implications for the federations who regularly have to adjust by adapting their own practices. This in turn creates instability and discontinuation in the practices of the sports federations, according to these views. In this regard, one study participant cited the example of the sport club privatisation strategy, whereby a few years ago the Olympic Committee gave freedom and powers to the

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[86] The latter, i.e. the SAOC's relationship practices with relevant international bodies can be described as being characterised by 'political courtesy and diplomacy'.

federations to move towards the adoption of commercial practices, such as attracting private investors or entering into commercial partnerships with the private sector. Hence, some federations acted accordingly and set up some commercial partnerships in various areas, such as the use of some facilities in training or hosting events as well some advertising and sponsorship deals with the private sector. According to this practitioner's view, problems arose when it was later discovered that existing commercial partnerships and deals at the GPYW did in fact conflict with those signed by the sports federations. This led the GPYW to request the Olympic Committee to rescind some of these partnerships. The study participant described such practices as being "anarchic and chaotic" and leading to instability in the Saudi sport sector privatisation efforts. Additionally, another study participant attributed the lack of stability in the practices of the sports federations to the constant changes in the composition and structure of the federations' boards of directors. These frequent changes, according to this view, lead to discontinuity in the strategising work carried out by the incumbent and previous board(s) following every new election of a new board.

> *"Every new board of directors wants to formulate a* [completely] *new strategy as soon as their term of office starts...how then do you expect to develop a unified and integrated strategy to be implemented by all the federations? This is impossible to implement in practice!"*

> (TF.official.2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

Alternatively, a number of study participants at the meso level were of the view that (external) socio-economic factors were the main cause behind the frequent changes and instability in meso-level organisations' practices. The summary of these views is that different periods have their specific circumstances that shape the practices and strategies taking place within the various sports federations. Therefore, practices in the early periods of government planning focused on formulating strategies with the main aim of widening social participation in sport, increasing the popularity and fan base, and familiarising the wider public with the various rules and regulations of the different sport disciplines. Recently however, the focus in policymaking and strategy formulation has shifted towards making sport clubs and federations self-sustainable through finding new sources of revenue, which can allow the federations to support themselves and increase their activities and the overall level of competition.

A second key finding that came out form the analysis of practices phenomena concerns the significant observed variations in the levels of 'organisational resistance' to the sport club privatisation policy within the organisations and actors at this level. Some argued

that the sports federations have no stake in the privatisation policy and their members, therefore, are not concerned by any talk of resistance to the proposed policy objectives or implementation. Other practitioners showed complete reservation and rejected the club privatisation 'idea' from the outset, as one participant argued:

> *"I am fundamentally against the idea of privatisation because the sport clubs are currently struggling with debts, including the football federations despite significant increases in its income in the last few years. Privatisation will destroy sports, and football players may be the only party to benefit; that this if it is correctly implemented."*

> (TF.official.2, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

An interesting observation was that the views expressed at the individual disciplines sport federations showed relatively more caution and reservation about the possibility of privatisation leading to the neglect of the activities of individual sport disciplines and even more focus on collective sports due to their popularity and large fan base, football in particular. Similar questions at the level of the Olympic Committee about such potential organisational resistance to the proposed privatisation policy were faced with hesitation by the SAOC's practitioners. Most of the view expressed here hesitated in predicting what might happen in the future but could not dismiss that such resistance practices may subsequently appear, despite at the same time alluding to the fact that such high-level policies tend to be carefully studied and also carry significant official power and (structural) legitimacy attached to them. Generally speaking, most study participants at the meso level expressed their discontent about their lack of involvement in formulating the privatisation strategy, but at the same time admitted that this kind of strategy, if successfully implemented, will represent a major 'turning point' the Saudi sport sector, whether positively or otherwise. Overall and based on the analysis of the collected research evidence, the researcher was not in strong position to pass judgement on resistance practices at this meso level because, as highlighted in previous parts of this chapter, the objectives, direction and implementation plans for the proposed privatisation strategy are still largely unclear and ambiguous for many of the meso-level practitioners.

6.4 Conclusions

At the meso level, the study sample consisted of five sample case organisations representing the 'middle' strategising praxis level through which key strategising activities pass through within the overall strategising journey. These meso-level organisations represent a key link between policymakers at the macro level and those organisations and practitioners directly overseeing the privatisation policy process and implementation.

In the case of the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee (SAOC), which represents a key organising body overseeing the overall sport movement in Saudi Arabia, the study findings highlighted some peculiarities in the strategising work of the Committee. On the one hand, he SAOC had adopted various practices consistent with the some of the key objectives of the privatisation policy, some even long before the policy came to existence, such as promoting private investment in the sports sector and adopting several commercial practices. Thus given this, one would anticipate that the SAOC would have been given a key role in the privatisation policy process. In contrast, the study findings revealed a lack of opportunity for the SAOC to actively participate in the formation and implementation of privatisation strategy. Hence, the SAOC adopted counter practices aimed at distancing its work form that of the GPYW and an attempt to limit the direct control of the GPYW over its activities by potentially using the privatisation strategy as a pretext. Hence, the SAOC did not fully immerse in the work around the privatisation policy even though it retained peripheral interest in the process, but mostly in a reactive and advisory capacity. This created a certain level of conflict and confusion among the employees of the SAOC due to the fact that its workforce was a mixture of its own employees, who were concerned with maximising their organisation's administrative and financial autonomy, but also some GPYW officials who worked there on a part-time capacity and who more concerned with exercising maximum levels of control over the strategising activities of the Committee in order to extend its subordination to the GPYW.

The other four sample case organisations at the meso level comprised selected individual and team sports federations, which were selected following a stratified sampling technique. These key sporting bodies have the responsibility of overseeing the overall sport sector in Saudi Arabia. The research findings that came out here were highly similar and consistent among three of the four case studies (i.e. volleyball, tennis, and karate), with the case of the football federation a notable exception. In the latter, there

was evidence of proactive strategising practices towards implementing parts of the sport club privatisation agenda. In the other three sports federations, in contrast, research findings revealed little active involvement of their respective practitioners in the strategising work around the privatisation policy despite these federations' continuous attempts to endorse and adopt new practices to promote investment and increase their autonomy.

Consistent with the proposed theoretical framework (Chapter 3) and corroborating the preliminary findings at the macro level (Chapter 5), data analysis also revealed that strategy practitioners, through their background and interactions, play a central role within the overall dynamics of the activity system in the context of the Saudi sport sector in general, and the sport club privatisation policy in particular. Moreover, meso-level findings provided further evidence of the importance of the socio-cultural contexts in which practitioners perform daily strategy work. Relevant issues included important contextual factors such as practitioners' social background and status, their education and experience, and issues of trust and conflicts of interest.

More specifically, the analysis showed that the GPYW, despite of it operating at the macro level of strategising praxis, has extended significant, at times undue, powers in directly appointing, or at least significantly influencing, the makeup of key organisational actors at the meso-level organisations. The GPYW's influence is even more pronounced in relation to all aspects of the strategising work performed at these organisations, including strategy planning, formulation and implementation. This was evident from the fact that most of the strategising practitioners at this level, particularly at sports federations, are still categorised as volunteers within legal entities that are directly under the government's control. In the same trajectory, data analysis showed that any strategic initiatives or official discourse with higher policymaking agencies needed to be approved by the GPYW.

At the meso-level domain of strategising praxis, research findings provided evidence that several factors worked together to create a striking lack of coherence and clarity in the implementation of the sport club privatisation policy at the meso level. These included high levels of secrecy that characterised the strategising work relationships of several important policymaking agencies and other strategy implementations actors, combined with a dominant air of confusion, uncertainty and ambiguity that filtered negatively through to the meso-level organisations and strategising actors over time. Other related factors, such as high levels of centralisation, dependence and uniformity, as well as the lack of adequate collaborative work and communication between meso-level

agencies, adversely affected not only the interpretation of strategising goal-directed activities by meso-level practitioners, but also the implementation of key policies and strategies in the Saudi sort sector, including the privatisation strategy.

Practices at the meso-level organisations were characterised by being highly controlled and dominated by those of the GPYW, as an influential macro-level strategising actor. Unsurprisingly, and consistent with similar findings from the macro-level analysis (previous Chapter 5) as well as theoretical predictions (Chapter 3), these practices exhibited the expected elements of inertia, persistence, and high levels of attached structural legitimacy. This meant that resistance practices were quite mild and tacit if they existed at all. At the same time however, organisational resistance of some meso-level practitioners was more evidently expressed specifically in relation to the lack of clarity and high levels of ambiguity surrounding the sport club privatisation policy. Common implications of this lack of clarity in vision were the inadequate interpretation of the policy aims by key meso-level practitioners, and hence the lack of direction in strategy implementation too. In some extreme cases, basic elements of the privatisation policy and strategy have not yet even filtered through to some meso-level strategising organisations and actors. Similar levels of discontent were also expressed in the study participants' views regarding their lack of direct involvement in strategy formulation. This observed lack of participation and involvement is not surprising due to the existing 'ways of doing things' that are firmly established and highly entrenched at the macro-level policymakers. Hence, high levels of centralisation in planning and decision-making, and a predominantly top-down approach in strategic discourse and communications were dominant and permanent features of the strategy work flow between the macro-level actors and those at the meso level. Contrastingly, and in terms of the observed working relationships and strategising work between the meso-level organisations, these were found to be comparatively less hierarchical and more horizontal, further strengthened by recent important changes taking place at these organisations such as the changes regarding the structure and membership of the Olympic Committees' and sports federations' boards of directors. Additionally, some important variations were observed in the practices of sports federations compared to those of the Olympic Committee owing to the different objectives they pursued. However, these variations only contributed towards worsening a situation that was already characterised by instability and fragmentation of strategising practices and the wider strategy work.

The overall picture that emerged from data analyses at the meso level, and resembling those already reported at the macro level (Chapter 5), revealed several areas of deficiency in the three domains of strategising, including the drafting, communication and implementation of the sport club privatisation policy by key actors and organisations at this level of strategising praxis. Data analyses at the meso level revealed aspects of ambiguity, lack of clarity and coordination in the strategising work around the sport club privatisation policy. These factors resulted to fragmentation, lack of continuity and some level of instability in planning and implementation activities that contributed to shaping the sport club privatisation policy over the years.

Chapter 7 Strategy and Strategising: Micro-Level Case Studies

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the third out of four analyses chapters, aiming to explore the empirical data within and across the different levels of the study. This chapter specifically aims to analyse the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising occurring at the micro level of strategising, in the context of the main unit of analysis in this study, i.e. the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs. This is achieved through the empirical analysis of the collected primary and secondary data within the micro level of study[87].

Just like the other two levels, this micro level is a key element of the strategising praxis domain, representing the innermost level at which key strategising activities take place. Hence, and due to factors related to historical developments in traditional strategy research (see also Chapter 3), the micro level has a particular significance within the strategy-as-practice research agenda. The strategising school of thought strongly advocates a special emphasis on micro-level organisational behaviour and interactions, including the day-to-day and mundane activities, thereby bringing these to the forefront of the overall strategy work (see, for example also, Jarzabkowski, 2004; Mayer et al., 2006; Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009).

In line with the analyses conducted in Chapters 5 and 6, key issues investigated in this chapter include, among others, key theoretical constructs of strategy and strategising, such as strategy formulation, strategic outcomes, goal-directed activity, types and patterns of strategising activities and practices, and forms of legitimacy (see also Chapter 3). Likewise also, it is envisaged that through the empirical analysis of the three key domains of strategising at this micro level, and in combination with parallel findings from the previous two chapters, key similarities and differences in strategising within each, as well as across the three levels of investigation can be further identified and explained.

This chapter mirrors the previous two chapters and consists of two main parts. Part one offers a brief, yet important, discussion of the background profiles of each of the case study organisations that constitute the study sample at this micro level of analysis. Part two then offers detailed discussion of the general themes that came out of the analysis of primary and secondary data at this level. The analysis in this chapter is also based on the chosen methods (see Chapter 4) including the results from thematic and content analyses techniques. Similarly, the discussion is also informed by theoretical constructs derived

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[87]A with Chapters 5 and 6, the focus of this particular chapter is on intra-level (i.e. within) analysis and discussion, whereas the focus in Chapter 9 is on inter-level analysis (i.e. across).

from the theoretical framework developed within Chapters 3. More specifically, the three key domains of strategising, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis, constitute the basic framework for analysis in this second part. The chapter concludes by recapitulating and highlighting all of the key findings from previous sections with a view to understanding the basic dynamics of strategy and strategising at the micro level of strategising praxis. Hence, it is envisaged that the findings from this chapter, in combination with those from the other two (Chapters 5 and 6), will then be used to inform the rest of cross-case synthesis to be subsequently developed in Chapter 8.

7.2 Case profiles

Reviewing the background profiles of these micro-level organisations will help towards better appreciation of the precise role of each organisation within the overall context of Saudi sport club privatisation, as well as the inter link ages between all of the organisations across all the levels of strategy praxis.

The ten sample organisations at this level represent a cross-section of organisations directly concerned with the implementation of the sport club privatisation strategy at this level of strategy praxis. The sample constitutes five regional and district offices, in addition to five different sport clubs. The district offices act as an intermediary communication body with the various sport clubs in the different geographical regions of Saudi Arabia. These offices, therefore, play an important role by acting as key intermediaries in the communication and translation of central government policy to the various sport clubs. The latter, with a total sample of five clubs at this level, represent the target entities of the privatisation policy and the lowest level within the overall chain of policy implementation.

In the Saudi administrative system, there are 13 administrative regions or Emirates which are divided into a further 104 provinces.88

Throughout the years, the GPYW made consistent efforts to extend its government services to all regions and localities within Saudi Arabia. For this purpose, the GPYW established regional offices as local representative sport authority in the region, in order to organise, supervise and develop the activities of sport clubs at a local level.

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[88]Regional System (1992), Article (3).

7.2.1 **Riyadh office and Al-Hilal Sport Club**

The Riyadh region is the capital of Saudi Arabia and its largest city, an urban centre with a population of more than 5 million (CDSI, 2013). It is also the capital of the Central Province (historically also known by as the Najd or Al-Yamama region). The province's economy is mainly based on agriculture, trade, industry, administration and financial services. The Riyadh region's geography is rich with desert plains and some medium highlands which constitute its valleys.

Al-Hilal sport club is one of four official sport clubs based in Riyadh. The club was founded in 1957 by an ordinary citizen (Alsaatey., 2010). Al-Hilal sport club is the most widely supported clubs in Saudi Arabia, with its football club one of Saudi Arabia's most successful football clubs in *Asian*. The Al-Hilal football club boats 55 official titles, including a record 37 national championships, a record 6 Asian championships, as well as 7 Arab and Arabian Gulf championships (AFC, AFC Club Ranking, 2013). The club won about1011championshipinvarioussports for example: Volleyball = 75 Championships, Handball = 3 Championships, Squash = 290 Championships, Taekwondo = 221 Championships, Tennis = 190, Athletics = 33 Championships (Alhilal, 2012)

Since founding the club two citizens have become as club president heads, while the most common one this club is headed by the princes member in the Saudi Royal Family (Alhilal, 2012). The sport club is located in a popular neighbourhood with relatively high population density and relative low-income residents. The club has a major football stadium with approximately 30,000 capacities, but most football matches are in fact played at the King Fahd stadium in Riyadh, with a much higher capacity of 75,000. Besides sports and football in particular, activities at the club also include regular cultural and social events.

7.2.2 **Dammam office and Al-Ettifaq Sport Club**

Dammam is the administrative city and economic hub of the largest province in Saudi Arabia, the Eastern Province, which is located on the Arabian Gulf coast and borders the nearby states of the GCC. It has a population of about 4 million, the majority of whom live in Dammam. It is Saudi Arabia's main oil production centre with its trading port extended becoming one of the biggest oil export terminals in the world. Dammam is also a global hub for chemical industries based at the Jubail Industrial City. Besides oil-production and related industries, the region is also known for agriculture, fishing and pearling. The region is a coastal desert area with sand dunes and the Hasa oasis in the

South. The dominant climate is very hot with high humidity in summers and cold in winters.

Al-Ettifaq sports club is the biggest sport club in the east of Saudi Arabia, based in the city of Dammam. Al-Ettifaq was founded in 1944 following the merger of three Dammam-based sport clubs. The club had an early history of achievements and overall it has a total of 13 championships in football and more than 45 local and Arab championships in various sports such as Volleyball, Squash, Taekwondo, Tennis, Athletics and Swim Championships (Alsaatey., 2010). Al-Ettifaq football team is the first Saudi club to win an international championship such as the Arab Club Champions Cup in 1984, as well as the Gulf Arab Champions Cup in 1984. This early history of achievements helped attract the government's attention towards developing sports and sport facilities in the wider Eastern region and nowadays the region had biggest number of the sport facilities within the Kingdom. This favourable position also contributed to making the Eastern region a major source of sporting talent in Saudi Arabia, in both individual and team sports.

Al Ettifaq sport club historically has strong links with the region's influential business community, hence all the club's presidents have been business people. The club has also a number of influential honourary members who provide the club with important financial and administrative support.

7.2.3 Jouf office and Al-Arouba Sport Club

Jouf Province is the Northern gate of the Arabian Peninsula for trade and pilgrimage, bordering Jordan and Iraq. It has the largest land port in the Middle East and a population of around 440,000 (CDSI, 2013). Sakakah is the main city in the province with four Governorates. Sakakah is an oasis located to the north of the An Nafud desert with its population working mainly in a thriving agriculture sector. The province's climate is characterised by dry and hot summers and very dry and cold winters. Average temperatures are lower than other regions of the Kingdom.

As with most Saudi clubs, Al-Arouba Sports Club was established with sport, social, and cultural objectives. The club was founded in Sakaka in 1975, first under the name Al-Najma club which was subsequently changed in 1995 to its current name.

The Al-Jouf province suffers from a sever lack of sporting infrastructure and facilities. Al-Arouba club facilities, opened in 1988, are still the only the government sport facilities within the province. Al-Jouf province sport clubs regally suffer from a lack of financial

support, despite the excellence of its individual and team sports team's performances. Media attention is also lacking. Although AL-Arouba club has succeeded in reaching the Premier League in 2013, it failed in finding a commercial sponsorship deal. In 2011, the government announced its plans to build a large sports city in the region which it said would cost SAR110 million (around $29 million equivalent). The sport city would include a football stadium with athletic running track, a hotel, swimming pool, gym and multiple sport halls. However, as of the date of this study fieldwork, which was two years from the scheduled start date of construction, the project had not began yet. Throughout history, presidents of AL-Arouba club came from within the local region with ken interest in sport and also held their positions on a voluntary basis in most cases.

7.2.4 Jazan and Al-Tohami Sport Club

Jazan is the smallest region in Saudi Arabia. It is located in the south and stretches along the northland and sea borders of Yemen and the southern Red Sea coast. It has a population of approximately 1.4 million. The local biggest city is Jazan and includes 14 governorates and over 100 islands in the Red Sea.

AL-Tohami Sport Club is considered to be the oldest in Jazan founded by a Saudi teacher in 1949. The club's name was derived from the Tihama plains, which Jazanis a part of, and was founded with sporting, educational, social and cultural objectives. The club is still relatively small and unknown in Saudi Arabia, as is the case with all Jazan-based clubs which lack the support and assistance of state and commercial sponsors despite it being a source for Saudi elite athletes. Jazan clubs regularly suffer from financial difficulties and severely lack in facilities and infrastructure. Club competitions are held at "King Faisal sport city". The Jazan clubs also see instability due to frequent resignations hence adversely affecting the performance of member sports teams.

In 1979, 1995 and 2006 the government made promises to build some club infrastructure for Jazan-based clubs but did not fulfil the promises because of the state deficit at the time, bureaucracy in taking decisions and the absence of some eligibility criteria. In 2005, newer plans were drawn to find an urgent solution to improve the infrastructure of Jazan-based sport clubs. In 2011, the government announced its intention to build 6 sports clubs facilities in Jazan at a cost of SAR 325 million ($86 million equivalent). The researcher went to AL-Tohami Club new headquarters which cost of SAR 85 million (around $22 million) but until the beginning of 2014, only 19 percent of the project was completed.

7.2.5 **Jeddah office and Al-Ittihad Sport Club**

Jeddah is considered to be an economic as well as commercial hub of the Hejaz region, on the coast of the Red Sea. Its importance is due to the fact that it is the largest Red Sea port and the second-largest city in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it is the major urban centre in the Makkah Province and a gateway to Islam's holiest city and all the holiest places in Saudi Arabia (Daghistani, 1991). Geographically Jeddah lies in the lower area of the Hijaz mountains between these mountains and the Red Sea coast. It is the coastal desert plain bordering the Red Sea.

For many years, Jeddah's residents have worked in the fishing trade, or in the port trade, including receiving Muslim pilgrims, as a trade point between West Asia and North Africa (Al-Ansary, 1982; Daghistani, 1991; Farsy, 1991; Al-Harbi, 2003). The multicultural nature of the pilgrims coming to the Holy Land impacted on Jeddah's residents and their cultural, social and economic life (Yosuf, 2006). Jeddah's population is diverse historically, with a population today of around 3.5 million (CDSI, 2013).

The Al-Ittihad Sport Club was founded in 1929 in Jeddah at a meeting of a number of local residents with the aim of founding a club after the split from the Al-Hijaz sports football team, which had happened as a result of tribal differences (Alsaatey, 1963; 2001). Al-Ittihad is the oldest Saudi sport club and enjoys a unique popularity and presence. Since the founding of the club, just one prince from the royal family has been the president, and the rest of the club's heads are citizens, businessmen and traders. Headquarters of AL-Ittihad club is located at Al-Sahafa Street in north Jeddah with easy access to the site. The club has a major football stadium that can accommodate around 30,000 spectators, but most club matches are played at Prince Abdullah Faisal stadium, with a capacity of 40,000 spectators.

7.3 Strategising at micro level

The aim of the following section is to present key findings at the micro level of study. The combination of the two main chosen complementary techniques for data analyses, i.e. content and thematic analyses, resulted in the identification and dissection of the major strategising themes, as shown in Table 7.1. Hence, the themes table presents the combined set of major themes pertinent at the micro level of investigation, which help in guiding further analysis and discussion within this chapter.

Table 7-1 Thematic analysis: identified major themes at the micro level

Strategising domains			Key strategising themes
Practitioners	*Background*	1.	Strong loyalties and allegiances to the region and local community. Regional allegiances sometimes surpass those to the organisation
		2.	Less variations in education background and levels of micro-level practitioners, hence creating more homogeneity among practitioners
		3.	Importance of contextual socio-cultural factors but with higher levels of homogeneity among practitioners, leading to relatively better communication
	Interactions	4.	Club practitioners are mostly volunteers with higher officials exercising major power and influence in decision-making. Those at the regional offices are completely subordinate to the orders ad instructions of the GPYW
		5.	Organising work and practices at the club level are not stable or continuous
		6.	Observed occasional lack of professionalism in performing tasks due to irregular patterns of working hours
		7.	Issues of lack of trust and conflicts of interest evident, further undermining trust in policy leadership
Praxis	*Context*	8.	Sport club privatisation policy objectives are unclear and ambiguous at the micro level leading to wrong interpretation of key policy aims and major implementation shortcomings, as well as incoherence between economic and social objectives
		9.	The ownership and precise organisational structures of sport clubs are not clear
		10.	Major discrepancies in the views about the true motives behind the privatisation policy and the precise interpretation of its objectives within the sport sector
	Interactions	11.	Decrease in direct government funding to clubs ahead of private sector involvement and privatisation. This was a form of concern for many club officials particularly small ones
		12.	The absence of a detailed official written 'strategy document' of the privatisation policy, resulting in lack of clear guidance for implementation
		13.	Lack of stability and continuity in the strategising activities and practices at the micro level
Practices	*Context*	14.	Some commercial practices and partnerships with the private sector, particularly within football, helped provide the catalyst for shaping the trend and privatisation vision
		15.	Top-down and highly bureaucratic strategic discourse and practices at the regional offices, but less formal and more horizontal communication among sport club actors
		16.	Presence of practices allowing practitioner's personal interpretation of procedures, rules and decrees to resolve lack of clarity and preserve organisational and wider interests
	Interactions	17.	A sense of ambiguity and lack of clarity about privatisation policy objectives, combined with ineffective communications and non-involvement, led to inadequate interpretation and implementation by micro-level strategising actors
		18.	Severe lack of constructive debate and critical strategic discourse between policymakers and strategy implementers due to serious lack of involvement and participation in strategy formulation
		19.	Relatively more instances of mild and tacit resistance practices compared to macro and meso levels, particularly among sport club officials, and especially among smaller clubs within border regions

7.3.1 **Practitioners**

Practitioners, as one the three key domains of the strategy-as-practice school of thought, play a key role at every stage of strategising, both at the intra- and inter-organisational levels. Their role is to enable strategy formulation, implementation and the overall strategy work flow in order to achieve strategic outcomes of goal-directed activity (see also Chapter 3).

7.3.1.1 Practitioners' background

Primary and secondary data analyses revealed that micro-level strategising practitioners, consisting of various GPYW regional office managers as well as officials from the sample sport clubs, had varying socio-cultural backgrounds, as well levels of education and experience. Other closely related factors include differences in opinion about issues such as the motives behind and interpretation of privatisation policy objectives at the local level and local organisations. These issues often masked problem related to trust relationships and conflicts of interest.

In the Saudi context, socio-cultural issues such as personal background, social status and personal allegiances are closely linked to practitioners' daily strategising work and their interpretations of their roles within the organisation. In this regard, data analyses at the micro level revealed strong practitioners' allegiances to the regions they come from and/ or are employed within (stronger allegiances were observed particularly within the border regions).[89]

At the level of the GPYW regional offices, the first observation in this regard is that many of the employees including office managers and other officials at regional offices, particularly in the Southern and Northern regions, come from that same region where they were usually born, grew up and studied. Further dissection of data revealed that practitioners within the regions of Jazan and Jouf had particularly strong views about this issue, revealing that their roles within the regional offices and sport clubs was primarily to serve the local population through developing sport and youth activities in their region and serving and defending its interests. One such view was:

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[89] Regional allegiances are similar and linked to other forms of allegiances discussed in other parts of this study, such as allegiances to family or tribe discussed in Chapter 5. These allegiances may nevertheless stem from quite different motives.

"I am not that interested in this talk about privatising sport clubs and it is going to be done because this [our] *region is still in need of important projects. My role here is to serve the local people and act as the link between local sport clubs and the relevant higher authorities such as the GPYW. The current situation of sport within this region is not encouraging and I am working for the interests of my region and not really interested in these wider goals that are currently being talked about"*

(NO, Official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)

In contrast, the participants' views expressed about their regional allegiances were relatively less pronounced in those case organisations based in regions with large urban hubs such as Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. The GPYW offices and sport clubs within such regions had more diversity in the backgrounds of their employees and hence relatively weaker regional and tribal allegiances.[90]

Related to the above, collected data also revealed that one important factor accentuating these regional allegiances among micro-level practitioners was the perceived inequality and sometimes 'favouritism' exercised by the government authorities at the macro level in distributing resources, services and sport infrastructure between different regions and provinces. Examining sport infrastructure and facilities across the different regions (see Appendix 28), shows the concentration of more and better facilities in the Central, Western, and Eastern regions. Some officials from the Northern and Southern regions saw this apparent 'preferential treatment' as damaging to the sport movement and sport sector within their regions. They argued that this situation does not allow their local sport clubs and athletes to excel in sporting competitions, despite the abundance of local sporting talent, due to these weaknesses in the required infrastructure and facilities. One regional officer stated that:

"Jazan is one of the most densely populated regions [of Saudi Arabia] *and is renowned for its sporting excellence, as many of the Saudi national teams' players and athletes are from this region. Up to very recently, we did not have any public sporting facilities in Jazan region. Nowadays, all Jazan region sport clubs sporting facilities"*

(SO Official1, Personal Communication, January 9, 2013)

Some study participants attributed this alleged favouritism to the prejudice and impartiality of higher-level actors (individuals and groups) whereby they favoured their

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[90] The increased levels of diversity observed at the GPYW regional offices in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam become apparent when examining the personal backgrounds, such as family and tribe backgrounds of employees at these offices.

own regions, whether inside the sport-related agencies or outside at the levels of policymaking and national planning. These views also pointed out that this situation did in fact affect most of the other service sectors and government agencies besides sport-related ones. One regional officer said:

> *"*[Government] *ministers and senior officials tend to come from specific regions and their role in 'directing' resources and projects to these regions is apparent for everyone to see...you cannot convince me that this has happened by coincidence! There is no one from our region who is in a position to relay our voices and concerns to the King* [and the government and policymaker]. *The* [resultant] *severe lack of sporting infrastructure and facilities in turn led to a lack of competitiveness of local clubs and athletes and consequently a lack of interest of investors in working with our clubs...privatisation is built on investment opportunities and the reality is that sport clubs only exist on paper!"*

> (NO.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)

In contrast, the views presented by GPYW regional officers in the bigger cities (Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam) showed satisfaction with their current situation whether in terms of sporting infrastructure or the level of attention their regions received from the authorities. They did not draw comparisons with the other regions in terms of available facilities and infrastructure either. At the same time, they highlighted the need for material assistance to the 'big' sport clubs due to the relatively higher expenses and costs incurred in running the bigger clubs in the bigger regions.

