Social inclusion, sport and the prison - Theoretical framework Prisoners on the move

Social inclusion refers to a variety of issues regarding poverty, social injustices and inequality, issues that would appear to be universal and prevalent in all societies (Bailey, 2008). The converse of social inclusion is social exclusion. Social exclusion can take different forms, such as lack of access to power, knowledge, services, facilities, choice and opportunity (Long et al., 2002). Other definitions draw much more attention to the processes of exclusion rather than only the result of exclusion. In line with this viewpoint, measures taken to reduce indicators of exclusion (i.e. in health, education, employment) will not necessary succeed in encouraging inclusion if these measures fail to tackle the processes of exclusion (Bailey, 2008).

In literature, different but often (partly) overlapping conceptualisations of social inclusion can be found. The conceptualisation of social inclusion by **Engbersen and Gabriëls** (1995) provides us with a frame to study social inclusion. These authors describe social inclusion as having a functional, an expressive and a moral dimension. The functional dimension refers to matching individuals to the institutional structures of society. How to make people's actions attuned so that society can run smoothly? Often, studies about the contribution of leisure initiatives to social inclusion only consider this dimension. A quote from positive development researcher Reed Larson (2000) illustrates this stance: *"Given the renewed ideology of enterprise capitalism […] the importance of initiative hardly needs selling. The economic, social and political order of our society presupposes an individual who is capable of autonomous action"* (p. 171). However, Engbersen and Gabriëls (1995) indicated the relevance of taking into account an expressive and moral 'objection' to this stance. Their expressive dimension refers to the search of people to find value and recognition in social life and is reformulated by Bouverne-De Bie (2002) as the opportunities of people to participate in social structures in a way that makes it possible for them to tune reason, appreciation and acting and, in this, find social recognition and self-respect. The third dimension, the moral dimension, refers to the principles that should be agreed upon so that a fair redistribution of social resources could be effected.

Another framework, that partly shows similarities with the framework of Engbersen and Gabriëls (1995), is provided by **Bailey** (2005) and **considers sport's potential contribution** to social inclusion and exclusion. Sport participation provides a focus for social activity, an opportunity to make friends, develop networks and reduce social isolation, it seems well placed to support the development of social capital (Bailey, 2008). Bailey (2008) distilled four dimensions in total. Firstly, the functional dimension of social inclusion relates to the enhancement of knowledge, skills and understanding. It is claimed that sport provides opportunities for the development of valued capabilities and competencies, and the anecdotal evidence in favour of sport's contribution to inter-personal and intra-personal skills is persuasive (Bailey, 2006). The idea is that sport provides appropriate settings for the promotion of (young) people's social development has led to the formation of a number of programmes aimed at using various forms of physical activity as vehicles for the development of valuable skills and capabilities (Cameron and MacDougall 2000; Morris et al., 2003; Sandford et al., 2006). Secondly, social inclusion can also be defined in relational terms, such as the sense of social acceptance. Sport might play a role, here, by offering people a sense of belonging, to a team, a club or community (Ennis, 1999). Thirdly, which is the spatial dimension, social inclusion relates to the proximity and the closing of social and economic distances. Certainly, there are frequent claims that sport brings individuals from a variety of social and economic backgrounds together in a shared

interest in activities that are seen to be inherently valuable (Sport Canada, 2005). For example, there is a popular view that sport's non-verbal format can help overcome linguistic and cultural barriers more easily than other areas of social life (Bailey, 2008). Finally, social inclusion assumes a change in the locus of power (power dimension). Sport contributes to social inclusion, in this respect to the extent that it increases individuals' sense of control over their lives, as well as 'community capital' by extending social networks, increased community cohesion and civic pride (Bailey, 2008).

However, these approaches to social inclusion do not allow studying the different dimensions as referring to separate phenomena. These rather abstract **conceptualisations make it fairly difficult to translate and use them in a concrete setting**, such as a sport setting or, even further, sport (plus) program. In this context, it may be useful to mention what **Münchmeier** (1991) has referred to as installing biographic, institutional and political competences as a task of (youth) initiatives, such as sport-based social interventions (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012). Biographic competence refers to the way coaches, or those working with people in a sport setting, could give opportunities to people to find out about who they are (for example, identity development, self-worth). Institutional competence encompasses supporting people in finding access and making use of social institutions and services (for example, school, career services, sport clubs). Finally, political competence entails supporting people in sharing ideas with others and having an impact on how policy makers shape the conditions in which they live, including access to institutional resources (see Coussée and Roets, 2011). This would include, amongst others, identifying and challenging processes of social exclusion. Defined outcomes could be measured or indicators could be developed based on Münchmeier's competences (Haudenhuyse et al., 2012). Münchmeier's (1991) notion of biographic, institutional and political competences might prove to be a useful framework for understanding the narratives of socially vulnerable people in relation to forms of sport participation (Haudenhuyse, 2012). It could be investigated how, from the perspectives of people partaking in sport-based interventions (e.g., prisoners), participation in such settings contributed in creating pathways to biographical, institutional and political competences. In such an enquiry, it would also be important to include the perspectives of primary caregivers, significant others and those directly working with people in sport-based settings. Furthermore, comparing the potential of sport-based social interventions in establishing biographical, institutional and political competences with other forms of social interventions (for example, an association) in which (the same) people partake, might give us more insights into the uniqueness of sport-based practices. In order to ascertain the social impact of two sport-for-development programmes in the Republic of South Africa, **Burnett** (2001) developed a context-sensitive research instrument, namely the Sport Development Impact Assessment Tool (SDIAT). The competences, as identified by Münchmeier (1991), show some similarities with the different impact dimensions of the SDIAT, which encompasses the following:

• Macro-level: sport development in relation to broader socioeconomic and environmental factors (for example, provision or lack of public facilities and services);

• Meso-level: community development and usage of institutional resources (for example, involvement in and functioning of social networks, such as sport club membership);

• Micro-level: holistic development of participants in terms of personal experiences (for example, ideological, physical, social, psychological).

It may be clear that although many researchers defend the notion that sport can have integrative aspects, such as friendship, trust and social cohesion, most of them also acknowledge that sport can entail opposite trends and **question the idea** that participation in sport can foster social inclusion and generate social capital (Theeboom et al., 2011). Some authors wondered if it is actually active sport involvement that promotes the development of social capital or that, on the contrary, people who have a tendency to generate social contacts find their way to sport more easily. In the second case, for people who have no or few social skills, social exclusion proceeds and is not a result of, sport participation (Coalter 2008). Besides, sport is not always an act that is equally open to all, since notions of normality/abnormality and domination/subordination seem magnified within the contexts of bodily practices (Bailey, 2008): 'sport acts as a kind of badge of social exclusivity and cultural distinctiveness for the dominant classes... it articulates the fractional status distinctions that exist within the ranks of larger class groupings' (Sudgen and Tomlinson, 2000: 319). Given that sport can 'bond' people, often within a closed circle of friends, it may also create strong out-group antagonism and social exclusiveness: 'we against the rest' (Elling 2004). Various authors pointed to the possibility of segregation, such as the tendency to practise sport in own circles and reinforcing of stereotypes and prejudices (Collins 2004).

Nevertheless the ascribed positive impacts of sport described in the above, the futility of arguing whether sport is good or bad has also been observed by authors (e.g., Coalter 2001, Coalter 2008; Long and Sanderson, 2001). Sport, like most activities, is **not a priori good or bad**, but has the potential of producing both positive and negative outcomes (Patriksson, 1995). A more constructive question would seem to be '*what conditions are necessary for sport to have beneficial outcomes?*'. The simple fact that people engage in a sport setting does not automatically imply that specific differences in personal or social outcomes can be expected. Moreover, Verweel et al. (2005) stated that experiences and contacts from outside the sport context are assumed to be of larger It therefore becomes clear that more attention is needed regarding the **structural components and processes of management and guidance within the sport context** in order to provide greater insight into the complexity of the underlying processes that are presumed to generate social benefits (Theeboom et al, 2011). However, to date, there is a lack of insight into the nature of these structural and organizational mechanisms and how they can be created in organized sport contexts. For example, Coalter (2008) stated that research on the 'sufficient' conditions that are needed in order for sport to provide social benefits is sorely lacking.

With regard to the **penal system**, the rapid growth in prison populations in the Western societies has been an increased interest in the use and value of sport and physical activity settings in prisons (Martos-García et al., 2009). However, in line of Caplan (1996), it appears that sports programmes in prison are most valuable in the area of social control. However, it is possible that participating in recreational sports can have long-term (rehabilitative?) effects if they are continued after release from prison. Arguably, as mechanisms of social control, they function as a social safety valve for everyone and not just former inmates in free society. If they keep the people active and sometimes goal-oriented in prison, they may accomplish the same purpose outside of prison. The most substantial problem which exists is that, following their release from prison, most inmates fail to continue these activities and this form of lifestyle (Caplan, 1996). Arguably, given the opportunities and motivation, participating in organised recreational sport activities outside of prison may have an analogous social control effect in the wider society.

In addition, it can be expected that social inclusion of prisoners through sport demands a more **inclusive approach** which also deals with fundamental problems relating to participation inequalities in other domains, such as education, work and leisure (Theeboom et al., 2011). With regard to prisons, Caplan (1996) stated that while recreational sport is necessary in the prison, this does not overshadow **other areas which are equally necessary**, such as opportunities for education and practical training. And he continues by stating that '*more trades should be offered so that inmates can both utilise their time constructively and have a trade or profession to practice upon their release*'. As indicated, above, we are starting to gather clues, but there is a need for further research (Bailey, 2008).

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