Mobilising the sport-based community: the construction of social work through rationales of advanced liberalism

David Ekholm

Journal Article

N.B.: When citing this work, cite the original article.

This is an electronic version of an article published in:

David Ekholm , Mobilising the sport-based community: the construction of social work through rationales of advanced liberalism, Nordic Social Work Research, 2017.

Nordic Social Work Research is available online at informaworldTM:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2017.1310127>

Copyright: Taylor & Francis (Routledge): STM, Behavioural Science and Public Health Titles

<http://www.routledge.com/>

Postprint available at: Linköping University Electronic Press

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-136148>

Mobilising the sport-based community: the construction of social work through rationales of advanced liberalism

David Ekholm, Linköping University, Department of Social and Welfare Studies

Accepted for publication 2016-10-15

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, social work and welfare provision have undergone notable changes. Unconventional techniques have been adopted, and unorthodox agencies in public-private partnerships have been enrolled in the field, in contrast to past practice (Webb 2006). For instance, sport with explicit premises of social objectives has been included on the social policy agenda and even promoted as a solution in response to social problems (Coalter 2007). Because social work is situated within the welfare state (Webb 2006), problem-solving practices and interventions are affected by and subject to significant changes. Accordingly, the Scandinavian and social democratic welfare regime (cf. Esping-Andersen 1990) – to situate our conceptions of social work – is considered to be transforming, absorbing new influences and rationales (Larsson, Letell and Thörn 2012). In Rose's (1999) words, this kind of development illustrates a gradual shift in governmental rationality from welfarism to a state of advanced liberalism. This article gives special attention to one significant feature of this shift, namely, how 'community' is activated and promoted in welfare provision. In line with this, the article seeks to explore some tendencies in the role of 'community' in relation to 'the social' kind of governing that is characteristic of Swedish and Scandinavian welfarism.

To explore these tendencies in welfare provision, the article investigates the case of one public authority's political rationality, articulated by municipal policy makers and a senior civil servant with respect to a local sport-based social and welfare intervention, the Sport Programme (henceforth SP). In the description of the SP given below, it is shown how social problems of crime and social exclusion are assumed to be caused by segregation, giving raise to tensions in society, and how a sense of social cohesion, integration, and 'community' is promoted as a response. It is demonstrated how sport is promoted and justified as a response to social problems because it is assumed to foster and produce a communal sense of belonging for youths. Based on this empirical observation, the article seeks to explore the tendency and rationality of 'community' in contemporary welfare provision and social work and to investigate how 'community' is formed as a space for solidarity and inclusion. Two questions are raised: (1) How is 'community' formed as a space for intervention and inclusion? (2) What institutional arrangements of the SP are formed in relation to the construction of 'community'?

These questions will be investigated from a governmentality perspective (cf. Dean 2010; Foucault 1991; Rose 1999). Such a perspective enables an exploration of how problems and spaces in society are constructed and made ready for social and pedagogical interventions aimed at social inclusion – in other words, how problems and spaces are constructed and made governable. In this respect, 'community' is examined as a

discursive formation promoted in response to social problems of segregation causing tensions in society in turn resulting in crime and social exclusion. A variety of statements (in interviews, newspaper articles and municipal council debates) from two policy makers and a senior civil servant are scrutinised.

In recent years, sport practices have increasingly been assessed and financed based on their estimated contributions to social objectives – and in that sense, conceived as tool for welfare provision (Coalter 2007; Norberg 2011) with respect to crime prevention (Nichols 2007), social inclusion (Kelly 2011) and social work (Lawson 2005), for instance. Policy makers and sport advocates have justified the social role of youth sport participation given the presumed benefits of an engaged community and personal development expected (Coalter 2007). Assumed to re-generate values of ‘community’, sport schemes were promoted, for instance, in the US during the Reagan administration and in the UK under New Labour’s ‘Third Way’ political agenda (Coalter 2007). However, popular belief in sport as a means of responding to social problems has been questioned for relying upon ‘sport evangelism’ rather than scientific support (Coakley 2011, 307). It is important to further our understanding of sport in relation to social work and welfare provision because sport-based interventions such as the SP are gaining prominence in social policy today in Sweden and the other Nordic countries. Analysing statements made in the context of social theorising concerning a welfare society in transformation will contribute to the understanding of how social work practices, professional social work and welfare provision in general are conditioned and performed today. It is important to explore rationales maintained by policy makers in order to understand developments in social work. Moreover, exploring them helps to raise relevant questions about how professional social work can and should react to or align with the tendency towards governing based on ‘community’. Accordingly, this article aspires to contribute to the body of research by relating sport to social objectives while highlighting the formation of ‘community’ in the Swedish and Scandinavian context of welfare provision and social work. While the role of ‘community’ in Scandinavian welfare and in relation to social work are noticed and debated in research (e.g. Petersson 2000; Strand Hutchinson 2009; Villadsen 2009), the role of sport here and in relation to shifting rationales of welfare provision, social policy and social work has not been developed in research (Ekholm 2013).