> *"The move towards privatisation demands that the authorities make it compulsory on the private sector to inject finance and capital into the sport clubs and not only take into consideration the financial aspects, especially in* [bigger] *regions such as Riyadh. The costs of* [running] *sports have nowadays become very high, and this requires the authorities to introduce laws to oblige the support of sport clubs..."*

> (CO.official1, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

At the level of Saudi sport clubs, the majority of club presidents tend to be locals from that region where the club is based (all the presidents of the five sample case clubs in this study come from within the local population). They usually have close and strong (historical) ties to their local clubs and are considered as 'honourary members' who come from the club's base of fans. They also hold the position in a voluntary capacity. Hence, clubs presidents share the same socio-cultural background of their local region and therefore exhibit high levels of loyalty to that region and its residents. The presidency of the Riyadh-based clubs has historically been dominated by princes from the siblings of

the ruling royal family, and occasionally alternating with few select members prominent from the local business community. In contrast, the presidency of the Jeddah-based clubs has historically been dominated by a group of influential members from the local community, and occasionally alternating with a few royal princes over the years. The presidency of sport clubs in the Eastern region is regularly contested between local business people (Sunni and Shia). As for the Jouf and Jazan regions, the situations there are similar, where club presidency is usually competed for between local business figures or civil servants and ex-members of the military. Hence, as mentioned above, while club presidents shared similar traits in terms of their strong loyalty and allegiance to club and region owing to them coming from the local community, at the same time however, their socio-cultural personal backgrounds tend to vary.[91]

When asked about the level of sporting infrastructure, facilities and investment of their respective clubs and regions, the participant club presidents were of the same view as the regional GPYW office managers. They agreed that there is an issue around the preferential treatment of some regions at the expense of others. One such view was:

> *"You have to understand that the society itself naturally pushes you to serve the people from your own region...there is no harm when an official serves his region, but not at the expense of other regions and their development! It is quite inconceivable that our region and clubs do not have adequate sporting infrastructure while clubs in much smaller provinces such as Najd have this infrastructure...this is not justice!"*

<div align="right">(TC Official2, Personal Communication, January 11, 2013)</div>

Specific interview questions about the proposed sport club privatisation policy had varied responses from the sport clubs' officials. Those within the bigger regions (Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam) focused on the financial benefits that privatisation could bring about, such as increased revenues from sponsorship deals, whereas the other club officials highlighted the need for the infrastructure of their respective clubs and regions to be improved so that it becomes viable for privatisation. As one club official said:

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[91]Out of the five sample clubs included in this study, one club president is a prince, two are businesspersons, and the other two are employees of the public and private sectors.

> *"We currently have old infrastructure and we need assistance from the GPYW to improve them in order to accommodate all the fans...also the strategic location* [the club's infrastructure] *on the road to Jordan and to Syria put it in a favourable position for attracting private investment such as building hotels...these and other similar ideas will help in future privatisation"*
>
> <div align="right">(AC.official2, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)</div>

Another interesting aspect of the views expressed by the regional GPYW officers was their similar (and candid) assessment of the backgrounds and motives behind the work of the club presidents, senior officials and honourary members. They argued that the real motive behind backing the clubs in the first place was to attain 'fame' and social status. According to these views, this was the case particularly for those clubs based in big cities which tended to rely considerably on the financial as well as personal backing of these honourary club members. One such view was:

> *"There is no* [logical] *explanation for the vast expenditure by these club presidents without a sufficient financial return except that they are seeking fame. Some presidents try to disguise this fact by arguing that what they do is part of wider 'patriotic' duties towards the King, the country and its people especially that there are no taxes to pay in Saudi Arabia. But the reality remains that the quickest route to fame in Saudi Arabia is through presiding over a sport club!"*
>
> <div align="right">(WO.official1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013).</div>

Collected data regarding the education background of practitioners at the regional GPYW offices (Appendix 29) reveal a steady improvement in the education levels of these employees particularly in the last ten years. During fieldwork at the GPYW regional offices, the researcher noticed that out of the five regional GPYW managers who were study participants, three attempted to divert away any questions about educational qualifications, two of whom preferred to talk about their long experience in the sports domain instead. This led the researcher to further probe the experience of these regional office managers (see appendix 30) and additional collected information showed that many employees had several years of on-the-job experience, which may in turn explain that job promotion to senior management levels within the GPYW offices is mainly based on job experience.

At the level of participant sport clubs, four out of the ten club officials showed reservation in providing information about their educational qualifications, whereas the rest of officials held university degrees albeit in non-sport specialism including engineering and social sciences. Only one of the study participants at the club level held a postgraduate

degree (masters) but did not reveal in what specialism even though he had a long experience working at the club.

As for the club presidents, some of them had been in service to their respective clubs for more than 25 years while a few others had only been appointed relatively recently. The study sample included both types of presidents. The case of club presidents is rather peculiar in comparison to other officials and practitioners in that financial power and to lesser extent practical experience – usually business and entrepreneurship – come out as the two most important criteria for appointment as club president. As one study participant argued:

> *"If you can find someone who is able and prepared to spend as much money as I do in backing the club then let them come forward! Unfortunately, people do not know or value what we offer in effort and money to the club and whenever we try to distance ourselves, they come back to us asking for help and financing. It does not really matter how I got to club presidency but what matters is that I am capable of managing the club and catering to its financial needs. Today, money is the nerve of sport management."*

<div align="right">(EC.official1 Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)</div>

One study participant in particular questioned training and professional development currently received by club presidents by asking:

> *"Who is the party responsible for the continuous training and developing club presidents? Is it the sport clubs from their average budgets, or the responsibility of the individuals themselves as volunteers to serve the local community, or the responsibility of the ministry of sport (i.e. GPYW)?"*

And after some more debate, the participant concluded:

> *"The Institute of Sport Leadership in Riyadh does not offer training courses and programmes during the summer periods and all of the courses are based in Riyadh. That's why it is difficult for club presidents to leave their club affairs in the middle of the sporting season to take part in these programmes...why can't they be based within the regions?"*

<div align="right">(AC.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)</div>

The statements made by this particular club official led the researcher to further examine the schedule of activities of the Sport Leadership Institute in Riyadh. This revealed some consistency with this participant's statements such as the fact that all of the Institute's training programmes and courses took place in the middle of the sporting season. This is in spite of the Institute being wholly financed by the government and overseen by the

GPYW, as well as its stated main objective being to work towards developing the skills of the sport sector personnel including those at the sports federations, sport clubs and the government sport agencies. At the same time, the researcher also noticed that some of the Institute's work did in fact extend to the regions mainly in offering training courses for sport coaches and referees, although all of the management-related courses and programmes are still being held in Riyadh.

Study participants at the micro level expressed their relative satisfaction with the working relationships and communication levels between the GPYW regional offices and the sport clubs, but they also mentioned that the regional offices did not have any active role in the sport club privatisation programme. Inside the micro-level organisations, daily activities between the managers and other employees were dominated by face-to-face meetings or through official written documents. Official meetings were quite limited in the Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam regional offices and almost non-existent in the Jazan and Jouf offices. In the fieldwork phase, the researcher noticed that the working relationship between office managers and the rest of employees was characterised by being casual and very friendly. Additionally, the researcher recorded strong working relationships in two cases between some GPYW regional office managers and the club presidents within the same region, in the form of a regular monthly 'tea meeting' in which the latest developments in the local sport sector were usually discussed. The same level of communication and working relationships were not observed at the regional offices of Riyadh, Jeddah or Dammam. There was one occasion in which the researcher was personally invited to take part in one of these meetings between a regional office manager and some of his staff with a club president accompanied by some other club officials. The meeting initially started quite informally but shortly after that became more official.

> *"For many years we have not seen such field visits and initiatives to enquire and find out about the local club's needs and requirements. The office manager asked for this idea to be extended to visit all the other sport clubs in the region and our club president was very satisfied with the outcomes of this visit."*

> (EC.official2, Personal Communication, January 6, 2013).

Despite most of the study participant previously revealing that they regularly use modern means of communication such as electronic mail and social media in their daily lives, only 1 out of 5 regional office managers and 3 out of 10 club officials said that they used these communication means in their daily organisational work. This included communications within their organisations as well as those with external ones. Reasons for this lack of the use of modern communication means at the regional offices level

varied from those who said that there is currently work being done to establish a communication network involving all of the GPYW offices and divisions, while others attributed this to the small number of employees which does not necessitate using such means, or that staff are not adequately qualified to do so. The officials at club level, meanwhile, considered the non-recognition of electronic means of communication as the main reason behind this, thus giving preference to the use of more traditional means such as the written document and correspondence through fax.

Regarding communication with relevant authorities and agencies at the higher levels (meso and macro), all micro-level practitioners taking part in the study agreed that higher authorities did not specifically communicate with them regarding the sport club privatisation strategy. They added that all what they heard or know about this strategy had come from the media. One regional office manager expressed his belief that the club privatisation imitative is a mere reaction to the pressures from international sports federations, such as The Asian Football Confederation (AFC, Criteria for Participation in AFC Club Competitions for 2011–2012 seasons, 2010), to make 'professionalism' and privatisation preconditions to participating in official international tournaments. "Based on what I read and hear in the media, privatisation is one of the conditions and requirements that have been imposed by the Asian Football Federation on the clubs in the (Saudi) Football Professional League." (SO.official1, Personal Communication, January 9, 2013).

A sport club official from one of the bigger clubs mentioned that there had previously been some contact with a working group looking into the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs when a visit was made by their team to the club's premises. He said:

> *"A delegate team from the Deloitte consultancy group paid us a visit in which they explored the club's infrastructure but they did not discuss with us or present any written documents...their visit was just to estimate the value of our infrastructure"*

(EC.official2, Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)

The discussion above highlights a certain level of anxiety among the study participants caused by a lack of effective communication from the authorities at the higher levels regarding the future direction of their clubs. Additionally, expressed views revealed that the role of GPYW regional officers was merely a procedural one, often restricted to conveying and implementing directives and procedures. More worryingly, this situation resulted in high levels of ambiguity among micro-level practitioners regarding the communication, interpretation and implementation of the privatisation strategy. There was even evidence to support the fact that some practitioners had doubts about the lacks

'legitimacy' in the GPYW's work and procedures around the privatisation strategy. One instance of this was revealed by the following statement:

> *"I do not know whether signing of agreements with consultancy companies to conduct studies into the privatisation project was a sovereign decision or engineered by some officials. They bring to us western concepts such as privatisation and professionalism but these remain without practical implementation for years."*

<div align="right">(IC.official2, Personal Communication, January 13, 2013).</div>

7.3.1.2 Practitioners' interactions

In terms of the contextual factors shaping strategising activities and behaviours of micro-level practitioners, the main observations and findings are discussed below.

The views expressed by the GPYW regional office managers in the five regions were in agreement about the GPYW's keenness to preserve the top-down pyramidal structure in the working relationships between practitioners at its main offices at the ministry with those at the various regional offices. Additionally, 4 out of 5 regional office managers confirmed that their level of participation and involvement in formulating strategies were very limited and usually restricted to facilitating the tasks of the specialised committees and working groups responsible for studying privatisation and sport investment. One regional office manager stated that this lack of participation was in fact due to some regions being far from the centre of policy and decision-making. He also added that some regional officers, including himself, were not actively seeking to be involved in sport strategy formulation anyway. Nevertheless, all of the study participants at the level of the GPYW regional offices confirmed their limited involvement and participation in the sport club privatisation strategy. Some were of the view that this lack of participation was due to the existence of a specialised working group/ committee, already tasked with drafting the privatisation strategy, adding that they might become involved at later stages in the process. Some other study participants also pointed out to the regular semi-annual meetings that the GPYW started organising for the benefit of the regional offices and their managers starting from the end of 2011. These meetings aim to develop and enhance the role of the regional offices locally within their designated regions.

> *"I have been very eager to attend all of these meetings, in itself a really good initiative to exchange experiences with fellow colleagues. However my preservation about these meetings is that they are mostly formulaic and the working agenda is pre-arranged with pre-determined topics for discussion, hence giving no opportunity for raising or discussing problems and issues found at the regional offices. Besides, why would it not be possible to circulate these plans among us beforehand so that we can present our opinions at these meetings?!"*

<div align="right">(NO.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)</div>

In some contrast to the views expressed by practitioners at the regional offices, those expressed by club officials, including club presidents, concurred that what really is holding back investment within the sport sector – as the main vehicle towards privatisation in their opinion – was the 'excessive' power held by senior sport officials and policymakers. In the same vein, the views expressed by most club officials confirmed that this excessive power did frequently result in instability and some confusion as well as contradictions in interpreting and applying existing procedures, rules and regulations related to sport investment. Some cited one specific example as a source of contradiction, whereby existing rules were very strict in forbidding the use of the club's facilities for commercial purposes. However, at the same time, these rules were not always uphold as occasionally permissions are given to enter into 'long-term' investments of club facilities while other equally feasible proposals are often rejected.

> *"With every change in the composition of senior officials overseeing privatisation and sport investment, we receive* [many] *changes affecting the existing rules and procedures of sport investment.* [For example] *we have made long strides in investing in a players' academy but its progress is currently halted due to its apparent conflict with yet another new decree."*

<div align="right">(EC.official1 Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)</div>

In terms of the daily strategising activities observed inside the regional GPYW offices, most regional office managers spoke about individual meetings with their employees as part of the ratification process of decisions before approving them. Additionally, 'closed' meetings were also held between office managers and heads of units. Additionally, the researcher observed that the daily activities of regional offices employees were concentrated on the execution and monitoring of routine daily activities that they are tasked with. Overall, the views expressed by regional office practitioners in terms of organisational structure and the organising of work activities were very similar in that the work at the offices is largely stable and is executed according to the prescribed structure flow.

The daily work of strategising practitioners at the clubs level concentrated more on the technical aspects of running the club such as monitoring players' and teams' training and preparations. Collected practitioner views at the clubs level revealed that in relation to organisational structure and the general organising of work at their organisations, the two main obstacles they faced were, firstly the frequent changes in club presidents (3 out of 5 clubs experienced this), and secondly the lack of professionalism in the practices of some employees in the previous administration(s). All of this caused a certain lack of clarity as well as instability in the organisational and working structure of these clubs. One practitioner view highlighted the degree to which previous administration practices, which he described as being 'odd', had disrupted the basic organisational structure within the club:

> *"When we took charge of the club, a lot of information had disappeared for unknown reasons! We had no information about players or employees contracts or any debts. We cannot comprehend what they were trying to hide! Why can't the work be structured? Now, we are still working to establish an organisation structure chart and determine roles and responsibilities for our club."*

> (IC.official2, Personal Communication, January 13, 2013)

Another regional office manager recounted a similar instance encountered by one of the clubs within his region whereby a number of administrative documents, such as important contracts, were in fact missing:

> *"We were asked to investigate and review the documents at this particular club due to a complaint by the club's administration regarding the disappearance of numerous administrative documents and contracts. Honestly, these kinds of practices within the clubs are disappointing and destroy the administrative and financial structure of the club...some behave as though the club is their personal property!"*

> (WO.official1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013)

Similarly, some of the views of club employees confirmed that they just work without in fact being aware of the precise organisational structure of the clubs that they work for. Some attributed this to a lack of financial resources that can allow them to have a large organised workforce within a proper organisational structure. Moreover, despite the existence of a unified club charter document[92] specifying the roles of practitioners for all Saudi sport clubs, 4 out of 10 interviewed clubs officials were in fact unaware of the

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[92] This charter document dates back to July 1995 (GPYW Director-General decision number 2409).

existence of such a charter. Additionally, the researcher observed that there was quite a lot of secrecy surrounding the club charter document as it was not readily accessible, in addition to the fact that it has not been updated since its introduction in 1995, except for a few alterations by hand. All of the above evidence, and in some contrast to the findings within the regional offices, point to an evident lack of stability and direction in the organisational daily work of practitioners within the sample sport clubs.

As alluded to so far in earlier parts of this chapter, there were repeated statements and questions raised from micro-level practitioners about the 'true' motives and objectives behind the proposed privatisation policy as talked about by macro-level practitioners. Practitioners at both the GPYW and sport clubs were of the same view that statements made by macro-level officials regarding the privatisation policy were mainly aimed at 'media and political consumption', and therefore using this as a means to preserve their positions and protect their jobs in the long run. What gave these views more credibility was, according to micro-level practitioners, the evident lack of consultation and participation of micro-level actors particularly in the early stages of strategy formulation. Additionally, there very limited concrete strategising practices such as workshops, working groups and meetings to facilitate strategy formulation at the lower levels of strategising praxis. In this context, one study participant said:

> *"We heard a lot about committees that have been tasked with looking into the sport club privatisation project and improving club revenues...but every now and then some new committees are formed and the political and media 'show' restarts again! Politicians are particularly astute in using such topics to attract public attention and give the impression that they are doing good work, but the reality? Perhaps you are better informed than me about this!!"*

<div align="right">(EO.official1, Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)</div>

In a similar vein, but at a different level, some regional office managers showed some concern and relative suspicion about the 'true' intentions and motives of club presidents. They raised doubts about the readiness as well as the ability of the club officials to strategise effectively or safeguard the interests and property of their clubs in the face of their unbridled desires to achieve personal goals such as personal fame. The views expressed by these regional office managers added that club officials also lacked the necessary skills and expertise to effectively utilise the resources they have in order to perform professional work that can allow the club to prosper financially as well as in a sporting sense.

> *"Club presidents 'wasted' their personal wealth and government subventions in order to win football tournaments and get promoted to the Super League, but nobody invested* [wisely] *in order to create an independent, self-sustaining club with its own resources and revenues. The situation could become worse if the clubs were to be completely privatised and their ownership becomes private as, for example, the club president can easily spend all of the shareholders' raised capital to achieve just titles* [i.e. sporting titles such as championships and cups].*"*

(CO.official1, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

On the other hand, two club officials argued that GPYW officials, including those at the regional offices, do not adequately understand the nature of work at the clubs and that they underestimate and even undermine the (good) work performed by club presidents. The above discussion points to a considerable divergence of opinion between micro-level practitioners in terms of who should be leading the privatisation programme and the precise roles of actors within their respective level of strategising praxis. The more substantial issue is, however, the lack of mutual 'trust' between strategising practitioners within the micro level as well as across other praxis levels regarding key issues such as key practitioners' motives and objectives. Therefore, this has created an unfavourable environment for the interpretation and implementation of policy objectives from the very outset. Hence, this often meant that 'bringing everybody on board' may indeed be a distant objective, also potentially becoming a major obstacle in its own right.

7.3.2 **Praxis**

The empirical analysis in this subsection discusses the context and interactions as pertinent to micro-level strategising praxis in relation to daily strategy work of micro-level practitioners and organisations. This section extends the discussion within Chapter 2 in which a detailed political economy and socio-cultural contexts of Saudi Arabia was provided.

7.3.2.1 Praxis context

Originally, the GPYW regional offices were established by the Saudi government to serve the local community in a sporting, social and cultural capacity and also to oversee the activities of local sport clubs within the various regions and provide a key working link between the GPYW ministry and the clubs. Overall, this vision has remained the same for

the last few decades despite the cultural activities not coming under the direct responsibility of the regional offices as of 2003.[93]

In terms of the sport club sporting infrastructure, in the beginning of organised sporting movement in Saudi Arabia the clubs did not have their own facilities such as stadia and training centres. These were usually rented from the private sector. Football competitions specifically, and until 1975, used to take place within facilities owned by individuals.

> *"Stadia before 1975 used to be owned by individuals and not the government...the first stadium built by the state was in 1970. Hence, sport clubs did not have their own facilities and stadia before the 1980s until the government started building these new facilities and granting permission for the clubs to use them."*

> (HC.official1, Personal Communication, January 16, 2013)

More widely and in terms of the precise ownership of sport clubs, the study participants' views were unclear in this respect and many did not talk extensively about the history of sport clubs. The views varied between those who thought that the clubs are state-owned because it built the infrastructure and provided financial aid throughout the years. Meanwhile, others said that sport clubs are still owned by their founders and that the role of the government was limited to financial aid only. Another view was that sport clubs are in fact owned by the whole society, i.e. they are social entities providing sporting and social services to the youth and the society at large.

Tracking the development of the role in the state within the sport sector and clubs in particular shows that it always coincided and was linked with overall planning policies and strategies from one planning period to another. Moreover, and as wider trend, the Saudi government has always been keen to take over and sponsor any project or work that may enable it to exert control and merge it within its wider economic and social plans. This was the case in all sectors including the sport sector. Hence, tracking the level of investment and active role played the government usually started off in a very intensive manner but then tends to slow down and fade as soon as some level of control over these activities or clubs is attained. Linked to this, 3 regional office managers and 7 sport club officials argued that the main initial motive behind the government's privatisation initiative was the economic austerity measures adopted by the government in the wake of falling government revenues during the mid-1990s until around 2005. However as two

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[93]Royal Orderno.A/2on 30/04/2003to rename some ministries, includingrenaming of the Ministry of Informationtobecomethe Ministry of Culture andInformation with the transferculturalactivities and its affairs from the GPYW and sport clubs and to be under this the Ministry of Culture andInformation supervision.

participants argued, as the country's finances subsequently started improving caused by the significant rise in oil prices slowed down the government's efforts on delivering the privatisation policy and instead focus more on social welfare. One participant said in this regard:

> *"*[Sport club] *privatisation used to be a government priority during the late days of King Fahd until his death, a period which saw very constrained government direct aid to clubs. During this period, the privatisation of other sectors, such as telecommunications and electricity were achieved quite swiftly. After that, providing social welfare and services took more government priority such as the direct building hospitals and universities...but then King Abdullah did subsequently provide millions in subsidies to sport clubs."*

(CO.official1, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

In contrast to the above views, and as already mentioned within the previous section, five study participants were of the view that privatisation was instead initially triggered and motivated by the conditions imposed by various international sports federation, as well as the Asian Football Federation in particular. In the case of football, Saudi elite football clubs were required to become 'professional trading' companies with owners and shareholders as well as commercial activities.

> *"The conditions of the Asian Football Federation forced many* [Saudi] *clubs to change their slogans and register as commercial trademarks as well as open commercial outlets to sell merchandise, and hence function as professional trading companies...the clubs, the ministry and the football federation have to follow this direction."*

(AC.official2, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)

7.3.3.2 Praxis interactions

Despite the importance of the various economic and social-cultural contextual factors in shaping the development of the sport sector in Saudi Arabia over the years, eight out of fifteen study participants shared the view that the government's approach towards privatisation equally had a significant influence over, not only the trend of evolution of privatisation policy, but also over the meaning and interpretation of privatisation as a policy concept within the sport sector. As one club officially complained:

"The multitude of decrees and laws regarding privatisation, professionalism and sport investment since 2008, meant that we at the club level could not distinguish between these decrees; whether they related to privatisation, or to sport investment, or to professionalism. Every now and then, we receive official decrees containing several instructions, conditions and mechanisms regarding these issues [researcher: from who?]...*at times from the GPYW, others from the football federation, and sometimes from the regional office."*

(HC.official2, Personal Communication, January 16, 2013)

Similar to previous findings at meso and macro praxes, the collected evidence from primary data at the micro level points to a general lack of direction and various inefficiencies in the flow of strategising activities since strategy inception. Moreover, there is also evidence to support the presence of a general sense of malaise among most micro-level practitioners regarding key practical aspects of the sport club privatisation strategy, including the overall trajectory, terms and mechanisms adopted. This is in addition to an evident lack of a clear set of indicators and benchmarks to guide the strategising work of key practitioners at this level. Some club level participants even admitted that this overall perceived lack of direction often made them 'overlook' the privatisation programme so as not to distract the other core club's activities and focus instead on the internal activities of their clubs.

The opinions of most club officials also pointed out that the severe financial difficulties that their clubs are currently facing, such as high levels of debt, is damaging to the overall investment environment in the sport sector. They attributed the main cause of this situation in which the clubs find themselves in to the government's policy in reducing aid and direct subsidies to the clubs over the last few years. In contrast though, the managers of regional GPYW offices in the bigger cities disagreed and instead lauded the steps taken by the government in reducing direct aid to the clubs, as the main trigger for clubs to search for financing from alternative sources such as commercial partnerships with the private sector.

Additionally and similarly to the findings from macro and meso strategising levels, all of the majority of study participants at club levels express reservations and doubts about the government's moves towards professionalism, privatisation and sport investment despite the absence of written plans and strategy documents. According to these participants, determining a written privatisation strategy document detailing the required practical procedures for implementation and the adopted benchmarks will allow the unity in vision and hence avoid unnecessary confusion and conflicts, as one club official suggested:

"we keep hearing of the government's repeated calls for professionalisation since the end of the 1980s, and privatisation and sport investment since the 1990s...how is it feasible for the government to demand this from us yet there is no written [strategy] document? I mean, where are we heading? How and when should we start, and when are we going to finish? Who is going to finance us?...all of this information until now we do not know!"

(EC.official1 Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)

Alternatively, the views from regional office directors about the lack of a written strategy document and other guidelines, argued that some existing rules and guidelines could be used as 'general benchmarks' by the clubs and other implementation actors to infer what is required of them regarding the implementation of the club privatisation strategy. For instance, they cited the examples of existing guidelines regarding conditions of investing clubs' infrastructure such as land, or those relating to the distribution of match revenues and income from publicity. One regional director said:

"There are some guidelines which clarify how investment can be implemented inside a club. These can act as guidelines prepared by the privatisation working group within the ministry (GPYW), but some officials at the clubs do not want to abide by them, or they are interested in adding and finding out about them."

(WO.official1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013)

In this regard, the researcher observed that there was deficiency in communicating such guidelines to the clubs themselves, to the extent where some club officials were not even aware of the existence of such guidelines. The overall situation about the existence of clear written strategy documents and guidelines, in combination with inadequate strategic discourse, led to major flaws in strategy work at the micro level. This was accompanied by a deep sense of lack of involvement and participation in the overall strategy work by micro-level participants particularly at the club level. This resulted in discrepancies in the practices of different clubs within deferent regions. Thus, strategising activities of some clubs, such as those based in Riyadh and Eastern region showed some signs of already moving towards attracting private sector investment and privatisation-type of practices in general. Whereas clubs in other regions such as Jeddah, Jouf, or Jazan, such types of activities and practices were absent despite, as already stated, the close working relationships, between GPYW regional offices and club officials within these specific regions. Researcher field observations in this regard revealed various commercial practices at some clubs such for example the Al-Hilal club and Al-Ittifak club, where there were commercial advertisements or leasing of space and infrastructure to the private

sector, or the existence of player academics financed by the private sector. In contrast, club officials within other regions such as Jeddah, Jouf and Jazan, showed little awareness of such practices, as one official said: "The GPYW does not permit us to exploit the club's infrastructure and premises and there are numerous complicated bureaucratic procedures for investment..." (AC.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013).

7.3.3 **Practices**

Strategising practices is the third of the three key domains of strategising and this section extends and complements the previous sections by exploring further key findings at the micro level regarding this domain.

7.3.5.1 Practices context

Collected data at the micro level lend support to the emergence of various 'new' organising and strategising practices among micro-level organisations particularly the sport clubs since the short period following the introduction of the club privatisation policy by the SEC in 2002. More specifically, the views expressed by various study participants at the micro level revealed that the origins of this trend go back to the ideas of sport investments, which came prior to the privatisation programme. These included more efforts by clubs towards attracting commercial partnerships and sponsorship deals particularly with the Saudi telecommunications companies.

> *"Following the privatisation of the Saudi Telecommunications Company (STC) in the nineties and the public offering of its shares shortly later in early 2000s, the company released itself from government control and now became in a better position to sponsor and work with the sport clubs involving significantly bigger financial packages than ever before."*

> (EC.official1 Personal Communication, January 6, 2013)

The particular fruitful new relationship between the telecommunications companies and sport clubs was noticed by companies in other sectors and investors, helping to promote the sport business as a profitable venture for investors. Hence, the Saudi football league was particularly a shining example and became a very profitable channel for many companies to invest and marketwise their products and services. "The multi-million sponsorship deal between the telecommunications company (STC) and the Saudi football league was a catalyst for private sector investment in football clubs, allowing the clubs to pay off their debts and to invest in the club.". (WO.official1, Personal Communication, January 12, 2013).

Alternatively, some study participants said that the real turning point in the spread of private investment practices was the entry of another private sector telecommunications company, namely Mobily, to the Saudi market in 2005. This created even more competition particularly between telecommunications companies for establishing commercial partnerships with the football clubs. This was plainly manifested when Mobily succeeded in replacing STC as the long-term partner of one of the biggest football clubs in Saudi Arabia, namely Al-Hilal Football Club. The two parties signed a 5-year sponsorship deal worth in the region of million 200 SAR.

> *"The sponsorship deal between Mobily and Al-Hilal was the biggest deal in the history of Saudi Arabia sport and attracted the attention of other players in the market to the potential for profitability of investment with the clubs. Many people thought the significant sponsorship deals with the telecommunications companies signalled a new era for clubs in which they became self-sufficient and not anymore dependent on government aid through the GPYW...but in the last two years, the telecommunications companies started gradually withdrawing from the sport sector, to the point where currently most clubs and sports federations are without* [commercial] *sponsors."*

> (SO.official1, Personal Communication, January 9, 2013)

In more general terms, data analyses at the micro level reveal a high level of lack of clarity, misunderstanding and ambiguity among strategising practitioners regarding the specific privatisation and sport investment practices. The statements from regional office practitioners agreed that their role was confined to executing higher orders and instructions without any discussion or objection. Many of the micro-level practitioners agreed that many of the privatisation practices are 'stuck' at the higher levels of strategising praxis (or the top of the pyramid) and their implications have not yet filtered through to lower levels. Additionally, this overall sense of uncertainty and confusion surrounding the privatisation strategy opened the door for some personal interpretations at the level of regional offices and sport clubs. For instance, one regional office director thought that personal interpretation in order to help the local clubs to attract investment for example is acceptable:

> *"I favour public interest over individual interest in all of the decrees and instructions I receive. It would not be right if one of my clubs is suffering financially and has debts and at then finds an investor who can help to ease the situation only for us to reject them because they do not meet one criteria..."*

> (NO.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)

7.3.7.2 Practices interactions

Further analysis at the micro level of strategising praxis revealed some additional related findings in terms of the phenomena and interactions around the practices domain of strategising.

As mentioned previously, the lack of clarity and the level of uncertainty surrounding the club privatisation policy as perceived by micro-level practitioners, opened doors for personal interpretations. Deeper data analysis of strategising practices strongly corroborates this preliminary finding. Despite most existing laws and regulations, whether regarding the running and activities of sport clubs, or specifically relating to the privatisation strategy, explicitly stating in all official documents that: "*the GPYW has the full rights to interpret what has been decided and also to amend or add any articles...with a decision from the President*"[94], many club officials still believe that it is within the remits of their role to interpret (the spirit of) various such rules and regulations. These club officials justify this view by arguing that the 'structural legitimacy' that they have acquired, or entrusted with them, through the being elected or nominated gives them the authority to implement plans and strategies as they see compatible with the overall interests of their clubs, even if this occasionally means overlooking some of these decrees and regulations.

