

CAN SPORT INCLUDE PEOPLE? RISKS AND CHANCES

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at contributing to the reflection on sport regarded as a potential tool for the development of community bonds and social inclusion. First of all the variety of existing experiences in the field are outlined. What stands out is a wealth of initiatives and projects, but the use of sport often appears to be scanty and frequently there is incoherence between declared aims and taken actions. Aim of the contribution is adding to the debate on the theme, highlighting certain theoretical and methodological focal aspects that should be considered in order to provide the real potential of sport as a tool for social inclusion and community development. To this purpose, a specific experience will be taken into account (an experience carried out in the township of Manenberg in Cape Town –South Africa–) re-reading it in the light of such focal aspects, highlighting theoretical and methodological assumptions, dilemmas and open questions that investigate the researcher on the subject.

KEYWORDS: sport, social inclusion, community development, risks and potentials.

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¿EL DEPORTE PUEDE INCLUIR A LAS PERSONAS? RIESGOS Y OPORTUNIDADES

Este trabajo pretende contribuir a la reflexión sobre el deporte considerado como una herramienta potencial para el desarrollo de los lazos comunitarios y la inclusión social. En primer lugar se exponen la variedad de experiencias existentes en el campo. Lo que se destaca es una gran cantidad de iniciativas y proyectos, pero el uso del deporte a menudo parece ser escasa y con frecuencia hay incoherencia entre los objetivos declarados y las acciones tomadas. La contribución se suma al debate sobre el tema, resaltando aspectos teóricos y metodológicos que deben ser considerados a fin de mejorar el potencial del deporte como herramienta de inclusión social y desarrollo comunitario.

Para este propósito, se presenta la experiencia llevada a cabo en el municipio de Manenberg en Ciudad del Cabo (Sudáfrica) a partir de una revisión crítica de sus objetivos, supuestos teóricos y metodológicos, así como de su resultado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: deporte, inclusión social, desarrollo comunitario, riesgos y potencialidades.

O DESPORTO PODE INCLUIR PESSOAS? RISCOS E OPORTUNIDADES

RESUMO: Este trabalho tem como objetivo contribuir para a reflexão sobre o desporto considerado como uma ferramenta potencial para o desenvolvimento de laços comunitários e de inclusão social. Primeira apresenta-se a variedade de experiências no campo. O que se destaca é uma grande quantidade de iniciativas e projetos, mas a utilização do desporto muitas vezes é insuficiente e outras muitas vezes não tem consistência entre os objetivos declarados e as ações tomadas. A contribuição é, para além do debate sobre o tema, enfatizando os aspectos teóricos e metodológicos que devem ser considerados, a fim de melhorar o potencial do desporto como uma ferramenta de inclusão social e desenvolvimento comunitário.

Para este fim, relatamos a experiência realizada no município de Manenberg, na Cidade do Cabo (África do Sul) a partir duma análise crítica dos objetivos, pressupostos teóricos e metodológicos, e o seu resultado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: desporto, inclusão social, desenvolvimento comunitário, riscos e potencialidades.

That sport is a tool aimed at social inclusion and community development is often taken as a proven fact. But it is not clear at all, what are the characteristics of sport that can justify such an assumption and which are the conditions that can realize it.

The contribution starts from the survey of many projects, initiatives, meetings, platforms that claim to refer to sport as a tool for social inclusion and community development.

On one hand, this highlights an important wealth, but on the other hand emphasizes at times the presence of a risky trend of using sport as a cure-all in relation to problems of diverse nature: economical, physical and mental health...

First some cross aspects characterizing many of these projects will be highlighted and then some focal aspects will be underlined as “necessary conditions” for the development of projects that use sport as a tool for social inclusion and community development.

Eventually an experience carried out in the neighbourhood of Manenberg in Cape Town (South Africa) will be presented. It will be re-read in the perspective of the highlighted theoretical and methodological focal aspects, and of the still open questions that interrogate the researchers.