A case of sport-based social and welfare intervention rationality

The SP constitutes a typical case of a sport-based social and welfare intervention. In this article, the public authority’s rationale for the SP provides the principal object of investigation, reflecting some instances of the policy context introduced above. In 2009, the SP was initiated by Social Democratic Party policy makers and municipal administrators in a large Swedish city. It was implemented as a partnership intervention, managed by a social entrepreneur, and conducted in cooperation with public schools and local voluntary sport clubs. The programme was launched in response to claims made by local sport clubs of social problems involving segregation, social exclusion, and crime in a distinct, notably disadvantaged urban ‘area of exclusion’ – claims that were backed by participants in the local political debate. The programme is carried out as sporting and outdoor activities during school-time, after school and

during school holidays. Several sports are involved in the programme, among them football, basketball, boxing and dancing. The social entrepreneur plans the activities, coordinates between schools, sport clubs and municipal administrators, and leads the sport activities together with affiliated coaches and local sport club coaches. The municipality provides the bulk of the funding. The public authorities agree with and support the goals of the programme articulated by the social entrepreneur; the goals are described in the entrepreneur's Articles of Association as being to "reach out to children who are not active, involve them in sport, work with social issues, integrate, gather up all youths in the risk zone, coach, educate them to a better future... and as a result help our community and society". Since its start, the SP has attracted considerable attention in local as well as national media coverage. It has also expanded, been adopted in other Swedish cities, and received numerous awards. In 2015, the SP was still operating in its city of origin. For the last 25 years, the city has suffered from de-industrialisation and generally high unemployment alongside low education levels, poor public health, and growing immigration. These characteristics are especially significant in the targeted area.

According to local sport club representatives and policy makers, these characteristics have constituted a breeding ground for social problems. The policy makers and municipal administrators explicitly justify sport as a response to social problems because it is assumed to foster a sense of community responding to tensions in society. The chair of the municipal executive committee articulated the problems addressed in a local newspaper article:

Excerpt X. We have segregation in the city, which will cause greater tensions if we do not manage to create fair conditions... I mean, what makes it especially hard is that there are social divides. Culturally and ethnically, it is another dimension... Not only have we responded [to the needs of two local sport clubs]. We have responded to a social problem that requires commitment, where sport can play a positive role in breaking this. (Municipal Councillor 1 in a 2011 newspaper article)

From the statement above, a chain of problems is outlined: social, cultural, and ethnic segregation and inequalities is considered to cause tensions; in other statements, tensions are associated with social exclusion and crime. Presumably, the SP responds to social problems by means of breaking this chain. Whereas social divides represent the problem, social belonging, solidarity, and community are articulated as being key features of the response. A sense of community, belonging and inclusion re-connect the SP with images of city-specific traditions of membership in voluntary associations and popular movements as well as trade unions and labour movements – which in the statements examined are also described as civil society. Through the SP, such a community is assumed to be rejuvenated.

Excerpt Y. Solidarity and community mean so incredibly much for the development of all society, and I think that if you are [a resident of the city], you understand that even better. In other words, this is a city that has been characterised for a long time by an incredibly strong [tradition of] membership in associations and popular movements...It's like the legacy of the old blue-collar city that lives on...I mean, I think it's obvious that it could be a

good community without sport, but I think it would be stupid to take the risk since sport still has this element of concreteness and clarity in its very aim, so that it's really easy to create a sense of solidarity around sport. (Municipal Councillor 1)

In this sense, the SP aims to respond to social problems by means of including youths in 'the good community' and/or society through sport participation. Providing individual youths with competences and skills for inclusion in pedagogical programmes and opening inclusive spaces for youths are generally core ambitions for welfare provision and social work (Philp 1979).

Outline

In the next section, the governmentality perspective and the concepts of 'the social' and the 'community' are introduced. After this, the various statements examined and procedures of analysis are presented. The analysis focuses on relations between public welfare and civil society, personal and moral relations within the 'community' and on the institutional arrangements established. The article concludes with a discussion of how the construction of 'community' enables certain ways of governing and aligns with transformations in the welfare state.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The governmentality perspective enables an analysis of how problems are constructed and how solutions by means of governing are promoted. Governing in this context refers to any rational activity performed by any agency that seeks to shape the conduct of populations or individual subjects (Dean 2010; Foucault 1991). This entails representing problems in certain ways, enabling different technologies and solutions in response. Such means and ends of governing are referred to as governing rationales. It is particularly relevant here that governing involves the construction of different grounds for promoting solidarity, fostering inclusion, and organising welfare provision. Such grounds, which are provided in statements, can be considered territories of governing (Rose and Miller 1992) – for instance, 'the social' of a welfarism or the 'community' of advanced liberalism (Rose 1996, 1999).

According to Rose (1996, 1999, 2000), governing has gradually shifted from welfarist to advanced liberal rationales. This development is described as a shift in balance from governing on the grounds of 'the social' to those of 'community'. First, welfarism is based on the socialisation of problems, risks, citizenship, and protection. The territory of 'the social' was formed to promote programmes of solidarity and welfare interventions for broad populations based on the idea that citizens belong to a broad, interrelated collectivity beyond direct personal relations (Donzelot 1988). Furthermore, the conduct of citizens was to be governed by state-led agencies (from above) on the basis of expert knowledge, for instance, through public social work. Such statist welfare provision has been criticised for being patronising and bureaucratic, and in the final decades of the twentieth century started to be contested by both the political left and right.