> "*The GPYW does not permit you to discuss, instead they determine the rules for you and you oblige and implement. Some of these decrees are more than ten years old and therefore do not cater for the current environment, which makes choose to overlook them.*"

> (TC.official2, Personal Communication, January 11, 2013)

Many study participants believed that such practices of personal interpretation are justified when the strategic direction lacks clarity because at ultimately they are the ones who are first to be held accountable for the success or failure of such strategies whether the circumstances. Related to this, study participants also spoke of the higher government agencies' enduring insistence on certain 'ways of doing things' without constructive critical debate with the regional office and the clubs. They saw these practices as some sort of 'government patronising'. Thus, the above discussion not only corroborates previous preliminary findings regarding micro-level practitioner's disposition for personal

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[94]Paragraph 9 of Article 21 in the GPYW's decision No. 3368 dated 14/02/2011 based on the Saudi Council of Ministers decision No. 113 of 29/03/2010. Article *7* of the General Conditionsin the GPYW's decision No. 8220 of 24/06/2009 to modify his previous decision on 15/05/2006.Text of the Saudi Council of Ministers decision No. 69 on 1/12/1992attached to the GPYW decision No. 2409on10/07/1995.

interpretations when necessary, but also point to some forms of 'resistance' practices, still mostly in a tacit and mild format albeit relatively stronger than those reported at the macro and meso levels (see Chapters 5 and 6). In the same vein, further tacit resistance practices were also inferred from various other study participants overall evaluation of the proposed privatisation policy. Some showed unease about policy because in their opinion, it will stop direct government funding of the clubs, thereby also affecting the club's infrastructure and by extension that of the whole region too. This caused some club officials particularly those at the border regions, to express, albeit tacitly, their concern about this aspect of privatisation, as one club official argued:

> *"Fortunately when the* [latest] *wave of* [direct] *royal 'relief funds' came it saved the region's sport clubs, and this is not applicable to just our region, many others were in the same situation. That is why privatisation will not be beneficial to the smaller clubs. It will decrease funding to build infrastructure and this is what concerns me the most."*

> (AC.official1, Personal Communication, January 8, 2013)

Another club official added:

> *"It is not possible to force all the Saudi clubs to undergo privatisation because there are those who prefer to remain a club with sporting and recreational objectives especially in the smaller provinces and towns. They should open the vote and then see who is for and who is against* [privatisation]*!"*

> (TC.official2, Personal Communication, January 11, 2013)

Inside the daily work of many sport clubs and regional offices, including planning activities, strategising discursive practices including open and critical debate were relatively much more prevalent among the organisational actors. Many of these discursive practices were manifested in face-to-face non-written communications. This may be attributed to contextual socio-cultural factors that are deeply rooted in various regions, particularly in the North. It was also noted, however, that as one moves down South (i.e., Jeddah and Riyadh), such practices become comparatively less widespread.

Communication of strategic discourse at the micro level differs between the regional offices and the sport clubs. At the GPYW regional offices, official written forms of communication were the dominant form particularly with practitioners and organisations at the meso and macro levels. At the clubs level, these forms f communication were less common, with some club officials attributing this to lack of resources:

"You are talking about advanced administrative practices whereas daily work at our club is simple as you have seen, and this is due to a lack of resources. I sometimes even print out letters on my own account or at home"

(TC.official1, Personal Communication, January 9, 2013)

As a general observations in terms of the daily organisational work at the sport clubs, there were many areas of deficiency in the work processes and practices, such as a work environment that is lacking in the required levels of professionalism, in addition for instance to a lack of archiving work in several clubs. According to the views of club officials, the main reasons behind the observed situation were due to a lack of resources and the nature of the work of club employees, which is predominantly voluntary. Perhaps the most cited reason was the frequent changes in the structures, personnel and practices of most sport clubs (7 out of 15 participants said that the work at the clubs was not institutional). Hence, this led to an overall instability and a lack of continuity in the strategising work of many clubs.

7.4 Conclusions

At the micro level of strategising praxis, ten sample case study organisations were analysed, in the form of five different sport clubs and five regional offices, representing the five different geographical/ administrative regions of the Kingdom. The study sample at this level represented a cross-section of those organisations and actors directly concerned with the implementation of the sport club privatisation strategy at the lowest level of strategy praxis. Analysis of research findings revealed that at the level of regional/ district offices, the daily strategising practices showed significant levels of homogeneity across all the five regions, with a few exceptions among those office located at close proximity to policy and decision making circles, such as those based in the capital Riyadh and a few other big cities. A similar observation can also be made about the sample sport clubs, with those clubs located more distantly (North and South) having far less participation in privatisation related strategising compared to those clubs in close proximity to the policymaking circles (Central, Western and Eastern regions). The common overall finding between the two sample groups at this level is the apparent limited participation of regional offices and sport clubs alike in strategy work around the privatisation policy. A situation that was further exacerbated by the striking absence of clear written strategies for the implementation of the privatisation policy.

Additionally, and similar to macro- and meso-level findings (Chapters 5 and 6), the background contextual factors of strategising practitioners are also found to be equally

significant in shaping strategy work including key aspects of strategising patterns and activities at the micro level. The study of micro-level practitioners' education background, social status and allegiances, revealed high levels of loyalty of most practitioners to their regions and localities, particularly those at the club level. While this had some positive aspects, at the same time, however, it proved to be a recurrent obstacle in the face of the overall strategising work, often making these practitioners act in the interest of their 'personal' allegiances at the expense of working towards attaining the wider objectives as demanded by the overall activity system (i.e. conflicts of interest). In addition to high levels of similarity between micro-level practitioners in terms of their social backgrounds, equal homogeneities in education backgrounds also helped strengthen and ease communication and discourse between these practitioners, but without the privatisation strategy taking central attention in their organisational daily work.

Another key finding regarding the role of micro-level practitioners is the evident lack of active participation and involvement of key strategising actors particularly at the club level. The role of club officials was often marginalised and their input not considered, or even solicited in the first place. The prevalent top-down approaches to management and strategy work, which is long entrenched within Saudi organisations, contributed to creating and aggravating this observed situation. This in turn created a 'gap' between strategising actors and their work at the lowest levels of the pyramid, with that found at the higher levels. The above, combined with high levels of personal interpretation of strategy work among sport club officials and frequent lack of professional standards of work among the club employees, led to further instability in the strategising work of micro-level practitioners.

The discussion of micro-level praxis showed the lack of clear and documented strategies, in turn creating a lack of stability in the strategising work around the privatisation policy at the micro level. What exists in terms of plans and guidelines follows a strict top-down hierarchical and pyramidal approach from the highest levels of policymaking to micro-level organisations and practitioners. Research evidence at the micro-level of strategising praxis reveals a lack of continuity in strategising activities, often leading to 'disruptions' and 'gaps' in the overall flow of strategy work. The issue becomes more serious at the micro level as many of the ultimate implementation actors operate at this level of praxis. Most of the observed differences in the views expressed by micro-level study participants mainly stem from variations in the situations of their respective organisations, such as the resources available to their respective clubs. Meanwhile, the

regional GPYW office directors saw their role as mainly a procedural one and considered themselves as extensions to the authority and work of the GPYW at a regional level. Hence, they saw themselves as not having any autonomy in interpreting strategy goals or directing the flow of strategising activity, and instead limited their work to communicating instructions and overseeing implementation. The club officials, in turn, agreed that their level of freedom and autonomy in interpretation of strategy objectives were very limited and are governed by the rules and regulations set by the GPYW. They also often complained about the lack of clear direction and guidance from higher strategising actors, leaving them no choice but to prioritise the existing internal activities of their clubs. From a club's perspective, what made the situation regarding the proposed privatisation policy even more precarious was the inadequate existing legal framework, many aspects of which have not been updated in a long time, making them redundant and unsuitable for application in today's environment. A further area of apprehension by some case clubs was the evident favouritism of some clubs and some sports over others, citing the case of football as a particularly obvious one.

In terms of strategising practices at the micro level, there were some important variations between those observed at the level of regional GPYW offices and those at the level of the local sport clubs. In the former, daily strategising practices, particularly with meso and macro level actors were dominated by procedural practices and official written communications. Resistance practices were very rare, even though most study participants circumvented talking about this specific issue. At the level of sport clubs, daily strategising work was mostly informal carried through face-to-face talk and meetings, but there was also an overall lack of professional standards of work when compared to regional offices. The frequent changes that these clubs regularly go through especially in terms of personnel haled create a lack of stability and continuity in the organising work of most of these clubs. In comparison to previous findings at the meso and macro levels of strategising praxis, resistance practices, albeit still in mild and tacit formats, were more widely displayed in the views of study participants from the sport clubs. This further contributed to aggravating the above-mentioned deficiencies in strategy interpretation and implementation at this crucial strategising praxis, i.e. the micro level.

FOURTH PART - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 8 Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The main subject of the proposed study is to examine the Saudi sport clubs privatisation policy and the strategising work around it from a strategy-as-practice research agenda involving various strategising actors at different levels of organisational praxis. Pertinent issues to be investigated here include, among others and to state just a few, key concepts and theoretical constructs of strategy and strategising such as strategy formulation, strategic outcomes, the nature of goal-directed activity, types and patterns of strategising activities and practices, and forms of legitimacy.

This chapter is the final of four analyses and discussion chapters, bringing together and synthesising the key findings from the previous three analyses chapters (5, 6 and 7), and augmenting them to offer a more critical evaluation of the remaining key theoretical constructs as established in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3). Hence, the chapter deeper discussion of the main patterns of strategising activity, as well as reporting the findings from the cross-case synthesis method (Chapter 4) across the three levels of the study, i.e. macro, meso and micro. This will allow the generation of deeper-level findings through a 'compare and contrast' approach, ultimately seeking to identify and explain key similarities (commonalities) and differences, as well as areas of convergence (consistency) and divergence (variation) across the three levels of the study.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part builds on the main findings from the previous three chapters in relation to the three domains of strategising (i.e. the 3Ps). This is employed as the basis upon which an overall evaluation of the strategising activity system dynamics, thereby allowing the researcher to identify the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising occurring in the context of the main unit of analysis in this study, i.e. the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs. It is envisaged that through the empirical analysis of the three key domains of strategising at the three praxis levels, key similarities and differences in strategising activity system across the three levels of investigation can be further identified and explained. This part also includes some discussion of the commonalities that came out of the thematic analysis within the previous three chapters, including the important theme regarding the role of context (intra- and extra-organisational) in strategising work.

The second part then augments the analysis by applying the cross-case synthesis data analysis method (see Chapter 4) to conduct further intra- and inter-level analyses of the key identified patterns, types and categories of strategising that came out as a result of the data analysis process at the three levels of strategising praxis. This part also brings together the key findings at the three levels, and highlights areas of consistency or otherwise with previous literature.

Part three then builds on and complements the previous parts by providing an overall critical evaluation of the Saudi sport club privatisation policy as the main unit of analysis in this study. This part specifically looks at evaluating the evolution and progress to-date of the policy and a critical assessment of the key triggers, enablers and obstacles of the privatisation policy with a view to learning valuable lessons and generating useful policy recommendations.

8.2 The strategising system dynamics of Saudi sport clubs privatisation strategy

By utilising the replication feature of the holistic cross-case method (Chapter 4) and using the main theoretical framework adopted within this study, table 8-1 summarises and highlights the replicated overall themes and findings across the three levels of strategising praxis as relevant to the three domains of strategising (3Ps), in the context of Saudi sport club privatisation policy. These replicated themes help understand the precise dynamics of the overall strategising activity system around the sport club privatisation policy.

In terms of strategising practitioners, the major replicated themes as reported within table 8-1 reveal the significance of various background and contextual issues across all the three levels of analysis. Here, the practitioners' social, educational and personal backgrounds all influence the behaviour and therefore strategising work of these practitioners. Strong personal loyalties and allegiance to tribe, family, or region are further significant contextual factors that are strongly rooted in the wider socio-cultural context of Saudi society. The study reported various examples of this theme, such as the favouritism in allocating sporting infrastructure among regions and sport clubs, where clubs based in bigger urban regions with a sophisticated network of influential government officials historically have enjoyed more attention and direct assistance from the government. Contextual factors also had adverse effects on the practitioners' daily strategising work including that conducted around the privatisation policy, by bringing to the surface issues of lack of trust and conflicts of interests. These issues filtered down from the macro level to show strong persistence at the lower levels too. This combined with a severe lack of clarity in policy vision and objectives, resulted in key implementation actors, particularly

at the micro-level, expressing doubts about the true intentions of policymakers (i.e. lack of trust), in addition to some mild resistance practices. The lack of involvement and active participation of key policy implementation actors, especially at the lower levels, is another common overall finding. Micro-level practitioners in the form of sport club officials and employees, as the bottom-level actors in strategising work, were left feeling marginalised and sometimes completely ignored. The direct consequence is that these key implementation practitioners did not completely 'buy into' the privatisation policy and often prioritised the immediate interests of their clubs at the expense of wider efforts to achieve goal-direct outcomes related to the privatisation policy. Some club officials even considered that the proposed privatisation may harm the future of their clubs and feared the consequences of cutting or stopping direct government subventions. At the same time, the majority of macro-level practitioners regarded those at lower levels of strategising praxis as not being in complete synchronisation with the proposed strategy, and some accusing them of not possessing the required skills to effectively implement the privatisation strategy at their level. The overall lack of professionalism and volunteering as the dominant mode of work of many strategising practitioners provided an additional obstacle in the face of effective implementation.

The existing highly rigid and entrenched modes of work and ways of doing things that came to shape the work of most Saudi government organisations over the years created unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and high levels of centralisation in policy and decision-making. Hence, procedural strategising enacted through long-established administrative practices became the norm in all phases of strategy work around the privatisation policy, a finding that is entirely consistent with deeper findings reported in subsequent parts of this chapter. This in turn exacerbated the general sense of confusion, ambiguity and lack of clarity that surrounded the privatisation policy vision and regularly led to wrong interpretations of policy objectives by key implementation actors. Strategising practices around the privatisation policy were characterised by a lack of continuity and lack of stability, with many exhibiting elements of inertia and resistance to change.

Table 8-1 The replication feature in the identified strategising themes across the macro, meso and micro levels

Strategising domains		Replication in key strategising themes across the three praxis levels
Practitioners	*Background*	1. Practitioners' personal loyalties and allegiances influence strategising behaviour and decision-making
		2. The importance of contextual factors including personal, educational and socio-cultural backgrounds in most of strategising practitioners' work
	Interactions	3. Dominance of communication and strategic discourse through rigid conventional written forms of communication with strategising actors at higher levels of praxis, but more flexibility and use of direct communication means with actors at lower praxis levels
		4. Issues of related to lack of trust and conflicts of interest between strategising practitioners
		5. Limited active participation and involvement of practitioners, particularly at the lower levels, in formulating plans and strategies including the sport club privatisation strategy
Praxis	*Context*	6. Sport club privatisation strategy is incomprehensible amongst key implementation actors and the absence of a detailed official written 'strategy document'. This filtered through adversely to lower levels of strategising praxis
		7. Conflict between economic and social objectives. Unclear and ambiguous policy objectives resulted in wrong interpretation by implementation actors and major implementation shortcomings
		8. Rigid policy implementation framework does not cater for specific needs of sport sector and lack of consultation and effective strategic discourse
	Interactions	9. Strategy implementation is characterised by rigid hierarchical top-down approach with noticeable lack of proactive and constructive strategic dialogue
		10. High degree of 'uniformity' and 'standardisation' in strategising work, accompanied by very high levels of 'centralisation' in policy and decision-making leading to the frequent dominance of procedural strategising
Practices	*Context*	11. Lack of constructive dialogue and continuous consultation between key policymakers and implementation practitioners
		12. Presence of practices allowing practitioner's personal interpretation of policy tools and mechanisms to resolve lack of clarity and preserve narrow organisational interests
	Interactions	13. Some mild and tacit resistance practices particularly at the lower levels of strategising praxis
		14. Lack of stability and continuity in strategising activities and strategising workflow across the different strategising praxes and organisational levels

8.3 Key findings on the patterns, types and categories of strategising activities

The chapter so far has explored the precise dynamics of the strategising activity system in the context of the privatisation policy of Saudi sport clubs, including how key theoretical and practical aspects of the three key domains of strategising (i.e. the 3Ps) are manifested across the three levels of strategising praxis.

In the second part of this chapter, additional key theoretical concepts particularly relating to the key domain of strategising practices are further analysed and discussed. Such core concepts include the identified key patterns of strategising, types and categories of strategising, and other closely related concepts such as the forms of legitimacy, strategy formulation and implementation, and goal-directed activity. The main aim behind the analyses is to determine the nature of strategising activities and patterns within the context of the proposed study and collected data. Additionally, a related aim is to assess the extent to which these key concepts of strategising typically manifest themselves within the sample case studies.

8.3.1 **Macro-level key findings**

8.3.1.1Macro-level patterns of strategising activity

At the macro level, the following patterns of goal-directed activity – as informed by the reviewed literature and the proposed main theoretical framework (see Chapter 3) – have been identified at the participant case organisations at this level.

Emerging and reactionary

This study found evidence supporting the widespread presence and prevalence of the *emerging pattern* of strategising activities within the case organisations at the macro level, albeit in a more general trajectory (i.e. in the context of the history and evolution of the Saudi sports sector), and less in terms of the specific sport cub privatisation programme. Reviewing key milestones in the history and evolution of these government bodies at the macro level (see parts of Chapter 2 as well as section 5.2 of this chapter), reveals that the very action of creating many of the government bodies involved today in strategising activities within the Saudi sport sector often exhibited strong elements of the emerging pattern of organising and strategising.

There were many instances where strategising and organising within the participant case organisations at the macro level initiated and carried out various organisational activities without explicit predetermined goals. Such 'unplanned' activities would subsequently grow in importance over time, until they gain in internal and external legitimacy and

validity. These activities would then become goal-directed and attract significant resources and attention from top management as well as from external policy makers at higher levels.

This finding in relation to the emerging pattern of strategising is quite closely linked to another, perhaps 'novel', strategising pattern in the context of the Saudi sport sector, namely what the researcher chooses to call a '*reactionary*' pattern.

In the context of this discussion, it is worth emphasising that what happens at the lower levels in the Saudi sports sector has a direct impact on the actions of key policy makers and government bodies at the macro level. Tracking the beginnings and evolution of Saudi sport clubs reveals that most of these clubs were formed in a spontaneous and unplanned manner to begin with.[95] They consequently had little influence or leverage within the higher levels of policymaking and government in their early period of existence. They subsequently, however, managed to attract the attention of some highly influential officials through the endorsement of their activities as well as the allocation of financial subsidies in direct support of these clubs. Hence, the overall picture was that the initial involvement of these officials was typically *reactive* in nature and caused by a combination of factors. One of these factors was the objective of 'preserving' national unity and the stability of the newly founded Saudi state, considering the various conflicts that started to arise between different sport clubs and some of their stakeholders. Another factor was the realisation by the government of the increasing influence of these sport entities within all aspects of Saudi social life, and hence taking advantage of this important channel through which the government could implement various social welfare policies. A GPYW official stated that:

> *"...the creation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia saw disorder and chaos in the beginning, hence requiring the government to intervene by completely halting all sport activity and only subsequently reinstating it after the establishment of a specialised administration force under the oversight of the ministry of interior to organise sporting activities"*

> (GP.official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

Additionally, data analysis at the macro level of study also found historical similarities between the case organisations in terms of these organisations' context around their inception and subsequent historical developments, as well as their positioning and specific

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[95] This specific issue regarding the creation of sport clubs (the micro level of study) is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

roles in relation to various national economic development plans. All of the organisations included in the study sample at the macro level were created in a manner that can be described as 'reactionary'. The establishment and numerous restructurings that these organisations have undergone were principally triggered by the various economic crises that the country experienced over the years (1930-1990). The SEC, for instance, came into existence following the decrease in government spending after the first Gulf War during the 1990s. The MEP, meanwhile, was established following the economic and financial crisis in the 1930s, whereas the GPYW was extended to formal organisation to overcome the crisis between local sport teams back in 1936. By creating these policymaking organisations to oversee strategic development in different sectors, the government's initial intentions were often to respond to new realities imposed by various economic crises and hence stabilise and stimulate the economy as well as appease the social front.

Similarly, many of these organisations have themselves over the years developed a range of reactionary patterns of strategising that enable them, at least temporarily, to mitigate the effects of social and economic crises. However, and as data analyses validate, as soon as stability is re-established and some positive results start to emerge, this (quite intense) strategy work – at all levels of policymaking and strategy implementation – starts to gradually fade away, and completely disappear in some instances, and only re-emerge when a given sector is facing a fresh new crisis. For instance, in the case of the SEC, it is clear that since its inception it had a specific formal and written vision, mission and policies. By tracking the historical development of the SEC's body of work, the researcher noted however, that the level and intensity of strategy work carried out at this particular policymaking agency progressively declined coinciding with the subsequent improvements in the performance and overall economic indicators of the Saudi economy.

Changing patterns

In contrast, and in more agreement with the emerging pattern of strategising, senior officials at the GPYW consider the origins of the Saudi sport club privatisation strategy as being mostly unplanned in its initiation phase going back to the early 1990s. It then followed in the subsequent years that this privatisation programme became more goal-directed and centrally planned as a result of the subsequent adoption of its premise by the Saudi government, thereby also attracting internal and external validity and legitimacy as well, as significant economic resources and direct funding. A senior official at the GPYW quite precisely stated:

> *"The origins of this situation* [i.e. the Saudi sport club privatisation strategy] *can be specifically traced to Football Confederations Cup when we worked with a foreign company alongside the FIFA towards providing services and marketing them related to this international sporting event. Our aim was to find a sponsor for this event, thereby cutting the need for direct government financial support. Following this experience, the ideas of investment in the sport sector and the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia were born."*
>
> (GP.official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

In contrast to the views expressed by the interviewed officials at the GPYW, those at the level of the SEC as well as the MEP agreed that the original thinking behind the Saudi sport club privatisation strategy goes back to the government's reactionary measures, straight after the first Gulf War, aimed at attempting to diversify the country's economic sources of income and address budget deficit. Hence, sport was one of a number of sectors targeted by the government's new focus on strategic planning which in the sport sector entailed the instigation of the privatisation discourse at the highest levels of government policymaking. This viewpoint can be substantiated further by examining the 'official' version within the original 'Saudi Privatisation Strategy' as well as the successive 5-year development plans since the early 2000s. A senior SEC official proclaimed:

> *"Despite various economic crises that preceded the first Gulf War, the war directly caused deficits in the government budgets and balance of payments, leading to higher levels of unemployment among the Saudi citizens and a shrinking in wage levels of employees. All of these factors forced the Saudi government to abandon many of its previous policies [of direct funding and subsidies] and instead adopt policies to diversify the sources of income as well as reduce the financial burden endured during the years of consolidation, through a new policy of privatisation"*
>
> (SC.official1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

Despite the differences in the views expressed as emerged from data analysis regarding the origins and development of the privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia in general, and sport club privatisation in particular, all the participants agreed that the origins of such strategising work can be traced to the early 1990s, although the precise frameworks, procedures and plans were mostly undocumented (i.e. not in an official written format). Additionally, these were often not officially announced or published as part of the

government's overall strategic plans until well into the early 2000s. Hence, in brief conclusion to this point, it appears that a large part of the strategising work around the sport club privatisation policy may have initially started as emergent practices, with the GPYW actively participating in many related aspects without explicit, pre-determined or formal goals. It then followed that over time; such practices started to significantly grow in influence and gain in legitimacy (both internal and external), to then become strategically planned with attached policy goals and objectives.[96] Additionally, these practices became more and more strategically convergent with the goals and priorities of policymakers at the higher levels within the Saudi government, ultimately leading to their official assimilation within the government's overall privatisation strategy.

Still with regards to the various patterns of strategising activity identified in this study so far, an important observation at this stage is that these identified patterns within the case organisations at the macro level exhibited elements of divergence and uniqueness, depending on the organisation in question. What follows is a brief discussion of some other important specific findings in terms of patterns of strategising activity within each of the case organisations at the macro level of analysis.

At the SEC, patterns of strategising activity tend to be characterised by the *changing* pattern. This finding is rather anticipated considering that the main aim of establishing the Council was to undertake and introduce deep and radical changes in the dynamics of strategy work and strategic planning, starting from the highest levels of policymaking in order to achieve the greater goal of diversifying and rebalancing the Saudi economy.[97] In this context, it was observed that the manner in which the SEC engaged with various economic sectors regarding privatisation policy issues differed from sector to sector. Thus the telecommunications sector, for instance, was closely overseen by the SEC, whereas, on the other hand, the privatisation plan for sport clubs was largely left in the hands the GPYW, and MEP to lesser extent, to manage and oversee. This was evident from the interviewed officials at the SEC, one stated:

> "...*sport clubs and the youth sector are the responsibility of the GPYW. It is the government body chiefly authorised to establish rules and regulations specific to the sport clubs...and so far we have not interfered in the sport club privatisation policy as we have done in other sectors such as telecommunications...*"

> (SC.official1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)

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[96] This was due to a number of factors, many of which are discussed in this and other analyses chapters.
[97] This finding islargely sourced from the official documents and publications of the SEC.

Having said that, it is also worth noting that strategising activity at the SEC sometimes drifts towards 'stagnation' and especially 'inertia', quite paradoxically when the overall national economy is performing well. Accordingly, it can be manifestly observed that the level and intensity in planned formal strategising at the SEC is inversely related to the overall performance of the Saudi economy.

Realised patterns

At the MEP, the dominant strategising pattern can be argued to be that of *realised* activity. This stems from the traditional role of the MEP, dating back to the 1970s, as the chief economic planner at the national level, particularly in the form of the consecutive 5-year development plans. This key role of the MEP enabled it to establish a large network of historical relationships with many other influential Saudi government bodies. The Saudi government in general, and the MEP in particular, utilises the 5-year development plans as an important vehicle to promote and work towards achieving specific strategic objectives in various sectors of the Saudi economy including the sport sector. This element of periodic centralised planning that characterises these (medium-term) development plans helps the policymakers mitigate inertia and *resistance* to change at those lower level organisations responsible for the implementation of these plans. At the same time, policymakers at the MEP are careful that such activities do not cause or lead to major change in strategy work, whether inside the MEP itself or within those organisations concerned by the direct implementation of these development plans. It was evident from the collected primary data at the MEP that policymakers at this particular organisation were primarily concerned with successful realisation of various strategic plans and goal-directed activities and outcomes through the regular updating of the 5-year development plans based on the results from previous plans. A senior MEP official stated that:

> "*There is a certain reality that the ministry is required to take into consideration when devising development plans that are compatible with the performance of each particular economic sector. We review and discuss the social services sector, and then review and discuss the individual performance and strategic plans of each relevant organisation within that sector...all of that in order to accomplish the desired objectives for all the sectors.*"

<div align="right">(MP.official1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2012)</div>

In the context of realised patterns of strategising, primary and secondary data analyses also show that goal-directed activities, such as the aforementioned 5-year development plans, tend to frequently exhibit elements of inertia and stagnation in a number of sectors and organisations. It happens that following the dissemination of these strategic plans, inertia and resistance to change is quickly manifested within the organisation. Hence, strategising work at the level of the organisation often fails to renew or come up with new patterns and activities that can serve towards a successful interpretation, and therefore, implementation of the original intended strategic goals and objectives. Therefore, the MEP made it one of its tasks to actively and *periodically review* the performance of various sectors and organisations at different phases of implementation, in order to continuously realign strategic activities and practices with the original strategic goals and objectives, or sometimes even adjust these goals. The discussion previously presented in Chapter 2 regarding the objectives of national development planning revealed the prevalence of the realised pattern of strategising, whereby strategic goals are regularly realigned and revised. An important issue to highlight here, and consistent with previous discussion in this chapter, is that the participants at all the levels of study agreed that effective strategic discourse and communication between the relevant stakeholders involved in strategy formulation and implementation was weak and sometimes even completely lacking. In instances where communication was present, it tended to take place at the beginning of the strategy work but then gradually faded away, and in a rather quick fashion. In this same vein, the researcher noted the high intensity of communication – through official documents, correspondences and decrees – between the ministry and the relevant government organisations during the first stages of policy implementation, which then gradually decreased following the official announcement(s) of the strategic plan(s). Moreover, and at the lower level of hierarchy within the various participating organisations, the researcher also noticed the complete absence of any trace for such official correspondence. For instance, the researcher found very little documented evidence of correspondence between the MEP and the GPYW during the various phases of policy implementation. It was brought to the researcher's attention that when such documented correspondence existed, it is usually kept concealed by senior management.

Inertial/ embedded patterns

At the GPYW, the analysis of primary and secondary data at this particular macro-level organisation found evidence supporting the presence and dominance of the *inertial* or *embedded* pattern of strategising. Data showed that strategising activities at the GPYW

were characteristically embedded within the strategic context of the organisation, which is hugely influenced by the existing historical and cultural relationships within the GPYW. This finding is quite consistent with the key theoretical features of the inertial pattern of strategising – as previously explained in Chapter 3 (see also, for example, Miller 1993; Jarzabkowski 2005). Likewise, detailed review of the history, evolution, and organisational structure of the GPYW – see section 5.2 of this chapter as well as Chapter 2 – provides further evidence for the dominance of this particular pattern of strategising at the GPYW. Tracking the evolution of the GPYW reveals that many of the strategies, activities, procedures and daily work observed at this organisation initially started out with planned formal strategic goals, but then 'persisted' over time (such as through the consecutive national development plans) and subsequently exhibited features of *inertia*, thus becoming in the process very difficult to change or displace. The specific instance of the sport club privatisation programme, despite it being relatively recent and still work in progress, serves as an example to highlight the pervasiveness of the inertial pattern of strategising within the GPYW. Numerous other goal-directed activities and practices at the GPYW gained 'persistence' over time through a combination of historical and cultural factors, as already explained, as well as the dominance of some other powerful 'embedded' procedural factors. This latter is very important in the Saudi context and features quite strongly in several other parts of the analysis in this study. Equally important as well is the role of senior managers at the GPYW in persisting with these strategic activities, even though one may also argue that this behaviour may indeed be a direct result of the aforementioned factors, particularly procedural ones, rather than a causal factor in its own right. Consequently, and as predicted by the theoretical framework previously established in Chapter 3, many of these change programmes and strategic initiatives failed to live up to expectations and often fell short of achieving the original intended objectives, with some also exhibiting the typical 'goal-drift' trend. Moreover, and consistent with theoretical predictions, this study found evidence that this situation of organisational inertia partially contributed towards creating a collective organisational 'sense of failure' and/ or 'sup-optimal performance'.

