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Pedagogies of (de)liberation: salvation and social inclusion by means of Midnight Football

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the pedagogies of (de)liberation promoted in the sports-based intervention Midnight Football (MF), carried out in a suburban and socio-economically disadvantaged residential area in Sweden. Based on interviews with coaches and managers and on-site observations, we examine how socio-pedagogical rationalities and technologies are articulated in discourse and assumed to operate within the intervention, and how certain ideals of conduct and social inclusion are represented in discourse. The analysis is guided by a Foucauldian perspective on a variety of forms of power. It displays how disciplinary forms of spatial and temporal diversion and dislocation of youth from sites of risk and danger to sites of order and football are formed within MF, where non-authoritative relations between coaches and youth can be facilitated, underpinned by a pastoral form of benign care and guidance. This, in turn, according to the rationality, enables pedagogies of sublime guidance and governing through deliberative and motivational dialogues, supporting youth to conduct themselves and, within the frames of football, choose the right track in life, away from gangs and crime. Making active and responsible choices means not only opportunities for individual deliberation, salvation and social inclusion, but moreover, security in and for the locality, community and society. The analysis illustrates how discipline, pastoral power and technologies of empowerment and of the self are intertwined and constitutive of the government promoted. Notably, dialogues between coaches and participants do not focus on the socio-economic inequalities or the socio-political context of segregation among the youth; instead, salvation becomes a question of the mindset of the youth, legitimizing a pre-given socio-economic and socio-political order of social exclusion. Still, there is unfulfilled potential for critical pedagogy and (de)liberative dialogues for articulating the conditions for participation in sport and in society on the terms of the participating youth.

Introduction

There is a long tradition of sport activities integrated with socio-pedagogical social work and social policy objectives (e.g. Reynolds, 2017; Sabbe, Bradt, Spaaij, & Roose, 2019), for instance in Sweden (cf. Ekholm, 2016). In this article, we focus on the socio-pedagogical rationalities and technologies promoted in the sports-based intervention Midnight Football (MF), carried out in a suburban and socio-economically disadvantaged residential area in ‘East City’, Sweden. The aim of the article is to
explore how learning and the formation of subjectivities are constructed as key rationalities of the intervention and how such rationalities align with the conceptualizations of social inclusion promoted. This is explored through three research questions: How are socio-pedagogical rationalities articulated in discourse and underpinning the intervention? How are socio-pedagogical technologies assumed to operate within the intervention? How are ideals of conduct and social inclusion represented in discourse? Accordingly, the article does not examine the outcomes of the intervention per se and does not provide an evaluation of its effects, but instead directs attention to the rationalities and technologies of pedagogy and governing imbued in the practices assessing them as a political force of power.

This exploration is made against the background of how social inclusion has emerged as a key objective of social policy, following inequalities, segregation and social exclusion, not least in Sweden where a range of socio-pedagogical interventions specifically targeting inhabitants of the urban peripheries have been developed (e.g. Sernhede, Thörn, & Thörn, 2016). In this socio-political context, sports-based interventions have gained a certain prominence (Dahlstedt & Ekholm, 2019b). Here, pedagogical benefits have been particularly highlighted in both policy and scientific discourse (e.g. Haudenhuyse, 2017). Such a discourse involves certain notions of social change, overlapping with wider pedagogical rationalities of social work in general (cf. Sabbe, Bradt, et al., 2019), as a means of enabling social inclusion of those deemed ‘at risk’ (cf. Hartmann, 2016) of social exclusion.

The intervention investigated was developed by a national charity and corporate social responsibility foundation, specializing in sport for social objectives. The intervention was set up in cooperation with local agencies, primarily the local sport club Sumeria FC (coded name for purpose of confidentiality) in collaboration with community actors, sponsors and charity organizations (cf. Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018), and was funded on the basis of an assignment made by the municipality of East City. The intervention has not been involved in direct cooperation with district or national sport confederations, other than through the associated club being a member of confederations on these levels. The MF design was developed in Sweden, although inspired by similar programmes especially in the U.K., and was adapted and diffused by the foundation to local management in a variety of locations in Sweden (cf. Ekholm & Holmlid, in press). MF has previously been researched with a focus on organizational set-up, local policy governing and gendered dimensions of sport participation (Ekholm, 2019; Ekholm & Holmlid, in press; Ekholm, Dahlstedt, & Rönnbäck, 2019). The research performed on the intervention has not been part of the intervention design or associated with the organization in any way prior to the study. Accordingly, the research was not performed on behalf of the organization, and the organization of the programme is not embedded in a scientific context. Sumeria FC performs the activities locally, with coaches who are often recruited from the association’s senior football team. The explicit goals described in formal documents are ‘promoting integration through sport’ and ‘to develop a sense of responsibility and participation in society as well as employability […], to prevent social exclusion [and] to contribute to crime reduction’. Coaches and managers were trained in advance of and during the intervention by the foundation’s educators, focusing especially on the pedagogical arrangements of the activities.

