6 Interpretation and Discussion of the Results

6.1 From the Perspective of the UEFA

Reflecting both interviews as well as the different topics, it can be said that the terms sustainability and legacy have become important issues. Even though UEFA did not regulate aspects of sustainability in their bid requirements for the EURO 2008, certain sustainability initiatives and processes did evolve from 2002 until the realization of the tournament in 2008. Although UEFA was positively influenced by the IOC and its sustainability and legacy concepts, it can be questioned that other subjects, like having a good, professionally organized event are still more important than prioritizing and implementing the theme of legacy. For example, in 2005 the UEFA Congress approved UEFA’s strategy ‘Vision Europe’ that defined ‘strategy’ as: “The direction and development of European football over the next decade” (N.N., 2005b, 9). This book addresses the term legacy within the contexts of ‘governance and structure’ and ‘off-field issues and key stakeholders’ with the approach of “in an ideal world there would be...” (ibid., 9f.). This way of outlining a prospective approach may not be as optimistic as such a vision should be. UEFA emphasized during the interview that the terms ‘legacy’ and ‘sustainability’ are not yet very developed but have potential. There are a few challenges UEFA must face and they have to make a tremendous effort in the future to organize events in a more sustainable way. Confronted with the statement that sustainability and legacy are defined as the project challenges of the 21st century, Martin Kallen stated:

“We are äh (.) we are still far from where we should be at this time from the UEFA’s point of view. We are still on the baby-level. this subject at UEFA is not yet been äh (.) a subject, which is treated on the highest importance.”

Therefore, the terms ‘legacy’ and ‘sustainability’ have the potential to plant the right seeds in people’s minds as early as possible. As Philippe Furrer from the IOC said:

“Legacy is not an afterthought; (.) it is not something you start developing (.) just, you now, months or a couple of years before the event. (.) it should be embedded in the entire vision of the event and this is why we are trying to address it at a very early stage.”

With a sustainable development approach, UEFA established a public transportation concept, free access for public transport for fans having purchased a match-ticket (a.k.a. ‘Kombi-Ticket’), which for them was a significant project for and investment in society (fans). This project was not a simple undertaking for UEFA, but with the public transportation infrastructure, it would have been wrong by UEFA not to invest in such a project. UEFA was not only influenced by the Olympic Movement and its charter, but also very much by the Swiss Government, politicians, NGOs and other individuals who found it important to look further and see how the environment can be stabilized. Taking the development process into account, it cannot be contested that UEFA’s objectives in terms of sustainability and corporate governance are considered as being accomplished. The entire knowledge transfer and knowledge management gained from the EURO 2004 helped enormously to professionalize the event
organization and significantly reduced costs. If UEFA wants to reduce competitive advantages for bidders, the notions of legacy, sustainability, and CSR must be considered earlier in the bidding process. As outlined, certain steps have already been taken into account, albeit with potential of further improvement (see chapter 2.3.1 and 2.1.2.5.1). The results of the interviews show that stronger policies should already be required in the bidding documents, including the potential to leverage them. Martin Kallen went even further, stating that certain legislations and regulations might be set by the EU, which would then make them compulsory for a sports organization such as the UEFA. He admitted that from a political perspective, this approach already started. In order for governing bodies such as UEFA to retain their autonomy and influence in addition to their commercial and sporting potential, they must practice effective (good) governance to counter the constant threat of external intervention, particularly from the EU and the society (tax payers). An organization such as UEFA must anticipate future developments in order to keep its role as the regulator in their environment of sports, politics, economics and so forth. For example, they adapted the principle of good governance, engaged in constant dialogue with the EU to produce regulatory changes in governance (see chapter 2.2), and opened a representation office in Brussels. UEFA must be able to adapt to these external interventions; integration is important, but UEFA also needs to maintain its goals, structures, as well as its main objective, which is the promotion of football. This approach, which can be considered as good governance, is explained by the orientation with the action system (AGIL paradigm) by Parsons.

As to whether written or unwritten policies were strong enough to establish a concept of equal opportunity in people’s consciousness, Patrick Gasser said that the Swiss, and particularly the Swiss media, had a very negative attitude towards the EURO 2008. This phenomenon may in theory be comprehensible or justified due to a lack of transparency in a political decision-making system that repeatedly encounters criticism from a strict democratic viewpoint that encourages investigative journalism, which seeks to expose scandals. Another subject raised during the interview was that UEFA considers itself a guest that simply brings the ‘show’ but cannot rule a country because the main task is to make sure that ‘football comes first’. Freedom must be given to a host country to fit different aspects into the host country’s context and needs, a process that cannot be ruled by UEFA. In terms of respecting the rules and policies of sustainability and corporate governance, UEFA’s experts unanimously agreed that the Swiss Government surpassed all expectations. They had a tremendous interest to fulfill their sustainability aspects, first discussed after the award of the candidacy, as they were influenced by the ‘Green Goal’ concept of the 2006 Football World Championship in Germany. A sustainability strategy and charter was adopted, even though it had no binding effect on the organizers. We outlined the ‘process of building up event legacies’ (see chapter 2.1.2.5.1) and how such event legacies have to be planned systematically and evaluated. Figure 5 shows the systematic framework as well as a strategic approach in building up and strengthening an event legacy. Therefore, in order to avoid weak planning, a contingency plan comes into effect through this model, as negative and unplanned event legacies might potentially be neglected in the process. As an example, at the EURO 2008, the measures in the field