Unresolved patterns

In the case of the GPYW, primary data showed that senior management, including those directly overseeing the sport club privatisation programme, continuously engaged and persisted with various strategising activities over the years despite the apparent lack of strategic direction and strategic outcomes attached to the privatisation programme. The

appointment – in the space of only ten years – of five different committees to evaluate the sport club privatisation process shows that the GPYW persisted with substantial strategising despite the lack of satisfactory strategic outcomes. It was highlighted to the researcher at the data collection stage that each incoming committee started from the work of incumbent committees but without clear strategic or goal-directed. This finding may also be interpreted as a persistent endeavour by the GPYW in its search for some kind of 'unfound' goal-directed activity and strategic outcomes, which could enable it to successfully implement the privatisation programme. Both these elements make this pattern of strategising *unresolved* to a significant degree. Additionally, and as Jarzabkowski (2005) argued, this unresolved pattern of strategising is commonly encountered within organisations characterised by some degree of fragmentation and distribution. This observation is entirely consistent with the context of this study, especially when one takes into account the level of fragmentation and distribution that comes with delegated strategy implementation through the various levels of hierarchy, and also involving a wide range of organisations and strategic actors, as is the case with the sport club privatisation programme in Saudi Arabia.

8.3.1.2 Macro-level types and categories of strategising activity

At the macro level, the following types and categories of goal-directed activity – as informed by the reviewed literature and the proposed main theoretical framework (see Chapter 3) – have been identified at the participant case organisations at this level.

Procedural and administrative strategising vs. interactive strategising

Generally speaking, in the wider context of the Saudi political economy (see also Chapter 2), formal administrative practices tend to dominate all aspects of centralised government planning such as overall economic planning and the setting of government budgets. Hence, the typical flow of activities with respect to planning, policymaking, decision-making as well as implementation, and in line with the typical organisational structure of most Saudi government agencies, is characterised by the dominance of pyramidal, top-down management approaches. This status quo, and as already asserted, is also largely borne out of the wider socio-cultural and historic contexts that characterise the Saudi society at large.

In the specific context of national development planning, the government relies quite heavily on the work of several 'planning committees' in drafting initial plan proposals through official meetings and consultations, in which strategic plans are regularly drafted

and officially documented and recorded. This is a major and persistent feature of the wider prevailing 'culture of centralised planning' in the Saudi context (see also Chapter 2). Hence, all major centralised government strategic planning activities, spanning several economic sectors, are initially developed within an official setting and then flow in a hierarchical, top-down and pyramidal approach. At the top of this hierarchy are the SEC and the MEP as the two main government agencies where most centralised strategic planning and strategy formulation are initiated and shaped. This type of strategy work is continuously repeated with the introduction of any new national strategic plan. In this respect, some MEP officials stated that:

> *"In collaboration with relevant agencies, we gather all necessary information and data required to prepare the initial draft for the strategic development plan...we then build and formalise the plan by having it sanctioned and approved by the Council of Ministers...and after that, all concerned entities are required to fully commit to the implementation of the plan."*

> (MP.official2, Personal Communication, January 1, 2013)

In order to obtain a more accurate picture of the nature and process of strategic planning at the SEC and MEP, it is worth revisiting some of the key findings about the patterns of strategising found at these particular organisations (see previous section 5.3.3 (a). At the level of the SEC, the *changing* pattern of activity dominates the strategising work in order to formulate and generate new strategies for the privatisation of several economic sectors and activities, but enacted mainly through very powerful and entrenched *procedural* and formal *administrative* practices and processes which have been at work a for a long time. However, data analysis at this level also interestingly reveals that the above type of strategising within the SEC, in combination with the dominant *realised* pattern of strategising observed at the MEP (see previous section 5.3.3 (a)), resulted in a shift towards a more *interactive* type of strategising that became to characterise strategy work, including privatisation policy, taking place between these two powerful macro-level policymakers. This interactive type of strategising was evident from the frequent and regular interactions, many of which were face-to-face, among high-level policymakers from the SEC and MEP, as well as with relevant parties directly involved in the privatisation policy at the macro level. Moreover, interactive strategy work in this context was also significantly shaped and influenced by wider socio-cultural factors that typify social relations within Saudi society. Several study participants from the SEC and MEP admitted that relationships between senior officials of these two organisations often

surpassed the official boundaries of work to become less formal, such as meetings outside working hours, social gatherings and similar social activities.

> *"Most of the employees at the SEC are either consultants to or employees of the MEP as well. Hence, collaboration work between us is ever-present and continuous and often exceeds routine formal work, allowing us to seek their input and assistance without formal or official boundaries"*

<div align="right">(SC.official1, Personal Communication, December 25, 2012)</div>

These direct interactions, in the form of interactive strategising, between officials at the SEC and MEP played a major role in bridging the gaps in the views of key officials at these two influential policymaking bodies.

In the specific case of the privatisation strategy of sport clubs as a standalone policy programme, analysis revealed a slight departure from the usual flow of strategy work highlighted above. Whereas the overall development plan for the whole sport sector was initiated at the level of the SEC and MEP, the tasks of specifically drafting the sport club privatisation programme was entrusted to working groups belonging to the GPYW. One study participant explained the reason behind this 'slightly unusual' change in procedure by saying that:

> *"Previous sovereign decisions from the King's office required the establishment of specialised committees to examine the sport sector back in 2002...this meant that the privatisation policy of sport clubs was treated as a 'special case', outside the usual sequence of centralised strategic planning workflow that is typically found in Saudi Arabia."*

<div align="right">(MP.official1, Personal Communication, December 31, 2012)</div>

To this effect, the researcher observed the creation, in the period [2002-2013], of five different 'specialised' committees tasked with preparing the ground for the privatisation strategy of Saudi sport clubs. These committees had been appointed through royal as well as ministerial decrees as mentioned above. The committees functioned for periods varying between 4 and 24 months, but the researcher did not succeed in retrieving any evidence of the precise work carried out by these committees.

Despite this perceived 'high' level of initial involvement of the GPWY in the drafting of the sport club privatisation strategy, further data analysis show that, in contrast, as soon as this specific strategic plan is established, approved and formalised, direct active involvement and the general level of interest from higher authorities declines quite

dramatically. Hence, while in other economic sectors, the roles of the SEC and MEP tend to dominate all aspects of centralised strategic planning, especially at the strategy formulation stages, in the specific case of the privatisation strategy of sport clubs, the levels of active participation and direct involvement of these two powerful agencies were comparatively very low and also typified by being largely discontinuous. Hence, despite many of the goal-directed activities linked to the privatisation policy experiencing severe stagnation and inertia at the GPYW level - as discussed in previous parts of this chapter -, the subsequent involvement and participation of the SEC and MEP was reduced to routinized procedural and formal administrative strategising at this important conjuncture in strategy work. On this issue, a response from one key GPYW official stated:

> *"We had previous experience in which our committees worked on preparing a full and comprehensive strategic plan for the complete redevelopment of the Saudi sport sector, with one of its key items being the club privatisation initiative...but nothing had come to our attention regarding the results of this strategy! We are currently working a new strategy for the privatisation of sport clubs in collaboration with some reputable international consulting firms but we are still yet to communicate with the MEP and the SEC."*

<div align="right">(GP.official4, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)</div>

Likewise, another GPYW official concurred with this view by reiterating that interaction between his agency and the MEP/ SEC was confined to formal procedural discourse and communication regarding wider government plans for the sport sector, and the absence of strategising practices outside of these official channels (i.e. administrative and procedural avenues).

> *"Up to now, there are no regular meetings taking place between the GPYW and the MEP and SEC. We, here at the GPYW, had already sent them official communication informing them about our ongoing work on a 'draft strategy' to privatise sport clubs, on top of disseminating this information throughout all the relevant media outlets. The SEC and MEP, as well as the sport clubs themselves, are fully aware of our efforts and ongoing work in this regard."*

<div align="right">(GP.official5, Personal Communication, January 15, 2013)</div>

To further substantiate this finding, the review of a large number of official documents and communications between the MEP and SEC on one hand and the GPYW on the other, confirms that key strategising patterns and modes of work among these organisations have remained largely unchanged since the 1970s. Documentary analysis at this level showed

that most of these official correspondences were based on official decrees and directives, dating back more than two decades prior. Thus, opening wording in official correspondences, such as "based on the directive number ... dated on ... the following has been decided ...", "based on article number XY of the sport club rules and regulations, the decision has been taken to ..." were quite frequent and typical. The same observation was also obtained following the documentary analysis of a large number of official documents and correspondences between the GPYW on the one hand, and the sport federations and sport clubs on the other. This revealed high *administrative* subordination and dependence of all Saudi sport federations as well as sport clubs to the GPYW. Additionally, any administrative-related decisions and other activities of these organisations, outside the scope of conventional routine, required the prior agreement of the GPYW. This partly contributed to the prevalence of inertial patterns of activity at the level of sport clubs, making them strongly embedded and extremely difficult to displace or change, a finding that is presented and discussed in more depth in the subsequent Chapter 7. As one GPYW stated:

> *"Sport clubs are directly and legally affiliated to the GPYW and are under its control financially and administratively. Therefore, they are obliged to abide by its rules, regulations and directives, and any decision they want to make must be under the complete and prior agreement of the GPYW."*

> (GP.official2, Personal Communication, January 14, 2013)

Table 8-2 Summary table of identified key patterns, types and categories of strategising practices at the *macro* level

Strategising	Practices and activities	Macro		
		EC	MP	GP
Patterns	*Emerging*	E	E	E
	*Reactionary ***	E	E	E
	*Inertial/ Embedded ****	E	E	D
	Changing	D	E	N
	Realised	E	D	N
	Unresolved	N	E	D
Types	*Procedural*	D	D	D
	Interactive	E	E	N
	Integrative	E	E	N
	Pre-active	E	E	E
Categories	*Episodic*	E	E	N
	Discursive	D	D	D
	Administrative	D	D	E
	Recursive and adaptive	E	E	D
	Corporate vs. peripheral	E	E	N

E = **E**xistent; **N**= **N**on-Existent; **D** = **D**ominant   *Source: developed by author*

Additional notes:

* New pattern, see relevant text in Chapter 8 for the author's definition of this pattern.

** Includes mild and tacit resistance practice.

8.3.2 **Meso-level key findings**

8.3.2.1 *Meso-level patterns of strategising activity*

At the meso level, the following patterns of goal-directed activity were identified within the sample case organisations at this level of strategising praxis.

Emerging and reactionary patterns

Data analyses at meso level revealed the presence of emerging and patterns of strategising within the participant organisations but not any prevalent or dominant forms. Similar to macro-level findings, emerging patterns of activity are observed in more general and historical trajectories than in terms of the specific strategising work around the privatisation policy or similar strategies. As was asserted in previous parts of the study (see Chapters 2, 5 and 6), many of the Saudi sports agencies, including the various sports federations and the Olympic Committee, were created in more reactionary fashion. The former as necessary governing bodies of the growing number of sport clubs, and the latter as many of these clubs started competing internationally and becoming members within international sports bodies. The strategising work of the SAOC was characterised by a duality of work in trying to find the right balance between fulfiling its responsibilities towards the GPYW on the one hand, and the requirements of the international sports

bodies, such as the various international sports federations on the other. Most of these activities of the SAOC were in a reactionary manner; goal-directed by not emerging from within the organisation itself. There were signs however, both at the sports federations level and at the SAOC that recent changes in the regulations and organisational structures of these agencies (such as changes in boards of directors and the voting system), have started to encourage the more of the emerging patterns of strategising. An example of this was mentioned in one of the sports federation practitioners recounting of the case of a small-scale tennis programme that was initiated through 'personal' initiatives, from some tennis referees and coaches, after one regular sports discussion meeting. This particular programme draws the attention of Tennis Federation officials and was eventually adopted within the federation's wider plans. As the Tennis Federation official recounted:

> *"When we started the idea of small-scale tennis programmes, it was just a passing thought really in order to link the tennis game with education as a potential channel for popularising the sport more widely in Saudi Arabia...today the idea has become a widespread programme adopted in many Saudi schools and sponsored by a few companies to the tune of quarter of a million SAR* [around $50,000 equivalent].*"*

> (TF.official1, Personal Communication, January 2, 2013)

Changing patterns

As mentioned earlier (see also Chapter 6), the recent changes at meso-level organisations allowed for some changing activities, both purposeful and emergent, to come to the front of strategising work at these organisations. It is important to note, however, that change in this context does not mean the major redirection in established goal-directed activities, but rather a partial realignment of objectives accompanied by some reconstruction of meaning behind exiting goal-directed activities. The main aim behind such changing activities is to improve the strategising workflow so that it travels in all directions (meso to macro and vice versa, and meso to micro and vice versa) instead of being only top-down and one-dimensional. The Olympic Committee in particular has been adopting various proactive measures to enhance the strategising work of the sports federations and the various Olympic sub-committees. As one SAOC official stated:

> *"We have given sports federations and the members of the Olympic Committee the opportunity to present their views and proposals regarding the future of Saudi sport. I sincerely hope that such measures can help bring about positive change in the way that decisions are taken within the sports federations."*

> (OC.official1, Personal Communication, December 29, 2012)

Further data analysis specifically in relation to the privatisation policy reveals that such moves towards more changing patterns of strategising work did not impact the work around the privatisation policy which had goals and objectives predetermined by macro-level actors. Hence, meso-level organisations pursued changing activities instead in relation to their overall organisational objectives such as promoting various sports and organising various sporting competitions.

Realised patterns

Realised patterns were the dominant pattern of strategising activity at meso-level organisations (see table 8-5). Despite the recent changes that these meso-level organisations have undergone, the majority of their strategising work still prioritises the pursuit of existing strategic overall goals but regularly reconstructing practitioners' meanings around these goals. This is in order to prevent inertia and enable the achievement of strategic outcomes. Such practices at the sports federations and the SAOC were influenced by the GPYW's recent efforts to widen the participation of various external stakeholders in strategy formulation such as academic and entrepreneurs, but without necessarily undergoing major changes to the existing goal-directed activities. The lack of involvement and participation of meso-level organisations in strategy formulation around the sport club privatisation did not prevent the Olympic Committee from engaging in activities that are closely related to privatisation, such as around sport investment and more economic liberalisation within the sport sector. Similarly, inside the work of the sports federations, data analysis reveals the widespread presence of realised patterns of strategising activity. One federation practitioner stated that:

> *"Being volunteers does not imply that we cannot bring about change in the federation...on the contrary, we have made some achievements in this regard but the privatisation policy of sport clubs does not fall within our work boundaries..."*

> (KF.official2, Personal Communication, December 26, 2012)

Inertial/ embedded patterns

Inertial patterns at meso-level organisations were less prevalent that at the higher levels of strategising praxis, such as those reported within Chapter 5. Despite the close working relationships between the GPYW and meso-level organisations, many of the embedded patterns found at the level of the GPYW did not filter down to the meso level, becoming instead stagnant and inertial at their origin. At the same time, there were a few examples of other practices that have become highly embedded and inertial over the years, at the macro level, but still manifested at the meso level, such as for instance activities around

sport investment. Another related finding is that highly embedded patterns of strategising activity at the macro level often clash with those at lower levels including the meso level. Another factor that acted to counteract and prevent the widespread of inertial and embedded patterns is the recent deep organisational and regulation changes that meso-level organisation have undergone, thereby bringing new leadership, ideas and ways of working.

Unresolved patterns

The unresolved pattern of strategising was quite dominant at the Olympic Committee (see table 8-5). During various fieldwork visits, the researcher met with various SAOC officials who spoke about initiatives to modernise existing rules and frameworks at the level of sports federations and others to develop professional competencies within these federations. Such initiatives date back to 2002 and were revisited in 2011 and 2014 but lacked in clear goal-direction and hence fell into a vicious circle, permanently searching for some 'unfound' goal(s). At the sports federations, the unresolved pattern was observed but did not dominate, as was the case at the Olympic Committee. One reason behind this could be that most of the work of the federations happened within short planning periods. Additionally, the researcher observed an organisational culture that tends to attribute success and achievement to individuals, which may have created added incentives for strategising practitioners to deliver strategic outcomes within short planning periods. At the same time, however, various activities within the sports federations were left unresolved such as programmes around sport investments and commercial sponsorship.

Table 8-3 Summary table of identified key patterns, types and categories of strategising practices at the *meso* level

Strategising	Practices and activities	Meso				
		OC	FF	VF	KF	TF
Patterns	*Emerging*	E	E	E	E	E
	Reactionary *	E	E	E	E	E
	Inertial/ Embedded **	E	N	N	N	N
	Changing	E	E	E	E	E
	Realised	D	D	D	D	D
	Unresolved	D	E	E	E	E
Types	*Procedural*	E	E	E	E	E
	Interactive	E	E	E	E	E
	Integrative	D	D	D	D	D
	Pre-active	N	N	N	N	N
Categories	*Episodic*	E	D	D	D	D
	Discursive	D	D	D	D	D
	Administrative	D	D	D	D	D
	Recursive and adaptive	E	E	E	E	E
	Corporate vs. peripheral	E	E	E	E	E

E = **E**xistent; **N**= **N**on-Existent; **D** = **D**ominant   *Source: developed by author*

Additional notes:

* New pattern, see relevant text in Chapter 8 for the author's definition of this pattern.

** Includes mild and tacit resistance practice.

8.3.3 **Micro-level key findings**

At the micro level of strategising praxis, the following main patterns of goal-directed activity were identified within the participant case organisations.

8.3.3.1 *Micro-level patterns of strategising activity*

Emerging and reactionary

Research evidence at the micro level reveals the widespread presence of *reactionary* patterns of strategising activity within case organisations at this level (the GPYW regional offices and the individual sport clubs). Reactionary patterns provides a more accurate classification than emerging patterns in the case of regional offices due to the fact that the top-down approach is the dominant form of strategising work and that bottom-up (i.e. originating from the regional offices) and unintended forms of strategising are virtually non-existent.

At the regional offices, the prevalence of the reactionary pattern can be attributed to the top-down and heavily procedural work approach to daily organisational activities. Views expressed study participants within the regional offices (see Chapter 7) agreed that their organisations are in fact extensions of the GPYW and hence their role are confined to

communicating the GPYW's orders and instructions to the sport clubs and overseeing implementation. Hence, the activities of the GPYW are not internationally pre-planned but instead emerge and develop in *reaction* to higher directives and instructions from the GPYW. What adds more substance to this finding comes from close examination of the history and development of these regional offices. As was alluded to in Chapter 7, all of the regional offices were established in order to extend the government agencies' control (such as the GPYW) over sport clubs and their activities at regional and local levels. Thus, strategising activities related to the privatisation programme do not directly concern the regional office managers except for providing the link between the GPYW and the clubs on the one hand, and overseeing related activities of sport clubs such as the use of club infrastructure and facilities for investment and commercial purposes on the other. Hence, the main role of the regional offices is to act as the go-in-between the GPYW and sport clubs, meaning that all of their activities are a reaction to what originates from either side.

Within the sport clubs, strategising and organising activities are dominated by emerging patterns of activity and also partially reactionary ones albeit with some personal interpretation combined with some forms of mild tacit resistance attached to them (see Chapter 7). Data analysis reveals that most clubs function without a clear organisational structure or strategic plans to guide future direction. Additionally, tracking the history and development of the various sport clubs shows strong elements of the emerging patterns of activity as most clubs were formed in a non-intentional manner and sometimes even as a by-product of other loosely related developments (example of the Al-Ittihad sport club based in Jeddah, see Chapter 7 section 7.1). It happened that subsequently and for various reasons mentioned on previous occasions, many of these sport clubs particularly the bigger ones which are typically based in large urban areas, started attracting the attention of the government and key policymakers. Such attention was in the form of financial subventions and aid, providing club infrastructure and facilities, as well as integrating these clubs into the overall national planning of the government, such as the 5-year development plans (see also Chapter 2).

Changing patterns

Unsurprisingly and due to the dominance of the reactionary patterns of activity at the regional offices, one cannot speak of the presence of any changing patterns within these micro-level organisations, particularly in their working relationship with macro-level actors such as the GPYW. In this regard, none of the daily strategising activities at the

regional offices exhibit features of the changing patterns, either purposeful or emergent. Having said that, limited changing patterns of activity were observed in the other direction of strategising workflow, i.e. the relationship with sport clubs. One such atypical example was in the case of the regional office in Dammam (Eastern region), where the office manager changed the prevailing officious strategic discourse and communication to a more interactive one.

In contrast, the strategising activities at the sport clubs exhibited much more of the features of changing patterns, albeit at lower levels of decision-making and confined to the immediate environment of the club. As previously highlighted in Chapter 7, club officials had some limited room for personal interpretation of existing rules and regulations as well as orders and decrees that come from the regional offices and higher level strategy actors such as the sports federations and the GPYW. The development in privatisation practices and to more extent the sport investment practices observed at various sport clubs provide some support for the existence of such changing patterns. Four out of the five sample clubs adopted new practices to replace the old ones, such as establishing commercial partnerships and sponsorship deals with the private sector. Such practices were particularly widespread among football clubs (the example of commercial partnerships with the telecommunications companies such as STC and Mobily, see Chapter 7). Interestingly, there was the instance of one sport club in which such commercial patterns of activity were not adopted at all, but this had caused anger and complaints from the club's stakeholders and clubs officials were accused of being out-of-date in their management style.

Realised patterns

At micro-level organisations there was no evidence of the presence of *realised* patterns of activity. This finding at the regional offices level is again unsurprising due to the dominance of reactionary patterns, implying that these organisations and their practitioners did not have the will nor the legitimacy to pursue such patterns of activity. An additional factor in this is the fact that the privatisation strategy, for instance, lacked clear goals and guidelines for implementation by micro-level actors. This inevitably meant that there was no clear set of standards or benchmarks for judging or evaluating the progress of policy implementation. Likewise and by extension, there were very little mechanisms in the strategising work of micro-level practitioners that can allow the detection of inertia and persistence. As for the case of the sport clubs, and as previously stated in Chapter 7, most of them did not have clear strategic plans and goal-directed

activities except for the sporting side, such as planning for tournament and championships. Hence, the privatisation initiative did not represent a priority activity for club officials and the attached ambiguity and confusion about policy objectives provided an additional pretext for the clubs to act accordingly. In turn, the regional offices did not have the required authority to interfere in directing the activities and decision-making of sport clubs, even though they had the authority to oversee, supervise and report issues. Hence, the activities of regional offices were found to be predominantly confined to supervision, communication of directives and reporting of problems and issues and very little active follow-up and evaluation of goal-directed activities at the lower levels of strategy implementation. Meanwhile, the activities of the sport clubs in relation to the privatisation policy were mainly limited to receiving directives and instructions, as conveyed by the regional offices, and crucially lacking in clear direction or implementation guidelines. In short, at the micro-level organisations, strategising goal-directed activities such as the privatisation programme were not designed to be followed up, evaluated and adjusted according to directed strategic outcomes, but were instead filtered through from the higher levels to be strictly followed and implemented with a sort of 'open deadline'.

Inertial/ embedded patterns

Many aspects of the proposed privatisation strategy intersected, and were often a source of conflict, with previous established strategising activities found at the sport clubs, such as previous programmes towards the professionalisation of sports or investment in the sector. Hence, besides the added levels of confusion and complexity caused by this overlaps in activities, other aspects of the daily work within sport clubs exhibited elements of inertia and resistance to change (*inertial* patterns of activity) at the detriment of the new realities dictated by the privatisation policy. Key strategising actors across the three levels of praxis failed to harness such overlaps to achieve higher levels of cooperation, involvement and ultimately performance. At the level of regional offices, a similar situation can be observed whereby 3 out of the 5 office managers said that they did not actively try to interpret or understand instructions and decrees from higher level strategising actors because they were directly concerning the sport clubs and their role was to jus convey them. Hence, strategising activities at the regional offices become part of the daily routine of the work of these organisations which are filtered down to the clubs without minimum probing, then ending up losing their originally intended goals and objectives.

Unresolved patterns

Besides reactionary and emerging patterns, the *unresolved* pattern of activity was another dominant feature of the strategising activities observed at micro-level organisations, as relevant to the privatisation strategy. Data analysis reveals that most aspect of the strategising work around the proposed privatisation policy flowed through various strategising praxes in a strict top-down hierarchical approach, ultimately ending up at the sport clubs. Once there, most of these activities are either marginalised or completely ignored by key strategy implementation actors, but at the same time remaining in the background work of micro-level actors but remaining *unresolved* and not attaining their goal-directed strategic outcomes for indefinite time horizons. This pattern of activity was more prevalent at the sport clubs due to many factors some of which have already been mentioned such as the lack of clear direction and implementation guidelines, but additionally also the nature of daily work observed at these organisation including the patterns of work of club employees (mostly volunteers) and the overall focus on the operational side in the daily running of club affairs. Hence, the ultimate result is that most of these activities end up becoming unrealised and in permanent search for 'unfound' goals. The above situation faced by strategising actors within the sport clubs is not helped by the strategising work conducted at the level of regional offices as their practitioners do not actively seek to *resolve* issues but only convey and report them as highlighted before. This further reinforces the presence and continuation of a large amount of *unresolved* issues in relation to the implementation aspects of the privatisation strategy, without meeting their intended goals or strategic outcomes. The researcher found numerous instances of such unresolved patterns of activity, such as the various infrastructure projects linked to the privatisation programme not being delivered in the allocated timeframes and hence becoming 'frozen' for a number of years. The overall picture in this regard, and consistent with theoretical predictions (Chapter 3), is that key micro-level strategy implementation actors find themselves in continuous permanent albeit feeble attempts, at least within themselves, to try to construct commonly understood meanings about goal-directed activity, but ultimately leaving little extra capacity to coordinate and actually implement key aspects of the goal-directed activity.

8.3.3.2 Micro-level types and categories of strategising activity

At the micro level, data analyses revealed the following types and categories of goal-directed activity at the participant case organisations.

Procedural type and administrative category of strategising vs. interactive strategising

The working relationships between the regional offices and the sport clubs were clearly dominated by a highly prescribed *procedural* type of strategising enabled through long-established *administrative* practices. Interaction between these micro-level actors occurred once a month, in a form of regular meetings but mostly in a highly rigid and procedural manner. Centralisation of decision-making and high levels of bureaucracy practiced at the macro-level organisations (Chapter 5) filtered through to the micro level and shaped the patterns of strategising work that took place at the GPYW regional offices in particular. This observation was particularly pronounced in the case of micro-level organisations based in the bigger urban cities such as Riyadh, Dammam and Jeddah and noticeably less in more remote regions such as Jouf and Jazan. Hence, the flow of strategising activity followed this rigid top-down and highly procedural approach, thus in turn limiting the scope for interactive strategising to make any meaningful impact at the micro level. Some forms of interactive strategising were observed by these were limited to occasional interaction between the regional offices and local sport clubs[98] but mainly to discuss instructions and implementation issues in order to conform with the overall administrative and procedural frameworks and not in any way to influence the substance or direction of goal-directed activities and strategies. The daily strategising work within the regional offices was equally dominated by procedural strategising and highly rigid administrative practices and followed a highly prescribed top-down approach.

When probed about the reasons that led to the dominance of procedural strategising and administrative practices in the working relationships between micro-level organisations, study participants found it difficult to explain. However, there was some convergence of participant views that contextual factors did play a significant role in creating the current situation, but could not articulate the precise dynamics of how this came about.

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[98] The researcher also observed one case of interactive strategising taking place within the Eastern region.

Table 8-4 Summary table of identified key patterns, types and categories of strategising practices at the *micro* level

Strategising	Practices and activities	Micro									
		CO	EO	NO	SO	WO	HC	EC	AC	TC	IC
Patterns	*Emerging*	N	E	N	N	N	D	E	D	D	E
	Reactionary *	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E
	Inertial/ Embedded **	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
	Changing	N	E	N	N	N	E	E	E	N	E
	Realised	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Unresolved	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D
Types	*Procedural*	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E
	Interactive	N	E	E	E	N	N	E	E	E	N
	Integrative	N	E	N	N	N	N	E	N	N	N
	Pre-active	N	N	N	N	N	E	N	E	E	N
Categories	*Episodic*	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	N	N	N
	Discursive	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
	Administrative	E	E	E	E	E	N	N	N	N	N
	Recursive and adaptive	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
	Corporate vs. peripheral	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E

E = **E**xistent; **N** = **N**on-Existent; **D** = **D**ominant   *Source: developed by author*

Additional notes:

* New pattern, see relevant text in Chapter 8 for the author's definition of this pattern. At micro level, it is a dominant pattern among regional GPYW offices and features heavily at sport clubs level.

** Includes mild and tacit resistance practice.

8.3.4 **Cross-case[99] synthesis**

The analyses of strategising patterns, types and categories within each of the three levels of strategising praxis, as presented in the previous three sections, provided an evaluative picture of the nature of strategising dynamics as relevant to the Saudi sport club privatisation policy. These findings relate to a total sample of 18 different organisations across the three levels. This section superficially augments and complements the aforementioned analyses by reporting the results of cross-case synthesis of primary and secondary data *across* the three levels of study. The key findings from cross-case synthesis are also summarised in table 8-5.