The activity carried out is five-a-side football, played indoors on Saturday nights from 20:00–00:00, with participants aged 12–25, following a schedule where the team winning the five-minute game stays on the pitch. The activities take place regularly during the school semesters, at the same time and location with supervising coaches and managers present, but do not require association membership or registration. Different youths can participate from week to week, although a large portion of the participants take part in the activities on a regular basis. Activities are sometimes attended by more than a hundred young people, either taking part in the activities or hanging around. It is primarily boys who participate on the playing field, while the girls present are mainly spectators. The absence of girls was noted by managers and coaches as a problem. A range of measures have been taken in order to attract girls, and discourse around this has already been scrutinized (Ekholm et al., 2019).

East City MF provides a case for examining an emerging form of socio-pedagogical intervention which is increasingly present in and important for welfare and social policy in Western societies,
such as Sweden (Dahlstedt & Ekholm, 2019b). Accordingly, the article presents a single-case study, based on an in-depth investigation of the practices and activities performed. The research design provides thick narratives accessible for detailed examination and further exploration through theoretically informed analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Accordingly, the detailed scrutiny and close descriptions of narratives, discourse and rationality are a result in their own right, not primarily as a way to generate a hypothesis or generalizable data (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The empirical material was collected within a research project, based on interviews and on-site observations. All the empirical material provides a solid empirical background for the analysis presented. However, the empirical material mainly examined in the article consists of interviews with nine managers and coaches (all male), selected as they are the most active on-site in the interventions and are engaged in the socio-pedagogical work carried out. All the respondents selected agreed to be part of the study. There were also occasional coaches who were not regularly active in the intervention, and who were not selected for interviews. The interviews were structured following an open-ended interview guide, focusing in particular on the following themes: descriptions of (a) the participating youth, (b) the competence of coaches, (c) youth and coach interactions, and (d) sport in relation to social objectives. The interviews took between 30 and 60 min and were transcribed verbatim. The interviews have provided important knowledge about the discourse and rationality of the socio-pedagogical elements of the intervention (cf. Cruickshank, 2012). Participatory observations of the activities were carried out on five occasions during one semester, with two researchers present on each occasion. Field notes were transcribed directly after the observations made, and were systematically re-assessed in analysis providing a context and frame for exploration. More comprehensive fieldwork that was possible, complemented by other methods of gathering empirical accounts, has been very important for providing contextual knowledge of how the rationalities, technologies and objectives of the intervention have been formed and practised (cf. McSweeney & van Luijk, 2019).

The empirical material has been analysed on the basis of a discursive framework based on a constructivist epistemology, guided by Foucauldian (e.g. 1982, 2009) concepts of productive power. In practice, the procedure of analysis contained two steps. First, a thematic analysis of the discourse and rationality articulated were conducted, outlining the themes presented in the findings and analysis section. Here, a structure or rationality of problematizations, means or technologies of social inclusion and objectives of the intervention guided the thematization. Second, key theoretical concepts, such as the various forms of power outlined by Foucault (1979, 1982, 2009, 2010), guided the exploration of the discourse outlined, situating the rationalities and technologies within the frames of power and political rule in modern societies. This approach makes it possible to analyse the conditions of inclusion and the dimensions of power imbued in shaping youth as includable citizen subjects, and opens up the spectrum for recognizing the political significance of sports-based interventions as a vehicle of social policy and as a means of governing.

**Research context**

Scientific discourses on sports-based interventions have been influential in relation to the development of policy (cf. Coakley, 2015; Coalter, 2011). In particular, policy discourses construing sport and leisure as feasible responses to social exclusion have been pinpointed in relation to the austerity policies of advanced liberalism (e.g. Parnell, Spracklen, & Millward, 2017) and neoliberal trends in social policy (e.g. Hartmann, 2016). Moreover, there has been an intense scholarly debate concerning the social benefits expected from sports-based interventions in terms of responding to social problems (Coakley, 2011, 2015; Coalter, 2015). In the discourse, much attention has been paid to identifying the potential and expected outcomes of sports-based interventions with a variety of social objectives (e.g. Coalter, 2011, 2015), not least in terms of social change and learning (e.g. Luguetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk, 2017), potentially manifested in ‘good citizenship’ (e.g. Parker, Morgan, Farooq, Moreland, & Pitchford, 2017) or social cohesion (e.g. Sabbe, Bradt, Spaaij, & Roose, 2018).
Repeated in scientific discourse are notions of physical diversion, displacement of youth from times and spaces of risk, and diversion of attention from delinquent conduct (e.g. Nichols, 2007). Beyond simply diverting youth from being at risk, sports-based interventions have been seen to facilitate improved self-confidence and self-esteem (e.g. Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005), referred to as pro-social development (e.g. Nichols, 2007) or personal development, and seen as having been facilitated through improved social relations (e.g. Deboignies, Schallée, Haudenhuyse, & Theebom, 2019). This aligns with expectations of sports-based empowerment of individuals and communities (e.g. Lawson, 2005). The spectrum of ‘empowerment’ has been noted as important, referring both to the provision of competences of youth needed in order to function in society and to the development of skills and competences for countering inequalities, segregation and social exclusion (cf. Ekholm, 2016). In the first regard, such hopes have been noted to align with neoliberal discourses underpinning interventions targeting segments of the populations deemed ‘at risk’, facilitating adaptation to a pre-given social order (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). In the second regard, empowerment aligns with ambitions of critical pedagogy (e.g. Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013) to develop a certain counter-conduct (Luguetti et al., 2017), which may be facilitated through dialogues and communication with leaders (e.g. Nols, Haudenhuyse, Spaaij, & Theeboom, 2018). However, particular conditions are required for such ideals of empowerment to be realized – not least when it comes to raising awareness of the socio-political context of existing inequalities (Meir & Fletcher, 2019). Notably, there is a danger that interventions aiming at empowerment will fail to address structural challenges (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011), focusing rather on adaptation (cf. Luguetti et al., 2017) and hence becoming technologies of discipline and control (e.g. Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