Second, the consequent demise of 'the social' coincides with the rise and rejuvenation of 'community', which aligns with traditional perceptions of community as a space for

moral bonds, personal relations, and solidarity between individuals tied to the local neighbourhood which were presumably fragmented by the division of labour, capitalism, and later welfarism. Accordingly, the state and public agencies were gradually relieved of power and responsibility as the sole authority governing welfare. Just as 'the social' of welfarism, the 'community' of advanced liberalism has to be formed as a governing territory; such formation practices are called 'technologies of community' (Rose 1999, 188). This involves the formation of a 'third space' (Rose 2000, 1395) of welfare provision, where the 'community' is articulated as being distinct from the totalitarian and patriarchal rule of the state as well as from the commodification of the market. Instead, civil society agencies are mobilised in complex webs of welfare provision, and the naturalness of personal relations and moral bonds between individuals assumed within 'community' is highlighted. Consequently, the 'community' of advanced liberalism is represented as a non-political domain of natural morality and human relations. This framework is used to empirically explore the rationales and tendencies of governing with respect to the SP.

Swedish and Scandinavian welfare in particular has been organised around 'the social', characterised by modernist ideals and state-centred welfarist rationales of social engineering, socialised risk pooling and economic redistribution – termed the social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990). However, a notable feature of the Swedish welfare state is its consensus culture, involving social movements, civil society, and even market-based agencies in central government bodies and administration in certain spheres (Larsson, Letell and Thörn 2012). Sweden has a large voluntary sector and civil society relative to other countries (Svedberg and Olsson 2010), which in recent years have gained a more visible role in welfare provision (Johansson, Arvidsson and Johansson 2015). Statist agencies and civil society have developed close relations especially with respect to sport organisation (Norberg 2011). Historically, state and municipalities have assumed a supportive, subsidiary role in relation to the sport movement; these associations are based on assumptions of democratic socialisation and social integration – expectations that today are increasingly explicit (Norberg 2011). Such governance tradition of involving non-state actors puts the notion of a sovereign welfare state into perspective (cf. Dahlstedt 2009). For instance, Petersson (2000) have highlighted the mobilisation of the local community as a means of governing in response to segregations and social disorder. Even so, the Swedish welfare model could be seen as undergoing a displacement from 'governing from the social point of view into a state of advanced liberalism' (Larsson, Letell and Thörn 2012, 17).

EMPIRICAL MATERIAL AND METHODS

Situated in relation to changing conditions for welfare interventions and social work, the SP is viewed as a practice that contains specific dimensions of unorthodox welfare provision and social work. Therefore, the rationales of governing imbued in the statements about the SP are treated as a distinct case that lends itself to examination. This means that the overarching design makes up a kind of case study, where analysis is designed to provide insight into the broader social context (Yin 2014) of mutations in governmental rationality. In this sense, the case is constructed to explore specific tendencies represented in the broader social context, both empirically and theoretically,

based on the framework proposed. In this section, the composition of empirical material is presented, the collection of material is reported, and analytical and interpretive strategies are accounted for.

The empirical material analysed in this study consists of a variety of statements articulated by the three most prominent representatives of the municipality's policy making and administration. Municipal Councillor 1 chairs the Municipal Executive Committee and previously chaired the Childcare and Education Committee. Municipal Councillor 2 chairs the Childcare and Education Committee and is a member of the Municipal Executive Committee. They are also members of the Municipal Council, representing the reigning Social Democratic Party. They were actively involved in setting up the SP and thus have good insight into its practice, management, and organisation. The senior civil servant is responsible for running the municipal administration, which administers the municipality's share of the programme, and for maintaining formal contacts with the social entrepreneur. The three representatives were selected for this analysis because they hold key positions in social policy formulation and administration and because they are the three municipal government representatives most closely connected to the programme.

The statements made by the representatives were accessed in interviews, municipal council debates, and local newspaper articles. First, one interview was conducted with each representative. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by the respondents' own descriptions of the SP. The interviews lasted 75-100 minutes and were conducted in each respondent's office in city hall. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim (constituting 35 pages of written text). Second, a municipal council debate initiated by an interpellation question by a councillor from the opposition Liberal Party involving, among others, the two municipal councillors in this study was accessed on audio tape and transcribed verbatim. Five contributions from the representatives in the debate (which constituted five pages of transcribed text) were included. Third, statements made by the two councillors taken from 13 articles in two local newspapers during the period 2008-2014 were included in the material. These statements are short quotations of up to four sentences each (constituting two pages of text).

All statements accessed contain presentations of the SP, of sport as a means of responding to social problems in general, and of the role of municipal public policy and administration. Together, this variety of statements constitutes a consistent way of talking about sport for social objectives. Representations of problems and means of response as well as programme ends are animated in such statements, forming domains and underpinning governing – that is, the rationality that gives meaning to the practices in the programme. Accordingly, it is in such statements that rationality can be explored. The analysis is conveyed in three subsequent steps. First, in an initial, open-minded reading, recurring patterns in statements specifying 'community' in relation to social cohesion, integration and inclusion were identified (as a response to the construction of the problem implied in statements). Based on this observation, a constructionist conceptualisation of the 'community' as a territory of governing and the 'technologies of community' promoted (cf. Rose 1999) was employed to interpret the statements compiled. Second, two dimensions of 'technologies of community' were discerned. These

dimensions constitute the two initial themes presented in the analysis of the construction of 'community'. Relative to this, institutional arrangements produced by the specific construction of 'community' constitute a third theme. Third, these themes were interpreted based on the theoretical concepts described above. For instance, the significance of moral and personal bonds was key to understanding how the SP was used as a strategy to overcome the dividing line between statist public welfare and non-statist civil society and to provide social work with a human touch. The framework proposed constitutes a strategy for exploring the rationales of governing and welfare associated with the microphysics of practices and for identifying how they take shape in macro-level governmental rationalities (cf. Rose 1999). The empirical material presented is suitable for analysing the aim and questions of this study since the SP and statements concern some central themes about 'community' that are relevant to contemporary welfare provision and social work. The limited empirical material does not, however, allow for testing or evaluation of the tendencies explored with respect to the broader context of contemporary social policy.