8.3.4.1Findings on key patterns of strategising activity

In terms of key findings regarding the observed patterns of strategising and on a general level, there is no single pattern of strategising that dominates in all of the organisations across the three levels. Instead, each level features certain patterns that came to prevail or dominate, but not necessarily equally featuring or dominating within the rest of

[99] This section specifically addressed key findings from deals from cross-case and cross-level synthesis.

strategising praxis levels. The *realised* pattern, as an example, is widely prevalent and dominates at the meso level and has some presence at macro-level organisations too, but not existent at the micro-level organisations. The dominance of this strategising pattern at the meso level can be attributed to the sport federations and Olympic Committee continuous attempts to shape and reshape activities in pursuit of goal-directed outcomes. Additionally as well, this pattern of activity suits the purposes of meso-level organisations in their daily strategising work allowing them to exert some influence over the direction of goal-directed activities, but without overtly interfering in or clashing with the work of macro-level actors. At the macro level, the realised pattern tends to dominate at the MEP but interestingly was not linked to the same pattern observed at the meso level. This can be explained by the official role allocated to the Ministry of Economic Planning since the 1970s, which is to pursue existing goal-directed objectives and (5-year) national development plans to deliver progress and growth in various economic sectors. Hence, on the one hand, this pattern of strategising observed at the MEP allows strategy actors within this macro-level organisation to continuously adjust and realign goal-directed outcomes and therefore enable it to limit inertia and resistance to change by implementation actors. It can, on the other hand, achieve this without necessarily undergoing major radical changes to overall policy objectives, thereby ensuring some continuity in strategy work among various stakeholder organisations across the different planning periods.

Another overall finding that comes out of the cross-case synthesis across the three levels concerns the emergence of a *novel* pattern of strategising – inferred from the review of literature presented in Chapter 3. The researcher chose to call this new pattern the *reactionary* pattern, loosely defined as "initially starting as completely passive, non-intentional and not pre-planned and lacking in goal-direction. It is 'imposed' on the organisation and its practitioners as a 'reaction' to some external forces, pressures or organisational realities". Hence, the reactionary pattern resembles some elements of the emerging pattern but visibly lacking in goal-direction. Having said that, this pattern can, over time, become more goal-directed with attached strategic outcomes, even though it can also experience high levels of inertia over time. At the micro level, this pattern is particularly dominant among the regional GPYW offices and also features quite heavily within most sport clubs. This strategising pattern also noticeably features at macro-level organisations albeit less in terms of organisational pressures but instead in more relation to general historical developments and trends, combined with using it as a response to occasional external pressures (such as specific economic, political and social pressures,

see Chapter 5 for more). This was particularly the case at the SEC and MEP, with the GPYW sharing some of the characteristics of meso-level organisations in its working relationships with the other two macro-level organisations. A further aspect of difference between how reactionary patterns of strategising are used by macro- and meso-level organisations compared to those at the micro level relates to the fact that senior macro- and meso- level officials resorted to this pattern in their strategising work whenever there was an 'urgent' need to actively respond to some external developments and/ or pressures. In contrast, data analysis revealed that reactionary patterns of strategising among micro-level actors, particularly those at the regional offices, had become so prevalent and dominant that they constituted a permanent feature of organisational daily activity whereby they waited for instructions and orders from higher levels and only then they reacted according to what the situation necessitated. Hence, a rather expected, but important, derived finding was that the strategising daily work of most micro-level actors, including that around club privatisation strategy, was characterised by being mostly *passive* in nature, thus becoming highly procedural and relying on structural forms of legitimacy and only being enabled through highly rigid administrative practices, allowing little room for interaction by implementation actors.

As for *emerging* patterns of strategising, data analysis shows their presence within most organisations across the three praxis levels, even though strictly speaking they often did not result in clear goal-directed outcomes in addition to coming into existence in more general trajectories than in terms of actual practical strategising work such as the work performed around the privatisation programme. At the macro level, for example (see earlier sections of this chapter), the presence of emerging patterns was recorded mostly in the general context of the history and evolution of the Saudi sports sector and by extension that of various sport agencies (the cases of the SEC, MEP and GPYW), and less in terms of the specific sport cub privatisation programme. Practical strategising activities such as the latter were instead pre-planned and structured, particularly at the SEC level, albeit in a general sense as they tended to lack in clarity and direction as they filtered down to organisations and actors at the lower levels of praxis. Overall, the same can also be said about meso-level organisations. At the micro level, the situation could not be more contrasting between the regional offices vis-a-vis the sport clubs. At the regional offices, such emerging patterns of strategising practices were, unsurprisingly, completely non-existent due to the highly prescribed work of these organisations. In contrast, emerging patterns at the level of sport clubs were prevalent at all the participant case clubs and dominated in 3 out of 5. The actors at club level often adopted various practices in a

spontaneous unplanned manner, only for these practices to become goal-directed and purposeful over time. An example of such emerging practices is the various club activities in relation to long-term efforts to attract private investment, and diversify and increase the club's revenues. It is worth noting however, that such emerging practices even though they eventually gained in some strategic direction, but this often did not go beyond the boundaries of the concerned club. This can be classified as a missed opportunity for policymakers in charge of the privatisation policy as they could have harnessed these capabilities found at the lower levels of praxis by actively encouraging participation and involvement of actors within these levels by adopting a more horizontal approach combined with some bottom-up strategising work. What was instead observed in practice (see also Chapter 7), was that most sport club officials did not buy into the overall vision of the proposed privatisation policy due to this lack of involvement at crucial stages of strategy formulation.

Inertial or *embedded* patterns of strategising activity were observed at all the case organisations, with the exception of the sports federations (meso level). Overall, this particular finding is not entirely surprising due to many of the aforementioned historical, procedural and contextual factors that helped over the years shape the work of most Saudi organisations particularly government agencies. At the macro level, inertial patterns feature heavily in the strategising work of the SEC and MEP and are dominant in the case of the GPYW (see also Chapter 5 and previous sections of this chapter). In addition to being heavily embedded within the above-mentioned contextual factors, inertial strategising in relation to the privatisation policy are further enabled and preserved through the persistence of top management (in this case the macro-level actors) on pursuing this goal-directed activity over more than a decade now. Hence, this filtered through to most organisations at the lower levels of strategising praxis (see table 8-5). The exception of sport federations can be attributed to the deep changes that these federations have recently undergone in key areas of their organisational structure, resulting in senior federation officials and management to attempt to find new ways of delivering goal-directed outcomes.

Closely related to the inertial and embedded patterns of strategising, an interesting finding from data analysis that specifically relates to the sport club privatisation programme is the strong pervasiveness of the *unresolved* pattern of strategising (see table 8-5). With the exception of the SEC (macro level), evidence supporting the presence of this pattern of strategising was found at all the levels of investigation and across all of the participating case organisations. Hence, with the exception of the SEC and for more than a decade,

strategising practitioners persisted with various strategising activities related to the privatisation policy despite the observed lack of clarity in direction and lack of satisfactory realised strategic outcomes. Strategising theory (see, for example Jarzabkowski 2005, and Chapter 3) points to strategy actors, particularly at the lower levels of praxis, entering into a cycle of continuous, and potentially permanent, search for some unfound goal-directed activity and outcome(s).

The cross-case finding regarding the unresolved pattern of strategising is also consistent with the theoretical prediction (see Chapter 3) that this pattern of strategising tends to be correlated with high level of fragmentation and distribution in the chain of strategy implementation. This is consistent with the context of this study whereby privatisation strategy implementation is largely delegated involving numerous strategy actors across three levels of strategising praxis.

As previously discussed in macro-level findings, at the highest levels of planning and policymaking, strategising work around the sport club privatisation policy may have initially started as *emerging* practices without pre-determined formal goals. These practices subsequently gained in legitimacy and significance, and eventually attracted the attention of senior policymakers (such as the SEC and MEP), leading to their official their official adoption within the overall privatisation policy objectives at a national level (the 5-year development plans). These changing patterns were not observed at the level of the GPYW (macro) as well as most of its regional offices (meso) due to the preference of GPYW practitioners to persist with 'stable' practices rather than pursue new ones, in turn directly impacting on regional office practitioners. At the meso level, the situation was different in that changing patterns were manifested at the sports federations level and at the Olympic Committee in particular. The latter has undergone various proactive initiatives to improve the strategising work around the privatisation policy. At the club levels, there was also strong evidence for the presence of changing patterns of strategising due to the nature of daily work in these clubs (see also Chapter 7), which leaves some freedom for personal interpretation by club practitioners and the pursuit of objectives that primarily serve the interests of the club. It is however worth noting that these changing activities at the micro level are typically strongly counteracted by other prevalent practices including embedded patterns and procedural/ administrative strategising.

8.3.4.2 Findings on types and categories of strategising activity

In terms of key findings relating to the types and categories of strategising that came out of cross-case synthesis across the three levels, and as relevant to the sport club privatisation policy, one primary finding was the clear prevalence and frequent dominance of the procedural type at all levels of strategising praxis. This affected all aspects of strategising daily work whether intra- or inter-organisational (see table 8-5). The vast proportion of daily strategising workflow followed a highly prescribed, rigid and hierarchical set of procedures that were typically top-down and bureaucratic, with very limited active participation by lower-level actors and consequently no room for critical strategic discourse. These procedural patterns were typically enabled through a long-established and highly entrenched mechanisms and 'ways of doing things' that are typical of Saudi organisations, particularly government agencies involved in the sport sector. Such mechanisms included various administrative practices, forms of communication and strategic discourse, combined with the pervasive presence of the structural form of organisational legitimacy (see also table 8-5). The procedural type of strategising was particularly dominant at the very highest levels of strategising praxis involving senior policy and decision-makers, such as the case at all of the macro-level organisations and the same was observed at the regional offices within the micro level. It is also worth adding that besides the historical and contextual factors mentioned above, the current observed situation in terms of the dominance of procedural and administrative forms of strategising was also helped becoming entrenched by senior government officials' desire to keep high levels of control over the activities within the sport sector.

At the meso level, procedural strategising was also extensive but in a comparatively less dominant form, with the occasional recent introduction of alternative forms of interactive strategising by meso-level organisations, such as the promotion of interactive mechanisms in the working relationships between the Olympic Committee and the sports federations. This observation at the meso-level organisations could at least be partly attributed to the changes brought by recent elections as well as some changes affecting part of the existing regulations governing the work of these sport agencies, factors that resulted in wider base participation in decision-making. Similarly, at the level of sport clubs (micro level), procedural forms of strategising were also widely practiced but this did not mask most of the club officials' desire to detach themselves from the direct oversight and control of government agencies and higher-level practitioners. How this was interpreted among different club officials in relation to the proposed privatisation programme did not always converge however. In the case of the larger clubs, their officials saw privatisation as

potential vehicle to achieve autonomy and becoming self-sustainable particularly if taking into account that some of the bigger clubs already practice various privatisation practices such as commercial partnerships with the private sector. Alternatively, the smaller clubs (particularly those based in the smaller and/ or border regions) saw the proposed privatisation as potentially beneficial in bringing much needed infrastructure and facilities to their clubs, but at the same time expressing concerns about what privatisation could mean for them in terms of direct government subventions being significantly cut.

Besides the prevalent and dominant procedural and administrative forms of strategising, cross-case analysis also revealed the presence of other categories of strategising practices (see table 8-5), as informed by the theoretical review in Chapter 3. Episodic practices were present in all of case organisations across the three levels of praxis. These ranged from the formal to the informal with the former dominating at the higher levels of praxis and the latter becoming more frequent at lower levels. Data analysis also reveals a lack of continuity within given episodes of strategising or in terms of sequences of episodes. Some episodes also did not achieve the intended outcomes particularly at lower levels of praxis, leading to an abrupt start of a new episode, hence affecting continuity, or abandoning the episode altogether. An example of this can be observed particularly at the macro level where various episodic practices had the tendency to end at that level and do not make it to lower levels.

Discursive practices were equally present and dominant forms of strategising within all the case organisations. It clearly came out from primary data analysis that strategy discourse and discursive practices in the context of Saudi club privatisation were used by all the relevant organisational actors not only to express their standpoints regarding the policy vision but also often to enhance, protect or at times resist such strategy. Consistent with theoretical predictions (see, for example, Laine and Vaara, 2007), discursive practices in the Saudi context did particularly bring out the social aspects of strategy and strategising. These aspects are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of Saudi society. A dominant form of strategic discourse in the study context was the (over)use of highly procedural and administrative tools as a means for strategic discourse. The most frequently used tool was the official written document, such as communiqués, decrees and instructions. The use of such official strategy discourse was visibly more prevalent at the higher levels of strategising praxis, becoming relatively less at lower levels, particularly in the daily communication between actors within the same organisation. Administrative practices were also prevalent among all case organisations across the three praxis levels and acted as the main channel for enabling procedural strategising. Examples of such

practices include various organising and coordination tools such as budgets and control systems. At the micro level, some clubs did not have sufficient resources in place to become involved in high-level administrative practices and due to this limited themselves to basic tools and mechanisms. Recursive and adaptive practices were also observed in most of the participant organisations, particularly at the level of sports clubs albeit in relation to wider day-to-day activities such as sport investment and not in relation to the privatisation policy due to lack of clarity and guidance as established before. At the other organisations, such 'social' recursive and adaptive practices were present, with the exception of regional offices (micro level), but regularly replaced and counteracted by institutionally imposed ones.

The final category of strategising practices concerns corporate and peripheral practices. Data analysis reveals the dominance of stability-seeking corporate practices particularly at the level of the GPYW (macro), whereas at the meso level, the strategising actors at the sports federations as well as the Olympic Committee exhibited some elements of the peripheral exploratory practices as they sought to become more independent and autonomous. At the clubs level, such practices also existed but did not greatly influence strategy making due to the absence of bottom-up approach to strategy formulation.

Table 8-5 Summary table of the main findings of cross-case synthesis: the main patterns, types and categories of strategising practices across the three levels

Strategising	Practices and activities	Macro			Meso					Micro									
		EC	MP	GP	OC	FF	VF	KF	TF	CO	EO	NO	SO	WO	HC	EC	AC	TC	IC
Patterns	*Emerging*	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	N	E	N	N	N	D	E	D	D	E
	Reactionary *	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E
	Inertial/ Embedded **	E	E	D	E	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
	Changing	D	E	N	E	E	E	E	E	N	E	N	N	N	E	E	E	N	E
	Realised	E	D	N	D	D	D	D	D	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Unresolved	N	E	D	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D
Types	*Procedural*	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E
	Interactive	E	E	N	E	E	E	E	E	N	E	E	E	N	N	E	E	E	N
	Integrative	E	E	N	D	D	D	D	D	N	E	N	N	N	E	N	N	N	N
	Pre-active	E	E	E	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	N	E	E	N
Categories	*Episodic*	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
	Discursive	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
	Administrative	D	D	E	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
	Recursive and adaptive	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E
	Corporate vs. peripheral	E	E	D	D	D	D	D	D	N	N	N	N	N	E	E	E	E	E

E = **E**xistent; **N**= **N**on-Existent; **D** = **D**ominant   *Source: developed by author*

Additional notes:

* New pattern, see relevant text in Chapter 8 for the author's definition of this pattern. At micro level, it is a dominant pattern among regional GPYW offices and features heavily at sport clubs level.

** Includes mild and tacit resistance practice.

8.4 Evaluation of sport club privatisation in Saudi Arabia

This third part of the chapter complements the previous discussion by critically evaluating key aspects of the Saudi sport club privatisation policy, including its historical development and evolution from policy inception until today. Additionally, previous findings from this chapter and prior analyses chapters (5 to 7) are synthesised in order to deepen the evaluation by focusing on the main triggers, enablers as well as obstacles as the other key aspects of policy implementation. In doing this, the main framework of analysis is still the main proposed theoretical framework in Chapter 3, including the three key domains of strategising (the 3Ps) and related key theoretical constructs of the strategising research agenda. A derived contribution of this section is to generate some valuable theoretical and practical lessons including useful policy recommendations.

8.4.1 **Policy evolution and key triggers**

At the highest levels of policymaking in Saudi government, the views from SEC officials (see also Chapter 5) highlighted a number of factors that historically helped trigger the debate about privatisation policy in general and within the sport sector in particular. The main factor that came out from the study participants' responses was related to wider economic issues affecting the Saudi economy particularly during the 1990s. This period saw the Saudi economy enter into a severe economic crisis caused by the implication from first Gulf War, combined with sharp falls in oil prices. Hence, the economy entered into recession with economic growth stagnating and the government's finances saw significant budget deficits as a result (Foley S. , 2010;Niblock & Malik, 2007; Rashid & Shaheen, 1992). This situation led the government to start considering resorting to privatising several economic sectors as a response to the crisis. The privatisation experiences from several countries within the region (Arab and Asian), as well as internationally provided a natural platform for privatisation planning at the national level (see also Chapter 2) and the government paid close attention to the results achieved from these experiences. Additionally, the Saudi government through its various agencies and ministries consulted international bodies, such as the World Bank and the IMF about its privatisation intentions and efforts (Alkhames, 2011; Akoum, 2009; Alsaatey, 2000). Subsequently, a number of working groups and specialised committees at various senior levels of state policymaking started looking into formulating privatisation policies and strategies for implementation in identified economic sectors. It was in 2002 that a comprehensive national privatisation plan was devised by SEC culminating in a list of

recommend state-dominated sectors and state-owned entities drawn to be privatised and the sport sector (including sport clubs) were included as one of the identified sectors. Since then, a number of sectors have undergone complete or partial privatisation during that period, such the telecommunications and electricity sectors and with some positive results. Consequently, the various privatisation plans have attracted significant official as well as public and media attention and continue to do so today.

Specifically regarding the privatisation policy for the sport sector, SEC officials sated that the main motive behind these plans was to allow the clubs to become more sustainable and self-sufficient through adopting commercial business practices such as attracting private investments and entering into commercial partnership deals, thereby diversifying and increasing revenues. These officials were keen to point out that the privatisation plans go beyond the mere selling-off of state-owned assets, such as club facilities and infrastructure, and the vision behind the privatisation is to being more efficiency into the sector and making it a net contributor to the overall Saudi economy

The study participants at the MEP had similar views by arguing that privatisation of the sport sector and sport clubs in particular will bring more management professionalism and operational efficiency into the sector, hence creating new sources of revenue and becoming independent of direct government subvention. GPYW officials also echoed these views and were overall optimistic about the ability of the sector, post-privatisation, to diversify income sources particularly football, but with some other sports still in need of some form of government financial assistance.

The overall picture from senior policymaking officials (mainly at the macro level), shows that most strategising practitioners agreed on the principles and basic premise of the privatisation policy for the sport sector and that overall it would be beneficial and better than the current status quo. However, these views diverge when it comes to precise format that the privatisation plans should take, such as regarding whether the government should still play some role post-privatisation particularly in the case of less popular and individual sports. The reality today is that only football, mostly the Saudi Professional League clubs, has experienced some relative success in collaborating with the private sector.[100]

The views expressed by study participants at the lower levels of strategising praxis (meso and micro) did not fully converge with each other or with those of the macro level. Sports

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[100] The total value of sponsorship deals for the Saudi Premier League clubs reached SAR120 million ($32 million equivalent) in 2012 in addition to television rights totalling SAR250 million pre years (around $66 million equivalent) started from 2014.

federations' and Olympic Committee officials viewed the government's privatisation initiative as a reaction to various pressures – many of these pressures are external/ outside such as conditions set by international bodies for official membership and/ or participation in official international events – on sports federations and sport clubs to fully adopt professionalism, which invariably implies full transfer of club ownership to the private sector.[101] Alternatively, the majority of views expressed by micro-level practitioners (regional offices and sport club officials) saw that the main trigger behind the privatisation project is the economic austerity measures that the government wants to introduce as a way of controlling spending on the sector.

Overall, the synthesis of the different views expressed by key strategising practitioners across the three levels of study reveals some areas of convergence in these views regarding the evolution and key triggers and motives behind the proposed privatisation policy within the sport sector. One such area of concurrence is the importance of the wider contextual factors in Saudi Arabia such as the political, economic and social contexts in driving government policy including the privatisation initiative.

Table 8-6 Key triggers of Saudi sport club privatisation in the views across three levels

Levels	The range of participant views across three levels	
	Minority views	*Majority views*
Macro	Governance of sport clubs behind the evolution of the privatisation policy	Wider social and economic development objectives as the trigger behind privatisation policy
Meso	Social and economic development objectives is the main trigger behind the privatisation policy	External considerations and pressures behind the evolution of the privatisation policy
Micro	External considerations and pressures behind the evolution of the privatisation policy	Austerity measures in government spending behind the evolution of the policy

8.4.2 **Policy enablers and obstacles**

In order to complement the evaluation of key triggers and privatisation policy evolution presented in the previous section, one also needs to critically evaluate the main policy *obstacles* and *enablers* in order to understand and appreciate the current situation. Naturally, any privatisation programme including sport sector privatisation will differ from one country to another and from one context to another. These peculiarities and differences become even more pronounced in the context of advanced versus developing

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[101] One such example in this context is the conditions stipulated by the Asian Football Federation in 2008 over member football clubs to satisfy certain requirements, such as regarding advertising in official matches, as a precondition for participating in its official competitions. At the time, many Saudi media outlets saw such developments as part of the proposed national privatisation plans for the sector especially due to the timing of this announcement, which came straight after one committee finished a study on privatisation policy.

nations, as is the case within Saudi Arabia. These differences stem from background factors such the specific political economy and social contexts of each country. Countries that have adopted the market economy model naturally have more mature and active private sectors and therefore more expertise in leading and implementing privatisation programmes, and promoting the private sector's role within the economy.[102] This subsection uses prior analyses of primary and secondary data and the adopted theoretical framework within to summarise and critique the main enablers and obstacles as relevant to the Saudi club privatisation policy.

Through cross-case and cross-level primary and secondary data analyses, the following overall policy enablers were identified at the level of strategising practitioners.

Firstly, the availability and eagerness of many local, regional and international investors, whether individuals and organisations, to invest in the Saudi sport sector and sport clubs in particular. At the regional level, an example of this is the current favourability of the investment environment within the Gulf region. This is mainly enabled through the various trade and investment agreements between the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) member countries, which greatly facilitate the movement of people, goods, capital and services as well as the practical measures to boost investment and trade in the region, including privileges regarding acquiring ownership stakes of companies within the GCC economic zone. The second main policy enabler relates to the current structure and personnel of most sport clubs whereby most club employees work in a volunteering capacity, hence making any privatisation implementation relatively unproblematic to implement from point of view of having to negotiate with trade unions or employee representatives. The historical weakness of trade union activity in Saudi Arabia is an additional related factor in this, as is the fear of potential social backlash, such as compulsory redundancies of employees, as result of privatisation.

Some of the key obstacles in the face of effective privatisation policy implementation can be summarised in the following. Firstly, data analyses show serious concerns among various strategising practitioners, particularly at the lower organisational levels, about the lack of clarity of vision and lack of clear and precise implementation guidelines in the proposed sport club privatisation policy. Additionally, and as already established, there were also major differences in the views among different practitioners at different levels about policy objectives such as what was documented across all the study levels in terms of the conflicts between economic and social objectives. For instance, while the prevalent

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[102] Chapter 2 cited some examples of international privatisation programmes including in the UK.

view among macro-level practitioners was that the privatisation strategy would allow the clubs to become independent of direct government aid and become self-sufficient, a number of other fellow practitioners within the same level were of the view that continuation of direct government aid is needed because the clubs had a noble 'social mission'. In the same vein, meso-level practitioners showed some level of apprehension that a 'blanket' privatisation of all sport clubs would result in aggravating existing inequalities and the further negligence of fringe sports, including less popular sports, individual sports and smaller clubs in particular. At the micro level, strategising practitioners were also concerned by potential consequences of privatisation that could even lead to undesirable social repercussions such social unrest among club supporters due to higher ticket prices. All of the above factors, combined with a pervasive lack of participation and involvement of key implementation actors in strategy formulation, resulted in creating various obstacles related to issues of trust, split allegiances among practitioners at different levels and different organisations, in addition to conflicts of interest. All of which eventually resulted in the surfacing of some resistance practices by key strategy actors.

A third obstacle arises from the lacks of specialist expertise particularly among the leadership of the privatisation programme, a factor which is exacerbated by the lack of professionalism among strategy implementers and the fact that a large proportion of employees within the sport sector only work in a volunteering capacity. An additional policy obstacle comes from the fact that the Saudi sport sector counts a large number of non-homogenous sport clubs, 153 different clubs to be precise, all differing in history, characteristics and realities whether in terms of popularity or economic value or sporting achievements. Some sport clubs may not even have an economic value that is high enough to attract private investment in the first place. Therefore, due to all of these factors, a blanket 'one size fits all' rolling of the privatisation policy may be extremely challenging to successfully deliver.

Additional policy enablers and obstacles were also identified at the other two domains of strategising, i.e. strategising praxis and strategising practices. One particular policy enabler relates to the current situation regarding club infrastructure and facilities, most of which are still state-owned. This could facilitate the valuation of clubs and their fixed assets and enable a swift transfer of ownership from the government to private owners. Alternatively, prospective private owners could reach a deal with the government to build their own infrastructure. Another important policy enabler concerns the fact that the Saudi socio-cultural context is highly conservative with strict rules of conduct and where

religious principles play a significant part in peoples' everyday lives (see also Chapter 2). Given this context, sports as a service or commercial activity holds advantage over other similar services, say entertainment, theatre or cinema, as unlike many aspects of these other services, most sport activity types are regarded as being acceptable and usually do not conflict with religious principles or traditions of the Saudi society. In fact, the practice of many sports is actively encouraged as they are seen as recreational activities that strengthen the body and mind. This social acceptance of sport, as opposed to many other services, combined with its huge popularity among the ordinary population, as well as the large fan base[103], a huge domestic market[104] and a large pool of sporting talent, makes many sports an extremely attractive proposition for the involvement of the private sector. A further policy enabler comes from the relative success stories of similar privatisation projects in the not-too-distant past, such as in the telecommunications sector (see also Chapter 2), and this can provide valuable lessons and examples of best practice to senior policymakers and also allows benefiting from the expertise gained by leaders and practitioners who conducted these successful programmes.

In terms of key identified policy obstacles at the strategising domains of praxis and practices, these can be summarised as follows. Firstly, there is the inadequate economic milieu, which is characterised by high levels of central planning with excessive state control of most economic activity. This economic reality is exacerbated by a noticeable weakness of the private and services sector.[105] When also taking into account the inadequate current legal and regulatory framework governing economic activity, offering few safeguards and guarantees to potential investors, this then becomes a major obstacle in the face of enacting a bigger role for the private sector through mechanisms such as privatisation. The legal protection of investor's rights, for instance, comes at the top of the priorities and concerns of potential investors. The current state of the Saudi investment legal framework presents additional, often unnecessary, sources of business risk to any potential domestic or foreign inventors, and with higher expected risk, investors demand higher expected returns. Similar to the investment environment, the administrative side of

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[103] Comparing to other countries within the region, high levels of fan attendance are regularly recorded in Saudi Arabia particularly in popular r sports such as football and volleyball. This is facilitated by relatively low prices (admissions and club merchandise for example) and a strong purchasing power of the Saudi person.

[104] For instance, other GCC countries such as Qatar or the UAE, while having much better sporting infrastructure and investing more in sports in percentage terms, the main obstacle face in these countries is the small fan base and pool of talent in addition to a much smaller domestic market for demand in comparison to Saudi Arabia.

[105] Saudi economy is hugely dependent on oil and gas.

things is currently inadequate and highly bureaucratic and therefore not conducive of free-market or private sector economic practices. At the sport clubs level, various other obstacles are evident. One such obstacle is the lack of transparency surrounding the sport clubs' operations. For instance, in most cases it is extremely difficult to determine the precise ownership structure of most clubs. Many sport clubs were founded by individuals such as prominent businesspersons, but later benefited from government aid through direct financial subventions over many years and the building of club infrastructure, but all of this without clearly stipulating who owned what! The lack of professionalism in the administrative work of many clubs (example of lack of archiving activity), coupled with high levels of secrecy and low disclosure/ transparency, implied that a potential investor would find it near to impossible to obtain the required information and conduct any sort of due diligence.[106] The noticeable lack of published and readily available information about the sport clubs' current and historical operations particularly regarding organisational and financial aspects, including risk factors, provided further obstacles in the face of privatisation efforts. Another additional obstacle that came out of data analyse relates to the government's slow pace in effecting the privatisation policy implementation (given that the policy was originally imitated in 2002). A number of strategising practitioners, particularly at lower levels, attributed this government attitude to undeclared political considerations. Some saw the privatisation project as card played by some senior government officials by playing on the sentiments of Saudi youth to score political points and achieve unrelated political objectives. Similarly, others were of the view the government's slow pace in enacting the privatisation policy objectives can instead be attributed to fears (by some influential government policymakers and politicians) about issues of national security as privatisation could mean the entry of foreign capital and investors, and instead preferring certain infrastructure and highly popular clubs, deemed as strategic, to remain in the hands of the government.

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[106] A relevant example here that was revealed to the researcher during fieldwork is the example of an investor purchasing a club but then only to later find out that it has financial obligations (creditors and debt) that were not documented prior to the purchase. Lack of transparency, documentation and the unprofessional practices of previous club officials and administrations can easily lead to such scenarios where the potential investor is bearing too much risk, particular if the privatisation operation occurs in full (as opposed to partial).

8.5 Conclusions

The identified patterns of strategising at the three levels of strategising praxis exhibited elements of convergence (similarity) and divergence (difference) across the three levels and between the sample case organisations.