Furthermore, the social competences attained through sports are often described as transferable ‘life skills’ (e.g. Danish, 2002). However, sport is not a magic tool that automatically provides life skill learning as such (Danish, 2002). Rather, the lasting value of sport participation lies in how well the acquisition of principles from participation in sports can be used in other contexts. Here, a distinction has been made between explicit and implicit transfers (Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014). Explicit transfer involves a pedagogical strategy where the actual transfer of skills is pronounced and subject to conscious reflection. Implicit transfer targets the development of cognitive, emotional and social skills in sports activities, focusing on how such skills include abstract dimensions that make it possible for skills such as problem-solving, decision-making and emotional self-esteems to be adapted and used in other settings. However, sports-based intervention often fails to provide a socio-pedagogical learning environment, as coaches do not see themselves as facilitators of pedagogical objectives (Haudenhuyse, Theebom, & Coalter, 2012). Nevertheless, there might be elements of team sports which align with pedagogical objectives of social work, in terms of group work for dealing with conflicts, mutual moral responsibility, joint goal-formulation and problem-solving (Brown, Garvey, & Haydn, 2011; Moreau et al., 2018) or community work (Reynolds, 2017). Such objectives often necessitate professional competences of those conducting the activities (Brown et al., 2011). Still, non-professionals may provide bonds and support, acting as links between the social life of youth and their institutional environments (school and family) (Moreau et al., 2018).

In contrast to such an affirmative undercurrent concerning sports-based interventions, such interventions have also been said to lack empirical support (Coalter, 2007, 2015) or have even been described as part of a political discourse and sport-evangelist myth (Coakley, 2011, 2015), obscuring the structural causes of the social problems they are designed to address (e.g. Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). Thus, sports-based interventions seem insufficient for addressing the complexity of societal processes at the root of the social problems targeted (e.g. Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). In contrast, confidence in the powers of sport has even been criticized for both obscuring underpinnings of and actively facilitating neo-liberal and neo-conservative rule (e.g. Hartmann, 2016) as well as third way activation policies (Green, 2012).

What is evident in the scientific discourse is how social change and the pedagogical objectives are repeatedly located to the subjectivities of the participants, in the name of ‘diverting attention’, ‘pro-
social development, ‘increased self-esteem’, ‘empowerment’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘life skills’. Such characterizations are euphemisms for governing the minds and souls of those participating in sports. However, such pedagogical objectives are not at all specific to sport; rather, they are constitutive of modern and liberal rule in general (cf. Foucault, 2009). Still, research on sports-based interventions is often underpinned by clear-cut distinctions between emancipatory ideals of pedagogy and development and subjugating control or discipline rationalities (cf. Sabbe, Roose, & Bradt, 2019). We argue that such distinctions can be questioned and overcome using a Foucauldian conceptualization of productive power, highlighting how development and control, pedagogy and policing are intertwined in complex assemblages of productive power.

Theoretical framework

In the article, we approach MF as a site where a range of governing technologies operate, underpinned by certain problematizations. This approach is guided by a discursive framework informed by the work of Foucault (1979, 1982, 1988, 2009, 2010). When it comes to the forms of power exercise of modern and liberal rule, Foucault (1979, 2009, 2010) outlined a variety of rationalities and technologies of rule. Modern forms of government are formed in the continuum of ‘pedagogy’ and ‘policing’. While moral education forms an upward continuity, securing order by means of forming the moral conduct of subjects, the disciplining order of the police secures the downward continuity of power and rule (Foucault, 2009). From this point of view, the framework presented in the following transcends any distinction between the pedagogical and the political, interweaving pedagogy and politics in the governing of subjects, their conduct and their subjectivity. From this particular point of view, it is possible to analyse forms of deliberation and emancipation as a form of power exercise, as part of the political government between pedagogy and policing – productive of conduct, actions, behaviours and subjectivity.

In modern societies, conceptualizations of risk underpin a range of governmental interventions (Foucault, 2009). From a discursive viewpoint, ‘risk’ may be understood as a term used to animate potential and future dangers – it is thus not an objective condition, but a problematization of the future (Foucault, 2009; Rose, 1999). A key dimension of modern social policy, therefore, is to, on the hand, guide particular populations and subjects to self-management and self-responsibility of risk – in the name of activation and empowerment – and, on the other hand, impose discipline and control on those seen as constituting a risk to social order (Rose, 1999).