State of the art (richness and limits)

Internationally, the consideration of sport as a tool for social inclusion and for the community development is very high.

Some literature points out that sport is hazardously often considered good by itself, a sort of cure all, capable of solving problems of diverse nature (Baldwin, 2000; Coakley, 2002; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

Today, more than ever, it is urgent a reflection that could help to identify the planning and enacting conditions (Coalter, 2002; Hartmann, 2003) that can allow sport, which is powerful but not by all means salvific, to become a really effective tool.

In these years some international platforms have been created in order to share ideas on the issue: among the most acknowledged the “Platform on Sport and Development” (www.sportanddev.org) and “Beyond Sport” (www.beyondsport.org). Also the number of foundations and associations with this aim has been growing fast in the last years.

A general outline of the existing international projects can be drawn taking into account these platforms and the internet sites of various ONG associations and foundations. From a first analysis emerges a great variability of addressed interlocutors: sometimes they are children, some other times are young people or teenagers, other times are adults affected by different problems. In some cases the issue is to deal with the society reconstruction after a natural disaster or a war; in other cases is to intervene

in large metropolis districts characterized by marginalization, fragility, or territories affected by poverty or violence. In addition there are projects dealing in some cases with health-medical problems (e.g.: HIV diffusion and prevention, abuse) or with unemployment or social rehabilitation after an imprisonment; in other situations deals with physical or mental disability.

The territories involved are the most diverse: it is possible to find experiences of such projects in every part of the world: Argentina, Brazil, Republic of Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Suriname and Uruguay, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Thailand, India, Nepal, Fiji, Pakistan, China. There are also other operative projects in European countries as: UK, Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Spain, even if smaller in number.

Another relevant data is that the majority of the organizations promoting such projects have legal and representative bases in Europe or USA and that they promote projects mainly in other countries, many of which are in poor or crisis situation.

The aims declared by the various projects appear to be more homogenous: in nearly the totality of cases the accent is on community relations and social inclusion, in less cases on wellness.

In order to give only a rough idea of the variety of existing initiatives, we give a brief description of some projects addressed to migrants, women and young people.

The program *3 Sisters Adventure Trekking and Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN)*,¹ is promoted by the Women Win Foundation, which has created a unique platform to promote the taking part of women in trekking, rock and ice climbing activities. At the same time the association EWN offers them the opportunity of working as trainers, allowing them, not only to improve their economic condition, but also to enhance the level of self-esteem and confidence, developing professional know-how.

Boxgirls is a project developed in Berlin by the association Boxgirls International², thanks to which Muslim women can have access to services to practice this sport, facilitating in this way cultural exchanges and acquaintances.

The project MIMoSA (Migrants' Inclusion Model of Sport for All)³ has been financed by Sport Unit (DG EAC). The project has had 14 partners among which sport associations, local authorities and research centres of 5 countries of European Union, coordinated by UISP (Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti, Italy). The starting point is the statement that still many cultural and legal ties limit migrants and

1 <http://www.3sistersadventure.com/Joinatrek/>

2 <http://www.boxgirls.org/berlin/startseite.html>

3 <http://www.isca-web.org/english/news/mimosamigrantsinclusionmodelofsportforall>

refugees access to sport practice (limited financial resources and lack of information on sport organizations and location; limited if not absent cooperation between sport organization, migrants organizations and national and local authorities). This project aims at promoting active citizenship, inter-ethnic dialogue facilitating the social migrant inclusion (refugees, displaced persons, Rom).

Among the projects address to a young target (children and teenagers) we can mention the project *Umthombo Surf Stars*, developed in South Africa by the Association Umthombo Street Children-SA⁴ whose aim is to engage group of minor at social exclusion risk and drug abuse in intensive programs of rehabilitation. Among different activities surf practice represents a tool promoting self-esteem and confidence; it helps learning team-work through sport experience and finally, taking part to competitions with other young athletes encourages positive relations with peers.

In Nigeria *The International Sports Academy*⁵ offers some sport talented teenagers (from 13 to 17) the chance of attending second grade school, totally residential, combining high levels of education with high standards of sportive training.

The variety of proposals is really wide. Among the possible various remarks we underline three of them.

A first remark refers to the confusing and undifferentiated use of the term inclusion and of its different meanings. In some cases the aim is to include someone into a sport practice (include into sport) which appears to be the prevalent model nowadays, in other the aim is to use sport to foster inclusion into a specific social context (sport that includes) as Coalter (2002) already suggested. These are two very different points of view which are not comparable.

In the first case the aim will be the sport inclusion, increasing participation and reducing barriers, giving the opportunity to progress in sport abilities also at a competitive level.

In projects of this kind lies the risk of attributing to sport an automatic power of generating inclusive bonds. Sport would be good on itself. Actually this can create confusion and risk of misunderstanding.

In the second type of projects, instead, the real challenge is to generate and promote social capital as main heritage, rather than gain sport results (Maza, 2006; Perks, 2007). In this case the risk is not taking into account the network in which people live and not involve them rightfully in the different phases of the project.

4 <http://www.umthombo.org>

5 <http://www.theinternationalacademy.org/tia/>

In some projects of this kind, in fact, the territorial interlocutors are often involved just for the activation of scholarships, or for furnishing structures, but they are rarely considered interlocutors in all projects phases.

A second remark relates to the recurring lack of frameworks for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the projects. Often, neither the expected results are described, nor the indicators which should supervise the quality of the developed actions are defined.

Finally a little attention appears to be given to the local contexts: socio-demographic data, existing structure, social problems, and tradition in sport practice.

In brief, after having taken into account the richness of the existing projects, we think it is now important to highlight some necessary conditions, according to our perspective and experience that can allow sport to be an effective tool for inclusion and social development.

Which conditions to promote social inclusion through sport?

A first essential condition for the development of initiatives that use sport as a tool for generating inclusion seems to be, in our opinion, the explanation of the conception of sport.

It is important to reflect on sport characteristics in the present society, on its potential as well as on its risks. There is a general agreement on the positive results coming from sport practice: in body self-perception, in the integrated development of mind and body, in the improvement of self-esteem, in acquiring social competences (tolerance, respect for others), in dealing with emotions and with group relationships (among others Bailey, 2000). Assuming that sport can contribute to the development, of well-being, personal competences and positive attitude towards self and others, we cannot although assume that these advantages can have a parallelism on a social level.

A debate is still open in literature about the theories of reference, and the planning realization and evaluation methodologies, that can certify the specific effectiveness in sport areas of interest.

As Collins and Kay (2003) affirm “sport alone rarely contributes to social inclusion, community development, disease and anti-social behaviours prevention, but instead it can help to support actions in a wider horizon, for example in a network of local services” (p. 24).

A second condition that stands out as fundamental in the development of sport projects is related to method: which method appears to be most suitable to sustain inclusion processes and the development of community networks through sport?

As underlined by some studies published recently (Burnett, 2009; Sanchez & Gozzoli, 2010) the adoption of participatory methodologies (Participative Action Research-Castaño, 2005; McTaggart, 1997; Villasante, 2006) aims at the involvement of all available interlocutors of the reference community from the start and throughout the entire working process. In fact the objective of sport projects dedicated to social inclusion is change, not only at an individual level, but it expands to groups and community level. According to this methodology, researchers and participants interact in order to co-construct new levels of knowledge and competences.

Adopting a participative perspective requires some fundamental attentions:

- a) A careful analysis of the context, of its characteristic, of the institutional and informal interlocutors, of the possible targets, of the most cogent issues, of the presence or absence of similar initiatives (enhancement of the existing – e.g. spaces, sport facilities and attention of the local cultures) (respect to these aspects see Martínez & Larrea, 2010).
- b) A look not limited to the specific sport target concerned, but to real or potentials networks around them that could represent a source of inclusion and bond;
- c) A strong alliance and involvement of local networks (local authorities, universities, schools, hospitals, Departments and also private companies) privileged interlocutors of a real dialogic planning that cannot replicate intervention models irrespective of the contexts;
- d) Prevision of medium-long implementation times;

A third fundamental condition to give sustainability to these projects is a specific attention to an adequate training of professionals in charge of these projects.

Often the operators come from experience of training in sport sciences or sport marketing, consequently generally they are well expert of sport universe, but with less competences in dealing with complex networks and social planning.

For this reason a partnership with local Universities can represent a good practice with the perspective of recruiting local professionals and of organizing their training and refresher courses.

A fourth condition refers to a framework that could evaluate the projects from the early planning phases. In the perspective of a participated evaluation (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012) it seems fundamental for the project participants to focus from the very beginning on the specific intended purposes, as to translate them into indicators (e.g.: number of persons, number of local authorities involved, coherence between goals and actions etc.). This process can monitor the accomplishment of the goals

of the planning action taken. Among the indicators that an effective evaluation should include, a fundamental one is represented by the sustainability of the entire projects in economical term and also in terms of local legacy.

An experience on which reflect

We now introduce a current experience in Manenberg (a township in the northeast of the city of Cape Town, South Africa) in order to retrace it highlighting the focal aspects put in evidence before. The project, originated by the Champions for Children Foundation, has involved our University in following the entire development of the project from the aims definition to the effectiveness evaluation.

Champions for Children Foundation

Champions for Children is a non-profit foundation founded by Clarence Seedorf in December 2005. The foundation recognizes the elemental rights of children and is characterized by its effort in education and health through sport. The foundation aims to help young people living in underdeveloped countries who are affected by natural disasters, wars, and diseases.

From its establishment until today, *Champions for Children* has been adopting projects in Cambodia, Kenya, Brazil, Suriname, and The Netherlands, and co-works with Italian and local organizations. Since 2009, the foundation it has been engaged in the construction of *Champions Playground*, a multipurpose facility that also becomes a sport-game place in the social crucible that pays attention to the children's education and inclusion. As a tribute to Nelson "Madiba" Mandela's inheritance, the first Champions' game area will be built in Manenberg, a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. Since June 2009, in fact, Clarence Seedorf has been one of five ambassadors of the foundation inherited by Nelson Mandela for the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Researcher first steps: clarity of theoretical and methodological choice.

In the following paragraph we are going to describe in detail the sport conception and the methodological attentions that guided us since the beginning of the participation to the project.

The theoretical point of view proposes by researchers starts with the positioning that makes sport, as a total social fact, a powerful, ritualistic, and symbolic device for the reproduction of society (Allison, 2000; Gozzoli & D'Angelo, 2010; Sánchez, 2003). This notion is particularly meaningful for a society whose future is questioned through different theoretical, political, and social trends (Outhwaite, 2008).

In particular, in contemporary western society, characterized by functional and social differences (Luhman, 1998) and that ends in the process of institutionalized individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), social integration is an ever-changing process and the inclusion of a person in a certain system does not assure his inclusion in others. In these societies, social exclusion seems more “integrated” by being more frequent in subsystems. This topic influences the spread of “social benefits” that sport practices can have; for this reason, if sport intervention is to be socially effective, it has to work in relation to different social fields (Gómez, Puig, & Maza, 2009).

In contrast, the strength of sport in today’s society is to make both communicative and conversational sense and to contribute to practical-built sense as well (Sánchez, 2010). Sport is supported by an ethic based on common feelings (aesthetics) and, in the end, by its ability to produce social capital.

Lingering over this last aspect shows how this increasing extension and density of social networks that form social capital (Maza, 2006) is accompanied by—in particular, in the case of elite sportsmen—symbolic capital that can become of considerable magnitude, such as when dealing with football sportsmen.

If “common sense,” which is the basis of sociality, has been changed into the cement of contemporary society, although sport idols are ephemeral, they can act as community imagery at certain moments. As Bauman (2003) reported, sport idols “evok[e] community experience without a real community” (p. 84). The main problem of this kind of “aesthetics communities” is their pressing obsolescence. Our sport-social project aims to pass from an aesthetic community founded on common sense and symbolic capital to the creation of a city network of “ethical” responsibilities and widespread social compromises.

Methodologically, this study begins from an epistemology of knowledge founded on dialog and symmetry between the researcher and the subjects being researched (Amado & Lèvy, 2001; Domínguez & Coco, 2000; McTaggart, 1997). A research task approaches the problem to understand reality and to change reality using knowledge and cooperation. Thus, a research task is oriented toward action and resolution of social problems and involves, as Buxó (2002) reported, required active participation that stresses the approval, assent, and cogeneration of data and problem codification. Therefore, one researches to change and to democratize (Alberich, 2000).

Through participative sessions, group discussions, interviews and meetings, this methodology involves both population and different institutional agents (such as administration, schools, university, companies, and NGOs) and activates the social network that has to explain both the main problems and the most suitable solutions. Meanwhile the methodology provides auto-organizational and sustainable content to the *Champions Playground* in Manenberg.

Meeting with the context: socio-demographic Aspects of Manenberg (Cape Town)

As already specified, a deep analysis of the context is imperative in order to start out a dialogue with the real context. What is important to know about Manenberg?

Manenberg was conceived in the middle of the 1960s to accommodate people who were vacated from their homes during the *Group Areas Act*⁶ execution in Cape Town. Because borders were not clearly established, the area has gradually increased from the arrival of homeless families from different parts of Cape Town, from other places of South Africa, and from other African countries. This phenomenon is reflected in the different styles of the houses and public flats built during different periods and in the social networks that different community sectors have with very different areas of the country. For a long time, Manenberg was classified as a “black point” for the city and one of the main places for gang activities as it was out of control and experienced recurrent episodes of public violence. Several local services closed and their employees retired because of this violence. A library and a first-aid clinic with bulletproof windows are witnesses of these statements. Officially, the Manenberg population increased in recent years, and is currently at 55.594 thousand people, of which 95% consider themselves “colored”. The “African black” residential number has significantly increased in recent years. Thirty-seven percent of the population is under 18 years of age and only 2% obtained the basic school certification. Unemployment is officially at 35%, but evidence exists that the number is higher. Thirteen percent cannot work because of diseases and a similar percent is comprised of retired people. Sixty percent of the population declares their income as less than 1600 R. a month (approximately €160 per month). The area’s infrastructure is similar to that of other townships of Cape Town: 98% of the homes have electricity, 81% have water, but 95% share bathrooms.

Manenberg has the highest level of violence and delinquency. Its high rate of criminal activity refers to crimes related to drugs, murders, and violent robberies (Gie & Haskins, 2007).

The township’s political origins in *apartheid* may make Manenberg seem like a black ghetto, which keeps economic rank and social ostracism as institutional objectives (Wacquant, 2010). If this statement was true, Manenberg could paradoxically

6 The Group Areas Act was a law approved by the Parliament of South Africa under the government of apartheid in South Africa. Under the law, different racial groups were assigned to different racial and commercial sectors in the urban area in a urban apartheid system. A consequence of this law was that it did not allow non-white people to live in developed areas.

think of itself as a community with a cultural and, from a certain point of view, an organizational identity founded on inner homogeneity (Bauman, 2003). In fact, the ghetto could sustain itself through “functional efficacy” for its suitability to solidarity and collective initiatives (Delgado, 2007). However, without a doubt, beyond following immigrant waves of different nationalities and ethnic groups through Manenberg, “life in the ghetto does not settle community.” In contrast, life in the ghetto prearranges social anonymity and, finally, assumes “the powerlessness of Community” as Bauman himself stated (2003, pp. 144-145). Thus, unemployment, drugs, violence, and AIDS are not the causes but are the consequences of the dissolution of social bounds. Therefore, a proposal that calls for real change cannot be from outside (from “the top”) of the community development process in the township. In fact, various actions have been undertaken for this reason. Primary schools in the neighborhood have taken part in different initiatives during the past few years to promote and establish new opportunities for society in an attempt to set up development projects such as, for example, the “Charter of Manenberg people,” in May 2008.

“The Champions Playground”: network and project definition

The original idea of the foundation was the realization of a new sport facility in township of Manenberg to facilitate sport practice of minor at risk. The initial idea consisted in the inclusion into a sport practice (precisely soccer, coherently with the founder, a famous soccer player). The analysis of the context and local existing realities has immediately highlighted the presence of various interlocutors interested in starting out a dialogue aimed at better defining an intervention hypothesis. The first step has been the involvement of various agencies in the development of the planning idea.

In this sense the *Champions Playground* project since the very beginning takes into account institutional collaboration among the following interlocutors: the *Champions for Children* Foundation (the applicant and purchaser of the project), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, Universitat Ramon Llull of Barcelona (involved in the coordinating and evaluating function of the project given their experience with the issue), Western Cape University of Cape Town, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the local government of Cape Town, and others local entities (schools, neighborhood associations, and NGOs) working in the township of Manenberg that gathered for the occasion in a forum (first important outcome of the work carried out even before the playground construction).

A conference with one or two representative for each interlocutor is managed through the co-planning of programs and actions that focus on local development that works on sport potentials. The project implementation leads to the realization

hypothesis of a multi-functional sport complex in Manenberg, indoor and outdoor, in order to involve various members of the community in different activities monitored by instructors and educators.

The original idea of a soccer school and relative facilities was broadened with a series of sport and extra-sport activities addressed to minors between 6-14 years at risk of social exclusion and to their potential reference adults (parents, teachers, street educators). These specific activities, starting from sport, could offer real occasions aimed at developing social capital, in particular at sustaining and preserving three fundamental rights of man: education, health and work.

Referring to education, one suggestion is to have children engage in sport-play-recreational activities within their social environment during or out of school time. The purpose is granting physical activity in the schools and situations where cannot be carried out due to lack of structures, or embedding it (where already practiced) in the curricula, generating occasions to reflect on and to discuss issues of local interest (group cohesion, leadership, social differences, racism, environmental education... among others).

Regarding health, attempts are made, through sport and physical activity, to promote an alimentary and hygienic-sanitary culture, to prevent at-risk behavior (for example, obesity and AIDS).

Regarding work, sport represents a chance to obtain professional qualifications and creates opportunities to improve sport skills and to create professional jobs in the sport field, including trainers, sport promoters, and masseurs among others.

These three application fields (education, health and work) cannot be considered independent one from the others, but should be thought of as closely connected to developing global synergy actions that affect the community.

An hypothesis, for example, is a set of socio-sport activities aimed at helping unemployed young people (13-14 years) to acquire at the same time sport skills, healthy habits, and professional competences. In this case the collaboration is among associations and local institutions working in health development and in the field of violence and drug prevention, sport federation and schools. Thanks to sport practice the unemployed young can firstly learn to play a sport, meet significant figures (educators and coaches), take on healthy habits, have access to educational programs in sport fields (to become for example trainers, sport promoters, masseurs), and in some cases eventually become professional players. Such an occurrence could improve the symbolic capital of Manenberg and allow new "aesthetics communities" to be models for the development of new social commitment.

The exploitation and enhancement of local human resources, as already underlined, is an other imperative issue in order to realize successful projects. With

the support of Western Cape University training and programs are being designed ad hoc for the various professionals and their supervision. All the professionals involved in the project implementation come from Meneberg, most of them are young in training. They are instructors and trainers of the various practiced sport (soccer, cricket, volley), educators/animations who work side by side with technicians, but also in the planning and realization of extra-sport activities; moreover other positions are expected to be in charge of the structure management from the facilities maintenance, as well as the of the coordination of the various activities.

Concerning evaluation process involves all the conference of participants since the very first steps in order to evaluate coherence between aims and actions, to share indicators and methods of survey, reflect upon possible obstacles or problems and accordingly find new possibilities of intervention.

Challenges and open questions for researchers

A review of the experience shows that challenges and difficulties were experienced when creating a network of social agents involved with the Manenberg *Playground* project. The three institutions involved were considered vital to the development of the project: the local university (University of the Western Cape), Cape Town Municipality, and the local Foundation. Each organization faced different problems.

Regarding the University of the Western Cape, the main difficulty from its participation in the promotion, creation, and sustainability of the *Playground* was to convince their coordinating board that the project was not simply a sport project that could benefit from the Soccer World Cup celebrations, which were plentiful and that provided a context in which different institutions (FIFA) and famous soccer players came with their particular projects. Instead, the *Playground* project entailed sport for development. To overcome their resistance, the past experiences (both of the Università Cattolica and Blanquerna and of the Foundation) regarding the issues related, to the proposed paradigm and methodology needed to be shared in a deep way, through participative logic, with the local university.

This approach resulted in a proposal that was reformulated based on the university experiences and that determined a participative and sustainable project with greater social ambition and less personal prominence. Concretely, it led to full adhesion to the project by the Rector and Department of Western Cape and its commitment to sustain and strengthen contacts (already activated by the working board but still being defined) with the municipality and the Nelson Mandela Foundation (University of the Western Cape is dear to Nelson Mandela for its commitment after the end of apartheid). This phase of strong project sharing (possible for both institutional relationships among the universities and for a mediating and more personal function

between the Foundation representative and the local university) was crucial. An initial outcome of this synergy was evident through a few administrative and bureaucratic steps requested by the Municipality of Cape Town.

The administration needed to approve the project after it studied its environmental impact on Manenberg. To facilitate this work, the relationship of confidence and understanding among the institutions (and, why not, with the sport symbolic capital) enabled the city to start the project before finishing the studies, which have now been transformed into the basis for environmental improvement. The city itself was converted into a member of the *Playground*.

The township of Manenberg faced different challenges. Various non-governmental organizations already existed in Manenberg that did not always cooperate, creating some resistance. Some of these organizations asked themselves about the effect of the *Playground* on their activities. Others were concerned with gang violence, the conditions for security, and a project that would be accepted by the majority of the community. In this way, the basic question was, "How and with whom was cooperation established to achieve general acceptance?"

To go beyond these problems, a forum was created that included members of the *University of the Western Cape*, the private foundation, Manenberg, and the city. This forum aims at unifying the four main parties interested in working together. In Manenberg, the principal of a primary school was elected to represent the necessities of the local children and families, and many NGOs favored taking part in the project. In this way, with any party actively participating in a collaborative manner, the acceptance of the community is achieved. The strength of the common action of this forum seems to have obtained that acceptance, necessary to the dialogue with various mediators of gangs. The initial key of the project is founded on the network of personal and institutional relationships that already existed before the beginning of the project.

Today, the development of the wide and cooperative network created by the two European universities, the local university, the local municipality, the forum of Manenberg associations, and the Mandela Foundation is complete. Although it is a slow process which never can be considered concluded for its permanent adaptation, it is already an important asset at the social level. The consequences of this cooperation are the architectonic and urban *Playground* project, transfer of the soil and the funding infrastructure of the surroundings by the local administration, the creation of the forum of Manenberg associations, the university agreement to train students connected with the project and the interchange of professors, and the network of local and international sponsors.

From an economic point of view, the project still needs more sponsors, especially for its sustainability. However, the global economic crisis is creating a challenge.

Some sponsors linked to European enterprises have revised their budgets for the project, and they have requested more dilution to allocate their extended contribution. The loss of visibility from the World Cup is a difficulty for the project, as is the loss of interest by some organizations. Meanwhile, building materials costs have been increasing.

Therefore, continuously governing the constituted network is required to prevent the network from falling apart or developing conflicts with the coordinating board. The “different times” of the implicated agents, including public annual proposals, community urgencies and academic course, particular strategies and individual interest, must be considered. The process becomes (or risks becoming) non-rhythmical and out-of-time. Moreover, given the transnational nature of the network, communication difficulties increase from special distances, different languages, social practices, and different cultures.

At the same time, the situation invites a more imaginative approach in various aspects and an evaluation of the unexpected. In this sense, we have been reviewing the *Playground* (always in a multi-use feature) and studying the possibility of opening it to local and international proposals that may be newer and more collaborative, such as the one for the project in Madrid, “*Street Games. Self-administered sport centre,*” which in July 2010 received support from the CSD in the notification “Sport, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects.”

To sum up, what it is necessary today is a permanent negotiation that permits the activation of hypotheses and readings, which are shared and sustainable in real context. In other words, in our experience, proposing projects aimed at social development and social inclusion of fragile subjects means, first, connecting the different local partners and, second, creating the conditions because the partners can converse in reference to a joint and shared work object. Sport can be a valuable opportunity to do so if not trivialized or made absolute.

DISCUSSION

Can sport include people? This question was the guiding thread of the present paper, which was conceived in order to produce scientific knowledge on the use of sport to foster social inclusion. Sport, in fact, is not good in itself, and it cannot be considered an automatic opportunity for social inclusion and community development. For this reason, attributing value to sport requires attention.

Considering the amount and variety of initiatives and projects worldwide, the analysis of the literature has revealed that a considerable amount of research and reflection are still to be carried out if it is possible and which are the conditions that allow sport to become a real occasion of inclusion and development of social bonds (Bailey, 2000; Bantulà & Sánchez, 2010; Burnett, 2009; Coalter, 2002).

The present contribution wants to place itself in the debate, proposing a reflection on some conditions necessary to sport projects, in order to generate social capital and to promote real occasions of inclusion in the contexts where they are developed.

We consider essential the theoretical clarity (what is meant by sport and why we attribute to it some functions instead than others), and methodological clearness (what is the most appropriate and consistent method with the pursued aims). Secondly we deem useful to highlight some attention with reference to the process in order to sustain the inclusive potentialities of sport. In our perspective sport has undoubtedly its own peculiar strength. It has the function of “basic ritual of contemporary society”, quoting Hoggard.

In the presence of the fragmentation of the present social context, the redundancy of discourse generating sport and becoming corporeal (the Habitus of Bourdieu) makes it a unique connector and catalytic. If all this is true, it cannot be true regardless of the specific context and of its actors between concrete ties and resources. In other words, sport in it, is not a panacea, but a tool to use to positively enhance value.

The methodology is of a participatory nature that generates sustainable actions in context; constant attention must be provided to realize synergistic actions with respect to connections to different community actors that have similar interests in sport, but that often have differences in cultures, actions, investments, and expectations. Too often different meanings of the term inclusion are referred to and too often are neglected by the social actors, whose involvement is essential for an effective inclusive process. Moreover, the theme of the existing exploitation (structures, interlocutors, operators...) as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness and of short-long term sustainability appears to be totally neglected.

Certainly this choice, as any participative process, (in particular in relation to contexts characterized by different cultures), carries along many efforts and risks for researchers but we believe that it is the best way to try to promote a really inclusive sport.

Re-reading the experience carried out in Maneberg up to now, intended to highlight the effort to enhance the context, the involvement of the local actors in a shared planning, since the very start, the use of sport as catalytic of other activities, avoiding the import of pre-packaged products. Surely it will be important to verify this process outcome at the final opening time of the Playground: what revolve around sport? What are the effects on educational level, on health and on employment opportunities? What has happened to the generated network? Has it been implemented or has it impoverished with the passage of time? What training has it engendered on this theme? And finally what is the social capital gained?

Finally, due to the scarcity of contributions on this theme, the analysis of other cases could be worth developing a more complex vision of the conditions that allow or do not allow sport to represent a way to social inclusion.

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