In the context of the sport club privatisation strategy, it can be asserted that relevant strategising patterns at the macro level of policymaking are rather characterised by some element of instability. At the higher levels of policymaking, the changing pattern of strategising tends to dominate (such as the case of the SEC), or the realised activity (in the case of the MEP). Over the years, these two dominant patterns helped shape the current state of the privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia at large. These changing and realised patterns of strategising activity are however, counteracted to a certain degree, by inertial or embedded patterns found at lower levels of policymaking within the macro level, such as what was observed at the GPYW where strategising activity frequently showed elements of stagnation and inertia. Additionally and quite importantly, this study has thus far identified at least one novel pattern of strategising activity in the Saudi context, in the form of the reactive pattern. On the whole, it can be argued that the deep interaction between these key organisations at the macro level involving their strategising practitioners and various strategising patterns has resulted in a situation where unresolved activity has become the dominant pattern of strategising in relation to the sport club privatisation programme. Considering the potential 'negative' aspects typically associated with this particular pattern of strategising activity – at least from a theoretical point of view, such as issues of sub-optimal performance, high levels of inertia, and the lack of strategic direction – this situation at the macro level of policymaking may indeed be of some legitimate concern to the Saudi government in its longstanding attempt to see a successful implementation of its privatisation policy of sport clubs.

At the meso level, all strategising patterns were present in some shape or form, some becoming dominant, with the exception of the inertial/ embedded pattern which had limited presence. Specific strategising practices related to the sport club privatisation policy were rather limited at the meso level because they did not filter through effectively from the macro level. There was however, some strategising work performed around related activities such as general investment in the sport sector. With the exception of the football federation, all of the other sports federations were closely following patterns of strategising work as prescribed by the GPYW, as a powerful

macro-level strategy actor. The meso-level organisations particularly the Olympic Committee saw a healthy amount of changes in their organisational structures, regulatory frameworks and personnel, changes that rustled in an influx of new leaders and ideas, as well as the emergence of previously unseen patterns of strategising activity. However, meso-level practitioners were careful not to give the impression of occasioning change and, similar to the standpoint of the GPYW officials, were equally keen to preserve and persist with current practice and existing goal-directed activities. All of these factors resulted in the realised pattern becoming the most prevalent at this praxis level.

At the micro level, observed patterns of strategising showed high levels of divergence between those at the regional offices compared to those observed at the sport clubs. At the regional offices, certain strategising patterns such as the emerging pattern were non-existent due to the nature of work of these organisations, which is predominantly highly prescribed. These emerging patterns were quite prevalent at the level of sport clubs, but with the caveat that such emerging patterns often did not extend beyond the individual sport club, hence not resulting in any major goal-directed activity. Changing patterns of strategising were often present at level of sport clubs largely due to the nature of daily work at these organisations, which is characterised by some levels of freedom for personal interpretation by club officials. These changing activities at the club level were, however, frequently counteracted by embedded patterns and procedural/administrative strategising, whether at the level of regional offices or at higher levels of praxis particularly from the GPYW. Another finding at the micro level that is consistent with the rest of findings at the other strategising praxes was that the procedural type of strategising activity was dominant among all case organisations in relation to sport club privatisation policy. This followed highly rigid administrative practices and prescribed top-down approach.

Chapter 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

Through a holistic, embedded multiple-case study research design, the main of this study was to understand how strategising practices are manifested in the context of the privatisation policy of Saudi sport clubs as the main unit of analysis. A closely related aim was to investigate the relationship between strategy and strategising as two distinctive sides of the policy process concerned with all phases of policy and strategy making and implementation. A further related research objective was to aim to understand and evaluate the various strategising actors' roles at macro, meso and micro levels in shaping and implementing the sport club privatisation strategy.

Combined with precise choices in terms of theoretical framework and research design and methods, the researcher was able to identify the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising, as well as offer an overall evaluation of the strategising activity system in the context of the main unit of analysis in study, namely the privatisation of Saudi sport clubs. Additionally and of equal significance, the research framework and analysis of findings enabled the researcher to provide an overall critical evaluation of the privatisation policy's development, process and progress to-date.

After reiterating the study's key aims and objectives, the rest of this concluding chapter starts by summarising the key findings of the research and directly answering the proposed primary and secondary questions. The chapter then discusses implications and potential theoretical and practical contributions of the study. Some limitations of the study are also discussed at this stage, along with some suggestions and potential avenues for future research. An overall final conclusion to the whole study is ultimately provided at the end of this chapter.

9.2 Summary of empirical findings and answering the research questions

The precise choice of research design and methods in combination with the chosen framework for data analyses allowed the researcher to capture a wide range of the respondents' views, as well as to accurately reflect their own experiences, understandings and beliefs about the key elements of strategising as relevant to the Saudi club privatisation policy. Moreover, the complimentary methods of content analysis, thematic analysis and cross-case synthesis allowed the researcher to conduct deep analysis of the rich primary and secondary data collected. These methodological choices allowed generating key common themes of strategising across the three levels

of strategy praxis and hence identifying similarities, differences and ultimately areas of convergence and divergence in the strategising work of key actors. Additionally, important results were arrived at regarding a critical evaluation of the development and current state of the sport club privatisation policy.

To reiterate once more, and as was established in the Chapter 1, the study's primary research questions were twofold:

1. Firstly, how patterns, types and categories of strategising are manifested in the daily strategising work of various strategising actors at different levels of strategising praxis?

2. Secondly, what is the precise relationship between strategy and strategising in the context of the privatisation of sport clubs in Saudi Arabia? In other words, what are the precise dynamics of strategy and strategising as applicable to the sport club privatisation policy in Saudi Arabia?

Additionally, the following secondary questions were also posed in order to complement the primary questions and widen the scope of the study, as follows:

- *What has been the progress to-date of the Saudi government's development policies for the sports sector in general, and in relation to the sport club privatisation programme in particular?*

- *How, in practice, has the privatisation policy been translated into implementation strategies to achieve the policymakers' goals and key objectives?*

- *How do various organisational strategising actors at macro, meso and micro levels interpret and implement the privatisation strategy, and what is their role in shaping and implementing the strategy?*

- *What is the overall assessment of the progress to-date of the of privatisation strategy implementation as part of the wider national development plans?*

The main findings from this study can be organised along two broad levels. Firstly, key findings in terms of the three main domains of strategising: practitioners, praxis and practices, as the key components of the overall strategising activity system in the context of the Saudi sport club privatisation policy. The second level of findings is much deeper and specifically deals with the key patterns of strategising as manifested across the three levels of strategising praxis (macro, meso, and micro) within the case study organisations.

Consistent with the main premises of the theoretical framework, which was generated from a comprehensive review of literature, overall research findings at the macro, meso and micro levels of study revealed strong evidence to support the central importance of

the three key domains of strategising within the overall dynamics of the strategising activity system. Hence, by extension these three strategising domains were found to play a significant role in the context of the Saudi sport sector in general, and the sport club privatisation policy in particular.

The common themes that emerged from data analyses at the three praxis levels were organised along the three domains of strategising. With regards to the first domain, examining practitioners' backgrounds and organisational interactions at the three levels of strategising praxis provided strong evidence in support of the important role of *context*, particularly the socio-cultural aspects that characterise the Saudi society. Factors such as the personal, educational and socio-cultural backgrounds provide the context in which strategising practitioners perform daily strategy work. Hence, these contextual factors played a significant role in the shaping of strategy work at all praxis levels and often extended to related strategising phenomena such as issues of trust and conflicts of interest, as well as strategic discourse. Closely linked to these contextual factors is also the wider Saudi political economy, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Another common key finding across the three levels was in relation to high levels of loyalty and allegiances showed by strategising practitioners towards their regions, tribes and families. This factor was found to be closely linked to issues of organisational power and legitimacy of these practitioners. Hence, it often influenced their strategy work, more often than not in an adverse way, such as leading to conflicts of interest and/ or perceived lack of reciprocal trust between key strategising actors. Speaking of trust, the findings around this issue can be classified as a main theme in its own right, as data analysis showed a concerning lack of reciprocal trust relationships between the leadership, particularly at macro level, and other organisational agents involved in the privatisation strategy.

Data analyses relating to the second main domain of strategising, i.e. praxis, also revealed a number of interesting findings. At all levels of strategising praxis, the overall picture showed several areas of deficiency in the praxis domain of strategising, including the formulation, dissemination and interpretation, as well as implementation of the sport club privatisation policy. Analyses revealed a major lack of clarity, continuity and stability in all phases of strategy work, a phenomenon that became more and more acute as one goes from one strategising praxis to the other; from macro to meso to micro. This sense of confusion and ambiguity was caused by an apparent lack of a clear vision, manifested through a surprising absence of a written strategy document, an issue that some may judge to be symbolic, but which was frequently

raised by participants. Rather strikingly, even at the very highest levels of planning, policy and decision making, data also revealed numerous sources of conflict and ambiguity in the 'ideology' of government policy, such as the recurring problem of balancing 'conflicting' social and economic objectives which proved to be a major obstacle in the face of effective implementation particularly at the lower levels. Hence, many study participants at all praxis levels expressed strong views about the presence of such conflicting aspects in the government's vision of sport sector privatisation. All of the aforementioned issues created an environment of confusion, instability and discontinuity in the strategic discourse as well as the interpretation of key policy objectives.

Other related findings regarding the domain of praxis, such as the observed very high levels of centralisation, bureaucratic procedures and uniformity, combined with inadequate collaborative work and communication between key strategising actors, particularly *across* the praxis levels, all adversely affected the effective interpretation and implementation of policy objectives. In this regard, the noticeable lack of involvement and participation of key stakeholders in key stages of strategy formulation particularly at the lower levels of strategy praxis not only undermined practitioners' morale and motivation, but also resulted in some resistance practices among certain actors, albeit mostly in mild and tacit format. It is worth emphasising, however, that this observed lack of participation and involvement of policy actors and stakeholders is not entirely surprising in the overall Saudi context, due to the existing 'ways of doing things' which are firmly established and highly entrenched and that came to typify the work of most Saudi government agencies.

Further research findings in relation to the third key domain of strategising, namely practices, complete the overall picture of strategising activity system as relevant to the Saudi club privatisation policy. Key findings here reveal the common theme around the dominance of top-down approaches, combined with high levels of centralisation in decision-making, such as for instance the overwhelming dominance and control of the GPYW in the dissemination and implementation phases of the privatisation policy. This particular observation about the role of the GPYW is crucial, as it is an extremely influential macro-level strategising actor providing the key link between the various actors across all the levels of strategising.

A further key finding in relation to strategising practices concerns the lack of communication and participation in key stages of strategy formulation. This often led to inadequate interpretation of policy aims, but also caused issues of lack of trust and

occasionally conflicts of interest between key strategising actors. This in turn created a sense of 'misdirection' and undermined the (interpretative) legitimacy of policymakers despite observed high levels of structural legitimacy. Linked to this, and with few exceptions observed at the highest levels of policymaking at macro level, the existing daily strategising practices that were in application lacked goal-direction, which in turn opened the door for extensive personal interpretations at various stages of strategy work.

Hence, and consistent with theoretical predictions, many of the practices observed at all levels of strategising praxis, but at meso and micro levels in particular, exhibited elements of inertia, persistence, and high levels of inferred 'structural legitimacy'. This in turn resulted in some observed resistance practices, but as already alluded to above, these were mostly in a mild and tacit manner. At the same time, however, more serious reservations were expressed to the researcher, particularly by a number of some meso- and micro-level practitioners specifically in relation to the lack of clarity and sense of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the sport club privatisation policy aims and direction. It was the case, particularly at the micro level of praxis that at times even very basic elements of the privatisation strategy did not filter through to some strategising actors.

As mentioned earlier, the second level of findings specifically deals with deeper analysis of the key patterns of strategising as observed within the sample case organisations across the three levels of strategising praxis. Core theoretical constructs and concepts analysed here were informed by the theoretical framework of the study. Such concepts included the key patterns of strategising, its main types and categories of, as well as closely related concepts such as the different forms of legitimacy. The aim in performing this deeper analysis of collected data was to enable the researcher to dissect evidence in order to undertake an informed assessment of the extent to which these key concepts of strategising tend to be typically manifested in the context of the proposed study.

Despite strong evidence of the presence, as well as the active promotion of several other patterns and types of strategising practices within the Saudi sport sector, the procedural type is found to be the most prevalent across all the strategising praxes and all of sample case organisations in this study. In the context of the Saudi political economy, and sport club privatisation policy in particular, this finding is neither entirely surprising nor inconsistent with preliminary observations of the researcher during fieldwork and data collection phases. In the same vein, and consistent with theoretical predictions, organisations (and societies more widely) that are dominated by hierarchical, top-down approaches to management, combined with the prevalence of structural forms of

legitimacy, ultimately lead to the dominance of certain strategising practices at the expense of others.

The dominance of old and established 'ways of doing things' at all of the participant organisations made the procedural and administrative patterns and types of strategising the dominant forms in all of the case organisations, hence becoming a permanent feature of strategy work within the sport sector also inevitably effecting the dynamic of the privatisation strategy. Thus, procedural strategising is found to be mainly enacted through the widespread and prevalent use of long-established formal administrative practices that came to typify centralised policymaking in Saudi Arabia. Many years and decades of these inherited and accumulated formal administrative practices and 'ways of doing things' also came to epitomise most Saudi public sector organisations and agencies, thus resulting in high levels of 'embeddedness' and 'persistence' of this type of strategising within the wider functioning and organisational culture of these entities. This observation was particularly pertinent in the case of the privatisation programmes of various economic sectors in Saudi Arabia, including sport. Hence, various aspects and implications of this prevailing situation could be seen as a the major obstacle in the face of any attempt to successfully introduce new ways of organising and strategising, such as the proposed major change in the ownership and control of sport clubs through the privatisation programme. This is expected to be partly due to the perceived huge (collective) effort that is indeed required to undergo the required major reorganisations and changes of existing practices and procedures to successfully achieve such underlying objectives.

9.3 Study contributions

The study makes a number of valuable contributions on several fronts. Firstly, on a theoretical level, the study makes a number of theoretical contributions particularly in relation to the study approach adopted in this research. The deployment of the strategising or strategy-as-practice research agenda as the main approach of the study represents a novel contribution in the field of sport management studies. Whilst the strategising school of thought has recently started to gain considerable attention and momentum within academic circles[107], its deployment in the field of sport management research is still rather recent and quite limited (see, for example, Johnson & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, Molloy, Mayer & Smith, 2006). Additionally, a detailed review of existing strategy studies within sport management reveals noticeable lack of

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[107] A review of the relevant literature reveals existing applications of the strategising approach particularly in the fields of health policy and education research, see for example, Jarzabkowski (2005).

empirical type of studies in this area. Hence, with its adopted theoretical framework and empirical approach, it is envisaged that this study will make at least a modest contribution towards filling part of this existing gap.

A number of other alternative approaches could have been followed, particularly a policy-based approach, such as policy analysis, policy implementation research, and policy process. Conventional strategic management perspectives offer another alternative, such as change management approaches, or even various other sociology- or politics-based approaches. Unlike the aforementioned approaches and unlike other conventional strategy research paradigms, the deployment of the strategising research agenda in the field of sport management has in itself great promise towards enhancing our understanding of how the whole journey of organisational strategy from formulation, to implementation, to goal achievement unfolds. This is attributed to the fact that, unlike conventional strategy approaches which can be too analytical and too detached, the strategising perspective emphasises the need to shift the focus towards organisational practices, behaviours and inter-individual interactions, through a focus on daily processes, interactions and practices across different organisational levels (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington 2006). This novel theoretical perspective can therefore lead to a better understanding of how daily organisational behaviour can create purposeful strategic choices and outcomes.

Additionally and still on a theoretical level, the basic theoretical framework adopted in this study allowed the researcher to investigate all of the three key domains of the strategising research paradigm, as first proposed by Whittington (2006), namely practitioners, practices, and praxis (i.e. the 3Ps). Hence, this study not only uses a novel approach in the field of sport management, but can potentially also be more comprehensive in scope and rigour than many previous strategy studies, particularly empirical ones, where only one of the domains of strategising tend to be examined.[108] This added rigour and scope allowed the researcher to examine and evaluate the linkages and interconnectedness between the 3Ps, a hugely important facet of the adopted theoretical framework, not least because most of strategising occurs at the nexus between these three domains (see, for example, Whittington, 2006). Thus, the study makes a substantial contribution by adding to and enriching the existing limited literature that examines the manifestation of strategising practices within sport management. Moreover,

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[108] A brief review of existing strategy studies shows the dominance of studies that focus on the domain of practices as opposed to the other two domains of strategising.

by examining a variety of key issues about practitioners, practices and praxis, in a novel field of study and within a completely new context, the study provides a great opportunity to put into application as well as re-examine many of the concepts of the strategising school of thought.

Speaking of context, the study has the potential to make a number of significant contributions in this regard. In the case of Saudi Arabia, as well as many other regional and comparable emerging economies, there is very scant literature and hence limited understanding of the precise dynamics of strategy work in the field of sport management. This, in turn, creates inadequate understanding and flawed application of key policy initiatives including major change programmes such as that of privatisation. Thus, it is envisaged that the proposed study will make a noteworthy contribution towards enriching the existing body of knowledge in this area within Saudi Arabia (and potentially also neighbouring countries), as well as help improve the overall understanding of what constitutes key aspects in policymaking and effective strategy work. Moreover, the theoretical framework of the study can further be extended to be applied to the analysis of similar policy initiatives in countries and economies that share similar characteristics with the Saudi system, notably GGC-member countries, but also other regional and emerging economy countries, such as the wider Middle East region. Additionally, the specific context of the study (Saudi Arabia) can enrich the international dimension of research into sport management practices around the world by helping facilitate informed cross-country comparisons and allowing a better understanding of the role of context in strategy work within sport.

In the Saudi political economy and socio-cultural contexts, the government and through various centralised policymaking agencies, has had a longstanding interest in actively managing the sports sector milieu. However, for the previous decades prior to the start of the 21st Century, the focus had been mainly on purely sporting aspects and community/ education type of work (Alqdadey, 2012; Alsaatey., 2010), and there was little attention, if any, given to commercial exploitation via the private sector. The efforts to professionalise the sports sector were very limited (with the 1993 'Professional Sports Project' a rare exception and a case in point, albeit with very limited results, see Chapter 1 introduction). However, by the early 2000s, and for reasons already discussed in earlier parts of the thesis (see Chapters 1 and 2 in particular), the focus had completely changed particularly with the notable consecutive inclusion within the five-year national development plans of the sports sector as a key area targeted for development. This was swiftly followed upon by the subsequent introduction of the sport clubs privatisation project through the SEC,

MEP and GPYW. These developments conveniently coincided with a huge rise in the commercialisation of various sport clubs' operations and activities particularly in the case of football, through various channels such as major advertising and sponsorship deals, TV and commercial partnerships. These trends led to new sources of funding and increased revenues for many sport clubs109 and a significant rise in the value of players' contracts. All of these developments gave the Saudi policymakers strong impetus to actively advance the agenda for more commercialisation and professionalisation of the sports sector including the sport club privatisation policy as flagship of these initiatives. In turn, these developments, quite naturally, gave rise to the need to seek to improve management practices in sport sector organisations as the policymakers started to realise that full professionalisation of sport cannot be attained without modernising and professionalising the management aspects. Additionally, the slow pace of progress in implementing the privatisation policy led the government to seek informed opinion about the precise reasons behind this, as well as try to introduce new ideas for future direction. Hence, by being the first independent, rigorous and comprehensive study to be conducted on the Saudi sport club privatisation policy, this research can act as catalyst for future efforts to advise policymakers and fill the existing void in terms of the lack of scientific/ academic informed assessments of the privatisation policy/strategy to-date.

By extension and in the same vein, this study brings new and useful findings central to the Saudi context. The study offers a comprehensive mapping and evaluation of the evolution and development of sport management practices in Saudi Arabia since the establishment of the Saudi state going back to the beginning of the 19th Century. The rigour of investigation is evident in this study by including all the key actors in policy and strategy work across the various strategising praxes, from the macro, to the meso, to the micro levels, spanning 18 different organisations. This allowed the researcher to trace in detail the line and flow of policy and strategy work from the very top of the organisational hierarchy to the lowest level of implementation, and vice-versa. Additionally, this approach also allowed deeper analyses to be conducted within each level and case study organisation (intra analysis), as well as across the three levels and cases (inter-level analysis and cross-case synthesis). Hence, the study not only helps clearly dissect the role of each organisation (and its relevant actors), but also appreciate the level of

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109 For instance, in 2014 the total value of TV sponsorship deals of (TV rights agreements) in Saudi Arabia reached (SAR 4.1 billion - equivalent to nearly $1.1billion for 10 years to broadcast football professional league matches) see more at Saudi Pro League website (Saudi Pro League, 2014). This not includes other sports and sport clubs commercial sponsorship and partnership or government subsidies.

interconnectedness between them, as well as any potential areas of difference/ divergence such as those borne out of differences in personal backgrounds, socio-cultural contexts, or even geographical/ regional considerations. Therefore, the approach of the study, coupled with the results and findings, lay firm ground for future more detailed and more targeted investigation.

In addition to the above-mentioned theoretical and context-related contributions of the study, the research also has the potential for further contribution in terms of methodology and research practice. On a methodological level, it was asserted in previous parts of the thesis that researching strategising entails the empirical investigation of everyday processes, practices and activities across multiple levels of strategising praxis and involving various organisational actors (i.e. distributed strategy work not only confined to the top management; see, for example, Jarzabkowski, 2005). This, in turn, inevitably gives the strategising research agenda an empirical focal point. Hence, in order to fully achieve the premise of the strategising research paradigm and enable a theoretically sound application of the proposed research, this study adopted a 'modified' and 'augmented' case-study design, namely an "holistic and embedded multiple-case study design" (see Figure 9-1) (the research design is principally inspired by the seminal works of (Yin 2003; 2009)). Thus, in this respect, and through these precise methodological choices and the augmented holistic, embedded multiple-case design, this study offers an original contribution on a methodological level.

Figure 9-1 Study research design – Yin's model 'reconsidered': "holistic embedded multiple-case study design."
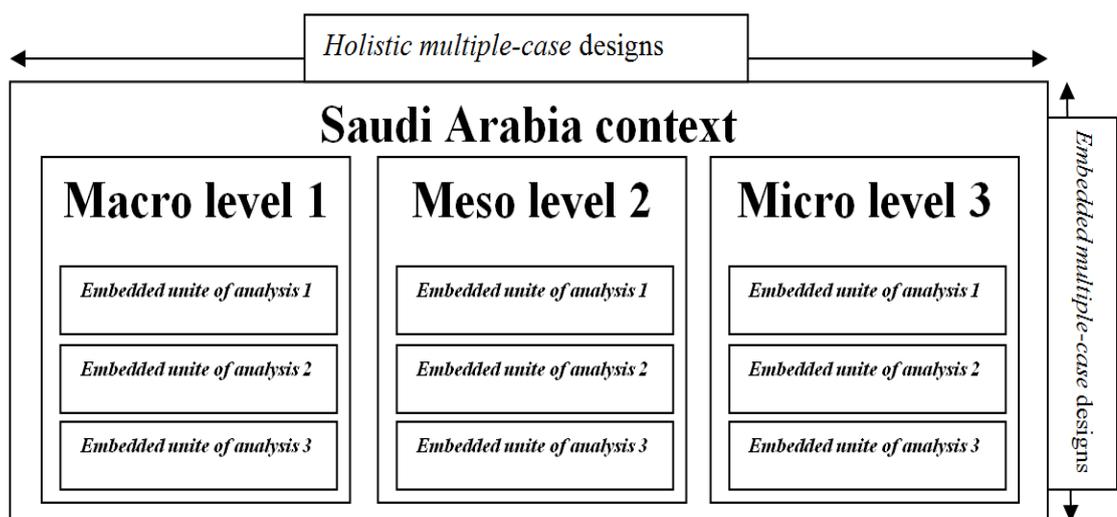
Source: developed by author

9.4 Study limitations and recommendations

As highlighted in the previous section, this study makes a number of useful contributions on theoretical and methodological fronts. It is nevertheless important to also briefly flag up some potential drawbacks and any areas of limitations. Some of these are summarised below, which are then followed by suggestions and recommendations for policymakers as well as suggested avenues for future research.

- On a methodological front,[110] the study sample, despite being indeed methodologically sound, is still not completely representative of the whole reality of strategy and strategising within the Saudi sport sector as a whole.[111] This specific concern is particularly pertinent to the micro level of strategising praxis, where there is considerable fragmentation and diffusion of strategy actors and organisations. In the same vein, the number of study participants - in the form of strategising practitioners - remains rather limited, even if it is also worth pointing out at the same time that this was imposed on the researcher owing to constraints related to the scope of the study and to time and resources considerations. Moreover, these issues can only open up further avenues for future research by, for instance, improving the sample size and number of study participants.

- Also linked to the previous point, another potential study limitation maybe inherent in the study' research design. While semi-structured interviews and secondary data analysis techniques have numerous merits and strengths, they also suffer from intrinsic drawbacks (see also Chapter 4). One such drawback is the 'researcher distance' between the researcher and the subject of investigation (the organisation and its actors and context), meaning that the research may not be able to capture all the hidden subtleties of daily organisational life, such as mundane behaviours, activities and daily routines. In this regard, perhaps a more participatory approach, such as 'participant observation', would help in overcoming this particular limitation. Again, adopting such approach even just for part of the study would not have been feasible in the context of this research due to the scope of the study and time and resources constraints.

- On a more conceptual level and as briefly alluded to in the previous subsection, the basic theoretical framework used in the present research throws a few other limitations that are worth briefly considering. One such limitation came to light at

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[110] For further detailed discussion of methodology-related limitations, see also section 4.6 of Chapter 4.
[111] For example, the inclusion of private sector sport organisations in the study sample was beyond the scope of this research, but provides yet another avenue to expand and enrich the existing study.

data coding and analyses stages, where the researcher found the classification of various concepts, contracts and themes particularly problematic. It was not always a straightforward task trying to fit into the basic theoretical framework each of the identified themes and constructs. This was due to high levels of interconnectedness between the three key domains of strategising (the 3Ps) and the many areas of overlap between them. A number of themes and constructs could well have been classified into two or more of these domains. Such areas of overlap were particularly apparent among the practices and praxis domains of strategising. While the study points out some of these areas of overlap, it does not delve further into them or attempt to suggest ways to disentangle between them. Once more, this could as well open an interesting avenue for future research to address this theoretical aspect of the research.

Finally, and based on study key findings and contribution, the study generates numerous recommendations on a practical level for policymakers and practitioners towards a better and more informed understanding of what constitutes organisational daily life within sport organisations and the role played by key strategising actors. On a practical level, the study makes original recommendations and generates useful insights and lessons for policymakers in order to devise more effective future policies for the wider benefit of the sports sector, and hopefully help shape its future visions. The lessons derived from this study not only have the potential to improve core strategic sport management aspects, but can also enhance various other aspects related to the wider governance of the sector. Thus, in conclusion to this subsection, some recommendations and forward-looking lessons, as well as some suggested avenues for future research – as informed by the study's key findings – are therefore summarised below.

- The systematic analysis and critical evaluation of the Saudi sport club privatisation policy to-date revealed major limitations and flaws in the strategy work of key actors and organisations (see also Chapter 8 for a summary of key obstacles). One of the main obstacles in the face of effective policy implementation is the presence of high levels of ambiguity at various key stages of the strategy journey, including strategy formulation, dissemination and implementation. Deeper analyses revealed that the absence of a clear written strategy document was a common adverse aspect across all the sample case study organisations. Interestingly, this particular finding not only applied to the privatisation programme, but was also a regular occurrence in other policy initiatives, such as 'the professionalisation project', or the 'sport elite strategy' – also known as 'the Olympic Falcon'. Thus, it follows that a key recommendation

from this study is the need to produce clear written strategy documents from the outset and at regular intervals in the strategy journey. Linked to this is also the importance of actively involving and consulting key strategising actors at the very early stages within the strategy journey particularly at the strategy formulation. Clear documentation is also key when it comes to strategy reviews and evaluations via increased disclosure and transparency, through for example the production and dissemination of regular periodical reports. Such proactive strategising practices would allow key stakeholders to adequately understand and interpret strategy objectives, and allow other interested parties, such as academics and practitioners, to analyse progress and offer informed opinions.

- Based on research findings reported in previous chapters, the study strongly recommends a more balanced and more equitable distribution of powers and decision making among the various regions of the Kingdom though regional sport bodies, such as the sport federations and sport clubs. The study findings revealed a major concern in this respect whereby sport clubs within close proximity to the central policymaking circles enjoyed unfair advantage over their counterparts. Likewise, there ought to be more equal distribution of funding, facilities and sport infrastructure as well as the overall involvement in shaping the sport policy among different sports. In the future, policies need to be targeted in a way as to ensure better balance between collective versus individual sports, and popular versus less popular sports.

- A promising avenue for future research is to conduct more in-depth analysis of individual case studies, particularly at the micro level in order to fully exploit the premise of the strategising research agenda, wherein the micro level plays a particularly significant role in the overall activity system dynamics of strategising. Even though this research comprises an 18 separate case studies across three levels of investigation, it is still limited in scope due to practical considerations, hence opening avenues for future extension by either conducting more exploratory studies or enlarging the sample size.

- On a conceptual level, the study recommends further deeper analysis of the three key domains of strategising (the 3Ps) in the context of this research. Whilst the results of this study confirmed the close interconnectedness between the three strategising domains, it also revealed areas of overlap when it comes to practical meaning and interpretation of the reality of daily organisational life. Hence, one of the limitations of this study is the difficulty in deterministically setting clear boundaries and disentangling issues between each of the three dimensions of theoretical framework.

The praxis domain in particular exhibited many areas of overlap with that of practices and it was not always obvious or straightforward to the researcher to clearly mark the boundaries.

- On a methodological front, and as previously argued, the main study approach and theoretical framework adopted in this study adequately serve the initial aims and objectives of the study and bring significant contributions both theoretically and methodologically. Having said that, other alternative approaches could yield alternative results to what has been reported here, and therefore enrich the existing body of knowledge about sport management in Saudi Arabia. For instance, a more participant observation approach would allow the researcher to immerse deeper into the case study organisation(s), thereby extricating hidden aspects of daily and mundane strategising work, and at the same time avoiding some of the common pitfalls of more distant data collection methods, such as the semi-structured interview (see also Chapter 4).