There are various ways to approach the forms of power in contemporary societies. Discipline refers to the prescriptive institutions, regulating time and space, set up in order to control the population by means of producing normalization (Foucault, 1979, 2009). Pastoral power refers to the relations between the shepherd and the flock used as a metaphor for government (Foucault, 2009). This form of ‘power is not exercised over a territory but, by definition, over a flock, and more exactly, over the flock in its movement from one place to another’ (Foucault, 2009, p. 171). The shepherd ‘goes ahead and shows his people the direction they must follow’ and ‘guides to salvation, prescribes the law, and teaches the truth’ (Foucault, 2009, p. 171, 224). Pastoral power is constituted by how the shepherd – or the pastor, governor or conductor – leads the flock based on benign interest and care for each sheep in the flock, and in order to succeed, the relationship between shepherd and sheep is decisive (Foucault, 2009). Governing refers to the ‘condukt of conduct’, i.e. the activities guiding the behaviour and ways of thinking of subjects (Foucault, 1982, 2009), exercised through techniques aimed at regulating the freedom of subjects (Foucault, 1982, 2009, 2010). Governing is carried out, not against the subject’s own will, but by steering the will of subjects. In this regard, subjects are not only subjected to power, but are rather self-reflective and active in conducting themselves (Foucault, 1982). In particular, in contemporary forms of governing, power operates ‘through the regulated choices of individual citizens’ (Rose, 1996, p. 41), i.e. forming social order through the choices of individual subjects (Foucault, 2009; Rose, 1999). This involves techniques of empowering subjects with competences of self-reflection, self-management and responsibility (Rose, 1999), which
operates by providing powers of individual agency such as self-esteem and self-confidence (Rose, 1999). Such capacities can be formed through ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1988), which refers broadly to practices through which subjects constitute their own subjectivity, for instance through self-reflection or self-care (Foucault, 1988). Such self-reflection allows for practices of and for caring for oneself in an ethically reflected way – and this is, in a particular way, the government and formation of the soul and of subjectivity (Foucault, 1988).

This approach provides a multifaceted diagram for analysing power, highlighting, in particular, how modern and liberal forms of rule take the government of the soul and of subjectivity as the target of intervention. This kind of governing has evolved in a variety of institutions promoting learning and education, by means of pedagogical or socio-pedagogical practices, constituted through technologies of discipline, of the pastorate, of governing, of empowerment and of the self, directing the conduct and forming the subjectivities of people – and in that sense ruling societies. Accordingly, we explore MF as a site of governing technologies.

Findings and analysis
The analysis is structured into six subsections pinpointing the findings of the study. Here, we analyse the problematizations posed in discourse, the technologies promoted to address the problems of risk suggested, and the objectives of intervention as well as the ideals of inclusion underpinning this discourse and rationality. Most notably, there are certain understandings of risk underpinning disciplinary displacement and diversion of youth, in turn enabling a variety of pedagogical techniques forming the rationalities of social change constitutive of the MF pedagogy. Interrelated with this rationality is the deliberation techniques aiming to form self-reflexive and self-managing subjects by means of participation in football.

Rationalities of risk and diversion
A central theme of the discourse articulated is risk or problematizations of the future. Accordingly, certain potential dangers need to be prevented. Here, the future is made knowledgeable in terms of risk, with primarily spatial and temporal dimensions (cf. Ekholm & Dahlstedt, in press). Youth are repeatedly characterized as exposed to risk in the residential area of intervention, particularly at the mall (spatial), and at specific hours at night, particularly at weekends (temporal). Importantly, the spatial and temporal elements concern how youth are exposing society to risk, at particular sites and at particular hours. In a variety of articulations, youth are portrayed as threats to social order and the local community, where the dislocation by means of participation in MF is proposed as an alternative.

A few coaches describe having been involved in crime and drugs. Such narratives form a discursive backdrop for underscoring the importance of MF as a device for diversion. Shanzar, one of the coaches, expresses this narrative, pinpointing the potential risk of future delinquency and disorder by underscoring how ‘it’s easy to end up in the wrong crowds and become a criminal’. He explains that ‘I was in almost the same situation […] but, so, I changed and started with MF … and now I want to give the kids the same chance that I got.’ Highlighting football as an alternative to delinquency and crime, he further elaborates: ‘I had other goals … I wanted to succeed in football and not cause problems … so, I managed to leave those people and go in the right direction.’ In this way, Shanzar’s narrative underscores a pedagogical rationality of MF, as the activities ‘are good … ‘cause it helps the youth to do other stuff … that they are there, instead of causing problems’. In addition, such experiences overlap with descriptions of other youth in the residential area. For instance, Darko, another coach, describes the ambition of MF as to ensure ‘that the youth don’t end up in the wrong crowds … and, like, end up in prison’. Underpinning this ambition, he further claims that ‘ninety percent of my friends are either in prison or doing drugs’, continuing by stating that he is not one of them, as ‘I chose another path … and that was thanks to football’. Here, it is made clear that
crime and drugs are a common concern among people and friends in the locality, furthermore suggesting that sport facilitates diversion from these risks.

According to such observations, the locality is described as a site of risk, populated by youth exposed to drugs and crime, where coaches, as well as peers, have been involved in delinquency. However, as described, sport participation has provided another path. Embedded in such risk discourse are descriptions of sport as an alternative to and diversion from risk. This risk rationality is intertwined with disciplinary technologies of spatial, temporal and mental diversion of youth to sites of order, rules and security (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, in press). The sport practices are, in contrast to life outside, characterized by order and structure, as safe and securing practices, and, not least, as sites where formative coaches (acting as role models) are present and influential in establishing relations with youth. Notably, these practices constitute a disciplinary form and structure of the activities, which in turn facilitates socio-pedagogical arrangements and subtle forms of governing as elaborated on further in following subsections.

Role models and the conditions of legitimacy

Alongside the technologies of diversion promoted, certain pedagogical techniques are repeatedly articulated and intimately associated with the work of role models. Underpinning the notion of role models are the ways in which they qualify as conductors of social change, becoming legitimate partners of dialogues. The conditions of legitimacy are articulated in terms of equality and community, shared experiences and identity.

Highlighting the legitimacy granted among the youth, Sulejman refers to his own experiences of delinquency. He says that ‘unfortunately, I have a background and experiences that appeal to them … and which grants respect … I was at the bottom and on top’, referring to a past of both crime and athletic successes. Nevertheless, this background enables legitimacy, and it is the traits of leadership that grant him a position as a role model and a conductor of social change. Sulejman states that his experiences provide a platform to reach out and to support authority. However, he distances himself from these experiences while emphasizing that it is not primarily the experiences as such that make him a good leader, but the traits of conduct, the security and confidence it imbues. Being a conductor means having a certain poise: ‘When they meet an adult who is not confident in himself […] you lose their respect.’ By visualizing non-hierarchical relations, the coaches appear to be credible messengers, which is required in order to promote self-reflection among the youth. The shared experiences and personal traits, accordingly, facilitate relations between conductors and youth. This is also how Gabriel refers to himself as a leader, in the following excerpt.

So, I take care of people in different ways. I adapt. We are different. […] They respect me, and I respect them. […] I say hello to everyone … hug them and see how they are doin’, trying to create a good feeling. […] I’m on their level … talk a bit of ghetto slang [Sw: ortenspråk] … some jokes and so on. Sometimes, you need to be serious, but most often I get to their level and talk like them. That’s how I earn their respect … I become one of them. (Gabriel)

In the above excerpt, Gabriel stresses that being a coach is a matter of ‘taking care of people’, based on mutual respect. Forming relationships based on mutual trust enables the position of role model and, moreover, dialogues concerning right and wrong. Such relationships are made possible by legitimacy and credibility, formed on the basis of ‘being on the same level’ and talking the same language, and discursively coalesce in terms of ‘respect’. The egalitarian ideals of non-authoritative guidance through dialogue, however, imbues hierarchies. Although the coaches gain their legitimacy by being part of the flock of the youth, sharing identities and experiences, there are clear roles and relationships between the guides and the guided. Described here is a form of non-authoritative conductor who leads the youth on the basis of benign pedagogy, and who has been granted legitimacy and credibility in the position as a role model and partner in dialogue on the basis of certain experiences, traits and identity.
Establishing non-authoritative relations and dialogue

Seeing that coaches are part of and qualified as part of the same community, becoming credible and legitimate in their roles, a form of anti-authoritative ideal of benign care for the flock of youth can be created. Hierarchies between coaches and participants are downplayed and given low visibility, creating a sense of reciprocity and community, while still suggesting that coaches have a parent-like role in the relationships formed. The idealistic equality envisioned is contrasted by clear divisions of role between conductor and youth, where the conductor leads the way.

Coach Roque pinpoints this dimension of governing, stating that ‘I’m not an authoritative leader … in [the area], we don’t have authoritative leaders’. He stresses the importance of being on the same level with the youth guided through the activities performed. Also, Sulejman describes the non-authoritative pedagogical ideals in terms of ‘I try not to act like the police … I try to guide them, to counsel them and to give them advice’. Here, ‘the police’ is the antonym of authoritative governing, but to guide means to lead forward in an anti-authoritative way. Accordingly, the pedagogical objectives outweigh the disciplinary police. Seen in a broader light, the disciplinary displacement away from the streets enables a form of counselling pedagogy. Sulejman, who also has a managerial role in guiding the other coaches in their work with the youth, explains this pedagogical idea by stating that ‘I used to say to our coaches that “you’re not leaders” … I mean, you are leaders, but no one should see you as someone who puts themselves above’. Instead, he stresses that relations should be ‘of community [and] on the same terms [and] on the same level’, which, coincidentally, is not the case with the police as is explicitly contrasted: if a coach acts like the police, ‘then you’ve lost your relationship … lost the respect … you’ve lost everything … everything’.

Coach Shanzar frames such pedagogy in a narrative with himself centre stage. In the following excerpt, he reflects on how to conduct the youth while being part of the community, pinpointing that there is a certain balancing act that ultimately has to do with respect.

My task is to be with the boys, lead them, be a part of them and play with them … but also to show that I’m the leader and the one who decides. You need to find a balance … between being one of them, but also showing that I’m in charge. […] I also believe that it’s about letting the boys know that I’ve been in their situation. I had a choice, and I choose football over the negative things. I’ve been through a lot in my life. […] I listen to what they have to say … and then I make decisions from there. They listen to me, and that shows they respect me, and I respect them. I’m close with the group. […] But they still understand that I lead, and if something happens, I’m in charge. (Shanzar)

In addition to the elements of community and equality, Shanzar’s description pinpoints the importance of being able to show subtly that it is the leader ‘who decides’ when conflicts arise. Such authority requires the legitimacy and respect referred to previously, which is enabled by the relationships formed within the activities. The essential capacity and competence highlighted here concern being able to handle the balance between being part of the flock and being the authority who has the last word.

Technologies of motivational dialogue

The importance of dialogue embedded in non-authoritative relations between coaches and youth and the pedagogies promoted has already been introduced. Supportive dialogue is a core technique for guiding the self-reflection of subjects. It is through dialogue that a sense of responsibility can be formed. In practice, the technologies of dialogue are constituted by motivational work directed towards empowering and making youth competent in the art of making the right choices. It is through dialogue that the coaches reach out to the youth.

Sulejman points this out by conceptualizing what it means to lead, that ‘when you are a leader here, you’re not a leader in the sense that you decide and govern’, but instead to lead ‘should not be noticed […] but more like melting together in a way’. Interestingly, Sulejman uses the word ‘govern’ (styra in Swedish) to denote the authoritative rule of conduct, in contrast to the kind of
pedagogy promoted. In practice, he refers to leading as an act of non-authoritative guidance characterized by a sublime form of influence transcending the distinctions between policing and pedagogy. In addition, Shanzar describes how ‘we solve most things through dialogue and try to lead the youth on the right track through motivational talk … and yeah, we succeed’. Most notably, the sublime form of guidance through motivational dialogue is illustrated by the coach Sead. In the following excerpt, he makes the rationality of leading, motivation and the art of choosing explicit.

We lead the children on the right path. We try to show the alternatives available … and what would happen if they were to go down the wrong path. Mainly, I think the coaches in football … make up a kind of fostering. You have a lot to show. […] If we lead the boys on the right track, and show what is right and what is wrong, then we may make way for a better future. […] Above all, it leads them to become better people in society. They will do well at school … get a job … and not end up in the dark world … with crime. (Sead)

Again, being a coach means leading the way in a certain direction, navigating between right and wrong. In that sense, the task is one of moral guidance and the future of the youth is framed as a particular moral concern. The moral scheme also manifests itself in the form of distinguished alternatives in the locality and in life. There are things one should and should not do; there are good and bad things; there are right and wrong tracks; there are success and life in the dark; there are positive and negative role models. Repeatedly, such differentiations are made on moral grounds, forcing moral reflection and learning of navigation capacities. The technologies of governing target reflection and choice: the capacities of the moral subject. Introducing the variety of alternative routes in life, Sead mentions the importance of making the consequences of following the right or wrong track visible. In a sense, such a pedagogy aims to address the mind of the youth. The coach Roque says that ‘we want to achieve change … absolutely … we want to change their entire way of thinking’. Ultimately, thinking relates to making conscious and morally reflected choices. Returning to Sulejman, changing ways of thinking means that the coaches can ‘create conditions and provide tools … but it is their [the youth’s] choices, what they do with the key to the door that we gave them’. Here, responsibility is added to the discourse and rationality of choosing the right track.

**The art of choosing**

The forms of sublime governing aiming at self-reflection are manifested in guiding youth at the crossroads between delinquency and crime or sport and civil manners. In dialogue, the alternatives can be made clear. The art of choosing is about taking responsibility for one’s own decisions. The pedagogies of dialogue and of choosing the right track evidently target youth’s ways of thinking, facilitating self-reflection.

Here, coaches as positive role models have a particular role to play. Sulejman mentions that ‘in [the area] there are many role models … but not all are positive, sadly, most of them are negative role models’. Therefore, he adds, ‘we believe it is important to provide positive role models so that they [the youth] can choose other ways in life’, and this is, accordingly, ‘leaders that can influence the youth to make the right decisions […] to guide them in the right direction when they encounter difficulties and setbacks … there, they face a choice’. This should be viewed in the context of crime. Sulejman stresses that ‘most youth coming here are not criminals … but they are at a crossroads which can mean that they become involved in crime if they are not guided’. Accordingly, when youth do not do well at school ‘there are gangs [and] negative forces picking them up’. In the following excerpt, Sulejman further elaborates on making the right choices, by re-connecting to his own backstory of delinquency and crime.

The rougher my life became, the fewer people I had to turn to. So, I turned more and more to the other guys … and so I was at a crossroads. Should I continue with football or should I go with these guys? It was tough. I got no help and had no one to help me choose the right track. That’s why I love what I do now. ‘Cause I believe that many of the guys here are at this crossroads, and now they have me and my coaches here to help them make good decisions and choose the right track. I didn’t get that support … but I help them choose the right track. You’ve got to keep on fighting! […] I fight until I succeed. There is no failure. (Sulejman)
The quotation is articulated in the context of Sulejman having been previously convicted. Providing an alternative to crime is in this sense re-assessed as a key intervention objective. Responsibility is located to the moral subjects of the participating youth; or rather, the youth are constituted as moral subjects when confronted by the moral question of choosing between good and bad, right and wrong. Using his own narrative, Sulejman transfers the MF pedagogy to the lives and choices confronted by the youth.

Following up on this, Shanzar underlines that ‘the kids coming here are at an age when they start to be involved in crime … going in the wrong direction, and having a decision to make’. Again, the term ‘decision’, i.e. the responsibility of the individual, is associated with welfare and security. However, according to the discourse and rationality articulated, the youth are not left alone to make their choices. There is a complex apparatus of guidance and reflection offered within the practices, carried out by role models in dialogue, constituting a pedagogy in its own right, ultimately aiming to prepare the subject to choose the right track.

In an interesting passage, Gabriel mentions how the dialogues allude to the youth’s self-reflection. He says that ‘many times, you notice how the kids act in the wrong way’. He continues, ‘so, we talk and they regret what they have done and change their ways the next time they are in the same situation’. Such technologies of reflection are central in governing the self. Reflection is initiated by the conductors, but the work of reflection and of taking responsibility is a matter for the youth. According to Gabriel, this formula means that ‘we coach them in what it means to be a good person [and] how to live a good life’. Notably, reflection and responsibility are expected from a good person. Such a pedagogy of moral responsibility constitutes a way of preventing crime and delinquency. This is one side of the intervention goal, which involves shaping subjects into young people who feel a sense of inclusion, practise moral reflection, take responsibility and conduct themselves in an orderly manner, and who are assumed to be proliferated and manifested in a more secure locality and community.

**The objectives of deliberation**

Following on from the refined ways of thinking and the development in the art of choosing the right track in life, the objectives of intervention and the processes of governing can be assessed. The formation of self-reflective, self-managing, includable citizen subjects can be viewed as an end in itself, but also as a means of shaping a cohesive and secure community. In both senses, however, this is the result of the refined ways of thinking promoted through technologies of reflection and subjectification.

The practices are assumed to contribute to the formation of included or orderly youth; and as suggested, this is most notably a result of the pedagogy promoted. Abraham describes the objective in terms of ‘fostering decent residents of the community’, continuing by stating ‘we throw out a ball … five sensible coaches … and one thing leads to another: if they conduct themselves well here, they will also conduct themselves well out in the streets’. This notion of transfers enabled by MF is conceived of as a key feature of the pedagogical goals, albeit implicit and not much elaborated on strategically – the notion of transfers is instrumental for the discourse of proliferation of social change. Expected learning outcomes target the moral and learning subject, but are assumedly transferred, meaning that they are not exposed to crime or exposing the community to delinquent conduct. Continuing on from his descriptions of fostering better residents, Abraham states that ‘our task is to work in a preventive way … and I know we do’. Such security is formed in the combination of disciplinary dislocation and the MF pedagogy targeting the youth’s ways of thinking.

Shanzar describes the interconnections between disciplinary diversion, pastoral guidance, technologies of the self and the art of choosing in the following excerpt.

> When they are here with us, we talk a lot about the things that make them choose the right track, and not ending up in crime and bad things. So, yeah … I really believe that we do a good thing for society … mainly the local area.
and community. [...] Midnight Football makes the kids hang around the right crowds ... everyone likes football, right ... and the kind of activity we have makes more and more young people want to come and play, and listen to us and do good things. So, Midnight Football leads to fewer young people out in the street and more people in one place doing good things. (Shanzar)

Displaced and dislocated to the sites of MF, the youth, accordingly, encounter coaches who explain alternative routes in life in dialogue, emphasizing that there are choices to be made, and are in turn proliferated ‘out in the street’, forming a more secure community. With these words, Shanzar presents the dimension of local security, that the intervention provides security for the local residential area, preventing crime or at least dislocating potential delinquents from the streets. Here, the assumed power of football emerges in terms of the popularity of football, which makes it possible to reach out to the youth and make them eligible for pedagogical intervention.

Discussion

The analysis displays some key features of the rationalities, technologies and objectives constitutive of this particular examined intervention. The analysed rationalities, technologies and discourse relate to this particular intervention programme, and generalizations from this interrogation are thus limited, as is the case with explorative case study approaches. Still, the analysis displays and has brought forth some key reflections and analyses of how power takes shape in modern society and in contemporary social policy. By means of diversion and disciplinary forms of spatial and temporal dislocation from sites of risk to sites of order and football, a venue is formed where pedagogies of deliberation can be played out. In such pedagogies, role models visualizing the conduct and enabling motivational dialogues aiming to facilitate the art of choosing the right track are instrumental. According to the discourse analysed, such conductors of social change are granted legitimacy and credibility on the basis of their background, experiences, identity and traits. In this sense, and central to the rationality promoted, making active choices means opportunities of individual deliberation and social inclusion, but moreover, security in the locality and thus crime prevention. Such notions and rationalities can also be recognized from previous research on sports-based interventions (cf. Debognies et al., 2019; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Lawson, 2005; Luguetti et al., 2017). In some ways, the analysis mirrors arguments put forth in the research field concerning firm beliefs in the power of sport, despite being scientifically unsupported and unable to target structural challenges and mechanisms of segregation and exclusion (cf. Coakley, 2011, 2015; Coalter, 2015; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015; Hartmann, 2016). Still, the analysis introduces an understanding of sports-based interventions as sites of productive power and as sites of formation of conduct and subjectivity as well as formation of social order. The explored processes and discourses of pedagogy can reasonably be studied from a variety of approaches. The promoted perspectives have contributed by situating the pedagogical rationality within the spectrum of power and rule characteristic of modern society.

The analysis illustrates forms of governing subjects and society, where elements of discipline, pastoral power, technologies of empowerment and technologies of the self are intimately intertwined. Accordingly, a variety of productive power technologies are at play within the intervention, performed in various ways in order to produce a certain conduct and subjectivity among the targeted youth. The rationality can be understood in terms of both development and control. However, such a distinction is shadowed by how together they are formative of conduct and subjectivity, and by means of proliferation formative of community and society. Power is never complete or fixed. The rationality outlined is characterized by tensions and contradictions between the variety of power technologies sketched out.

The routes animated in discourse mirror biblical themes, visualized in the technologies of pastoral guidance and the shepherd’s care and efforts for the salvation of the flock (cf. Foucault, 2009). There are two alternative ways forward. The wrong track is the threatening and risky future of crime and delinquency, the discursive ‘hell’ of the suburban locality in decline and deprivation. The right track is the representation of salvation – the discursive ‘heaven’ rewarded – through participation.
in sport, offering refined self-reflection and empowerment, personal development and freedom of both mind and soul. However, the direction of the route is not decided upon by divine or sovereign rule, but by each individual’s own will and responsibility for making the right decisions in life. Furthermore, it is, according to the discourse and rationality promoted, through the active choices of subjects that social order is proliferated (cf. Foucault, 2009; Rose, 1999). As agency opportunities are implicit within the promoted governing pedagogy aiming for deliberation and activation, there are reasonably a range of ways for managers and coaches to navigate actively in relation to the discourse and rationality embedded in and intertwined in the structure of the intervention design. Still, regardless of the eventual agency or positioning of the managers and coaches within the discourses, this article focuses on the rationality of articulated pedagogy.

A key point of the pedagogy promoted in MF concerns the non-articulated notion of transfers of (life) skills perceived and underpinning the rationality of the intervention. The articulated pedagogy contains no elements of transfer, either explicit or implicit (cf. Turnnidge et al., 2014). Although they are not spoken about strategically, transfers are assumed to follow on more or less automatically from participation. This is in strict contrast to what is often outlined as a condition in scientific discourse. Moreover, the intervention is conducted by non-professionals, unskilled in socio-pedagogical or social work (cf. Brown et al., 2011), though – without a doubt – deeply engaged in the lives, comfort, welfare and salvation of participating youth (cf. Moreau et al., 2018). Here, pedagogy is constructed as an act of pastoral power based on benign care of the flock, with identity and shared experiences qualifying the pastor as part of the flock. Altogether, such concerns make it quite difficult to assess the potential to succeed in the pedagogical objectives of the intervention (cf. Coalter, 2007, 2015).

In order to situate the intervention and its political rationality, there is a need to underscore the selective outreach and target in the context of the advanced socio-economic inequalities, segregation and social exclusion of the urban landscape of contemporary Sweden (cf. Sernhede et al., 2016). It is, in this sense, noticeable how the dialogues between coaches and participants, as described, do not primarily focus on raising awareness of socio-economic inequalities or the socio-political context of segregation among the youth (cf. Meir & Fletcher, 2019), and thus underpinning emancipatory counter-conduct or empowerment (cf. Luguetti et al., 2017; Nols et al., 2018). Rather, the focus is on how youth are to manage in a pre-given social order and take responsibility for their own conduct and choices in life (cf. Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Re-assessing the alternatives illustrated above, salvation (in terms of evading risk, choosing the right track and also not constituting a risk to the community and society beyond), in this sense, becomes a question of working on the mindset of the youth rather than questioning current conditions of life. The benign ambitions of salvation, welfare and prosperity, however deliberative they may be, at least in these forms of operation, contribute to the creation of responsibilized youth subjects subjugated to a pre-given socio-economic and socio-political order, empowered with competences assumed to be needed in order to manage in such a world. Such a pedagogy of (de)liberation helps normalize current segregation and inequalities as well as neoliberal rule in general, rather than forming a counter-consciousness and emancipatory forms of opposition (cf. Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

Given that youth have their own understanding and will to participate, there is certainly potential for critical pedagogy in MF and similar kinds of sports-based interventions (cf. Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Nols et al., 2018; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013) that may provide youth with opportunities to articulate the conditions for participation in sport and in society on their own terms. Youth, as well as coaches and managers, can – and do – articulate participation in sport by means of alternative rationalities such as crime prevention or the promotion of social order (cf. Dahlstedt & Ekholm, 2019a; Hartmann, 2016). Given such opposition to current problematizations, there are in any case conditions for a reflective pedagogy with a focus on challenging the conditions that characterize participation in sport and society against the background of socio-economic inequalities, segregation and social exclusion – which, incidentally, is something that must be recognized, combatted and explored from the point of view of the narratives of the participating youth themselves.
Notes

1. The concept ‘youth’ is not unproblematic. Like other categories, ‘youth’ is not seldomly interpreted as a homogeneous category, especially if and where all ‘youth’ is assumed to be male. However, this category of people is, like others, heterogenous in a variety of dimensions. Still, we use the concept ‘youth’ to refer to the young persons, both boys and girls (although, as it were, a majority of boys), participating and not participating, present in or absent from the activities.

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