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the construction of 'community' is divided into three sections. First, external relations between governing and welfare-providing agencies are analysed. Consideration is given to how public welfare is made distinct from voluntary sport clubs and civil society. Second, the focus then shifts to the internal relations of the 'community', with the spotlight on personal relations and skills promoted in the SP. Third, an analysis is conducted of institutional arrangements established in the SP and enabled by the specific construction. Here, the focus is on partnerships and the mobilisation of agencies.

The construction of 'community': Civil society made distinct and mobilised

In the following statements, the 'community' is formed by a separation between public welfare and civil society as well as through the mobilisation of civil society. Certain characteristics of potency are attributed to the latter, which are associated with human and moral values of voluntarism and commitment.

Excerpt 1. I mean, mainly I'm a little worried because... because I think we've taken too much responsibility for this. I see a sliding, if we look at it over a longer period, so that we see we've socialised and municipalised a great deal of what was previously run through associations... I think parts of this development have been unsuccessful because I think that also in a modern society then... commitment through associations is needed just as much as it was before. And this commitment through associations is really hard to create in a public and municipal organisation. Just like you're responsible in an association, which you joined of your own free will, there's no duty but rather there's a desire and commitment, and sometimes you need a little 'grease' from the society, but one has to be careful to defend the association because if it is municipalised, then there's a risk that you'll smother that associational drive, which is so very important for things to work really well. (Municipal Councillor 1)

Excerpt 2. No, I think people should avoid as much as possible solving problems through the public [sector], but we should invest a lot of money in those who really need it... The idea after all is to support associations, not take them over... There may be an overconfidence in the welfare state, that it should solve every problem, which it didn't do. The youth recreation centres didn't solve all the problems but instead may have even undermined existing structures that worked... The sport movement really has grown. I myself have been a youth coach in a football association and it's a lot of fun. I think people have a need to be with people and work with them because it's fun, because it's enjoyable. People have a drive to want to be good. (Municipal Councillor 2)

Excerpt 3. The municipal effort, its purpose, is mainly a question of...with the help of the collaboration of associations developing vulnerable areas, or if [referring to Liberal Party member] you want to call them exclusion areas... school, associations in collaboration. Once again, those of us who've been involved for a while know that it's not really anything new. We've done that before, but doing it in a more systematic way, making it goal-oriented and focused on areas where we know there's the greatest need – that, in contrast, is somewhat new. (Municipal Councillor 1 in the debate on the question raised by the Liberal Party member)

To start off, public welfare administered by municipal authorities and by voluntary associations is viewed as two distinct entities – albeit closely related. Statements in excerpt 1 and 2 concisely represent the SP and its association with civil society, in contrast to public municipal welfare and social work. Most clearly, in excerpt 2 the municipality is associated with the 'welfare state', 'the public', and youth recreation centres, which constitute one set of agencies, while the SP is represented as something quite the opposite. Accordingly, civil society agencies (and thus the SP) are associated with such cherished values as voluntarism, human relations, and personal (moral) responsibility – all considered to be natural human traits given room outside the structure and systems of publicly provided welfare. Although the SP is managed by a market-based social entrepreneur, the policy makers associate it with the voluntary associations of civil society. In this sense, the SP is a way for public welfare to mobilise and activate civil society agencies in response to social problems. The contributions that presumably are made are succinctly summarised in excerpt 1 as promoting active responsibility associated with voluntary efforts. To explain the benefits of voluntary work, the municipal councillor states that it is built on 'a desire and commitment' instead of 'duty'. Implicitly, this would mean that such virtues are beneficial in reaching out to youths at risk of advanced social exclusion.

This idea is related to conceptions of the true nature of humanity as touched upon in excerpt 2, that people have a drive to want to be good. This representation suggests that humans have immanent moral traits that can be expressed in civil society – traits that are threatened with being 'smothered' if administered by the municipality and which have been lost under welfarism and modernity in general. It is implied that modern society and the welfare state have constricted human and communal values in favour of an exaggerated belief in welfarist solutions to social problems based on social engineering. Such representations are nurtured by nostalgic views of 'community' (excerpt 3) as the basis of personal and moral bonds and a form of solidarity. There is a

recurring view in the statements that the municipal authority must not administer the SP. It is said that welfarism and state-led interventions have instead destroyed existing structures of civil commitment (excerpt 2), that such commitment is difficult to create in municipal organisations, and that even then such endeavours would smother the power of volunteerism in reaching out to youths (excerpt 1). In excerpt 5, presented in the next section, the statement illustrates the assumed technical, administrative and bureaucratic limitations of public welfare provision, which are described as difficulties in reaching out because of inflexible work structures and working hours. Also noteworthy, in excerpt 3 it is clearly stated that using sport as a means of responding to social problems of exclusion, for instance, is a systematic and goal-oriented task.

The construction of 'community': Forming a space of moral and personal relations

The emphasis on human relations and moral bonds in the SP and civil society has already been noted. In the following statements, this construction of 'community' is further explored and exemplified mainly with respect to leadership traits that presumably facilitate reaching out to youths at risk. Two kinds of traits are noted: first, within the SP, the manager and leaders are given scope to be entrepreneurial and to express their own driving forces; second, genuine and shared experiences are highlighted as a basis for common identities and human authenticity in personal relations.

Excerpt 4. But since [the social entrepreneur manager] is, like, an entrepreneur, incredibly driven who wants a lot so he creates his own business concept or whatever it should be called. And it ends up with the Children and Youth Board buying his services...This is a matter for [the social entrepreneur manager]. He's the one who is [the SP]. I don't think you can put anyone else there. I think he's irreplaceable. I do. For better or for worse, naturally. [Interviewer: Does it matter whether he does this through an association or in his company?] Well, I think he should be in the sphere he's in now, that he's the one, he's the one who owns it. I think he should ... I don't think it would work if he were employed by [the local sport federation]. No, I don't think so. He's too much of an entrepreneur. I mean, the contacts he's created with businesses and corporations. (Municipal Councillor 2)

Excerpt 5. No, I think we have a hard time reaching certain groups in our structure... We're civil servants who work our usual hours, at times something more is needed. ...Guys like [the social entrepreneur manager and associated coaches] have their own background, which was fairly tough, for better or for worse. Sometimes we have a hard time in our regular structure, the municipal structure, meeting these young people. So these guys are extremely important in this meeting. ...As role models but also like they have an understanding of the problems in another way. Yeah, if people have been in the squalid world of drugs, it's obvious they know what it's about. (Municipal Councillor 2)

In the statements above, the emphasis is on personal traits rather than professional skills. For instance, in excerpt 4 the social entrepreneur manager's desire and drive are considered necessary for the success of the programme. Personal traits are also highlighted since the manager is described as 'irreplaceable'. This means that his potential as a welfare provider is not dependent upon professional skills acquired in

training and education that could possibly have been performed by other professionals in an institutionalised setting; instead, the manager is enacted as authentic and human with the entrepreneurial traits and skills necessary to push the programme forward. Additionally, in the same statement it is considered irrelevant whether the manager operates the programme in a voluntary setting (civil society) or as a market-based social entrepreneur. His personal traits need to find space to operate in and prosper. Such space can be guaranteed in market-based entrepreneurship – the crucial matter here is that the manager is not an employed official or subsumed in the public welfare system. Being employed would undermine his personal traits and limit his action capabilities, it is implied; instead, he needs to operate in a way and in territory where his human and unimpeded entrepreneurship can play out – that is, the ‘community’. Being employed in the public welfare system would be limiting, for instance, in terms of working hours (excerpt 5). The chief advantage cited in making space for personal traits to drive the intervention is in terms of personal relations and meeting the youths targeted.

In excerpt 5, it is described how the structure of public welfare makes it difficult to reach out to youths at risk of social problems and exclusion. The efforts made need an added value – a more ‘human touch’. The public welfare system is unable, in relative terms, to provide this because the authenticity favoured is built on personal rather than professional relations and is exclusively made possible by common experiences and shared identities. This is assumed to provide the mutuality and authenticity needed to reach out to youths at risk. It is assumed that having been in the same situation, having the same experiences, and establishing a common history provide a basis for developing a shared identity. The role models described are assumed to have an understanding of the social problems at hand, based on their experience of having been in a disadvantaged situation – this competence is valued. It is noted (excerpt 5) that experience with drug problems is valued in preventing others from going that route. Professional skills (perhaps the skills of trained social workers or professionals in pedagogy) are disregarded in favour of personal traits, experience, and identity. Representations of authentic and entrepreneurial leadership illustrate the personal and moral bonds between people within the SP and are presumably present in the ‘community’; however, such traits and bonds seem to be implicitly lacking in professional relations in public social work.

Institutional arrangements enabled

According to the statements examined, some characteristics of ‘community’ desired by policy makers and administrators in responding to social problems are lacking in public welfare and social work. Voluntarism, idealism, entrepreneurialism, and authenticity in relations can presumably be achieved through sport participation. Accordingly, the sport-based social entrepreneur is constructed as an embodiment, a container, catalyst, amplifier, and facilitator of the virtues of ‘community’. Incorporating the characteristics and virtues mentioned by including the social entrepreneur and civil society agencies in partnership allows entrance into other arenas and agencies – and, not least important, innovative potential funding arrangements. Consequently, responsibility for responding to social problems is re-distributed, and public welfare takes on the role of governing at a distance, introducing subsidiarity and selectivity in the governing rationale. The

following statements touch upon the institutional arrangements enabled by the specific construction of 'community' presented.

Excerpt 6. Many big companies really want to be involved and be part of [something] good. They need, like, some place to channel their resources. Feeling like 'we're involved too and taking responsibility in the community'. And they [the SP and the social entrepreneur] can, like, bring that in. (Municipal Councillor 2)

Excerpt 7. No, but I mean, what we see in society is that we [the public sector] are getting less and less money. So basically since the 90s we've cut school, after-school activities, social schemes, I mean, it's so crass... So then we also have to find new ways in order to solve the problems that exist because the problems have almost escalated with unemployment... youth unemployment... Then we need to take advantage of civil society or associations, non-profit organisations, much much much more. Then the associations... they run by themselves... It takes very little time, it costs very little... [what] we get out... and then we may also have to perhaps start thinking about how we'll restructure our money so that those who need it most get a little more in some kind of a system. (Municipal Councillor 2)

Excerpt 8. We did see some advantages with [setting up the SP]. First, the municipality can't just go out and find sponsors that easily. He can do that in his social entrepreneurship and get in touch with these consultants, financial advisors, and other [resources] he has around him. He has also promised to evaluate and monitor these activities... We do get in touch with other people than if we were to run this ourselves, that's the thing. And other institutions and companies that can help with other things on this... There's a trend in the corporate world of shifting to more socially responsible activities... And that's where this comes in... his operations could establish better contacts with companies that want to carry out socially responsible activities. (Senior Civil Servant)

In these statements, the social entrepreneur is enacted as a gateway both to civil society and to market-based corporations; the social entrepreneur bears the characteristics of humanism, morality, entrepreneurialism, and authenticity. In this sense, the construction of the social entrepreneur can be viewed as a nexus facilitating the 'technologies of community' and the mobilisation of partnerships within the SP. For instance, the entrepreneurial traits provide access to sponsorships as well as contacts with consultants, financial advisors, and evaluators with qualifications beyond the scope of public welfare and social work (excerpt 8). According to excerpt 7, public welfare cannot access or apply for sponsorships. Once again, this highlights the limitations and shortcomings of public welfare.

Moreover, market-based agencies in general are associated with a sense of morality and communal involvement. According to Municipal Councillor 2, corporations are ethically motivated to take part and assume their social and communal responsibility; however, they need assistance in channelling their contributions (excerpt 6). Such corporate social responsibility is described as a trend in contemporary welfare provision (excerpt 8), and through this representation market-based agencies are included in the 'community' and qualify as partners in the SP. Such inclusion is facilitated by the

entrepreneurial drive presented previously, to meet people and reach out to different groups. By including market-based agencies in the partnership, innovative funding for welfare provision and social work programmes like the SP can be provided, which may cut costs. In excerpt 8, the role of market-based agencies is highlighted in providing sponsorships, and in excerpt 6 corporate resources are emphasised. The municipal councillor furthermore explains the economic benefits of involving private agencies – they are self-driven and require little effort and few resources from public welfare (excerpt 7). In this case, it is civil society agencies that relieve public welfare of the weight of responding to social problems on their own. This is significant in the context of public sector austerity. It is noted that social and welfare interventions of various kinds have suffered from cuts, which forces private and civil society agencies to be involved in welfare provision (excerpt 6). Austerity measures, combined with rising youth unemployment and social problems, call for all forces in society and the community to unite in responding to problems, according to Municipal Councillor 2. Setting up such institutional arrangements entails sharing responsibility for responding to social problems and re-distributing it from the municipal public welfare system to civil society and market-based agencies involved in the programme. The municipal administration launches the SP and appoints the social entrepreneur. The entrepreneur in turn mobilises civil society in the task of maintaining the SP and accessing market-based corporations for funding. In this way, responsibility is distributed among a variety of agencies; however, this further blurs the boundary between public and private agencies, forming a network of governing welfare.

The responsabilisation of non-public agencies plays an important role. Here, the municipality assumes responsibility for setting up and launching interventions, but not in managing them. In this sense, public welfare governs the establishment of the SP and the conduct of youths at risk from a distance. In excerpt 1, the role of public welfare is described as providing the voluntary sector (civil society) with ‘grease’, presumably making the SP a smooth operation. The notion that the municipal administration is supposed to bolster non-public-sector actors and agencies is a recurring feature in the statements analysed (for instance, excerpt 3). In this sense, the role of municipal administrators is subsidiary to that of (what are represented as) non-political agencies in the operational field, which manage and carry out the SP. Moreover, selectivity is introduced in the governing rationale. It is pointed out (excerpt 3 and 7) that the strategy needs to systematically identify a target for the intervention and limit efforts to those with the most urgent needs – selective ‘high risk’ targets as presented by Municipal Councillor 2 in another statement. In line with this, municipal administrators argue for the need to restructure welfare provision and set priorities in providing the ever-decreasing funds available.

DISCUSSION

In the analysis, rationales and ‘technologies of community’ in social work and welfare provision have been explored in relation to the sport-based intervention. As a first step in forming ‘community’, the distinction between public welfare and civil society agencies is made clear in the statements examined. The potential of civil society is emphasised in statements analysed because it is considered to incorporate and facilitate voluntarism,

idealism, and human commitment as well as authentic and entrepreneurial leadership traits. This entails a rejuvenation of community in reaction to disbelief in welfare statism and even modernism. Accordingly, public welfare is problematised as being bureaucratic, delimited, and insufficient. Moreover, public welfare is associated with the impersonal entities of 'system' and 'structure', while the civil society agencies highlighted in conjunction with the SP are connected to 'community' and provide a 'human touch' in personal relations (cf. Villadsen 2009).

As a second step, the division between public welfare and civil society is breached. The policy-making and municipal administration representatives seek to integrate the values of 'community' in the intervention by mobilising civil society agencies as partners in responding to social problems. Partnership relations between public welfare (including local schools) and voluntary sport clubs in civil society, and even inclusion of market-based agencies, are based on the policy makers' drive to promote communal values and innovative funding potential. The social entrepreneur is the nexus, facilitator, and portal in moving beyond the separation between public welfare and civil society. The role of public welfare is thus not to perform welfare interventions, but instead activate the 'community' via the social entrepreneur and thus mobilise civil society.

Along with redistributing responsibility for responding to social problems and blurring the line between individual agencies (which are now incorporated and enmeshed in a more complex web of welfare provision), the construction of the 'community' enables a certain way of shaping the conduct of targeted youths. Municipal policy making and administration as well as public welfare and social work are described as offering scope for social engineering and political steering; at the same time, civil society is described as a non-political realm of authentic personal relations and moral bonds. Importantly, it is this separation between the political and non-political sphere that is transgressed and becomes diffuse. Personal traits of entrepreneurialism and authenticity are assumed to prosper in the 'community'. Such traits, rather than professional skills, are viewed as essential in reaching out to youths and developing personal relations and moral bonds. Statements draw on an influential 'discourse on voluntary sector rationality' (Villadsen 2008, 172), representing civil society and 'community', as a natural terrain free of power relations and subjectification, located off the political spectrum of welfarist social planning and engineering. Although operating through a network of private agencies involving civil society, the SP intervention arguably involves governing and subjectification in shaping the conduct of the youths targeted. Within the SP, a governing rationale emerges that is enabled precisely by authenticity in personal relations, moral bonds, common identity, and shared experiences providing a 'human touch': role model identification. The conduct of youths can be shaped by their identifying with and following in the steps of authentic role models within the SP. The governing rationale is based on the idea that mutual moral obligations between individuals sharing identity and experiences will bind them together, fostering a sense of communal solidarity and moral cohesion, constructing a space for social inclusion – the 'community'. In other words, governing operates on the basis of 'community' rather than on the basis of 'the social'. Organising social work and welfare provision in a form where role model identification is the main rationale constituting the practice of shaping the conduct of youths arguably entails a de-professionalisation with respect to responding to and

solving social problems – in fact, professional skills are represented instead as a limitation in the statements analysed.

Particular to the Scandinavian regime of welfare is how statist agencies and civil society have been intertwined in local and community-based collaborations. Here, the formation of ‘community’ and the tendencies displayed may be viewed as a development and reconfiguration of the welfarist rationales of governing. Selectivity and subsidiarity (associated with liberal and conservative regimes or residualism) are noted in the analysis. Explicitly, the modified governing rationales are justified by austerity and public spending cuts, by highlighting limitations to and shortcomings in public welfare. Selectivity concerns the intervention outreach, assessing risk and setting priorities regarding the targets of welfare intervention. In addition, there is a long tradition of the state (and municipalities) facilitating voluntary associations and civil society activities. However, by adjusting expectations and making the anticipated outcomes of sport participation explicit – which has shifted from being a potential effect to a premise of the activities – subsidiarity is transferred from the sphere of leisure activities and imported to the sphere of welfare provision.

In contemporary Swedish social policy, welfarist and advanced liberal rationales arguably co-exist: one rationale does not simply replace the other. However, tendencies and shifts in this balance of governmental rationality need to be explored in order to understand contemporary and future social work practice. The slight mutations in ‘the social’ and the introduction of ‘community’ in this kind of welfare intervention raise a wide range of questions concerning how contemporary social work practice could be understood. If the rise of governing based on ‘community’ is an emerging theme in social policy, even beyond the context of sport as a means of responding to social problems, then what is the role of professionalism in social work? What then is the general meaning of *social* work when ‘the social’ is mutating? Are we witnessing a rejuvenation of *community* work or a neo-philanthropic regime of targeting social problems? What kinds of social problems would be judged to be in need of professional interventions (and in what ways are these social problems constructed)? What kinds of problems are even considered to be *social* (and, accordingly, a concern for broader society and public authorities)? Could professional social work align with these forms of social (or community-based) welfare interventions? How could this be done? The adjustment of expectations on sport introduces non-professional conductors of social work to the field as well as philanthropic ideals and innovative ways of doing social work. We must scrutinize what this means for the quality and precision of social and welfare interventions – this should be an important task for the emerging literature on sport-based social work. This analysis, of course, cannot provide the answers, but it has highlighted implicit dimensions and raised questions, thereby making a contribution to the body of research concerning the conditions of social work in the changing welfare state. Some central challenges for social work have been made manifest by examining the ways of governing that are fostered. In order to approach the above questions, research needs to be attuned to the variety of interventions forms that constitute contemporary social work – for instance, sport-based intervention practices, as well as a range of other interventions responding to social problems – in order to sketch out the practical technologies applied and trace the rationalities embedded. The focus on

‘community’ – as well as de-professionalisation, neo-philanthropy, entrepreneurialism, role models and on doing social work at a distance – moreover, highlights the role of and conditions for the social worker. Analysing sport as a means of responding to social problems stresses that the role of the conductor of social work is diverse and even transforming. To make conscious and visible the emerging tendencies of such social and welfare provision mentioned, articulating questions and introducing concepts and perspectives, is a way of providing reflection capacities that could underpin control and development of sport-based social work practice.

This article provides some empirical accounts of *how* ‘community’ is constructed in practice and enabled in the field of – and with the advent of – sport as a means of social work; it is exemplified by a case of sport-based social intervention and focused on how sport activates ‘community’. The statements analysed illustrate one of a multitude of instances, where seemingly minor mutations in governing rationales epitomise welfare state transformations. Such reflections are noteworthy because they indicate how social work and welfare provision are performed and enabled in contemporary society beyond the institutionalised arenas of welfarism. The investigations carried out and the findings produced underline the need for further empirical research on the governing rationales imbued in welfare provision and the impact they may have on the development of professional social work in a welfare state that is reconfiguring its means and recalibrating its objectives. The refined perspectives and innovative questions raised could be further addressed systematically based on more comprehensive empirical material.

REFERENCES

- Coakley, J. 2011. “Youth Sports: What Counts as ‘Positive Development’.” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35 (3): 306–324. doi: 10.1177/0193723511417311
- Coalter, F. 2007. *A Wider Social Role for Sport: Who's Keeping the Score?* London: Routledge.
- Dahlstedt, M. 2009. *Aktiveringens politik. Demokrati och medborgarskap för ett nytt millennium* [The Politics of Activation. Democracy and Citizenship for a New Millennium]. Malmö: Liber.
- Dean, M. 2010. *Governmentality: Power and Rule in the Modern Society*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE.
- Donzelot, J. 1988. “The Promotion of the Social”. *Economy and Society* 17 (3): 395-427. doi: 10.1080/03085148800000016
- Ekholm, D. 2013. “Research on Sport as a Means of Crime Prevention in a Swedish Welfare Context: A Literature Review”. *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum* 4: 91-120. URL: sportstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/091_120_vol_4_2013_ekholm.pdf (accessed October 18th, 2016)

- Esping-Andersen, G. 1990. *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. 1991. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, 87-104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johansson, H., Arvidsson, M. and Johansson, S. 2015. "Welfare Mix as Contested Terrain: Political Positions on Government–Non-profit Relations at National and Local Levels in a Social Democratic Welfare State". *Voluntas* 26: 1601-1619. doi: 0.1007/s11266-015-9580-4
- Kelly, L. 2011. "'Social Inclusion' through Sports-Based Interventions?" *Critical Social Policy* 31(1): 126–150. doi: 10.1177/0261018310385442
- Larsson, B., M. Letell, and H. Thörn. 2012. "Transformations of the Swedish Welfare State: Social Engineering, Governance and Governmentality: An Introduction." In *Transformations of the Swedish Welfare State*, edited by B. Larsson, M. Letell, and H. Thörn, 3–22. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lawson, H. A. 2005. "Empowering People, Facilitating Community Development, and Contributing to Sustainable Development: The Social Work of Sport, Exercise, and Physical Education Programs." *Sport, Education and Society* 10 (1): 135–160. doi: 10.1080/1357332052000308800
- Nichols, G. 2007. *Sport and Crime Reduction: The Role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Norberg J. R. 2011. "A Contract Reconsidered? Changes in the Swedish State's Relation to the Sports Movement." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 3: 311–325. Doi 10.1080/19406940.2011.596157
- Petersson, K. 2000. "Mobilisering av gemenskapen. Om den socialpedagogiska offensiven i lokalmiljön" [Mobilisation of the community. On the advancement of social pedagogy in the local neighbourhood]. In *I stadens utkant. Perspektiv på förorter* [In the City Outskirts. Perspectives on the Suburbs], edited by K-O. Arnstberg and I. Ramberg, 86-118. Tumba: Mångkulturellt centrum.
- Philp, M. 1979. "Notes on the Form of Knowledge in Social Work." *The Sociological Review* 27 (1): 83–111. doi: 0.1111/j.1467-954X.1979.tb00326.x
- Rose, N. 1996. "The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government." *Economy and Society* 25 (3): 327–356. doi: 10.1080/03085149600000018
- Rose, N. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Rose, N. 2000. "Community, Citizenship and the Third Way." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 (9): 1395–1411. doi: 10.1177/00027640021955955

Rose, N., and P. Miller. 1992. "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government." *The British Journal of Sociology* 43 (2): 173–205. doi: 10.2307/591464

Strand Hutchinson, G. 2009. "The Mandate for Community Work in the Nordic Welfare States". In *Community Work in the Nordic Countries*, edited by G. Strand Hutchinson, 15-37. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Svedberg, L. and Olsson L.E. 2010. "Civil Society and Welfare Provision in Sweden: Is There Such a Thing?" In *Third Sector Organizations Facing Turbulent Environments: Sport, Culture and Social Services in Five European Countries*, edited by A. Zimmer and A. Evers, 225-251. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Villadsen, K. 2008. "Doing without State and Civil Society as Universals: 'Dispositifs' of Care Beyond the Classic Sector Divide." *Journal of Civil Society* 4 (3): 171–191. doi: 10.1080/17448680802559768

Villadsen, K. 2009. "The 'Human' Touch: Voluntary Organizations as Rescuers of Social Policy." *Public Management Review* 11 (2): 217–234. doi: 10.1080/14719030802685289

Webb, S. A. 2006. *Social Work in a Risk Society: Social and Political Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Yin, R. K. 2014. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: SAGE.