9.5 Conclusions

The overall picture that emerged from this study revealed several areas of deficiency in the three domains of strategising, as relevant to the main proposed unit of analysis, namely the Saudi sport club privatisation policy. Aspects of deficiency included all stages in the strategy journey starting from strategy formulation, to communication and dissemination, to interpretation and implementation, and finishing with evaluation and review phases. Analyses revealed aspects of ambiguity, lack of clarity and cohesion as well as inadequate coordination in the strategising work around the sport club privatisation policy. In turn, these factors resulted in the fragmentation, lack of continuity and some level of instability in planning and implementation activities that contributed to shaping the sport club privatisation policy over the years. The two levels of findings summarised above allowed the researcher to achieve the final objective of determining the precise dynamics of the activity system as relevant to the sport club privatisation policy and the study participant organisations and strategising actors. Additionally, this allowed the researcher to determine gaps and overlaps, as well as those of convergence and divergence, vis-a-vis the proposed theoretical framework and expected theoretical predictions.

Analysis of the three key domains of strategising, in term of backgrounds, contexts, trends and daily interactions revealed that the government's dominant top-down model of implementation policies resulted in creating evident separation between policy-

formulation actors and those at organisations below them in the hierarchy. This led to an overall sense of ambiguity and lack of clarity in transmitting, interpreting and ultimately implementation of key policy objectives, as one participant mused: "who is the leader in charge of Saudi sport clubs privatisation policy?". This extremely rigid and hierarchal mode of interaction and communication between relevant organisations and practitioners involved in policy formulation and implementation meant that the practitioners' implementation process was often dominated by a one-way flow of strategic activities, actions and practices. It follows that many of the organisational actors involved in the privatisation policy were working in silos most of the time. Many practitioners struggled to ensure that policies are executed as accurately as possible in terms of achieving their intended goals. The managers at macro-level organisations were often faced with a dilemma when it comes to the accurate interpretation of the privatisation policy directives. This was partly due to a noticeable lack of clarity in the strategic direction, further exacerbated by inadequate communication and low levels of coordination in strategising work among key practitioners. These situations filtered through to lower levels of strategising praxis leading to many practitioners not fully understanding their precise position and/ or role within the overall organisational hierarchy as it relates to the sport club privatisation policy. Faced with several dilemmas at once, on top of numerous internal and external pressures to make effective decisions and deliver results, practitioners often resorted to personal interpretation in an attempt to understand what is precisely required of them. The lack of collaborative work, such as initiatives involving joint work programmes, further exacerbated a situation that was already unfavourable. This highlighted the severe mismatch between what privatisation policymakers wanted and what other organisational practitioners, crucially responsible for policy implementation, at the lower levels of hierarchy could realistically deliver.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Macro level interviews questions

code	Questions	Examine*link with
1	**Background and general questions.**	
1.1	How long have you worked for this organisation? What is your educational background?	Personal Background
1.2	What positions have you held during that time? Qualifications and experience gained?	Qualifications and experience
1.3	What are the nature of your job and the structural of your organisation? Are there rules and procedures or instructions impact in your daily routine and controlling of your employs daily works e.g. job description and schedule of annual meetings? If yes, Is it clear? Explain.	Understanding organisational structure
2	**Saudi history and background :**	
2.1	What are the key economic factors that impact on the development of Saudi sports such as facilities, participation, budget, sponsorship, donations, and income earned and expenses, etc.?	Economy impact In Saudi Arabia
2.2	Do you think social changes in the Saudi Arabia have impact on the people's behaviour, especially employees in sport such as educations, cultural, religious, scientific or technological forces and economic, etc.?	Social impact In Saudi Arabia
2.3	Since 1970 when government started "5-YNDP", how the trend towards development policy events has changed "Welfare to Economic government"?	Role of planning In Saudi Arabia
3	**The political economy of privatisation in Saudi Arabia :**	
3.1	Where were the ideas of privatisation policy coming from? And what were the pressures, demands shaping the policy?	Influence of legitimacy
3.2	Is there any specific Strategy for privatisation sports clubs strategy? If yes, what are the main features of this strategy? How it is made and working?	Existing activity
3.3	Is there any mechanism monitoring, follow up, and feedback on privatisation policy? Explain.	Administrative practices
3.4	Do you think, there is resistance to the government privatisation policy? What are the main arguments and motives and reasons for this rejection?	Resistance practices
4	**Privatisation strategies at different sectors:**	
4.1	What is your organisational strategy to implement the government privatisation policy? How is made these strategies in different sectors? Unclear? Motivation to implement?	Individual interactive
4.2	Is this strategy translated into specific targets, goals, and measures to achieve them?	Content interactive
4.3	Does this strategy have clearly defined and regulated in a form that easy to be understood by implementers? Explain.	Concept interactive
5	**Practitioners :**	
5.1	What areas of policy-making are you involved in? Who were the key Actors involved in the policy making?	Practitioners interaction
5.2	How do you explain your relation with different sectors managers who shape the strategy? Are they participating in strategy making? Explain.	Practitioners practices
5.3	What are senior managers at different sectors qualification? How do you evaluate their performance and interaction in term of strategy executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating and shaping?	Practitioners behaviours
5.4	Do managers have a degree of autonomy to decide what minimum standards must their sector achieve in privatisation and other aspects?	Practitioners authority
6	**Practices :**	
6.1	What are the practices that must be undertaken by managers in order to implement the strategy? Is it coordinated and adapted with other organisation efforts to construct and implement the practice you wish?	Implementation practices
6.2	In your opinion have any misunderstanding in the strategy cycle occurred?	Understanding practices

6.3	Are there any areas in which the implementation of privatisation strategy process could be improved upon?	Evaluation practices
7	**Praxis :**	
7.1	To what extent do you think the strategy is implemented according to the itsintended aims?	Praxis activity
7.2	Are there any specific strategy and policy measures for implementation and for improving performance and targets?	Praxis regulatory
7.3	What is your opinion of the implementation of privatisation sports clubs strategy within the last 10 years? What has been your role in that period? What have been the main challenges in this process?	Praxis obstacles
8	**Other issues :**	
8.1	What are the recent changes in laws, regulations and recommendations which may have a particular impact on public, non-profit organisations?	Uncalculated change impact
8.2	To what extent you think there is a variation in the implementation between different sectors?	Stabilising activities
8.3	Are there any areas in which the privatisation policy process could be improved upon?	Future development

Appendix 2 Meso level Interviews questions

code	Questions	Examine*link with
1	**Background and general questions.**	
1.1	How long have you worked for this organisation? What is your educational background?	Personal Background
1.2	What positions have you held during that time? Qualifications and experience gained?	Qualifications and experience
1.3	What are the nature of your job and the structural of your organisation? Are there rules and procedures or instructions regulating your daily routine and controlling of your employs daily works e.g. job description and schedule of annual meetings? If yes, Is it clear? Explain. How are decisions made in your organisation? Explain the process. What is your relation with the GPYS and the sports clubs?	Understanding organisational structure
2	**Saudi sport history and background :**	
2.1	What are the key economic factors impacts on the development of Saudi sports such as facilities, participation, budget, sponsorship, donations, income earned and expenses, etc.?	Economy impact In sport organisations
2.2	Do you think social changes in the Saudi Arabia have impact on the people behaviour, spicily employees in sport such as educations, cultural, religious , scientific or technological forces and economic, etc.?	Social impact In sport organisations
2.3	Since 1980 "GPYW in 5-YNDP", how the trend towards sports development policy events has changed "Welfare to Economic government"?	Role of planning
3	**The political economy of privatisation in Saudi Arabia :**	
3.1	Are you familiar with the government privatisation strategy? What do you think about it? Who are the main stakeholders in your organisation? Did you consult them with regard to your reaction to the privatisation policy? Where were the ideas of privatisation sports clubs strategy coming from? And what were the pressures, demands shaping the policy?	Influence of legitimacy
3.2	Is there any specific strategy for privatisation sports clubs strategy? If yes, what are the main features of such strategy? How it is made and work?	Existing activity
3.3	Is there any mechanism for policy monitoring, follow up, and feedback? Explain.	Administrative practices
3.4	Do you think, there is resistance to the government privatisation sport strategy? What are the main arguments and motives and reasons for this rejection?	Resistance practices
4	**Privatisation sports clubs strategy:**	
4.1	When did you first hear about the new privatisation strategy and what did you do as an organisation? What is your organisational strategy to implement government privatisation sports clubs strategy?	Individual interactive
4.2	Is this strategy translated into specific targets, goals, and measures to achieve them?	Content interactive
4.3	Dose the sports strategy clearly defines and regulated in a form that easy to be understood by implementers? Explain.	Concept interactive
5	**Practitioners :**	
5.1	What areas of policy-making are you involved in? Who were the key Actors involved in the policy?	Practitioners interaction
5.2	How do you explain your relation with the senior managers who are demands shaping the strategy? Are they participating in strategy making? Explain.	Practitioners practices
5.3	What are senior managers sports clubs and sports federations in the regions or cities qualification? How do you evaluate their performance and interaction in term of strategy executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating and shaping?	Practitioners behaviours

5.4	Do managers and principals have a degree of autonomy to decide what minimum standards must all clubs achieved in privatisation and other aspects?	Practitioners authority
6	**Practices :**	
6.1	What are the practices that must be paid by managers in order to implement the strategy? Is it coordinated and adapted with other organisation efforts to construct implement practice you wish?	Implementation practices
6.2	In your opinion where in the strategy cycle misunderstands may occur?	Understanding practices
6.3	Are there any areas in which the implementation of privatisation sports clubs strategy process could be improved upon?	Evaluation practices
7	**Praxis :**	
7.1	To what extent you think the strategy is implemented according to the policy-making intend?	Praxis activity
7.2	Are there any specific strategy and policy measures for implantation and for improving performance and standards?	Praxis regulatory
7.3	What is your opinion of implementation of privatisation sports clubs strategy within last 10 years? What is your role in that period? Is there any measure to reduce rate of failure and misunderstand privatisation sport clubs strategy?	Praxis obstacles
8	**Other issues :**	
8.1	What are the recent changes in laws, regulations and recommendations which may have a particular impact on public, non-profit organisations and especially sport clubs?	Uncalculated change impact
8.2	To what extent you think there is a variation in the implementation between different regions or clubs?	Stabilising activities
8.3	Are there any areas in which the sport clubs privatisation strategy process could be improved upon?	Future development

Appendix 3 Micro level interviews questions

code	Questions	Examine*link with
1	**Background and general questions.**	
1.1	How long have you worked for this organisation?	Personal Background
1.2	What positions have you held during that time? Qualifications and experience gained?	Qualifications and experience
1.3	What are the nature of your job and the structural of your organisation? Are there rules and procedures or instructions impact in your daily routine and controlling of your employs daily works e.g. job description and schedule of annual meetings? If yes, Is it clear? Explain.	Understanding organisational structure
2	**Saudi sport history and background :**	
2.1	What are the key factors of GPYW privatisation strategy impacts in your region and cities or club on the development of sports such as facilities, participation, budget, sponsorship, donations, income earned and expenses, etc.?	Economy impact In sport clubs or region cities
2.2	Do you think social changes in your region cities have impact on the people behaviour, spicily employees in sport clubs such as educations, cultural, religious, scientific or technological forces and economic, etc.?	Social impact In sport clubs or region cities
2.3	Since 1980 "GPYW in 5-YNDP", how the trend towards sports development policy events has changed "Welfare to Economic government"?	Role of planning
3	**The political economy of privatisation in Saudi Arabia :**	
3.1	Who owns sport clubs? Where were the ideas of privatisation sports clubs strategy coming from? And what were the pressures, demands shaping the strategy?	Influence of legitimacy
3.2	Is there any specific strategy for privatisation sports clubs strategy? If yes, what are the main features of such strategy?	Existing activity
3.3	Is there any mechanism for policy monitoring, follow up, and feedback? Explain.	Administrative practices
3.4	Do you think, there is resistance to the government privatisation sport clubs strategy? What are the main arguments and motives and reasons for this rejection?	Resistance practices
4	**Privatisation sports clubs strategy:**	
4.1	What is your organisational strategy to implement government privatisation sports clubs strategy?	Individual interactive
4.2	Is this strategy translated into specific targets, goals, and measures to achieve them?	Content interactive
4.3	Dose the sports strategy clearly defines and regulated in a form that easy to be understood by implementers? Explain.	Concept interactive
5	**Practitioners :**	
5.1	Do you participate or take part, in any form, in the process of policy-making? Who are the key Actors involved in the policy?	Practitioners interaction
5.2	How do you explain your relation with the GPYW managers who are demands shaping the strategy? Are they participating in strategy making? Explain.	Practitioners practices
5.3	How many full time employees are there in your organisation? Qualifications and experience gained? How do you evaluate their performance and interaction in term of strategy executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating and shaping?	Practitioners behaviours
5.4	How much autonomy and power do you have in deciding standards, goals, measures and funding to meet the requirements of the strategy?	Practitioners authority
5.5	Do you have the authority in making the final decision regarding the sports clubs in the performance of your organisation and in deciding the necessary remedial measures needed to rectify such a problem?	Practitioners authority

6	*Practices :*	
6.1	What are the practices that must be paid by managers in order to implement the strategy? Is it coordinated and adapted with other organisation efforts to construct implement practice you wish?	Implementation practices
6.2	In your opinion where in the strategy cycle misunderstands may occur?	Understanding practices
6.3	Are there any areas in which the implementation of privatisation sports clubs strategy process could be improved upon?	Evaluation practices
7	*Praxis :*	
7.1	To what extent you think the strategy is implemented according to the policy-making intend?	Praxis activity
7.2	Are there any specific strategy and policy measures for implantation and for improving performance and standards?	Praxis regulatory
7.3	What is your opinion of implementation of privatisation sports clubs strategy within last 10 years? What is your role in that period? Is there any measure to reduce rate of failure and misunderstand privatisation sport clubs strategy?	Praxis obstacles
8	*Other issues :*	
8.1	What are the recent changes in laws, regulations and recommendations which may have a particular impact on public, non-profit organisations and especially sport clubs?	Uncalculated change impact
8.2	To what extent you think that policies and procedures may changes with the change of persons and official positions?	Stabilising activities
8.3	To what extent you think there is a variation in the implementation between different regions or clubs?	Stabilising activities
8.4	Are there any areas in which the sport clubs privatisation strategy process could be improved upon?	Future development

Appendix 4 Summary of interviews schedule plan in Saudi Arabia

Date		Program	Process
17th Dec 2012		Arrived in S.A	
18th Dec 2012		Ministry of High Education	Gave them letter from Saudi Culture Bureau in London and Brunel university letter. Receive letter from them for intended for Ministry of Youth, clubs and other organisations in my plan
19th Dec 2012		Visit: Ministry of Youth Welfare; GPYW	Gave them personal letter about my research Made appointments. Receive official letter from them for intended their departments, offices, sport federations and spot clubs.
19th Dec 2012		**The first televised debate**	**The first elections via live television broadcast to public.**
20th Dec 2012		**Attended elections**	**First elections to president of Saudi football federation.**
21st Dec 2012		**Social communication**	**Invited some friends working at GPYW for dinner**.
22nd Dec 2012		Visit: The Supreme Economic Council	Gave them personal letter about my research Made appointments.
23rd Dec 2012		Visit: Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee (SAOC)	Gave them personal letter about my research and GPYW official letter. Made appointments
24th Dec 2012		**Meet the new president of football federation**	**First meeting between the members of football federation.**
24th Dec 2012		Visit: Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP)	Gave them personal letter about my research and Ministry of High Education official letter. Made appointments.
25th Dec 2012		Visit: Sports Federations (NSF)	Gave them personal letter about my research and GPYW official letter. Made appointments
Weekly report of collect data & interviews. Send GPYW official letter from their departments, offices, sport federations and spot clubs. Organising interviews schedule in Riyadh.			
25th Dec 2012		Travel East	Conduct interviews and information's in East.
29th Dec2012		Interviews in Riyadh	Conduct interviews and information's in Riyadh
Weekly report of collect data & interviews. Organising interviews schedule in West and South.			
1st June 2013		Travel to West	Conduct interviews and information's in West
5th June 2013		Travel in South	Conduct interviews and information's in South.
Weekly report of collect data & interviews. Organising interviews schedule in North and East.			
12th June 2013		Travel to North	Conduct interviews and information's in North.
Weekly report of collect data & interviews. Reviewing all interviews reschedule any new plan.			
17th June 2013		Collect important data rising during interviews.	Visiting library, publication houses, government agencies and private agencies.
25th June 2013		Thank organisations and people	Send thank you letter to all participants and organisations
Weekly report of collect data & interviews. Reviewing all Process reschedule any new plan.			
30th June 2013		Travel to London	Fly back to London.

* Thursday and Friday are weekend in Saudi Arabia. Some organisations open on Thursdays such as clubs.

* During all this interviewing period, I tried to do as much transcribing and translating as possible in between the interviews

Appendix 5 Interviews schedule with managers at Macro, Measo and Micro levels.

No	Official	Organisation	Date and time	Level
1.	SC. Official.1	The Supreme Economic Council	25/12/2012(13:09-14:21)	Macro
2.	MP. Official.1	Ministry of Economy and Planning	31/12/2012	Macro
3.	MP. Official.2	Ministry of Economy and Planning	1/1/2013	Macro
4.	GP. Official.1	GPYW	29/12/2012	Macro
5.	GP. Official.2	GPYW	14/1/2013	Macro
6.	GP. Official.3	GPYW	14/1/2013	Macro
7.	GP. Official.4	Privatisation project team	15/1/2013	Macro
8.	GP. Official.5	Privatisation project team	15/1/2013	Macro
9.	OC. Official.1	Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee	29/12/2012	Meso
10.	OC. Official.2	Saudi Arabia Olympic Committee	29/12/2012	Meso
11.	FF. Official.1	Saudi Football Federation	19/1/2013	Meso
12.	FF. Official.2	Saudi Football Federation	19/1/2013	Meso
13.	VF. Official.1	Volleyball Federation	31/12/2012	Meso
14.	VF. Official.2	Volleyball Federation	31/12/2012	Meso
15.	TF. Official.1	Tennis Federation	2/1/2013	Meso
16.	TF. Official.2	Tennis Federation	2/1/2013	Meso
17.	KF. Official.1	Karate Federation	26/12/2012	Meso
18.	KF. Official.2	Karate Federation	26/12/2012	Meso
19.	EO. Official.1	GPYW office in Dammam	6/1/2013	Micro
20.	EC. Official.1	Al-Ettifaq Sports Club	6/1/2013	Micro
21.	EC. Official.2	Al-Ettifaq Sports Club	6/1/2013	Micro
22.	NO. Official.1	GPYW office in Al-Jouf	8/1/2013	Micro
23.	AC. Official.1	AL Arouba Sports Club	8/1/2013	Micro
24.	AC. Official.2	AL Arouba Sports Club	8/1/2013	Micro
25.	SO. Official.1	GPYW office in Jazan	9/1/2013	Micro
26.	TC. Official.1	AL Tohami Sports Club	9/1/2013	Micro
27.	TC. Official.2	AL Tohami Sports Club	11/1/2013 in Jeddah	Micro
28.	WO. Official.1	GPYW office in Jeddah	12/1/2013	Micro
29.	IC. Official.1	AL Ittihad Sports Club	13/1/2013	Micro
30.	IC. Official.2	AL Ittihad Sports Club	13/1/2013	Micro
31.	CO. Official.1	GPYW office in Riyadh	1/1/2013	Meso
32.	HC. Official.1	AL Hailal Sports Club	16/1/2013	Micro
33.	HC. Official.2	AL Hailal Sports Club	16/1/2013	Micro

Appendix 6 Letters of confidentiality page. 1

Brunel
UNIVERSITY
L O N D O N

vassil.girginov@brunel.ac.uk.

Appendix 7 Letters of confidentiality page.2

Brunel
UNIVERSITY
LONDON

Brunel
UNIVERSITY
LONDON

http://www.brunel.ac.uk/research
http://csspa.ksu.edu.sa/about-college

Vassil Girginov
vassil.girginov@brunel.ac.uk
HU8B 3PH, HW213, 01895 266811

Appendix 8 Sample of letters from Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London to MEP

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education

Cultural Bureau in the
United Kingdom & Ireland

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العـالي
الملحقية الثقافية
بالمملكة المتحدة وإيرلندا

الشئون الأكاديمية:R585

إفـــــــادة

تفيد الملحقية الثقافية بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن بأن المبتعث/ فواز بن خيري بــن مرزوق الحكمي (سجل مدني رقم، 1059611457) مبتعث من قبل جامعة الملــك ســعود لدراســة الدكتوراه في تخصص التربية البدنية في جامعة برونيــل إعتبــاراً مــن 2010/01/01م حتــى 2013/11/22م.

وقد منحت له هذه الإفادة بناء على طلبه لتقديمها الى وزارة الإقتصاد و التخطيط وذلك من أجـل تسهيل مهمته في جمع المعلومات الخاصة برسالة الدكتوراه.

والله الموفق،،،

الملحق الثقافي
بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن

أ. د. غازي بن عبد الواحد المكي

د ع كك، 2012/3/23م

Appendix 9 Sample of letters from Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London to GPYW

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education

Cultural Bureau in the
United Kingdom & Ireland

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
الملحقية الثقافية
بالمملكة المتحدة وايرلندا

الشئون الأكاديمية:R585

إفـــــــــادة

تفيد الملحقية الثقافية بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن بأن المبتعث/ فواز بن خيري بـن

مرزوق الحكمي (سجل مدني رقم، 1059611457) مبتعث من قبل جامعة الملــك ســعود لدراســة

الدكتوراه في تخصص التربية البدنية في جامعة برونيـل إعتبـاراً مــن 2010/01/01م حتــى

2013/11/22م.

وقد منحت له هذه الإفادة بناء على طلبه لتقديمها الى الرئاسة العامة لرعاية الشباب وذلك من أجل

تسهيل مهمته في جمع المعلومات الخاصة برسالة الدكتوراه.

والله الموفق،،،

الملحق الثقافي
بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن

أ. د. غازي بن عبد الواحد المكي

د ع ك، 2012/3/23م

الرقم: .... التاريخ: .... المرفقات: ....

630 Chiswick High Road, London W4 5RY, E-mail: sachuk@uksacb.org Website: www.uksacb.org
هاتف: ٧٠٠٠ ٣٢٤٩ (٢٠) ٤٤ + فاكسات: ٧٠٠١ ٣٢٤٩ (٢٠) ٤٤ + / ٧٠٠٢ ٣٢٤٩ (٢٠) ٤٤ + / ٧٠٠٣ ٣٢٤٩ (٢٠) ٤٤ +

Appendix 10 Letters from Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London to sport clubs

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education

Cultural Bureau in the
United Kingdom & Ireland

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي

الملحقية الثقافية
بالمملكة المتحدة وايرلندا

الشئون الأكاديمية:R585

إفـــــــــادة

تفيد الملحقية الثقافية بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن بأن المبتعث/ فواز بن خيري بـــن

مرزوق الحكمي (سجل مدني رقم، 1059611457) مبتعث من قبل جامعة الملـك سـعود لدراسـة

الدكتوراه في تخصص التربية البدنية في جامعة برونيـل في جامعة برونيـل إعتبـاراً مـن 2010/01/01م حتـى

2013/11/22م.

وقد منحت له هذه الإفادة بناء على طلبه لتقديمها الى الأندية السعودية وذلك من أجل تسهيل مهمته

في جمع المعلومات الخاصة برسالة الدكتوراه.

