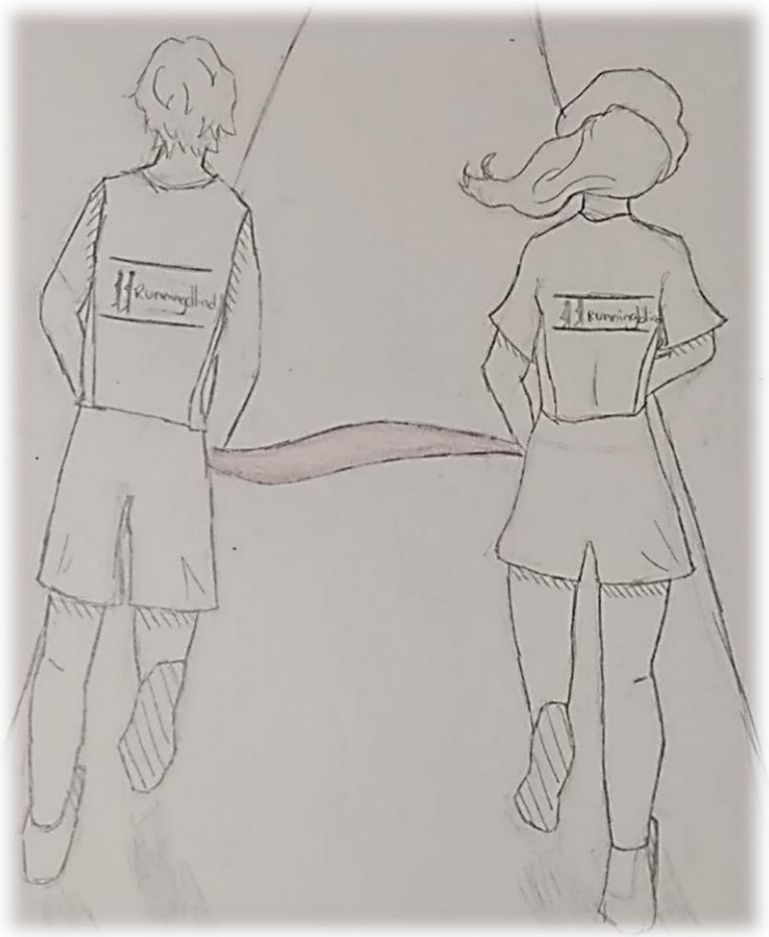
Get Tethered

Blind Running as a Lived Experience of Sports Inclusion



Master Thesis

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Date: 24 June 2021

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MINDS AND BODIES

We are all unique: in our bodies, our minds and our identities. Despite being so diverse, we sometimes depict one body-shape or way of thinking as being 'normal', even though few of us would describe ourselves in this way.

What do we see when we look at ourselves or at other people? Why do we sometimes act as if we value some lives more than others?

We are all unique, but we are also all connected, living in a shared world[1]

[1] The description of the 'Minds and Bodies Exposition' at the London Wellcome Collection; author unknown

Preface

This thesis is, together with the podcast 'BUDDY'S', the outcome of my final master research for the Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology- Global Ethnography track at Leiden University. The research explores how discourses on body normativity inform sports inclusion engagements of government and sports institutions and how people with visual impairments experience inclusion in sports in daily practices in the Dutch sports sphere. The research is multimodal, that is, it consists of a variety of modalities that opens up a space for diverse ways of engaging with people and anthropological research. Both outcomes, this written thesis as 'a finished, reified product of field work' (Collins et al. 2017: 143), and the podcast as an innovative approach to learn, research, produce knowledge and present knowledge, supplement each other.

During the research, I constantly asked myself the question: 'What are the best ways of gaining knowledge about the understandings and the experiences of the social world of people with visual impairments?' Is my ocular-centric way of understanding my own surrounding world, so through watching, observing and writing it down on paper, an appropriate, holistic representation of theirs? I do not think so; sound and sonic engagements are very important to the sports experiences of people with visual impairments. In order to do justice to people's diverse way of sensing and to present the research in multiple ways, I created a podcast in which Martijn, a runner with a visual impairment, and I talk about running, practising sports, sports inclusion, sensing, buddies and the experience of having a visual impairment. This way, the multimodal approach moves the reified 'subject' towards 'collaborator' or even 'co-author' (Collins et al. 2017: 143) and encourages a 'revelation of the collaborative nature of anthropology' (ibid.).

Furthermore, this research is the result of an internship at the Mulier Institute. The Mulier Institute conducts research to contribute to questions regarding sports in society and sports policies. In September 2020, I applied for a research internship at the Mulier Institute regarding the valuation and experiences of sports inclusion, focusing on people with impairments in the Dutch sports sphere. Together with my supervisors Caroline van Lindert and Maxine de Jonge, we narrowed this broad question and diverse research population to athletes with visual impairments.

Acknowledgements

Looking back to the start of this research, I was mostly unaware of sports practices for blind and partially sighted athletes, let alone, the institutional engagements regarding sports inclusion for athletes with (visual) impairments. While delving into this social sports realm, I have learnt so much about sports activities for people with visual impairments and how institutions try to make the sports world a better place for marginalised groups. Lots of people helped me to better understand this and I am most grateful for that.

First, I would like to thank all of the people that have participated in this research. Without

your willingness to talk to me and your enthusiasm to share your experiences, knowledge and thoughts, I would never be able to delve into the sports world you face and I would never be able to write this thesis. My special thanks goes to Martijn. Thanks a lot for our runs together, teaching me to be a buddy and the great podcast we made together! I am so happy I have met you! Also thanks to your daughter Noa, who made this lovely sketch of us running together for the cover.

I owe so much to Dr. Jasmijn Rana, my supervisor from the University of Leiden for fuelling my passion and setting an example of how to research sports in social sciences over the past five years. Without your supporting words, critical eye and our substantive discussions, I would have never completed this thesis with this much joy. Our cooperation brought out the best in me. I also want to thank Dr. Ratna Saptari for your insightful comments and positive feedback towards this research during all of our tutorials.

I cannot express enough thanks to Caroline van Lindert en Maxine de Jonge who supervised my research internship at the Mulier Institute. Your guidance and effort helped me during all the time of research and your insightful comments contributed immensely to my understanding of sports practices for athletes with impairments.

My classmates, my friends and my flatmates, Robin, Madelief and Bibi, also deserve my gratitude. Thank you all for being open to discuss and give feedback on my thoughts. Thinking with you really inspired me. I also want to thank you, Mela, as my ‘special classmate’. Our phone calls and your supportive words really inspired me.

Lastly, I want to thank my mother, father and my sister Silke who are with no doubt my MVP’s. Your trust and supportive words have been super important during the entire research. Dad, I want to thank you, in particular, for sharing your knowledge about running and for running together with me. To the three of you, thanks for your endless effort in trying to understand anthropology as a discipline and trying to get a grasp of what I am doing at the university. I would not know what to do without you!

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Introduction

We are lucky with the weather today but the low hanging sun sometimes blinds me. Not very safe when being the visual component of this tethered, Running Blind team. Today Martijn and I run our longest route, 11.5 kilometres, through De Vlietlanden, a nature area nearby Leiden. I see us approaching the blue-white bridge that I know as the halfway point. When we cross this bridge, we have to run another 5 kilometres until we arrive back at Martijn's place. This bridge symbolises the feeling of relief or dismay; a feeling that differs every run. 'Martijn, we are at the blue-white bridge and have to speed up now'. We increase our pace because of the slope, cross the bridge and turn left to continue alongside the canal. It is quite busy with cyclists, pedestrians and rowers. When we have to avoid fast cyclists, Martijn runs behind me in order for us to pass safely. In Running Blind terms, this is called 'trailing' (In Dutch: sporen). When they pass by, we return to our side by side position. We cross another, smaller bridge and I see two cyclists approaching us; two older ladies on electric bikes. I tell Martijn they are nearing and see them clumsily align in order to create space for us. The lady in front greets us and passes by. The second lady looks at us and looks somewhat distressed. 'Hold 'm tight, please!', she shouts and she passes us. I hear Martijn sighing. 'Some people will always be distressed when encountering Running Blind duos'. According to Martijn, people are not so familiar with blind running and thus experience our encounter as dangerous and weird, like we are 'abnormal' runners. Such an implicitly judgemental comment in regard to what type of sporting body is 'normal' and what is 'abnormal', is something I have never experienced while running solo. Never have I ever encountered someone marking my running body as abnormal. When I cross other people, in particular runners, they often nod, raise their hands or vocally greet me. Even though I am a novice and do not consider myself having the body of a runner, the encounter with another runner is a short moment of appreciation and mutual understanding; it is a shared moment of two running bodies acknowledging each other's presence. Encounters with others while being a Running Blind team are different, even though I never felt abnormal while running with Martijn. Never have I ever considered our two tethered, running bodies as displaced or different. Nevertheless, the lady's comment, directed at our bodily presence, marks us as different in that space and reveals that we do not align with her perception of 'the normal running body'. But what is a 'normal' running body and what makes her see us as 'abnormal' in that space?

Reflecting on my personal and shared running encounters, this incident represents how much running is a lived, bodily experience that is shaped by the senses, the presence of others in the environment and the notions of normative and non-normative sporting bodies. The distinctive responses I received regarding my running body made me critically aware of running as a lived experience that is affected by social hierarchies and existing body norms in sports. Certain groups of athletes face exclusion from

sports practices that are subjected to these body norms. Exclusionary practices hinder the participation in sports that, when combatted, deems to play a key role in increasing public health, social cohesion and integration (Besnier et al. 2018; Coakley & Pike 2014; Parren 2016; Van Amsterdam 2014). In order to create a sphere in which *all* people in the Netherlands can participate in and benefit from sports, the Dutch governing bodies and sports institutions joined forces. In September 2018, over 150 parties adopted the Dutch National Sports Agreement, entitled, 'Sports unites the Netherlands' (In Dutch: Nationaal Sportakkoord- Sport Verenigt Nederland), in order to formulate strategies on how to create a Dutch inclusive sports realm. Such a realm entails, as the authors describe, that:

> 'everybody in the Netherlands can have a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activity. With everybody, we mean: everybody. We let go of pigeonholing. Barriers due to age, physical or mental health, ethnic background, sexual orientation or social position are removed. We fight exclusion. This situation becomes natural; we exchange adapted sports for inclusive sports and physical activity. Therefore, we need a transition in our collective way of thinking about sports and physical activity' (Bruins et al. 2018: 14).

While reading this policy, I am baffled at how many people, carriers of a variety of social labels, possibly face exclusion from sports activities. I have faced plenty of situations in which I felt excluded, but not so frequently based on my sporting embodiment. As a young, able-bodied, white, cis-gendered, middle-class woman, I mostly felt welcome in the sports settings I encountered. In this light, I consider myself privileged, but it triggers me to think about the exclusionary practices. What makes my sporting body different from other sporting bodies? Why do athletes face exclusion in a way I have not faced (yet)? Put differently, what makes me feel 'included' most of the time? These questions regarding inclusion and exclusion haunted my mind ever since. When I first started reading the sports inclusion policy, one particular sentence stood out and fascinated me: 'We exchange adapted sports for inclusive sports and physical activity'. I paused for a moment and tried to unravel it word for word. What kind of sports setting does this call for? The sentence presents a paradox: how is a sports setting accessible, open and safe, or 'inclusive', for athletes with impairments if we bid farewell to adapted sports? Are adaptations, in any form, not crucial in order to include athletes with impairments in sports and sports settings? Against this background, my research focuses on the everyday life experience of sports inclusion of athletes with visual impairments in Running Blind practices.

In line with international initiatives regarding sports for people with visual impairments, The Dutch Running Blind Foundation was founded in 2007 by a couple of athletes with visual impairments in Rotterdam (Oogfonds 2021). Nowadays, Running Blind has 14 departments spanning all the Netherlands. In order to give people with visual impairments a chance at sports and prevent people from isolation and physical inactivity, the foundation matches runners with visual impairments and buddies, runners without visual impairments (Oogfonds 2021). Once a buddy and a runner are

matched, they can arrange runs on an individual basis and they can join Running Blind events with other running duos. Running Blind is thus simultaneously a 'duo-practice' and a 'group-practice'. For the group practices, Running Blind offers training sessions at sports clubs; organises events for runners and their buddies and points out running contests in which duos can participate. After the virus outbreak in the Netherlands and the introduction of the national lockdown, Covid-legislation restricted sports practices with more than one person and this obstructed the practice and training sessions of Running Blind for several months. In response to this, the foundation started to fabricate Co-Runners, 1.5-meter running sticks, in order to enable Running Blind practices for duos who wished to continue running during the pandemic. The foundation fabricated about 80 Co-Runners which they rotated between the different departments. Using a tether or a Co-Runner, the bodies of the two runners are connected and run together following the buddies instructions. Herein, the buddy is the eyes of the runner (Running Blind 2015). Even through the practice of Running Blind needs adaptations to the running sport in the form of a Co-Runner or tether and are thus an adapted sports practice, Running Blind argues to be an inclusive sports practice since it brings together runners with and without visual impairments in sports clubs and thus breaks barriers in regards to sports, bodily ability (Running Blind 2019). Blind running tends to be inclusive since, according to Running Blind websites, 'running is for anyone, of any age and running does not mean going as fast as you can' (Running Blind 2019). Running Blind thus brings together different sporting bodies, i.e., an 'abled' runner and a 'disabled' runner. In this light, this research focuses particularly on how runners experience this form of sports inclusion and the valuation of different sporting bodies during the practice of Running Blind.

This research tries to formulate an understanding of how, in the light of sports inclusion engagements, sporting bodies are differently valued and how this valuation is subjected to body norms in sports that are known as realms for the celebration of physical superiority and strength (Besnier et al. 2018; Le Clair 2011; Van Amsterdam 2014). However, it is important to acknowledge that body norms regarding ability are not the only markers of exclusionary and inclusionary practices. As the sports policy indicates, several social divisions lie at the heart of practices of exclusion and inclusion. Several studies have explored these dynamics based on intersections of gender (Rana Forthcoming; Allen-Collison 2011), class (Wacquant 2004; Abbas 2004), religion (Elling & Knoppers 2005) and ethnicity (Burdsey 2007; Slobbe et al. 2013). Since impairments are often considered something personal, lodged in the body and 'naturally deviating' (Ginsburg and Rapp 2013), exploring the experiences of athletes with impairments could provide insights on body norms circulating in sports and sports policies and how people experience these norms in daily sports practices. It provides an understanding of how impairments are socially constructed and always shaped in relation to the social sports context.

In this light, sport is not something that is 'out there' but is rather a lived experience in which social categories and body norms are formulated, challenged, reformulated and valued. Sport is thus a socially constructed realm that is experienced through the sporting body in the everyday life of

athletes. Therefore, sports inclusionary practices exist within the narratives, beliefs and bodily experiences of the people involved. Understanding sports and inclusionary sports engagements as a lived experience, is the foundation of this research. During the entire research, I have been emphatically engaged with these experiences. Athletes told me their stories, experiences and everyday realities that provided me with a new lens in regard to sports, sports inclusionary and exclusionary practices and my own sporting body. I came to realise how I was once not aware of how dominant ideas on body normativity create limitations and challenges for athletes with visual impairments. For a large group of people, this is a painful, daily reality that defines the movement of their bodies in public spaces. During all the time of research, I read a book by Zen Buddhist and former professor Haemin Sunim *The Things You Can Only See When You Slow Down* (2017) who wrote down inspiring quotes on how to deal with challenges and new forms of awareness in the daily life. These words helped me to 'slow down', take some time in order to step into this painful everyday life experience of exclusion and reflect on my own feelings and experiences. Since I am an advocate of sharing knowledge drawn from non-academic sources in academic literature, I will share a quote that has been the most helpful for me during the research. Hopefully, this helps the reader to slow down and to become emphatically aware of the lived reality of inclusion and exclusion in sports:

> *The world comes to exist because we are aware of it. We cannot live in a reality of which we are unaware. The world depends on our minds in order to exist, just as our minds depend on the world as the subject of our awareness. Put differently, our mind's awareness can be said to bring the world into being* (Sunim 2017: 21)

Research questions

The broader theme navigating this master thesis entails how body norms, imbued in sports inclusion policies and human behaviour, shape social realities in various contexts in society. Herein, body norms are at the heart of practices of inclusion and exclusion and are markers of boundaries of what body 'fits' and what body 'does not fit' that specific time and place. Body norms are acted upon, valued, challenged, constructed and reconstructed, and this is expressed through policies and through the body in the social context. Body norms are, hereby, characterised as slippery, fluid and changeable dynamics about, within and between people.

Central to this research is the question: How do runners with visual impairments experience practices of sports inclusion? In order to explore the central research question, I formulated three sub-questions that structure the different levels wherein people encounter notions of sports inclusion.

1) How do government and sports institutions construct 'sports inclusion'?
2) In what way are these constructions imbued with discourses regarding body normativity?
3) How do runners with visual impairments experience inclusive sports practices, like Running Blind, through the body?

To understand these complex social dynamics of discourses, practices and the immersion of

body normativity, I draw upon poststructuralist theories and methodologies. In poststructuralist ways of conceptualising social life, theorists understand the social world as a set of routines, patterns and structures that are temporarily constructed and therefore make it unstable, fluid and subjected to existing power relations that inscribe the bodies of people. In this way of thinking, theorists acknowledge that truths exist in the lived experiences of people and their bodies.

Theoretical Framework: Discourses and Bodies

Dutch government institutions assume that the implementation of a set of guidelines will eventually lead to inclusion in sports for people with impairments. Hereby, policy-makers regard inclusion in sports as a social world that is realisable through institutional engagements. Policies are thus considered a top-down, linear process: from problem addressing, to policy formulating and thereafter implementing of the guidelines (Shore 2012: 3-5; Tate 2020). This suggests that inclusion for athletes with impairments is feasible, providing all actors acknowledge and follow these guidelines. However, the heart of this research does not lie with the understanding of sports inclusion as a graspable and identifiable ideal that is implementable through sets of guidelines, but rather with the lived, bodily experiences. Inclusion and exclusion from sports live in narratives, sensory experiences and the skills of athletes with visual impairments who encounter this through the body.

This does not mean that policies are not important for the understanding of sports inclusion in the daily practices of athletes with visual impairments. On the contrary, sports inclusion policies shape how people deal with sports inclusion in the everyday life. Policies emphasise dynamics in sports and create awareness in regard to daily sports processes and practices. They also create new possibilities for the target groups but also formulates limitations of certain activities. Policies thus affect practices on a daily basis that people thereupon engage with and give meaning to. To put it differently, policies make and unmake social sports realities. When examining sports inclusion policies, it is crucial to recognise that we are not dealing with a neutral and universal set of guidelines (Tate 2020). Policy is not free of valuations. Instead, when policy-makers formulate policy, they aim to create an inclusive sports realm that is considered the most desirable and favourable for all. In this light, it is important to critically consider what ‘an inclusive sports realm’ implies. The questions are: what are underlying assumptions, social ideals and what terminology is used? Language in policies is thus not an objective truth and does not cover a universality of shared meanings (Appelrough & Edles 2016: 644); it is imbued with valuations, dispositions and meanings that are subjected to power structures. Since some people, and some researchers, tend to become sensitive and solely see the idealistic, or ‘feel-good story’, of sports inclusion practices (Coakley and Pike 2018: 347), it is important to remember that language in regard to inclusionary and exclusionary practices always involve power relations and dominant notions of normality and might present an idealism in which some people do not fit. In this research, the language and terminology of sports inclusion and the imbued power relations and norms in policy are understood through Michel Foucault’s (1975) conceptualisation of discourses and body

normativity, that find expression in and through sporting bodies.

According to Foucault, people are always subjected to body norms that circulate in social spheres, like in powerful institutions and their practices, and in human behaviour. Body norms govern how people behave and criticise themselves and others in the social context, as he argues:

> "The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher- judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements" (Foucault 1975: 304).

To understand how people know what the body norms are in a given time and place, Foucault uses the concept 'discourse'. By discourse, Foucault means 'ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them' (Weedon 1987: 108). Discourses are not only ways of constructing meaning and ways of thinking. Discourses constitute 'the "nature" of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern' (Weedon 1987: 108). Put differently, discourses are ensembles of social relations that produce meaning and knowledge. These ensembles organise knowledge and structure it as 'constitutions of social relations through the collective understanding of discursive logic and the acceptance of the discourse as social fact' (Adam 2017). It produces and transforms values, norms, identities and practices and thus shapes social realities.

Discourses are products of power structures within society. In Foucauldian understanding, power is horizontal, between people, and exists in acts that affect other acts (Arnason 2017: 295). Power is not solely expressed in rules and law, but also through techniques and strategies (ibid.). This means that power is not something that some people possess and others lack; it lives within the daily networks of practices and meanings in society. As Foucault argues in Discipline and Punish: 'power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up' (Foucault 1975 in Appelrough & Edles 2016: 656). These power structures formulate what humans come to know and how humans value themselves, their bodies and others. Through power, a collection of 'linguistic tools, rules, descriptions and habits of logic' (Appelrough & Edles 2016: 646) shapes discourses and shapes particular knowledge of the social world. It is thus through power relations that people create an understanding of the world. Through power structures, humans construct specific meanings about themselves, others, bodies and the experienced reality. Knowledge is thus a co-creation of people through power structures that people are subjected to.

Discourses circulate in sports and sports policies, and (re)produce discursive knowledge about the sporting body. Sports construct, reproduce and challenge dominant notions of what the sporting body looks like and how people through the body learn how to practise sport. Arnason (2017) argues

that even within running practices that seem very basal at first glance, disciplinary techniques on body normativity and bodily fitness shape the practice of it:

> 'Even running, which appears on the surface to be a very simple, free, and noninstitutionalized form of exercise, is today a field of prolific knowledge production, power effects, and economic activities, focused on disciplining the body – not just the body of the competitive runner but every running body. This area of biopower includes scientific and medical experts; dissemination of scientific literature ranging from specialized science journals to popular magazines, websites, and blogs; techniques and equipment to monitor and measure certain physiological values such as pulse, maximum heart rate, the concentration of lactate in the blood, and the maximal oxygen uptake (VO2 max) (and all the knowledge about the meaning of such information and what to do with it) […] The runner is constantly told what to do, what to eat, what to drink, what to buy, and what that kind of a person is or is becoming' (Arnason 2017: 298).

In the daily practice of sports, discourses on physicality circulate and are closely tied to hegemonic beliefs about ability and the normal body in human behaviour and in institutional policies. These constructions shape how people value, understand and experience the sporting body. Accordingly, these discursive ideas construct a paradigm of normality that is expressed in sports practices and policies (Van Amsterdam 2014: 22). Important to the understanding of these discursive practices, is the analytical concept 'ableism', which refers to 'the attitudes and views of able-bodied people towards disabled people and is based on the (often implicit) assumption that the world should be tailored to those without disabilities' (Van Amsterdam 2014: 111). A disability, in this perspective, is thus not solely lodged in the body but acts as a mark of inferiority, that labels a person as incapable of complete participation in sport.

In this discourse, disability opposes normality that act on the spectrum of physicality as relational counterparts (Ginsburg and Rapp 2013). This spectrum involves an understanding of the abled body as a taken for granted norm and classifies the disabled body as below average and abnormal. Various studies on sports and discourses in sports illustrate how the 'abled' sporting body is superior to the 'disabled' sporting body and how these are classified as 'normal' and 'abnormal' respectively (Arnason 2017; Besnier et al. 2018; Coakley & Pike 2014; Parren 2016; Le Clair 2011; Limoochi & Le Clair 2011; Van Amsterdam 2014). Athletes come to understand and value themselves through the labels of the 'abled' or 'disabled' body and accordingly, act upon their bodies. Discourses on body normativity in sports create standards or norms of judgement by which people measure themselves and others in sports. A norm or a standard exists only in reference to a specific group of athletes and creates an aggregate, a mean, or an average athlete to which requirements can be compared. The valuation of the 'abled' and 'normal' sporting body and the 'disabled', 'abnormal' sporting body is thus socially constructed and do not represent a universal, neutral idea of the sporting

body. As Landman (1998: 93) shows in her study, the definition and category 'normal' is always negotiated, challenged but also appropriated. There is not a universal consensus on normality but solely 'cultural understandings of what constitutes normality and perfection' (Landman 1998: 93). In short, athletes are always subjected to body norms in sports that find expression in policies, conversations, dispositions, encounters and everyday life practices. Important to the understanding of how dominant knowledge regarding sports inclusion shapes practices of the sporting body in the everyday life is to create an opening for an integrative approach to the role of discourses in sensory, bodily experiences (Porcello et al. 2010). In this view, the connection between dominant language, practices and the sensory body opens up insights into how people face sports inclusion as an everyday life experience. This asks for a turn to 'the body as a site of knowledge' (Porcello et al. 2010: 52).

The body is the medium that put people in the world and is central to the understanding of the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Gallagher 2010; Ingold 2000). Humans are experiencing subjects that create an understanding of themselves, their bodies and others by perceiving the world through their bodies. Put differently, humans actively bring, as Komarine Romdenh-Romluc (2011) argues, perceived things and perceived properties into being. The body, in the perception of the world, is a site of experience that forms awareness as you go through life. These streams of bodily experiences involve an ensemble of meaningful relations that are shaped by discursive ideas about, for example, the sporting body. People experience bodies based on ideas about what kind of bodies are good or normal and what bodies are not good or abnormal (Romdenh-Romluc 2011). The body, imbued with discursive epistemes, is a living subject experiencing the world; 'one finds oneself an embodied being inhabiting a world' (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 14). The lived experience of the body gives meaning or significance and opens up horizons for all knowledge to take place by perception (Merleau-Ponty 1945). People are not pure thinkers about the world around them, but are shaped by perception that is 'incarnate subjectivity'. That is to say, the only foundation for knowledge is our concrete inherence in the world, as Merleau-Ponty describes: 'the world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the world is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects' (Merleau-Ponty 1945 in Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 104). The body in sports, as a human activity, is thus a fulcrum, a site in which people experience and inhabit the sporting world (Besnier et al. 2018: 257). To understand the creation of these lived, bodily realities about the world of sports, it is important to emphasise the centrality of senses and skills.

Humans perceive the world and have senses which communicate the forms of the perceived knowledge through the body. The body's different sensory organs bring people into contact with 'the fold of the world's expression' (Montani 2019: 382) and shape bodily understandings of the world (Howes 2019). The body thus comes to know the world in and through the senses. People shape their understanding of the world not through the senses as separate transmitters of objects, but through the senses as an internally related, unified ensemble that 'grasp the sensible' (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 8). In perceiving the world through the senses, the body is not a natural object of perception, but 'is attached

to the world and lives according to the rhythms of its sensible environment' (Montani 2019: 383). Herein, the senses shape human consciousness and create understandings of the surrounding environment. In ableist and western centric body discourses, humans have five senses, sight, sounds, smell, taste and touch and moreover have proprioceptive awareness of their own body (Classen 1993: 2; Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 68). Proprioception entails the so-called internal sense of the body, that is to say, our sensation of the body as our body. The proprioceptive systems provide information on the bodily movements: 'the internal sense we have of the position of our limbs relative to one another, and so on' (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 68). For example, humans sense that their right hand is their right hand and not their left foot. Proprioception goes hand in hand with the sensory organs, because the sensation of the body is shaped on the sensations of the sensory organs. In other words, the sensation of the self as being in the world is based on a synthesis of the sensory organs and the proprioceptive sensation of the body. In the sensation of the self in regards to the capacities for action, proprioception also plays an important role. For example, while running, humans sense that their body is running and in movement. This sensation is different from the sitting body. During a run, humans are thus proprioceptive aware of the running and moving body. When the body is in action, that is to say, to act, it is necessary to be aware of the environment and the body itself or as Merleau-Ponty points out:

> 'My proprioceptive awareness of my body is always an awareness of it doing something. I experience my body as a whole, as it is engaged in some task. I am only aware of my body parts in relation to this experience of bodily purpose. Thus I experience the parts of my body as having a different 'value' depending on the role they perform in my behaviour' (Merleau-Ponty 1945 in Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 88).

The awareness of the environment and the self in this world are shaped by discursive knowledge that creates understandings. In this knowledge about the body, people are measured against ableist notions of the sensory body (Hammer 2012; Keating & Hadder 2010). For some people, bodily experiences are affected because of a deficit or a reduced capacity of a sense or multiple senses (Keating & Hadder 2010). For these people, either classified as 'impaired' or 'disabled', the impairment shapes the perception since diverse sensory abilities shape how knowledge of the perceived world is bodily experienced and understood. For people with visual impairments, the perception of the world is affected by the ability of sight. As Keating and Hadder (2010: 122) explain, the understanding of the environment is affected by terminology like 'over there' or 'that way'; this is very difficult for people with visual impairment to grasp. Also, Romdenh-Romluc (2017) points out how people with visual impairments experience the environment surrounding them through tools that are incorporated in a sense to the body. People who are blind or partially sighted sometimes use a stick to navigate through the environment. The sensation of the stick, through touch, translates to the sensation of the hand and leads to knowledge to perceive the world. Herein, the stick is an extension of the body and is part of the proprioceptive awareness of the body.

In other words, the senses are communicative resources that shape a perceptual bodily, experienced truth and are shaped by the capacity of the senses (Keating & Hadder 2010: 119). Perceiving the world means having a body, means inhabiting the world, means being in a world and understanding it as an organic whole of meaningful relations that people sense and are bodily involved in. In bodily experiences of the world, people have the ability to discover opportunities for action (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 77). Perceptual experiences with surroundings contribute to people's understanding of a given surrounding as requiring specific forms of behaviour (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 79), or skills, that Ingold defines, not as 'techniques of the body, but [as] the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body) situated in a richly structured environment' (2000: 5). Skills are thus an apprenticeship of human's people's sensory perceptions and people's attunement to the environment (Grasseni 2018: 269) and shape the functioning of the living being in that environment. Skills are not bodily techniques that are inscribed or transmitted from generation to generation (Ingold 2000: 5) but are processes of attunement and responses in regard to the environment and other people inhabiting it. Bodily movements thus become *enskilled* through time and place, and are negotiated with the environment (Brown 2017; Gowlland 2019; Ingold 2000, 2018; Rana Forthcoming). The ways people know how to behave, move or act in certain contexts are constructed in social interactions between people and the environment that are both 'an integral part of the resulting technical skills, dispositions, and work ethics of the learner' (Gowlland 2019: 509).

Once people are skilled in an activity in a perceived environment, they can immediately act upon these perceptions without the need to consider or think about it (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 79). In these processes of enskilment, this 'automatic pilot' skill requires an identification of the environment and its actors that evolves into a practice in which a person 'familiarise oneself with an activity so that, eventually, engaging in it feels like 'second nature' (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 79). Attuning to the world through skills is thus something people can practise and master as if it is an integral part of knowing the world and the self. Since skills enable people to perceive their environment in opportunities for action, skills contribute to the knowledge and understanding of that environment and its actors; they shape people's awareness of the world and their bodies inhabiting that world (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 89). In the processes of enskilment, Rana (Forthcoming) emphasises the importance of the social structures and power dynamics in the environment which people inhabit. In her research on running practices of girls and women, she argues that 'certain physical bodies come with certain social expectations' (Rana Forthcoming) and that people attune to or sense these expectations. The expectations are shaped by discursive social structures that are imbued and negotiated in the movement of girls and women in relation to certain environs. Running, like other forms of sport or physical activity, is thus a physical but also a cultural co-production of other skilled actors within the environment that reflects existing power relations and people's position in larger

social structures. In other words, discourses inscribed in the environment and its inhabitants are important shapers in people's bodily attunement and understandings of sports worlds.

Methodology and Ethics

In order to explore discourses and lived experiences that construct and shape the notion of sports inclusion, I used a multimodal research approach. Since I came to the understanding that sports inclusion is very much a lived experience, I wished to experience it myself as a subject within the research. Through 'participant sensation' (Howes 2019), soundscapes and auto-ethnography, I tried to empathically engage with practices of sports inclusion myself. When I joined Running Blind as a guide runner, I conducted 'participant sensation', which Howes (2019: 18) understands as the departure of the conventional 'participant observation' aiming at observing, towards a more holistic method of 'participant sensation' aiming at sensing and making sense of the world. At the beginning of the fieldwork period, I signed up and I got matched with a runner and we are still running buddies after the field work period ended. During the whole research, I ran twice a week with Martijn and one time with Rob and Joran. Running together allowed me to be part of a sports practice that is often regarded as inclusive sports practice since it literally connects, or tethers, an athlete with a visual impairment to an athlete without. I became an integral component of this synthesis and it gave me an embodied understanding of how people with visual impairments practise sports and how athletes experience notions of 'able-bodiedness' and 'disabled-bodiedness' through the body. While running, I learnt a lot about the different sensory experiences of running and how senses shape running which provided me a ground to mirror my own. Hearing, smelling, listening, feeling, (partially) seeing and remembering shape a run and create different running experiences. However, different experiences of the run do not prohibit shared feelings and mutual experiences. Running as a sensory experience creates mutual understandings of the run between the buddy and the runner since it is for both a bodily experience. My running buddy and I both physically move; we both feel joy; we both devote ourselves to completing a run safely. The only 'hard distinction' in our sensory experiences is that I perceive visually and the other runners perceive less visually.

I am aware of my embodied, integrated visual-centrism in my experiences and perceptions of the world and that these differ for people with visual impairments. This distinction creates different sensory experiences that explain a lot about 'the body as a tool of inquiry and vector of knowledge" (Hammer 2013: 4). Therefore, I will never be able to completely understand how athletes with visual impairments experience practising sports since I am a congenital seer. I recognise myself in Hammer's description of herself as a 'sighted researcher observing blind [and visually impaired] participants, but as a person with a material body and visual skills, engaging in research with other people of varied corporeal experiences, addressing the "multisensority of experience, perception, knowing and practice" (Hammer 2013: 6). In this research I, therefore, not only try to understand how people with visual impairments perceive and experience running but I also reflect on my sightedness and sensory

experiences in sports practices.

Recording our Running Blind runs, so-called ‘soundscapes’, helped me to further explore the sensory part of running. Soundscapes are a useful method to understand how sound and the everyday life are entangled. Soundscapes make ‘accessible, audible and thinkable, alternative states of affairs that allow us to rethink and relive the materiality and semantics of the real world.” (Voegelin in Henryen 2020: 29). A soundscape thus creates a holistic understanding of sensory experiences of people’s engagement with sounds from a given space and how this manifests ‘as beautiful and messy practices’ in daily life (Henryen 2020: 29). A soundscape as an ethnographic method thus provides a story about the connection between sounds and place and makes relational experiences of living audible (Henryen 2020: 31). I used soundscapes to relive the Running Blind runs by listening to the sounds of the environment and surroundings that are an integral part of the sports experiences of both me and runners with visual impairments. For them, sounds shape the sports experience more than for people with sight. When I listened to the recordings, it opened up a space for me in which I became an ethnographic listener (Feld & Breinneis 2005: 465) and it brought me as close as possible to sports experiences athletes have who do not or perceive less visually than I do. This research method made me experience the Running Blind runs through a different dimension of awareness and this way, it opens up a new lived experience of running that I was once unaware of.

Inspired by both carnal-ethnographical (Waquant 2004) and auto-ethnographical ways of researching (Van Amsterdam 2014), I tried to empathically experience practices of sports inclusion by writing down my own feelings, emotions, bodily sensations and thoughts during my solo runs. I wrote about the runs themselves and the presence of others on the route, but also about what I saw, heard, smelled, felt and experienced. In other words, I have understood my runs as sensory experiences. This method, as a scientific unconventional way of knowing (Van Amsterdam 2014: 31), helped me to understand sports inclusion as a socially constructed reality that is lived through the body and how I, as a researcher, take part in this co-constructing process. Auto-ethnography creates ‘new ways of being and understanding’ (Van Amsterdam 2014: 31) that are crucial to the understanding of the idea of sports inclusion in sports practices.

Furthermore, I conducted in-depth, semi-qualitative interviews with policy-makers; people working within sports alliances, sports clubs, sports organisations and federations; and runners with and without visual impairments. The importance of these qualitative interviews is twofold: they are a means to explore the experienced truths about sports inclusion, and they are a means to understand how these experiences are subject to, but also actively shape the understanding of ‘sports inclusion’ through the body. In other words, these stories and experiences contributed to my understanding of the discourses and the experiences of it in daily life sports practices. I conducted 22 recorded interviews via telephone, Microsoft Teams or in real life, taking into account the Covid-19 regulations. 8 interviews were with athletes with visual impairments who run in a Running Blind setting or run on an individual basis. 3 of the interviews are with people who contribute to the Leiden municipal Sports

Agreement. The other 11 participants were athletes without visual impairment or employees at sports organisations, federations or sports clubs that deal with sports inclusion engagements on a daily basis.

Prior to the interviews, I formulated a topic list that consisted of questions regarding the daily practice of the job or the sport; the understanding and experiences of 'sports inclusion' itself and the experience of practising sports with and without visual impairments (see appendix). The semi-structured nature of these interviews was crucial for me to discuss my questions with the interviewees but it also prevented me, as a researcher, from pigeonholing the responses of the interviewees and the leading of the interviewees in specific directions (Bryman 2016: 467). These interviews thus encouraged participants to come up with their own topics and questions. Not only did these interviews largely contribute to the exploration of sports inclusive discourses and lived experiences, I also really loved listening to narratives, instances and worldviews in order to formulate an understanding of these lived experiences myself. Through these interviews, my participants gave me the opportunity to get a deeper understanding of the lived experience of sports inclusion and I am most grateful for that.

In addition to the interviews, I conducted a content analysis of policy documents and documents of sports institutions to unpack common understandings and assumptions around sports inclusion. This method allows for an exploration of the written content and the discourses it reflects and performs, by focusing on significant actors and the dispositions they adopt; the usage of specific words and word combinations; and crucial themes and subjects (Bryman 2016: 283). A critical analysis of these documents allowed me to understand who contributed to the construction of ideas about sports inclusion and in what way the institutions try to realise it. To me, it was a means to understand sports inclusion on the institutional, 'elite' level, i.e., these documents are formulated and adopted by powerful, political (sports) institutions. I used content analysis to examine the UN Convention on The Rights of People with Disabilities and the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. I also looked at documents describing strategies of the Dutch government aiming at the creation of an inclusive society. Moreover, I examined these strategies in the sports context through the Dutch National Sports Agreement and the Leiden Municipal Sports Agreement. Lastly, I explored application forms and the Engagement Protocol of the International Blind Sports Association (IBSA). Thinking through these texts made me understand how the notion of sports inclusion is constructed on institutional level and how institutions try to implement this notion in the daily practices of sport.

Thereafter, I analysed the documents, interviews and the field notes whereby I made use of *open coding* and *focused coding* (Emerson et al. 1995). Open coding focuses on the identification of ideas, themes and issues that come out of the data. Open coding provided me with the possibility to demarcate core insights and themes, and a step back from the field in order to think about linkages, connections and dynamics. After open coding, I have conducted focused coding. As the term suggests, this mode of coding is more focused and therefore centred around a theme or concept. It made me focus on discovering and identifying concepts, themes or social categories by explicitly searching for their dynamics in the data. Both strategies were useful for me to unravel and structure my data in order

to explore the discourses and practices in the lived experiences of sports inclusion.

During the time of research, I have, as an anthropologist, the responsibility for the people I researched (Robben & Sluka 2007). This means that the interests of the interlocutors are seen as the primary principle. The American Anthropological Association (AAA) formulated Codes of Ethics in 1998 that describe several principles an anthropologist must always take into account. These ethics concern, among others, fostering privacy and preventing harm. In regard to fostering privacy and preventing harm for the interlocutors, I did not use an informed consent form but the consent was based on a process of negotiation. First, when I ran with people, I had informed them about the research. The runners know my aims, my focus and the methods I am using for the research. It is, therefore, an ethical 'contract' or 'agreement' that is adapted to the specific situation and setting (Robben & Sluka 2007: 304). When I spoke on the phone or via Microsoft Teams, I asked the participants if it was fine with them if I recorded the interview. Also during this remote research method, it was an agreement between the interlocutor and me. In order to guarantee anonymity and foster privacy, I did not write down the participants' real names, but I wrote down the function of the professional and I gave each runner and buddy a pseudonym, except for Martijn. I explicitly asked Martijn if I could use his real name, since we collaborated in creating the podcast together. Since Martijn also shares his experiences in the podcast, we agreed on using his real name in this thesis as well.

Prior to all the encounters with the interlocutors, I explained my position as a master student at the University of Leiden and I always gave an explanation of anthropology as a discipline. I have faced many encounters with people who do not know anthropology as an academic discipline or see it as an equivalent of folklore studies. In my opinion, the understanding of anthropology as folklore studies does not do justice to the aims, objectives and practices of the discipline nowadays and therefore, I always explained anthropology as:

> *Anthropology used to be the study of the so-called 'Non-west'. Anthropologists travelled there and lived within the community in order to explore different understandings of the world, e.g. cultural and social events and world-views. After the mid-twentieth century, there was a change in this way of thinking within the discipline of anthropology; you do not have to go to other continents to examine different understandings and worldviews because everyone experiences differently. In line with this view, I study the sports experiences of people with visual impairments since this is an understanding of the world that is unknown to me.*

With this explanation, I think that the participants have a better understanding of the broader scope of anthropology and the way I practised it. In my opinion, this is an important 'ethical step' while introducing the research. I want to prevent that people understand anthropology as solely 'folklore studies' and after our encounter ask themselves what makes them a research object in folklore studies.

Chapter Outlines

Through a multimodal research approach, this thesis explores how the notion of sports inclusion on the institutional level is imbued with discourses regarding body normativity and how the conceptualisation of the body as a sensory and skilled site of knowledge provides insight into the understanding of sports inclusion as a lived, bodily experience.

Chapter One focuses on how governments and sports institutions deal with sports inclusion as a most desired sports world and how they aim to realise it. It explores missions, visions and strategies within policy documents formulated by the Dutch national and Leiden municipal government and documents drafted by sports organisations and federations. This chapter gives a critical note on these institutional engagements by contesting inclusion language and objectives as imbued with body normative and ableist discourses. It argues that sports inclusion, as it is defined on the institutional level, does not directly translate to feelings of inclusion in the daily practices of sports. Therefore, inclusion in sport should rather be understood as a daily, lived experience, as it is experienced during a tethered Running Blind run.

Chapter Two focuses on Running Blind Environs. It shows how running is a lived experience created through bodily attunement to the sensed environment. Through sensations and skills, runners, tethered to their running buddy, shape an understanding of the sporting world they inhabit and construct their bodily experience of running. In this view, this chapter provides insights into the centrality of the sensed environment in the experiences of sports inclusion.

Chapter Three focuses on Running Blind Buddies. This chapter shows how the buddy, physically tethered to the athlete with the visual impairment, is an important part of the sensation of and attunement to the environment and is central to the understanding of the bodily, running experience. This chapter argues how the running experience is a co-created synthesis in the sense that it asks for reciprocal attunement and adjustments of both runners which shapes feelings of inclusion, belonging and appreciation.

Chapter Four focuses on Running Blind Bodies. It shows how the Running Blind duo, via the sensory, attuned and tethered body in motion, comes to understand the running world. It describes how runners become proprioceptive aware of their two separate bodies as one holistic body that moves through the environment. It thus deals with the body as a site of knowledge and describes how sports inclusion is experienced through the holistic running body.

Hereafter, the thesis ends with concluding remarks and tries to do justice to the complex social reality of sports inclusion through sensory, bodily experiences. It shows how we should critically examine different understandings of inclusion in sport, that is to say, sports inclusion as both an institutional ideal and a lived, bodily experience. I hope that this critical examination contributes to general awareness and understandings of ideas, strategies and experiences of sports inclusion in the Dutch sports sphere.

Chapter One – Contesting Inclusion

People, whose body somehow deviates from the norm, have experienced exclusion from society through the ages. In Europe's ancient times, so until 500 BC, people with impairments often faced inhuman treatment and were left to their fate; some of them were even regarded as changelings of the devil (Schouten 2001: 14). In the following centuries, this cruel attitude changed slightly as a result of the emerge of Christianity which rejects eradication and neglect (ibid.). However, people with impairments were still seen and treated as different and were often an object of mockery. The rise of health care knowledge and health care institutions in the seventeenth century in Europe caused changes in this attitude (Schouten 2001: 15). This started off with the foundation of homes, hospitals and schools for people with sensory impairments. These blind and deaf institutions initiated a process of the establishment of multiple institutes for people with other impairments, like intellectual and physical impairments, but with the intension to separate them from society (Schouten 2001: 16). The nature of these institutions shifted in the nineteenth century. Instead of solely separating people from society, treatments were developed to start pedagogical and educational learning processes in order to improve people's functioning in the life outside the institute (Schouten 2001: 16). Since there was a broad support base for physical movement as a positive stimulus in physical and mental wellbeing (Vermeer 1986), sports and physical education became a central focus in the treatment methods. This trend resulted in a gradual process of the foundation of multiple sports associations for people with impairments in Europe and the United States.

In the first half of the twentieth century that had been dominated by two world wars, people's perspectives regarding the isolation of people with impairments changed. In the aftermath of the war, society dealt with war veterans who incurred impairments during the wars. Instead of estranging them in separate institutes, the veterans faced more appreciation and respect from society because they had been fighting for the liberty of all (Schouten 2001: 15). The institutes, therefore, focused on providing opportunities for the veterans to re-enter society. Hereby, sports and physical activities became essential in rehabilitation facilities in order for them to regain confidence in themselves and their bodies (ibid.). Doctor Ludwig Guttmann was important to the establishment of sports for people with impairments. As a rehabilitation professor, Guttmann was a key promotor of these sports and his efforts eventually led to the establishment of the annual Stoke Mandeville Games for war veterans with spinal cord injuries, starting off in 1948. These games developed as an international contest for people with a variety of impairments and are considered the beginning of the Paralympics and the 'Sports for All- movement'.

This Sports for All-movement came to life in multiple layers in Dutch society in the mid-twentieth century and initiated a process of sports as an important public theme on the political agenda. In line with the idea that sports are *for all* and practised *by all*, sports first came to the attention of the local and later on national government institutions in the Netherlands. Local

government institutions focused on the standardisation of the rules of play and the foundation of sports associations until 1950. Between 1950-1995 they focused on shaping and reinforcing all parties that were involved in sport (Cobussen et al. 2019: 66-68). In this second phase of sports as a policy pillar, sports shifted from elite practices based on citizen initiatives towards a means to improve the wellbeing of all citizens in Dutch welfare policy (Cobussen et al 2019: 56). In this view, sports organisations for athletes with physical and sensory impairments were fused under the flag of the Dutch Association for Adapted Sports in 1992 (In Dutch: Nederlandse Bond voor Aangepast Sporten/NEBAS; sinds 2008: Gehandicaptensport Nederland) in order to ensure the safety, quality and quantity of adapted sports and encourage participation and integration in sports. After 1993, the Dutch national government took over the sports policy of local government institutions whereby the social importance of sports was developed into a firm set of national government regulations called: *'What sports moves'* (In Dutch: Wat sport beweegt). With this policy, the government embraced the idea of sports as a solution for a variety of social issues and as a glue for society. In 2011, the sports policy changed radically. Policy-makers came to the understanding that curing social problems via sports is complex and difficult and therefore altered the policy aims to instead encourage people to practise sports at the local level. The participation in sports was and still is regarded as the first step towards curing and overcoming social issues. This shift towards to local level meant that the policy was decentralised (again) to municipalities and local initiatives. It marked a transition from sports in a welfare state towards sports in a civil society based on local citizen initiatives and personal, social networks (Cobussen et al. 2019: 64). With the central focus of including all athletes in sports and providing all athletes with access to services and facilities, the local government institutions received a relatively autonomous position for their own input and ideas (Schouten 2001: 32). However, this freedom simultaneously caused confusion and variation in the daily practice of sports policy therefore needed centralised guidelines. This resulted in the foundation of a national agreement based on the cooperation of multiple stakeholders within the Dutch sports realm.

The National Sports Agreement and Leiden Municipal Sports Agreement

In September 2018, the Dutch national government, municipalities, sports institutions, businesses and civil society organisations signed the National Sports Agreement- 'Sport unites the Netherlands' (In Dutch: Nationaal Sport Akkoord- Sport Verenigt Nederland). This policy aims at reinforcing 'the power of sport', that is to say, sport as (1) a social domain that people enjoy and (2) sports as a strategic tool for social bridging and social bonding between different groups in society and different sectors, countries and cultures (Bruins et al. 2018). The policy will be implemented along three implementation lines at the local, sports and national level with each a different focus (Pulles et al. 2020: 2). The local line focuses on creating new collaborations and joint commitments between parties at the local level. The sports line aims to increase the quality and quantity of sports providers. The national line focuses on safeguarding, validating and distributing knowledge about sports inclusion

and providing grants for the sports and local lines (Pulles et al. 2020: 2). The three lines collaborate on the common ground of sports as a promising domain in overcoming social problems and achieving (government) objectives. The sports agreement is divided into partial agreements based on six ambitions regarding: 1) Inclusive sports and physical activity 2) Sustainable sports infrastructure 3) Vital sports and physical activity providers 4) Positive sports culture 5) Skilled in movement 6) Top-level sports that inspire. Once these ambitions are achieved, the sports and physical activity realm in the Netherlands, it will be an inclusive sports domain in which everyone in every life stage can participate with joy once these ambitions are inhere (Bruins et al. 2018: 7). For the aim of this thesis, ambition 1 'Inclusive sports and physical activity' is the most important to elaborate.

Around 57% of the people in the Netherlands practise sports weekly but some groups in society lag behind in their sports participation, specially, people with an impairment, people with low socioeconomic statuses, people living in poverty situations and people with a migration background (RIVM 2018; Bruins et al. 2018). This is not solely because these people are not interested in sports and physical activity; these groups of people face exclusion from the sports spheres. In order to create an inclusive sports realm in which everyone has a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activity, the authors of the sports agreement designed three objectives to achieve in 2021 (Pulles et al. 2020):

1. Everyone considers inclusive sports and physical activity as self-evident.
2. Through intensive cooperation between regional and local alliances, regions in the Netherlands strengthen themselves in creating inclusive sports and physical activity spheres.
3. There is more social, financial and practical accessibility in regard to sports- and exercise.

An important alliance that is founded to formulate the sports inclusion chapters of the agreement and to put these objectives into practice, is 'the Alliance for Sports and Physical Activity for Everyone' (In Dutch: *Alliantie Sport en Bewegen voor Iedereen*). The alliance is an ensemble of a variety of sports organisations that strive for sports inclusion for people who experience distance from or do not feel welcome within Dutch sports realms (Pulles et al. 2020: 8). The alliance aims at creating awareness of surrounding inclusion and exclusion; realising and fostering local and regional cooperation; eliminating barriers and realising suitable sports and physical activity supply (ibid.). In other words, the Alliance for Sports and Physical Activity for Everyone is committed joining forces in order to create sports inclusion along this national line.

Along the local implementation line, Dutch municipalities formulate and adopt their own Sports Agreements that are adapted to the local context. It has to be in line with the objectives of the National Sports Agreement but it leaves space for municipal initiatives. The municipality of Leiden adopted her Sports Agreement in June 2020 aiming at the creation of a sports realm in which inhabitants of Leiden can participate for life (Sluis et al. 2020: 3). 59% of Leiden's inhabitants practise sports weekly but the older inhabitants, inhabitants with impairments, inhabitants with a migration background and inhabitants with a low socio-economic status lag behind (Sluis et al. 2020: 11). The

percentage of participation in sports among these groups is significantly lower than the average among all Leiden citizens. In the section about creating inclusion in sports, the authors describe that they formulated general actions aiming at all marginalised groups (in Dutch: groepen met een afstand tot sporten en bewegen) but also some additional activities for a specific marginalised group or category (Sluis et al. 2020: 12). According to the authors, it is important to distinguish the marginalised groups in order to acquire specific knowledge on the experienced exclusionary practices. Within the agreement, not all marginalised groups are described, solely youth and inhabitants with impairments. This does not mean that Leiden is more focused on youth and citizens with impairments. During an interview with one of the main authors of the agreement, the author explained that the Leiden Sports Agreement is a collaboration with organisations that aspire sports inclusion for their audience. During the formation of the Leiden Sports Agreement, these organisations happened to be organisations focused on youth and citizens with impairment. For this reason, actions aiming at sports inclusion for youth and citizens with impairments are pointed out in the policy. Regarding the inclusion of Leiden citizens with an impairment in sports, the Leiden municipality wants to found a networking group on 'Adapted Sports' and hire an adapted sports consultant; the municipality considers to found a lending service for sports aids and provide transport and subsidies, and lastly, the municipality keeps supporting existing initiatives regarding adapted sports (Sluis et al. 2020: 14).

Analysing the history of the sports policies and the governmental initiatives in sports in the Netherlands, it becomes clear that these engagements ground in 'the great myth of sport', what Jay Coakley explains as: 'sport is essentially pure and good, and its purity and goodness are transferred to anyone who plays, consumes, or sponsors sports' (Coakley & Pike 2016: 11). For this reason, 'there is no need to study and evaluate sports for the purpose of transforming or making them better, because they are already what they should be' (Coakley & Pike 2016: 11). Sports are thus inherently good for everyone and participation in sports will eventually leads to individual and communal development. The great myth of sport implies a rejection of critical studies and disturbing practices of humiliation and exclusion in sports because sports are considered to be 'essentially pure' and to be a source of excitement and joy for everyone. However, the Sports Agreement acknowledge and various studies show that there are everyday practices of sports that contradict the great myth of sport. Inclusion always goes hand in hand with exclusion and this is founded on power structures, privileges and marginalisation (Elling & Knoppers 2003; Elling & Claringbould 2005; Parren 2016). It is therefore important to critically examine inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the daily practices of sports and also the terminology and implicit understandings in sports policies that shape these daily practices for athletes facing a distance from sports. In other words, it is important to not lose political sharpness when talking about sports inclusion.

Contesting Sports Inclusion Language

Language surrounding the word 'inclusion' is not solely adopted in sports policies; it is a discourse

that flows within the structures of a variety of social spheres and institutions in societies worldwide. For example, the United Nations formulated a convention in order to create inclusive UN institutions, focused on people with impairments in 2006 (UN 2006; UN 2018) and the Dutch government formulated strategies to realise more inclusion and diversity within the Ministry of Defence in 2018 (Bijleveld-Schouten 2018). Inclusion engagements in sports are thus intertwined with social structures of inclusion engagements in other spheres of social life and is thus not solely an ideal in sports. Even though the term inclusion is frequently used by people and institutions, there is not a single, uniform definition of it. The United Nations define 'inclusion' regarding people with impairments as:

> 'The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion of their rights and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (UN 2018: 20).

The Dutch Minister of Defence uses 'inclusion' in her inclusion strategy plans as:

> 'Diversity is inextricably linked to inclusivity. People primarily think about variety when regarding diversity, but inclusivity entails that everyone within the organisations is valued, accepted and can contribute regardless of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. […]' (Bijleveld-Schouten 2018: 1).

Although there is a lack of a uniform definition of 'inclusion', one pointing out participation, rights and perspectives, the other pointing out appreciation, there is some sort of common understanding of what an inclusive realm looks like. In this view, a realm is inclusive when various forms of diversity are common and appreciated by the people inhabiting it. It assumes a realm in which people attempt to strengthen the positions, interests and development of the other party while showing honourable respect for everyone. In other words, the current context needs adaptations to its structures in order to be inclusive and the people inhabiting it should change their dispositions and aspirations (Klapwijk in Vermeer 1986). In this understanding of inclusion, 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are two sides of the same coin. While reading the National Sports Agreement and the Leiden Sports Agreement, the policies tend to aim for inclusion in sports in a slightly different way. This section contests inclusion language in the sports policies in the Netherlands, pointing out three critical notes regarding the discrepancy between inclusion policy ambitions and daily practices; the underlying discourses of inclusion and the pitfall of concealing inequalities when claiming inclusion in sports.

First, there is a discrepancy in regards to the realisation of inclusion in sports between the sports policy on the national and municipal level, and its daily practices and engagements. In order for the sports realm to be inclusive, as the national and municipal ambition reads, 'the Netherlands make the change from adapted sports to inclusive sports and physical activity' (In Dutch: Nederland maakt de omslag van aangepast sporten naar inclusief sporten en bewegen) (Bruins et al. 2018: 13; Sluis et al. 2020: 14). In this light, the policy tends to define adapted sports practices as the undesired counterparts of inclusive sports practices. In other words, adaptations to sports are thus not inclusive. Following this ambition narrowly, the Dutch sports sphere should drift from or exchange adapted

sports for inclusive sports in order to create a sphere in which everyone has a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activity. Reading this ambition regarding the inclusion of athletes with impairments, we should ask ourselves the question if we should read this ambition narrowly. Is a drift from or an exchange of adapted sports what the policy-makers envision when aiming for the inclusion of people with impairments? Considering this question, it is important to acknowledge that adapted sports enable and create possibilities for people with impairments to practise sports. For example, athletes with visual impairments, participate in multiple adapted sports like athletics, basketball, horse riding and wrestling but also in sports designed for blind or partially sighted athletes, like goalball and showdown (Klapwijk in Vermeer 1986: 25). For these athletes, the adaptations to the sport, the sports setting and special measures are crucial in order to join in sporting activities (Klapwijk in Vermeer 1986: 25). An institutional drift from these adapted sports could eventually impede the practices of these sports and this could be a ground for exclusionary practices in the Dutch sports sphere. The narrow ambition thus contradicts the general goal: the creation of inclusion in sports. While reading the sports agreements closely, it becomes clear that people should not understand this ambition narrowly. In order to create a sphere in which people have a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activity, professionals working on implementing the sports policy acknowledge often encourage people with impairments to practise adapted sports because they enable people to join sports activities. In the Leiden Sports Agreement, for example, it is implicitly noticeable that categorical adaptations to the sports practices are encouraged in order to create participation possibilities for people with impairments, namely, the municipality of Leiden aims to realise a lending service for sports aids and hires an 'adapted sports consultant' to help people with impairments to find a suitable sports club. In other words, inclusion in sports does not drift from adaptations to sports.

This discrepancy, or inherent paradox, in the ambition to create an inclusive sports realm shapes a variety of interpretations within the professional field and leads to different understandings of how an inclusive realm looks like. One example is the upcoming platform Unique Sport (In Dutch: Uniek Sporten); an online platform to match people with impairments to sports and sports clubs. One of the programme managers of Unique Sport explains in an interview:

> *The name 'Unique Sport' obviates the diversity in disabilities and displays that we talk about special sports practices. Unique sport practices are fully inclusive, despite the fact that we filter a certain group of athletes. But with everything that we do, we try to tell people with impairments that they have the right to have a place in society and practise sports. If you translate inclusion into: 'sporting and exercising together', like Running Blind, we would say: amazing, but it is not a must. Some athletes favour practising their sports in a club solely for athletes with impairments and they feel happy about it. That is fine too! Inclusion is not something we have to achieve at any cost, just because it is socially desirable.*

In this light, adapted sports are valued as a form of inclusive sports practices. This approach to adapted sports as inclusive sports also played a role in the formation of the Sports Agreement in Leiden. As one of the main authors explains during an interview:

> *How can sport associations breathe and facilitate inclusive sports and exercise? I think that inclusion is about creating possibilities for everybody to participate. So I am on the conditions-creating side of the spectrum because I believe that everyone should be able to participate but always based on their own choices. I don't say that everyone must participate but I think inclusion is about the possibility to participate. Therefore, you need infrastructure to organise sports for athletes with impairments.*

In line with this view on creating sports infrastructure to enable sports practices for people with impairments, the Leiden municipality hired a sports consultant for adapted sports. The professional explains during an interview that she faces the discrepancy of adapted sports and inclusive sports in her daily practices:

> *Inclusion means everyone; adapted means adaptations so this is not inclusive, provided that they mean: we arrange adapted sports in a sports club whereby everyone is inclusive in that sports club. Then I think this is inclusion. It is about how you frame it. If you have, for example, an adapted sports team at a korfball association but they attend the club's parties and events in a normal way, like anyone else, then I think it is inclusive. You offer adaptations during the training sessions but if there is an event for the whole club, then everyone is welcome and free to join. Then it is inclusive.*

The different approaches to adapted sports and inclusive sports causes challenges for people to choose a sport. Some people, in need of adaptations to sports practices, express those when they ask the sports consultant for help:

> *On the one hand, they want their child, or an adult, to not have a label. But at the moment I offer an activity that is aimed at all, they say: my child cannot participate in this because he needs a separate group with special guidance. So it is two-fold: they don't want their child to have a label but they prefer an adapted sports group, while I am an advocate of sports with everyone, because it is important for both groups to be mixed.*

These specific situations of people who work for organisations that shape inclusionary practices show how there is a tension within the objective to abandon adapted sports practices and create inclusive sports practices. On a daily basis, adapted sports are seen as part of inclusive sports realms because they provide access to services and facilities for athletes with impairments. To put it differently, institutions highly encourage people with impairments to participate in adapted sports when favoured by the athletes. So if professionals encourage adapted sports in the daily implementations of the sports policy and acknowledge that adapted sports are crucial to include people with impairment in sports practices, what makes an inclusive sports realm different from an adapted sports realm? In other words, how do professionals bring adapted sports under the umbrella of inclusive sports? All professionals in this research work on the common ground that the Dutch sports realm is inclusive when everyone has the possibility to join every sports club and enjoy the sports practices in 'the mainstream sports club' (in Dutch: reguliere sportvereniging), that is to say, a sports club in which people with and without impairments enjoy and practise sports. This understanding is imbued in daily practices of organisations dealing with inclusionary practices, according to a coordinator Adapted

Sports of the Athletics Union Netherlands (In Dutch: Atletiek Unie). As she explains during an interview: 'all our practices are shaped by the motto: *inclusive when possible, adapted when necessary'*.

The second critical note on inclusion language concerns this motto of inclusion in sport as equivalent of the mainstream sports setting. When aiming for sports inclusion in mainstream sports settings, it is important to critically question what a mainstream sports context entails. One should ask the question: what conditions does a mainstream sports setting have and to where does it have to develop in order to be inclusive? Analysing the governmental engagements regarding the creation of an inclusive sports realm, professionals aim for introducing people with impairments to a 'mainstream sport setting'; a sports setting in which abled athletes practise their sports. It is about 'the sports club right around the corner' (In Dutch: de sportclub om de hoek). The ideal, inclusive sports setting or sports club is thus a setting in which abled and disabled athletes practise their sports together. The creation of an inclusive sports club thus asks for a movement towards the ableist sports setting and implicitly asks people with impairments to adapt to the ableist sports setting. This strategy towards inclusion in sports tends to be different from the strategies of the UN and the Dutch Ministry of Defence because it does not ask for institutional change nor change of the current setting. This particular movement to create an inclusive sports sphere could be understood as a process of normalisation: '[…] rather than stressing the differences, [it] takes as a starting point the possibilities of the individual person who- in those respects where his own capabilities fall short- must be helped to lead as normal a life as possible' (Zijderveld in Vermeer 1986: 29). In other words, the policy implicitly asks people with impairments to adapt in order to fit the variety of athletes within one particular ableist 'sport-rhythm' that is valued as inclusive, mainstream and 'normal'. As a project manager of Disabilities Sports Netherlands (In Dutch: Gehandicaptensport Nederland) points out during an interview:

I think we all should work on a world in which it is normal that they participate in everything.

In this light, the mainstream sports setting as the final aim for the inclusion of athletes with impairments implies a normative valuation of ableist sports practices as superior to other forms of sports practices and foregrounds an ableist sporting context. A socially desired, inclusive sports realm thus consists of ableist sports practices and the possibility for the practice of adapted sports when favoured by the athletes. However, the practice of ableist, mainstream sports activities is the desired norm. Herein, the ableist sports realm is imbued with valuation and meanings regarding notions of body normativity, namely the ableist sporting body. This valuation of the ableist sports contexts as 'socially desired sports practice' is not founded in universally established, normative criteria for distinguishing the most acceptable from the most unacceptable sports realm. Rather, these valuations are always the product of human goals and desires that are subjected to social and political structures of body normativity based on power relations. Sports inclusion policies are based on this valuation

and, though often naturalised as objective truth, are thus not neutral or a universal set of guidelines. Policies that foster sports inclusion therefore rather reflect ableist underpinnings that measure athletes with impairments against ableist notions of normality. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*: 'the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate' (Foucault 1975 in Appelrough & Edles 2016: 663). In other words, sports inclusion understandings are based on discourses that are the historical product of defined ableist norms. This makes sports inclusion a discursive construction based on ableist notions regarding sporting bodies and sports spheres.

Equivalenting the ideal form of sports inclusion and the ableist sports context can be understood in the light of the 'great myth of sport'. As discussed before, the great myth of sport displays sport as essentially pure and good, and its purity transfers to anyone who practises it. This may result in uncritical attitudes or approaches to sports practices because 'sports are already what they should be' (Coakley & Pike 2016: 11). When combatting exclusion from sports for people with impairments, introducing and including them in the mainstream sports sphere, so with people with and without disabilities, in this view, will lead to social bonding, social bridging (Coakley & Pike 2016: 112) and inclusion (Bruins et al. 2018: 14) because it is inherently good and pure. In short, the ableist mainstream sports context are considered to be inclusive and should be the norm in sports settings in order to create a sports sphere in which everyone has a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activities.

The last point this section outlines concerns the pitfall of concealing inequalities when claiming the ultimate form of sports inclusion as inhabiting in the mainstream sports settings. This means that introducing athletes with impairments in the mainstream sports setting and providing them opportunities to practise (adapted) sports, i.e., an inclusive sports setting, does not mean that the setting 'feels' and 'does' inclusive. In line with Sara Ahmed's exploration of institutional diversity managements (2007), the language of inclusion is terminology that 'more easily supports existing organizational ideals or even organizational pride' (Ahmed 2007: 235). In the light of the great myth of sport, this means that the notion of inclusion maintains and supports the current construction of the mainstream sports setting as if it is inherently good and pure. Following Ahmed's argument, sports inclusion terminology invokes differences between athletes and sporting bodies but does not necessarily invoke commitment to challenge inequalities within the mainstream sports settings. By implication, the structures and practices of this mainstream sports setting are not challenged because the introduction of athletes with impairments will naturally lead to inclusion. Herein, terminology surrounding 'diversity' and 'inclusion' tends to conceal the systematic inequalities under the guise of differences. When the socially desired, inclusive sports realm is achieved by introducing athletes with impairments in the mainstream sports setting and this is 'cut off' from histories of inequality, injustice, struggles and feelings of exclusion, structural exclusionary practices will not be challenged. In other words, exclusionary practices will not be challenged if people in the mainstream sports setting do not

commit to combat the structures of exclusion, injustice, inequality and ideas regarding a 'normal' sporting body. 'Being inclusive' thus does not necessarily translate into 'doing inclusive'. This tension between 'being' and 'doing' inclusion is illustrated in an interview with runner Pim who used to row in a mainstream rowing club in Leiden:

> *In my childhood, I wanted to participate in normal sports with my friends but this became a disaster; I got bullied and mocked. I didn't participate in sport for 20 years because I completely got turned off by sports. I now realise: adapted sports are the place for me! Because I cannot keep up with the abled sports and I always had to be on my toes. If you talk about inclusive sports practices… adapted sports practices are nowadays already difficult to achieve. Inclusion is just a couple of bridges too far. When you want to be inclusive, the comparison is inappropriate; it is impossible to measure. You can have fun when you play sports on a recreational level but when there is a competition, your impairment becomes a separate category and you have to practise adapted sports. It is just for people without impairments very hard to look beyond the normal paths and their own little world.*

On paper, this mainstream rowing club could be considered as 'being inclusive' since it offers sports practices for people with visual impairments. However, the club is not 'doing inclusive' since Pim got mocked, left the club and thereafter did not participate in sports for 20 years. These experiences are important in the consideration of mainstream, ableist sports settings as inclusive sports realms. These cases illustrate that inclusion on paper does not directly translate to feelings of inclusion in daily practices. In other words, inclusion in a sports cannot be obtained by merely adhering to the set of institutional guidelines drawn from the policies. This critical note is also pointed out by one of the main members of the Alliance for Sports and Physical Activity for Everyone:

> *What I believe still needs attention is the translation of the knowledge to the daily practice. We see a lot of sports clubs and sports suppliers saying: you are welcome within our club and this is what we offer. You have to adapt to this setting. It is very easy to say: you are welcome to my party and subsequently…. you can find out yourself what to do. They don't ask you to dance or to be involved at the party. When you ask people to dance because you are dancing yourself; that is what inclusion is about! You pay attention to the people and you ask: who are you and why are you here? You delve into the stories of the people and you give people the feeling that they can be themselves. They belong. They can give their opinion, instead of, you can come at this hour at the club and subsequently… you should not complain about anything.*

One can learn from these cases that 'doing inclusion' is thus not simply done, it needs institutional effort to identify and combat the social and material structures of inequalities and dominant discourses on the superiority of ableist sporting bodies. For example, the rowing club of runner Pim could be labelled as 'inclusive sports club' following the institutional guidelines while it does not feel like an inclusive sphere in its practices. In other words, a mainstream sports sphere has the capacity to develop towards an inclusive sports sphere when it challenges structures of inequality, injustice, exclusion and body normativity. Therefore, it needs a commitment of those within the sports club who

have the most capacities to attach inclusionary practices to the histories of inclusion and exclusion and thereafter affect changes within the sports club.

Conclusion

This chapter elucidates that, within the context of sports inclusion policy and inclusionary practices, people should critically examine the used terminology and its implicit practices since it is imbued with valuations, dispositions and meanings. Based on the analysis of the Sports Agreement, three points are important in the understanding of the terminology of sports inclusion.

First, the phrase 'adapted sports will be exchanged for inclusive sports' (In Dutch: aangepast sporten wordt ingeruild voor inclusief sporten) (Bruins et al. 2018: 13) implies a drift from adapted sports towards inclusive sports in order to create a sphere in which everyone has a lifelong enjoyment of sports and physical activity. However, the everyday inclusionary practices in sports differ from the governmentally formulated reality of sports inclusion. Instead of drifting from adapted sports, adapted sports go hand in hand with inclusionary practices, rather shape inclusionary practices for athletes with impairments. This means that there is an inherent tension between the language in policies and daily practices that shapes different understandings of inclusion in sports.

Second, the ultimate form of inclusion in sports is, according to the professionals of the sports inclusion policies, introducing athletes with impairments in the mainstream sports setting. In this inclusive sports setting, there are sports practices for both 'abled' and 'disabled' athletes who preferably practise the sport together. In order to create an inclusive sports sphere, athletes with impairments have to be included in the mainstream, ableist sports sphere which subsequently asks athletes with impairments to adapt to the mainstream, ableist setting. By implication, the policy is based on a hegemonic, normative idea on the sports context and the sporting body to which people with impairments should adapt. This implicitly values the mainstream, ableist sports setting as inherently good, pure and superior to other forms of sports practices.

Lastly, this approach towards inclusion in sports should eventually lead to the elimination of exclusionary practices, according to the professionals. Introducing athletes with impairments into mainstream or 'normal' sports activities will thus create a sphere in which everyone has the possibility to enjoy and practise sports. However, it is important not to claim or label a mainstream sports realm as 'being inclusive' when people inhabiting it are not committed to change social and material structures of inequality and injustice. In this light, people should contest every presumption that 'saying inclusion' is 'doing inclusion'. Inclusion is, drawing upon this analysis, more something people experience, perceive and encounter in daily sports practices instead of an imposed institutional set of guidelines. Inclusion lives in experiences, narratives and in the sporting practices of athletes; it is an emphatic engagement with the sport, the people and the environment itself.

In order to understand how policy language is not directly translated in feelings of inclusion, this thesis now turns to the experiences of inclusion and exclusion among runners with and without

visual impairments practising Running Blind. Running Blind is a form of adapted sports since it requires a tether to guide the runner. However, as briefly discussed before, it could be considered as an inclusive sports practices because it tethers a runner with a visual impairment to a runner without. Based on the multimodal research outcomes, the next chapters show how inclusion is a daily life experience that regarding Running Blind runners should be understood as a lived, bodily experience which asks for a turn to the body as a site of knowledge (Porcello et al. 2010: 52).

Chapter Two- Running Blind Environs

While we run downhill the bicycle lane, I see that we are approaching an excavator which blocks the path. The machine has a long arm reaching for the pond on the right side of the path and hereby bars our route. "What is that, Marit?", Martijn asks me in response to the loud noise of the machine. "We're approaching an excavator thingy and I am looking for a way to pass safely". Martijn laughs: "Well Marit, this is a nice challenge for you to test your buddy skills". This moment in the running environment has a lot of elements that a buddy must evaluate. As a buddy, you scan the environment first. On the left side, the cycle path is paralleled by grass that is about four meters wide in which a shell path meanders. On the right side, there is a verge and a pond. As a buddy, you assess the possible obstacles; you evaluate your options and you make the safest decision. In this particular situation, I figured as a buddy I have four options:

1. *Stop running. Look around, scan the environment for other passers-by and possible obstacles. Walk on the grass on the left side towards the shell path. This path is not wide enough to walk side by side, so we have to trail. Also, this path meanders so Martijn has to zigzag behind me on this, already, uneven ground.*
2. *Stop running. Look around, scan the environment for other passers-by and possible obstacles. Walk on the grass on the left side, pass the excavator and return to the cycle path. Running or walking on grass is hard for people with visual impairments because it is uneven. Also, it is hard for them to distinguish depth within the grass ground. Furthermore, it has been snowing last week so the grass is soaked.*
3. *Slow down and run underneath the arm on the right side of the machine. We have to duck and be careful of the movements of the arm that moves roughly and unpredictably.*
4. *Slow down. Pass the machine on the left side on the little stretch of cycle path that leaves about 1 meter between the grass and the machine. This means that we have to trail in order to fit this stretch. Also, we have to be very careful since we are close to the unpredictable machine and the edge of the grass to which it is easy to sprain an ankle.*

During a Running Blind run, the running duo faces multiple situations in which the duo must attune their bodily movements. As I described in my field notes, I had to translate this new environment and attune our running bodies to it. At the time, I chose option 4 which is on closer inspection not the safest way to pass the excavator. We did however pass safely but Martijn taught me, after we passed the excavator, that it would be the safest option to stop running and walk on the grass. Considering the options and deciding the safest choice is something a buddy learn by doing it and discussing it with the runner. The attunement to the environment is thus a co-created synthesis. As we learn from these field notes, the elements in the environment or environs shape our sense of our place in the world in which we move (Carter 2018: 43). The air, the ground, the temperature, the singing birds, the branches on the ground, the pools of water, the natural surroundings, the passers-by and the tethered buddy are just a few elements that shape bodily movements during a Running Blind run. People are attuned to the environment that shapes the bodily understanding of it. In other words, running makes us part of the environment, rather we become the environment (Carter 2018). In order to become the running

environment, the runner senses the environs first. Herein, 'the body thus comes to know the world in and through the senses', as Montani (2019: 387) writes. Through a coherent ensemble of the sensing organs and proprioceptive awareness, people create an understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit. Henry, a former runner, described how he senses the environment of the rowing club he is nowadays a member of:

> *I visited the club with my wife when nobody was there. I visualised the building; there are the toilets, there is the bar and there are the changing rooms. This way, I have my own image of the club in my head.*

Henry thus senses the environment and translates this into an understanding of himself as a member of the rowing club. This way, he learns how to move through this environment and how to be a member of this club. While Henry creates personal translations of being in the environment, during blind running, the translation of the environment results in co-created attunement. During Running Blind runs, the guide runner translates environs for the runner to get a grasp of the surroundings. This way, both runners attune to the environs which shape the movement of the bodies. This is a dynamic negotiation between the environs and the running bodies, because the environs are always changing. Some changes in the environs appear smoothly and predictable while other environs change abruptly and unpredictable. This results in different forms of sensation and translation of the environs. When the running duo approaches a predictable change in the environment, like a change of the ground, the buddy senses the environment and foresees this change. After this visual sensation of the changing environs, the guide runner evaluates at what moment he or she has to mention the change. Herein, it is not useful to prepare a runner for the changing environs in terms of standardised distance measures, because it is hard for people with visual impairments to translate meters into an attuned bodily action. For example, it is not appropriate to give instructions like, 'another 50 meters and we walk on clinker-bricks'. In order to give appropriate instructions, one can translate distance in steps or with a countdown system; this depends on the preferences of the runner. To illustrate this: during the runs with Martijn, we pass two cattle grids. When I see them, I translate it into a countdown system: "We are approaching the two cattle grids, Martijn, in 3,..2,..1,..". Conversely, there are situations in which the elements of the environment change abruptly and unexpectedly. This asks for an immediate translation and immediate attunement of both runners to that changing environment. In these particular situations, one cannot translate the environment through steps or a countdown, simply because you cannot completely prepare for the change. Rob and I faced a certain situation during our run which I wrote down in my field notes:

> *I see a group of young men approaching us. One of them swings with a leash but I do not see a dog running somewhere. I scan the environment for the dog again; unleased dogs are always playful and lively and are therefore a possible hazard for us. For this reason, I want to warn Rob in advance. At the moment I want to say: "Rob, unleashed dog somewhere; we have to be*

> *alert", the dog jumps out of the bushes and lands in front of us. This asks for immediate attunement and action. I pull the tether firmly and make us stop.*

It is impossible to sense and translate every element in the running environment. During a run, a guide runner does not mention the temperature, the breeze that tousles the hair, the air you breathe in and out, the wind that blows through the leaves of the trees or a cyclist that cycles on the other side of the canal. It is not solely impossible but foremost unnecessary. It is the task of the guide runner to evaluate what element in the environment he or she must translate for the runner. It is thus up to the buddy to sense if the element is a significant aspect or possible hazard in that environment. Evaluating and differentiating the elements is important, as runner Ramon explains:

> *It is crucial for my buddy to solely mention the necessary information. You do not have to mention every unevenness. I want to be warned for kerbs, thresholds, slippery manhole covers and oncoming traffic. It is only confusing to receive unnecessary information.*

Translating the environs in giving commands is a skill that is attuned to the runner's impairment and the runner's preferences. As a buddy, you attune your translation of the environs to the runner's impairment, that is to say, you translate your sensations differently for a blind or partially sighted runner because there is a difference in the remaining sense ability. As Ramon, who is blind, already described how the buddy's translation of the environment is an attunement to his impairment, he also experiences how the remaining sense ability affects the running movements of blind and partially sighted runners:

> *There are runners who are very insecure. They want to know more about what crosses their path and how to respond to it. To me, it is more like: I attune directly to what the buddy says. I can respond like a seer while I am not. That is really practical because I do not need that much information. I hear when people are in front, behind or next to me. I use a lot of information sources around me.*

The instructions are also attuned to the runner's preference. When Ramon, for example, speaks about unnecessary information, this information could be necessary for another runner. Prior to the first run, the runners discuss which information the guide runner gives and what she leaves out, which is further explained in chapter three. However, there are some elements in the environment that the guide runner always mentions, that is to say, the changing of the surface and the running directions:

> *It is self-evident that the buddy mentions a change in the ground. If you do not describe this, runners could startle because they, suddenly, run on grass, sand, pebbles or wood chips* (buddy Remco)

> *You have to mention: from asphalt to clinker-bricks, from clinker-bricks to asphalt, manhole covers, speed bump up, speed bump down, sharp right turn, sharp left turn. You have to mention it all* (runner Joran)

The instructions thus entail the running directions and the changing ground that are in accordance with both runners. Moreover, the translation of the environs is also shaped by the runners' familiarity with

the running environment. When a running duo follows a particular trail several times, both runners remember remarkable environs that are significant for the run. Herein, the memory of both runners is important in the bodily attunement to the environment. When the guide runner remembers certain environs, he or she is better prepared for that change. To put it differently, when you encounter certain environs over and over again, you attune your guidance to it. On the one hand, when you encounter static environs, you have acquired the knowledge of when to translate it. I know, for example, at what point I have to mention that we are approaching the two cattle grids. On the other hand, when you encountered moving environs in previous runs, you have acquired the knowledge of the possible presence of the moving elements in the environment. In other words, the knowledge of the environs shapes your attunement to that particular environment, as I describe in my fieldnotes:

> *At some point during our run alongside the canal, we approach a female cyclist who coaches the rowing boat from the quayside. She holds a megaphone in her hand while she keeps up with the boat. I see the megaphone but I do not mention it to Martijn; she does not use it. "Martijn, we're encountering a cyclist", I say when she approaches us. Suddenly, she starts speaking through the megaphone and Martijn startles. "Jesus, what is that?!" "Sorry Martijn, she uses a megaphone to coach the rowing boat".*

Ever since I am focused on megaphones. Every time we run alongside the canal, I focus on megaphones when we encounter rowing boats and their coaches on bicycles. In other words, I sense the environment and attune my sensation to my knowledge of this environment. In line with the megaphones, I am now very much aware of my translation of the presence of poles:

> *Marit: Ok, Martijn. Speed bump up… and down. Yes, done! Here, we run in between them. Martijn: In between what, Marit?* (Martijn laughs) *This would be a real blind person's response to your instructions, Marit. But no worries, I know there are two poles here, one on the left side, one on the right side. But you should say: we run in between the poles*.

The acquired knowledge of the environs results in the gain of confidence in the bodily movements of both runners. When both runners know what is coming, they know how to attune to the environs and how this shapes the bodily movements. This is explained by runner Pim:

> *If you run a familiar track with someone, you see that he is more confident because he knows what is coming. He knows every pavement and every turn. In an alien environment, that is not the case. When you run in an alien environment, it means that you have to trust the guide's instructions even more. That costs a lot of energy!*

Since sensing and translating the environs and the attunement of the bodily movements to it takes a lot of energy and courage of both runners, some runners decide to run in a setting that minimalizes encounters in the environment. In this view, some runners prefer to run on a treadmill or a running track. For example, runner Jos does not feel safe anymore to run through the streets or a park nowadays, because the ignorance and carelessness of others often endangered him:

> *I wear a Running Blind jacket but some people just do not recognise or do not notice it. Sometimes, people just do not leash their dogs and do not think about the consequences for me and my buddy. After a while, I decided to run on a treadmill at the gym. There, I do not have to worry about these things.*

To minimalize encounters in the environment, a running track is useful for running duos since it eliminates possible hazards in the environment, like speed bumps, holes and oncoming traffic. A running track has more advantages: it has an even ground; the lines mark the running route which is some runners still distinguishable from the path, and the turns are always in the same direction. This makes a running track the safest way of running, according to Running Blind trainer Leon. Feeling safe and confident during a run does not solely depend on the physical environment; it is also dependent on the presence of other runners in that environment. Like runner Jos describes, he feels more confident and safe in an environment without others who are careless or ignorant according to him. An environment in which runners can avoid encounters with unconsciously incompetent passers-by are Running Blind training practices and meetings for runners and their buddies at sports clubs. Before the outbreak of the Covid-pandemic, sports clubs provided the Running Blind runners with an environment that is adjusted to their running practice. The sports clubs provide buddies and tools in order to practise blind running. Moreover, the exercises and the instructions are adjusted to the practices and needs of blind running and all the runners are familiar with translating the environs and attuning this into bodily action. As Running Blind coach Leon explains during an interview:

> *I can train these runners because they are in the same boat. They all have visual impairments and the group is founded on that common ground. That is the basis of my training practices because their starting situation is equal.*

A Running Blind training is thus a more adjusted environment to which runners attune their running body. For this reason, a lot of runners expressed during interviews that they missed the safety and stability of the training sessions during the lockdown. They pointed out that because all people in the training learn to sense the environment, to translate it for the runners and eventually to attune their bodies to these environs, it creates a sphere in which people feel welcome, understood and appreciated, as runner Ramon enthusiastically points out in an interview:

> *We are a very cheerful, enthusiastic group of runners. We respect each other. We have fun together. We also make jokes like: "Look over there!!"* (Ramon laughs loudly). *I remember an incident: a buddy and a runner in front of me stopped running but did not mention it. Of course, I bumped into them. Then they said: "Why don't you watch out!"* (Ramon laughs even more loudly). *That is how we treat each other.*

The common ground, or to say, having a visual impairment, is a foundation to regain confidence in the running skills but also in the self as a human being. People with visual impairments, rather people with impairments in general, face limitations, stigmas and exclusion from a variety of spheres in society. People with visual impairments do not solely face barriers based on body normative ideas in sport but also because they are not able or less able to sense visually, which is 80 per cent of the world's

environs, as pointed out by runner Pim during an interview. That is to say, people with visual impairments miss out or get just a little grasp of 80 per cent of the environs, like signs, texts, objects but also movements like nodding and pointing. In sports practices, it is thus important to adjust to these sensations of the environment. During Running Blind practices, the instructions of the trainer must be adjusted to the senses, as runner Pauline describes during an interview:

> *My trainers have become proficient in expressing themselves verbally. That is to say, they do not solely show how to do an exercise, but they also express very precisely in words how to do it. It is also very useful that the trainer puts me in the right position by touching my hip, for example. It is thus very physical and it is thus important to not feel shy or awkward about it. Training is very physical.*

In line with Pauline's description of the adjusted environment of the training sessions, runner Mia explained during an interview how the adjustments are very important to gain knowledge about her own sporting body and its capacities:

> *We need different standards. I cannot do what you can do, Marit. I will never be like a sighted person.*
> *I do not have the same tempo or skills. Of course, I want it, but I will face limitations. Thus, I draw my own lines. There comes a time that I find myself and become myself. I have always loved to practise sports and I know I can do it. This is how I have been raised and want to be.*

A sports environment that is more attuned to the sensations of the runners, like a Running Blind training practice, thus creates a ground to improve confidence and trust in the runner's body. Moreover, it is a ground to create an appreciation of the running body. In such an environment, runners learn how to attune their bodily movements to the environs. This results in feelings of acceptance and appreciation of the running body. In other words, it strengthens people's feelings of celebrating the running, visual impaired body and the acquired running skills.

Conclusion

The elements in the environment, or environs, are very important to the bodily experience of tethered running. Runners sense the environment and translate it into an attunement that shapes the running body. Hereby, the environs and the beings within the environments are always relational. An environment thus does not exist without the beings in it and the beings within it are attuned to it (Ingold 2005: 6). In other words, an environment is experienced, felt and dealt with by its present beings that have attuned their bodily movements to the environs. During Running Blind runs, the attunement to the environs and the shaped bodily movements are mutually sensed and create a shared experience. This shared bodily experience is an experience of inclusion in the sense that both runners are valued shapers and co-creators of the practice and the lived reality of the run. To put it differently, the attunement of the tethered bodies to the environment is a shared and co-created experience that values, rather asks, for mutual communication about and through the sensations, the running skills and

the present environment. This understanding of sports inclusion in relation to the environment gives a different dimension to sports inclusion as the institutional discourse in regards to creating inclusion in the mainstream sports context through the implementation of the governmentally formulated sets of guidelines. Instead of presuming that the environment of a mainstream, ableist sports setting should be the norm and is inclusive when introducing athletes with impairments (Bruins et al. 2018), this chapter shows that the personal and joint attunement to the environment shape feelings of inclusion, appreciation and belonging. To put it differently, environments are sensory realities that lead to shared understandings (Carter 2018: 47) and eventually lead to feelings of inclusion. In this understanding, the relationship between the runner and the buddy is important to the creation of feelings of inclusion. In the process of translating the environs; sharing this with the runner; attuning it into bodily movements and shaping mutual feelings of appreciation and inclusion, the buddy plays an important role and is crucial to understand running as lived, bodily experience.

Chapter Three- Running Blind Buddies

Two minutes of a Running Blind run, based on a soundscape. This soundscape is also analysed in the podcast:

Marit: Ok, here comes an unleashed dog on your left side.
Martijn: Oh yeah, here he is.
Martijn and Marit: Good morning!
Passer-by: Good morning!
Marit: That one came close; it was super enthusiastic with a stick in its mouth.
Martijn: Yes, but if you run further and do not pay attention to the dog, 9 out of 10 times, it will ignore you. Or it suddenly sees something and crosses your path (Martijn laughs).
Marit: (laughs) *Dogs are always so enthusiastic.*
Martijn: Yes, they have been to the park here. When I walk with Elphi in the park, I walk this way to return home. Elphi is always enthusiastic when we walk here. It is a nice park by the way!
Marit: Yes, it is and it is close to your home.
Martijn: It is! And you are allowed to unleash your dog here and they cannot escape. In the summer, they can swim here and there is a little beach.. well.. beach.. just some sand.
(Moped noise from the right side crossing us at the junction)
Marit: Let me see… yes.. we can go to the left now.
Martijn: yes, I hear! I always love this weather. It is a little cold now, but later it will be perfect!
Marit: Yes, I agree! I ran last weekend and… cyclists from behind us… yes, passed us... it was also super nice running weather last weekend!

While running tethered, Martijn and I talk about everything: the daily routines, the plans for the day, the family members, Running Blind news, last night's football match and news items, but also more sensitive topics like love, trust and the purpose of life. While we run and chat, I am constantly aware of our environment. While being focused on our conversation, I am simultaneously focused on the environs. While we run forwards, I visually scan the environment in front of us, besides us and behind us by turning my head. While I listen to Martijn's stories, I listen to the environment. I listen for cars, runners, cyclists, mopeds and rushing trains. When I talk to Martijn, I simultaneously talk about the environment. I interrupt my own sentence to translate a changing element in the environment into verbal instructions. Moreover, I interrupt Martijn when some element in the environment needs bodily attunement. I am not a natural multitasker, but buddy running enskills me in being a running, sensing centipede. You become skilled in focusing on and filtering the environment; distinguishing the main and side environs; translating the significant environs; attuning the bodily movements to it and having a conversation at the same time. Buddy running, therefore, consumes 20 per cent more of your energy, explained by runner Pim, and thus asks for the buddy to be physically fitter than the runner, as explained by Running Blind trainer Thea:

You have to be super concentrated as a buddy. While it is super nice to chat and talk about your daily life events, you have to scan the environment in order to avoid holes, for example. Thus, you have to be multifunctional. That is super tiring and therefore you need to have a

> *better physical condition than the other runner. You must be able to run faster, slower and longer, that is to say, you need to have a higher level of running. This is to compensate for the energy you need for the guiding.*

This means that, in an ideal situation, the only significant difference between the runners is the visual sensation of the environment. Besides seeing and translating the visual sensations, the runners ideally have a similar pace, physical condition and running skills. Herein, the buddy adjusts to the runner's capacities. In reality, however, it is sometimes difficult to flatten bodily differences between runners. For example, I am far from Martijn's running level what makes our runs adjusted to my physical condition and pace instead of his. From an athletic point of view, I am thus not a suitable buddy for Martijn. Nevertheless, I am Martijn's buddy because he was in need of a buddy and I signed up as a buddy at that time. Since Martijn was willing to train with me and improve my running level, we got matched. In the buddy-runner matching process, more barriers hinder an 'ideal match' between runners. On the one hand, buddies are volunteers. This means that they are free to sign up and sign out whenever they prefer. This results in an unstable buddy pool from which runners can draw and asks for adjustments to the availability of buddies. Moreover, Covid-19 hinders the running practices of Running Blind duos and the matching process. Since a lot of the buddies are somewhat older, they are considered a risk group. A lot of running duos decided, for this reason, to pause their runs and continue until they are vaccinated against Covid-19. For the younger, lower risk-group of runners, these practical considerations obstructed their running practices. Covid-19 also caused a stop in the influx of new buddies. In pre-Covid-times, the new buddies had to attend Running Blind training practices before their first run. This way, the trainers helped the buddy to get used to several running techniques and they gave instructions on how to guide a runner. According to runner Rob, it is very important to be trained in these buddy skills, because 'double seeing' is difficult and energy-consuming. Since training practices were cancelled during the lockdown, it was not possible to train new buddies. At first, it was thus not possible for me to become a buddy. I, however, became a buddy because Martijn needed a new buddy; he was willing to teach me the ins and outs of guide running and we immediately clicked when we met. The conditional resemblance of the runners is thus important, but a successful match depends on more aspects. That is to say, a fruitful buddy-runner match is also based on a click, trust and a consensus in regard to the communication. The creation of such an ensemble starts at the first encounter, as runner Rob describes:

> *There must be some sort of chemistry between the runners when they first meet. It is for both runners exciting and new since both are not familiar with each other's world. One is blind; the other is sighted; how do you deal with each other? Both runners might experience barriers in this encounter. It is up to the runners themselves to decide whether or not to they want to put effort into understanding each other's experiences.*

Subsequently, the runners discuss the mode of the communication prior, during and after the runs. This entails that the runners discuss explicitly what environs to mention, how to mention it and at what

moment. This is dependent on the runner's impairment and the runner's preferences, as briefly discussed in chapter two. To put it differently, the shape of the instructions is explicitly discussed prior to the first run. Discussing the modes of communication prior to the first run is important according to buddy Remco:

> *One of the most important things about being a buddy is to agree on the communication that is the most comfortable for both of you. You both have to feel comfortable in each other's presence and with the way of guiding. Buddy running is very touchy and physical; your bodies are always close to each other. Communication about physicality is thus very important. You also discuss the mode of the commands. When you turn, for example, to the right, you can say: 3..,2..,1.. right! When it is a slight turn, you can say: to the ríííííííííght!; when it is a sharp turn, you can say: right!*

Runner Ramon and his buddies also discuss the mode of communication prior to the first run. As he explains:

> *I do not need a lot of information when I run. My buddy knows that. I do need instructions about our directions, so if we go to the left or to the right. Also, I need instructions about speed bumps and manhole covers because you can trip over them. I do not need more than that.*

Prior to the first run, you also discuss how the runner communicates with the buddy. Some runners are still able to speak while running, while others prefer to communicate via their body, as runner Ramon explains:

> *Normally, I do not talk during a run. I give a thumbs up when I am ok or I shake my head when I am not ok. I think you can understand that talking and running at the same time is not doable* (Marit: *Actually, I do talk during runs*). *When I talk during a run, I run 8 kilometres per hour so…* (Ramon laughs) *talking and running at the same time… that is not for me.*

In my experience, it feels self-evident to discuss the modes of communication prior to the first run. When you first meet someone, it feels natural to ask in what way you can guide the runner. This way, both runners know what to expect from a run; how to communicate during the run and how to meet the other's needs. The discussion on the ways of communicating is the foundation of trust, respect and confidence. This is an open conversation about the runner's running experiences, the sensations of the running environment and the attunement of the running body. It emphasises the body as a site of knowledge about people's perception of things and properties and how they bring them into being. In other words, it is a way to understand each other's experienced running worlds. When the duo runs more often, the explicitly discussed modes of communication gradually transform into an implicitly, mutual attunement to the environment. Herein, the guide runner becomes skilled in giving commands and the runner knows which elements will be mentioned and which will the buddy will leave out. This is a ground for the two bodies to merge into one running body which is further explored in chapter four. On the contrary, it is for some duos not necessary to explicitly discuss the mode of communication prior to the first run. For example, for buddy Ann, who often runs with her daughter,

explicitly discussing commands and instructions is unnecessary since Anna and her daughter are familiar with each other's modes of verbal communications and bodily attunement:

> *When I run with my daughter, I speak a lot but I do not have to. Based on my body language, she knows exactly if something is coming. Due to the small changes in my running movement, she feels that the environment is changing. When I run with other people, I always discuss what to mention and what to leave out. Hereby, I need some time to get used to the new mode of communication. With my daughter, I do not have to.*

Anna and her daughter thus share inner, bodily knowledge about their running body, that is to say, they have implicitly understandings about each other's needs, preferences and bodily attunement. An explicitly discussed accordance regarding the buddy's communication is therefore redundant. For duos without this inner, bodily knowledge, it is also important to discuss the mode of communication during and after the runs. This namely opens up space for both runners to share their experiences of the run in general and their experiences with the translation of the environment. Both runners need to share their experiences in order to shape a technique of translation that feels comfortable for both runners, as buddy Anna describes:

> *It is of utmost importance to just do it and ask for feedback from the runner. This way, you learn how to give commands and how to feel comfortable about them.*

Giving commands is something I struggled with at first. I am not the kind of person who often speaks to others in the imperative. Before I became a buddy, I associated communication in the imperative with impolite, rude or hierarchical modes of speaking. When I ran with runner Joran, he commented on my mode of communication after several minutes:

> *Talk in commands, Marit! Use short sentences. Do not use a sentence with a beginning and an ending!*
> *Do not say: "We are approaching ground that is uneven and a little bumpy"; say: "Uneven ground".*

Despite I felt uncomfortable with the forceful side of commands, I have learned to introduce commands in my instructions since it contributes to the safety of the runs. If you guide a runner with full sentences, you might be too late to attune to the changing environs. For example, you might see that you are approaching a hole in the ground. When you decide that this hole is a significant changing element of the environment, you start to estimate when you translate it into verbal instructions. When you say: 'Within a few steps, there is a hole coming, so you have to make a big step in order to avoid it", you probably already passed the hole. Therefore, you might consider saying: "Hole in 3..,2..,1.., big step!". This way, you prepare the runner for the changing environs with clear and unambiguous instructions. This asks for the buddy to have a dominant attitude which felt uncomfortable to me at first. I have discussed this feeling with the other runners and they explained to me why this way of communication is important to the safety of the runs. Now that I understand the necessity of commands, I feel more comfortable giving commands and thus feel more comfortable in buddy skills

in general.

Feeling comfortable with the modes of communication and the responsibility you have as a buddy translate into feeling comfortable in each other's presence because you know you can trust each other. The feeling of trust develops along with the time you run, as Running Blind trainer Thea explains:

> *You have to learn how to give someone your trust. That comes along with the running experiences you have together. This way, a runner learns how to trust you. Running with a buddy for a longer period of time is the ground for real trust. He has to surrender because you are his eyes. However, that is a barrier for the runner of course. Those are skills you learn by doing it.*

Or as runner Ramon points out in an interview:

> *I have to adjust to the verbal translation of the buddy. To me, that is blind trust in the buddy and in sports in general. Trusting my buddy is pure relaxation.*

This pure relaxation, Ramon points out, arises from the blind trust in the buddy and is an important shaper of the joint experience of the run. The feeling of trust in the other runner; trust in your own and the other runner's running skills; the agreement on the mode of communication and successful experiences are a fruitful ground to create mutual attunement to the environment and mutual understandings of the running environment. In other words, trust and communication shape a shared feeling of being in this world as a runner.

Conclusion

Trust, the communication and the click between the runners are important to understand feelings of inclusion in the shared, bodily experience of Running Blind. Being physically tethered to a runner one trusts and understands shapes a fruitful ground to attune to the running environment and create a joint understanding of it. The running experience is, in this light, a co-created synthesis in the sense that both runners express their feelings and understandings of the run and the running skills, explicitly or implicitly agree on the mode of communication, and subsequently attune to the environment in a way both runners feel comfortable with. Blind running thus asks for reciprocal attunement and adjustments of both runners. In other words, blind running is reciprocity. This means that during a Running Blind run, the responsibility to adjust in order to practise and enjoy the run lies with the 'abled runner' and the 'disabled runner'. Understanding inclusion in sport as reciprocal synthesis provides a different lens regarding the understanding of inclusion in sports drawn from the sports inclusion discourses of the Dutch policies. Herein, the responsibility or the 'burden' to adjust to the inclusive sports setting is uneven, i.e., it lies with the athlete with the impairment and not with the athletes in the mainstream, ableist settings. In this light, inclusion in sports is achieved when athletes with impairments are introduced in the mainstream sports setting without changing or challenging its structures. Conversely, this chapter shows how feelings of togetherness, appreciation, and inclusion arise from a co-created

experience of running that asks for reciprocal adjustments. This co-creation defines the runners as living subjects experiencing the world (Romdenh-Romluc 2011: 14) and shapes feelings of inclusion into the tethered bodies of Running Blind runners as embodied beings in the world. In sum, reciprocity shapes feelings of inclusion in the bodily movements of running.

Chapter Four- Running Blind Bodies

> *Martijn hands me a fluorescent orange, cotton tether. "So, Marit, this is a Running Blind tether. Because I prefer to run on your left side, you hold it in your left hand between your thumb and index finger, or your index finger and middle finger, whatever feels most comfortable for you. I hold the other side of the tether. When we run, the tether is always between us. You have to make sure you move your arm because it will cramp otherwise. More importantly, when you move your arm, you can guide me with it. By pulling it gently, you can pull me in a certain direction. By pulling it firmly, you warn me and you make us stop". I hold the tether and I start to feel a little distressed. "What if I let you trip, Martijn?" Martijn laughs. "If I bump into a tree, I'll say: Marit, that's super silly, but if I stumble, no worries! You also stumble or slip sometimes. Things like that happen". I take the tether and hold it between my index finger and my middle finger. "Well, Marit, let's walk first so you can get used to it, later we'll start running."*

From the moment Martijn and I hold the tether, the tether provides a ground for our bodies to evolve from two separate running beings into one running being. Holding the tether means that we are not individual running bodies anymore but one holistic running body that translates the environment and attunes to it. The blurring of the bodily divisions is a process that emerges gradually based on shared experiences of the duo in the running environment. I experienced this gradual blurring of our bodily divisions while being a novice buddy. At first, I was very aware of separate our bodies; mine as separate from the other body. I was very much focused on my own body in our ensemble: how I held the tether; how I moved my left arm; how I saw the world and most importantly, how I translated that visual world for Martijn. By focusing on my own running practice and sensations of the environment, I felt like we, as tethered bodies, were mostly attuned to that running environment and subsequently I would prevent us from accidents or mishaps. During the time of running with Martijn, the separation between our bodies, which I experienced in order to guide us safely, gradually blurred and transformed our two running bodies into one attuned, running being. Even though we both have our sensory organs and our own proprioceptive awareness to sense the environs and ourselves, our bodies shape the sensations of the environs into one understanding and make us one sense-making being. In other words, our sensing, running ensemble shapes a synthesis of the total experience of running.

When two bodies run as one holistic, sensing and attuning body, the runners are proprioceptive aware of their tethered bodies running through the environment. When being proprioceptive aware, one experiences 'the sensation of body position and movement' (Tuthill & Eiman 2018: 194). Hereby, the proprioceptive awareness of the Running Blind body is connected to sensory organs, namely: you are aware of your moving arm while running and you feel the tether in your hand. These are not two different sensations: it is one holistic sensation of being tethered to the other runner. When the two runners are proprioceptive aware of this tethered Running Blind body, it shapes a ground to create shared experiences, understandings and sensations of the runs. That is to say,

the two bodies are tethered, sense the environment and subsequently attune to it as one holistic, proprioceptive aware and sense-making running body. This holistic Running Blind body is shaped by several aspects, as discussed in the previous chapters, namely: the mutual trust in the (visual) sensations of the environs; the mutual trust in the translation of the environs; the mutual trust in the moment of translation; the attunement of the instructions to the runner's impairment and preferences; the accordance in the mode of communication; an open dialogue before, during or after the run and an open-minded attitude regarding each other's sensory understanding of the world.

Grounded in these experiences, the two bodies run as one being through the environment and shape one understanding of being a Running Blind runner. A Running Blind experience is thus more than the sum of its parts since both runners actively contribute to the creation of a new, joint understanding. In other words, it is a co-created synthesis founded in the experiences of both runners. A synthetic understanding calls for discussing, illustrating and explaining one's experience in order for the other runner to grasp an understanding of the running experiences. This facilitates a ground to delve into the other's experiences while it also mirrors your own. It, furthermore, opens up a space for understanding how running bodies are gradually attuned to the world surrounding them and it exposes self-evident matters regarding your own sensory attunement, as I experienced myself during a run:

> *"Marit, close your eyes", Martijn tells me. I am baffled. "Trust me and try to run with your eyes closed". I look at the cycle path which is straight, paved and free of passers-by. I quickly scan the ground; it is free of branches, puddles of water and unleashed dogs. After my safety check, I dare to try to close my eyes although I feel utmost unease about it. After just a couple of seconds, I bump into Martijn and almost trip because I had lost control over my feet. I completely lost my sense of coordination with my eyes closed. I am astounded: I do not solely sense the world visually through my sight; it also coordinates me and moves me through it.*

Through this experience, I became proprioceptive aware of how my body runs through the environment based on my visual sensations. My sight moves me and translates visual environs into sensations and I lost both sensations when closing my eyes. At this moment, Martijn opened up a space for me to become aware of the movements of my body and how this is shaped by my visual sensations. Simultaneously, the proprioceptive awareness of my own running body and visual sensations provided me with a lens to get a grasp of Martijn's understanding of the run. These few seconds provided me with a ground to better understand how Martijn's running body is attuned to me and our environs. It showed me that we both have a different foundation of our bodily coordination and movement and that sensations shape understandings of the run. When we run tethered, our different sensations create, through an ensemble of the sense organs and proprioceptive awareness, a synthesis that results in a shared understanding of the world and a shared understanding of our body as one being in that world. It shapes a joint attunement to the world around us and explores how that world is attuned to us, or how Thomas Carter describes:

> ‘My senses do not just tell me what is surrounding my corporeal being nor where I am in the world; my senses also inform me as I run the state of my very being. The world, therefore, is not an unchanging object, as it is typically described, but endlessly relational to my own sensory being. It is made manifest only through a variety of views and our perception of it is made possible by our bodies’ (Carter 2018: 68).

Through the senses, runners thus create proprioceptive understandings of themselves and an understanding of the environs surrounding them. During the interviews, runners often pointed out this sensory understanding of the running body in the environment, as runner Henry explains:

> *I have run the Dam-tot-Dam run five or six times. During the runs, I knew where I was, because I was born and raised in Amsterdam. I know the route. There is this tunnel and I heard we were approaching it. You just hear that there is a tunnel coming. What a sensation to hear this tunnel and run through it; really amazing!*

Sensing and being aware of the running body in the environment is thus, like touch through the tether, also based on sounds and noises from the environs. When you run through the environment, you hear singing birds, rushing cars, greeting cyclists, barking dogs, your own breathing, the music through your earplugs, your own footsteps, an approaching tunnel and much more other environs. All these elements shape an understanding of the running environment and the self as being in it, but not all elements need attunement in the bodily movements. That is to say, when runners run through the environment, they translate significant sonic environs into attuned bodily movements. Sometimes, the environment needs sonic engagements but this is hindered, as I once experienced during a run:

> *Today, it was windy and rainy and these conditions always make it hard for Martijn to sense the environment sonically. The wind blocks ambient noise and this makes him more dependent on my verbal instructions. So today, I made sure I looked further ahead and more often over my shoulder. At some point, I looked over my shoulder and I saw a cyclist passing us from behind at the very last moment. I did not hear it coming because of the wind. “Martijn, cyclist from behind us”, I pointed out as quick as I could. “Wow, Marit, thanks, I did not hear it coming, did you?!” “No, I did not hear it coming either, I looked over my shoulder!” “Well done Marit, otherwise it would be a nasty surprise!”*

For runners in Running Blind duos, sonic sensations are thus very important to create an understanding of the run through the environment. By hearing, the runner is thus sonically engaged with the environment which shapes attunement to the world in the bodily movements, as runner Ramon, who is blind, and runner Joran, who is partially sighted, explain during an interview respectively:

> *When I run, my ‘sight sense’ is very strong. I listen to what is in front of me, behind me and next to me.*

> *I ‘see’ with my ears. I listen: from what direction is the noise? From where is the moped coming? If it approaches you from behind, I hear it before you can see it. That is also with smell and touch.*

These explanations show how sight and visual sensations are experienced differently for runners. When I use both my eyes and my ears to sense environs and attune my body to these visual and sonic sensations during a run, like I sensed the cyclist from behind us, Joran and Ramon use their sonic sensory organ, the ears, to grasp 'a visual sensation' of the surroundings. Of course, our sensations ground into different sensory organs but it shows how sensations are based on a sensory ensemble that shapes an understanding of the environs. Both runners obviate their sight organs by 'seeing' through the ears. That is to say, they attune their bodily movements to environs based on dominant sonic sensations to which I, as a sighted-runner, would attune to based on dominant visual sensations. The diverse sensations, in regards to encountering the environment and attuning to it, thus shapes the runners run through the environment. Through the senses and the bodily attunement to these sensations, runners learn how to run within a particular environment. The bodily movements are shaped by the runner's characteristics, namely if the runner is partially sighted or blind. If the runner is partially sighted, there are differences in the bodily movements between impairments regarding the visual acuity and the visual field. The characteristics of the visual impairment shape how the runner sense the environs and how he moves within it, like Running Blind trainer Thea explains:

> *There are differences in the way of running between someone who sees nothing and someone who sees a little. Someone who sees nothing searches for a kind of "false sense of security" by reducing the moment of suspension. This way, the foot is longer touched to the ground and this feels more secure for a blind runner. Conversely, someone who has a little sight, dares to raise the foot higher. He dares to take more risks and runs with a take-off, a landing and a moment of suspension. However, for a blind runner, it is really a false sense of security. If someone develops a shuffling running technique, every clinker-brick that is uneven with the road is an obstacle! They have to learn to take more risks because raising the feet reduces the number of obstacles. That is in fact the opposite of what they feel and this is the first thing I try to teach them. I can see from the bodily movement of a runner if someone is blind or partially sighted.*

The movement of the running body is thus shaped by the nature of the impairment, but also by the runner's own preference of sensing. Martijn always runs on my left side. For him, it is more comfortable to run on the buddy's left side. This does not have a logical explanation; it is a feeling that transformed into a habit. Having Martijn on my left side; holding the tether in my left hand and putting extra focus on the environs left developed in my running habit and shaped my understanding of a Running Blind run. For this reason, I felt somewhat unease when I met Rob who runs on the right side. Rob prefers to run on the buddy's right side, because this places the buddy between the runner and the possible hazards. This way, Rob can keep running while the guide runner avoids possible obstacles. When we had to trail in order to pass others safely, I speeded up my pace so I could run in front of Rob. When I have to trail with Martijn, he always slows down his speed and positions himself behind me. The guide runner is thus much more agile with Rob than he or she is with Martijn. Guide running is thus an attunement to the present environs but also both runner's bodily movements. When I run

with Martijn or Rob, I guide them with the orange Running Blind tether. This connects our running bodies and provides us with the possibility to move through the environs as one, tethered body. Herein, the tether shapes our sensory understanding of the environs around us. However, some runners prefer to run without a tether, like runner Joran. When I met Joran, I waited for him to hand me over the tether. However, he did not. He started running without a tether next to me. The fact that we were not tethered felt really uncomfortable for me and therefore I asked:

> *Marit: Joran, why aren't you running with a tether?*
> *Joran: Because I prefer to run without. I always run next to my buddy; I do not need a tether. Only during contests, then I run with a tether for safety issues.*
> *Marit: But how do I guide you?*
> *Joran: You can speak to me, can't you?*

Although we were not connected through the tether, our bodies moved through the environment as one holistic body. Like running with a tether, I had to translate the environment and attune our bodily movements to it. However, running with Joran asks for different forms of guidance. During a run with Joran, I have to translate environs in verbal instructions which I do not have to mention when I run tethered. For example, often Martijn and I encounter a puddle of water, a branch or faeces of horses which we avoid by pulling the tether. Hereby, the bodily attunement does not need verbal instructions. When I run with Joran, I have to translate environs more often into verbal instructions because I cannot guide him with the tether. That is to say, I need to verbally translate environs that I, in tethered runs, do not translate as significant environs. For this reason, I was significantly more out of breath and tired after the run with Joran. Running without a tether thus asks me to attune my buddy skills to the preferences and needs of Joran which was a physically conditional challenge for me. Running with or without a tether thus creates different translations of the environment, different bodily attunement and therefore defines the experience of a Running Blind run.

Besides the bodily movements and the proprioceptive awareness of the tethered bodies as one holistic running body, the experience of a Running Blind body is also shaped by the present characteristics of the environment. Since environments are changing, experiencing the Running Blind bodily ensemble and the world through running is always fluid, changeable and contextual. In other words, what we know about our running body and the world, is in motion itself. The characteristics of the environment concern significant changes in the environs and others reading the duo's presence. Firstly, changes in the environment shape the bodily movements and the joint experience of the run. Take for example the Covid-pandemic that prohibited people to practise sports within a 1.5-meters distance from other people. While people were encouraged by the government to stay healthy and fit by practising outdoor, solo sports, like running, the Covid-regulations obstructed Running Blind practices for several months since the tether does not foster the 1.5-meters distance. To adjust to the new environment, the Running Blind Foundation fabricated 80 Co-Runners. Running with the Co-Runner is, however, very different from running with the tether and it, therefore, needs time for both

runners to get used to it. For example, a Co-Runner changes the position of both runners; they have to run sequentially because they take up the path when running with distance which asks for new attunement to the environs, as runner Ramon explains:

> *I have started to experiment with the Co-Runner. The first time, I ran in front and my buddy had to guide me from behind: left, right, left, right. At some point, we swapped positions and we found out that this is way easier! For me, it is easier to manoeuvre with the Co-Runner, but it is important to tune the arm movement with the buddy. That is difficult!*

Changes in the environment shape the bodily movements of Running Blind duos and this asks for new forms of attunement. Some people gradually adjust to these shifting environs by running with the Co-Runner. However, not everyone feels comfortable to attune to the new environment. This is experienced during Running Blind training sessions, as explained by Running Blind trainers Leon and Thea respectively:

> *We ran with a stick but that was a fiasco. It is very unnatural and the thing was fragile. It did not feel safe because it fell apart the whole time. Then we thought: we will never do this again.*

> *As soon as people were allowed to run with the tether, all runners started to run with the tether again. At that time, the government decided that people with impairments were allowed to have a guide within 1.5-meter. However, this is always with mutual permission. Runners prefer a more direct contact and it is possible to miss information when running on distance. Moreover, guiding with the tether is more direct than with the Co-Runner, so this makes it harder to guide.*

Following these quotes, it becomes clear that bodily movements of blind running are shaped by attuning to changes in the environment. Besides attuning to the changing environment, the experience of a Running Blind run is also shaped by others reading the bodily presence of the running duo. While moving through the environment, blind running bodies are read, often implicitly judgementally, by others in that particular environment. They are, as Thomas Carter argues, not just 'living beings in the world, they are of the world precisely because they are subjects and object—perceiving and being perceived— simultaneously' (Carter 2018: 72). This reading and eventual valuation start with the first encounter. People can recognise the body of a Running Blind runner from a distance. People visually sense the tether or Co-Runner the ensemble uses. Moreover, others are able to recognise a Running Blind duo by the clothing. It is an unwritten rule for Running Blind runners to wear Running Blind clothes when running. Runners have a black shirt, or a white shirt with red parts at the sides and red sleeves. The winter clothing is white with orange tints. All shirts are printed with the Running Blind logo on the chest and on the back. This way, passers-by are able to recognise the runners as a blind runner. It is important according to runner Ramon:

> *We have Running Blind clothes and reflective jackets. 'BLIND', is printed on the front and back of these jackets in order to create awareness by others. Visibility while running is crucial.*

When others recognise the running bodies, they often respond to their presence subsequently. Some passers-by greet, nod or even wave at the running duo. Some of them yell encouraging words or give a thumbs up. Others do not respond but keep looking at the running duo. You see that they think and evaluate the presence of the Running Blind tethered ensemble. This occurs often with children. During runs with Martijn, we run through neighbourhoods with schools, sports club and playgrounds. Once we encountered two children playing with a ball and they stopped abruptly when we ran by. They looked at us and I saw them questioning and trying to get a grasp of what we were doing. Conversely to implicit responses to our Running Blind body, some people explicitly express their notice of our presence. During a run on the bicycle lane, we approached a cyclist who enthusiastically yelled to us:

Hahaha, that's nice to run with a tether! How much fun is that! (In Dutch: hoe gezellig is dat!)

These responses to our bodily presence mark us as different in the sense that we do not conform to the standards of a running body. Through others in the environment, a Running Blind duo becomes proprioceptive aware of their tethered bodies in that environment as different from the running norms. After these encounters, I asked Martijn how it made him feel, because it made me feel uncomfortable to be 'othered' based on our running body. Martijn understands this feeling; he used to feel othered or 'abnormal' during these encounters: *The tether really gives it a 'handicapped look',* as he explains. However, he does not want to pay attention to these encounters nowadays. Martijn enjoys running, getting fitter and faster, and preparing for contests. In other words, Martijn enjoys to be a runner and become a better one, even though the encounters made him feel uncomfortable and othered at first.

Conclusion

Blind running is very much a bodily affair. One might say that running is per definition a bodily practice but blind running gives this physicality extra dimensions. A Running Blind experience is, namely, a shared, bodily experience shaped by the buddy and the runner. The experience of a Running Blind run is a shaped co-creation of the runners' awareness of the environs, the runners' attunement to the environs and the runners' proprioceptive awareness of the tethered body as it is engaged in the physical activity of running. This shapes a ground in which two separate running bodies evolve into one holistic body which creates proprioceptive awareness of their Running Blind body. Herein, this body is a site in which runners sense the environs, sense themselves, attune to the present environment and shape their movements (Carter 2018). However, the Running Blind body is also a site that is shaped by the characteristics of the environment, that is to say, changes in the environment and others in that environment who sense and value the presence of the Running Blind body. This subsequently shapes the experience of the Running Blind body itself and the shared running practice. To put it differently, the shape of the running body, the way we make it move through the environment and its responses to others and changes in the environs create an understanding of how we emplace ourselves in regards to them.

The shared, bodily experience of Running Blind runs shapes an understanding of feelings of inclusion in sports as lived experiences. As Running Blind bodies move through the environment, they create a unified, whole loop of the sensation of the self as a significant running being. In other words, running is a joint understanding of sports and the sports world through a holistic ensemble of sense-making running bodies. Running Blind bodies thus shape feelings of togetherness, appreciation and inclusion in the practice of Running Blind as a bodily, lived experience. Following this understanding, this chapter provides a different lens on how to understand inclusion in sports as experienced through the body. In other words, feeling and 'doing' inclusion in sports are thus bodily affairs. The practice of Running Blind creates a space in which both runners feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences and feelings of the run in order for it to evolve into a holistic understanding of the world. This is a ground for 'doing inclusion' that is not based on adjustments to a mainstream, sports setting, that formulates the policy strategy to create inclusion in sports. Drawing from this chapter, the creation of feeling and doing inclusion is thus a shared and mutual process that asks for adaptations of both the 'abled runner' and 'disabled runner' in order to practise a Running Blind run. This provides an equal ground of the appreciation of the diversity regarding running bodies and shapes a ground to create shared understandings and experiences of running and being a runner.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis and the podcast "BUDDY'S" show how the practice of Running Blind provides insight into the understanding of sports inclusion as a lived, bodily experience. Through the conceptualisation of the body as a sensory and skilled site of knowledge, it gives a different perspective on institutional engagements in regards to the creation of an inclusive Dutch sports realm. In the research, I focused on how runners with visual impairments experience practices of sports inclusion (central research question). I have examined how government bodies and sports institutions construct 'sports inclusion' (sub-question 1); how these constructions are imbued with discourses regarding body normativity (sub-question 2) and how runners with visual impairments experience inclusive sports practices, like Running Blind, through the body (sub-question 3). Through a multimodal research approach, I explored the notion of sports inclusion in the adopted Sports Agreement at the national level, i.e., at the level of the Dutch national government and the local level, i.e., the Leiden municipality. Thereafter, I delved into the experiences of sports inclusion in daily sports practices of Running Blind runners and buddies. Examining both levels at which people actively deal with and shape notions of sports inclusion contribute to the understanding of it as a dominant discourse and a daily life sports experience.

As extensively discussed in Chapter One, inclusion in sports at the institutional level, is defined as a realm in which: '[…] we exchange adapted sports for inclusive sports and physical activity' (Bruins et al. 2018: 14). When reading this definition narrowly, sports inclusion concerns a drift from 'adapted sports' towards 'inclusive sports'. However, it becomes clear that in the daily practices of professionals working on the creation of inclusive sports spheres, people should not understand this definition narrowly. Rather, we see that professionals encourage people with impairments to practise adapted sports. According to the professionals, inclusion in sports is achieved when 'abled' and 'disabled' athletes practise their sports in the same sports environment, that is to say, the mainstream sports club (In Dutch: de reguliere sportvereniging). An inclusive sports club is thus an equivalent of a mainstream sports club shaped on ableist structures. This implicitly entails a process of the standardisation and normalisation of the mainstream sports setting that is inherently imbued with notions of normality and body normativity in sports. In other words, it asks for adjustments of the 'disabled' athletes to the structures of the ableist mainstream setting. However, saying a setting is inclusive does not mean that a setting is 'doing inclusive'. It is important not to claim or label a mainstream sports realm as 'being inclusive' when people inhabiting it are not committed to change social and material structures of inequality and injustice. Rather, we should critically consider what a sports setting needs to acknowledge and value the diversity in lived sports experiences and how people themselves experience inclusion in sport instead of presenting a hegemonic idea to which people should adjust.

The ethnographic chapters (Two, Three and Four) delve into experiences of sports inclusion in

the daily practices of Running Blind. During a Running Blind run, the runners are tethered and run as one holistic body through the environment. When both runners are attuned to each other's sensations and translations of the experienced environs and are attuned to the communication about them, the runners become proprioceptive aware of their running bodies as one sensing and attuning being in the running environment. This way, the runners become a whole part of the running world and that world becomes a whole part of them. Running, while being tethered, evolves as a co-created experience based on the joint sensations of the environs, the concordant communication between the runners and the attuned bodily movements. This ensemble of two separate running bodies, the one identified as 'abled', the other as 'disabled', actively shapes an understanding of sports inclusion, not because the sports are absorbed into the mainstream, ableist sports setting, but because the tethered ensemble comes to know the world and creates an understanding of that world through their holistic running body. In other words, running tethered creates a unified, whole loop of the sensation of the self as a significant running being and shapes sports inclusion as a bodily, lived experience.

To conclude, inclusion in sports, as it is formulated in national and municipal policies, is not per definition one-on-one experienced by its target groups in their daily sports practices. That is to say, the sets of guidelines regarding 'sports inclusion' is not a direct translation of the daily experiences of sports inclusion and vice versa. If institutions want to transform the sports setting into a realm in which everyone feels free to participate, I encourage people to critically consider inclusion language with its implicit biases of ableist sporting bodies in mainstream sports settings and to acknowledge that athletes have different bodily, lived experiences of inclusion. This means that in order to 'do inclusive', we have to change our discursive perception on the 'normal' sporting body, the 'mainstream' sports setting and the implicit movements towards inclusion. To end this thesis: I hope this thesis contributes to general awareness and understandings of the lived sports experiences of athletes with (visual) impairments in the Dutch 'inclusive' sports sphere and I hope readers will develop a critical eye towards our efforts to create a sports realm in which every sporting body is celebrated.

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Deze scriptie en de podcast “BUDDY’S” laten zien hoe hardlopen in Running Blind verband inzichten geeft in het begrijpen van sportinclusie als alledaagse, geleefde, lichamelijke ervaring. Aan de hand van de conceptualisering van het lichaam als plek van zintuigelijk kennis en vaardigheidskennis geeft het een andere invalshoek op het beleidskundig, institutionele idee van sportinclusie in Nederland. De centrale vraag in dit onderzoek luidt: ‘Hoe ervaren hardlopers met een visuele beperking, verbonden aan Running Blind, inclusie in sport? Deelvraag 1 luidt: ‘Hoe hebben overheidsinstanties en sportorganisaties het begrip ‘inclusie’ geconstrueerd? Deelvraag 2 is: Hoe zijn deze constructies doordrenkt met discoursen over lichaamsnormen? Deelvraag 3 luidt: Hoe ervaren hardlopers met een visuele beperking een inclusieve sport, zoals Running Blind, door en via het lichaam? Aan de hand van multimodale onderzoeksmethoden heb ik een poging gedaan te ontrafelen hoe sportinclusie wordt begrepen in de Sportakkoorden van de Nederlandse Rijksoverheid en de Gemeente Leiden. Vervolgens heb ik interviews gehouden met hardlopers met een visuele beperking en buddy’s om te onderzoeken hoe sportinclusie in de dagelijkse sportpraktijk ervaren wordt.

Hoofdstuk Eén beschrijft hoe sportinclusie wordt geformuleerd in de Nederlandse Sportakkoorden. Aan de hand van opgestelde richtlijnen doelt men op het creëren van een inclusieve sportsfeer. Hierin wordt inclusie dus beschouwd als top-down, lineair proces: van probleem-constatering, naar beleidsformulering, naar de implementatie, naar resultaten (Shore 2012: 3-5; Tate 2020). Het impliceert dus dat inclusie in sport te creëren is mits iedereen zich aan de richtlijnen houdt. Bij de analysering en het begrijpen van beleid en de beoogde ambities is het van belang te erkennen dat we niet te maken hebben met universele en neutrale richtlijnen; beleid is niet waardevrij of een objectieve waarheid. Echter, beleid is een product gebaseerd op menselijke doelen en wensen welke onderhevig zijn aan sociale en politieke structuren en machtsrelaties in de maatschappij (Foucault 1975; Shore 2012; Tate 2020). Om deze reden is het belangrijk om kritisch te zijn op de inhoud, terminologie en impliciete vanzelfsprekendheden in het beleid. Deze blik resulteerde in drie kritische noten ten opzichte van het inclusiebeleid:

1) Voor het creëren van een inclusieve sport en beweegsector in Nederland stelt het beleid dat aangepast sporten wordt ingeruild voor inclusief sporten. Als men deze ambitie ‘nauw’ leest, betekent dit het wegdrijven en uiteindelijk inruilen van aangepast sporten zodat een inclusieve sportsector ontstaat. Echter, uit de dagelijkse praktijk van professionals, die streven naar sportinclusie, blijkt dat men deze definitie niet ‘nauw’ moet hanteren. We zien zelfs dat aangepast sporten en bewegen wordt aangemoedigd door professionals zodat mensen aansluiting kunnen vinden bij het sport- en beweegaanbod in Nederland. Met andere woorden, aangepast sporten en bewegen gaat hand in hand met het creëren van sportinclusie, zoals een professional vertelt: *“Inclusief waar mogelijk, aangepast waar nodig”*. Een andere professional vertelt: *“Als je inclusie vertaalt als ‘samen sporten en bewegen’, zoals*

bijvoorbeeld Running Blind, dan zeggen wij: fantastisch als dat lukt, maar het is niet altijd een must. Er zijn ook mensen die lid zijn van een sportvereniging voor alléén mensen met een beperking. Die vinden dat prima en voelen zich daar fijn. Dat is ook goed! Inclusie moet niet iets zijn wat je koste wat kost wilt bereiken, omdat het maatschappelijk voor je gevoel het beste is". Uit deze praktijkvoorbeelden blijkt dus dat professionals niet streven naar het inruilen van aangepast sporten en bewegen. Met andere woorden, het sportbeleid en de dagelijkse praktijk bevat dus een inherente spanning.

2) Als aangepast sporten en bewegen wordt aangemoedigd om een inclusie in sport te bereiken, wat maakt een inclusieve sportsetting dan anders dan een aangepaste sportsetting? Volgens professionals is een inclusieve sportsetting een setting waarin zowel sporters met en zonder beperking samen sporten in een reguliere sportvereniging. Dit betekent dus dat er bij 'de sportvereniging om de hoek' sportaanbod is voor zowel mensen met en zonder beperking, zoals een professional vertelt: *"Inclusief betekent iedereen; bij aangepast sporten zit er een aanpassing in. Dan is het dus niet inclusief sporten. Tenzij er bedoeld wordt: we bieden aangepast sporten aan binnen de vereniging waardoor iedereen 'inclusief' is binnen de vereniging. Bijvoorbeeld, als een korfbalvereniging een aangepast team heeft, die op een normale manier betrokken is bij een verenigingsfeest of verenigingsactiviteit, dan vind ik het inclusief!".* Met andere woorden, een inclusieve sportclub is een equivalent van een reguliere sportvereniging waar vervolgens sporters met een beperking worden geïntroduceerd. De basis van een inclusieve sportvereniging is dus de reguliere vereniging die gebouwd is op structuren passend bij sporters zonder enige beperkingen. Als men dit analyseert, impliceert het creëren van een inclusieve sportwereld het standaardiseren en normaliseren van de reguliere sportsetting waarin sporters met een beperking welkom worden geheten. In de transitie naar een inclusieve sportwereld worden dus de reguliere sportstructuren als ideaal en inclusief voor iedereen gepresenteerd. Een ideale, inclusieve sportvereniging presenteert dus impliciet een normatief beeld van sporten en bewegen waar sommige sporters niet per definitie inpassen; een sporter met een beperking zal zich moeten aanpassen aan de structuren van de reguliere vereniging waar hij of zij reeds exclusie van ervaart. Alomvattend, het streven naar inclusie in sport is doordrenkt met waarderingen over lichaamsnormen en structuren in sport.

3) Men moet kritisch zijn naar claims over 'inclusie'. Als een reguliere sportvereniging de richtlijnen van het beleid volgt en dus als inclusief gezien kan worden, voelt en doet deze dan ook inclusief? Met andere woorden, voelt iedere sporter zich welkom, gewaardeerd en erkend als louter het sportaanbod divers is maar de algehele, valide structuren van de club niet veranderen? Betekent 'inclusief-zijn' hetzelfde als 'inclusief-doen'? Dit wordt geïllustreerd door een hardloper met een visuele beperking: "*Ik heb geroeid in een reguliere roeiverenging, maar daar ben ik weg gescholden en wilde de trainster de verantwoordelijkheid niet voor mij*

nemen. Vervolgens heb ik 20 jaar niets meer gedaan omdat ik finaal was afgeknapt op sporten en nu merk ik gewoon: aangepast sporten is mijn plek, want ik kom niet mee met de valide sport! Dan moet ik zo op mijn tenen lopen". Een reguliere sportvereniging met aanbod voor mensen met een beperking doet dus niet altijd inclusief. Met andere woorden, het is van belang dat mensen niet zomaar claimen dat een sportvereniging inclusief is zonder dat de inherente, algehele structuren van ongelijkheid, uitsluiting en exclusie worden aangepakt. Enkel wanneer mensen bereid zijn deze structuren aan te vechten, kan dit leiden tot een sportomgeving waarin iedereen een leven lang plezier heeft aan sporten en zich erkend en welkom voelt.

Als 'inclusief-zijn' en 'inclusief-doen' niet altijd een één-op-één vertaling is, hoe kunnen we het gevoel van inclusie dan het beste begrijpen? Met deze vraag in het achterhoofd kan inclusie beter worden begrepen als een alledaagse, geleefde ervaring dan een product van nagevolgde richtlijnen. De etnografische hoofdstukken Twee, Drie en Vier beschrijven deze ervaring van sportinclusie tijdens het hardlopen in Running Blind verband. Uit gesprekken met hardlopers met een visuele beperking en buddy's blijkt dat inclusie leeft in verhalen, ervaringen en gevoelens die ontstaan tijdens het hardlopen in Running Blind-verband. Tijdens het hardlopen zijn de twee hardlopers verbonden aan een lintje of een Co-Runner en rennen als één holistisch lichaam door de omgeving. De buddy scant de omgeving en geeft instructies om het duo vervolgens daarop af te stemmen. Zo benoemt de buddy tegemoetkomende fietsers, laaghangende takken, plassen, drempels, een veranderende ondergrond, wildroosters, loslopende honden en tal van andere elementen in de omgeving. Tijdens het hardlopen vertaalt de buddy dus de visuele waarnemingen in verbale instructies zodat het duo hierop kan anticiperen. Met andere woorden, de buddy is tijdens het hardlopen de ogen van de andere hardloper. Wat de buddy wel en niet benoemt, is in overeenstemming met de hardloper. Sommige hardlopers willen alleen de noodzakelijke factoren horen, zoals 'loslopende hond'; anderen willen meer details van de omgeving horen. Ook de manier hoe er gecommuniceerd wordt, is een overeenstemming tussen de hardlopers. Zo kan de buddy een aftelsysteem gebruiken zoals '3..2..1.. drempel op!' of een stappenindicatie zoals 'nog 10 stappen en dan gaan we naar rechts'. Het bereiken van een overeenstemming in de communicatie vraagt van beide hardlopers een open-minded verdieping in elkaars belevingen en zintuigelijke waarnemingen, zoals een hardloper vertelt in een interview: "*Het is voor beide hardlopers spannend, omdat je niet bekend bent met elkaars wereld. De één is blind; de ander is ziend, hoe ga je dan met elkaar om? Beide hardlopers kunnen hierin drempels ervaren. Het ligt aan de mensen zelf of zij moeite willen steken in het begrijpen van elkaars ervaringen".*

Naast het verdiepen in elkaars werelden, is het vertrouwen tussen de hardlopers belangrijk tijdens blind running. Zo moeten buddy's vertrouwen hebben in zichzelf als buddy. Dit betekent dat de buddy vertrouwen moet hebben in zijn of haar vaardigheden in het scannen van de omgeving; het vertalen van de belangrijke elementen naar verbale instructies en het anticiperen van de lichamelijke bewegingen op deze elementen. De hardloper vertrouwt op zijn beurt de buddy als 'zijn ogen', zoals

een hardloper vertelt tijdens een interview: *"Het is aanpassen en luisteren naar wat je buddy zegt. Voor mij is dat blindelings vertrouwen in het sporten"*. Daarnaast zegt een buddy: *"De hardloper moet op gegeven moment leren om de buddy te vertrouwen. Dat komt met de ervaringen die je met elkaar hebt opgedaan. Nadat je een aantal keren met elkaar hebt hardgelopen krijgt een hardloper pas écht vertrouwen in de buddy. Die moet zich leren overgeven aan de buddy, want die is op dat moment zijn ogen".* De ervaringen van blind running zijn dus gebaseerd op wederzijds vertrouwen in elkaars vaardigheden. Wanneer beide hardlopers afgestemd zijn op elkaars waarnemingen, elkaars vertalingen van waargenomen omgevingsfactoren en elkaars vormen van communicatie, dan worden de hardlopers proprioceptief bewust van hun beide lichamen als één waarnemend, afgestemd, hardlopend lichaam. Op deze manier wordt hun hardlopende lichaam één met de omgeving en die omgeving wordt één van hen. Met andere woorden, hardlopen aan een lintje wordt een gezamenlijk gecreëerde ervaring gebaseerd op gezamenlijke waarnemingen, overeenstemming in de communicatie tussen de hardlopers en de afgestemde, lichamelijke bewegingen. Het samenspel tussen de twee, apart rennende lichamen, één 'hardloper met een beperking, één 'hardloper zonder beperking', construeert inzichten en persoonlijk besef over sportinclusie in de dagelijkse sportpraktijk; niet omdat aangepast sporten wordt geïntroduceerd in reguliere sportverenigingen maar omdat beide lichamen de sportwereld duiden en waarderen via hun verbonden, holistische lichaam.

Kortom, sportinclusie, zoals het wordt beschreven in nationaal en gemeentelijk beleid, wordt niet per definitie één-op-één ervaren door de doelgroepen in de dagelijkse sportpraktijk. Sportbeleid is dus geen directe vertaling van de inclusie-ervaringen in de praktijk en vice versa. Het is dus belangrijk om te erkennen dat sportinclusie geen objectieve, via beleid te realiseren, realiteit is, maar een geleefde ervaring die gevormd is door het samenspel tussen sportende lichamen tijdens de sportbeoefening. De gezamenlijke, lichamelijke ervaring van Running Blind vormt gevoelens van inclusie als geleefde ervaringen. Als Running Blind hardlopers samen rennen, creëren zij gedeelde ervaringen over sporten en bewegen en de wereld eromheen. Met andere woorden, blind running creëert gezamenlijke inzichten in sport door het holistische ensemble van de hardlopers. Op basis van wederzijds vertrouwen, een open houding ten opzichte van elkaars ervaringen en overeenstemmingen in de manieren van communiceren, creëren de hardlopers dus samen de ervaring van blind running. Inclusie is, met andere woorden, een co-creatie gebaseerd op het samenspel tussen gelijkwaardige hardlopers.

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Appendix (Bijlage)

A. Itemlijsten voor de semigestructureerde interviews met professionals

1. Introductie
    a. Wilt u uzelf voorstellen en vertellen wat voor werk u doet?
    b. Hoe bent u met dit werk in aanraking gekomen?
    c. Wat is uw affiniteit inzake sporten voor mensen met een beperking?
2. Werkzaamheden:
    a. Wat houdt uw functie in?
    b. Wat maakt uw werk belangrijk?
    c. Wat hebben mensen met een beperking volgens uwnodig?
    d. Zijn uw werkzaamheden beïnvloed/veranderd na het aannemen van het nationaal of de lokale sportakkoorden?
    e. Wat doe u in je functie voor mensen met een visuele beperking?
    f. (Betreft RB trainers) Welke technieken zijn belangrijk tijdens Running Blind?
    g. (Betreft RB trainers) Welke technieken zijn belangrijk voor buddies?
    h. (Betreft RB trainers) Welke technieken zijn belangrijk voor hardlopers met een visuele beperking?
    i. (Betreft RB trainers) Valt alles te trainen? Of moet er ook een natuurlijke klik zijn tussen de hardlopers?
    j. (Betreft RB trainers) Kan iedereen een buddy worden?
    k. (Betreft RB trainers) Welke invloed heeft corona op Running Blind?
    l. (Betreft RB trainers) Hoe is de sportclub betrokken bij Running Blind?
3. De organisatie
    a. Waar staat de organisatie voor?
    b. Wat doen jullie voor mensen met een beperking?
    c. Waarom bestaan jullie als organisatie?
    d. Wat hebben mensen met een beperking volgens de organisatie nodig?
    e. Werken jullie met inzichten vanuit de doelgroep zelf? Hebben mensen met een beperking invloed op de organisatie?
    f. Wat doet de organisatie voor sporters met een visuele beperking?
    g. (Betreft beleid) Hoe zag het sportbeleid van Leiden eruit vóór het Sportakkoord?
    h. (Betreft beleid) Waarom is het Leiden akkoord pas in 2020 aangenomen?
    i. (Betreft RB trainers) Hoe is Running Blind verbonden aan de sportclubs?
4. Sportinclusie:
    a. Wat versta u onder ‘inclusie’?
    b. Wat maakt het domein ‘sport’ geschikt voor het creëren van inclusie?
    c. Is iedere sport geschikt voor het creëren van inclusie?
    d. Waarom is inclusie in sport een ‘big deal’ en de focus van beleid? Leidt het tot maatschappelijke inclusie in zijn totaliteit?
    e. Denkt u dat inclusie binnen sport mogelijk is?
    f. Waarom is inclusie in sport wenselijk?
    g. Wat is de positie van Nederland inzake sportinclusie ten opzichte van andere landen?
    h. Wat is de rol van beeldvorming in het creëren van inclusie in sport?
    i. Hoe ziet een sportwereld eruit met ‘sport voor iedereen’?

B. Itemlijsten voor de semigestructureerde interviews met hardlopers

1. Introductie
    a. Wilt uzelf voorstellen en vertellen welke sporten u beoefent?

   b. U hebt een visuele beperking. Hoe zou u die omschrijven?
   c. Bent u geboren met deze visuele beperking of heeft u die op latere leeftijd verkregen?
   d. Welke woorden gebruik u om de visuele beperking te omschrijven; handicap, beperking, blind, etc.?
2. Sporten:
   a. Waarom sport u?
   b. Bent u altijd al zo sportief geweest?
   c. Sport u alleen of in een groepje?
   d. Sport u op een club of in een verenging?
   e. Beoefent u aangepaste sporten? Zo ja, wat verstaat u daaronder? Welke aanpassingen zijn er?
   f. Doet u binnen de club nog andere activiteiten dan alleen het sporten, bijvoorbeeld bardiensten/evenementen organiseren etc.?
   g. Sport u met meer mensen die blind of slechtziend zijn? Of sport u met zienden?
   h. Voelt u zich welkom in de club? Zo ja, waarom? Zo nee, wat maakt dat u zich niet welkom voelt?
   i. Sport u liever met mensen in een reguliere sportclub of met een groep met andere sporters met een visuele beperking?
   j. Wat voor aanbod heeft de club voor mensen met een beperking?
3. Running Blind
   a. Hoe lang bent u al hardloper bij Running Blind? En hoe vaak loopt u hard in de week/maand?
   b. Loopt u met een lintje of loopt u zonder lintje? En heeft u wel eens met een Co-Runner gelopen?
   c. Hoe vindt u het hardlopen samen met een buddy?
   d. Wat moet een buddy hebben zodat u zich fijn voelt tijdens het hardlopen?
   e. Welke technieken zijn belangrijk voor buddy's?
   f. Valt alles te trainen? Of moet er ook een natuurlijke klik zijn tussen u en de buddy?
   g. Kan iedereen een buddy worden?
   h. Welke invloed heeft corona op Running Blind?
   i. Hoe is de sportclub betrokken bij Running Blind?
   j. (Betreft buddy) Waarom bent u buddy geworden?
   k. (Betreft buddy) Wat vindt u van buddy-en?
4. Zintuigelijke ervaring
   a. U hebt een visuele beperking; mist u dat in de beoefening van de sport?
   b. Welke zintuigen zijn belangrijk bij het beoefenen van de sport?
   c. Als 'ziende sporter' denk ik dat geluid en tast voor u belangrijk zijn bij het sporten, bent u het daarmee eens?
   d. Hoe speelt de omgeving een rol bij het beoefenen van uw sport?
5. Sportinclusie:
   a. Bent u bekend met het Nederlandse sportbeleid omtrent inclusie?
   b. Wat verstaat u onder 'inclusie'?
   c. Wat maakt het domein 'sport' geschikt voor het creëren van inclusie?
   d. Is iedere sport geschikt voor het creëren van inclusie?
   e. Hoe kan beleid ervoor zorgen dat een sportclub inclusiever wordt?
   f. Hoe kan beleid ertoe bijdragen dat u zich meer welkom voelt in een sportclub?