والله الموفق،،،

الملحق الثقافي
بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن

أ. د. غازي بن عبد الواحد المكي

د ع ك، 2012/3/23م

Appendix 11 Saudi State under the basic instructions outgoing year 1926

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                                              ┌──────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
                                              │   King   │──────│ Rulers of the Regions│
                                              └──────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
                                                   │
        ┌──────────────────────┐                   │
        │ General Inspectorate │───────────────────┤
        └──────────────────────┘                   │
                                              ┌────────────────┐
                                              │ General Deputy │
                                              └────────────────┘
                                                   │
                       ┌──────────────┐            │         ┌───────────────────┐
                       │ Shura Council│────────────┼─────────│ Accounting Bureau │
                       └──────────────┘            │         └───────────────────┘
```

Directorate of Military matters	Directorate of Foreign matters	Directorate of Internal matters	Directorate of Finance	Directorate of Legitimacy "Sharia"	Directorate of General Knowledge

Directorate of Internal matters:
- Directorate of Public Security
- Directorate of Public Health
- Directorate of Post and Telegraph
- Directorate of Municipalities

Directorate of Legitimacy "Sharia":
- The administration of justice
- The administration of Hajj
- The administration of Endowments
- The administration of Two Holy Mosques

Appendix 12 Saudi State under the Agents Council regulation issued in 1931
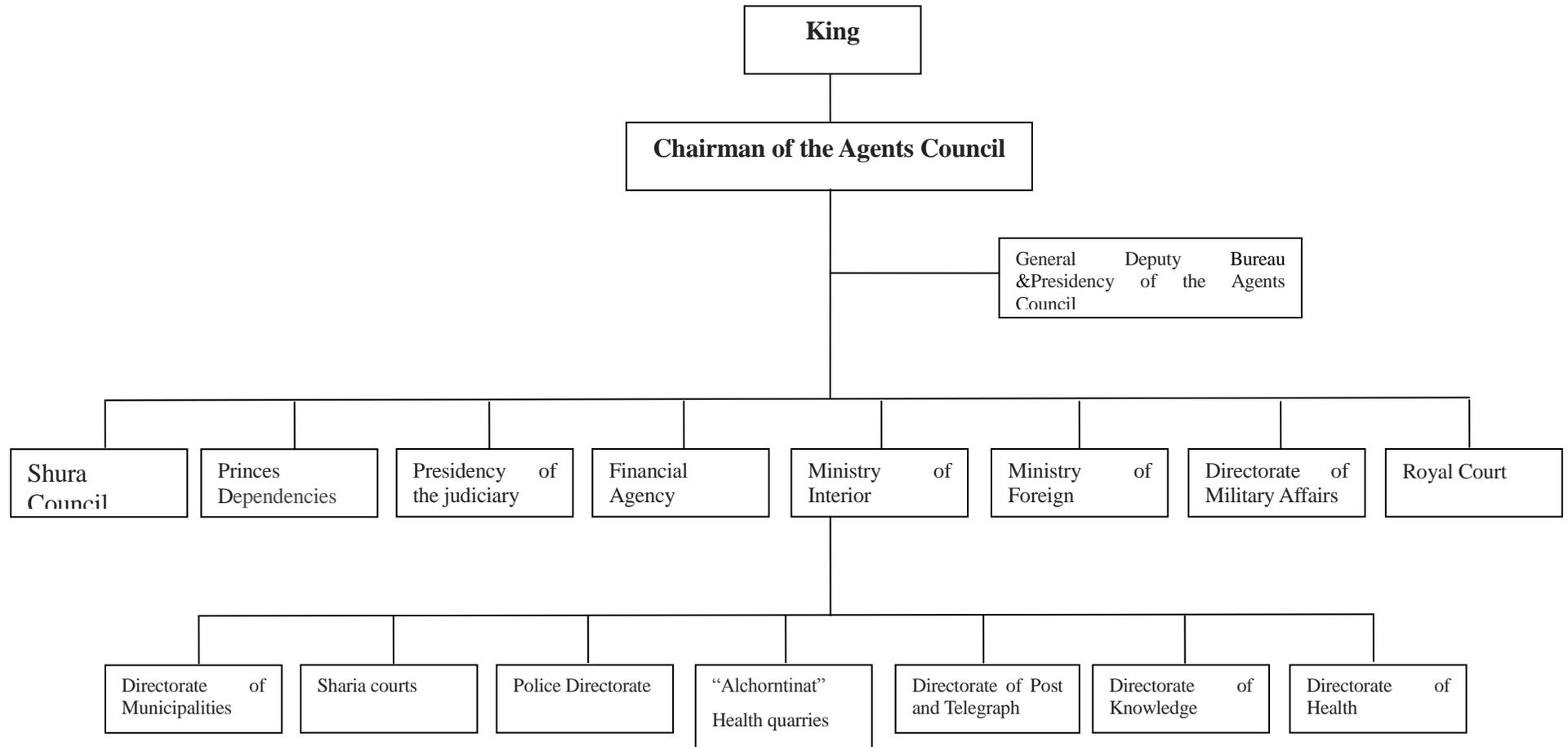
Appendix 13 Saudi State organisational structure 2013
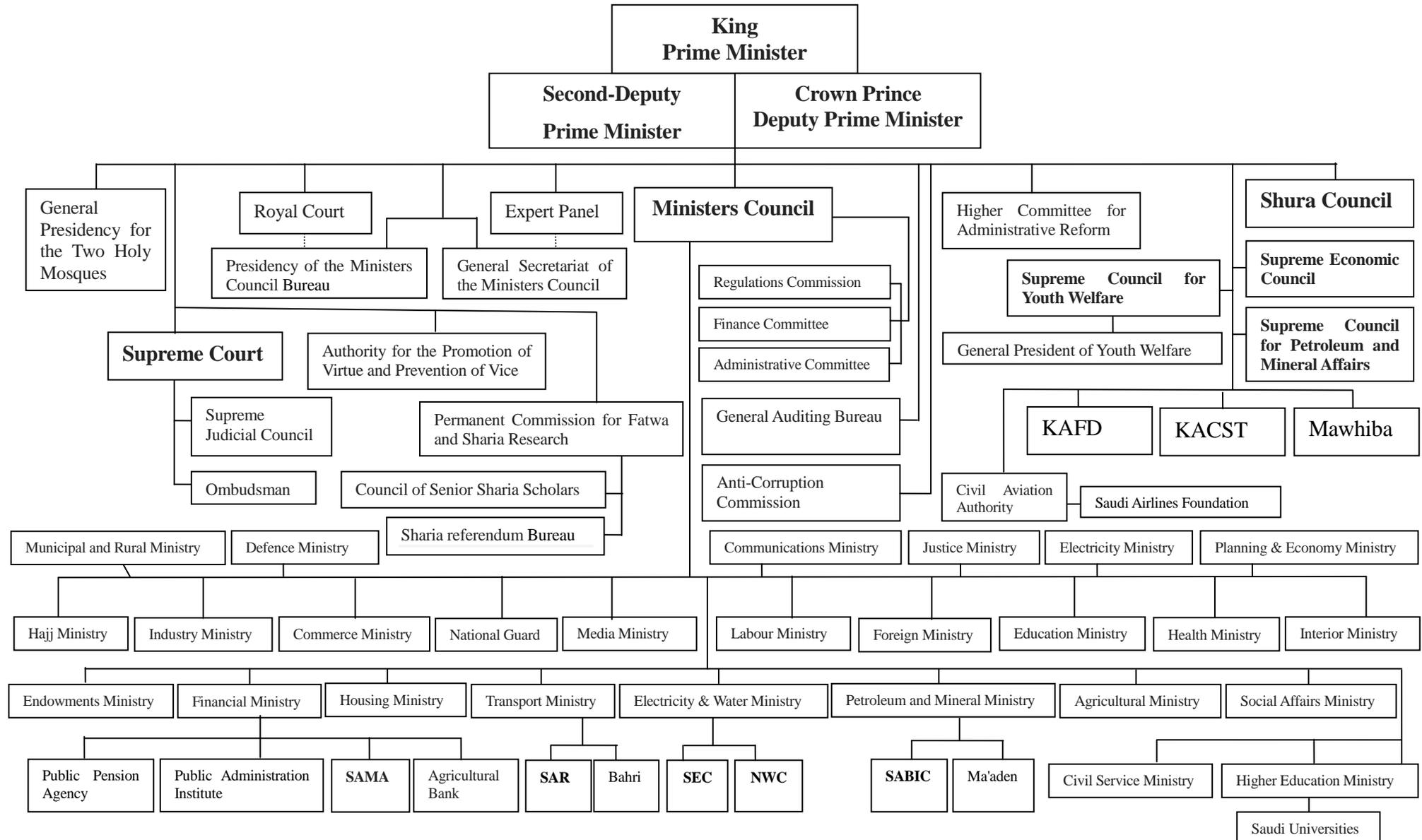
Appendix 14 Saudi Supreme Economic Council organisational structure 2013

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┌───────────────────────────────┐        ┌───────────────────────────┐
│ Consult Commission for        │────────│     King - President      │
│ Economic Affairs              │        └───────────────────────────┘
└───────────────────────────────┘                     │
                                        ┌───────────────────────────┐
                                        │ Crown Prince –Vice President│
                                        └───────────────────────────┘
                                                      │
                          ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
                          │ The Standing Committee of the Supreme         │
                          │ Economic Council                              │
                          └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

| Privatisation Committee | Secretary-General | Experts   and   Consultants |

Secretary-General Office

| Studies and reports Dept. | Financial   Affairs | Administrative Affairs Dept. |

| Translation Affairs | Documentation Centre | Editor Affairs | Storages Affairs | Procurement Affairs | Accounts Affairs | Employees Affairs | Administrative Communications |

Appendix 15 Ministry of Economy and Planning organisational structure 2013
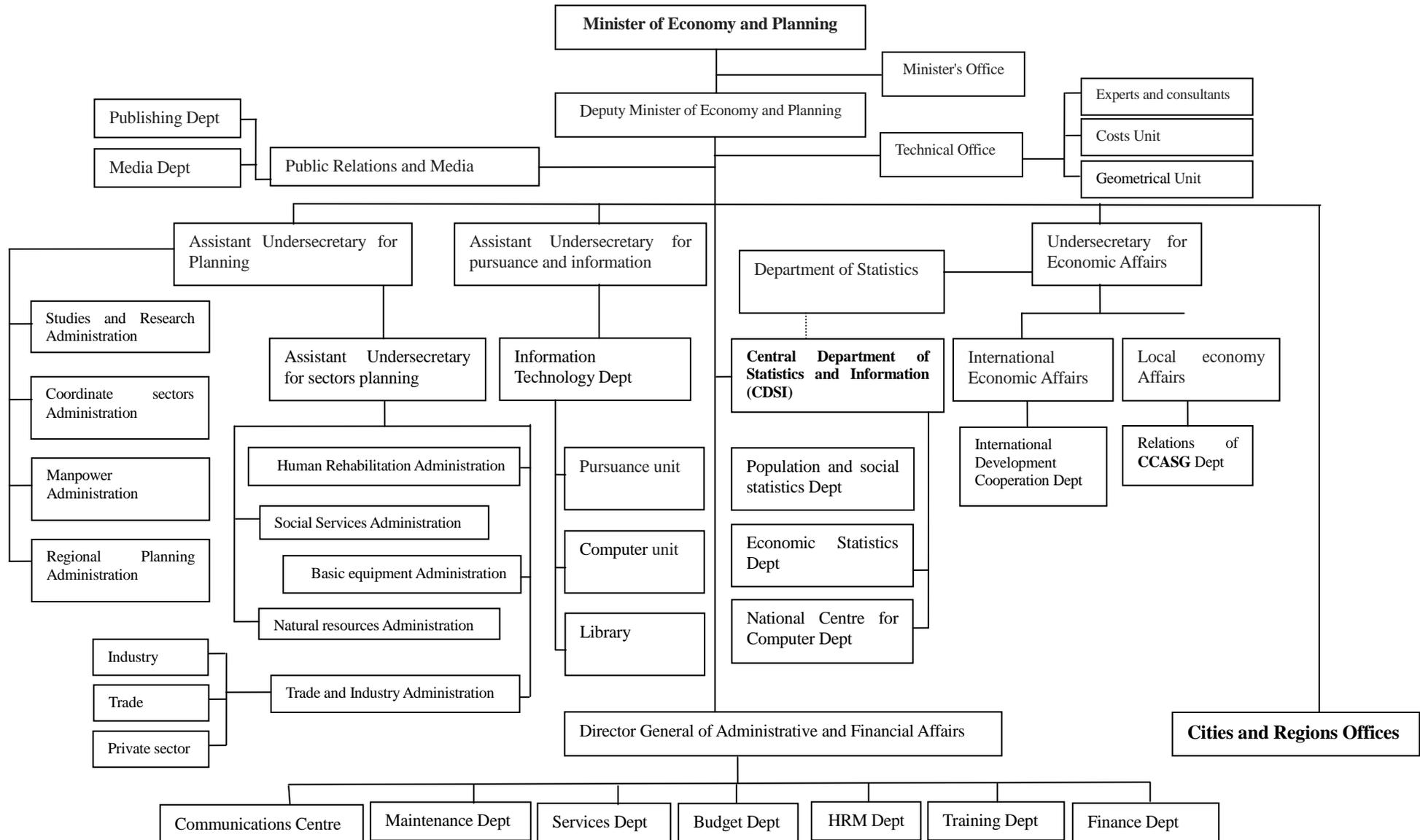
Appendix 16 The organisational structure of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare
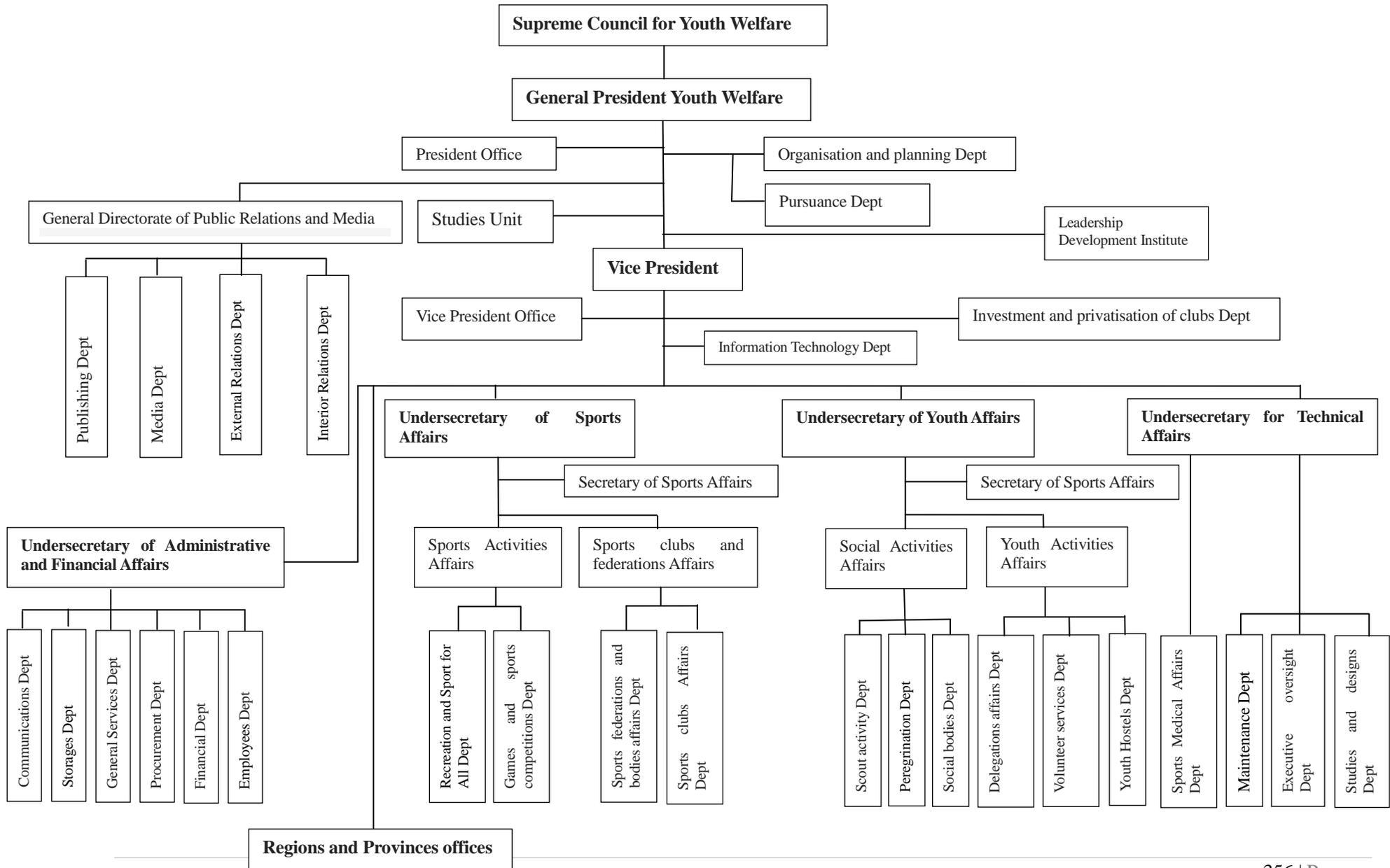
Appendix 17 Historical development of Saudi Arabia sports Federations

	Federation Name	Symbol	Found	Federation Membership "sport Recognition"				Sport clubs Registered 2013
				Arabian Gulf Organizing Committee	Arab Federation	Asian Federation	International Federation	
1.	Saudi Arabian Society for football	SASF	1959					155
	Saudi Arabian Football Federation	SAFF	1956	1982	1976	1972	1956	
2.	Saudi Arabian Society Basketball	SASB	1963					58
	Saudi Arabian Basketball Committee	SABC	1974					
	Saudi Arabian Basketball Federation	SABF	1975	1979	1974	1974	1963	
3.	Saudi Arabian Society Volleyball	SASV	1963					126
	Saudi Arabian Volleyball Federation	SAVF	1976	1979	1977	1964	1964	
4.	Saudi Arabian Society for Handball	SASH	1963					78
	Saudi Arabian Handball Federation	SAHF	1975	1980	1975	1976	1975	
5.	Saudi Arabian Society for Athletics	SASA	1963					96
	Saudi Arabian Athletics Federation	SAAF	1975	1983	1975	1973	1963	
6.	Saudi Society for Swimming	SSS	1973					55
	Saudi Arabian Swimming Federation	SASF	1976	1976	1983	1983	1977	
7.	Saudi Arabian Gymnastics Federation	SAGF	1978	-	1978	1983	1980	27
8.	Saudi Arabian Power Federation	SAPF	1980					
	Boxing (Separation 2013)	SABF	1980	-	1981	1982	1982	20
	Wrestling (Separation 2013)	SAWF	1980	-	1980	1980	1980	
	Weightlifting (Separation 2001)	SALF	1980	1998	1980	1980	1980	32
	Bodybuilding (Separation 2001)	SABF	1980	1998	1980	1980	1980	
9.	Saudi Combat sports Federation	SACF	1975					
	Karate (Separation 2001)	SAKF	1975	-	1977	-	1975	57
	Judo (Separation 2013)	SAJF	1975	-	1982	-	1979	42
	Taekwondo (Separation 2013)	SATF	1975	1997	1976	-	1978	
10.	Saudi Arabian Society for Bicycles	SASB	1963					31
	Saudi Arabian Bicycles Federation	SABF	1975	1986	1975	1979	1975	
11.	Saudi Arabian Federation for	SAEAF	1989	-				
	Equestrian (Separation 2001)	SAEF	1989	-	1990	1990	1990	16
	Arrows (Separation 2013)	SAAF	1989	-	1990	1990	1990	
	Shooting (Separation 2013)	SASF	1979	1994	1987	1979	1979	Military
12.	Saudi Arabian Fencing Federation	SAFF	1975	-	1978	1978	1979	
13.	Saudi Arabian Society for Tennis	SACT	1975					
	Table -Tennis (Separation 1993)	SATTF	1993	1976	1956	1974	1977	128
	Tennis (Separation 1993)	SATF	1993	1977	1975	1976	1976	130

No.	Name	Abbrev						
14.	Saudi Arabian Society for Squash	SASS	1988					18
	Saudi Arabian Squash Federation	SASF	1992	1992	1989	1990	1990	
15.	Saudi Arabian Society for Bowling	SASB	1989					1
	Saudi Arabian Bowling Federation	SABF	1992	1989	-	1989	1989	
16.	Saudi Arabian Physical Education & Sport for All Federation	SAPESF	2013					Non
	Saudi Sport for All Federation	SASAF	1994		1995		1995	
	Saudi Physical Education Federation	SAPEF	1988		1978		1995	
17.	Saudi Sports Medicine Federation	SASMF	1988		1978		1988	Noon
18.	Saudi Arabian Disabled Sports Federation	SADSF	1992	1993	1988			Noon
	Saudi Arabian Special Needs Sports Federation (Rename,2010)	SASNSF	1992					
	Saudi Society for Deaf Sports (Separation 2004)	SSDS	2000				2000	
	Saudi Deaf Sports Federation	SADF	2008					
19.	Saudi Arabian Maritime Sports Federation	SAMSF	2008					Noon
20.	Saudi Arabian Society Snooker Billiards (Included 2001)	SASSB	2000					Noon
	Saudi Arabian Snooker & Billiards Federation	SASBF	2008					
21.	Saudi Arabian Society for Golf	SASG	1975					Noon
	Saudi Arabian Golf Federation	SAGF	2008					
22.	Saudi Society for Sport Car & Motorcycles	SASCM	2005					Noon
	Saudi Arabian Sport Car & Motorcycles Federation	SASCMF	2007		2008			
23.	Saudi Arabian Racing Pigeons Committee for the amateur	SARPC	1991				1993	Noon
	Saudi Arabian Racing Pigeons Federation	SARPF	2001					

Appendix 18 Saudi Arabian Olympic committee organisational structure 2013

Appendix 19 Saudi Arabian football federation organisational structure 2013

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │  General Assembly   │──│  SAFF Board of Directors │
                    └─────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────────┘
                                                        │
                                             ┌────────────────────┐
                                             │     President      │
                                             └────────────────────┘
                                                        │
                                             ┌────────────────────┐
                                             │   Vice-President   │
                                             └────────────────────┘
                                                        │
                                                        │         ┌──────────────────┐
                                                        ├─────────│ Executive Office │
                                                        │         └──────────────────┘
                                             ┌────────────────────┐
                                             │  Secretary-General │
                                             └────────────────────┘
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| Financial Control Committee | Election Commission |

| Secretarial | Assistant Secretary General |

Sports Medical Committee	Media Committee	Legal Committee	Finance and Marketing Committee
Social Responsibility Committee	Football Games Committee	Disciplinary Committee	Competitions Committee
Committee professionalism and Players' Status	Strategic Studies Committee	Appeals Committee	Technical and Statistics Committee
		International Relations Committee	Main Referees Committee

Full-time | Part-time | Casual

Appendix 20 Saudi Arabian Volleyball Federation organisational structure 2013

Appendix 21 Saudi Arabian Karate Federation organisational structure 2013

Appendix 22 Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation organisational structure 2013

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                                    ┌─────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                    │  General Assembly   │───│  SATF Board of Directors │
                                    └─────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────┘
                                                                          │
                                                                ┌───────────────────┐
                                                                │     President      │
                                                                └───────────────────┘
                                                                          │
                                                                ┌───────────────────┐
                                                                │   Vice-President   │
                                                                └───────────────────┘
                                                                          │
                                                                          │    ┌────────────────────┐
                                                                          ├────│  Executive Office  │
                                                                          │    └────────────────────┘
                                                                ┌───────────────────┐
                                                                │ Secretary-General │
                                                                └───────────────────┘
              ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐              │
              │ Financial Control│      │Election Commission│  ┌───────────┐   ┌──────────┐   ┌───────────┐
              │ Committee        │      │                   │  │Secretarial│───│ Treasurer│───│ Accountant│
              └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘  └───────────┘   └──────────┘   └───────────┘
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Training and National Teams Committee   Public Relations and Media Committee   Referees Committee   Technical and Competitions Committee

Full-time   **Part-time**   **Casual**

Appendix 23 ALITIHAD sport club organisational structure 2013

General Assembly

The honour member's commission

Executive Council of the honour members

Club Board of Directors

| Media centre | **President** |

| **Executive Office** | **Vice-President** |

Football set

Sports Coordinator

Investment & Marketing

Treasurer

Secretary-General

Director of football

Accountants

Secretarial

Accountant | Secretarial

| Gymnastics supervisor | Volleyball supervisor |

| Swimming supervisor | Handball supervisor |

| Karate supervisor | Basketball supervisor |

| Tennis supervisor | Table tennis supervisor |

| Judo supervisor | Water polo supervisor |

| | Athletics supervisor |

Social activity Committee

Sports activity Committee

Medical Committee

Cultural activity Committee

Human Resources

Public services

Public Relations

Operation of facilities

Technical and medical devices | Professionalism official | Team Manager

ALITIHAD School Director

Appendix 24 ALHILAL sport club organisational structure 2013

General Assembly

The honour member's commission

Executive Council of the honour members

Club Board of Directors

Media centre — **President**

Executive Office — **Vice-President** — Legal counsellor

Sports supervisor &member of the Club Board of Directors — General Auditor

Football set

Sports Coordinator

Investment & Marketing — **Treasurer** — **Secretary-General** — Director of football

Chief Financial Officer — Secretarial — Accountant — Secretarial

Accountants

Age groups Director

Karate supervisor	Volleyball supervisor
Tennis supervisor	Basketball supervisor
Judo supervisor	Athletics supervisor
Taekwondo supervisor Supervisor	Squash supervisor

Assistant Secretary General

Technical and medical devices — Professionalism official — Team Manager

Social activity Committee	Human Resources
Sports activity Committee	Public services
Medical Committee	Public Relations
Cultural activity Committee	Operation of facilities

Appendix 25 ALITIFAQ sport club organisational structure 2013

General Assembly

The honour member's commission

Executive Council of the honour members

Club Board of Directors

Media centre — **President**

Executive Office — Vice-President

Football set

Sports Coordinator

Investment & Marketing

Treasurer

Accountants

Secretary-General

Secretarial

Director of football

Swimming supervisor

Volleyball supervisor

Karate supervisor

Taekwondo supervisor

Tennis supervisor

Squash supervisor

Body-Building supervisor

Wrestling supervisor

Water polo supervisor

Social activity Committee

Human Resources

Cultural activity Committee

Public Relations

Football Academy

Technical and medical devices

Professionalism official

Appendix 26 ALOROUBAH sport club organisational structure 2013

General Assembly

The honour member's commission

Club Board of Directors

Public Relations & Media Manger — **President**

Executive Office — **Vice-President**

Swimming Administrative	Volleyball Administrative	**Treasurer**	**Secretary-General**	Investment & Marketing manger
Karate Administrative	Handball Administrative	Accountants		Football set
Tennis Administrative	Squash Administrative		Secretarial	
Weightlifting Administrative	Boxing Administrative		Cultural &Social Activities Divisions	

Director of football | Technical and medical devices | Professionalism official

Appendix 27 ALTOUHAMI sport club organisational structure 2013

General Assembly

The honour member's commission

Club Board of Directors

President

Vice-President

| Swimming Administrative | Judo Administrative | Treasurer and Accountant | **Secretary-General** | Volleyball Administrative | Football Administrative |

| Karate Administrative | Tennis Administrative | Secretarial | Handball Administrative | Basketball Administrative |

| Weightlifting Administrative | Cultural &Social Activities Divisions | Water polo Administrative |

Strategy & strategising: An examination of sport clubs privatisation strategy in Saudi Arabia

Appendix 28 Distribution of sport facilities and population by province and regions 2012

Province	Capital	Area (km²)	Density	Governorates	GPYW offices	Population	Ratio	Club	Sport club facilities class A	B	C	Total	Sport city	Stadia	Sport facilities Total
Center Provinces (Najd)		566,173	15.4	35	9	8,726,150	32%	64	4	6	1	11	4	2	17
Ha'il Region	Ha'il	103,887	5.8	4	1	606,164	2%	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Qassim Region	Buraidah	58,046	21.3	11	2	1,234,531	4%	14	0	3	1	4	1	0	5
Riyadh Region	Riyadh	404,240	17.0	20	6	6,885,455	25%	41	4	3	0	7	2	2	11
West Provinces (Hijaz)		461,111	21.8	32	6	10,053,969	36%	28	4	0	1	5	5	1	11
Tabuk Region	Tabuk	146,072	5.5	6	1	803,418	3%	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Madinah Region	Medina	151,990	11.9	7	1	1,805,696	7%	6	1	0	1	2	1	0	3
Makkah Region	Makkah	153,128	45.9	12	3	7,026,805	25%	12	3	0	0	3	2	1	6
Bahah Region	Bahah	9,921	42.1	7	1	418,050	2%	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
North Province		212,009	3.6	6	2	772,038	3%	8	0	1	0	1	1	0	2
Northern Borders	Arar	111,797	2.9	3	1	325,334	1%	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Jawf Region	Sakakah	100,212	4.5	3	1	446,704	2%	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
South Province		237,875	16.1	34	3	3,841,265	14%	19	0	1	0	1	2	0	3
Jazan Region	Jazan	11,671	118.7	14	1	1,385,773	5%	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Asir Region	Abha	76,693	25.3	12	1	1,942,153	7%	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Najran Region	Najran	149,511	3.4	8	1	513,339	2%	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
East Province		672,522	6.2	11	3	4,170,010	15%	34	3	2	1	6	3	1	10
Eastern Region	Dammam	672,522	6.2	11	3	4,170,010	15%	34	3	2	1	6	3	1	10
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	2,149,690	311	118	23	27,563,432	1	153	11	10	3	24	15	4	43

Sport club facilities class:

A=Football stadium include athletics track (capacity up to 10,000), Hall for volleyball, basket and handball (capacity up to 600). Tennis courts. Squash courts. Swimming Pool. Gymnastics Hall. Table tennis and TV Hall. Theatre (capacity up to 500), Lecture room (capacity up to 35).Library. Mosque. Canteen. Athletic dormitories (capacity up to 35 beds).
B=Football stadium include athletics track (capacity up to 5,000), Hall for volleyball, basket and handball (capacity up to 300). Tennis courts. Swimming Pool. Mosque. Canteen.
C=Football stadium (capacity up to 2,000), Hall for volleyball, basket and hand ball (capacity up to 200). Tennis courts. Table tennis and TV Hall. Mosque. Canteen.

Appendix 29 Qualifications of GPYW employees at offices 2002-2012

GPYW offices	2002								2008								2012							
	P	E	S	B	M	D	O	T	P	E	S	B	M	D	O	T	P	E	S	B	M	D	O	T
Riyadh	12	8	18	8	0	0	2	48	12	8	11	13	1	0	4	49	8	11	14	16	1	0	2	52
Zulfi	2	2	12	3	0	0	2	21	2	2	11	3	0	0	2	20	3	2	12	4	0	0	1	22
Almajmah	3	2	5	1	1	0	0	12	2	2	4	3	1	0	0	12	3	2	6	3	1	0	1	16
Al-Kharj	2	2	5	4	0	0	2	15	1	2	5	6	0	0	1	15	1	2	5	6	0	0	1	15
Shakraa	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	8	2	2	3	2	0	0	0	9	2	2	4	2	0	0	1	11
Dawadmi	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	7	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	7	2	1	4	2	0	0	1	10
Hail	5	6	7	2	0	0	1	21	4	6	6	3	0	0	0	19	4	5	6	4	0	0	1	20
Qassim	10	9	7	5	0	0	0	31	10	9	7	5	0	0	0	31	9	8	6	5	0	0	3	31
Rass	4	3	4	2	0	0	2	15	3	3	4	3	0	0	2	15	3	3	4	5	0	0	1	16
Jeddah	13	7	14	9	1	0	2	46	9	6	13	7	1	0	1	37	5	5	12	14	2	0	2	40
Makkah	5	3	5	4	0	0	0	17	5	3	8	6	0	0	1	23	5	3	4	6	0	0	1	19
Taif	8	3	8	1	0	0	0	20	7	3	6	5	0	0	0	21	5	3	7	5	0	0	2	22
Baha	1	2	4	2	0	0	2	11	3	2	3	4	0	0	2	14	3	2	3	4	0	0	2	14
Medina	7	6	11	4	0	0	1	29	7	5	9	6	0	0	0	27	5	4	9	8	0	0	2	28
Asir	8	2	10	2	0	0	1	23	8	2	12	2	0	0	0	24	5	2	11	5	1	0	3	27
Jazan	2	0	5	2	0	0	2	11	2	1	3	3	0	0	2	11	2	2	4	2	0	0	2	12
Najran	2	2	6	2	0	0	0	12	2	2	6	2	0	0	0	12	2	2	6	2	0	0	0	12
Eastern Province	7	7	18	10	0	0	3	45	7	7	18	10	0	0	3	45	7	7	18	9	1	0	5	47
Ahsa	4	3	5	3	0	0	1	16	4	3	5	3	0	0	1	16	4	3	5	4	0	0	3	19
Qatif	2	1	6	2	0	0	0	11	2	1	6	2	0	0	0	11	1	1	6	2	0	0	1	11
Jawf	2	3	2	5	0	0	1	13	1	2	3	5	0	0	1	12	1	2	3	5	0	0	0	11
Tabuk	4	3	4	4	1	0	1	17	3	4	5	3	1	0	1	17	3	4	6	5	1	0	2	21
North Province	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5
Total	109	78	163	76	3	0	24	453	99	76	153	97	4	0	22	451	84	77	156	119	7	0	38	481

P= Primary, E= Elementary, S= Secondary, B= Bachelor, M= Master, D= Doctorate, O= Other, T= Total.

Appendix 30 Experience of GPYW employees at offices 2002-2012

| GPYW offices | 2002 | | | | | | 2008 | | | | | | 2012 | | | | | |
Years of experience	0>1	1>5	5>10	10>15	15<	Total	0>1	1>5	5>10	10>15	15<	Total	0>1	1>5	5>10	10>15	15<	Total
Riyadh	5	37	2	3	1	48	2	21	22	3	1	49	3	15	23	5	6	52
Zulfi	5	15	0	1	0	21	3	7	8	1	1	20	3	10	6	2	1	22
Almajmah	0	7	1	0	4	12	0	5	2	1	4	12	1	6	3	2	4	16
Al-Kharj	3	9	1	0	2	15	3	6	2	2	2	15	3	4	4	2	2	15
Shakraa	1	6	0	0	1	8	1	4	2	1	1	9	1	3	2	3	1	10
Dawadmi	1	1	0	1	4	7	1	1	0	1	4	7	2	1	3	2	3	11
Hail	2	16	0	1	2	21	2	9	3	2	3	19	3	10	3	2	2	20
Qassim	5	19	1	2	4	31	5	19	1	2	4	31	3	21	1	1	5	31
Rass	2	8	1	3	1	15	2	6	3	3	1	15	2	5	3	2	4	16
Jeddah	3	30	2	4	7	46	1	12	9	7	8	37	2	18	10	5	5	40
Makkah	2	8	0	1	6	17	3	12	3	2	3	23	3	10	3	2	1	19
Taif	3	13	0	4	0	20	3	7	5	4	2	21	0	9	6	3	4	22
Medina	2	17	1	3	6	29	3	12	3	4	5	27	1	13	6	3	5	28
Eastern Province	9	21	1	4	10	45	6	18	7	5	9	45	3	23	7	5	9	47
Ahsa	3	9	0	0	4	16	3	9	0	0	4	16	3	9	2	0	5	19
Qatif	2	2	1	2	4	11	2	2	1	2	4	11	2	2	0	3	4	11
Northern Borders	1	1	1	1	0	4	0	2	1	1	0	4	1	2	1	1	0	5
Jawf	1	6	2	2	2	13	1	6	2	2	2	13	1	5	0	3	2	11
Tabuk	1	5	3	5	3	17	1	5	3	5	3	17	2	6	1	6	6	21
Baha	2	6	1	1	1	11	2	7	2	2	1	14	1	5	4	1	3	14
Asir	4	13	0	4	2	23	2	11	4	4	3	24	3	16	3	2	3	27
Jazan	4	3	0	2	2	11	4	3	0	2	2	11	4	4	1	1	2	12
Najran	4	4	1	1	2	12	4	4	1	1	2	12	2	6	0	1	3	12
Total	65	256	19	45	68	453	54	188	84	57	69	452	49	203	92	57	80	481

Comments: