



SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES. A CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Social Change through Sport for Development Initiatives. A Critical Pedagogical Perspective

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Summary

In many Western societies, a growing number of young people are socially vulnerable regarding one or more societal institutions (e.g. family, school, labour market) and/or are socially excluded (e.g. school, leisure, healthcare). These socially vulnerable and/or socially excluded young people have been failed by various institutions and a broad range of social policy intrusions. This has left many of them in poverty, uneducated, jobless and without hope and opportunity. In the context of the dismantling of the welfare state, the idea of citizenship has changed. Where it used to be focused on various social, political and economic rights, it is now narrowed down to individual obligations and duties, for example to take appropriate steps to manage one's own behaviour and well-being. Depoliticization acts in parallel to this development, sometimes rendering collective conditions of experience into personal problems, and displacing political and economic decisions into individual failings and responsibilities. The 'problem of youth' (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunities) is reframed and pathologized in the mainstream as 'young people as deficient' (e.g. regarding their character, resilience) that 'need to be fixed' by engaging them in interventions or trajectories to develop their attitudes, behaviour, skills and competencies. However, such a view distracts from the deficiencies within the social system and from the dismantling of welfare institutions. Associated with the good citizen image, is a judgemental 'blaming-the-victim' discourse on those who fail to be responsible for themselves and take part in society. Such a depoliticised frame reproduces the status-quo of social inequalities, welfare state dismantling and individual responsibility discourses and stands in the way of more progressive structural social change and transformation. This wider societal picture is vital to understand our field of study (i.e. sport for development) which I will discuss more in depth further on.

Therefore, in order to step away from harmful discourses, welfare state dismantling and social problems, and facilitate processes of empowerment and re-engagement of youth regarding various social institutions and social domains, a critical reframing of our research lens is most welcome to re-imagine alternative ways of *thinking about* and *working with* youth. To a great extent, this PhD draws on critical theory and alternative approaches that work towards social justice and meeting young people's needs and, at the same time, challenge harmful ways of thinking about and working with young people and their communities. One of the central critical theories is critical pedagogy, which underpins the development of nuanced forms of pedagogies that take account of specific needs identified by young people and practitioners. From a critical perspective, critical pedagogy makes it possible to ask critical questions about the relationships between injustice, power, privilege, politics and education. Critical pedagogy aims to contribute to a better understanding of how people can create spaces that are free of the dominant socially harmful and excluding discourses and practices and how the critical agency of people can be enhanced. By *reframing* the research lens through critical politicised theory, it becomes possible to look at and analyse present practices and *re-imagine* the workings of (other) policies, institutions, practices and pedagogies as they relate to young people in socially vulnerable and/or socially excluded situations. A critical pedagogical lens can be applied to a variety of educational 'spheres' such as schools, art and literature, music, public space and the media. It can be argued that sport may also be seen as an educational sphere.

In neighbourhoods and communities with low living conditions, it is increasingly believed that sport has the potential to reach a large number of people and that it can be used as a vehicle to address a variety of social problems such as poverty as well as to achieve non-sport social and developmental

objectives. The numerous rhetoric, policies and initiatives that have used sport for 'social change' and 'development' became known as 'Sport for Development' (SfD) (or 'Sport for Development and Peace' (SDP)). For more than two decades, the field of Sport for Development (SfD) has received significant attention from national and international sport organisations, government agencies, corporate and non-profit organisations, universities and schools around the world. Regarding the concept of 'development' (in 'sport for development'), various researchers stated that the concept is vague, has a contested character and is complicated, poly-vocal and open to several interpretations. Therefore, the concept of SfD has been defined in reference to individual, community, and societal levels, as well as in reference to several outcomes such as personal development, community cohesion and social integration. In recent years, the assumed potential of SfD initiatives to achieve broader social change has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny. Critical researchers distinguish two types of approaches to SfD practice, policy and research: a dominant, more instrumental and often positivist approach which implies *solutions* to development inequalities, integrate people into an inequitable world and therefore reproduces relations of power and social inequality, and an alternative, more critical (politicised) and descriptive approach, which *asks how* sport aligns with, or diverges from and thus transforms structures of inequality.

A first key issue in SfD is that, similar to the broader societal discourses described in the above introduction, the assumptions underlying many SfD initiatives are grounded in a self-control or 'deficit-model' of youth. Critical and problematising questions about this deficit model are hardly asked in both policy and public debates, and even sport (for development) research has sometimes failed to do so. It could be questioned and tested if young people are indeed uniformly 'deficient' – in line with the dominant conceptions of 'development' – and therefore in need of individual development.

Building upon this deficit model of youth, a second key issue is that there is a widespread belief that sport participation automatically and inevitably contributes to youth development because sport's assumed essential goodness, purity and positive effects are passed on to those who participate. This had been called the 'deficit-reduction model'. Although people who favour more progressive and structural social and institutional change find paternalistic and moralising programs to be ineffective, the deficit-reduction model remains consistent with the dominant narrative about positive personal development of youth in North America, Australia, New Zealand and some European nations. While SfD researchers have observed and criticised that policies, practices and programs tend to selectively emphasise assumed individual deficits and overstate the (individual) developmental change through sport, this is less often empirically and critically investigated, making analysis of this type valuable in complementing such theoretical critiques. Many of the existing studies have limitations: there are mostly focused on the 'Global south' and on ditto populations, consist of small datasets, only conduct one measurement, and do not interpret findings from a broader, critical and qualitative point of view. Thus, these limitations can be addressed and a systematic assessment of both young people's assumed deficits (needs) and their developmental change through sport can indicate (and confirm) if the assumptions that lie behind the deficit-reduction model are true or faulty.

Still, research on the relationship between sport participation and positive youth development outcomes has led researchers to conclude that this relationship is contingent and varies with combinations of multiple contextual factors, educational components and pedagogical processes. However, the use of theoretical approaches, models and frameworks is far from consistent. While many theories have been used within SfD research, the two most used theories are Positive Youth Development and Social Capital Theory. Although these frameworks can be valuable in helping people fit mainstream society, in departing from more community-focused conceptions, these frameworks

may be viewed as less politicised and less likely challenging to the status quo of marginalization compared to more critical frameworks. By using such less politicised theories, researchers are more likely to produce findings that reproduce the dominant ways of thinking about young people (i.e. as 'deficient') and development (i.e. individual-focused, instrumentally achievable), and working around their development. Again, such instrumental approaches are needed but their predominance in the research field of SfD suggests that research that challenges the dominant logic, imagination and practices of SfD remains relatively rare. Therefore, there remains a need for critical research and theory that identifies the processes through which sport participation is (or is not) linked with subsequent forms of socio-political development, civic engagement and efforts to produce progressive community, institutional and social change transcending the lives of particular individuals.

Considering the above, the importance of approaches that explicitly politicise research is increasingly recognised. Although many politicised theories could be employed to approach SfD policy, practice and research (e.g. political economy, governmentality, feminism, Marxism or anticolonialism), several researchers have argued to connect SfD to the educational philosophy of critical pedagogy (see above) and youth organizing. Youth organizing encompasses a process that brings young people together to define and talk about the most pressing issues in their communities, build individual and collective leadership, conduct research on these issues and possible solutions, and to follow through with social action to create community-level and institutional change. This transformative intention draws on a diversity of traditions of activism, collective action and related theoretical frameworks, such as the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. While such critical investigations regarding the underlying pedagogies and educational philosophies of SfD initiatives have been developing for a while, ongoing investment in such critical approaches can further develop and refine these theoretical frames to the concrete specificities of various SfD contexts. Based on the above state-of-the-art literature, in this PhD, the politicised theories of youth organizing (chapter 1) and critical pedagogy (chapter 3) will be used. These frameworks meet the calls for SfD research to engage in research, theory and conceptualizations that step away from deficit thinking, focus on components and processes, both individual and community level (and how they are intertwined), and make use of alternative, critical (politicised) and more descriptive approaches.

Based on the above, I formulated two research questions:

- **Research question 1:** *what are the underlying pedagogical processes of urban sport for development initiatives aimed at the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations?*
- **Research question 2:** *how can the impact of urban sport for development initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations be measured?*

These two research questions were investigated within six urban SfD initiatives in the 'Global North', more precisely in Belgium (i.e. Brussels as its capital and Flanders as its Northern region). The six urban SfD initiatives were Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball (*Wolf Pack*), City Pirates Football Club (*City Pirates*, Antwerp), *Kras Sport* (futsal, Antwerp), Brussels Boxing Academy (*BBA*), Brussels Brazilian JiuJitsu Academy (*BBJJA*) and *Opboksen* (boxing, Genk). The SfD initiatives were embedded in the most densely populated neighbourhoods (e.g. Borgerhout, 2060 and Merksem (Antwerp); Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Anneessens and Koekelberg (Brussels); and Genk's ex-mining regions) that have higher degrees of

ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty, unemployment, school drop-out and a lack of usage of public spaces and facilities than more advantaged neighbourhoods. In line of the sport, sport-plus and plus-sport categorisation, these SfD initiatives can be regarded as so-called 'sport-plus' initiatives in which sport is primarily viewed as an important *activity and context* for changing norms and values, attitudes, behaviour and other social development outcomes, but this is not left to chance and carefully programmed for, taking into account specific necessary and sufficient conditions.

In this PhD study, the methods were chosen according to the nature of each research question. Since research question one was aimed at *understanding* pedagogical *processes*, qualitative methods (i.e. focus groups, observations and informal chats, interviews and 'sharing circles') were used to gather data over a four-year period (2015–2018). Notes, reflections and thoughts were written down in several research journals. Since research question two was aimed at *measuring impact*, a quantitative method (i.e. a survey) was used. The goal was to measure the impact of the six urban SfD initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations. In this survey, 'development' was operationalised as the commonly used outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. These are 'household words' both inside and outside SfD research, practice, and policy and it is often assumed that boosting them will by itself foster positive outcomes. Data was gathered at two moments in time (October 2015 and May 2016) from boys and girls who were active in the selected initiatives and were between 14 and 25 years old.

Regarding our first research question, I have found several processes of youth development (e.g. youth-adult relationships of care and support), Freirean virtues (e.g. respect for young people's cultural identity, knowledge and autonomy), emerging dialogue (e.g. a reflective and an open conversational culture) a 'pedagogy of the volunteer' and opportunities for both role taking and modelling. I also found that the vision, personality and competences of the coach – as a central mentoring figure – are crucial in designing and implementing a youth- and needs-oriented pedagogy. Moreover, the actual pedagogy often stands or falls on how the coach *performs* this pedagogy with respect to the participants in the daily sport practice. The fact that players see the coach several times per week often creates a specific social and emotional relationship which, together with the aspects of respect, trust, care and support, is crucial to create a meaningful environment for young people and work on their development as part of wider community formation. These meaningful environments might not be offered, or at least not to the same extent, within other societal and educational spheres such as the family, school and/or employment settings. In line with this, the investigated SfD initiatives could be seen as pedagogical spaces where pedagogical *base work* is enacted with young people and their families. In this sense, the SfD initiatives go beyond the traditional 'banking' way of organising sport and working with young people and could be seen as a social action, or a social change, or a pedagogical 'counter-space' within a mainstream sport landscape and an urban context where many spaces and practices are exclusive. The findings indicated that such spaces are important in the context of urban realities that characterise cities such as Brussels, Antwerp and Genk. For some young people at risk of having no or negative connections with respect to various societal institutions (i.e. family, education, employment), the SfD initiative is often the last 'resort' with which they have a connection and where they can find supportive adults and mentoring figures that try to offer hope and perspective. In addition, building upon the above processes, the SfD initiatives enact *political* base work by, for example, creating a welcome and safe environment for both young people and their parents which can foster a sense of community and increase social engagement towards the initiative and the wider community, or, by modestly influencing the interpersonal contacts with parents, opponents, teachers and personnel of social partners and services regarding how they think about and

approach youth. However, a familiar challenge of these initiatives is that, on a day-to-day basis, coaches are preoccupied with the organisation and operation of the training and matches that swallow up all of their time and energy. Just for the organisation of the sports offer, the initiatives already experience various capacity problems (i.e. infrastructure, the right people, funding). Working qualitatively with young people from socially and economically vulnerable situations on their general development involving the wider family and community context demands tremendous resources, knowledge, skills and ongoing commitment, but with limited resources and time extended non-sport programming is typically pushed down the priority list. This triggers the question how SfD initiatives could be better supported to organise their qualitative work with young people through the activity and within the context of sport.

Regarding our second research question, I found that the analyses and data raise serious questions about the assumptions associated with the deficit-reduction model of youth underpinning many SfD rhetoric, policy and practice. A first key issue is that the results refute the assumption that most young people living in disadvantaged communities or growing up in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations need more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem (which are 'household words' both inside and outside SfD research, practice, and policy). These results warn against overgeneralising about individual development needs. A second key issue is that the measured outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem amongst participants were varied and certainly not unidirectional (i.e., there were increases, decreases, or even no change). There was no simple and predictable change in young people's self-evaluations. To think that young people are uniformly (or largely) deficient (i.e. low perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem) and participation in SfD initiatives automatically changes self-beliefs in a 'positive' sense would ignore the complexity of social change. In line with this, a third key issue is that even if some young people could benefit from higher levels of perceived self-efficacy or self-esteem – or any other primarily intrapersonal-focused concept (e.g. resilience) – and even if participation in an SfD initiative does lead to an improvement in those levels, it remains essential to question what these outcomes are, how they are related to decreasing their social vulnerability and increasing their life chances, and whose interests these outcomes serve most. SfD initiatives aimed at young people in socially vulnerable situations can be valuable in the sense that participation *may* possibly help young people to have more self-confidence and self-esteem and, in turn, stand stronger and get along in mainstream society. However, such a 'narrow empowerment', which overemphasises individual agency and distracts from broader social structures, will structurally reproduce families and young people in socially vulnerable situations. In addition, it should not be overseen that some people already have built up an unbridgeable backlog through a lack of opportunities and nourishing contexts in early childhood, while other people are naturally less capable of 'pulling themselves up by the bootstraps'. Therefore, expecting that every young person can be 'remoralised' or redeveloped into a self-governing 'good citizen' is unrealistic. Thus, without structural social investment in what makes communities and families vulnerable in the first place, SfD initiatives are at danger to merely be one part of a wider structural strategy that is focused at putting a sticking plaster on a wooden leg: it does not solve root causes but fights reoccurring symptoms. Still, it is important not to undervalue the SfD initiatives which could be considered as 'micro victories' or 'little utopias' which can enhance young people's agency and form a 'counter-space', which is a social action and change in itself within a mainstream sport landscape and an urban context where many spaces are exclusive.

Based on this PhD study, I outlined several strategies for going forward with SfD. Firstly, from a critical sociological perspective, SfD stakeholders should use more interpersonal, community-level and institutional-level conceptualisations of 'youth' and 'development' (when talking about 'SfD' for

youth) instead of narrowly using intrapersonal conceptualisations when designing, implementing and researching programs for working with young people in socially vulnerable situations through sport. Secondly, SfD stakeholders should disengage from the dominant, overgeneralised and individual-centred deficit model of youth when designing, implementing and researching programs and pay more attention to the needs assessment of young people by starting with an open-ended, bottom up, participatory, flexible and tailor-made approach that critically assesses young people's needs by addressing their actual and concrete life situations instead of relying on abstract, selective, pre-defined and often externally fixed ideas, beliefs and/or stereotypes of individual needs (i.e. assumed 'deficits' such as low perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem). Thirdly, SfD stakeholders should focus on the underlying pedagogical processes of initiatives that are needed to work *qualitatively* with young people towards their well-being and development and on the tremendous resources this demands for SfD initiatives. Fourthly, policy makers and administrators, both in- and outside the sport field, should think about how they can better support SfD initiatives in designing, improving, implementing and co-researching more sustainable programs for working on individual, community and institutional change and development. Fifthly, in line with building inter-organisational partnerships, SfD practitioners and initiatives should unite with other SfD initiatives who have a similar social mission and should organise a 'coalition of the like-minded' that can enter into dialogue with (supra-)local 'elite' social actors (e.g. policymakers and administrators). Finally, SfD stakeholders should re-imagine Faculties and Schools of sport sciences, sociology, management, and the like, where the future sport coaches, managers, bureaucrats, administrators and researchers are educated.

In line with our 'strategies of going forward with SfD', I outlined six pathways for future research. Firstly, I suggest that a further in-depth understanding of certain pedagogical processes and components such as 'respect', 'trust' and 'reflection' is needed to really try and grasp the true meaning and *soul* of these concepts. Secondly, I suggest investigating how problems, needs and impacts on various levels of development (i.e. intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup/community, institutional) can be monitored and evaluated. Thirdly, I suggest investigating the wider socio-political and institutional context (e.g. policy framework) in which SfD initiatives are embedded. More precisely, there is a need to investigate the visions, beliefs and assumptions of the wider network of 'elite' social actors (in Belgium) regarding the needs of people in socially vulnerable situations (the "beneficiaries" of SfD), how sport 'works', and, most important, how SfD initiatives are sustainably supported from a policy perspective (see recommendations). Fourthly, although sufficient basic funding remains a core necessity for social initiatives, I suggest investigating how initiatives can build organisational capacity that would allow them to strengthen their capacity and implementation of their social mission and curriculum (e.g. gain more insight in how various financial, material and human resources can be generated and sustained). Fifthly, I suggest investigating the 'SfD' curriculum in the current sport education system to scrutinise how, amongst others, coaches, managers and other students in sport are educated with regard to social issues such as poverty, social exclusion and discrimination and target groups such as people in socially vulnerable situations, poor people, people with an ethnic minority background and refugees. Finally, I suggest engaging in critical sociological sport research, using more innovative ways of voicing people, both socially and technologically, and using approaches that are more and truly participatory, action research-focus and rooted in critical theory, which may generate new forms of knowledge that are quintessential for further policy on the hybrid crossroads of sports, youth work, social work, welfare work, etc.

1. General introduction

1.1 The ‘problem of urban youth’

1.1.1 Failing institutions and social policy intrusions

In many Western societies, a growing number of young people are socially vulnerable regarding one or more societal institutions (e.g. family, school, labour market) and/or are socially excluded (e.g. school, leisure, healthcare) (Vettenburg, 1998; Levitas et al., 2007; Collins & Kay, 2014; Spaaij, Magee, Jeanes, 2014; Cooper, Gormally and Hughes, 2015). Social vulnerability broadly refers to the distorted relations of young people with these societal institutions (Vettenburg, 1998; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, Nols & Coussée, 2013). Central in the theory of social vulnerability is the progressive accumulation of negative experiences with such institutions, which eventually amount into social disconnectedness and a precarious social trajectory in terms of education, training and/or employment (Vettenburg, 1998; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013). Following Levitas et al. (2007), social exclusion can be defined as:

a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

(Levitas et al., 2007: p.9)

According to Cooper et al. (2015), these socially vulnerable and/or socially excluded young people have been failed by various institutions and a broad range of social policy intrusions. This has left many of them in poverty, uneducated, jobless and without hope and opportunity. For instance, with regard to poverty – which can be seen as a core cause of social exclusion (Collins & Kay, 2003; Ghys, 2014; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015) –, in 2016, 12,82% of the children in Flanders (the northern part of Belgium) grew up in a disadvantaged ‘chance poor’ family while this was 10,45% in 2012 (Raeymaeckers et al., 2017). In Brussels (the capital) and Wallonia (the southern part), the problem is even bigger, making Belgium belong to the European middle with regard to child poverty (Raeymaeckers et al., 2017). According to Raeymaeckers et al. (2017), these indicators clearly show that despite the efforts in Flanders and – by extension, Belgium – child poverty is still not properly addressed. Not surprisingly, many of these young people are confronted with experiences of failure and rejection and feelings of low self-image, disaffection, disengagement and even anger (Vettenburg, 1998; Sullivan et al., 2003; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Skille, 2013). In the context of such institutional failure, Cooper et al. (2015) referred to the contemporary dominant ideology of neoliberalism to argue that:

Any progress made under the Keynesian-welfare consensus of the immediate post-war years has been in a process of reversal since the onset of neoliberal policies from the 1980s – policies which have overseen the shift from government (that is, the collective management of the social welfare of the population by the state) to practices which

Ball articulates from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality (where the state seeks to incentivize individuals to take responsibility for their own ontological well-being).

(Cooper et al., 2015: 3)

Neoliberalism – the doctrine that market exchange is an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action – has become dominant in both thought and practice throughout much of the world since 1970 (Harvey, 2005). Although there are various typologies of ‘neoliberalism’ to date (see Pinson & Journal, 2016), one way of understanding neoliberalism is to understand it as a political and economic ideology that is characterised by market-based governance practices, privatization, commodification, efficiency, individualism, competition and the dismantling of the welfare state (Harvey, 2005). This definition shows that neoliberalism is far from a stable and coherent *ensemble* and many scholars prefer the notion of neoliberalism to *‘depict the inherently fuzzy, diverse, contingent, ever-mutating and path-dependant processes of regulatory change that have been inspired by neoliberal ideas’* (Pinson & Journal, 2016: 137). In addition, it must be mentioned that societies and their institutions change for many reasons, of which neoliberalism is just one (Le Galès, 2016), and that neoliberal policies and projects are always contextually embedded insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Therefore, while I have mostly referred to Anglo-American literature to refer to the context of neoliberalism, the impact of neoliberalism has been different in Belgium than, for example, in The Netherlands and certainly in the United Kingdom or the United States of America.

1.1.2 Moral behaviourism and the responsible citizen

In the context the dismantling or reengineering of the welfare state, the idea of citizenship has changed. Where it used to be focused on various social, political and economic rights, it is now narrowed down to individual obligations and duties, for example to take appropriate steps to manage one’s own behaviour and well-being (Giroux, 2013; Cooper et al., 2015). Basic rights are becoming more and more conditional and must be earned. According to Ball (2013), this reconceptualization of what citizenship means, is a ‘remoralisation’ of our relation to the state and to ourselves. This is what Wacquant (2009) has previously called a philosophy of ‘moral behaviourism’. Moreover, Ball (2013) observes that the move from the welfare state involves a redistribution of responsibilities and the emergence of a new form of government: self-government. Instead of civil rights, individuals must take charge of their own well-being as they can no longer rely on the state (at least not as much as before) for dealing with risk, uncertainty and protection (Ball, 2013). While calling on people to be responsible for their own behaviour and well-being is not a bad thing per se, these developments have undermined a more balanced trade-off between individual freedom and collective security (Bauman, 2001). For instance, corporate and state-sponsored calls for individual responsibility has been much greater than calls for a stronger social state with better collective security, notions that are often under attack (Giroux, 2013). In line with this, Ball (2013) observes that:

We are made fearful and therefore active ... Precarity is a fundamental condition of neoliberal society. Our emotions are linked to the economy through our anxieties and

our concomitant self-management ... and the state becomes the site of minimal provision and last resort.

(Ball, 2013: 134)

1.1.3 Depoliticization of the 'problem of youth'

Under this doctrine of the minimal social state, structural issues such as social disinvestment in social security, education, housing and care, and insecure work and low pay, not only impact young people and their communities (e.g. effects on well-being), but also those who attempt to alleviate harmful consequences of such disinvestments through the public, voluntary and community sector (e.g. youth work or sport for development) (Cooper et al., 2015; Giroux, 2013). More specifically, the increasing marketisation of welfare professions leads to a demoralising erosion of resources, a reduced capacity to voice opinions and a lack of confidence to express dissent. As a result, welfare practitioners face increasing limitations in their ability to deliver services that care effectively for those in need (Cooper et al., 2015). Along with these policies, Ball (2013) continues his observation to state that:

Depoliticization acts in parallel to this, sometimes rendering collective conditions of experience into personal problems, sometimes displacing political and economic decisions into individual failings and responsibilities.

(Ball, 2013: 134 – emphases in original)

In this conceptual frame, where young people are failed by various institutions, the 'problem of youth' (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunities) is reframed and pathologized in the mainstream as 'young people as deficient' (e.g. regarding their character, resilience) that 'need to be fixed' by engaging them in interventions or trajectories to develop their attitudes, behaviour, skills and competencies (Cooper et al., 2015). Here, the general conception is that young people are responsible to find connection to mainstream society, rather than the society and its institutions needing to adapt to young people and their experiences and needs (Cooper et al., 2015). However, such a view distracts from the deficiencies within the social system and from the dismantling of welfare institutions. In other words, individualised symptoms are emphasised over structural causes and collectively experienced social problems.

Once more, this does *not* mean that the responsibility of individuals to be the best person they can be (i.e. initiative, effort, perseverance) and make the best out of their life situation is *not* important. But predominantly emphasising an individual's responsibility to reconnect with mainstream society without concomitant attention for the wider structural structures that reproduce social issues, such as poverty, and how the state responds to these issues through its institutions, testifies to a meritocratic discourse that, by working hard, every person is capable of 'pulling her/himself up by the bootstraps' and being a 'good citizen'. In addition, as Swaab (2014) argued, some people have built up a backlog through a lack of opportunities and nourishing contexts in early childhood while other people are less capable to help themselves by nature (e.g. weakly gifted people, psychiatric people). Therefore, expecting that every young person can be (re)developed into a self-governing citizen is unrealistic. And even if some young people may benefit from "fixing" their 'deficits' (e.g. anti-social behaviour, low self-esteem, lack of employability), how does this relate to their and others' social problems such as poverty, bad housing, school-drop out and lack of job opportunities and decent work and pay? How does this prevent that each day new families tumble into poverty and children grow up in them?

Nevertheless, associated with the 'good citizen' image, is a judgemental 'blaming-the-victim' discourse on those who fail to be responsible and take part in mainstream society (e.g. in education, training or employment). Failure then falls under one's own responsibility and in a society perceived by many to be meritocratic and based on 'equal chances' the experience of being (seen as) a failure tends to be internalised by youth (Bauman, 2001). Such a depoliticised frame reproduces the status-quo of social inequalities, welfare state dismantling and individual responsibility discourses and stands in the way of more progressive structural social change and transformation. This wider societal picture is vital to understand our field of study (i.e. sport for development) which we will discuss more in depth further on.

1.2. Reframe to re-imagine ways of working with youth

1.2.1 Critical theory and alternative approaches

In order to step away from harmful individual responsibility and blaming-the-victim discourses, policies and practices that reproduce the status quo of social inequalities, welfare state dismantling and social problems and in order to facilitate processes of empowerment and re-engagement of youth regarding various social institutions and social domains, a critical reframing of our research lens is most welcome to re-imagine alternative ways of *thinking about* and *working with* youth.

Based on the above, there is a need to unmask the political violence (i.e. youth as deficient, blaming "failing youth", punishing the poor) that has always exercised itself obscurely through the workings of institutions, that appear to be both neutral and independent, in order to re-imagine them (Ball, 2013). Therefore, to a great extent, this PhD draws on critical theory and alternative approaches that work towards social justice and meeting young people's needs and, at the same time, challenge harmful ways of thinking about and working with young people and their communities.

In their book 'Socially just and radical alternatives for education and youth work practices', Cooper et al. (2015) engage with the framework of critical pedagogy (as a politicised lens) which underpins the development of nuanced forms of pedagogies that take account of specific needs identified by young people and practitioners. From a critical perspective, critical pedagogy makes it possible to ask critical questions about the relationships between injustice, power, privilege, politics and education. Critical pedagogy aims to contribute to a better understanding of how people can create *spaces* that are free of the dominant socially harmful and excluding discourses and practices and how the *critical agency of people* can be enhanced. As Cooper et al. (2015) elaborate:

Education clearly has a key role to play in supporting young people to attain their dreams and ambitions, and to become active and responsible citizens. However, we also believe that this requires reframing, imagining and generating different ways of working both within and outside the formal education system, ways that do not only seek to develop character and resilience, or promote the knowledge and skills required by employers, but also develop critical consciousness and capacities that facilitate the empowerment of young people to express needs and dissatisfactions creatively as democratic citizens.

(Cooper et al., 2015: 9)

That said, by *reframing* the research lens through critical politicised theory, it becomes possible to look at and analyse present practices and *re-imagine* the workings of (other) policies, institutions, practices and pedagogies as they relate to young people in socially vulnerable and/or socially excluded situations.

1.2.2 Introduction to critical pedagogy

The establishment of the critical pedagogy movement originated from the work of Paulo Freire (1921–1997), who was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who had radical ideas about education, pedagogy and learning. While Freire wrote his magnum opus, the ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’, 50 years ago for the Latin-American context, his work is also relevant for other historical contexts and geographical areas (e.g. Belgium), since there are ‘third world’ (“fourth world”) areas in the ‘first world’ (and vice versa) (Freire, 2005) where people live in socially vulnerable situations (e.g. poverty) and are socially excluded within various societal spheres (Vettenburg, 1998; Levitas et al., 2007; Collins & Kay, 2014; Spaaij et al., 2014; Cooper et al., 2015).

As Kincheloe (2008: 8-10) indicates, critical pedagogy is difficult to define and may be best understood by diving into the rich literature on this topic. For example, Darder, Baltodano and Torres’ (2017) ‘The Critical Pedagogy Reader’ (3rd edition) is loaded with contributions of the most renowned critical pedagogues. For a deeper understanding we refer to the original works of Paulo Freire (e.g. 2005; 1998). Kincheloe (2008) outlined the basic characteristics of critical pedagogy:

- Grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality
- Constructed on the belief that education is inherently political
- Dedication to the alleviation of human suffering
- Concern that schools do not hurt students—good schools don’t blame students for their failures or strip students of the knowledges they bring to the classroom
- Use of generative themes to read the word and the world and the process of problem posing—generative themes involve the educational use of issues that are central to students’ lives as a grounding for the curriculum
- Centred on the notion that teachers should be researchers—here teachers learn to produce and teach students to produce their own knowledge
- Grounded on the notion that teachers become researchers of their students—as researchers, teachers study their students, their backgrounds, and the forces that shape them
- Interest in maintaining a delicate balance between social change and cultivating the intellect—this requires a rigorous pedagogy that accomplishes both goals
- Concern with “the margins” of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and subjugation
- Awareness that science can be used as a force to regulate and control
- Understanding the context in which educational activity takes place
- Commitment to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power
- Understanding of complexity theory in constructing a rigorous and transformative education

- Focus on understanding the profound impact of neo-colonial structures in shaping education and knowledge

(Kincheloe, 2008: 10)

As opposed to harmful discourses and top-down policies and practices of working with young people, the use of critical pedagogy – both as a philosophical and educational framework – can help to reframe our research lens and analyse and re-imagine present practices by making use of pedagogies that (Freire, 2005, 1998; Giroux, 2009, 2012, 2013; McLaren, 2000; Cooper et al., 2015), in short:

- (1) make use of humanistic virtues such as solidarity, care and anti-discrimination
- (2) start from the needs, knowledges and identity of young people
- (3) work *with* young people, not *for* them (i.e. participatory)
- (4) work in an empowering way, i.e. not only teaching “technical” skills and knowledges, but also providing a humanist and socio-political formation to help young people become both critical and democratic citizens that can take part in changing their environment, however modest
- (5) are concerned with both socio-political reflection and action (i.e. praxis)

1.2.3 Critical pedagogy: a wide spectrum

The philosophy of critical pedagogy should be seen as a broad concept that entails working with people towards both individual and collective empowerment for a more socially safe and just environment. Critical pedagogy comprises various attitudes, or ‘virtues’, such as respect for people’s knowledge, autonomy and cultural identity; rejection of discrimination; tolerance; humility; joy; knowing how to listen; openness to dialogue; and caring for people. In addition, the aspects of ‘problem posing’ and ‘dialogue’ (i.e. reflection that enhances people’s awareness and problematising of social structures and institutions that marginalise them), ‘reflection’ and ‘dialogical action’ (i.e. the strategies of cooperation, unity, organisation, and cultural synthesis) are also key concepts within critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005; 1998).

Given this, it is vital to understand critical pedagogy as a wide spectrum of humanistic virtues, socio-political reflection *and* social action (which together form ‘praxis’). Unfortunately, because of the often-abstract ways of writing, critical pedagogy has often been misinterpreted, both by laymen and by researchers. On the one hand, there is a danger of narrowly interpreting and understanding critical pedagogy as a depoliticised *teaching method*, disregarding its transformative potential. As Macedo (2005) elaborates:

... Even many liberals who have embraced [Freire’s] ideas and educational practices often reduce his theoretical work and leading philosophical ideas to a mechanical methodology ... the transformation of dialogical teaching into a method invoking conversation that provides participants with a group-therapy space for stating their grievances ... the mechanization of Freire’s revolutionary pedagogical proposals not only leads to the depolitization of his radically democratic work but also creates spaces for even those liberals who embrace Freire’s proposals to confuse “the term he employs to summarize his approach to education, ‘pedagogy’ [which] is often interpreted as a ‘teaching’ method rather than a philosophy or a social theory. Few

who invoke his name make the distinction. To be sure, neither does *The Oxford English Dictionary*" (Aronowitz, 1993: 8).

(Macedo, 2005: 16)

Without its politicised philosophy, critical pedagogy fails to be transformative and, thus, reproduces the status quo of dominant socially excluding discourses, policies and practices that may harm people and their communities while distracting from wider social injustices, deficiencies within the social system and the dismantling of social institutions. On the other hand, there is a danger of interpreting and understanding critical pedagogy merely as a framework of socio-political reflection, activism and social action, neglecting the many humanistic virtues that are also part of the pedagogy. Those who think critical pedagogy is nothing more than critical praxis (i.e. reflection and action), again, tend to narrow the spectrum of critical pedagogy. Additional intellectual engagement with the work of Freire and the many other authors that have followed in his footsteps (such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren and bell hooks) may help to grasp the fine-grained meanings of this rich educational philosophy that has influenced many other theories on activism, social movements, community organizing and critical empowerment, whether or not focused on youth.

In addition, in countering possible critiques of being overly utopic and naïve (of which critical pedagogues have every so often been accused of), it is important to indicate that social change and 'transformation' can be modest, connected to micro relations, environments and levels, and take a long time. In line with Freire (2005), education does not change the world, but it changes people who (can) change the world. In line with this, it might be enlightening to refer to Achterhuis' (2016) notion of 'small utopias' (as alternative and opposed to 'large utopias') where people, from their modest radius of action, organise their environment more human and, as such, concretely show how things can be done differently and better. In our opinion, those who renounce utopic thinking, subject themselves to the existing social order that reproduces inequalities and injustices and give up the possibility of social change and progress.

According to Giroux (2013), a critical pedagogical lens can be applied to a variety of educational 'spheres' such as schools, art and literature, music, public space and the media. Similar to Bourdieu's notion of a 'field', it can be argued that sport may also be seen as an educational sphere. It is to this field, and more precisely the field of sport for development, that we will now turn.

1.3 Sport for development: key issues and gateways

1.3.1 Sport for development

In neighbourhoods and communities with low living conditions, it is increasingly believed that sport has the potential to reach a large number of people and that it can be used as a vehicle to address a variety of social problems such as poverty as well as to achieve non-sport social and developmental objectives (Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2015; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016a). Specifically, in relation to young people:

sport is recognized as an opportunity to actively engage youth in a leisure context that covers participation in sport activities, as well as education, employment and training, community leadership and healthy lifestyle activities.

(Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Nols, 2012)

Although there are groups of young people who are less likely to partake in organised sports (e.g. young people living in poverty or young people with a non-western background), it has been argued that sport practices seem to provide rich contexts for attracting young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Haudenhuyse et al. 2012; Haudenhuyse et al., 2018).

The numerous rhetoric, policies and initiatives that have used sport for 'social change' and 'development' became known as 'Sport for Development' (SfD) (or 'Sport for Development and Peace' (SDP)), which Kidd (2008) described as 'a new social movement'. For more than two decades, the field of Sport for Development (SfD) has received significant attention from national and international sport organisations, government agencies, corporate and non-profit organisations, universities and schools around the world (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016a; Black, 2017; Kidd, 2008). Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) define SfD as:

the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution.

(Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2016: 311)

This largely corresponds with Darnell's (2016) categorization of SfD comprising: (i) social issues; (ii) health; (iii) education; (iv) economic development; and (v) peace and reconciliation. However, such definitions and often overlapping categorizations remain overly broad and vague. More specifically, regarding the concept of 'development' (in 'SfD'), various researchers stated that the concept is vague, has a contested character and is complicated, poly-vocal and open to several interpretations (Black, 2010; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Therefore, the concept of SfD has been defined in reference to individual, community, and societal levels, as well as in reference to several outcomes such as personal development, community cohesion and social integration (Coakley, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2016a). Accordingly, to date, there is no agreed definition of SfD which remains a 'fluid' concept (Haudenhuyse et al., 2018).

SfD is not to be confused with 'sport development' (SD) (Schulenkorf, Sherry & Phillips, 2016b), which aims to improve the sport-related skills of particular athletes, with the main objective of getting people to participate, develop and perform in sport. SfD focusses on the role that sport can play in contributing to specific social outcomes and overall community well-being, with the primary goal to improve the participation and position of people in society, often those who are socially vulnerable, marginalised and socially excluded. This assumes that the participation in sport can meaningfully and effectively facilitate general participation in society (e.g. education, employment or housing) and that the existing societal institutions (e.g. schools, job brokers and sport clubs) are inherently beneficial, supportive, useful and socially inclusive for everyone, even for those who had a social vulnerability towards such institutions in the first place (Haudenhuyse et al., 2018). Of course, in practice, development can occur both *in* (e.g. sportive development) and *through* (e.g. wider social outcomes) sport synergistically.

In recent years, the assumed potential of SfD initiatives to achieve broader social change has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny (Schulenkorf et al., 2016a; Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes & Hayhurst, 2016). Indeed, the growth of the SfD field in scale, diversity and prominence has led to an influx of theoretical and empirical studies, methodologies and perspectives in the research domain (Hayhurst, Kay & Chawansky, 2016; Schulenkorf et al., 2016a). Although the importance of theory and theory-informed analysis is currently well established in SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016), theory building and advanced conceptualisations might still need more time to develop. Critical researchers (Black, 2017; Darnell et al., 2016; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011) distinguish two types of approaches to SfD practice, policy and research:

- a dominant, more instrumental and often positivist approach which implies *solutions* to development inequalities, integrate people into an inequitable world and therefore reproduces relations of power and social inequality, and
- an alternative, more critical (politicised) and descriptive approach, which *asks how* sport aligns with, or diverges from and thus transforms structures of inequality. ‘Descriptive’ here must be interpreted as focused on understanding. This approach has also been called the ‘interventionist’ approach (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

1.3.2 The dominant discourse: the deficit-reduction model of development

Historically, the focus of SfD has mostly been on educating and socially mobilising lower and working-class youth, who are often perceived as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘at risk’ of committing crime and ‘in need of education’ (Kidd, 2008; Haudenhuyse et al., 2018). In this dominant approach to SfD, many policies and practices are entwined with neoliberal philosophies, paternalistic values and top-down approaches that often frame and pathologize marginalised youth as ‘deficient’, ‘problems to be solved’ and ‘in need’ of regulation and/or prosocial development (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Coalter, 2013). Similar to the broader societal discourses described in the above introduction, the assumptions underlying many SfD initiatives are grounded in a self-control/deficit-reduction model of development (Coakley, 2011), which is a first key issue. According to Coakley (2011):

The rationale underlying this model is that deprived, disorganized environments produce young people who lack the attributes and coping skills to make choices and manage their lives in ways that lead to positive development. However, the socializing experiences that come with sport participation will produce the attributes needed to increase life chances for program participants.

(Coakley, 2011: 314)

The deficit-reduction model highlights individual deficits while distracting attention from deficiencies within the social system and of “mainstream-focused” institutions that tend to make young people socially vulnerable and socially excluded in the first place (e.g. inequality, poverty). Critical and problematising questions about this deficit-reduction model are hardly asked in both policy and public debates, and even sport (for development) research has sometimes failed to do so.

Within this dominant approach to SfD, a second key issue is that there is a widespread belief that sport participation automatically and inevitably contributes to youth development because sport’s assumed essential goodness, purity and positive effects are passed on to those who participate (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011). These beliefs, that often influence sport related policies,

programs and personal decisions, are widely publicised and promoted by people described aptly as “sport evangelists” (Giulianotti, 2004). The implementation and practice point begin from the observation that many sport-based development initiatives and proposals have extremely idealized beliefs about sport’s positive, prosocial force (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). They assume that simply having a sport program or initiative will automatically and inevitably serve the development goals of socialization, education and societal inclusion and integration.

Although people who favour more progressive and structural social and institutional change find paternalistic and moralising programs to be ineffective, the deficit-reduction model remains consistent with the dominant narrative about positive personal development of youth in North America, Australia, New Zealand and some European nations (Coakley, 2011). While SfD researchers have observed and criticised that policies, practices and programs tend to selectively emphasise individual deficits and overstate the developmental change through sport, this is less often empirically and critically investigated, making analysis of this type valuable in complementing such theoretical critiques (Darnell, 2015). Many of the existing studies have limitations: there are mostly focused on the ‘Global south’ and on ditto populations, consist of small datasets, only conduct one measurement, and do not interpret findings from a broader, critical and qualitative point of view. Thus, these limitations can be addressed and a systematic assessment of both young people’s assumed deficits (needs) and their developmental change through sport can indicate (and confirm) if the assumptions that lie behind the deficit-reduction model are true or faulty.

1.3.3 From evangelism to instrumental ‘what works’-approaches

Still, research on the relationship between sport participation and positive youth development (or other social and educational) outcomes has led researchers to conclude that this relationship is contingent and varies with combinations of multiple contextual factors, educational components and pedagogical processes (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2013). In line with this, Hartmann & Kwauk (2011) referred to the following factors: the objectives to which the sporting experience is organized and directed, the programming and interventions that are conducted in association with sport, and the resources that are devoted to any such initiatives. If sport is to have a productive effect in development (and it can and often does), it is typically when sport programs are organized and structured in purposive, systematic ways to achieve them. There is a growing body of literature in the domain of SfD research underlining the view that sport- based interventions need to be more clearly conceptualised in terms of *inputs* (the used human, social, physical, cultural, political, economic resources), *throughputs* (what is being done with used resources and how it is done), *outputs* (what is being accomplished with used resources) and *outcomes* (to what concrete consequences have such accomplishments led for those involved) (Haudenhuyse et al., 2018). In addition, the use of ‘theories-of-change’ in research has become increasingly popular (e.g. Coalter, 2012; Coalter, 2013). It is believed that this will contribute in creating better and more effective SfD interventions. Yet, there is not yet consensus on a comprehensive theory of change within SfD (Whitley et al., 2018). This might not be surprising since every theory-of-change depends on the ends to which it is ‘working’.

Furthermore, the use of theoretical approaches, models and frameworks is far from consistent (Whitley et al., 2018). While many theories have been used within SfD research, Schulenkorf et al.’s (2016a) review showed that the two most used theories are Positive Youth Development and Social Capital Theory. The Positive Youth Development approach tends to examine the conditions by and

through which sport can facilitate the holistic development of young people, particularly those in under resourced neighbourhoods and situations (Coakley, 2011), whereas Social Capital Theory and research considers the ways in which involvement in sport may support development and acquisition of knowledge, resources and relationships (i.e. capital) that can be useful in social engagement and mobility (Coalter, 2010; Spaaij, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016).

1.3.4 Beyond reproduction: in search for a politicised lens

However, although these frameworks can be valuable in helping people fit mainstream society (that tends to make people socially vulnerable and socially excluded in the first place), in departing from more community-focused conceptions (Coakley, 2016), these frameworks may be viewed as less politicised and less likely challenging to the status quo of marginalization compared to more critical frameworks (Darnell et al., 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). By using such less politicised theories, researchers are more likely to produce findings that reproduce the dominant ways of thinking about and perceiving young people (i.e. as 'deficient') and development (i.e. individual-focused, instrumentally achievable), and, in turn, working around young people's development. As Darnell et al. (2016) argues:

Compared to analyses of [SfD] based on political economy, governmentality, or feminist perspectives (as three examples), positive youth development and social capital may be viewed as less politicized concepts and frameworks. Researchers working within these frameworks tend to theorize development (through sport) as a process that can be successfully achieved if the correct or optimal tools, conditions, and processes are deployed or implemented ... Positive Youth Development and Social Capital implies or suggests solutions to development inequalities through sport whereas the latter cluster (political economy, governmentality and feminism) asks how sport aligns with or diverges from (or even resists) the histories and structures of inequality.

(Darnell et al., 2016: 6)

The former is more instrumental and often positivist, whereas the latter is a more descriptive, critical, and politicised approach to the study of SfD. Additionally, Haudenhuyse et al. (2018) argue that it is:

... questionable, and to date not empirically proven, whether a focus on positivism and a pragmatic preoccupation in finding 'what works' (Currie-Alder, 2016) effectively contributes to sport practices that can help in improving the human condition of communities and individuals.

(Haudenhuyse et al., 2018: 435)

Such instrumental approaches are needed but their predominance in the research field of SfD suggests that research that challenges the dominant logic, imagination and practices of SfD remains relatively rare (Darnell et al., 2016). This critique is especially pertinent considering the neoliberal policy context and social "investment" strategies within which many SfD initiatives in the most disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods are embedded (Hartmann, 2016). As indicated by Hartmann and Kwauk (2011), the

social effect of sport-based intervention then is not so much to emancipate the oppressed (see Freire 2005; 1998) but to normalise the existing relations of subordination that protect the social space of the privileged by controlling the bodies of those who are different (and have to remain different).

Therefore, there remains a need for critical research and theory that identifies the processes through which sport participation is (or is not) linked with subsequent forms of civic engagement and efforts to produce progressive social and institutional change transcending the lives of particular individuals (Coakley, 2011). As Coakley (2011) further elaborates, there is a need for research that focuses on the impact of these programs on structural social change at the neighbourhood and community levels. Various researchers have argued that other theoretical approaches may be more explicitly grounded in the political dimensions of development inequalities. Considering the above, the importance of approaches that explicitly politicise research is increasingly recognised (Darnell et al., 2016; Rossi & Jeanes, 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017; Leahy, Wright, & Penney, 2017). We will now turn to the framework of critical pedagogy and, drawing from this movement, youth organizing.

1.3.5 Using critical pedagogy and youth organizing to study SfD

Although many politicised theories could be employed to approach SfD policy, practice and research (e.g. political economy, governmentality, feminism, Marxism or anticolonialism), several researchers have argued to connect SfD to the educational philosophy of critical pedagogy (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Darnell, 2012; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013), as briefly outlined above. Additionally, Coakley (2011) suggested to explore the politicised frameworks of youth organizing (e.g. Sullivan et al., 2003) and critical youth empowerment (Jennings et al., 2006). Youth organizing encompasses a process that brings young people together to define and talk about the most pressing issues in their communities, build individual and collective leadership, conduct research on these issues and possible solutions, and to follow through with social action to create community-level and institutional change (Christens & Dolan, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2003). This transformative intention draws on a diversity of traditions of activism, collective action and related theoretical frameworks, such as the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. The work of Freire is especially crucial at its more micro levels of practice and application (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Critical approaches in SfD would consider counter-hegemonic educational spaces and pedagogies *to* and *through* that challenge dominant understandings of sport and/or development that reproduce social inequalities and the need for 'development' (Darnell, 2012). According to Hartmann & Kwauk (2011), infusing critical pedagogy in SfD thus moves beyond simply devising "better" teaching and coaching practices and/or revising interventions to be more student-centred and dialogical; it is about reconceptualizing the project in its entirety. Furthermore, Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) argue that initiatives must intentionally design and implement radical interventionist components that transform the educational space of sport and address the structures and pedagogies that marginalise young people. While such critical investigations regarding the underlying pedagogies and educational philosophies of SfD initiatives have been developing for a while (e.g. Spaaij, Oxford & Jeanes, 2016), ongoing investment in such critical approaches can further develop and refine these theoretical frames to the concrete specificities of various SfD contexts.

Based on the above state-of-the-art literature, in this PhD, the politicised theories of critical pedagogy (chapter 3) and youth organizing (chapter 1) will be used. These frameworks meet the calls for SfD research to engage in research, theory and conceptualizations that step away from deficit thinking, focus on components and processes, both individual and community level (and how they are intertwined), and make use of more politicised, critical, and descriptive approaches.

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2. Outline of the PhD study

2.1 Research paradigm

This PhD study departed from a pragmatist research paradigm. A research paradigm is a set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed (Kuhn, 1970). They are underpinned by different sets of assumptions that distinguish fundamentally different belief systems about what *reality* is (ontology), how we may *know* reality (epistemology), and how we go about *finding out* this reality (methodology). Thus, ontology deals with the nature of reality, epistemology with the relationship between knowledge and the researcher, and methodology with how the researcher can acquire knowledge (Grix, 2002; Hatch, 2002).

In a pragmatic research paradigm reality is constantly renegotiated, debated and interpreted in light of its usefulness in new and unpredictable situations (ontology). Pragmatists believe that the best method to know this reality is the one that solves problems (epistemology). In this study, a mixed methods methodology was used in that sense that it made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, connected to the two research questions (see following section). The qualitative methods (i.e. focus groups, sharing circles, interviews, observations) can be ascribed to a constructivist research paradigm, which contends that reality is socially constructed by individuals in groups and that there is no single reality or truth (ontology). Thus, constructivists believe that reality needs to be interpreted (epistemology). In addition, since constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed, and thus fallible, they accept that theory-free knowledge is unachievable because a person's understanding of reality is only known through their experiences (Smith & McGannon, 2017). The quantitative method (i.e. survey) can be attributed to a positivist research paradigm, which claims that there is a single reality or truth (ontology). Positivists therefore believe that reality can be measured and, therefore, the focus is on reliable and valid tools to obtain that (epistemology). In addition, this study also used beliefs of a critical research paradigm which argues that realities and knowledge are both socially constructed (see constructivism) and influenced by power relations within society (ontology and epistemology). More precisely, in this PhD study, critical pedagogy and youth organizing were used as theoretical frameworks, which are grounded in Marxist theory (i.e. dialectic, socio-political awareness, collective social action) (Grix, 2002; Hatch, 2002). While this study departed from a pragmatist paradigm, using both qualitative (constructivist) and quantitative (positivist) research methods, the data and findings were approached and interpreted from a critical perspective. Thus, while positivism and critical theory are incompatible paradigms, the quantitative method (i.e. survey) was approached from this critical perspective.

2.2 Research questions

Based on the challenges outlined in the general introduction above, the two research questions of this study were:

Research question 1: *what are the underlying pedagogical processes of urban sport for development initiatives aimed at the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations?*

Research question 2: *how can the impact of urban sport for development initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations be measured?*

2.3 Six urban sport for development initiatives

These two research questions were investigated within six urban sport for development initiatives in the 'Global North', more precisely in Belgium (i.e. Brussels as its capital and Flanders as its Northern region). The six urban SfD initiatives were Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball (*Wolf Pack*), City Pirates Football Club (*City Pirates*, Antwerp), *Kras Sport* (futsal, Antwerp), Brussels Boxing Academy (*BBA*), Brussels Brazilian JiuJitsu Academy (*BBJA*) and *Opboksen* (boxing, Genk). The SfD initiatives were embedded in the most densely populated neighbourhoods (e.g. Borgerhout, 2060 and Merksem (Antwerp); Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Anneessens and Koekelberg (Brussels); and Genk's ex-mining regions) that have higher degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty, unemployment, school drop-out and a lack of (usage of) public spaces and facilities than more advantaged neighbourhoods. Based on our knowledge of the Belgian SfD field, existing initiatives and their specificities derived from previous research conducted at the Sport & Society research group (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), the main criteria for inclusion of these initiatives were:

- (1) the long-term perspective of the initiative (whether or not dependent on project subsidies);
- (2) the central role of sport;
- (3) the engagement of young people on a regular basis and sustainable manner;
- (4) having a track record in working with young people in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations; and
- (5) explicitly aim to provide chances for young people and work around their development.

Since the aims of the SfD initiatives reflect Lyras and Peachey's definition of 'sport for development' ('the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged'), we decided to frame these initiatives as SfD initiatives. More precisely, in line of the sport, sport-plus and plus-sport categorisation of Coalter (2013), these SfD initiatives could be regarded as 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2013) in which sport is primarily viewed as an important *activity and context* for changing norms and values, attitudes, behaviour and other social development outcomes, but this is not left to chance and

carefully programmed for, taking into account specific necessary and sufficient conditions¹. Within the specific urban social reality outlined in the above, the SfD initiatives used a targeted approach to attract young people in socially and/or economically less fortunate situations.

- **Wolf Pack** is a basketball club consisting of several teams (i.e. U12, U14, U16, U18) with around 60 youth members in total. The club aims to offer children and young people the opportunity to familiarize with basketball in a pedagogically safe environment and to work with them on their personal, social and sport related values and skills to achieve positive self-development. Wolf Pack wants to empower young people and strengthen their social engagement. There is also an interschool competition affiliated to the club.
- **City Pirates** is a football club with around 1100 youth members of 80 different nationalities. They want to offer all children and young people chances and help them learn competences via football. City Pirates emphasizes equality, respect and engagement, and aims to provide a stable and balanced future of their participants.
- **Kras Sport** is a futsal club with around 550 youth members, embedded within youth work organization Kras Jeugdwerk. They want to connect with the live world of young people in the city and want to invite them to experiment and grow in their sport. Kras Sport focuses on engagement and taking responsibility, together with peers. In their volunteer brochure 'Voluntarily' [Uit Vrije Wil], they actively discuss the Youth Engagement Continuum (Sullivan et al., 2003).
- **BBA** is an Olympic boxing academy offering a qualitative boxing program accessible to all young people. Currently, they have around 500 youth members. They encourage young people to grow in boxing, take responsibility as assistant trainer and get a coaching degree. BBA additionally organizes non-sport activities to broaden their lifeworld. BBA is embedded within youth welfare work organization D'Broej, which stands for 'The Brussels Organization for the Emancipation of Youth'. D'Broej also actively refers to the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003).
- **BBJA** is a Brazilian jiu-jitsu academy with around 300 youth members focusing on both the physical and mental development. They put the wellbeing of children first and emphasize friendship over game. BBJA asks young people to commit themselves to younger children as assistant trainer or referee and supports them to follow sport courses. They strive for the emancipation of children and young people within the social reality of Brussels. There is also an interschool competition.
- **Opboksen** is an Olympic boxing club with around 850 youth members in total. In addition to technical aspects of the sport, they focus on respect, discipline, perseverance and communication as important values. Opboksen uses boxing to work around young people's particular objectives. Opboksen emphasizes fun, encounter and success experiences. They are funded by the prevention service.

¹ 'Sport' concerns traditional forms of sport with an implicit assumption or explicit affirmation that such sport has inherent developmental properties for participants. Within 'Sport plus', sports are adapted and often augmented with parallel programs to maximize their potential to achieve developmental objectives. Within 'plus sport', sport's popularity is used to attract young people to programs of education and training, with the systematic development of sport rarely a strategic aim.

2.4 Qualitative methods, analyses and quality aspects

In this PhD study, the methods were chosen according to the nature of each research question. Since research question one was aimed at *understanding pedagogical processes*, qualitative methods (i.e. focus groups, observations and informal chats, interviews and ‘sharing circles’) were used to gather data over a four-year period (2015–2018). These qualitative methods are further discussed in chapter one and three of this PhD manuscript. Notes, reflections and thoughts were written down in several research journals.

2.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

The focus groups, interviews and sharing circles were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes of observations and short informal chats were written down in several research journals. This PhD study made use of a thematic analysis (TA) analytical approach. TA is one of a cluster of analytical approaches that can be used to identify *patterns* of meaning across a qualitative dataset (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), qualitative research questions can be clustered into different “types”, and TA suits a wide range of these different types. Braun et al., (2017) indicate that TA can provide analyses of people’s experiences related to an issue, or the factors and processes that underlie and influence particular phenomena; TA can identify patterns in people’s practices, views or behaviours related to a certain issue; or TA can determine the common ways in which an issue or topic is represented (e.g. in media), or explore the ways it is “constructed” as an object of interest.

Thus, TA is very well suited to investigate our first research question (i.e. understanding processes). The widely used version of TA outlined by Braun et al. (2017) just offers researchers analytic tools to make sense of the data. This version of TA is not anchored in a particular theoretical tradition, which can therefore be applied flexibly across the spectrum of ontological and epistemological positions (Braun et al., 2017). This means that the researcher needs to make some active choices about how they engage with data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These choices include:

- Does the researcher primarily engage with the data at the level of a) the obvious meanings expressed or b) the meanings and frameworks that underpin the things explicitly stated by participants or in textual representations? (i.e. semantic or latent focus)
- Does the researcher approach the data coding and theme development in a) a “data-driven”, “bottom-up” or inductive way or b) a more “top-down” or deductive approach?
- Is the approach of the researcher grounded in conceptual, epistemological or ontological frameworks like realism, (post)positivism and essentialism, or contextualist/critical realist approaches, or critical/constructionist orientations?

In practice, most thematic analyses include both semantic and latent, and inductive and deductive elements (Braun et al., 2017).

The analyses in this study were informed by a six-phase model of TA, consisting of the following phases: (1–2) familiarization and coding; (3–5) theme development, refinement and naming; and (6) writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Doing TA (well) usually involves a recursive, reflexive process of moving forwards (and sometimes backwards) through these six steps (Braun et al., 2017). Moreover, Braun et al. (2017) indicated that it is crucial to remember that the analysis is not in the data waiting to be discovered (the themes do not simply “emerge”); instead, the analysis is produced through the intersection of the researchers’ own theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research skills and experience, and the content of the data themselves.

2.4.2 Quality aspects of the qualitative approach

To ensure the quality of the TA used in this PhD study, which is seen as a rigorous, deliberative and reflective process, the 15-point “checklist” of Braun and Clarke (2006: p.96) was used. This checklist provides a summary of the points at which TA can fall short in relation to quality (see table 1) (Braun et al., 2017). According to Braun et al. (2017), their “checklist” guidelines promote a thorough and systematic process and highlight the importance of the active role of the researcher.

Table 1: 15-point “checklist” for a good TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.96)

<i>Process</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Transcription	1	Data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for “accuracy”.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original dataset.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a light once-over.
Writing report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim to do, and what you show, you have done – i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just “emerge”.

In terms of quality, the qualitative research part was guided by a relativist approach. In line with this, instead of adopting a criteriological approach (i.e. universal criteria) which is considered inappropriate for judging the quality of research (i.e. validity and trustworthiness) that is underpinned by an interpretivist, constructionist or critical ontological position, this study adopts self-selected criteria from an open-ended list that are contextually situated and flexible (Burke, 2017; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). It fits with the assumptions held by constructionists, interpretivists and critical researchers (and pragmatist relying on such beliefs). Rejecting all notions of realism, a relativist believes that evaluative criteria should be study-specific (i.e. tailored to the study’s goal and the researcher’s choice of methods) and are only useful under certain conditions and in certain situations (Gergen, 2014). Moreover, Burke (2017) argued that:

From this perspective, sport and exercise researchers might reflect on the nuances related to a particular approach to inquiry and offer suggestions for how to evaluate their work. The process of judging is therefore viewed as a craft skill (Seale, 1999), whereby the relativist must make informed decisions and ongoing judgements about which criteria the inherent properties of a particular study as it develops over time.
(p.334)

Importantly, within this perspective, quality is both *revealed* and *resides* in the research report, placing responsibility for judging the quality not only on the researcher but also on the reader (Rolfe, 2006). In line with this, Smith and Caddick (2012, p.70 – for an overview with references) offer the following list of alternative criteria as a starting point for researchers to consider adopting when judging qualitative sport and exercise sciences (SES) work (in Burke, 2017).

- **Substantive contribution:** Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? How has this perspective informed the construction of the text?
- **Impact:** Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually? Does it generate new questions? Move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me to action?
- **Width:** The comprehensiveness of evidence. This dimension refers to the quality of the interview or observations, as well as to the proposed interpretation or analysis. Numerous quotations in reporting narrative studies, as well as suggestions of alternative explanations, should be provided to support the reader's judgement of the evidence and its interpretation.
- **Coherence:** The way different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture. Coherence can be evaluated both internally, in terms of how the parts fits together, and externally, against existing theories and previous research.
- **Catalytic and tactical authenticity:** This refers to the ability of a given inquiry to prompt, first, action on the part of the research participants, and second, the involvement of the researcher/evaluator in training participants in specific forms of social and political training if participants desire such training.
- **Personal narrative and storytelling as an obligation to critique:** How do narrative and story enact an ethical obligation to critique subject positions, acts and received notions of expertise and justice within and outside of the work?
- **Resonance:** The research influences, affects or moves particular readers or a variety of readers through aesthetic, evocative representations, naturalistic generalisations and transferable findings.
- **Credibility:** Has the researcher spent a significant amount of time with participants? Were participant reflections on the researcher's interpretations of the data sought? Participant reflections, or what are sometimes known as member checks, can open up dialogue about the fairness, appropriateness and believability of interpretations offered.
- **Transparency:** Was the research made transparent through, for example, an audit trail? Did another person, acting as a critical friend, scrutinize matters like theoretical preferences, breadth of the interview sample and the process of sorting, choosing, organising and analysing the data?

Here, criteria act as suggestions or possibilities for judging a piece of work rather than strict rules that must be always followed in a universal manner and applied to all work (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In chapter one and three of this PhD manuscript, it will be indicated which criteria, that were considered relevant and reflected the inherent characteristics and complexities of the study, were included to judge the quality of these chapters.

2.5 Quantitative survey, analyses and quality aspects

Since research question two was aimed at *measuring impact*, a quantitative method (i.e. a survey) was used. The goal was to measure the impact of the six urban SfD initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations. In this survey, 'development' was operationalised as the commonly used outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. These are 'household words' both inside and outside SfD research, practice, and policy and it is often assumed that boosting them will by itself foster positive outcomes. Data was gathered at two moments in time (October 2015 and May 2016) from boys and girls who were active in the selected initiatives and were between 14 and 25 years old. This survey is further discussed in chapter two of this PhD manuscript. Notes, reflections and thoughts were written down in several research journals.

2.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics 23. First, the nature and the extent of the participants' distribution on perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem was analysed. Second, to test for significant differences in scores between groups of young people (i.e., year repetition, age, sex), the parametric one-way ANOVA-test was used. Third, paired samples t-tests were used to investigate average changes in self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy between the first (T1) and the second (T2) administration. Fourth, to explore beyond average mean score, scattergrams provided insight into (the direction of) individual changes.

2.5.2 Quality aspects of the quantitative approach

Existing scales were used to measure perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. Such scales are likely to be more valid and reliable than newly crafted ones and allow a comparison of the distribution of responses in specific populations (Weiss, 1997). To measure perceived self-efficacy, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Sherer et al., 1982), modified by Bosscher, Smit and Kempen (1997), was used. The GSES has acceptable psychometric qualities (Bosscher et al., 1997; Bosscher & Smit, 1998). In this study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale was 0.775, which is acceptable (> 0.70).

To measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used (Franck, De Raedt, Barbez, & Rosseel, 2008; Rosenberg, 1965; Vallieres & Vallerand, 1990). The RSES has adequate psychometric qualities (Franck et al., 2008; Rosenberg, 1965; Vallieres & Vallerand, 1990). In this study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale was 0.701, which is again acceptable (> 0.70).

2.6 Outline of PhD study's structure

This PhD manuscript is further divided in three chapters. Chapter one (youth organizing) and three (critical pedagogy) depart from the first research question (i.e. understanding pedagogical processes) and make use of qualitative methods, while chapter two departs from the second research question (i.e. measuring impact) and is built around a quantitative survey (i.e. perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem). In chapter one, the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003) was used as an analytical framework of youth organizing to re-imagine our theoretical understanding of SfD and ways of 'working with youth' (i.e. sport pedagogy). Through this politicised framework, it was possible to critically identify and investigate the underlying pedagogical processes of the six urban SfD initiatives that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Methods include focus groups and in-depth interviews with providers and observations.

In chapter two, we investigated and measured the impact of the six urban SfD initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations and disadvantaged communities in Belgium (specifically, Flanders – the northern part of Belgium – and Brussels). In addition, the purpose was to investigate the assumptions underlying a 'deficit-reduction model of youth' in order to highlight some of the dangers of deploying such a model within SfD policy, practice, and research. We administered a survey at two moments in time amongst 14- to 25-year-old participants of the initiatives in order to test two assumptions within the deficit-reduction model: 1) 'participants are deficient and in need of development'; and 2) 'participation in the SfD initiatives leads to positive personal development'. In line with the literature, we operationalised 'development' as the commonly used outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem within research, practice, and policy.

In Chapter 3, we draw on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire as a politicised framework to identify and investigate the actual pedagogical processes of an urban SfD initiative in Belgium through the voices of young people. More specifically, we engage with several Freirean virtues (e.g. respect for people's knowledge and identity, rejection of discrimination, caring for people) and use key Freirean (and related critical pedagogy) concepts, namely 'banking education', 'dialogue' and 'dialogical action', as analytical tools. To elicit this purpose, this article reports on a case study of an urban SfD initiative for young people in Belgium, namely the Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball Club.

These three chapters are followed by a general discussion, several strategies for going forward with SfD, a reflection on this PhD study's strengths and limitations, several pathways for future research, several personal reflections, and a conclusion.

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Chapter 1: Re-imagining Sport Pedagogy through Youth Organizing: An Exploration of The Youth Engagement Continuum

Re-imagining Sport Pedagogy through Youth Organizing: An Exploration of The Youth Engagement Continuum²

Abstract

Large numbers of urban youth are growing up in socially and economically disadvantaged situations. This has created, amongst others, a combination of anger, alienation, and disengagement among young people. In the attempt to re-engage this youth, under the umbrella of 'sport for development' (SfD), the number of initiatives aimed at using sport as a catalyst for social change has proliferated in the last 15 years. Although the importance of theory is currently well established in SfD, critical theory building and conceptualisations for SfD might need more time to develop. Weaving together theories of youth development with community organizing, youth organizing has emerged as a promising strategy for working with youth (Coakley, 2011). Although multiple perspectives of youth organizing exist, Sullivan, Edwards, Johnson and McGillicuddy's (2003) work on the 'Youth Engagement Continuum', provides a particularly well-developed framework to enhance our theoretical understanding of SfD and re-imagine ways of working with youth. Using this framework as an analytical lens on data generated from observations, interviews and focus groups with providers from six urban SfD initiatives that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, we identified and investigated the underlying sport pedagogies. We found that the 'sport-plus' SfD initiatives can be positioned within the 'youth development' and, partly, 'youth leadership' category of the Youth Engagement Continuum. Furthermore, we found that more explicitly politicised features of youth leadership, civic engagement and youth organizing are hardly to no part of their curriculum. However, the SfD initiatives could be considered as pedagogical spaces where political *base work* is enacted in a subtler way and where young people can be themselves, feel welcome and safe, gain respect, can learn to reflect and form opinions, explore their own democratic norms and values, and engage in volunteering.

Key words: sport for development; sport pedagogy; youth development; youth leadership; civic engagement; youth organizing; youth engagement; critical pedagogy

Introduction

Large numbers of urban youth are growing up in socially and economically disadvantaged situations. This has created a combination of anger, alienation, pain, and disengagement (Sullivan et al., 2003; Cooper, Gormally & Hughes, 2015). In the attempt to re-engage this youth, under the umbrella of sport for development (SfD), the number of initiatives aimed at using sport as a catalyst for social change has proliferated in the last 15 years (Svensson & Levine, 2017; Coakley, 2011). Lyras and Peachey (2011) define SfD as 'the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialisation of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution' (p.311). The growth of the SfD field in scale, diversity and prominence has led to an influx of perspectives, methodologies, and theoretical and empirical studies in the research domain (Schulenkorf, Sherry & Rowe, 2016a; Hayhurst, Kay & Chawansky, 2016). Although the importance of theory is currently well established in SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016), theory building and critical conceptualisations of theoretical frameworks for SfD might need more time to develop (Nols, Haudenhuyse, Spaaij & Theeboom, 2018; Welty Peachey, 2016). Next to the social and educational outcomes of SfD initiatives, much SfD research is now more focused on the educational components and pedagogical coaching processes that could possibly contribute to such outcomes (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coalter, 2012; Spaaij,

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Oxford & Jeanes, 2016; Nols et al., 2018). However, despite the increased attention for pedagogical processes, there is still an overfocus on individual development (i.e. personal attributes) while a community level development perspective remains scarce (Coakley, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2016a). Therefore, in re-imagining SfD, critical researchers have called for more critical, politicised and descriptive research that can complement more dominant, instrumental and often positivist approaches (Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes & Hayhurst, 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017; Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

While a handful of SfD researchers have engaged in politicised theory from fields beyond SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016), it could nevertheless be fruitful to explore other theories that enhance our theoretical and conceptual understanding of SfD. Therefore, weaving together theories of youth development with community organizing, youth organizing – committed to civic engagement, political action, and community and institutional change – has emerged as a promising strategy for engaging youth (Sullivan, Edwards, Johnson and McGillicuddy, 2003; Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing [FCYO], 2018). Youth organizing aims to promote the leadership of marginalised youth in social justice organizing around issues such as public education reform, welfare reform, and youth service funding (FCYO, 2018). Although multiple perspectives of youth organizing exist, Sullivan et al.'s (2003) work, conceptualising the 'Youth Engagement Continuum', provides a particularly well-developed framework. This continuum consists of five categories (i.e. traditional youth services approach, youth development, youth leadership, civic engagement, youth organizing) and aims to work from traditional intervention, to development, collective empowerment and systemic change. Youth organizing is meeting the complex needs of disengaged youth as they develop and apply new skills in their effort to transform their communities (Sullivan et al., 2003). This transformative intention draws on a diversity of traditions of collective action and related theoretical frameworks, such as the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1998; 2005), which aims to combine socio-critical reflection and dialogue with political action (i.e. praxis).

The purpose of this article is to use the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003) as an analytical framework of youth organizing to enhance our theoretical understanding of SfD and re-imagine ways of 'working with youth' (i.e. sport pedagogy). Through this framework, we were able to critically identify and investigate the underlying sport pedagogies of six urban SfD initiatives that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This framework meets the calls for SfD research to engage in research, theory and conceptualisations that focus on program components and processes (e.g. Coalter, 2012), both individual and community level (and how they are intertwined) (e.g. Coakley, 2011), and on more politicised, critical, and descriptive approaches (e.g. Darnell et al., 2016). To achieve this, in this article, we report on findings from six urban SfD initiatives in Belgium that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Methods include focus groups and in-depth interviews with providers and observations at the initiatives. In the following sections, we provide a brief background on the fields of SfD and youth organizing, including the Youth Engagement Continuum.

Sport for Development and Working with Youth

Sport for development (SfD) has been distinguished from 'sport development' (SD), which aims to improve the sport-related skills of particular athletes (Schulenkorf, Sherry & Phillips, 2016b). In line with Welty-Peachey & Lyras' 2011 definition, SfD focusses on the role that sport can play in

contributing to specific individual and social outcomes and overall community well-being (Schulenkorf, et al. 2016b). Yet, in practice, development can occur both *in* and *through* sport synergistically (Bowers & Green, 2016). In stepping away from a deficit-reduction model, researchers have increasingly stressed the importance of understanding program delivery and the presence of specific educational components and pedagogical processes that could possibly contribute to social and educational outcomes (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2012; Nols, Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2017). Apart from this conceptualisation, Schulenkorf et al.'s (2016a) recent review showed that the two most-used theoretical frameworks are Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Social Capital Theory (primarily the Putnamian approach). However, although these frameworks can be valuable in helping people fit mainstream society, in departing from more community-focused conceptions (Coakley, 2016), these frameworks may be viewed as less politicised and less likely challenging to the status quo of marginalisation compared to more critical frameworks, such as critical pedagogy (Darnell et al., 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013; Nols et al., 2018). This critique is especially pertinent considering the popularity of social disinvestment policies that reproduce social inequalities (Hartmann, 2016).

In addition to these critiques and despite the increased attention for pedagogical processes, there is still an overfocus on individual level (i.e. personal attributes) while a community level development perspective remains scarce (Coakley, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2016a). In the above context, critical researchers distinguish two (research) approaches: a dominant, *instrumental*, and often positivist approach, which implies *solutions* to development inequalities (integrate people into an inequitable society), and a *politicised*, critical, more descriptive approach, which *asks how* sport aligns with, or diverges from (and thus transforms), structures of inequality (Darnell et al., 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Therefore, in re-imagining SfD, various researchers have called for more critical, politicised and descriptive research that can complement dominant, instrumental and often positivist approaches (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017).

There have been SfD researchers engaging in politicised theory, using various theoretical frameworks from fields beyond SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016) such as critical pedagogy (e.g. Nols et al., 2018), the capability approach (e.g. Svensson & Levine, 2017), political economy (e.g. Darnell, 2012), governmentality (e.g. Darnell, 2014) and feminist theory (e.g. Hayhurst, 2014). It could nevertheless be fruitful to explore other theories that could be used in SfD to enhance our theoretical and conceptual understanding. Looking to provide models of youth development opportunities through sport beyond an individual, depoliticised focus, SfD researchers, practitioners and policy makers can draw on various models of youth activism for inspiration, such as, most prominently, the work of youth organizing agencies (Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe and Lcoe, 2006). There is a tradition of youth organizing programs and literature (e.g. Sullivan et al., 2003; Gambone et al., 2006; Christens & Dolan, 2010) that critical researchers in SfD can use as frameworks that define development in ways that go beyond personal attributes (Coakley, 2011). To date, such literature has hardly been linked with youth sport/SfD literature and, to quote Coakley (2011), there is 'no a priori reason that such a link is not possible or would not be helpful in producing positive developmental outcomes for individuals and communities' (p.318). This is not to embrace naïve and unrealistic generalisations about the transformative power of sport (Spaaij, 2009), but to explore theories that can re-imagine the ways in which the sport pedagogy can include other processes and activities to empower young people to make choices about change-oriented leadership and civic engagement (Coakley, 2011). It is to the literature on youth organizing we will now turn.

The Critical Framework of Youth Organizing: The Youth Engagement Continuum

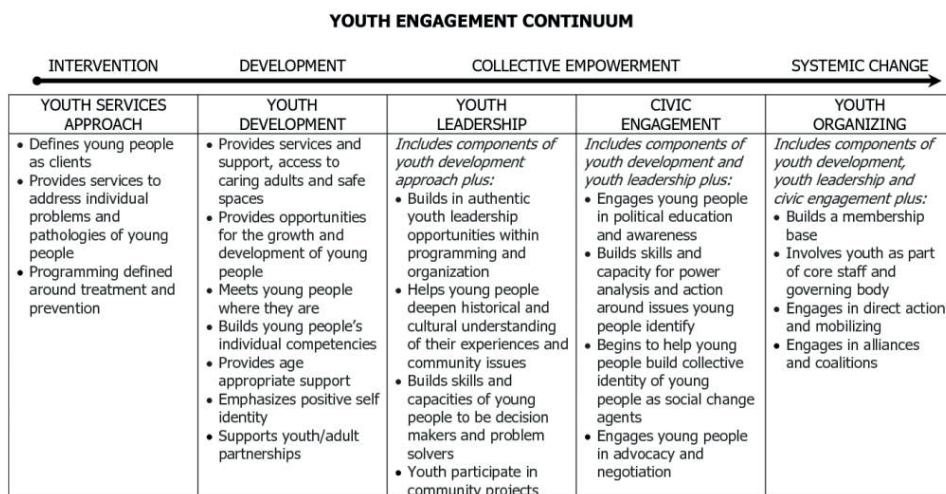
Youth organizing is a process that brings young people together to identify and talk about the most pressing issues in their communities, build individual and collective leadership, conduct research on these issues and possible solutions, and follow through with social action to create community-level and institutional change (Christens & Dolan, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2003). A regularly used definition of youth organizing is, 'an innovative youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy, and assists them in employing these skills to create meaningful institutional and social change in their communities' (FCYO, 2018).

The field of youth organizing is the outgrowth of three important antecedents that form the ideological, conceptual, and practical foundation for much of youth organizing's theory and practice. One important historical influence is the legacy of traditional community organizing models initiated in Chicago in the 1930s (see Alinsky, 1971) and adopted and modified by a number of local groups in neighbourhood- and faith-based coalitions (Sullivan et al., 2003; Christens & Dolan, 2010). Another influence is the tradition of student activism established in the 1960s within the progressive social anti-war and civil rights movements that cultivated the need to see young people as decision-makers instead of exclusively ascribing them a role as part of a constituency army (Christens & Dolan, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2003). One more influence is the rise of the positive youth development field in the mid-1980s that argued for more holistic and, in the late 90s, more applied forms of community engagement, such as youth-action and youth activism (Sullivan et al., 2003; Gambone et al., 2006).

Although multiple perspectives of youth organizing exist, Sullivan et al.'s (2003) work, based on the 'Youth Engagement Continuum', provides a particularly well-developed framework. The field of positive youth development created a host of collective empowerment strategies and overlapping approaches that led to youth leadership development, youth civic engagement, and youth organizing (Sullivan et al., 2003). Conceptually, these approaches fall on a continuum (figure 1) across five broad categories, with traditional youth service models on one side and youth organizing models on the other: 1) traditional youth service approach, 2) youth development, 3) youth leadership, 4) civic engagement, and 5) youth organizing (Sullivan et al., 2003). The continuum also includes traditional intervention, development, collective empowerment and systemic change. This framework resonates with conceptualisations of other research on youth organizing (e.g. Christens & Dolan, 2010; Gambone, et al., 2006).

Although services are certainly an important contribution to the long-term health and survival of young people (FCYO, 2018), the *youth services approach* defines young people as clients (instead of active members of a politically informed and civically engaged base) and strives to intervene in their lives to confront personal problems rather than seeing such problems as part of a collective struggle for improved life chances (Sullivan et al., 2003; FCYO, 2018). Due to the lack of resources and expertise, youth organizing groups often establish partnerships with existing social service agencies to refer young people for formal intervention (Sullivan et al., 2003).

Figure 1: Youth Engagement Continuum (Sullivan et al., 2003)



To provide some conceptual clarification, *youth development* is understood as the mix of services, supports, and opportunities young people need to stay engaged in a variety of societal spheres such as education, labour and civic life (Sullivan et al., 2003). *Youth leadership development* helps young people look beyond their personal needs to see their relationship to a collective group or community and deepens historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community conditions (Sullivan et al., 2003). *Youth civic engagement* is defined as young people developing the skills and habits needed to actively shape democratic society in collaboration with others (Sullivan et al., 2003). In this category, skills training and political education is tied to ongoing policy analysis and advocacy around issues that young people identify. In line with the previously stated definition, *youth organizing* relies on the power and leadership of young people defining issues that affect their communities and designing, implementing, and evaluating their own activities (e.g. community assessment, issue development, critical reflection, political analysis, campaign development and direct action) (Sullivan et al., 2003; Gambone et al., 2006). This is what critically distinguishes youth organizing in theory and practice from other forms of youth work. Youth organizing, youth leadership and youth civic engagement all pay attention to social justice; youth culture, identity and voice; the role of political systems and power structures in (re)producing conditions; political education and youth organizing skills; expanded opportunities for youth leadership; sustained relationships with supportive adults; civic participation and collective empowerment; and direct social action, needed to challenge power relations and create meaningful community-level and institutional change (Sullivan et al., 2003; Christens & Dolan, 2010; Gambone et al., 2006; Watts & Guessous, 2006).

Finally, youth organizing seeks to achieve outcomes on both individual and community levels. Regarding this aim, according to Christens & Dolan (2010), youth organizing is effective at producing impact at multiple levels because it weaves together youth development, community development, and social change into a unified organizing cycle. On the individual level, youth organizing promotes psychological empowerment, leadership development and socio-political development (Christens & Dolan, 2010; Watts & Guessous, 2006). At the same time, youth organizing produces community-level outcomes, including new program implementation, policy change, and institution building. Social

changes include everyday people wielding power, intergenerational and multicultural collaboration, and youth-adult partnerships in the exercise of power (Christens & Dolan, 2010). Furthermore, Gambone et al. (2006) report that youth organizing agencies show higher levels of youth leadership, decision-making, and community involvement in comparison with other agencies (i.e., identity support or traditional youth development).

Methods

This study sought to use the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003) as an analytical framework to enhance our theoretical and conceptual understanding of the sport pedagogy of six urban SfD initiatives in Belgium that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The six urban SfD initiatives are Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball (*Wolf Pack*), City Pirates Football Club (*City Pirates*, Antwerp), *Kras Sport* (futsal, Antwerp), Brussels Boxing Academy (*BBA*), Brussels JiuJitsu Academy (*BBJA*) and *Opboksen* (boxing, Genk). These SfD initiatives use a targeted approach to attract young people in socially and/or economically deprived situations. Most participants come from the most densely populated neighbourhoods (e.g. Borgerhout, 2060 and Merksem (all Antwerp); Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Anneessens and Koekelberg (all Brussels); and Genk's ex-mining regions) that have higher degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty, unemployment, school drop-out and a lack of accessible public spaces and facilities.

The initiatives were selected using the following criteria: (1) have a track record in working with youth in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations; and (2) explicitly say to provide chances for young people and work on their individual development. Since the below-mentioned accounts reflect Lyras and Peachey's definition of SfD ('the socialisation of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged'), we decided to frame the initiatives as SfD initiatives. More precisely, the SfD initiatives can be regarded as 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2013) in which sport is primarily viewed as an important *activity and context* for changing norms and values, attitudes, behaviour and other social development outcomes, but this is not left to chance and carefully programmed for, taking into account specific necessary and sufficient conditions.

- **Wolf Pack** is a basketball club consisting of several teams (i.e. U12, U14, U16, U18) with around 60 youth members in total. They want to offer children and young people chances to get familiar with basketball in a pedagogically safe environment and work with them on their personal, social and sport related values and skills to achieve positive self-development. Wolf Pack wants to empower young people and strengthen their social engagement. There is also an interschool competition.
- **City Pirates** is a football club with around 1100 youth members of 80 different nationalities, ages six and above. They want to offer all children and young people chances and help them learn competences via football. City Pirates emphasises equality, respect and engagement, and aim to provide a stable and balanced future of their participants.
- **Kras Sport** is a futsal club with around 550 youth members, ages six and above, embedded within youth work organisation Kras Jeugdwerk. They want to connect with the live world of young people in the city and want to invite them to experiment and grow in their sport. Kras Sport focuses on engagement and taking responsibility, together with peers. In their volunteer brochure 'Voluntarily' [Uit Vrije Wil], they actively discuss the Youth Engagement Continuum (Sullivan et al., 2003).
- **BBA** is an Olympic boxing academy offering a qualitative box program where everyone young person can sign up. Now, they have around 500 youth members, ages six and above. They encourage young people to grow in boxing, take responsibility as assistant trainer and get a coaching degree. BBA

organises non-sport activities to broaden their life world. They are embedded within youth welfare work organisation D'Broej, which stands for 'The Brussels Organisation for the Emancipation of Youth'. D'Broej also actively refers to the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003).

- **BBJJA** is a Brazilian jiu-jitsu academy with around 300 youth members, ages six and above, focusing on both the physical and mental development. They put the wellbeing of children first and emphasise friendship over game. BBJJA asks young person to commit themselves to younger children as assistant trainer of referee and supports them to follow sport courses. They strive for the emancipation of children and young people within the social reality of Brussels. There is also an interschool competition.
- **Opboksen** is an Olympic boxing club with around 850 youth members in total, ages six and above. Next sport technical aspects, they focus on respect, discipline, perseverance and communication as important values. Opboksen uses boxing to work around young people's particular objectives. Opboksen emphasises fun, encounter and success experiences. They are funded by the prevention service.

Data Collection

This article is part of a doctoral study. Qualitative research methods were used (focus groups and interviews, and observations at the initiatives and chats) to gather data over a four-year period (2015–2018). The research design was discussed with the head coaches and other people involved in the management of the SfD initiatives. We explain the main procedures below.

Focus groups and interviews with practitioners

In 2015, six focus groups were organised with the practitioners of each of the SfD initiatives. The focus groups with Wolf Pack, Kras Sport and Opboksen consisted of two parts, organised on two different occasions, because they were part of a preparatory trajectory for a workshop on *theory of change* (including monitoring and evaluation) (Weiss, 1997). The prime reason for using focus groups was to stimulate talk and conversation through interactions among group participants (Smith & Sparkes, 2017). In most cases, these focus groups also included practitioners from partner organisations (e.g. teachers, psychological counsellors). The number of participants (four to six) within the focus groups was small enough to manage the material and large enough to provide a new and richly textured understanding of experience (Smith & Sparkes, 2017). As a methodological tool during these focus groups, we used a theory of change to structure these discussions (see Weiss, 1997). For each SfD initiative, between four and six practitioners were asked about aspects such as their mission, vision, inputs and partnerships, the young people they work for and with, the sport and non-sport activities and components, outputs, and short and long-term development outcomes (e.g. individual and community-level development)³. The main objective was to focus on the educational components and pedagogical processes within these SfD initiatives and *how* these processes facilitate or obstruct the use of sport for individual and community-level development. Attention was given to contextual factors (e.g. participants, activities, opportunities) that influence these processes. The form of the focus groups was semi-structured. As a practical guide, we used the tips of Smith and Sparkes (2017) on 'doing interviews' (including focus groups). Prior to the start of each focus group, the participants were informed about the study and their rights, using an information letter and a verbal clarification. We received informed consent of all participants.

³ A Dutch version of the focus group questions can be found in attachment 1.

The data from the focus groups were reproduced in a general logical model which was further discussed with all six SfD initiatives in 2016 to gather additional reflections and understandings. The SfD initiatives from Antwerp (*Wolf Pack*, *Kras Sport*, *City Pirates*), Brussels (*BBA*, *BBJA*) and Genk (*Opboksen*) were interviewed separately. It is important to indicate that it was not our intent to outline this general logic model. This would reduce the complexity of working on development outcomes through sport and might prevent a more nuanced understanding. Rather, we used the logic model as a methodological tool to uncover the pedagogies that are underlying these SfD initiatives. Additional interviews were conducted with the head coaches and mentoring figures (e.g. association managers, social workers, youth workers that are often connected to or present within the initiative) at the SfD initiatives, making use of the theoretical frameworks of youth organizing (Sullivan et al.'s (2003) Youth Engagement Continuum) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1998; 2005). Documents and websites of the initiatives were also consulted.

Observations and informal chats

Observations offered rich insight into the day-to-day organisation and operation of the SfD initiatives and all people involved. It provided a basis for developing a deeper understanding of the nature of the SfD initiatives, as they unfolded on the ground and over time (Thorpe & Olive, 2017). Through observations during training, matches and other activities, the first author could observe various aspects such as the sport pedagogy and the social relationships with young people. Where possible, the researcher introduced himself to people at the SfD initiatives, such as young people, parents, other coaches, etc. to have short chats and explain the reason for his visits (i.e. investigating the initiative's pedagogy). During numerous informal chats, the head coaches provided the researcher with information about the SfD initiative, the young people and the wider institutional context of the initiative. The observation guide was designed around sensitising concepts that related to the research questions (i.e. pedagogy) and, as the study proceeded, concepts from youth organizing (i.e. Sullivan et al.'s (2003) Youth Engagement Continuum) and critical pedagogy (i.e. Freirean virtues and concepts – see also Nols et al., 2018). Field notes of observations and informal chats were written down in a research diary. These observations suggested probes for the focus groups and interviews mentioned in the above.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes of observations and short informal chats were written down in several research diaries. We used a six-phase model of thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2017). A 15-point checklist was used as a guideline to ensure the quality of the analysis (e.g. point 7: 'data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described'; Braun et al., 2017). Both semantic (obvious meanings expressed by participants) and latent (meanings behind the explicitly expressed), and deductive ('top-down', informed by theoretical frameworks: i.e. Sullivan et al.'s (2003) Youth Engagement Continuum of youth organizing) and inductive (bottom-up', informed by the content itself) elements were included.

In terms of validity, aligning with our ontology and epistemology, the study was guided by a relativist approach (Burke, 2017). This means that the criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research are drawn from an open-ended list of characteristics instead of a criteriolgic approach. In this study, the criteria we addressed included (Smith & Caddick, 2012): coherence (the different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture), credibility (the first author spent a

significant amount of time in the SfD initiatives and engaged in member reflections with the head coaches) and transparency (we turned to each other and several other colleagues and main providers as 'critical friends' that examined aspects, such as theoretical preferences and the process of analysing the data).

Results

Based on the Youth Engagement Continuum, the results are structured around three main themes; youth development and identity formation; youth leadership as volunteering and self-organisation; and socio-political development, civic engagement and youth organizing. Below we discuss each theme in depth.

Youth Development and identity formation

All young people need a mix of services, supports, and opportunities in order to stay engaged in a variety of societal spheres such as education, labour and civic life (Sullivan et al., 2003). According to Sullivan et al. (2003: p.8), youth development 'requires that young people have stable places, services and instruction. But they also need supports-relationships [with mentoring figures] and networks that provide nurturing, standards, guidance, as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges, and contributing to family and community'. Without these conditions, youth development does not occur. Within the Youth Engagement Continuum, emphasising positive identity is a central part of youth development.

Meet young people where they are

An important feature of the SfD initiatives is that they meet young people where they are. Such outreach work occurs in different ways. All initiatives have their infrastructure located within, or at least very close to, disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods (e.g. Molenbeek). This makes it easier for local youth, who often lack mobility or feel reluctant to come out of their neighbourhood, to get to the initiative. Further, at the end of the regular sport season, some initiatives, organise initiations on various local playing fields or other public places such as the street to recruit members (e.g. BBJJA organises a yearly 'Street Grappling' event). Some of the respondents work together with local schools. For instance, while Kras Sport and BBA provide occasional initiations at schools, Wolf Pack and BBJJA each organise sport at school with an inter-school competition, with a possibility for children to join the initiative in the longer term.

Although many of the SfD initiatives have a waiting list due to limited capacity (e.g. infrastructure, finding the right trainers), several respondents said to work on a welcoming and safe environment for every participant, regardless of people's background, skin colour and religious beliefs. Central was the emphasis on providing equal opportunities to young people perceived as being excluded from such opportunities. Many initiatives mentioned that such a 'second home' environment brings people together and, by involving both young people and their parents, contributes to social engagement and a sense of community. Such an environment also implies that the initiatives need to think of creative solutions to participation barriers amongst members. For instance, most initiatives ask low membership fees, sort out reduction possibilities, have family fees, payment plans and/or ask their members to engage in voluntary work to refund their membership fee. Many coaches also pay extra attention to the transport of players for away games and other activities (e.g. carpool, pay transport ticket) or include sportswear in the membership fee. While some initiatives only provide

separate training for women (e.g. City Pirates, Kras Sport), others organise both mixed and separate trainings (e.g. BBA, BBJA), or only mixed training (e.g. Wolf Pack, Opboksen). As part of a welcoming and safe environment, most initiatives also respect and respond to youth culture. For instance, the outside of the City Pirates cantina at the Antwerp Left Bank location is embellished with a graffiti art work based on the club's Pirates' theme and referring to Radja Nainggolan, who is 'godfather' of the project. Attention to youth culture is also reflected in many initiatives' activities (e.g. panna) and workshops (e.g. hip hop).

Youth-adult relationships: care, support and referral

Another important feature of the investigated SfD initiatives is the social relationships between young people and mentoring figures. Many of the respondents saw the sport initiative as an 'ideal place' – and for some young people 'the last resort' – to connect and make contact with youth. In first place, young people are interested in the sport activity in itself and many young people that come to the initiative expect that the coach has a high level of sport technical expertise. However, according to the respondents, a coach also needs to be respectful, encouraging, show interest in young people, caring, patient and 'strict but fair'. One of the coaches indicated that being strict – which he found is necessary in some cases for young people to learn not to take things for granted – can be combined with being caring:

You take care of young people, but you also have to be strict ... For example, one night, I was sleeping, and K. called me, in the middle of the night, and he said 'hey, coach, they want me to come and box in Germany' ... I said: 'K., go to bed' and hung up. Young people must know there are rules. You can not disturb people in the middle of the night for something like that. They must know there are rules, that it is not unconditional ... also if you want to get somewhere. There are rules, you must train regularly, work hard, and in first place I take care about safety. Being strict in that way ... it's a form of care. (coach 1)

Another coach indicated the importance of finding the right balance between the various signals you want to give young people, which are: that you are there for them, but also that they need to provide for themselves, and that they cannot expect that coaches are available at every moment.

Central within these youth-adult relationships is an openness for young people to ask questions, talk to coaches about various things, can express their opinions and be heard. But there is also an openness for coaches to question young people about their attitudes and behaviour. Humour is also an important way to befriend with youth and to approach them in a jovial way. Several respondents indicated that to engage with local young people, apart from a high level of sport expertise, the sport coach's expertise needs to include youth or social work competencies. Often, the sport background of the coach, as an ex-elite athlete, contributed to a higher status (e.g. ex-Olympic boxer who went to Barcelona 1992) but an additional vision on, and competence in, coaching young people was mentioned as vital. However, it was mentioned that each coach has a different sport pedagogy. Two respondents mentioned to feed back to coaches on approaching young people in a pedagogical and respectful way and that further action is taken (e.g. stop cooperation, assign a sport technical role) when coaches fail to implement the pedagogical vision of the SfD initiative in working with youth (e.g. fun, personal development, sportive development).

As part of working with young people, in most cases, the coach also develops extended relationships with parents or other family members to get to know the local community in which they

work. Several respondents indicated that a coach attempts to follow up on young people individually and offer them and their families social support on personal problems (e.g. financial issues, difficulties at school, brawl with parents). For instance, when young players are confronted with such problems, the association manager and/or social workers of City Pirates visit the home and/or school. Some SfD initiatives provide opportunities to do homework at the club or provide study counselling when desired. For some of the older members, the coach helps in finding a job through advice on possible strategies or drafting a CV. In doing this, these initiatives offer age-appropriate support to 'help questions', which often occur organically and informally. For support on help questions beyond the capacity of the coach, young people are referred to social partners or other more specialised social services. For initiatives embedded in youth (welfare) work such as Kras Sport and BBA, young people and/or their parents are often referred to thematic workers of the wider organisation (respectively Kras Youth Work and D'Broej on e.g. education or work).

Developmental opportunities: emphasising identity

Next to trying to provide a welcoming and safe environment, care and support, all SfD initiatives see their initiative as an educational space that provides developmental opportunities for young people. Besides regular training and matches, some initiatives organise additional camps during holidays. Also, other sport activities such as swimming, capoeira and sense ball are organised. Further, some of the initiatives set up exchanges with befriended clubs to provide young people with the opportunity to get out of their neighbourhood, encounter new people, and learn from the experience (e.g. Wolf Pack, Opboksen, BBA). All initiatives participate in, or organise, tournaments, with some players competing at regional, national and international (elite level) championships (BBJA, Opboksen, BBA, Wolf Pack). For instance, Wolf Pack often organises a USA tournament for some of the older players while some of the competitive BBJA players were able to participate in the recent European Championship JiuJitsu in Greece.

The initiatives also organise various non-sportive activities such as workshops on digital skills (City Pirates), rap and hip hop (City Pirates, Kras Sport) and cooking (City Pirates, Kras Sport); visits to an elite sport event (Wolf Pack, Kras Sport), a museum; theatre or circus show (Kras Sport, BBA, Opboksen), a rest home (City Pirates) or a special event (Wolf Pack visits a wolves park); and training weekends and trips (BBA, BBJA, Opboksen, Kras Sport, Wolf Pack) that are often abroad and combined with other leisure activities such as hiking. Many activities also involve young people's parents and the local community through theme events and feasts (e.g. family day, parent evening, multicultural or community feast) (Wolf Pack, City Pirates, BBJA). Creating a warm social climate within and around the initiative was regarded as an important for the social engagement of young people and their parents towards the initiative and the wider community.

According to several respondents, the above activities provide opportunities for life broadening experiences and are a rich context to work with young people. Within this context young people can be themselves, experiment with social behaviour, and talk about issues in their lives with peers and coaches. In many cases, conversations are purely about sport, but sometimes, depending on what young people want to share (or after informal inquiry by the coach), also more personal issues are discussed, such as peer, school or home experiences. Most SfD initiatives explicitly mentioned that coaches stimulate reflection amongst young people and try to create success and failure experiences (BBA, BBJA, Opboksen, Wolf Pack). The key idea here is to actively review their attitudes, behaviour, decisions and reactions through short feedbacks or longer conversations (e.g. after training). Some respondents mentioned that it is also important to give young people the opportunity to express their

emotions, thoughts and opinions. This increases the chance of an authentic learning experience. Regarding this, one respondent indicated that young people learn to think from practical experience and connect this to future situations while another respondent said it helps young people to become more aware of the consequences of choices and learn to make better decisions (e.g. not quitting school). Here, reflection is mostly connected to the personal and interpersonal level. One of the respondents talked about their yearly three-week hiking trip, which reflects the above-mentioned processes:

They are forced out of their comfort zone. They are in the nature, a different setting ... You reflect and evaluate together with them. In the nature, they are confronted with themselves, it's a fight with themselves. Young people that are stuck in life, at school, at home ... it can unleash a 'déclit' [click]. (coach 2)

But according to one of the respondents, the sport in itself (as part of the sport *context*) can also be actively employed to work around norms, values and reflection. During a chat, this respondent said:

Sometimes, people say that 'the social' and 'sport' are not connected, and that you need to put the social into sport, but that's not true, there are a lot of elements in the sport itself that you can use to work socially with young people, it hangs together. (coach 2)

Some SfD initiatives partly modify sport activities to enhance positive experiences. For instance, the initiatives include forms of play during training to foster fun and enjoyment, let participants express their energy and facilitate social contacts between young players. One coach has modified the pedagogy to the developmental age of children. BBJA's 'animal paradise' approach uses animals to visualise all the jiu-jitsu positions, such as 'the crocodile', instead of the Japanese vocabulary. They also prohibit strangles for children under 12 years old and let pre-school children fight with an object from a 'wrestling suitcase'. Some initiatives structure sport trainings to include pre- and post-training circle conversations to talk about, for example, sport tactical and technical issues, the effort of players, emotions, norms and values, and allow young people to form and express their opinion and feedback (Wolf Pack, Opboksen, City Pirates). Several respondents said working on group dynamics and using the group as an 'exercise terrain' for young people to experiment with their social skills, compare with other members, receive feedback on the own behaviour, or receive encouragement to dare things.

Regarding young people's development, the SfD initiatives often refer to concepts of 'responsibility' and 'empowerment' and even 'emancipation', with the aim of improving their future perspective. For instance, the vision of BBJA refers to emancipation and the wider social reality of the initiative:

BBJA want to offer sport as a hold for young people to empower them morally and allow them to develop themselves. (...) But an emancipation of young people from the working-class neighbourhoods will only be likely by drastically reducing unemployment and revaluing education. We can not cut our operation loose from the social reality and, thus, support initiatives that aim for the emancipation of children and young people, inside or outside the club. (BBJA website)

In first place, some respondents saw sport as a means for young people to get to know themselves, their body, their talents and weaknesses. Working around young people's identity was formulated as a central outcome by all SfD initiatives. Especially working around democratic norms, values and rights

are central (e.g. respect for others, equality, solidarity). Several respondents indicated that identity work is about who young people are (e.g. ethnic or religious identity), want to be, developing their sense of responsibility, and how they want to engage in society. About this, one respondent said:

What we should talk about is 'identity'. We work on the identity of young people. For example, the club shirt... from the moment they wear it, they know it comes with a certain responsibility, to be 'a Pirate', is to be respectful, treat people equally, etc. It's about who they are as a person. (association manager 1)

During the focus groups, several respondents also stated to work towards increasing (or adjusting) young people's self-image, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience. Some respondents mentioned the creation of a sport identity in which young people increasingly regard themselves as an athlete, and as someone to be proud of. It was also mentioned by several respondents that, for those participants who want to perform (on a higher competitive level), sport can be used to trigger young people to demand to work hard, take care of themselves, eat well, go to bed at a reasonable hour, etc. For some young people, becoming more socially engaged meant engaging in the SfD initiative as a volunteer and taking the lead. In line with this, another desired outcome of the SfD initiatives is working on young people's competencies. Next to sport skills, respondents mentioned social skills (e.g. team work, communication, come up for yourself, forming an opinion) and cognitive skills (e.g. self-reflection, responsibility, problem solving). One initiative, embedded in a youth work organisation, indicated to work on 'institutional competences' to bring young people closer to formal institutions such as social services. However, it seemed that the emphasis was on preparing individuals to internalise rather than to transform institutional logics.

Partnering up with 'the context': influencing relationships with parents and teachers

As part of caring for and supporting young people, several respondents indicated to work with young people's context, being mostly the parents and/or teachers, but also, although less frequently, staff of social partners and social services. As already mentioned, coaches develop extended relationships with parents to get to know the local community. According to the respondents, extended relationships, often build on regular and informal chats, generate the bond and trust necessary to talk about more sensitive issues and give support. In line with this, several of the initiatives (Wolf Pack, City Pirates, Kras Sport) do home visits. These may be done *before* membership – to set clear expectations about parents' role in the sport engagement of their child or children (e.g. rules, transport) – or *during* membership – when difficulties relating to the child's development and/or home situation become clear through the child's sport participation (e.g. child's behaviour, difficulties in paying membership fee, child being late for training). In addition, several respondents also indicated when parents become more involved their child's sport participation relationships are often positively influenced (e.g. parent sees child having fun, parent sees child act in a meaningful way, child feels cared about, child and parent talk about sport at home). Regarding this, coaches often exchange valuable insights on young people's development with parents. Some of the initiatives also organise activities that are open to parents such as a family day, a parent evening or a community feast. Although initiatives tried to involve parents, only two initiatives organised this in a formal way (i.e. parents' counsel) (City Pirates, Opboksen).

Several of the initiatives also have connections with local schools and teachers. This is the case for those initiatives working on a more structural base with schools such as Wolf Pack and BBJA as part of their school competition. Similar to the contact between coaches and parents, some of the

coaches occasionally talk to teachers about young people's development and exchange information that can be important in the overall guidance of students. According to one respondent, Wolf Pack's school competition influences students in a positive way (e.g. motor, personal and social development) while also influencing the classroom's social climate and social relationships between teachers and students (where the school team coach is also the class teacher).

Next to local schools, most of the SfD initiatives team up with a variety of (social) partners. For instance, City Pirates employs an association manager and two social workers that build a network of social (services) partners around the club while Opboksen is part of the organisation 'The Challenge' (De Uitdaging) and has contacts with the House of the Child. Kras Sport and BBA are embedded in youth (welfare) work (respectively Kras Youth Work and D'Broej) and besides having their own thematical workers (e.g. education, employment) they sporadically co-organise activities with social services such as Kras Youth Work's 'Talent Works' job fair, also trying to bridge the gap between employers and their young people through workshops and discussions. Finally, one of the respondents said that the interpersonal contacts, whether frequently or occasional, with parents, teachers and personnel of social services (e.g. job or welfare agencies) create room to influence how they think about and approach youth in a way that is less negative and sanctioning.

Youth Leadership as volunteering and self-organisation

Youth leadership development can help young people look beyond their personal needs and interests to see their relationship to a collective group, organisation or community (Sullivan et al., 2003). Through authentic youth leadership opportunities, youth are able to practice meaningful roles within the organisation (e.g. board member, staff member, peer trainer), and skill training and community projects provide additional channels for decision-making and problem solving (Sullivan et al., 2003).

Building in authentic youth leadership opportunities

All the SfD initiatives had opportunities for young people to engage in voluntary work, which increases their capacity to organise activities. However, from the in-depth interviews, it was clear that some initiatives involve young people more than others. In most cases, engaging young people in voluntary work is a rather spontaneous process. Around the age of 14, the coach often asks young people if they are willing to do little chores such as setting up the sport materials or, in basketball for instance (i.e. Wolf Pack), keeping time or the 24-seconds-clock during matches with other club teams. Some of the coaches indicated that they gradually give those young people who 'are ready' more responsibility and coach them in their voluntary work. For instance, at BBJA, young volunteers are asked to assist the younger players or act as a referee at a school tournament. At Wolf Pack, young volunteers are being deployed as 'fair play coaches' who observe and score the fair play of players and team during school competitive matches. One coach called this approach the 'pedagogy of the volunteer' in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility and form themselves into fully-fledged teachers. However, one of the respondents said that there is a real danger of selecting those whose profiles are already stronger than others, which pushes those hard-to-reach young people out of voluntary work who might most benefit from such voluntary work and the opportunity to bond with them.

As young volunteers grow older some of them become involved as an assistant coach. Some initiatives, such as BBJA and Wolf Pack, provide opportunities to young assistant coaches in their school competitions to gain practical experience with young age groups before letting them coach older age groups in the club. Several respondents indicated that young people learn from taking roles

such as volunteer, referee or (assistant) coach. In line with this, the Wolf Pack coach mentioned that older players are often seen as role models by younger players. This was observed during the yearly school competition's final where older players helped the head coach and younger players often ask older players to sign their t-shirts. In general, according to the respondents, such voluntary work provides learning experiences and fosters responsibility for others, becoming (socially) engaged and leadership competences and skills. By slowly involving young people in volunteering and/or coaching, they also have opportunities to learn how to implement the pedagogy of the initiative. Building on these informal learning experiences, coaches also encourage and support young coaches to acquire their formal coach certificates.

Building skills and capacities of young people to be decision-makers and problem solvers

Although some of the young people can experiment with and gain leadership skills through voluntary chores and (assistant) coaching, some initiatives try to go further and create a context in which young people can be more in charge and co/self-organise various other (leisure) activities. For example, at BBJA young people are encouraged to organise activities such as their cycling weekend. Collectively, the young people must find solutions for issues around budget, mobility, stay, safety, etc. But also during activities young people are encouraged to find solutions in group for encountered situations. Another example of this was when several players were selected for the 2017 World Championship jiu-jitsu in Greece, but the club did not have sufficient funding. Therefore, one of the young volunteers made a promotional movie about the club as part of a fundraiser. According to another coach, from this kind of self-organising approach, young people can learn much more than when everything is done for them because they experience the concrete challenges of organising things and learn to make decisions and solve organisational problems.

Through such leadership opportunities, young people can learn to co/self-organise, make decisions and solve problems (collectively) within their voluntary work. Some initiatives also had more formal channels of involving young people in decision-making. For instance, City Pirates, who seek to organise sport 'with, from and for young people', has a youth brigade and there is also a (senior) players' counsel. Still, these channels are not part of the core staff. Apart from that, the SfD initiatives have no real formal channels of involving young people in decision making. For Kras Sport and BBA, who are part of a wider youth (welfare) organisation (i.e. Kras Youth Work and D'Broej), it is not clear to what degree young people that participate in sport are involved in boards, staff member or project groups in their wider organisation. However, while such formal channels can be important, more informal ways of involving young people in decision-making processes cannot be underestimated and might, in some situations or for some age groups, be the best strategy to involve young people in decision-making. For instance, some initiatives, such as Wolf Pack, give a lot of decision-making power to the older groups to give their opinion and decide the team rules, how to play, who gets to play (based on the group-generated rules), who can join the team (in case of an external who is not coming from lower age groups). This was also the case at Kras Sport. Providing opportunities for young people to engage in democratic processes such as group dialogue and decision-making, the coach was present to facilitate the conversations if decision-making processes got stuck or became destructive.

Socio-political development, civic engagement and youth organizing?

Next to building in youth leadership opportunities and building skills of young people to be decision-makers and problem solvers, other central, more politicised, aspects of youth leadership are the active study of leadership, supporting youth to build ethical codes that guide their relationships within the world, youth's participation in community projects, and helping young people deepen an historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community conditions (Sullivan et al., 2003). Central to youth civic engagement and youth organizing are engaging young people in political education, building skills and capacity for power analysis, direct action (around issues they identify) and political mobilising (Sullivan et al., 2003). In general, youth civic engagement is defined as 'young people developing the skills and habits needed to actively shape democratic society in collaboration with others' (Sullivan et al., 2003: p.8).

Limited deepening historical and cultural understanding

However, none of the SfD initiatives include the active study of 'leadership' in their initiative's activities. Apart from one example by one initiative, initiatives do not help young people deepen historical and cultural understanding of community conditions and their experiences. BBA did mention visiting the commemoration of the 'Battle of Gembloux' with a group of young people. This commemoration memorialises the many deaths of Moroccan and Senegalese soldiers during WW2 who were used as 'cannon fodder' to slow down the Germans' advance to France via Belgium and which gave the Allies more time to reorganise. For the young people involved in BBA, many having Moroccan roots, this offers an understanding about their ancestors' role in the history of the country. But such activities are unsystematically and often very rare.

Limited participation in other community projects

Further, apart from young people's involvement in events such as family days, parent evenings or community feasts, SfD initiatives did not facilitate participation in other community projects focused on the well-being of others. From the various initiatives, there do exist connections to other projects such as a junior coach training, an employability training or supervising at neighbourhood parties. However, such projects are largely reflective of 'narrow empowerment' of young people (Lawson, 2005), aligning with dominant conceptions of participation and 'passive citizenship'. However, the consideration can be made that young people taking the lead in the initiatives, either as volunteer or co/self-organiser, already participate in a community project in itself, providing a safe and welcoming sport offer and contributing to the well-being of others. Furthermore, Wolf Pack works together with a Bolivian project for street children in La Paz and provides opportunities for several of their older players to visit Bolivia and meet the children, offering a life world broadening experience to the players and making them more conscious about issues such as (global) poverty and living in the streets.

Indirect socio-political development through identity formation

None of the SfD initiatives engaged young people in political education and awareness. Neither were there opportunities to build skills and capacity for ongoing power (and policy) analysis and action around issues that young people identify. Only two initiatives sporadically joined or organised activities with some of their participants that could stimulate their socio-political development. For instance, BBA joined the recent general strike (against the government's austerity measures) with a group of young people, organised a debate on 'NEETS' with the local minister of labour and co-organised an

information session on a new labour law with a union. Kras Youth Work occasionally organise neighbourhood consultation and one of Kras Sport's female players recently joined a local youth policy platform (J100), organised with other youth and social work partners, where young people can go in discussion with local politicians. Such scarce activities can stimulate the socio-political development of some young people.

Furthermore, although many of the initiatives fostered the creation of a collective identity (e.g. being a BBA boxer or a Wolf Pack basketball player), this was not yet related to an identity of young people as 'agents of social change'. In addition, except for the sporadically joined or organised activities from youth (welfare) work organisations (BBA, KRAS), there was no engagement of young people in advocacy and negotiation or opportunities to learn how to navigate political systems of community government. Consequently, within the SfD initiatives, young people have limited chances to participate in activities that develop the skills and habits needed to actively shape society in collaboration with others. In line with this, one respondent mentioned that the youth welfare organisation in which the SfD initiative is embedded had become more 'institutionalised' to the mainstream. This was confirmed by another coach embedded in a youth work setting, who said that there was no structural politicised work from the sport initiative and even for the broader youth work organisation politicised activities were rather 'accidental'. Another coach indicated that such work takes time and money, and that the daily organisation of training and initiations, and sorting out infrastructure are prioritised. One of the respondents further clarified that in an increasingly right wing political climate that dislikes critiques from civic society many organisations are afraid of offending certain (right wing) local politicians, which makes it difficult to organise a clear position and actions regarding social injustices in society. In such a climate, for organisations, politicised work becomes docile and sporadic. This clarification was linked to the context of marketisation of welfare professions and the need for organisations to keep local administrations and politicians as a friend, which reduces the capacity to voice opinions and a lack of confidence to express dissent.

However, from the interviews with the respondents, some coaches indicated to work on the socio-political development of young people indirectly through their identity (i.e. who young people are, what to be, developing their sense of responsibility, how they want to engage in society). Such identity formation happened subtly through chats or by talking to young people, before or after training and/or in the dressing room. Underlying these processes were to aim of working around democratic values, basic rights (e.g. the right to be who you are) and ethnic, cultural and religious tolerance. According to one respondent, respect for others and religious tolerance is important in a society where polarisation is on the rise.

Discussion

The purpose of this article was to draw on the Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003) as an analytical framework of youth organizing to enhance our theoretical and conceptual understanding of SfD and re-imagine ways of working with youth (i.e. sport pedagogy). Through this framework, we could critically identify and investigate the underlying sport pedagogies of six urban SfD initiatives that work with urban youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The results indicate that the six SfD initiatives work around several features that are central within the Youth Engagement Continuum (see figure 1). Coakley (2011) already indicated that many of the contextual factors that have been identified in a number of studies on sport participation and

associated outcomes overlap with the key factors of youth organizing. For Coakley (2011), this was a reason to make connections between youth organizing and sport. We found that the SfD initiatives are focused on the various 'youth development' features: meeting young people where they are, youth-adult social relationships of care and support, developmental opportunities, and emphasising identity formation. In addition, several SfD initiatives indicated working with young people's context such as parents, teachers (to improve relationships between young people and their parents and teachers) and have contacts with social partners and social services. With regard to youth leadership, for some young people, the SfD initiatives provide opportunities to be engaged as volunteers and, in some initiatives more than others, as self-organisers. In turn, young people can learn skills and competences while co-organising and guiding activities. Regarding more explicitly politicised features of the Youth Engagement Continuum (in the youth leadership, civic engagement and youth organizing category), apart from one example by one initiative (BBA), it was found that the SfD initiatives did not deepen young people's historical and cultural understanding of their experiences and community conditions. Besides the SfD initiative as a community project in itself, and with the exception of Wolf Pack's connection to a Bolivian basketball project, the SfD initiatives did not facilitate the participation of young people in other community projects that specifically focus on improving other people's well-being. Further, regarding youth civic engagement, the SfD initiatives did not engage young people in political education or provide opportunities to build skills and capacity for power analysis and action. Regarding this, only two initiatives sporadically joined or organised activities with some of their participants that could stimulate their socio-political development. Although the SfD initiatives can foster the creation of a collective identity amongst young people and their parents (i.e. sense of community), this was not a collective identity as 'agents for social change'. Finally, besides the sporadically or 'accidentally' joined or organised from youth (welfare) work organisations (i.e. BBA, KRAS) with some of their participants, the SfD initiatives, did not engage young people in advocacy and negotiation or opportunities to learn how to navigate political systems of community and government. In addition, one respondent referred to the increasingly hostile right-wing political climate contributed to the docility of civic society organisations to organise political activities and actions with regard to social injustices. This was linked to the context of marketisation of welfare professions which reduces the capacity to voice opinions and a lack of confidence to express dissent (see Cooper et al., 2015).

Given these findings, the SfD initiatives, which can be regarded as 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2013), can be positioned within the 'youth development' and, partly, 'youth leadership' (i.e. pedagogy of the volunteer) category of the Youth Engagement Continuum. More explicitly politicised features of youth leadership, civic engagement and youth organizing are hardly to no part of their curriculum. Even the two initiatives that are embedded in broader youth work (i.e. Kras Sport and BBA) only sporadically joined politicised activities (e.g. commemoration, general strike, youth consultation) with *some* of their sport participants and these activities were almost always initiated and organised by other civic organisations. This is in line with Lardier et al. (2018) study on 18 US youth workers' conceptions of their work with youth, who suggestion that while youth workers were very supportive of youth, the support and actions they provided were *on behalf of* rather than *with* them and that, in general, partnering with youth for community change was not a part of what they envisioned their work to be.

In line with these findings, it can be questioned to what degree SfD practitioners see value in a more politicised curriculum and regard it as their social mission. Understandably, many practitioners recognise the limits of sport in alleviating the social difficulties their young people are confronted with, certainly in the context of government disinvestment in social protection and security (Hartmann, 2016). In addition, a familiar challenge of SfD initiatives is that, on a day-to-day basis, the coaches are

preoccupied with the organisation and operation of the training and matches that swallow up all their time and energy (Spaaij et al., 2016; Hartmann, 2016; Nols et al, 2018). Working with young people through sport demands tremendous resources, knowledge, skills and commitment, but with limited resources and time extended non-sport programming (whether or not mingled in the sport activity) is typically pushed down the priority list (Hartmann, 2016). Therefore, the question is what can be expected from SfD initiatives that are often confined to work under precarious circumstances and have limited organisational capacity (e.g. resources, knowledge, skills) to combine their sport objectives with a social mission (Coakley, 2016; Fernández-Balboa, 2017)? This would be in line with Coakley (2016) who argued that sport-plus initiatives are most likely (or at best) capable of implementing a Positive Youth Development approach and that so-called ‘plus-sport’ initiatives (see Coalter, 2013) are more equipped to organise beyond youth development.

Thus, the SfD initiatives can be re-imagined as pedagogical spaces where young people – and by extension their parents – can be themselves, feel welcome and safe, gain respect, can learn to reflect and form opinions, explore their own democratic norms and values, and engage in volunteering and self-organising. In the words of Freire (2005: p.72), young people can become ‘more fully human’ which is essential for a socially just and democratic society. Mentoring figures such as the coach, the association manager, the social worker or the youth worker can be a key figure in creating meaning and purpose, for which a thorough knowledge of – and openness to – the life world of children and young people is essential (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, Nols & Coussée, 2013a). Such meanings and experiences might not be offered (to the same extent) by other societal spheres such as home, labour market or the neighbourhood (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a).

This does not mean that the SfD initiatives do not work politically. Freire (2005) argued that education is inherently political and, in his words, either functions an instrument for humanisation or domestication. By creating a welcome and safe environment, involving both young people and their parents, which can foster a sense of community and can increase social engagement SfD initiatives enact political *base work* in a subtler way. Also, through youth-adult relationships (i.e. respect, care, trust) positive identity can be emphasised. Here, positive identity formation means feeding back on young people’s attitudes and behaviour, stimulating their reflection and talking with them about personal matters and various democratic norms and values such as respect for others’ singularity, equality and rights (e.g. the right to be yourself and not to feel abnormal). This approach can support youth to build ethical codes that guide their relationship with the world and how they want to socially engage in it (Sullivan et al., 2003). Moreover, those young people who are involved in volunteering and self-organisation learn organising skills and competences. In doing so, young people take up a social engagement in their neighbourhood and towards other people’s leisure time (Sullivan et al., 2003). Finally, through the interpersonal contacts with parents, teachers and personnel of social partners and services (e.g. employees of job or welfare agencies), mentoring figures within the SfD initiative have a modest room to influence how people from a young person’s context think about and approach youth. This kind of *base work*, as Freire (2005) wants it, might not change the world, but it is changing people, and people change the world. In that sense, these pedagogical sport spaces can be regarded as ‘micro victories’ (Leahy et al., 2017) or ‘little utopias’ (Achterhuis, 2016) which enhance young people’s agency and, as an action in itself, re-imagine and challenge the dominant traditional ways of working with youth in a mainstream society and sport landscape (Cooper et al., 2015; Coakley, 2011; Hartmann, 2016; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013b; Nols et al., 2018). It can also offer a space in which young people are temporarily freed from deficit discourses that are often present in wider society (Cooper et al., 2015; Nols et al., 2017). However, in this context, Hartmann argued that, in first place:

‘we would do well to remember that some of the most important benefits of sport-based programming for target [groups] are not about intervention and resocialisation but about providing opportunities for recreation, fitness and leisure for populations and communities that are not well served by our usual market-based, profit-driven systems for provision’

(Hartmann, 2016: p.208)

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Chapter 2: Urban Sport for Development Initiatives and Young People in Socially Vulnerable Situations: Investigating the ‘Deficit Model’

Urban Sport for Development Initiatives and Young People in Socially Vulnerable Situations: Investigating the ‘Deficit Model’⁴

Abstract

Critical researchers have indicated that the assumptions underlying most sport for development (SfD) initiatives tend to align with a ‘deficit model’ of youth: young people from disadvantaged areas are uniformly deficient and in need of development, which can be achieved through sport (Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2013). In this article, we investigated these assumptions within six urban SfD initiatives that work with young people in socially vulnerable situations in a ‘first’ world nation, Belgium. We conducted a survey at two moments in time amongst 14- to 25-year-old participants in order to test two assumptions: i) ‘participants are deficient and in need of development’; and ii) ‘participation in SfD initiatives leads to positive personal development’. We operationalised ‘development’ as the commonly used outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. These are ‘household words’ both inside and outside SfD research, practice, and policy and carry the assumption that boosting them will by itself foster positive outcomes. The findings refute the supposition that young people from disadvantaged urban areas are uniformly in need of more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem and show that there is no simple and predictable change in participants’ ‘development’. We suggest that, in designing and researching programs, SfD stakeholders start from an open-ended bottom-up approach which is tailored to the actual life situations of young people and their individual differences and consider more interpersonal and critical conceptualisations of ‘development’.

Keywords: deficit model; disadvantaged communities; self-efficacy; self-esteem; sport; sport for development, urban areas; youth

Introduction

In communities with low living standards, it is increasingly thought that sport can reach a large number of people and that it can be used as a vehicle to address a variety of social challenges such as poverty, as well as achieve non-sport development objectives (Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2015; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). In recent years, however, the assumed potential of sport for development (SfD) initiatives to achieve broader social change has been the subject of considerable academic scrutiny (Schulenkorf et al., 2016; Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes, & Hayhurst, 2016; Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2016).

One key issue within SfD highlighted by critical researchers is that many SfD policies and initiatives are imbued with paternalistic values and neoliberal philosophies that emphasise the need for individual responsibility and treat young people as problems to be solved (i.e., with flawed attitudes or displaying ‘anti-social’ behaviour) (Coakley, 2011; Darnell, 2012; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Rossi & Jeanes, 2016). Researchers underlined how the assumptions underlying most SfD initiatives tend to align with a ‘deficit model’, which assumes that young people from disadvantaged areas are uniformly deficient and in need of development (Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2013). This approach, described as ‘narrow empowerment’ (Lawson, 2005), highlights individual deficits while distracting attention from deficiencies within the social system that tend to make young people socially vulnerable in the first

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place (e.g. poverty, social inequalities) (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013; Kelly, 2011; Weiss, 1997a). Furthermore, presumptions within SfD concerning individual deficits are seldom based on a systematic diagnosis of young people's social conditions and needs. According to Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004), it is common for social programs to be based on faulty assumptions about both the nature and extent of the problem they address and the needs of the target population they intend to serve. This occurs because of an insufficient initial diagnosis, selective exposure or the reliance on stereotypes. These programs may have little prospect of achieving their intended effects. Thus, a systematic assessment of both young people's assumed needs and developmental change through sport can indicate which of the assumptions that lie behind the deficit model are faulty. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the assumptions underlying a deficit model of youth within six urban SfD initiatives that work with young people living in socially vulnerable situations and disadvantaged communities in Belgium (specifically, Flanders—the northern part of Belgium—and Brussels). The aim is to highlight some of the dangers of deploying a deficit model of youth within SfD policy, practice, and research.

Regarding 'development', various researchers stated that the term is intriguingly vague, has a contentious and contested character, and is complicated, poly-vocal, and open to several interpretations (Black, 2010; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Kruse, 2006). Consequently, the term 'sport for development' has been defined in reference to individual, community, and societal levels, as well as in reference to several outcomes (Coakley, 2011; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). This wide array of definitions initiated calls for more conceptual and theoretical clarity within SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016). In designing the research strategy for this study, our challenge was to explore which conception of 'development' was most dominant within SfD research, practice, and policy. We found that, in most SfD programs, 'development' is not defined in terms of the need for social justice, collective empowerment and action, or transformative social change at a community or institutional level (Coakley, 2011; Darnell, 2010; Hayhurst, Wilson, & Frisby, 2010; Lawson, 2005). Instead, 'development' is mostly defined as an individual process in which socialisation experiences will produce the attributes needed to increase young people's life chances (Coakley, 2011, 2016; Darnell, 2012; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Such an individual-focused approach is often selectively or uncritically embraced by many who fund, manage, and staff SfD initiatives, as is shown by references to so-called 'heartfelt narratives' (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011) and a vision of 'development' as linear and measurable in a quantitative way (Coalter, 2013; Harris & Adams, 2015; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Kay, 2012; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014). Therefore, in communities with low living standards and a high degree of poverty, SfD initiatives tend to focus on fostering life skills in areas such as: self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem; decision-making; leadership; public speaking; human rights, gender attitudes, and prevention of sexual violence; and knowledge about health (Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Mwaanga & Prince, 2016; Spaaij, Oxford, & Jeanes, 2016). Within a deficit model, the importance of self-confidence, -efficacy, and -esteem is stressed in terms of overcoming barriers, making choices, and improving one's life chances (Coakley, 2011; Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Mwaanga & Prince, 2016; Spaaij et al., 2016). Despite the critique of 'neoliberal understandings', these are the most commonly used outcomes in research within sport-based youth development literature (i.e., self-confidence and self-esteem) (Jones et al., 2016; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Also, outside of SfD, in other youth development contexts, the concept of self-esteem, for instance, has become a 'household word' on the assumption that boosting it will by itself foster positive outcomes, although evidence for such an assumption has not been found (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Mruk, 2013). Unfortunately, a large number of SfD practitioners and researchers within sport-based youth development contexts find it difficult to resist

thinking in terms of a deficit model, thereby aligning themselves with the dominant managerialist or political rhetoric, and potentially harming young people and their self-image (Cooper, 2012; Kennelly, 2016).

Although SfD programs tend to emphasise individual deficits selectively and overstate the developmental benefits of sport, this is less often empirically and critically investigated, making analysis of this type valuable in complementing the theoretical critiques (Darnell, 2015). One of the exceptions to the scarcity of research on this theme is the work of critical researcher Fred Coalter (2013; Coalter & Taylor, 2010), who studied the assumptions underlying the deficit model in the Global South (specifically, India and Kenya) via a quantitative pre- and post-research design, which allowed him to *measure* ‘needs’—operationalised as a lack of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem—and ‘impact’. Coalter showed that participants were not uniformly deficient and that the programs had no simple and predictable impact. In their integrated literature review, Schulenkorf and his colleagues (2016) indicated that the majority of SfD projects are carried out in the ‘Global South’ and that research has largely focused on the community level, where qualitative approaches are dominant. For that reason, we placed our research focus on participants’ needs and outcomes in the ‘Global North’ (Belgium) and opted for a quantitative research design similar to Coalter’s. However, there are important distinctions between our study and Coalter’s work. Firstly, Belgium is a wholly different socioeconomic and cultural context to India or Kenya. In 2014, the HDI of Belgium was 0,890 (21th/188; ‘very high HD’) compared to 0,609 (130th/188; ‘medium HD’) and 0,548 (145th/188: ‘low HD’) for India and Kenya respectively (UNDP, 2017). Secondly, we took additional background variables of participants into account, some of which can be regarded as proxy-indicators of social vulnerability and conducted more elaborate and different analyses.

We administered a survey at two moments in time amongst 14- to 25-year-old participants of SfD initiatives in order to test two assumptions within the deficit model: i) ‘participants are deficient and in need of development’; and ii) ‘participation in SfD initiatives leads to positive personal development’. In line with the above literature, we operationalised ‘development’ as the commonly used outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem within research, practice, and policy. In line with the dominant assumptions in SfD, these simple hypotheses were formulated:

- Hypothesis 1: participants have low perceived self-efficacy;
- Hypothesis 2: participants have low self-esteem;
- Hypothesis 3: participation in the initiatives leads to an increase of perceived self-efficacy between the first (T1) and the second (T2) administration;
- Hypothesis 4: participation in the initiatives leads to an increase of self-esteem between T1 and T2.

After outlining the methods and reporting the results, we aimed to contribute to the academic debate on the deficit model and formulated practical implications for SfD stakeholders (i.e., needs assessment, understanding program mechanisms and context, conceptualisation of ‘development’). Finally, we briefly suggest some concrete theoretical pathways which go beyond the deficit model and which can inform, guide, and clarify the field of SfD in the future.

Methods

Initiatives

The data were collected at six SfD initiatives located in three disadvantaged, super-diverse urban areas in Belgium (Brussels, Antwerp and Genk). These three cities all have areas with a high degree of poverty and hardship, school drop-out rates, unemployment, and a lack of sustainable facilities and opportunities. 'Super-diversity' is an urban reality in which citizens are characterised by a complex layering of and interaction between variables such as countries of origin, nationalities, languages, cultures, religions, statuses, and social positions (Vertovec, 2007). Thus, the term should not be misunderstood as 'ethnic-cultural diversity'. The degree of superdiversity in Belgium is highest in Brussels, Antwerp and Genk. It is within this context that the initiatives were selected using the following criteria: (1) having a track record in working with young people in socially vulnerable situations; and (2) explicitly mentioning working on young people's development. The initiatives are *Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball*, *Brussels Boxing Academy*, *Brussels Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy*, *Opboksen* (boxing, Genk), *City Pirates Football Club* (Antwerp), and *Kras Sport* (futsal, Antwerp). These initiatives are relatively open access, but with a targeting, outreach approach designed to attract young people from the area. They can be regarded as 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2007) clubs whose primary focus is to use sport as a tool to achieve social development outcomes. They are relatively large initiatives and some of them have hundreds of participants.

Participants and Recruitment

The study population comprised boys and girls that are active in the selected initiatives and are between 14 and 25 years old. Due to the vulnerable nature of the population, attention was given to obtaining a passive informed consent from young people and their parents. This recruitment approach was agreed with staff members.

The Survey

Prior to the survey, the initiatives outlined a theory of change⁵ in several focus groups. Their theories of change helped us to focus our research attention and resources on key aspects (and key outcomes) of the initiatives' programs (Weiss, 1997a). The formulated key outcomes were "*having self-esteem*" (worthy beliefs about oneself) and "*believing in their own ability*" (or self-confidence/ perceived self-efficacy). As discussed previously, these concepts of self-confidence/efficacy and self-esteem are also commonly used in research within sport-based youth development literature (Jones et al., 2016; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Existing scales were used to measure perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem⁶. Such scales are likely to be more valid and reliable than newly crafted ones and allow a comparison of the distribution of responses in specific populations (Weiss, 1997b). The survey was administered to the young people at two moments in time: at the start of the sporting season (T1; October 2015) and at the end (T2; May 2016). To take the multilingual context into account, the survey was drafted in Dutch, French, and English via the back-translation method. After piloting, the survey was completed by the participants in small groups with the first author available for clarification.

⁵ An English version of the logic model can be found in attachment 2.

⁶ An English version of the survey can be found in attachment 3.

Perceived Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy can be defined as “people’s judgements of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). This concept influences thought patterns which relate to *initiative*, as well as the *effort* people will put into a particular activity, the extent to which they will *persevere* when facing obstacles, and their resilience when they face adversity (Pajares, 1996). To measure it, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Sherer et al., 1982), modified by Bosscher, Smit and Kempen (1997), was used. Although self-efficacy theory emphasises task-specificity, various experiences of failures and success in different domains of functioning may generate more generalised beliefs of self-efficacy that have explanatory value as well (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). Thus, general perceived self-efficacy is akin to ‘self-confidence’. The GSES has acceptable psychometric qualities (Bosscher et al., 1997; Bosscher & Smit, 1998). In this study, the internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) of this scale was 0.775, which is acceptable (> 0.70).

Self-Esteem

According to Mruk (2013, p. 27) “self-esteem is the lived status of one’s competence at dealing with the challenges of living in a worthy way over time”. The factor of competence has the conceptual room to accommodate such things as Bandura’s (1986) notion of self-efficacy (Mruk, 2013). To measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used (Franck, De Raedt, Barbez, & Rosseel, 2008; Rosenberg, 1965; Vallieres & Vallerand, 1990). Whereas, in recent literature, a distinction is made between a ‘state’ versus a ‘trait’ form of self-esteem, the original RSES was designed to assess a person’s *global* trait-like self-esteem. The RSES has acceptable psychometric qualities (Franck et al., 2008; Rosenberg, 1965; Vallieres & Vallerand, 1990). In this study, the internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) of this scale was 0.701, which is acceptable (> 0.70).

Socio-Demographic and Sport Indicators

Socio-demographic indicators were included in the survey such as: sex; age; country of birth; school trajectory (e.g. year repetition, suspension); family situation (e.g. spoken language at home, country of birth of (grand)mother); questions about perceived financial home situation; and concerns about their own future. Some of these indicators were used as proxy-indicators of social vulnerability (e.g. year repetition, school suspension, difficult financial home situation). According to Vettenburg’s (1998) framework of social vulnerability, year repetition and suspension *can* be important indicators of a socially vulnerable trajectory and *can* be predictive for further school and labour market trajectories. Sport-related indicators were also included (e.g. sport frequency, length of membership).

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics 23. First, the nature and the extent of the participants’ distribution on perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem was analysed. Second, to test for significant differences in scores between groups of young people (i.e., year repetition, age, sex), the parametric one-way ANOVA-test was used. Third, paired samples t-tests were used to investigate average changes in self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy between the first (T1) and the second (T2) administration. Fourth, to explore beyond average mean score, scattergrams provided insight into participants’ individual changes and their nature of the direction.

Results

Participant Profile

The first administration (T1) was conducted amongst 288 young people of which 82.6% were boys (238 boys) and 17.4% were girls (50 girls) (Table 1). Because of a shortage of participants aged over 14 years old at Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball, it was decided to lower the age group at this initiative to 12 years old ($n = 14$). Also at City Pirates Football Club, one team (U14) had several 13-year-old players ($n = 20$) who were also questioned. For these younger people (12–13 year olds), the researcher ensured that extra attention was given in advance to clarify the questions. Investigating participants' characteristics showed that the participants were, in general, a very ethnic-culturally diverse, multilingual group of young people.

The proxy-indicators of social vulnerability were analysed to investigate to what degree the initiatives reached young people living in socially vulnerable situations. Firstly, more than half (54.0%; $n = 150$) of the participants had repeated a school year at least once. This is a relatively high number since research shows that, at the age of 15, in Flanders, 'only' 27% of the students repeated their year at least once compared to 47% in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, while the OECD mean was 13% (Oproep Voor een Democratische School, 2014). Secondly, there was the high percentage of school suspension (19.2%), with 10.9% of the young people suspended twice or more. Furthermore, the sport coaches confirmed that many of their participants did indeed find themselves in socially vulnerable situations.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics and proxy-indicators of social vulnerability.

	All Sfd initiatives
Respondents	100% ($n = 288$)
Boys	82.6% ($n = 238$)
Girls	17.4% ($n = 50$)
Mean age	16.50 (SD 3.30)
First year at the club	44.5% ($n = 126$)
Two years at the club	16.3% ($n = 46$)
Three years at the club	9.5% ($n = 27$)
Four years at the club	4.9% ($n = 14$)
More than four years at the club	24.7% ($n = 70$)
Practice sport once a week (at the club)	15.8% ($n = 44$)
Practice sport twice a week	21.1% ($n = 59$)
Practice sport three times a week	26.2% ($n = 73$)
Practice sport four times a week	23.7% ($n = 66$)
Practice sport more than four times a week	13.3% ($n = 37$)
Belgian nationality	69.8% ($n = 201$)
Non-Belgian nationality	30.2% ($n = 87$)
Roots in migration (3 generations)	85.8% ($n = 247$)
No roots in migration	14.2% ($n = 41$)
Newcomers (< 5 years) in Belgium	10.1% ($n = 29$)
More than 5 years in Belgium	18.1% ($n = 52$)
Living in Belgium all my life	71.9% ($n = 207$)
At least speaking Dutch and/or French at home	86.1% ($n = 248$)
Speaking (an)other language(s) at home	13.9% ($n = 40$)

Still at school	81.1% (n = 227)
In further education	10.4% (n = 29)
Working	7.2% (n = 20)
Looking for work	1.4% (n = 4)
Primary school	3.5% (n = 8)
General school	44.5% (n = 101)
Technical school	24.7% (n = 56)
Vocational school	25.6% (n = 58)
Special needs school	1.8% (n = 4)
Repeated year	54.0% (n = 150)
Ever been suspended	19.2% (n = 53)
Easy financial home situation	52.5% (n = 143)
Rather easy financial home situation	31.1% (n = 85)
Rather difficult financial home situation	12.5% (n = 34)
Difficult financial home situation	4.0% (n = 11)

For the second administration (T2), due to temporary injuries, players' movements (to other initiatives or within the initiative), and other (unknown) reasons, there was a drop-out rate of 44,4% (n = 128). Therefore, the second administration (T2) was conducted amongst 160 young people of which 85,6% were boys (137 boys) and 14,4% were girls (23 girls). A comparison between those participants that dropped out and those that completed the survey twice showed that drop-outs have a significantly higher age ($p = 0.018$) and have been suspended significantly more often ($p < 0.001$). Drop-outs did not differ significantly with regard to perceived self-efficacy ($p = 0.615$), self-esteem ($p = 0.672$), financial home situation ($p = 0.075$), sex ($p = 0.135$), year repetition ($p = 0.061$), or length of membership ($p = 0.066$).

Investigating the Deficit Model

Investigating the deficit model, implicitly or explicitly present in much SfD rhetoric, we found that the young people in the initiatives were not uniformly deficient and in need of development (i.e., low perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem). In general, the average score on perceived self-efficacy (n = 288) was 25.18 on a maximum of 36, with a standard deviation of 5.247 (Table 2). The range of the perceived self-efficacy scores was 33, with a minimum score of 3 and a maximum of 36. Perceived self-efficacy scores between 20 and 30 are considered normal. The data showed that 33 young people had a score under 20 (representing low scores), while 44 young people had a score above 30 (representing high scores). The skewness of the perceived self-efficacy scores was -0.603 (small left skew) and the kurtosis (peakedness) was 1.049 (mesokurtic, but slightly thinner). Using additional testing with P-P Plots, Q-Q Plots, and One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test ($p > 0.05$), it could be said that the scores for perceived self-efficacy are normally distributed (Figure 1). These results refute hypothesis 1 which states that participants have low perceived self-efficacy.

Table 2. Mean scores T1.

	Mean	Std. Dev	Min-max (range)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived self-efficacy (0–36)	25.18	5.25	3-36 (33)	-0.603	1.049
Self-esteem (0–30)	21.69	3.99	8-30 (22)	-0.333	0.491

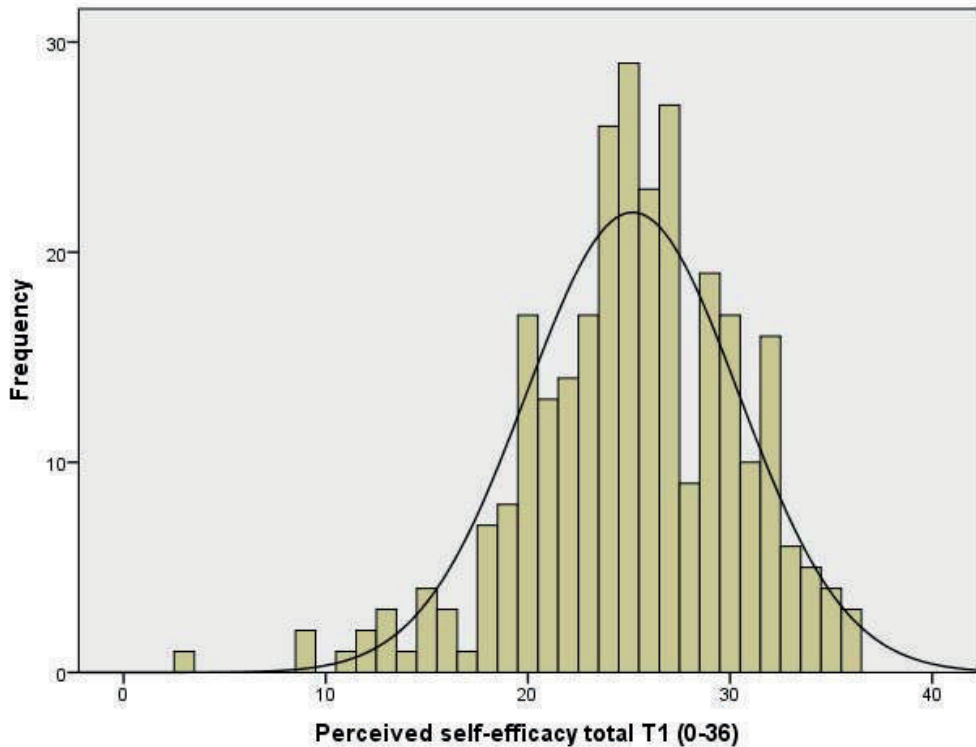


Figure 1. Perceived self-efficacy total at T1.

In general, the average score for self-esteem ($n = 288$) was 21.69 on a maximum of 30, with a standard deviation of 3.986 (Table 2). The range of the self-esteem scores was 22, with a minimum score of 8 and a maximum of 30. Self-esteem scores between 15 and 25 are considered “normal”. The data showed that 11 young people had a score under 15 (representing low scores), while 53 young people had a score above 25 (representing high scores). The skewness of the self-esteem scores was -0.333 (very small left skew) and the kurtosis was 0.491 (normal mesokurtic). Using additional testing with P-P Plots, Q-Q Plots, and One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test ($p > 0.05$), it could be said that the scores for self-esteem were normally distributed (Figure 2). These results refute hypothesis 2 which states that participants have low self-esteem.

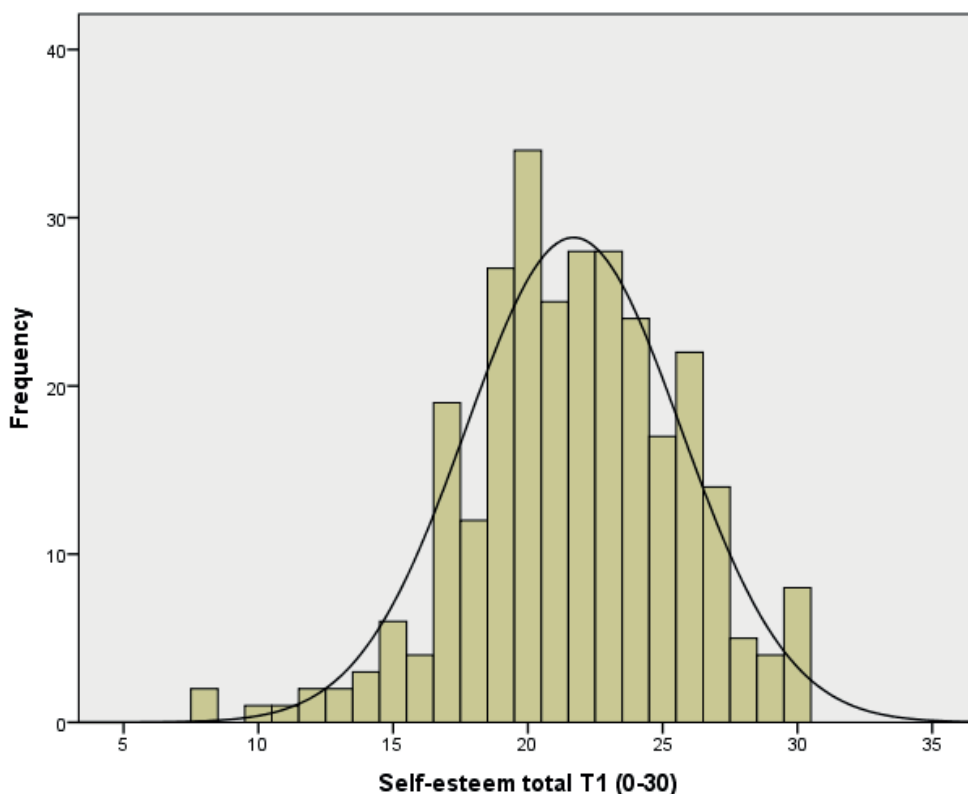


Figure 2. Self-esteem total at T1.

Testing Differences

The parametric one-way ANOVA test ($n = 288$) indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in perceived self-efficacy scores with boys (25.70) scoring higher than girls (22.70). A similar difference was found in self-esteem scores, with boys (22.08) scoring higher ($p < 0.001$) than girls (19.84). Furthermore, there was a significant difference ($n = 288$; $p = 0.009$) in the perceived self-efficacy scores between those who speak a language at home which is not Dutch or French (23.18) and those who speak at least Dutch or French at home (25.50). Such a difference was not found for self-esteem ($p = 0.978$). There was also a significant difference ($n = 428$; $p < 0.001$) in self-esteem with regard to concerns about their own future: young people who sometimes to very often have concerns about their own future scored lower (21.13) than those who have no concerns (22.99). Such a difference was not found for perceived self-efficacy ($p = 0.070$).

In the entire group, there were no significant differences found for perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem with regard to age ($p = 0.928$ and $p = 0.949$ respectively), year repetition (i.e., repeated a year at school or not) ($p = 0.053$ and $p = 0.122$), suspension (i.e., suspended or not) ($p = 0.969$ and $p = 0.806$), length of membership (i.e., been a member one year to more than 4 years) ($p = 0.416$ and $p = 0.162$), sport frequency (i.e., practice sport once to more than 4 times a week) (0.419 and 0.801),

financial home situation (i.e., easy to difficult) ($p = 0.077$ and $p = 0.838$), and time living in Belgium (i.e., been in Belgium for more than 5 years or not) ($p = 0.155$ and 0.404).

Investigating Developmental Changes

Paired-samples t-tests (Table 3) showed no significant difference in perceived self-efficacy ($p = 0.791$) and self-esteem ($p = 0.885$) between T1 and T2. However, when we split the group into participants who increased their scores on the one hand and those who showed a decrease in scores on the other, significant changes were found for both perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem (p -values all below 0.001). These increases and decreases thus cancel each other out in total, but do represent two separate meaningful trends (see next section 'beyond averages').

Table 3. Developmental changes.

	Mean T1	Mean T2	Difference (T2–T1)	t	p
Perceived self-efficacy (total) (n = 160)	25.22	25.12	-0.100	0.265	0.791
Self-esteem (total) (n = 160)	21.83	21.78	-0.044	0.144	0.885
Perceived self-efficacy (increases) (n = 61)	22.67	27.10	4.426	-8.853	0.000
Perceived self-efficacy (decreases) (n = 77)	27.12	23.40	-3.714	13.550	0.000
Self-esteem (increases) (n = 64)	20.33	23.91	3.578	-12.591	0.000
Self-esteem (decreases) (n = 73)	23.40	20.16	-3.233	11.289	0.000

Beyond Averages

Just as the young people cannot be regarded as uniformly deficient or of low perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem, the changes between T1 and T2 were varied and certainly not uni-directional. There were high levels of adjustment of scores between the two administrations of the survey (86.2% for perceived self-efficacy and 85.6% for the self-esteem scores). For perceived self-efficacy, 38.1% ($n = 61$) of the participants had an increase in their score while 48.1% ($n = 77$) had a decrease in their score. There were also participants who had no changes in their perceived self-efficacy (13.8%; $n = 22$). For self-esteem, 40% ($n = 64$) of the participants had an increase in their score while 45.6% ($n = 73$) had a decrease in their score. There were also participants that had no changes in their self-esteem (14.4%; $n = 23$).

Before score <i>below average</i> and then <i>increased</i>	Before score <i>above average</i> and then <i>increased</i>
Before score <i>below average</i> and then <i>decreased</i>	Before score <i>above average</i> and then <i>decreased</i>

Figure 3. Guide to reading the scattergrams.

A scattergram represents these individual changes visually (see Figure 3). A horizontal line was placed where the difference between T1 and T2 was 0. A vertical line was placed on the mean score of T1. Each dot represents an individual respondent's score and the degree to which their score (i.e., perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem) changed between the two survey administrations (i.e., T1 and T2). The top left and bottom right quadrants could be seen as the most interesting when investigating developmental changes. A scatter dot is plotted with the y-axis representing the *difference* between the first and second administration (i.e., increase or decrease) and the x-axis representing the individual *result* on the first survey score (i.e., T1).

For perceived self-efficacy, 23,13% had a score below the average on the first administration and their score on the second administrations indicated an increased perceived self-efficacy (top left quadrant). 31,25% of the young people had a score above the average on the first administration and the scores on the second administration indicated a decreased perceived self-efficacy (bottom right quadrant) (Figure 4).

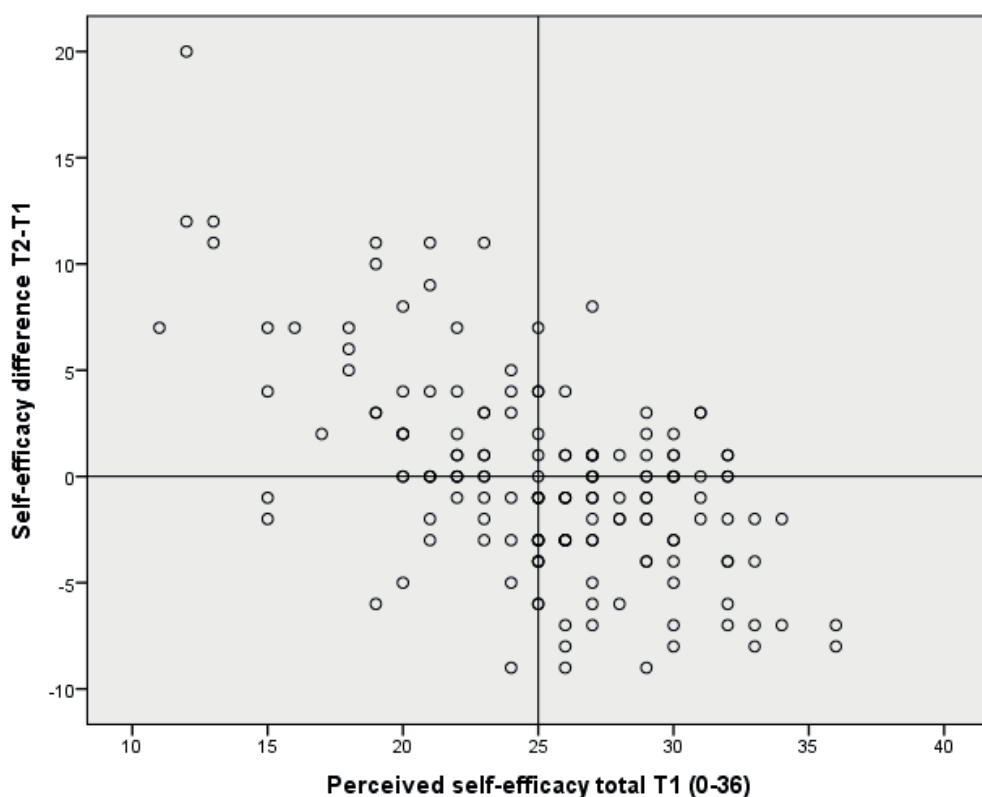


Figure 4. Scattergram of individual perceived self-efficacy changes.

For self-esteem, 25% had a score below the average on the first administration and their score of the second administrations indicated an increased self-esteem (top left quadrant). 26,25% of the young people had a score above the average on the first administration and their scores on the second administration indicated a decreased self-esteem (bottom right quadrant) (Figure 5).

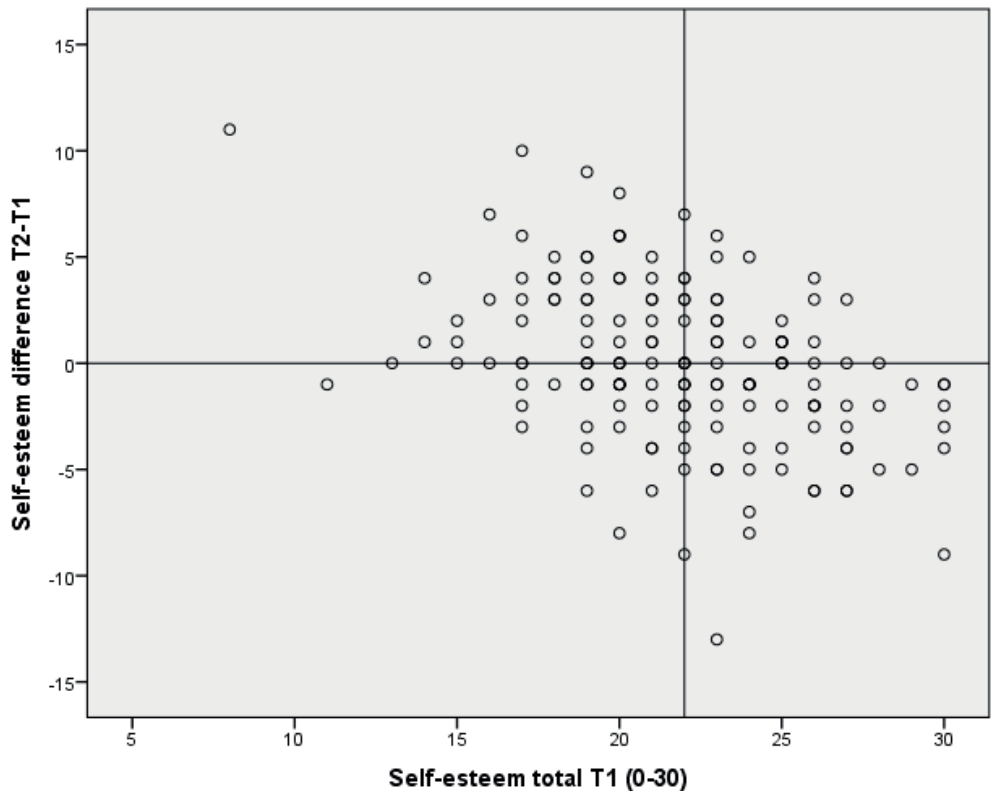


Figure 5. Scattergrams of individual self-esteem changes.

In other words, the diverse groups of participants were affected in a variety of ways and this varied between the initiatives. The hypotheses that all participants indicate an increase of their perceived self-efficacy (hypothesis 3) and self-esteem (hypothesis 4) between the first (T1) and the second (T2) administrations can be rejected.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to systematically analyse two assumptions within the individual-centred deficit model of youth: i) ‘participants are deficient and in need of development’; and ii) ‘participation in SfD initiatives leads to positive personal development’. Before discussing the key issues, we want to stress that measuring developmental change in social sciences is conceptually and methodologically challenging, which makes the interpretation of data tricky. Several limitations to this study’s research design should be taken into account. Firstly, participation in the initiatives was voluntary and participants who took part are likely to have a reasonable degree of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. As a result, young people that are in the most vulnerable situations might not participate in these initiatives, even if they set up a targeting, outreach approach. Still, our data sources indicated that the investigated SfD initiatives attract a large number of young people who find themselves in

socially vulnerable situations. Secondly, any changes that might be revealed in the data are not necessarily the result of participation in the initiatives. In social sciences, it is difficult to isolate the 'sport' or 'program' effect from other contextual influences (e.g. family, peers, school, public space) and from more general developmental changes young people might undergo. Thirdly, when developmental changes do appear, it usually happens slowly and in very slight ways. Since we do not know if and how soon the expected developmental change is likely to appear, a time span of 6 to 8 months might be relatively short (Spaaij et al., 2016).

Despite these limitations, the data raise questions about the assumptions underpinning most SfD rhetoric. The first key issue is that young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods cannot be regarded as *uniformly* deficient in relation to the assumed deficits of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. Not *all* participants had low perceived self-efficacy and low self-esteem. On the contrary, there was a normal distribution of self-evaluations, comparable to other populations (Bosscher et al., 1997; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Groups of young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods include some with relatively high self-evaluations, some with low self-evaluations, and most with scores somewhere in the middle. The results refute the assumption that most young people living in disadvantaged communities need more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem and, as such, warn against over-generalising about personal developmental needs. These results confirm the previous findings of research conducted in the Global South (Coalter, 2013; Coalter & Taylor, 2010). Our analysis in disadvantaged urban areas of the Global North (Belgium) also showed that there were no significant differences for perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem regarding age, year repetition, suspension, length of membership, sport frequency, financial home situation, or length of time living in Belgium. There were, however, significant differences between boys (higher) and girls for both concepts. Further, those who speak a language at home which is not Dutch or French scored significantly lower on perceived self-efficacy than those who speak at least Dutch or French at home. Also, young people who sometimes to very often have concerns about their own future scored significantly lower on self-esteem than those who have no such concerns. As Rossi and his colleagues (2004) stated, there are hardly any social problems that can be easily and convincingly described in terms of simple and unambiguous characteristics of the individuals experiencing those problems. Therefore, the first implication for SfD stakeholders designing and researching SfD programs is to pay more attention to the needs assessment of young people by starting with an open-ended bottom-up approach that is tailored to the actual life situations of young people and their individual differences, instead of relying on pre-defined, abstract ideas (Cooper, 2012; Giulianotti, Hognestad, & Spaaij, 2016; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Coalter, 2012).

The second key issue is that the outcomes measured amongst participants were varied and certainly not unidirectional (i.e., there were increases, decreases, or even no change). There was no simple and predictable change in young people's 'development', as might be expected on the basis of previous research (Coalter, 2013; Coalter & Taylor, 2010). Evidently, starting from the inaccurate assumption that young people are *uniformly* deficient, it may be expected that hardly any positive change (i.e., increase) would occur for participants with already high self-evaluations. The overall picture is that many participants with lower than average self-evaluations improved their score and many with initially higher than average self-evaluations showed a decrease. This tendency might be influenced by the statistical phenomenon of 'regression to the mean'. Such decreases should not necessarily be seen as a negative outcome. It may reflect a more considered approach to the completion of the survey on the second administration, or an adjustment to healthier levels (e.g. less narcissistic or anti-social self-esteem (Mruk, 2013)) due to a practical experience or social relationships

inside or outside the initiative. Likewise, for participants that had no changes in their self-evaluation, such status-quo should not necessarily be seen as a negative outcome or as evidence that SfD does not work. It might be that a participant developed lower levels of perceived self-efficacy and/or self-esteem outside the SfD initiative but developed higher levels inside the initiative. It might have been the other way around, although the latter participant is likely to quit the initiative for that reason (i.e., drop out). To think that all young people are deficient and participation in SfD initiatives automatically change self-beliefs in a 'positive' sense would ignore the complexity of social change. Therefore, the second implication for SfD stakeholders is to try to *understand* 'how or why a programme works, for whom, in what circumstances' and concentrate their 'fire' on vital program mechanisms and the contexts in which they operate for various groups of participants (Pawson, 2006). In line with this, Kay (2012) stated that it is questionable whether 'robust' levels of knowledge are achievable, and suggested that other types of knowledge (i.e., qualitative, 'understanding') may be more appropriate, valid and obtainable. According to Jeanes and Lindsey (2014), more nuanced and subtle 'understandings' are likely to enhance practice and contribute to the recognition of SfD as a more mature field that can contribute to a broader development effort.

The third key issue is that even if some young people could benefit from higher perceived self-efficacy or self-esteem levels—or any other individual-focused concept (e.g. resilience, a part of self-efficacy, or leadership)—and even if participation in SfD initiatives *did* lead to an improvement in those levels, it remains essential to question what these outcomes are, whose interests they serve, and how they are related to young people's life chances or social vulnerability (Coalter, 2013; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Spaaij et al., 2016). Critical researchers have argued that decontextualised and atheoretical analyses of the role of sport in development are not only simplistic and inaccurate in ascribing socially transformative abilities to sport, but also obscure the *contingent nature* of achieving outcomes and the *broader context* of development politics on the community, urban, national and/or international levels (e.g. power, ideology, welfare system) (Coalter, 2013; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011). A narrow approach to development which overemphasises individual agency and distracts from such broader contextual issues will reproduce vulnerability despite any 'targeted intervention' (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Kelly, 2011; Lawson, 2005; Weiss, 1997a). Nevertheless, SfD initiatives aimed at young people in socially vulnerable situations can be valuable in the sense that participation *may possibly help some* of the young people to have more self-confidence and self-esteem and, in turn, stand 'stronger' in mainstream society and its mainstream institutions. It might be asked if this should be the core social mission of SfD initiatives. Therefore, the third implication for SfD stakeholders may be to employ fewer intrapersonal and more interpersonal and critical conceptualisations of 'development' (e.g. supportive networks), which might be more valuable and beneficial when working with young people in socially vulnerable situations, as they take actual needs as a starting point.

Conclusion

We suggest that, if SfD stakeholders want to help young people in socially vulnerable situations, when designing and researching programs, priority should be given to disengaging from the dominant individual-centred deficit model of youth. There should be engagement in an open-ended bottom-up approach that critically assesses young people's needs by addressing their actual life situations and individual differences, and that considers more interpersonal and critical conceptualisations of 'development' (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013). However, taking into account the broader context of social

exclusion and development politics (Coalter, 2013; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011), together with the impact of the current austerity climate in several 'first' world nations (Parnell, Spracklen, & Millward, 2016), the future participation in mainstream society of young people in socially vulnerable situations is likely to be less than successful if broader societal change (e.g. in education or poverty reduction policies) does not occur at the same time (Hayhurst, Giles, & Wright, 2016). Critical theories at the crossroads of sociology, pedagogy, and development studies (e.g. Freire's critical pedagogy or Sen's capability approach) might serve as valuable alternative pathways which lead beyond the dominant, symbolically violent assumptions that are present within contemporary society and therefore also in SfD. Such critical theories can inform and guide research designs, data collection, analyses, and interpretations and, in turn, contribute to the conceptual and theoretical clarity that the field of SfD has been welcoming for quite some time.

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Chapter 3: Social change through an urban sport for development initiative? Investigating critical pedagogy through the voices of young People

Social change through an urban sport for development initiative? Investigating critical pedagogy through the voices of young people⁷

Abstract

This article explores the pedagogy of an urban Sport for Development (SfD) initiative in Belgium through the voices of young people. We draw on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and use qualitative research methods (i.e. observations, informal conversations, in-depth interviews and sharing circles) over a three-year period, to analyse the initiative's actual pedagogical practice with key Freirean concepts (i.e. 'banking education', 'dialogue' and 'dialogical action') and virtues (e.g. respect for people's knowledge, rejection of discrimination, caring for people). The findings reveal the presence of several Freirean virtues, emerging dialogue and, for some, action thought. Still, the SfD initiative remains at considerable distance from fully-fledged critical pedagogy. The young people in the SfD initiative nonetheless experience it as a space where they can be themselves, feel at home, gain respect, can learn to reflect and form opinions, and are temporarily freed from daily struggles such as discrimination. We discuss several pathways that could foster the capacity to organise and deliver a programme beyond emerging dialogue and action.

Keywords: sport for development; coaching; critical pedagogy; Paulo Freire; social change; physical education; coach education

Introduction

For more than two decades, the field of Sport for Development (SfD) has received significant attention from government agencies, nongovernmental organisations, sport practitioners and researchers around the world (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) define SfD as

the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution. (p. 311).

The contemporary upsurge of interventions in SfD is now roughly a generation old (Black, 2017), with the growth of the field in scale, diversity and prominence having led to an influx of theoretical and empirical studies, methodologies and perspectives in the academic domain (Hayhurst, Kay, & Chawansky, 2016; Schulenkorf et al., 2016).

Although the importance of theory and theory-informed analysis is currently well established in SfD (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016), theory building, and advanced conceptualisations might still need more time to develop. Critical researchers distinguish two (research) approaches: a dominant, instrumental, often positivist approach, which implies solutions to development inequalities (integrate people into an inequitable world), and a politicised, critical, more descriptive approach, which asks how sport aligns with, or diverges from (and thus transforms), structures of inequality (Black, 2017; Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes, & Hayhurst, 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011). For SfD, Schulenkorf et al.'s (2016) recent review shows that the two

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most-used theoretical frameworks are Positive Youth Development and Social Capital Theory (primarily the Putnamian approach). Although valuable, a limitation of these frameworks is that they may be viewed as less politicised and less likely challenging to the status quo of inequality and marginalisation compared to more critical analyses based on, for example, political economy or critical pedagogy, that focus on power relations, resources distribution and inequality structures (Darnell et al., 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017). This critique is especially pertinent considering the neoliberal policy context and social investment strategies within which many SfD programmes in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods are embedded (Hartmann, 2016).

Considering this, the importance of approaches that explicitly politicise research is increasingly recognised (Darnell et al., 2016; Evans & Davies, 2017; Leahy, Wright, & Penney, 2017; Rossi & Jeanes, 2016). While the critical investigations regarding the pedagogies and educational philosophies of SfD initiatives have been developing for a while (e.g. critical pedagogy and the capability approach), ongoing investment in such critical approaches can further develop and refine these theoretical frames to the concrete specificities of various SfD contexts.

The purpose of this paper is to draw on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire as a politicised framework to identify and analyse the actual pedagogical practice of an urban SfD initiative in Belgium through the voices of young people. More specifically, we engage with several Freirean virtues (e.g. respect for people's knowledge and identity, rejection of discrimination, caring for people) and use key Freirean (and related critical pedagogy) concepts, namely 'banking education', 'dialogue' and 'dialogical action', as analytical tools. Critical pedagogy aims to contribute to a better understanding of how politics, education, (in)justice and freedom are related, and how people can create spaces to enhance their agency and exercise forms of action to promote more equitable and potentially liberating policies and practices. It can also help to politicise our analytical lens and provide necessary insights into how SfD initiatives can defy everyday marginalisation resulting from social and political relations (in or outside sport). To elicit this purpose, this article reports on a case study of an urban SfD initiative for young people in Belgium, namely the Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball Club. We do so mainly through young people's voices, who are often ignored in sharing their experiences on how sport initiatives reproduce (or defy) conditions of marginalisation (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).

Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher whose radical ideas about education, pedagogy and learning led to the establishment of the critical pedagogy movement. In the Latin American context, Freire had witnessed an apathic 'culture of silence' and internalised subjugation which he saw as the consequence of a selective socialisation system controlled by powerful capitalist elites (e.g. education, media). While Freire wrote 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' almost 50 years ago and Latin America is another context than Belgium (Europe), there are 'third world' areas in the 'first world', and vice versa (Freire, 2005a), making his work relevant to various historical contexts and geographical areas.

Central to Freire's (1998, 2005a) work is his criticism of mainstream approaches to education. Freire (2005a) argued that education is inherently political: education either functions as an instrument for humanisation or domestication. Using the metaphor of the 'banking system', Freire argued that mainstream education can be compared to a 'feeding process'. Reflecting the system they serve, teachers 'deposit' selective knowledge (i.e. words, representations, judgements, prejudices) into their students, who are understood to be passive and empty 'accounts'. This system ignores students' prior

knowledge and life experience, and leads to preserve the status quo. Freire (2005a) positioned this banking approach within his ‘theory of anti-dialogical action’ (p. 138) which uses the strategies of conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion. Those truly committed to social justice and change must reject the mechanical and alienating banking concept and instead adopt an emancipatory ‘problem posing’ concept that enhances people’s critical awareness of societal conditions and structures that marginalise people (Freire, 2005a). Contrary to his theory of anti-dialogical action, Freire (2005a) positioned this approach within his ‘theory of dialogical action’ (p. 167) which uses the strategies of cooperation, unity, organisation, and cultural synthesis. Learning should involve problematising, raising questions and challenging students to shape their own destiny. Freire (1998, 2005b) referred to several attitudes or ‘virtues’ such as respect for people’s knowledge, autonomy and cultural identity; rejection of discrimination; humility; joy; knowing how to listen; openness to dialogue; and caring for people. The curriculum starts from the student’s own life situation and experiences. Through common ‘dialogue’ and critical reflection, teacher and student cooperate to unveil the marginalising conditions and structures and discover their role in transforming it. As Freire (2005a) put it: ‘the solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become beings for themselves’ (p. 74).

However, Freire’s work has been criticised. One major critique is that Freire’s work does not fully provide the accounts needed to help us understand how teachers are to move to critical reflection and dialogical action (McLaren, 2000). Another critique is that Freire’s analyses lack intersectionality. Compared to class, Freire did not systematically analyse race and gender. Related to this, the major voices of critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire, Giroux, McLaren) have been critiqued by feminist researchers for framing oppression in masculinist, abstract and absolute terms (i.e. no agency and wholly oppressed). Finally, another critique is that the discourse of critical pedagogy is based on rationalist assumptions which lead to several contradictions and the ‘transformative failure’ of critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1989; Fernández-Balboa, 2015; Tinning, 2002). For instance, the concept of ‘dialogue’ assumes a classroom of participants unified as ‘the subordinated’ against ‘the subordinators’, but this view fails to confront dynamics of subordination present amongst and within classroom participants in the forms of multiple, complex and contradictory student subjectivities.

Critical pedagogy and sport for development

A handful of researchers have studied the fields of physical education, sport and SfD from a critical pedagogy perspective (e.g. Richard Tinning, David Kirk, Simon Darnell, Ramón Spaaij and Ruth Jeanes). Critical studies of SfD reveal how many SfD initiatives are entwined with top-down approaches, neoliberal philosophies and paternalistic values that often treat marginalised youth as deficient and in need of regulation and/or prosocial development (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann, 2016; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013). Critical approaches in SfD would consider counter-hegemonic pedagogies and educational practices that confront dominant understandings of sport for/and development that reproduce social exclusion and inequalities (Darnell, 2012). Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) argue that such initiatives must intentionally design and implement ‘radical’ components that transform the educational space of sport and address the structures that marginalise young people. These radical components include: problem-posing dialogue that starts from the knowledge and experiences of participants, stimulating critical reflection, and supporting participants to determine their own future through various forms of individual and collective action (Luguetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk, 2016; Mwaanga & Prince, 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013; Wright, Jacobs, Ressler, & Jung, 2016). This

encourages co-education between participant and coach, making them both teacher and learner of specific knowledge that they bring to the dialogue. In addition, an organisational culture of respect, care and solidarity can pave the way for the foundation of a community in which joint ownership, involvement and responsibility regarding the initiative can flourish. This would allow participants to be actively involved in the design and organisation of the programme.

Key to a more radical conception of SfD is the role of the coach, their ongoing commitment and disposition, and their relationship with participants. However, within an educational context, Apple (1999) stated that, although many teachers do have socially and pedagogically critical intuitions, they often do not have ways of putting these intuitions into practice because they cannot picture them in action in daily and concrete pedagogical situations. This is an absence and it can be argued that the same is true for coaches within sport and, more specific, SfD. Because of this, in general, there remains an 'untested feasibility' (Freire, 2005a) about the practical imagination and implementation of critical pedagogy in SfD. Therefore, while research is beginning to reveal how critical pedagogy transpires in SfD, further research is needed to 'reimagine' Freire's theoretical work within and towards the practical reality of SfD.

Methods

This study sought to identify and analyse the pedagogy of an urban SfD initiative in Belgium, the Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball Club (Wolf Pack). Wolf Pack is a local non-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) that concentrates on providing young people with a chance to play basketball through a school competition (primary school) and a club (older ages). The Wolf Pack Club was established in 2015 to give young people who participated in the School Competition the chance to continue playing basketball. The Club was established because the head coach experienced that many young people that were too old (12+) for the primary School Competition did not have access to mainstream basketball clubs. The Club is closely connected to the School Competition in that sense that young people who participated in the School Competition have an opportunity to continue in the Club. The schools that participate in the School Competition are selected based on their location in disadvantaged urban areas, the degree to which they attract pupils from families in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations, and the school's vision. In contrast to the dominant discourse in competitive (elite) sports on performance, power and winning, Wolf Pack departs from a philosophy focused on participation and positive youth development.

Wolf Pack uses a targeted outreach approach to attract young people that find themselves in socially and/or economically less fortunate situations. Most players come from the most densely populated neighbourhoods (mainly Borgerhout, Antwerp-North, Hoboken and Deurne) that have higher degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty, unemployment, school dropout, and a lack of (usage of) public spaces and facilities. During a focus group prior to the interviews and sharing circles with the young people, the providers also mentioned wanting to 'provide young people with a chance to get acquainted structurally with basketball in a pedagogically safe environment and work with them on their personal, social and sport related values and skills to achieve positive self-development.' The providers also mentioned wanting to improve young people's empowerment (making them 'stronger' and 'stand more firmly on their feet') and strengthen their social engagement ('for which ideas and causes they want to engage themselves'). Wolf Pack's educational components (e.g. curriculum, reflection, evaluation) are interwoven with the sport provision, focusing on values such as respect, equality and justice as a fundamental base for creating a pedagogically safe environment. Since the

above-mentioned aspects (i.e. giving chances, pedagogically safe environment, values and skills, (self-)development, empowerment and social engagement) reflect Lyras and Peachey's definition ('the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged'), we decided to frame Wolf Pack as a SfD initiative.

'Wolf Pack' refers to the surname of the head coach, Ronald 'Ron' Wolfs, and the notion of 'wolf pack' is actively used (e.g. a pack of wolves sticks together as one team and must cooperate to survive). Ron is an ex-professional basketball player, of Dutch origin, male, white and non-religious. Having seen the darker sides of competitive (elite) youth sport (e.g. athlete exploitation, money over people), with Wolf Pack, Ron wanted to apply a different more inclusive and humane philosophy to coaching, putting the preferences of young people above the culture of performance and winning-at-all-costs. He is currently assisted by four younger local coaches (two men; two women) who assist and lead training sessions and matches. In addition, Ron often asks the club players to take on small chores such as being 'fair play coach' in the School Competition (i.e. keeping the fair play score), helping in setting up the table or managing the time during a Club game, or refereeing at the School Competition's final.

The club consists of three teams (U12, U14 and U16); there are currently 55 club members in total. Club members train in the sport hall of a local school on Wednesday afternoon and Friday evening. After Friday evening training, there is also an opportunity for older former members (around 20 years old) to come together, train and interact with Ron who became 'like a second father' to many of them over the years. Weekend matches are currently played in a community sports hall. During school breaks, several camps and tournaments are organised. Based on the participation and positive youth development philosophy, selection is based on demonstrated effort, engagement, motivation and fair play of players in the School Competition teams and at the Club. These camps and tournaments offer them a chance to meet and learn from the diversity of players from other (school and club) teams. Additional activities such as visiting a wolves park, family days and parent evenings are organised for the players and their parents. Ron also invests time in doing yearly home visits to meet the players' families. The initiative also collaborates with a Bolivian NGO in a project that aims to provide young people living on the streets with a chance to play basketball and, through their interest in the offer, bring them in contact with supportive social services and sustainable housing. This project offers opportunities for visits from Belgian players to Bolivia and vice versa, encounters and exchanges of life world broadening experiences (e.g. personal and social challenges).

Data collection

In this study, the focus will be on the Wolf Pack Club, and more precisely the U14 and U16 team and the older former members present at Friday evening training (as added voices of significance). This article is part of a doctoral study with all authors involved in the research design and data analysis (i.e. critical friends), and the first author responsible for the data collection. Qualitative research methods were used (observer-as-participant and informal chats, in-depth interviews and sharing circles) to gather data over a three-year period, with weekly and daily visits during October–December 2015; March–May 2016 and October–May 2017. The research design was discussed with the head coach. We explain the main procedures below.

Observations and informal chats

Observations offered rich insight into the daily life of the programme and its participants, and a basis for developing a deep understanding of the young people's experiences as they unfolded on the ground and over time (Madden, 2010). Through observations during training, matches and other activities, the first author became a more familiar face to the U14, U16 and former players and could observe various aspects such as the coaching style and the relationships with and between players. The head coach allowed the researcher to introduce himself to the players and explain the reason for his visits (i.e. investigating Wolf Pack's pedagogy and their experiences in the club) and the period of stay. The observation guide was designed around sensitising concepts that resonated with the research questions and several Freirean virtues (e.g. respect for people's knowledge and identity, rejection of discrimination, caring for people) and concepts (e.g. 'banking education', 'dialogue' and 'dialogical action'). Occasionally, the researcher actively participated in a training which facilitated his connection with the players. He also engaged in informal chats with players. During numerous informal chats, the head coach and young volunteer coaches provided the researcher with information about themselves, the initiative and other players. Field notes of observations and informal chats were written down in a research diary. These observations suggested probes for in-depth interviews.

In-depth interviews with young people

Since the minimum age was set at 14 years old and because there were no girls in the U14 and U16 team (and among former members participating in Friday evening training), we could only engage in interviews with boys. In addition to the informal chats (see observations), a total of 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with members (seven; U14 and U16) and older former members (three; Friday evening training). Ages ranged from 14 to 22 years old. The selection of participants was determined in consultation with the head coach who informed the authors on which players could share valuable experiences in the context of the study. The following table summarises their backgrounds (Table 1). The interviews lasted on average 54 min and were conducted during training hours or, for 18+ year-olds, on another agreed moment and place. The selection of participants was also based on the availability and voluntary consent of the participants. Prior to the start of each interview, the participants were (re)informed on the study and his rights, using an information letter. After consent, participants received a copy of this letter for their parent(s) or guardian(s). The semi-structured interviews focused on issues such as the participants' background, their involvement in the initiative, the meaning of the initiative to them, the characteristics of the head coach, the pedagogy, sport and non-sport activities, and possible effects⁸. All names used in the remainder of this article are pseudonyms.

Table 2: Profile of interviewees

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Involvement in Wolf Pack
Mohamed	14	These younger players have all been involved in the School Competition and have been Club players since 2015. For example, Emmanuel is of Ghanaian origin. He and his siblings are raised by their single mother who has financial difficulties.
Emmanuel	14	
Ayoub	14	

⁸ A Dutch version of the interview guide can be found in attachment 4.

Younes	14	
Kobe	15	
Branko	18	Has arrived in Belgium from Kosovo at a young age with his parents and siblings. Muslim. Has been involved in the School Competition since its establishment in 2005. Now plays for a reserves team of Belgian first division club. Participates in the Friday evening training with other former members.
Omar	21	Arrived in Belgium from Sierra Leone at a young age with his parents and siblings. Muslim. Has been involved in the School Competition since its establishment in 2005. Now plays for USA college basketball team. Is often present at Wolf Pack activities when visiting Belgium during holidays. Is a role model for many younger players.
Ilias	22	Born in Belgium. Of Moroccan origin and Muslim. Has been involved in the School Competition since its establishment in 2005. Was given the opportunity to visit the Bolivian project a couple of years ago. Now plays for a Belgian second division club. Participates in the Friday evening training with other former members.
Winston	22	Arrived in Belgium from Burma alone a couple of years ago as the son of (now ex) ambassadors. Has been involved as a School Competition coach since 2015 and was given a Club U14 team assistant coach role in 2017. Participates in the Friday evening training with the former members. Tries to combine his engagement for Wolf Pack with higher studies.
Deepak	22	From Indian decent. Lives on his own, with the parents out of sight. Was involved in the School Competition since its establishment in 2005 before becoming involved as an assistant coach in 2015. Left Belgium to support the Bolivian project in 2016 and has been undecided about his future engagements.

Sharing circles

Sharing circles, reflective of Freire's 'cultural circles', have been used in previous research (e.g. Indigenous communities) to share aspects of the individual and is based on caring, respect and compassion (Hayhurst, Giles, & Wright, 2016; Lavallée, 2009). Hayhurst (2017) clarified that 'sharing circles are similar to focus groups in qualitative research, but have a distinctly equitable, healing, emotional and spiritual tone, as they are used for sharing all aspects of the individual, 'heart, mind, body, and spirit' (p.6). They are used to provide an opportunity for the young people to share their

perspectives on the initiative with other participants. Two sharing circles were organised: one with ten boys (aged 13–14 years old) during training hours and one with six former members (boys aged 18–22 years old) on a week day evening. The selection of participants was based on those players who had also been involved in the interviews but was also open for others to join if they expressed an interest in sharing their experiences. The first author and head coach jointly facilitated the sharing circles and stimulated talk. The same informed consent approach was used as for the interviews. The first sharing circle took one hour and 12 min while the second lasted 54 min. The sharing circles mostly focused on the desirability of Wolf Pack's pedagogy and gauged if and how the initiative stimulates dialogical reflection (and action) regarding various topics (i.e. feelings, emotions, sport and school experiences, social issues)⁹.

Qualitative data analysis

Field notes of observations and informal chats were written down in several research diaries. The in-depth interviews and the sharing circles were tape-recorded and transcribed. We used the six-phase model thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2017). A 15-point checklist was used as a guideline to ensure the quality of the analysis (e.g. point 7: 'data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described'; Braun et al., 2017). Both semantic (obvious meanings expressed by participants) and latent (meanings behind the explicitly expressed), and deductive ('top-down', informed by theoretical concepts: i.e. Freirean virtues and concepts) and inductive ('bottom-up', informed by the content itself) elements were included.

In terms of validity, aligning with our ontology and epistemology, the study was guided by a relativist approach (Burke, 2017). This means that criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research are drawn from an open-ended list of characteristics instead of a criteriolgicist approach. In this study, the criteria we explicitly addressed included (Smith & Caddick, 2012): coherence (the different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture), credibility (the researcher spent a significant amount of time with participants and engaged in member reflections with the head coach) and transparency (we turned to each other and several other colleagues as 'critical friends' that examined matters like theoretical preferences and the process of organising and analysing the data).

Investigating the actual pedagogy of the Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball Club

Analysing Wolf Pack through the lens of critical pedagogy reveals several themes. Four main themes emerged from the data: (i) a move away from a banking approach: several Freirean virtues; (ii) emerging dialogue: a reflective and open conversational culture; (iii) towards socio-critical reflection: 'small steps' and emerging action thought; and (iv) limited capacity for dialogical conversations. Below we discuss each theme in depth.

⁹ A Dutch version of the interview guide can be found in attachment 5.

A move away from a banking approach: several Freirean virtues

Equality and no discrimination

When interviewing participants about what Wolf Pack meant to them, they primarily referred to Wolf Pack as a 'family' or a 'second home', where 'arguments are solved by talking', where 'you get along with people from diverse backgrounds', where 'everyone is there for each other', and where they can 'do what we love' (i.e. playing basketball). Participants also explicitly stated that Wolf Pack is a place where everyone is treated 'equal' and where there is 'no discrimination' (e.g. based on race or class). Several participants indirectly mentioned the flexibility of the initiative towards specific kinds of dress (i.e. in the early years some players played in jeans, barefooted or wearing football shoes), membership fees (i.e. very low fees) and transport issues (i.e. parents not always available to drive, head coach 'like a taxi'). When Kobe reflected on the head coach's personality he also referred to the inclusive approach towards Black youth:

[The head coach] is nice, kind, funny, respectful and patient. [Respectful in], yeah, how he handles us. Something like...although we have another skin colour...other clubs sometimes exclude youngsters with a dark skin, here you see that everyone is included. (Kobe, 15-year-old)

In this sense, Wolf Pack accepts difference and embraces an anti-discriminatory pedagogy, attuned to the young people's social realities that are characterised by an interplay of poverty, ethnic minority status and identity. In an interview, Emmanuel (aged 14) gave his opinion on the club's approach: 'I think it's good that it's an open club, that, for instance, when you have financial difficulties, troubles at school... [the head coach] sees that, takes you aside and talks. That motivates me.'

Humour and joy

Another aspect that frequently came to the surface during the interviews with participants was 'humour' and 'joy'. Participants indicated that they had a lot of fun at Wolf Pack and mentioned that the head coach is a funny and happy person who is always in for an innocent prank. The following passage describes one of the coach's pranks, written down after a training observation:

At the end of the circle conversation before opening training, the head coach said he could not find his €300 basketball and asked the players if someone had seen it or accidentally took it. After the players collectively searched through their bags and the changing rooms, the ball was found in the bag of assistant coach Winston who comically defended himself against the 'set-up' (the head coach asked an injured player to place the ball in the assistant coach's bag). This resulted in laughter amongst the players and a positive vibe within the whole group. (Research diary)

Additionally, to make trainings more fun and allow the players to find their rhythm, free and creative play was organised and during basketball camps loud and uplifting music was played. Furthermore, the coaches focused on gradual improvement and playing well instead of a winning-at-all-cost mentality.

Respect, love and care

Throughout the interviews with the participants, respect was a key feature. Many participants indicated that the head coach was 'like a father' to them, who is respectful, interested, loving, caring, honest and supportive, who believes in them, 'is always there for them' and 'makes sure you feel good'. It appeared from the observations that the coach's respect for them and his professional sport competence generated most of his authority. For instance, Omar described the head coach's personality and his relationship with him as follows:

The relation between [the coach] and me is like a father-son relation. I have known him all my life here in Belgium, about ten years, and he has got a good bond with my parents. (...) He is honest and straight forward. (...) He has always been there for me. For example, when I teared my cruciate ligaments and meniscus. (...) That was hard, three operations, but [the coach] sent me to the right doctor, the right specialist, for complaints and so, and he visited every week: cards, messages, books. He even gave me a movie: 'the way of the peaceful warrior'. (Omar, 21-year-old)

A two-way relational approach

The observations and interviews indicated that a hierarchical coach-participant relationship is minimised in Wolf Pack through a two-way relational approach which also gives space to bottom-up ideas and suggestions. Regarding this aspect, Branko clarified:

We don't see him as a person who takes the lead in that sense that he lets us decide, he stands next to us. (...) Put simply: at school, the teacher stands in front of you; at Wolf Pack, [the coach] stands behind you, get it? (Branko, 18-year-old)

However, although allowing bottom-up suggestions, in an informal conversation, the head coach said he always had an idea of what sport activities or training exercises were desirable and had the experience, without being manipulative or authoritarian, to unobtrusively direct such suggestions and maximise young people's learning opportunities.

Responsiveness to young people's needs and life environment

During the interviews, when participants were asked if Wolf Pack's pedagogy was responsive to what they needed (or were looking for) in a sport offer, they indicated that it did. Ayoub said it was important that the Club is also focussed on other issues (e.g. financial situation, getting respect) besides sporting aspects:

We only pay 65 euros per year, that is nothing compared to teams where you must pay 250 euros. There it is like: 'I come here to work' (...) and for the rest: 'I don't know you'. (...) Winston and so, they respect us, but at [Club X], other coaches, they don't respect us. With [Club X], that one game we won [with a one goal difference], he just didn't want to give a hand after the game. Their fair play is actually...weak. (...). I would not like to play at such a club. (Ayoub, 14-year-old)

During the interviews, two older former members also discussed the importance of the initiative on community level and in the context of the urban reality that characterises Antwerp. These participants argued that young people growing up in densely populated areas and often difficult circumstances need guidance or activities or risk doing 'shifty things and mischief'. The following quote by Ilias illustrates the degree to which Wolf Pack is responsive to the needs of the young people involved:

We were brought up in a specific milieu where not everything was delivered to us on a plate. [The head coach] wants to help children, to stay away from the streets. He doesn't say that explicitly of course but in time you know that. For example, a [Wolf Pack basketball] camp costs 15 euros, that is cheap for training, a shirt, food and drinks. He does that because he knows that not everyone has a good home situation. (...) He put a lot of free time in us, and does it from the heart, pure goodness. It makes him happy, for "foreign" children, that have scarce chances ...no profit, but from the heart. (Ilias, 22-year-old)

A different kind of club

Based on their experiences at the Club, their observations of adversary teams and/or their experiences at other clubs, many participants described the Wolf Pack as 'a different kind of club' compared to other (i.e. more mainstream) clubs:

There is a difference between a coach, and [head coach]. A coach gives training for two hours and then goes home. But [head coach]: morning – evening, private time – non-private time, school holiday – weekends, it's his life. (...) Because he is so involved, we see him several times a week, that creates a specific bond, an emotional and social bond. (Ilias, 22-year-old)

Regarding the above Freirean virtues (i.e. equality and rejection of discrimination; humour and joy; respect and care; two-way relational approach; responsiveness to young people's needs and life environment) within Wolf Pack, Branko explained this difference in pedagogy by referring to his experiences of physical education at school:

The government wants physical education, but that's not the same [as Wolf Pack]. It's about grades and rules, and primarily about health, et cetera. There is a need for space, for 6 to 12-year-olds to grow. It would be better if it were about a smile, then there would be more change, instead of a teacher who distributes. For example, for gymnastics, I had bad points! I also received remarks on my clothing. Small things that keep sticking...children keep on hearing the same story: "you have a wrong T-shirt", how do you think you react on that each time? (Branko, 18-year-old)

Emerging dialogue: a reflective and open conversational culture

The 'habit of reflection' and circle conversations

During training, the coaches raised questions that were mostly focused on tactical aspects, whereby participants were forced to reflect on possible solutions (i.e. problem solving). In an informal chat, the head coach explained that he frequently raises questions because 'players learn more when they have

to give the answer themselves than when someone gives them the answer' (research diary). For instance, Ayoub described this:

I think they ask a lot of questions on purpose, so that we do not only focus on our hands or technique...but just to make us think about what can happen if you do this and that (...) regarding basketball, what you can do, tactics and stuff. (Ayoub, 14-year-old)

While such sport tactical questions were not addressing socio-critical issues, according to the head coach, they are vital to stimulate the 'habit of reflection' amongst players and develop a 'reflective mind'. Furthermore, before and after each training the coaches systematically formed circle conversations with players, which lasted a few minutes. In these circles, coaches took time to reflect with players on training and match situations connected to group dynamics, their emotions and behaviour, and explore their own norms and values (e.g. respect, effort, teamwork, solidarity). The head coach specified that through the circle conversations the players 'learn to listen to each other, give their opinion, and learn to communicate it properly' (research diary). While reflection on emotions, behaviour, and norms and values might sound like an attempt to 'control' or 'adapt' 'morally deficient' young people to the mainstream, such feedback, rather, allowed young people to, in line with Freire's philosophy, 'become more fully human'. Omar described the underlying coach philosophy as follows:

At most clubs, it is 'friends' politics', there is little personal attention for the home situation of players. But at Wolf Pack you have got various norms and values, play, how to live, how you can develop as a human being. (...) There is personal guidance, they support you, there are moral values, it is not only achievement. (Omar, 21-year-old)

Being present, trust and learning to talk

During the interviews, several participants mentioned that the head coach is 'always there' if they need him or had a problem, and someone they can trust. According to the participants, the coaches and certainly the head coach, were very close to the players and always 'open' to talk about personal issues (e.g. a home situation) and possible solutions to specific problems (e.g. difficulty paying membership fee, bad grades at school, tense relationship with a teacher, conflict with a parent) together with the young people. In addition, Emmanuel (14-year-old) explicitly mentioned that the yearly home visits by the coach gave his mother an opportunity to talk about, for instance, her financial difficulties which was good to get things off her chest. In an interview, player-coach Winston described the role of the coach as follows:

I'm a coach, but they also see me as a sort of friend, we talk a lot, mostly after match or training. (...). Sometimes I ask: "what's wrong?", sometimes they say, "I can't come", because of the home situation or other problems. (...) Talking [is a means] with development as its goal. Young people sometimes don't know what is good or wrong. We reflect a lot, we ask their opinion as a player, we ask questions and players can give their feedback: about tactics, behaviour, emotions. (Winston, 22-year-old)

Towards socio-critical reflection: 'small steps' and emerging action thought

In the above we have offered indications that Wolf Pack's pedagogy reflects several Freirean virtues and an emerging dialogue. While stimulating the 'habit of reflection', forming circle conversations and (learning to) talk are not (necessarily or directly) addressing the root causes of marginalisation such as those of poverty and discrimination for example, from the observations and various informal chats with both coaches and participants, there is modest evidence that the activities of (and opportunities generated through) Wolf Pack might have had a stimulating effect on some players' socio-critical reflection. For instance, Emmanuel (aged 14) mentioned that they watched the movie 'Coach Carter' during the evening of a basketball camp, which indirectly touched the subject of racism. Also, Ilias (22-year-old) indicated that, because he got the opportunity to visit the basketball project for street children in Bolivia (see Wolf Pack case description), he was stimulated to think about issues of poverty and marginalisation in other geographical areas than Belgium.

Most of the participants seemed to have a certain amount of awareness of issues such as poverty and discrimination out of practical experiences and shared stories (e.g. 'we just end up talking about those subjects', 'at most clubs there is little personal attention for the home situation of players'). However, the older former members were more capable of expressing their opinions and insights about questions on issues of marginalisation. Reflecting on this issue, Branko argued about the deeper invasive impact of small steps:

It's about small steps that have a deeper invasive impact: mentally, physically, but also on your life trajectory. A lot of people don't want to see or believe this. But it changes a lot in a society. (Branko, 18-year-old)

With regard to action, some participants provided indications of emerging action thought (ideas on possible future forms of action). For instance, Branko (aged 18) told that they tried to set up their own club, similar to Wolf Pack's pedagogy, but were put off by the federation's formalities and decided to postpone the idea. Another example came from the interview with Mohamed. When asked about what he would do if he were the Mayor of Antwerp and had a big bag of money at his disposal, he said:

I would give it to my family. I would also give it to poor people, to people that don't have money, like hobos. (Mohamed, 14-year-old)

A last example, came from Younes, who reflected on his future aspirations and referring to coaching, helping and supporting children:

I want to play basketball, and later I want to be a coach, like [head coach]: helping children, support them, teaching them things and making them better. (Younes, 14 years-old)

Limited capacity for dialogical conversations

The above sections offer several examples of several Freirean virtues, emerging dialogue and, for some, emerging action thought through Wolf Pack's pedagogy. During one of the Friday evening trainings, the head coach indicated that, likewise the idea of the sharing circles, he would love to make more time to talk with participants about the challenges in their lives and the (social) issues and opinions that occupied them. However, the head coach added that all his time and energy went to the daily organising of the trainings and matches (also those of the School Competition) and that he would

need more people who, additionally, understand the initiative's philosophy (such as the few young assistant coaches) and could help organise more dialogical conversations. Finding people with a similar amount of engagement and energy as the head coach was deemed difficult. As Ilias reflected on his own responsibility:

[The head coach] has done the organisation for years and wants to expand. He can, via us, we are the first generation of Wolf Pack, and if we take it up, it is 'mission accomplished'. (...) [But like the coach,] I don't see myself doing that: his patience, his energy. A lot of people don't have his energy: giving training whole year long, then the camp, then to the USA... (Ilias, participant, 22-year-old)

With Winston, for instance, the head coach had a helping hand in organising daily trainings and matches. But even while the coach educated Winston in the initiative's pedagogy (e.g. respect, joy, talking), based on the observations and the interviews, it was a continuous task to guide Winston in this and guard the intended coaching philosophy in practice.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to draw on the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire to identify and analyse the pedagogy of an urban SfD initiative in Belgium through the voices of young people. The analysis shows that the SfD initiative deviated from a 'banking' approach, which is still largely considered the norm in dominant educational and sports practices (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). We found the presence of several Freirean virtues of critical pedagogy such as equality and rejection of discrimination, humour and joy, respect, love and care, and a two-way relational approach. The SfD initiative embraced a pedagogy that is responsive to young people's needs and life environment, characterised by an interplay of poverty, ethnic minority status and discrimination.

Beyond these virtues, the SfD initiative was built around a reflective and an open conversational culture. It can be argued that the SfD initiative's pedagogy reflected emerging dialogue by stimulating the 'habit of reflection', organising circle conversations and being open to talk. While these components might not necessarily or directly address the root causes of, for instance, poverty and discrimination, there was modest evidence that the activities of (and opportunities generated through) the SfD initiative had a stimulating effect on the socio-critical reflection of some participants. This suggests that developing critical awareness and expressing thoughts about social issues needs nourishing contexts and impulses, also outside sport settings (e.g. family, school). In addition, similar to other behavioural changes, it can be expected that socio-critical reflection and awareness is often slow to occur, usually in very slight, fragile and non-linear ways (Spaaij, Oxford, & Jeanes, 2016), should continue over an individual's lifetime (Mwaanga & Prince, 2016), and requires intellectual engagement and practice. Moreover, the findings revealed the presence of emerging action thought amongst some participants. We cannot assume that young people will all find the same meaning in a pedagogical encounter (Tinning, 2002). Embracing such uncertainty and diversity in effects, Tinning (2002) argued for a 'modest pedagogy' in which 'we need to be modest in the claims for what can be achieved in critical or conservative classrooms' (p.236). Our findings support this position.

It is important not to undervalue the modest evidence found in this study which can be considered as 'micro victories' (Leahy et al., 2017). The young people experience the SfD initiative as a space where they can be themselves, feel at home, gain respect, feel safe to talk about personal and social problems, can learn to reflect and form opinions, explore their own norms and values, become

socially engaged and are temporarily freed from daily struggles such as discrimination. In this sense, the SfD initiative could be seen as an action in itself which goes beyond the traditional way of organising sport and educating young people.

Although the findings reveal the presence of several Freirean virtues, emerging dialogue and (for some participants) emerging socio-critical reflection and action thought, the SfD initiative remained at considerable distance from fully-fledged critical pedagogy. This might not be too surprising since several researchers already pointed to the ‘transformative failure’ (or difficulties) of critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1989; Fernández-Balboa, 2015; Tinning, 2002). Based on our data, we found that there was a limited capacity (i.e. people and concrete implementation) for critical pedagogy in the SfD initiative. This finding corroborates Spaaij et al. (2016) who indicated the challenge of organising for critical pedagogy in sport when most of the coach’s energy is swallowed up by daily operations. Even if a coach nurtures an organisational culture that stimulates voluntary work and educates participants or local young people in the initiative’s pedagogy, much depends on a volunteer’s personality, background and social status (Jeanes & Spaaij, 2016). In line with Freire (1998), an essential limitation is that in most formal coach education systems, coaches are not trained in critical pedagogy which results in the ‘trained incapacity’ (Lawson, 2005) of many coaches regarding the structural origins of poverty and inequality (Black, 2017) and how to challenge those from a sport context.

Practical implications

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the SfD initiative examined in this article has the potential to expand its curriculum beyond the emerging dialogue. There are a few points we want to put forward here. As critical SfD initiatives find themselves on the margins of mainstream sport provision, they are often confined to operate under precarious conditions (Fernández-Balboa, 2017) that, in turn, contribute to their incapacity to defy dominant understandings, ‘big policies’ (Penney, 2017) and mainstream practices in sport. The transformation ‘beyond the dominant’ might mean that critical sports coaches who share a similar vision would need to unite and build a ‘coalition of the like-minded’ (Black, 2017) to push sports stakeholders towards a more politicised vision. For instance, the SfD initiative could expand its outreach work and dialogue with young people, parents, teachers, other local socio-critically oriented partners and policy makers from various fields (e.g. sport, youth, education, welfare) (Mwaanga & Prince, 2016; Spaaij et al., 2016). This could contribute to a more politicised vision and an awareness of the potential of the SfD initiative and to additional (policy) support that it might need. Such interorganisational partnerships could also generate additional organisational capacity (Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2017).

Reforming coach education necessitates that the dominant institutional sport logic is defied (Stenling, 2015) and the importance of critical pedagogy is explained in Faculties and Schools of sport sciences, management, and the like, where future sport bureaucrats, coaches, administrators, and event managers are trained (Black, 2017). However, such an endeavour might run counter to established sport imperatives and interest groups in the field of sport (Croston & Hills, 2017; Fitzpatrick & Burrows, 2017; Penney, 2017). Even if official curricula would adopt a more socio-critical orientation of sport, it remains a challenge to make the agenda of critical pedagogy fully understandable to all coaches and turn them into critical pedagogues (Gerdin, Philpot, & Smith, 2016) who must be, in the first instance, open to such an agenda. In the search for socio-critical structural strategies (Fernández-Balboa, 2017), one important intervention would be to recognise the limits of rational arguments for

a shift towards more critical sport coaching and develop an 'emotional commitment' (Tinning, 2002) to critical pedagogy in (student) coaches. In this regard, another important intervention would be to share practical critical pedagogical 'stories' of successful initiatives so that the critical intuitions of others in the field of sport do not remain only on a theoretical or rhetorical level.

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3. General discussion and conclusion

Based on the literature, I have formulated two research questions. The following research questions were formulated:

Research question 1: *what are the underlying pedagogical processes of urban sport for development initiatives aimed at the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations?*

Research question 2: *how can the impact of urban sport for development initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations be measured?*

These two research questions were investigated within six urban sport for development initiatives in the 'Global North', more precisely in Belgium (i.e. Brussels as its capital and Flanders as its Northern region). I will now answer these questions subsequently and reflect on them from an academic, policy and practical perspective.

1.1 Understanding pedagogical processes in SfD

Before I answer the first research question, it is important to repeat that, in this PhD study, the politicised theoretical frameworks of critical pedagogy and youth organizing were used. These frameworks meet the calls for SfD research to engage in theory and conceptualisations that step away from more dominant deficit-reduction discourses, focus on educational components and pedagogical processes, both at individual and community level (and how they are intertwined), and focus on alternative, more critical (politicised) and descriptive approaches. This is important because the choice of theory has coloured my analytical lens when reflecting about the research questions, designing data collection methods, collecting and interpreting this data, and reporting the main findings.

As I have briefly outlined in the introduction of this PhD manuscript, conceptually, critical pedagogy encompasses a variety of attitudes or 'virtues' and concepts such as 'problem posing' and 'dialogue' (as opposite to 'banking education'), 'reflection' and 'dialogical action' (Freire, 1998; 2005). Thus, critical pedagogy, and theories that draw from it such as youth organizing, should be understood as a wide *spectrum* consisting of humanistic virtues, socio-political reflection, awareness, various social actions, and social change of people, communities, environments, institutions and systems. These theories allowed me to *position* the investigated SfD initiatives on this spectrum of critical pedagogy and youth organizing (Youth Engagement Continuum), and place findings in a broader politicised light to gain insights into how sport stakeholders can engage in sport from a social (justice) perspective and reimagine ways of working with young people through sport (for development).

1.1.1. Youth development and Freirean virtues

I found that the six investigated SfD initiatives largely deviated from a 'banking' pedagogy (Freire, 2005), which is still regarded as the pedagogical norm in more traditional, dominant sports practices (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Darnell, 2012; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). By making use of the

Youth Engagement Continuum of Sullivan et al. (2003) as an analytical framework of youth organizing, I found that the initiatives work around several categories and features that are central within the Youth Engagement Continuum (see chapter one). In line with this, Coakley (2011) indicates that many of the contextual factors that have been identified in a number of studies on sport participation and their associated outcomes overlap with the key factors of youth organizing. I found that the initiatives are focused on the various ‘youth development’ features within the Youth Engagement Continuum, namely:

- meeting young people where they are (e.g. outreach work in the neighbourhood, a welcoming and safe environment, solutions to participation thresholds, responsive to youth culture);
- youth-adult social relationships of care, support and referral (e.g. balancing attention for rules, norms and values with care, humour and befriending, following up on young people and give support, extended relationships with parents and people from the community);
- providing developmental opportunities (e.g. life world broadening (non-)sport activities, positive experiences, learning experiences);
- emphasising positive identity (e.g. norms, values and basic rights, sense of social responsibility, self-image, relationships with parents and other educators);
- making and maintaining interpersonal contacts with young people’s context (e.g. improving relationships between young people and their parents and teachers) and staff members of social partner organisations and social services (i.e. youth service approach) (e.g. influencing how people from young people’s context think about and approach them)

This overlaps with the findings of the Antwerp Wolf Pack case study which I additionally analysed through the lens of critical pedagogy (chapter three). In this case study, departing from a participation and Positive Youth Development philosophy, I found the presence of several Freirean ‘virtues’ (Freire, 2005; 1998). These virtues largely overlap with the features ‘meeting young people where they are’ and ‘youth-adult social relationships’. The Freirean virtues are:

- equality and rejection of discrimination
- humour and joy
- respect for people’s cultural identity, knowledge and autonomy
- love and caring for people
- knowing how to listen
- a two-way relational and a more participatory approach

In this sense, the SfD initiatives embrace a pedagogy that is responsive to young people’s needs and life environment, which is often characterised by an interplay of poverty and ‘underprivileged’ ethnic minority status. With regard to designing and implementing a sport initiative for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and, possibly, in socially and economically vulnerable situations, other researchers point to the importance of starting from each young person’s life environment, abilities and needs (i.e. youth-centred approach) (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, Nols & Coussée, 2013; Super, Wentink, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2017a; Debognies, Schailleé, Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, forthcoming). In line with this, the SfD initiatives tried to creatively solve participation thresholds such as lack of sport-specific kinds of dress (e.g. provide (free) clothing and shoes), lack of financial capacity of parents and young people to pay membership fees in one go (or at all) (e.g. pay in “disks” or do voluntary work) and lack of mobility to get to away games (e.g. provide transport). Furthermore, some of the mentoring

figures (i.e. coaches, association managers, social workers and youth workers that are often present in the initiative) tried to conduct yearly home visits, mostly at the start of the season, to keep a finger to the pulse about the home situation and possible needs of players and their parent(s) or family. These process of starting from young people's needs and life environment (e.g. home visits) can be linked to a basic characteristic of critical pedagogy. In the words of Kincheloe (2008) – about teachers with respect to their students – and arguably also applicable to coaches and other mentoring figures relating to their participants:

The basic characteristic of critical pedagogy ... that teachers become researchers of their students – as researchers, teachers study their students, their backgrounds, and the forces that shape them.

(Kincheloe, 2008: 10)

1.1.2. Emerging dialogue: a reflective and an open conversational culture

Within these above features and virtues, the investigated SfD initiatives were built around a reflective and an open conversational culture through various pedagogical processes, namely:

- stimulating reflection (i.e. problem solving in sport, developing a reflective mind about issues such as their behaviour, decisions and reactions)
- organising circle conversations (e.g. on sport tactics but also on group dynamics, emotions, behaviour and norms and values)
- being open to talk (e.g. troubles in the school or family context)

It could be argued that by stimulating reflection, organising circle conversations and being open to talk, the SfD initiatives reflected an *emerging* dialogue, because through these processes young people can learn basic competences that are needed to engage in a dialogue, such as listening to each other, giving their opinion and learning to communicate it properly. In line with this, I found that the coaches – having most of the contact with the participants – were attentive to possible problems amongst some of the players such as troubles in the school or family context and, if needed, took players aside for a chat or talk, and/or informed other mentoring figures within the initiative. However, as Debognies et al. (forthcoming) state, giving individual attention to participants and having conversations with them requires time and opportunities, and a good practitioners-participant ratio is essential here. While reflection on emotions, behaviour, and norms and values might sound like an attempt to 'control' or 'adapt' or 'remoralise' (Ball, 2013) 'morally deficient' young people to the mainstream from a 'moral behaviourism' philosophy (Wacquant, 2009) such feedback, rather, is necessary for young people to, in line with Freire (2005), become 'more fully human' and engage in conversation with others. These processes of conversation and openness to talk resonate with the critical pedagogy characteristics of working *with* young people (i.e. participatory) and starting from their needs and knowledges (Freire, 1998; 2005). The data showed that the SfD initiatives are open to what young people have to say.

Admittedly, this reflective and open conversational culture might *not necessarily* address (the root causes of) various social injustices such as poverty and discrimination. However, I found that sometimes, for instance in the dressing room before or after training, there were occasional chats and conversations on topics such as encountered experiences of racism, the Palestine-Israeli conflict, the attacks in Brussels and the broader geopolitical context, or the 'muscular language' of a few politicians

with regard to the communities and neighbourhoods in which many of the participants grow up (e.g. Borgerhout, Molenbeek). Obviously, young people's experiences, impressions, feelings, thoughts and opinions do not just stop when entering the sport setting, rather, it is also a place where such socio-political topics come to the surface, although sometimes only volatile and due to a selective part of the young people. These sometimes volatile conversations are opportunities for mentoring figures – mostly coaches – to involve themselves in and stimulate young people's reflection on certain topics. It was not clear if all mentoring figures had opportunities to engage themselves in such possible conversations and, if they did, dealt with them in an adequate way and with the necessary knowledge, but there was evidence that some mentoring figures mainly emphasised the importance of stimulating reflection on norms, values and basic rights and, in doing so, often using humour as a facilitating communicative approach.

1.1.3. The coach as a central mentoring figure

I also found that the coach's vision, personality and competence are crucial factors in implementing a youth- and needs-oriented pedagogy. In the investigated SfD initiatives, where the management does not largely coincide with the figure of the head coach, the vision and pedagogy are (co-)designed by the wider club management (i.e. City Pirates) or the youth (welfare) work organisation in which the initiative is embedded (i.e. BBA and Kras Sport). Still, I found that the actual pedagogy often stands or falls on how the coach *performs* this pedagogy with respect to the participants in the daily sport practice.

A central feature within the SfD initiatives was the aspect of respect (e.g. for young people's cultural identity, knowledge and autonomy). Regarding respect, and applicable to sport settings, Freire argued that:

... it is impossible to talk of respect for students, for the dignity that is in the process of coming to be, for the identities that are in the process of construction, without taking into consideration the conditions in which they are living and the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience, which they bring with them to school. I can in no way underestimate such knowledge.

(Freire, 1998: 62)

Again, taking into considerations the conditions in which young people are living demands of the coach to become a researcher of the participants' backgrounds and the forces that shape them (Kincheloe, 2008). The fact that players often see the coaches several times per week often creates a specific social and emotional bond, connection, or relationship, and together with the aspects of respect, trust, care and support, this appears to generate a certain degree of a coach's "natural" authority over young people, which, in turn, are crucial to work on and influence young people's development (e.g. Coalter, 2013a; Moreau et al., 2018). A continuous supportive attitude is a key element for the effectiveness of SfD practices (Coalter, 2016; Super, Wentink, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2017b; Debognies et al., 2018).

In engaging in such social relationships with young people, the coach was often regarded as a sort of father figure who both creates and is part of the sense of a family and of safety and belonging (see Draper & Coalter, 2013) that make young people feel 'at home' in the initiative. Such relationships and interaction between coaches and players and an in-depth knowledge of – and openness to – the life environment of young people are essential when creating a meaningful environment for young

people (Coalter, 2012; Haudenhuyse et al., 2012; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a). Next to social relationships and interaction, in line with this, Beni, Fletcher and Chroínin (2018) indicate that meaningful experiences in youth sport can be influenced by fun, challenge, motor competence, and personally relevant learning. Such meaningful sporting experiences were considered a precondition for keeping youths engaged in the sporting activities, as well as a precondition for life skill development (Super, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2018). These meaningful environments and experiences might not be offered, or at least not to the same extent, within other societal spheres such as family, educational and/or employment settings (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a).

Of course, if a coach's own personality, social and cultural competence and experience are an important part of what constitutes the fabric of a pedagogy, it could be questioned which coaches perform better than others and to what degree coaches are "mouldable", either through the formal coach or physical education (PETE) system or informal coach training learning and opportunities within the initiative (e.g. as a voluntary assistant coach). In line with this, Jeanes and Spaaij (2016) indicate that much of the coach's pedagogy depends on her or his personality, background and social status. In addition, even if coaches are trained or coached formally or informally in a social or critical pedagogy, it remains a challenge to make these pedagogies fully understandable to all coaches, who must be, in first place, open to such a pedagogy (Gerdin, Philpot and Smith, 2016). These are all major challenges for coach and physical education teacher education which I will discuss further on.

1.1.4. Youth leadership as 'the pedagogy of the volunteer'

Within most of the investigated SfD initiatives, young people are gradually being involved as volunteers for a variety of chores, tasks and decisions. This resonates with some of the 'youth leadership' features within the Youth Engagement Continuum (Sullivan et al., 2003) (see chapter one). With regard to the youth leadership features, for some young people, the SfD initiatives provide opportunities to be engaged as volunteers and, in some initiatives more than others, as self-organisers. Two coaches denoted to this as 'the pedagogy of the volunteer'. This also reflects the idea within critical pedagogy and youth organizing that young people are involved in organising an offer and space adjusted to their needs and the needs of their peers within the wider community (Freire, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2003). While organising, young people can learn skills and competences under the mentorship of primarily the coach. This was also found by Buelens, Theebom, Vertonghen & De Martelaer (2015), who argue that volunteering in sports is regarded as providing developmental opportunities for young people living in socially vulnerable situations, such as development of technical (e.g. sports didactical) and key competences (e.g. pedagogical skills, organising skills).

I also found that volunteering and becoming a role model for others can help young people to become more socially engaged within the initiative and towards others who are often confronted with hardship and are otherwise excluded from a meaningful leisure time. As such, volunteers are engaged for a social cause within the broader society. With respect to this, Kay & Bradbury (2009) have found that volunteers reported strong individual benefits and an increased social connectedness in a range of contexts. Furthermore, Buelens (2016) indicates volunteering can both be valuable to young people and their wider community if they receive sufficient guidance and support.

Furthermore, during an extensive conversation with one of the coaches, the first author was informed about the difficulty of reaching so-called 'hard-to-reach' young people and engaging them in volunteering. Moreover, those young people, who could benefit most from volunteering (e.g. learning experiences, social connectedness), are often left aside because mentoring such young people takes

more time, energy and resources, and often includes more risks that might put the ‘good image’ of the initiative (using sport) at stake. In a wider policy and funding context where proving and *evidencing* success of a social organisation is vital to receive or retain funding, the management might often feel pragmatically tempted to work with “low hanging fruit” while “high hanging fruit” is left untouched or often quickly dropped. Additionally, new models of funding and a payment-by-results accountability risk introducing new incentives on sport-based interventions that, as Kelly (2012: 114) put it, “focus on less challenging (potential) participants and prioritise short term interventions over long-term relationship building” (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). This selection of participants has been coined as the ‘pistachio effect’ by Tiffany (2011) in which the harder nuts to crack (i.e. the highest hanging fruit) are, at best, left until later, or at worst, simply disregarded (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015).

1.1.5. The SfD initiative as a pedagogical space

The above processes (i.e. youth development processes, Freirean virtues, a reflective and open conversational culture and youth volunteering) can be seen as part of the solid pedagogical *base work* with young people regarding their general development and, in turn, the wider community. Related to this base work, the investigated SfD initiative are a space where young people:

- have the opportunity to practice sport (e.g. responsive to young people’s individual and family needs and creatively solving participation thresholds);
- feel welcome, included, safe and ‘at home’;
- are temporarily freed from possible harmful discourses and daily struggles;
- can be themselves and gain respect, love, care and trust;
- feel valued, recognised and supported;
- can explore their own attitudes, norms and values, emotions and behaviour;
- can learn to reflect and form opinions;
- feel safe to talk about personal and social problems;
- are offered learning experiences and life environment broadening activities;
- can show themselves in a positive and committed way to the people from their immediate environment, such as their parent(s) and teacher(s), which could influence how these people think about and approach them (i.e. improved social relationships);
- can develop both a positive identity and sport identity;
- can become socially engaged as a participant, role model, volunteer and/or self-organiser.

Such a space reminds of Foucault’s notion of ‘heterotopia’ which is a free constitutionally ambiguous ‘counter-site’ that contests and inverts ‘real sites’ and that can work to increase or oppose hegemonic norms (McLaren, 2000). It was also clear from the conversations with the young people of Wolf Pack (chapter three) that they saw the SfD initiative as ‘a different club’ to other sport clubs. More recently, such spaces have been brought into connection with the concept of ‘safe spaces’ (or safe places) where young people can feel physically, socially and psychologically safe, be engaged in meaningful activities, positive social relationships and where they can have positive experiences of support and appreciation (Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a; Super et al., 2017a).

Super et al. (2017a) argue that:

Participation in sport might mitigate the negative spiral of social vulnerability as it offers participants positive experiences with an institution in contrast to the many negative experiences they have with other institutions.

(Super et al., 2017a: 11)

Such spaces can temporarily free young people from harmful discourses and daily struggles that are often present in wider society. It can also be a place where through pedagogical *base work* young people are supported to explore themselves and the world around them, and learn various attitudes, norms and values, behaviours, knowledges, skills and competences. In this sense, the SfD initiatives go beyond the traditional ‘banking’ way of organising sport and working with young people and could be seen as a social action in itself. Thus, importantly, the SfD initiatives do not only focus on working with young people on a *micro* level (enhancing agency) but also comprise a social action on a *meso* level, that is: the initiative as a pedagogical ‘counter-space’ within a mainstream sport landscape and an urban context where many spaces and practices are exclusive. Thus, maybe, in first instance, these pedagogical spaces should be seen as *opportunities* for young people to practice sport. As Hartmann (2016) argues:

... we would do well to remember that some of the most important benefits of sport-based programming for target [groups] are not about intervention and resocialisation but about providing opportunities for recreation, fitness and leisure for populations and communities that are not well served by our usual market-based, profit-driven systems for provision.

(Hartmann, 2016: p.208)

The findings indicated that such opportunities are deemed important in the context of the urban reality that characterise cities such as Brussels, Antwerp and Genk (i.e. higher degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty, unemployment, school drop-out and a lack of usage of public spaces and facilities), both by the young people themselves and by the practitioners working with them. For some young people at risk of having no connections to and negative experiences with various societal institutions (i.e. family, education, employment), the SfD initiative is often the last place with which they have a connection and where they can find supportive adults that try to offer perspective and hope (see also Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a; Super et al., 2017a). This underlines the importance of the investigated SfD initiatives for young people growing up in disadvantaged situations and/or urban neighbourhoods.

1.1.6. Towards socio-political work and development? A modest pedagogy

Given these findings, the investigated SfD initiatives can be positioned within the ‘youth development’ and, partly, ‘youth leadership’ category (i.e. pedagogy of the volunteer) of Sullivan et al.’s (2003) Youth Engagement Continuum (chapter one). More explicitly politicised features of community-focused youth leadership, broader civic engagement and youth organizing are hardly to no part of their curriculum. Even the two initiatives that are embedded in broader youth work only sporadically joined politicised activities (e.g. commemoration, general strike, youth consultation) with *some* of their sport participants and these activities were often initiated and organised by other civic organisations. This is in line with Lardier et al. (2018) study on 18 US youth workers’ conceptions of their work with youth,

who suggestion that while youth workers were very supportive of youth, the support and actions they provided were *on behalf of* rather than *with* them and that, in general, partnering with youth for community change was not a part of what they envisioned their work to be. Regarding this aspect, one reference in my data indicated an increasingly hostile right-wing political climate which was believed to contribute to the docility of civic society organisations regarding the organisation of social justice activities. This can be linked the context of marketisation of welfare professions which reduces the capacity to voice opinions and a lack of confidence to express dissent (Cooper, Gormally & Hughes, 2015).

This does not mean that the SfD initiatives do not work politically. Freire (2005) argued that education is inherently political and, in his words, either functions an instrument for humanisation or domestication. The investigated SfD initiatives enact political base work by:

- creating a welcome and safe environment, involving both young people and their parents, which can foster a sense of community and can increase social engagement towards the initiative and the wider community;
- fostering youth-adult relationships (i.e. respect, care, trust) that emphasise positive identity (e.g. democratic norms and values, basic rights, ethical codes);
- creating opportunities for volunteering and self-organisation which should be seen as a social engagement in their neighbourhood and towards other people's leisure time;
- modestly influencing the interpersonal contacts with parents, teachers and personnel of social partners and services (e.g. employees of job or welfare agencies) with regard to how these think about and approach youth which could lead to positive experiences and improved connections and social relationships and is important for young people's identity formation

This kind of *base* work, as Freire (2005) wants it, might not change the world, but it is changing people and people change the world. While this base work with youth might *not necessarily* address (the root causes of) various social injustices such as poverty and discrimination, through the data from chapter three (Wolf Pack case study), there was only modest evidence that *some* of the processes and activities generated through the SfD initiative (e.g. Coach Carter movie, exchange with the Bolivian SfD project) exposed young people to socio-political content that *might* have had a stimulating effect on the socio-political reflection of *some* participants and, in turn, *might* have contributed to their socio-political development. Besides, the findings revealed the presence of emerging 'action thought' (i.e. thoughts on possible future forms of action) amongst *some* participants (e.g. set up an initiative with a similar pedagogy or wanting to become a pedagogical coach 'like the coach'). Some of the older Wolf Pack players seemed to have a certain amount of critical awareness out of practical experience and shared stories from *outside* the SfD initiative (e.g. poverty, discrimination, desirable sport pedagogies, the importance of the SfD initiative for young people in the neighbourhood). It is, indeed, common-sense that young people gain experiences from a variety of educational spheres within society (e.g. home, school, through the media).

These finding point to the fact that the (socio-political) development of participants is not at all evident, often uncertain, occurs in small steps and is contingent on many factors (Spaaij, Oxford & Jeanes, 2016; Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coalter, 2013a). Such uncertainty and diversity in effects on socio-political development was also highlighted by Tinning (2002) who argued for a 'modest pedagogy' in which we need to be 'modest in the claims for what can be achieved in critical or conservative classrooms' (p.236). The same could be said in relation to SfD initiatives. This reflection

draws a far more complex picture of the process of youth organizing than the graphical presentation of the Youth Engagement Continuum (Sullivan et al., 2003) would assume. To think otherwise, would be to underestimate the complexity of fostering socio-political development and meaningful social change in the 'power-full' social reality. Modesty and thoughtfulness is at its place here.

Nevertheless, it is important not to undervalue the political base work of the SfD initiatives. In first place, the political work of the SfD initiatives can primarily be found in providing a 'counter-space' (see above) and working *with* young people, not only on their sportive development and positive development but also their development as democratic citizens (i.e. democratic norms and values, basic rights and ethical codes). In that sense, the investigated SfD initiatives can be considered as 'micro victories' (Leahy, Wright & Penney, 2017) or 'little utopias' (Achterhuis, 2016) which enhance young people's agency (micro level) and form a social action in themselves within a mainstream sport landscape and urban context (meso level). Thus, the political is enacted through everyday practices of the providers and the young people.

1.1.7. The limited capacity of sport-plus

Understandably, many practitioners recognise the limits of sport in alleviating the social difficulties with which their young people are confronted with, certainly in the context of government disinvestment in social security and protection (Hartmann, 2016; Cooper et al., 2015; Giroux, 2013). With regard to this, it is important to remember that I have investigated SfD initiatives that can be regarded as 'sport-plus' (Coalter, 2013a) in which sport is primarily viewed as an important *activity and context* for changing norms and values, attitudes, behaviour and other social development outcomes, but this is not left to chance and carefully programmed for, taking into account specific necessary and sufficient conditions. In other words, they pursue a social mission through the core organisation of sport. A familiar challenge of these initiatives is that, on a day-to-day basis, coaches are preoccupied with the organisation and operation of the training and matches that swallow up all their time and energy (Spaaij et al., 2016; Hartmann, 2016). Just for the organisation of the sports offer, the initiatives already experience various capacity problems (i.e. infrastructure, the right people, funding). Working qualitatively with young people from socially and economically vulnerable situations on their general development involving the wider family and community context demands tremendous resources, knowledge, skills and ongoing commitment, but with limited resources and time extended non-sport programming is typically pushed down the priority list (Hartmann, 2016).

Therefore, what can we expect from sport-plus SfD initiatives that are often confined to work under precarious circumstances and have limited organisational capacity (e.g. resources, knowledge, skills) to combine their sport objectives with a wider social mission (Coakley, 2016; Hartmann, 2016; Fernández-Balboa, 2017)? To expect even more from these initiatives, such as political education and social justice activities and actions, would be demanding too much. This would be in line with Coakley (2016) who argued that sport-plus initiatives are most likely (or at best) capable of implementing a Positive Youth Development approach and that for organising beyond youth development so-called 'plus-sport' initiatives (Coalter, 2013a) are better equipped.

1.1.8. Mending the apolitical – political dichotomy

Of course, beyond Hartmann's (2016) quote on 'providing opportunities', the perspective of seeing the investigated SfD initiatives as a space where pedagogical base work can help young people to explore themselves and learn all sorts of things as part of their general personal development (pedagogical base), positions them primary as an initiative that departs from a philosophy of Positive Youth Development in the first place. In this sense, the SfD initiatives go beyond the traditional 'banking' way of organising sport and working with young people.

While researchers have indicated that a Positive Youth Development approach to SfD may be less politicised and less likely challenging to the status quo of marginalisation compared to more critical approaches (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016), it *may* be valuable in helping these young people stand stronger and get along in mainstream society (see Hayhurst et al., 2016), even if society and its institutions makes them vulnerable in the first place. Some researchers have questioned if helping young people get along in mainstream society should be the core social mission of SfD. However, it could be valuable to focus on the grey zones between apolitical and political approaches. How can we depart from the black-and-white dichotomy between these two ideal type approaches and the pleas to choose one over the other? Although some researchers might argue that the two ideal types are incompatible, a Positive Youth Development approach completed by, or embedded within, a politicised approach is possible. For instance, the 'youth development' category of the Youth Engagement Continuum (a social justice framework) is rooted in the movement of positive youth development (see Sullivan et al., 2003). To elaborate on this, a Positive Youth Development approach – as an example of a less politicised theory – does not exclude opportunities for political base work (e.g. democratic norms and values, basic rights), social engagement (i.e. volunteering and self-organisation) and future socio-political engagement at an older age, whether this is inside or outside the SfD initiative. Moreover, under the condition that a Positive Youth Development approach is free from mainstream societal discourses and practices, it can form the necessary base from which young people, under the support of mentoring figures (possibly also from partner organisations) can develop their socio-political agency. Again, for this to be possible, it is vital that a Positive Youth Development approach is perceived from a wider social justice approach (e.g. critical pedagogy or youth organizing). This would mend the 'apolitical' (i.e. dominant, more instrumental, 'technical') and 'political' (i.e. alternative, more critical) dichotomy in SfD approaches (see Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016). Arguably, it would be more correct to state that this would re-politicise Positive Youth Development, which was in its original conception more community focused (Coakley, 2016).

This perspective would be in line with my argument to understand critical pedagogy (and other frameworks that draw from critical pedagogy) as a wide *spectrum* consisting of humanistic virtues, socio-political reflection, awareness, various social actions, and social change of people, communities, environments, institutions and systems. Thus, as part of their general development, young people can learn many humanist attitudes, norms, values and 'technical' skills and competences needed to 'stand stronger', 'get along' and 'take part' in society, but also – and this would politicise their development – learn to unveil and *challenge* mainstream norms and values, discourses, practices that are exclusive and harmful, and design concrete (sport) spaces, activities and actions (however modest).

1.2 Measuring developmental impact in SfD

Research question two was ‘how can the impact of urban SfD initiatives on the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations be measured?’. This question was formulated because though SfD discourses, policies and practices tend to emphasise individual deficits selectively and overstate the developmental benefits of sport (Coakley, 2011; Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011), this is less often empirically and critically investigated, making analysis of this type valuable in complementing the theoretical critiques (Darnell, 2015). Therefore, a systematic assessment of both young people’s assumed deficits and needs and developmental change through sport can indicate which assumptions that lie behind the deficit-reduction model are faulty. In light of these analyses, I also reflected on the concept of ‘development’ itself (i.e. open to several interpretations), how it is commonly operationalised (i.e. intrapersonal perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem), how it can be measured (e.g. quantitatively or qualitatively) and place this discussion within a broader socio-political context (i.e. politics of development, funders’ quantitative accountability expectations).

1.2.1. Refuting the deficit model of youth

I found that the analyses and data raise serious questions about the assumptions associated with the deficit-reduction model of youth underpinning many SfD rhetoric, policy and practice. In line with previous research conducted in the Global South (Coalter, 2013a; Coalter & Taylor, 2010), a first key issue is that the results refute the assumption that most young people living in disadvantaged communities or growing up in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations need more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem (which are ‘household words’ both inside and outside SfD research, practice, and policy). These results warn against overgeneralising about individual development needs. Accordingly, young people from disadvantaged communities cannot be regarded as *uniformly* (or even *largely*) deficient in relation to the assumed deficits of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. Not all participants had low perceived self-efficacy and low self-esteem. On the contrary, there was a normal distribution of self-evaluations comparable to other populations. Groups of young people living in disadvantaged communities include some with relatively high self-evaluations, some with low self-evaluations and most with scores somewhere in the middle. Furthermore, research has illustrated how youth programs pursuing fixed externally pre-defined outcomes potentially have the perverse effect of excluding those young people who differ most from the desired developmental trajectory and outcomes (Coussée, Roets, & De Bie, 2009; Tiffany, 2011; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). This is especially relevant if such trajectories and outcomes are conceptualised based on mainstream conventions and practices with regard to education, employment or positive youth development, conventions and practices that are perpetuated by the same institutions (for example, schools and career services) that make young people vulnerable in the first place (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015).

In line with this, it can be argued that there are hardly any complex social problems that can be easily and convincingly described in terms of simple and unambiguous characteristics of the individuals experiencing those problems (e.g. low perceived self-efficacy or self-esteem) (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). Yet, the deficit model of youth *remains* consistent with the dominant narrative about personal development within much SfD policy and practice (Coakley, 2011) because of an insufficient initial diagnosis, selective exposure and/or the reliance on stereotypes and widespread beliefs. In addition, Coalter and Taylor (2010) indicated that such an approach to development is often

favoured – and stubbornly embraced even in the face of opposing evidence – by many who donate money to, manage, and serve as staff in sport initiatives. This results in programs being based on faulty assumptions about both the nature and extent of the problem(s) they address and the needs of the target group. These programs may have little prospect of achieving their intended effects.

Of course, the question should be asked to what degree much “diagnoses” tend to be inspired by an ideological discourse, that influences not only how politicians think but also infects practitioners in the field (Cooper, 2011), the wider public opinion and even researchers. In the context of the dismantling of the welfare state, the idea of citizenship has changed. Where it used to be focused on various social, political and economic rights, it is now narrowed down to individual obligations and duties, for example to take appropriate steps to manage one’s own behaviour and well-being (Giroux, 2013; Cooper et al., 2015). Along with this development, Ball (2013) observes that structural social problems tend to be depoliticised into personal problems and individual failings and responsibilities. In this conceptual frame, where young people are failed by various institutions, the ‘problem of youth’ (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunities) is reframed in the mainstream as ‘young people as deficient’ (e.g. regarding their character, resilience) that ‘need to be fixed’ by engaging them in interventions or trajectories to develop their attitudes, behaviour, skills and competencies (Cooper et al., 2015). However, such a view distracts from the deficiencies within the social system and from the dismantling of welfare institutions. In other words, individualised symptoms are emphasised over structural causes and collectively experienced social problems. This does *not* mean that the responsibility of individuals to be the best person they can be (i.e. initiative, effort, perseverance) and make the best out of their life situation is *not* important. But predominantly emphasising an individual’s responsibility to reconnect with mainstream society without concomitant attention for the wider structural structures that reproduce social issues, such as poverty, (or just bad luck) and how the state responds to these issues through its institutions, testifies to a meritocratic discourse that, by working hard, every person is capable of ‘pulling her/himself up by the bootstraps’ and being a ‘good citizen’.

1.2.2. From intrapersonal outcomes towards pedagogical processes

A second key issue is that the measured outcomes of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem amongst participants were varied and certainly not unidirectional (i.e., there were increases, decreases, or even no change). As might be expected on the basis of previous research (Coalter, 2013a; Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Coalter & Taylor, 2009), there was no simple and predictable change in young people’s self-evaluations. Logically, starting from faulty and overgeneralised assumptions about both the nature and extent of the needs of young people (i.e. deficits), programs have little prospect of achieving their intended outcomes (e.g. higher self-esteem) (Rossi et al., 2004). To think that young people are uniformly (or largely) deficient (i.e. low perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem) and participation in the investigated SfD initiatives automatically changes self-beliefs in a ‘positive’ sense would ignore the complexity of social change. For example, thinking that a certain young person would need self-esteem, it may be expected that hardly any positive change (i.e. increase) would occur if this young person already has a high level of self-esteem. While this is common-sense, dominant SfD rhetoric, policy and practice keep falling back on beliefs that participation in sport automatically and inevitable contributes to positive outcomes because of sport’s assumed essential goodness, purity and positive effects is passed on to participants (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011). Those politicians, practitioners and researchers narrowly focussing on evidencing individual outcomes and expecting clean and inherently positive (as opposed to messy and unpredictable) results (e.g. building character,

self-esteem, resilience) will probably overlook the yet existing importance of SfD initiatives within local communities and on an urban and societal level. Or they will probably oversee the primary importance of the qualitative processes within and what is needed to provide for such processes (i.e. resources and expertise).

Furthermore, decreases in self-evaluations should not necessarily be regarded as a negative outcome. It may reflect a more considered approach to the completion of the survey on the second administration, or an adjustment to healthier levels (e.g. less narcissistic or anti-social self-esteem (see Mruk, 2013)) due to a practical experience or relationships inside or outside the SfD initiative. Likewise, for participants that had no changes in their self-evaluation, such status-quo should not necessarily be seen as a negative outcome or as evidence that the SfD initiative fails. On the one hand, it might well be that a participant developed lower levels of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem *outside* the SfD initiative but developed higher levels *inside*. Here, the SfD initiative, as a pedagogical safe space (e.g. Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014) can help temporarily safeguarding young people against possible negative experiences, daily struggles (e.g. troubles at school or in the family context) and harmful discourses from outside the initiative (e.g. public space, school, family). Accordingly, under certain conditions and processes (see my answer to the first research question), the SfD initiative provides a context in which young people engage in meaningful activities, positive relationships and have positive experiences of support and appreciation (Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014; Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a; Super et al., 2017a). These positive experiences can, in turn, affect their self-evaluations in a positive way. Coalter (2012) emphasises the centrality of social relationships between coaches (or other mentoring figures) and participants and the development of respect, trust and reciprocity as a basis for potential attitude and behaviour change. Furthermore, Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, et al. (2004) contend that it is through the workings of entire systems of social relationships that any changes in behaviours, events and social conditions are effected. However, Pawson et al. (2004) continue and state that:

Rarely, if ever, is the 'same' programme equally effective in all circumstances because of the influence of contextual factors.

(Pawson et al., 2004: 7)

On the other hand, it might well be the other way around, that a participant developed higher levels of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem *outside* the SfD initiative but developed lower levels *inside*. However, the latter participant is likely to quit the initiative for that reason and drop out because the initiative is causing him or her low levels of self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy. This can have many reasons such as bullying coaches, bullying team members, perceived sporting incompetence or a socio-cultural mismatch experience by the participants with respect to the club culture and norms and values of other participants (e.g. see Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2014).

1.2.3. Towards more critical conceptualisations of 'development'

In line with this, a third key issue is that even if some young people could benefit from higher levels of perceived self-efficacy or self-esteem – or any other primarily intrapersonal-focused concept (e.g. resilience) – and even if participation in an SfD initiative does lead to an improvement in those levels, it remains essential to question what these outcomes are, how they are related to decreasing young people's social vulnerability, how they are related to increasing their life chances, and whose interests these outcomes serve most (Coalter, 2013a; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014).

In line with this, critical researchers argue that atheoretical, decontextualised and apolitical analyses of the role of sport in development are not only simplistic and inaccurate in ascribing socially transformative abilities to sport, but also obscure the contingent nature of achieving outcomes and the broader context of development politics on the neighbourhood, urban, and/or (inter)national levels (Coalter, 2013a; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Darnell et al., 2016). SfD initiatives aimed at young people in socially vulnerable situations can be valuable in the sense that participation *may* possibly help young people to have more self-confidence and self-esteem and, in turn, stand stronger and get along in mainstream society (Hayhurst et al., 2016). However, such a 'narrow empowerment' (Lawson, 2005) approach, which overemphasises individual agency and distracts from broader social structures, will structurally reproduce families and young people in socially vulnerable situations, despite targeted individual-focused intervention (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Kelly, 2011; Weiss, 1997). In addition, as Swaab (2014) argued, we may not oversee that some people already have built up an unbridgeable backlog through a lack of opportunities and nourishing contexts in early childhood, while other people are naturally less capable of 'pulling themselves up by the bootstraps' (e.g. weakly gifted people, psychiatric people). Therefore, expecting that every young person can be 'remoralised' (Ball, 2013; Wacquant, 2009) or redeveloped into a self-governing citizen is unrealistic.

Thus, without structural social investment in what makes communities and families vulnerable in the first place, SfD initiatives are at danger to merely be one part of a wider structural strategy that is focused at putting a sticking plaster on a wooden leg: it does not solve root causes but fights reoccurring symptoms. Even more problematic, SfD initiatives are then at danger of been misused by some politicians as part of a liberal repertoire aimed at keeping the disadvantaged under control (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Coakley, 2011; Spaaij, 2013; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015; Hartmann, 2016). Taking into account the broader context of social exclusion and development politics (Coalter, 2013a; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011), together with the impact of the current austerity climate in several 'first' world nations, the future participation in society of young people in socially vulnerable situations is likely to be less than successful if broader societal change (e.g. in poverty reduction or education policies) does not occur at the same time (Hayhurst, Giles, & Wright, 2016). Collins and Haudenhuyse (2015) argue that some policy measures in terms of, for example, welfare benefits or social support policy measures for people living in poverty (e.g. social housing) can have a more direct short-term effect on the lives of people in poverty. In line with this, it is perhaps more effective to *change the odds* instead of expecting disadvantaged groups to *beat the odds* (Secombe, 2002) through limited-focused sport-based interventions (Coalter, 2013b).

1.3 Strategies for going forward with SfD

This PhD study has refuted the assumptions underlying the deficit-reduction model of youth in sport and emphasised the importance of understanding the pedagogical processes underlying SfD initiatives from a critical theory perspective (i.e. critical pedagogy and youth organizing). This study has also pointed at the capacity problems most of the SfD initiatives experience in organising the sports offer (i.e. infrastructure, the right people, funding), typically pushing non-sport programming that demands tremendous resources, knowledge, time and energy, down the priority list.

Nevertheless, despite these findings and insights, it might well be that the dominant discourse of the deficit-reduction model (deemphasising pedagogical processes and wider structures) will remain popular for a variety of reasons (e.g. insufficient initial diagnosis, selective exposure, the reliance on stereotypes, ideological convictions). It can therefore be argued that it will be difficult to counteract this discourse in policy, practice and even in academia. Consequently, strategies must be designed to make sure that uncritical beliefs, assumptions and expectations are adjusted and that SfD stakeholders are made more aware of how sport can work for social change and how this is best supported from an organisational and policy perspective (e.g. financial and substantive support, sport education).

1.3.1 *Make use of critical theory to ask critical questions*

From a critical sociological perspective, SfD stakeholders should use more interpersonal, community-level and institutional-level conceptualisations of ‘youth’ and ‘development’ (when talking about ‘SfD’ for youth) instead of narrowly using intrapersonal conceptualisations when designing, implementing and researching programs for working with young people in socially vulnerable situations through sport. In this PhD study, I have engaged in critical theory, more precisely of critical pedagogy and youth organizing. Such theories and conceptualisations allow asking critical questions such as: how does working on assumed ‘deficits’ (needs) through sport relate to young people’s social problems such as poverty, bad housing, school-drop out and lack of job opportunities and decent work and pay? How can sport contribute in defying the social vulnerability and social exclusion of young people in mainstream society? What underlying pedagogical processes are vital? What do SfD initiatives and coaches need in order to implement a sport for social change approach? (e.g. capacity). Critical theory also allows asking critical questions about the position of SfD initiatives in a broader mainstream sport landscape and an urban reality that reproduces inequalities and poverty. It allows asking broader questions about, for example, the narrow focus on the effectivity and efficiency (‘success’) of often short-term, individual-focused sport-based interventions that aim to tackle the symptoms of long-terms social vulnerability and social exclusion (e.g. school dropout, low employability). Or about the impact of marketisation on the field of SfD, similar to social work and youth work, and the experiences of various stakeholders hereby. Such critical questions need to be asked, time and time again.

1.3.2 *Start from an open-ended, bottom up and participatory approach*

SfD stakeholders should disengage from the dominant, overgeneralised and individual-centred deficit model of youth when designing, implementing and researching programs and pay more attention to the needs assessment of young people by starting with an open-ended, bottom up, participatory, flexible and tailor-made approach that critically assesses young people’s needs by addressing their actual and concrete life situations instead of relying on abstract, selective, pre-defined and often

externally fixed ideas, beliefs and/or stereotypes of individual needs (i.e. assumed 'deficits' such as low perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem) (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Coalter, 2012; Cooper et al., 2015). As Rossi et al. (2004) state, there are hardly any social problems that can easily and convincingly be described in terms of simple and unambiguous characteristics of the individuals experiencing those problems. SfD initiatives and programs that are based on faulty assumptions may have little prospect of achieving their intended effects. Therefore, if SfD stakeholders are serious about social change, an open-ended, bottom up and participatory investigation of young people's needs is essential. Such an approach does not only apply to exposing the needs of young people but is also helpful for policy makers and sport administrators to map out the needs and policy suggestions of the various SfD initiatives in Belgium. By using a critical lens, SfD stakeholders can formulate similar questions that go beyond the fixation on the 'what works' mantra (i.e. effectivity and efficiency) and depoliticised evaluations of SfD initiatives (Currie-Alder, 2016; Haudenhuyse et al., 2018).

1.3.3 Focus on underlying pedagogical processes instead of outcomes

SfD stakeholders should focus on the underlying pedagogical processes of initiatives that are needed to work qualitatively with young people towards their well-being and development and on the tremendous resources this demands for SfD initiatives. The pedagogical processes that I have exposed within the investigated SfD initiatives can offer inspiration for policy makers and practitioners who have interest in designing, implementing and researching SfD (i.e. youth development processes, Freirean virtues, a reflective and open conversational culture and youth volunteering that contribute to a pedagogical space). Focussing on the underlying pedagogical processes will make working towards achieving specific outcomes, that is often unpredictable, more probable.

1.3.4 Support, organisational capacity building and basic funding

The investigated SfD initiatives often experience various capacity problems (i.e. infrastructure, finding or forming the right people, funding) for the organisation of the sports offer. With limited resources and time extended non-sport programming is typically pushed down the priority list (Hartmann, 2016). Working qualitatively with young people from socially and economically vulnerable situations on their general development and involving their families and the wider community demands tremendous resources and ongoing commitment. Therefore, policy makers and administrators, both in- and outside the sport field, should think about how they can better support SfD initiatives in designing, improving, implementing and co-researching more sustainable programs for working on individual, community and institutional change and development. If not, there would be a danger of a 'narrow coach empowerment' approach, in line with Lawson's (2005) notion of 'narrow empowerment' of young people, that is: working on the individual level (i.e. the coach's knowledge) but leaving the wider context (i.e. policy framework or organisational context) unaltered. The SfD initiatives mostly indicated capacity problems such as infrastructure, finding pedagogically formed people, and sustainable and longer-term funding. Policy makers and sport administrators can support initiatives and coaches in building organisational capacity which can generate these resources, although sufficient basic funding remains the core necessity for social initiatives (e.g. for the appointment of a capacity builder in the field – which can be already present in the club on a voluntary base).

A main challenge is that the work of SfD initiatives and coaches touches upon a variety of policy fields (e.g. sport, youth work, social work and well-being). This gives SfD initiatives a hybrid character for which support from various policy fields and institutions is required. Institutional bridges and partnerships between various policy fields (e.g. on 'sport for development') are necessary to co-support and co-fund SfD initiatives. This does not exist formally today although efforts in that direction are being made (e.g. 'BBC' at local level, which stand for 'Policy and Management Cycle' and is aimed at fostering integral cross-policy frameworks). Additionally, supporting SfD initiatives also involves thinking about conceptualisations and terms with regard to what SfD *is* and what it is not.

With regard to organisational capacity building, although currently underutilised, sport non-profits have used inter-organisational partnerships to generate collaborative advantages such as access to resources (Jones et al., 2017a; Jones et al., 2017b; Jones et al, 2017c). Therefore, SfD coaches would need to (be supported to) build bridges to organisations such as schools, social services, poverty organisations and other civic society organisations who are familiar with the needs of the young people that also come to the sport initiative and of which some can possibly work more politicised. The SfD initiative is then one radar in a wider network of socially-oriented partners striving for the betterment of the deprived situations in which most of the young people and families find themselves. However, as Jones et al. (2017a) argues, improving such inter-organisational partnerships is extremely difficult (e.g. focus on daily operations, vested interests, competition) and, again, this calls for support from the wider policy frameworks in which SfD initiatives are embedded.

1.3.5 Form a 'coalition of the like-minded'

In line with building inter-organisational partnerships, SfD practitioners and initiatives should unite with other SfD initiatives who have a similar social mission and should organise a 'coalition of the like-minded' that can enter into dialogue with (supra-)local 'elite' social actors. Elite social actors are actors such as high-level policymakers, think tanks, public intellectuals, lobby groups, (inter-/trans)national development organisations, commercial enterprises, employers, educational and leisure provisions (Haudenhuyse, 2018). Collectively entering into dialogue can possibly help SfD initiatives in influencing and co-shaping policy visions and frameworks regarding how SfD initiatives are best supported. Forming a 'coalition of the like-minded' (and inter-organisational partnerships) would also be a decent strategy in the context of marketisation of civic society and welfare professions which leads to a demoralising erosion of (and competition for) resources, a reduced capacity to voice opinions and a lack of confidence to express dissent (Cooper et al., 2015). Forming a coalition and partnerships may seem obvious, but this has not been done to date in Belgium and there is no SfD coalition that can influence the policy agenda, decisions, measures and support with regard to SfD policy, practice and research. It would defy the top-down approaches that are often characteristic of policy and management processes.

1.3.6 Re-imagining sport education

SfD stakeholders should re-imagine Faculties and Schools of sport sciences, sociology, management, and the like, where the future sport coaches, managers, bureaucrats, administrators and researchers are educated. This necessitates that the dominant institutional logic in sport is defied (Stenling, 2015) and the importance of more social and critical pedagogies explained. Now, many coaches, managers

and policy makers lack an in-depth knowledge about the structural origins of poverty and inequality (Black, 2017) and how these ills transpire in daily sport practice. Therefore, it is necessary for people in SfD to know how to tackle social issues through sport and work towards social change. This is not only important for coaches that operate in concrete daily practice but also for policy makers who (co-)design specific sport-based interventions.

Designing and implementing courses in social and critical pedagogies can give sport students, of whom some might already have *gut notions* of using sport for social change, more handles to put their abstract ideas into concrete daily practice (Apple, 1998). Moreover, a course on 'social sport pedagogies' (comprising insights from critical pedagogy and youth organizing) could be jointly given by practitioners and researchers and educate sport student to imagine and organise sport beyond more dominant sport pedagogies. Offering students practical stories and examples should be central here (Apple, 1998, Freire, 1998). Next to theory and practical stories, a sport education should enable sport students, especially coaches, to practice their knowledge in a concrete social reality where they can get in touch with youth from disadvantaged communities, learn from young people's life world, and reflect on their experiences in a learning environment by using the frameworks taught to them in the 'social sport pedagogies' course. Under the right guidance, such a practical experience can spark an 'emotional commitment' (Tinning, 2002) in students to use sport for social change from a more critical approach.

However, re-imagining sport education and implementing a more social agenda is not easy. For instance, attempts to educate socio-critical pedagogies are infrequent and rarely comprehensive since the agency of PETEs (physical education teacher education) to enact pedagogies that forefront socio-critical interests is contingent on the congruity of multiple socio-political network levels in which PETE is embedded (i.e. national/regional, local, school) (Ovens et al., 2018). In addition, there remain differences in how socio-critical issues (e.g. related to race, socio-economic status and religion) itself are conceptualised and enacted (Hill et al., 2018; Walton-Fisette et al., 2018). Such diverse definitions might contribute to confusion and lead to uncertainty over what and how to teach for socio-critical pedagogies and what intellectual tools are available for problematising social inequality and exclusion in sport (Hill et al., 2018). And even if curricula would adopt a more socio-critical orientation of sport, it remains a challenge to make this agenda fully appealing and understandable to all coaches and turn them into critical pedagogues (Gerdin, Philpot & Smith, 2016). Besides, as other authors have indicated (e.g. Stenling, 2015; Croston & Hills, 2017; Fitzpatrick & Burrows, 2017; Penney, 2017), trying to change institutions and their logics (in sport or other social fields) always comes with firm resistance because such an endeavour might run counter to established sport imperatives and interest groups. Thus, how open are the 'elite' social actors (see above) that influence sport education for such an agenda? And what are their visions and thoughts on this?

Alternatively, instead of trying to re-imagine sport education which has proven to be an uphill battle, it could be discussed to what degree it would be a viable and even better option to re-imagine youth work and social work education to include more knowledge on how sport can be used for youth development and social change. However, one issue might remain: even if it could be organised that youth and social work education embrace more sport (for development and social change), without re-imagining sport education in itself, it will not be more likely that the future sport educated coaches, club managers, government administrators and sport policy makers gain more knowledge of social and critical approaches and pedagogies in sport. Consequently, it is best that the various policy fields and institutions involved in this hybrid field of SfD build bridges and partnerships and institutionalise their cross-fertilisations (e.g. social and critical courses in sport and vice versa).

1.4 Strengths and limitations of this PhD

1.4.1 Strengths

One of the main strength of this PhD study is that, from a pragmatist paradigm, I have used critical theories to investigate and understand the underlying pedagogical processes of urban SfD initiatives aimed at the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations, and how this relates to wider social change. More specifically, this study has used the critical pedagogy of Freire (2005; 1998) and the youth organizing framework (Youth Engagement Continuum) of Sullivan et al. (2003) to position these SfD initiatives on the wide spectrum of critical pedagogy and the Youth Engagement Continuum. These frameworks meet the calls for SfD research to engage in theory and conceptualizations that step away from deficit model thinking, focus on educational and pedagogical processes, both at individual and community level (and how they are intertwined), and on critical, politicised and more descriptive approaches. It allowed us to place the findings in a broader politicised light and re-imagine ways of working with young people that could challenge the dominant, traditional ways of working with youth through sport. It also allowed us to give more insights into how sport stakeholders can use sport from a social (justice) perspective (i.e. pedagogical processes). While such critical investigations regarding the underlying pedagogies of SfD initiatives have been developing for some time, through this study I further developed and refined the theoretical frame of critical pedagogy to the concrete reality of SfD initiatives and, based on Coakley's (2011) suggestion, I have introduced youth organizing as an analytical lens. I also used these critical theories to reflect on several key issues of the survey findings (chapter two), in which I critically discussed the deficit-reduction model. It further allowed us to reflect on the concept of 'development', how it is commonly operationalised, how it can be measured, and place this discussion within a broader socio-political context. Critical theory plays a role in placing research, methodologies, interpretations and findings in a broader politicised perspective. By *reframing* the research lens through a critical, politicised theory, it became possible to look at and to analyse present initiatives and *re-imagine* the workings of (other) initiatives and pedagogies as they relate to young people in socially vulnerable and/or socially excluded situations. It also allowed to reflect on aspects of power, control and status quo within the SfD field, for instance, with regard to the position of the SfD initiatives in a mainstream sport landscape or the sport education system.

A second main strength is that through the Antwerp Wolf Pack Basketball case study (chapter three) I gave young people a voice, not only with regard to identifying and investigating the actual pedagogical processes, but also regarding other topics that came out of the conversations. Allowing young people to speak about their experiences is important because it 'voices' their insights and meanings which are often neglected in (sport) studies and made subordinate to the voices of program providers, experts, researchers, consultants, administrators and policy makers. This aligns with academic calls for more participatory approaches (e.g., Spaaij, Schenkenkorf, Jeanes & Oxford, 2017) and with the idea of critical research paradigms. In order to voice the Wolf Pack participants, I have used various qualitative methods (i.e. observations and chats, in-depth interviews, sharing circles). Through the observations, the young people and I gradually got familiar to each other and it allowed for short or longer chats and interactions about things I saw during trainings and matches and other questions about the initiative that came to my mind. Moreover, the interviews allowed to discuss the initiative's pedagogy more in depth, based on the notes I took while observing and the critical theory I used as a framework. Finally, the sharing circles provided an opportunity for the young people to share their perspectives on the initiative with other participants and allowed for interaction between

the young people. Sharing circles have been used in previous research to share aspects of the individual and is based on caring, respect and compassion (Hayhurst, Giles, & Wright, 2016; Lavallée, 2009). The case study also allowed me to frequently visit the Wolf Pack for over a period of three years (2015-2018).

A third main strength is that through the survey (chapter two) empirical data, findings and practical implications for SfD stakeholders regarding the of the deficit-reduction model were produced. Darnell (2015) argued that such analyses are valuable in complementing the many theoretical critiques of the deficit-reduction models (Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2013a). In addition, the two-measurement design of the survey is a strength because many studies in SfD only use a single group post-test only design (see Whitley et al.'s (2018) review). Via this systematic assessment of both young people's assumed developmental needs and change through sport, I was able to indicate which of the assumptions underlying the deficit-reduction model were faulty and how the concept 'development' can be approached which, in turn, influences how data are interpreted and findings are formulated. With the exception of the work of Coalter (2013a) and Coalter and Taylor (2010) this has not really been done intentionally and systematically.

A fourth strength of this PhD study is that it focused on SfD initiatives in the 'Global North'. In line with this, Freire (2005) already mentioned (in 1968!) that there are 'third world' areas in the 'first world', and first world areas in the third world. Therefore, investigating SfD initiatives in the Global North is valuable when most SfD research is carried out in the Global South (Schulenkorf et al., 2016) (although thinking in terms of Global North and Global South is becoming increasingly problematic). Furthermore, this study included two SfD initiatives from Brussels (i.e. Brussels Boxing Academy and Brussels Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy) which, I believe, is a context that is often neglected by Flemish researchers of Flemish universities due to a variety of reasons (e.g., many French and other non-Dutch speaking citizens, negative image through a selective presentation of Brussels in the media, and related to the feeling that many parts of Brussels, such as Molenbeek, generally are "no go" zones).

A fifth strength is that I have provided enough details of the PhD study's research paradigm, theoretical frameworks, methodology of the quantitative research method (e.g., initiatives' and participant profile, two measurements design of the survey, the standardised scales of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem, enrolment and drop-out rates, investigation of background variables of participants) and the qualitative research methods (e.g., observations and informal chats, focus groups and interviews with providers, interviews and sharing circles with young people, the use of various research diaries, sampling procedures), the analytical approach of the survey (see chapter two) and qualitative methods (see chapter one and three), and, finally, the aspects of research quality (e.g., Braun, Clarke & Weate's (2017) 15-point checklist, Smith and Caddick's (2012) criteriologist approach, the use of standardised (more reliable and valid) scales for the survey). These all contribute to the overall quality of this study, aligning the purpose, philosophy, methodology and methods.

1.4.2 Limitations and further reflections

One of the main limitations of this PhD study is that, although I voiced young people of the Antwerp Wolf Pack (chapter three), it was a real challenge to decode the abstract theoretical framework and concepts of Freire to the very concrete and tangible reality of the investigated SfD initiative and ask them context-specific questions (i.e. related to their lives and the meaning of sport therein) that were relevant, understandable, fun and informal (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013a).

While one of the main strengths of this PhD study is that I have used critical theories to investigate my two research questions, a second limitation is that I have not used it in combination with an intersectional lens. As said, I have used the critical pedagogy of Freire (2005; 1998) and the youth organizing framework (Youth Engagement Continuum) of Sullivan et al. (2003) that is, amongst others, rooted in critical pedagogy. Both critical theories are strongly influenced by Marxist theory (i.e. dialectic, socio-political awareness, collective social action) and, thus, depart from a class lens. While Freire was critiqued for not (or hardly) focusing on gender and race, he did engage more in these discussions in his later work (McLaren, 2000) (although I am not sure to which degree this work was intersectional). In this study, I have not focused on the intersections between class, race and gender. A focus on how class, race and gender intersect in lived experiences and social reality could deliver new data, findings and insights.

A third 'cluster of limitations' relates to the survey (chapter two). Firstly, participation in the SfD initiatives was voluntary. As a result, young people that are in the most vulnerable situations might not participate in these initiatives, even if initiatives set up a targeting, outreach approach in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and towards vulnerable families and communities. Nevertheless, my data indicated that the initiatives attract a large number of young people who grow up in socially and economically vulnerable situations. Secondly, any changes that might be revealed in the data are not necessarily the result of participation in the initiatives. In social sciences, it is difficult to isolate the 'sport' or 'program' or 'initiative' effect from other contextual influences and experiences (e.g., family, peers, school, public space) and from more general developmental changes young people might undergo (i.e. general maturation). Therefore, I have asked young people to answer the questions with regard to their attitudes *in general* (i.e. global self-esteem, general perceived self-efficacy): how they *generally* feel, within and across several contexts: the club, school, at home, etc. Furthermore, to say that this survey and this study has measured the 'impact of sport', would be technically and intellectually wrong. What I can say is that I have measured 'the self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy of young people who participate in SfD initiatives'. An appropriate use of language is vital here and mistakes are easily made. Thirdly, when developmental changes do appear (resulting from experiences in various context and/or general maturation), it usually happens slowly and in very slight ways (Spaaij et al., 2016). Since I do not know if and how soon the expected developmental change is likely to appear, a time span of 6 to 8 months between the first and the second administration of the survey might be relatively short. Fourthly, I could have used other concepts instead of perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. Still, with the same research design, I would have to make the same limitations.

A fourth limitation of this PhD study is that there is a lot of data that could be further examined, explored and analysed. Some of the data that I analysed and the themes that I found could be explored and analysed more in depth. For instance, using more raw data (i.e. quotes) to evidence the results and findings in chapter one, focusing more on several key themes and making the focus groups and interactions between participants and researchers more visible, is definitely on my to do list.

A fifth "limitation" concerns a reflection on my positionality as a researcher. While many of the young people that participate in the selected SfD initiatives have roots in migration and grow up in socially and economically vulnerable situations and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, I grew up in an economically and socially stable family with both parents completing higher education, in a Flemish 'peasant village' while going to school in 'the city' (i.e. Antwerp), have no short-term roots in migration, and completed General Secondary Education and university studies. This positionality needs to be taken into account and reflected upon when doing field research with people. However, through the observations, and this certainly was important in the Antwerp Wolf Pack case study, I had the

opportunity to become a more familiar and trustworthy face to most of the young people and the staff of the SfD initiatives. And yet, I felt that it was sometimes hard to feel 'at home' in some of the initiatives, also because I can be a rather reserved person when being surrounded by unfamiliar faces. With regard to this, I was happy to receive the assistance of two Physical Education students (Terence van Dijk and Benjamin Doms) for the data collection in Brussels. Terence and Benjamin were more familiar with the Brussels context and more comfortable expressing themselves in French. I have tried to be as open, unknowing, learning and non-hierarchical as possible. Especially with the young people of Wolf Pack, I had the impression that thresholds between the young people and myself diminished by each time I was present and more able to be myself (i.e. be 'Zeno' instead of the 'Zeno the researcher'). Such processes take time and thorough self-reflection, and researchers should be always aware that for many people they present an institute and a role that can generate distance, hierarchy and power imbalances. I believe that one of the most important things that can help in lowering the thresholds between participants and researchers is the *attitude* with which the researcher approaches participants in the field. If we, as researchers, continue to fail to *embody* our participatory and voicing methods, we risk staying entrenched in clean, distant and hierarchical 'banking' research, using at best critical politicised theory and participatory methods.

1.5 Pathways for future research

I outline six pathways for future research. These pathways are:

- 1) creating an in-depth understanding of pedagogical processes
- 2) investigating how problems, needs and impacts can be monitored and evaluated on various levels of development
- 3) investigating the visions of 'elite' social actors;
- 4) investigating organisational capacity building of SfD initiatives;
- 5) investigating the 'SfD' curriculum in the sport education system;
- 6) using innovative, participatory (action) research rooted in critical theory.

1.5.1 Creating an in-depth understanding of pedagogical processes

In this PhD study, I have investigated the various pedagogical processes and educational components of the SfD initiatives through the lens of critical pedagogy and youth organizing. Still, many of the processes that were found can be regarded as 'black boxes' and can be further dissected. For instance, while 'respect' is a central feature within all the initiatives, it is still not precisely clear what respect actually *means*, and how it is actually created or "comes about". Therefore, I suggest that a further in-depth understanding of specific pedagogical processes and components such as 'respect', 'trust' and 'reflection' is needed to really try and grasp the true meaning and *soul* of these concepts.

1.5.2 Investigating how problems, needs and impacts can be monitored and evaluated on various levels of development

In this PhD study, I have suggested that 'development' should be approached from a more critical sociological perspective and that development should be understood in a variety of ways and on a variety of levels such as the intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup/community and institutional level. Therefore, I suggest investigating how problems, needs and impacts can be monitored and evaluated on these various levels of development.

1.5.3 Investigating the visions of 'elite' social actors

In this PhD study, I have focused on SfD initiatives and their contribution to the development of young people participating in them. However, it would be interesting to investigate the wider socio-political and institutional context (e.g. policy framework) in which SfD initiatives are embedded. More precisely, there is a need to investigate the visions, beliefs and assumptions of the wider network of 'elite' social actors (in Belgium) regarding the needs of people in socially vulnerable situations (the "beneficiaries" of SfD), how sport 'works', and, most important, how SfD initiatives are sustainably supported from a policy perspective (see recommendations). These elite social actors are actors such as high-level policymakers, think tanks, public intellectuals, lobby groups, (inter- and trans)national development organisations, commercial enterprises, employers, educational and leisure provisions (Haudenhuyse, 2018). It is clear that SfD initiatives are expensive, expansive and complicated, that development and social change is far from automatic, and that SfD initiatives – if it is to be done properly and effectively – are no shortcut or an easy fix to alleviate people out of vulnerability. This also holds true even under

the best of circumstances with abundant resources and the most comprehensive and advanced modes of engagement and programming (Hartmann, 2016). As Hartmann argued:

‘A failure to understand these realities and limitations of sport-based programs can actually serve to reinforce and exacerbate the problems faced by at-risk urban youth defecting public attention away from deeper social sources of their problems.’

(Hartmann, 2016: p.207)

Overlooking these elite social actors’ visions, ideologies, beliefs and assumptions, and how they shape policy and expectations accordingly, may result in *failing* to unveil how some actors tend to see young people as ‘deficient’, or put the blame on young people for ‘not taking their chances’ (through SfD initiatives) or ‘not being grateful’ for the provided interventions. Moreover, overlooking these beliefs may result in *failing* to expose how some actors think that sport leads to positive outcomes, what these outcomes are (e.g. ‘development’, ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social integration’), and how they understand these concepts in relation to their needs (i.e. ‘deficits’). Furthermore, it may result in *failing* to demonstrate how some actors tend to judge SfD initiatives and practitioners for not ‘doing their job’ when not achieving *their* expected outcomes (i.e. ‘what did it deliver?’). Finally, it may result in *failing* to investigate how – and this is an unexamined reflection – some actors reproduce the status quo of social vulnerability of people (and SfD initiatives) by preventing that the scarce structures that support the many precarious SfD initiatives are expanded and become more sustainable, or by restricting such structures through funding cuts in basic work that is replaced by various often funder-directed ‘project calls’ which are often no more than proverbial ‘crumbs’ compared to the work that needs to be done and mostly ask of initiatives to become ‘self-sufficient’ after a few years. Such developments are also present within youth and social work contexts.

Moreover, SfD is a hybrid field touching upon a variety of policy fields (e.g. sport, youth work, social work and well-being) and institutional bridges and partnerships between various policy fields (e.g. on ‘sport for development’) are necessary to co-support and co-fund SfD initiatives. It would be interesting to explore elite social actors’ visions about this aspect. There is value in digging up these diverse visions of elite social actors that are often contradictory and characterised by vested interests and power. One theoretical framework that can be helpful is the politicised framework of ‘political economy’ (Darnell et al., 2016; Haudenhuyse, 2018). This framework would allow a critical focus on the influencing ‘elite’ social actors who directly or indirectly shape the state, economy and the (sport) structures that influence people’s experiences (Sukarieh and Tannock 2016; Haudenhuyse, 2018).

1.5.4 Investigating organisational capacity building of SfD initiatives

This PhD study has found that most of the SfD initiatives experience capacity issues in organising the sports offer (i.e. infrastructure, finding or forming the right people, funding) which often pushes more extensive non-sport programming that demands tremendous resources, knowledge, time and energy, down the priority list. Although sufficient basic funding remains the core necessity for social initiatives, next to the research suggestion above, it would be interesting to investigate how initiatives can build organisational capacity that would allow them to strengthen their capacity and implementation of their social mission and curriculum (e.g. gain more insight in how various financial, material and human resources can be generated and sustained). Such organisational capacity could provide SfD initiatives the space needed to set up, improve and sustain pedagogical activities with young people and inter-

organisational partnerships. On a side note, investigated organisational capacity building might also necessitate investigating the organisational capacity of services and organisations that are authorised to support SfD initiatives in building their organisational capacity (e.g. (the umbrella of) urban sport services, sport federations, non-profit organisations).

1.5.5 Investigating the 'SfD' curriculum in the sport education system

Now, many coaches, managers and policy makers lack an in-depth knowledge about the structural origins of poverty and inequality (Black, 2017) and how these ills transpire in daily sport practice. Therefore, it is necessary for people in SfD to know how to tackle social issues through sport and work towards social change. While the influence of wider societal developments and social issues on sport are being recognised, a more socio-critical formation of people in the sport field is much welcome. Thus, there is a need to investigate the 'SfD' curriculum in the current sport education system to scrutinise how, amongst others, coaches, managers and other students in sport are educated with regard to social issues such as poverty, social exclusion and discrimination and target groups such as people in socially vulnerable situations, poor people, people with an ethnic minority background and refugees (to name just a few). Sport education is certainly not only the Flemish Trainers' School but also the curricula of Faculties and Schools of sport sciences, management, and the like, where future sport coaches, managers, bureaucrats, administrators and researchers are educated. In addition, the education delivered by non-sport policy fields and organisations (e.g. social work, welfare work, youth work) should be mapped out. It would be interesting to expose where coaches, managers and all those who are interested in learning more about using sport for social change educate themselves through colleges, seminars, lectures, workshops, etc and on which level (i.e. national, programmatic, individual, school/club). An overview on this fragmented offer would be of value to those interested in such 'SfD' (or 'sport for change' or 'sport as a means') curricula. This investigation can also include a debate on which policy field(s) is (are) responsible for delivering such a curriculum (sport or social sector, jointly, others?) and how this can be organised effectively and efficiently.

1.5.6 Using innovative, participatory (action) research rooted in critical theory

In this PhD study, I have used a variety of qualitative methods such as observations, informal chats, focus groups (providers) and sharing circles (young people), interviews and I have kept several research diaries to write down notes and reflections. However, it would be interesting to engage in critical sociological sport research, using more innovative ways of voicing people, both socially and technologically, and using approaches that are more and truly participatory, action research-focus and rooted in critical theory, which may generate new forms of knowledge that are quintessential for further policy on the hybrid crossroads of sports, youth work, social work, welfare work, etc. The examples are legion: Dillabough and Kennelly's (2010) use of visual methods such as contemporary and historical photographs and drawings; Kennelly's (2011) use of walking interviews and photo voicing as part of her ethnographic research; Spaaij et al.'s (2017) and Sherry et al.'s (2017) call for more participatory research (e.g. innovative methods such as dialogue-based and participatory mapping (Spaaij et al. (2017), and reflective surveying, stories of change and photography/videography (Sherry et al., 2017)); Adeosun & Mwaanga's (2017) call for a (decolonising) Critical Participatory Paradigm (CPP); or Hayhurst's (2017) use of a postcolonial feminist PAR approach. This would require

that researchers and possible research funders embrace not only the iterative processes specific to participatory (action) research but also the certainty that the methods that will be used and how they will work out are not certain in advance (although possibilities could be mapped out). In line with this, Darnell, Whitley and Massey (2016) advocated for an ongoing and even renewed commitment to the qualitative study of SfD that moves beyond the rather strict confines of 'monitoring & evaluation' and towards an embrace of the full range of social and political implications that emerge from the activities of SfD. I believe that using more innovative, participatory, action-focused research approached embedded within critical theory could generate different and, in turn, potentially new and relevant data.

1.6 Conclusion

In this study I investigated the underlying pedagogical processes of urban SfD initiatives aimed at the development of young people living in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations, and how the impact of these initiatives on the development of these young people can be measured. For this, amongst others, I used the politicised theories of critical pedagogy and youth organizing.

The investigated SfD initiatives could be seen as pedagogical spaces where pedagogical *base work* is enacted with young people and their families. In addition, building upon the above processes, the SfD initiatives enact *political* base work by, for example, creating a welcome and safe environment for both young people and their parents which can foster a sense of community and increase social engagement towards the initiative and the wider community. In this sense, the SfD initiatives go beyond the traditional ‘banking’ way of organising sport and working with young people and could be seen as a pedagogical ‘counter-space’ within a mainstream sport landscape and an urban context where many spaces are exclusive. However, working qualitatively with young people on their general development and involving the wider family and community context demands tremendous resources, knowledge and ongoing commitment, but with limited resources extended non-sport programming is typically pushed down the priority list.

I also found that the analyses and data raise serious questions about the assumptions associated with the deficit-reduction model of youth underpinning many SfD rhetoric. A first key issue is that the results refute the assumption that most young people living in disadvantaged communities or growing up in socially and/or economically vulnerable situations need more perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem. A second key issue is that the measured outcomes amongst participants were varied and certainly not unidirectional. A third key issue is that even if some young people could benefit from higher levels of perceived self-efficacy or self-esteem and even if participation in an SfD initiative does lead to an improvement in those levels, it remains essential to question what these outcomes are, how they are related to decreasing their social vulnerability and increasing their life chances, and whose interests these outcomes serve most. Without structural social investment in what makes communities and families vulnerable in the first place, SfD initiatives are at danger to merely be one part of a wider structural strategy that is focused at putting a sticking plaster on a wooden leg: it does not solve root causes but fights reoccurring symptoms.

Policy makers and administrators, both in- and outside the sport field, should think about how they can better support SfD initiatives in designing, improving, implementing and co-researching more sustainable programs for working on individual, community and institutional change and development. In line of this, SfD practitioners and initiatives should unite with other SfD initiatives who have a similar social mission and should organise a ‘coalition of the like-minded’ that can enter into dialogue with (supra-)local ‘elite’ social actors (e.g. policymakers and administrators).

1.7 References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: focus group questions (chapter one)

Opbouw van de voorbereidende M&E sessies

1. Voorbereidende SESSIE DEEL 1: Belangrijkste bouwstenen van het 'programma' of het 'aanbod' (implementation theories)

- a. **VISION STATEMENT** (dit komt helemaal rechts op het schema, en is onze focus om het bos door de bomen niet te verliezen):
 - i. *Formuleer de visie van de organisatie/deelwerking en op welke elementen spelen de activiteiten van de deelwerking/deelaanbod in*
- b. **WHO INVESTS**
 - i. *Overzicht van alle 'investeerdere': wie maakt het aanbod mogelijk?*
- c. **WHAT WE INVEST** Welke **input** (mensen en middelen) is nodig om de activiteiten te kunnen aanbieden en de gewenste impact en uitkomsten te bereiken? Beschrijf ook wie allemaal het aanbod mogelijk maakt (de investeerders)
 - i. *Tijd*
 - ii. *Mensen (vrijwilligers & professionelen)*
 - iii. *Geld*
 - iv. *Materiaal en infrastructuur (gebruik zowel voor activiteiten als personeel)*
 - v. *Incentives die sportdeelname mogelijk maken (sticks, carrots, sermons) zowel op het niveau van deelnemers en hun omgeving*
 - vi. *Opleiding 'mensen'*
 - vii. *Intervisie 'mensen'*
 - viii. *Omkadering 'mensen'*
 - ix. *Wetgeving*
 - x. *Communicatie aanbod*
 - xi. *Proef of initiatie aanbod (bv. op school of in de wijk)*
 - xii. *Lobbyen & netwerking*
- d. **WHAT WE DO** Welke (sport) **activiteiten** zijn nodig om de gewenste impact en uitkomsten te bereiken (wees specifiek en concreet)
 - i. *Activiteiten (frequentie, duur, groepsgrootte, sporten)*
 - ii. *Workshops*
 - iii. *Groepsgesprekken*
 - iv. *Events (weekend, dropping, gaan eten)*
 - v. *Individuele begeleiding tijdens activiteiten*
 - vi. *Individuele begeleiding/ondersteuning buiten activiteiten*
 - vii. *Groepswerking*
 - viii. *Infoavonden*

- e. **WHO WE REACH** Welke **deelnemers** bereiken we met de aangeboden activiteiten. En wat zijn hun gemeenschappelijke kenmerken waar we via het aanbod op wensen in te spelen. Of anders gezegd: op welke profiel van deelnemers hebben we met het aangeboden programma een maximale effect.

- i. *Aantal*
- ii. *Leeftijd*
- iii. *Gender*
- iv. *Thuisituatie*
- v. *Socio-economisch profiel*
- vi. *Migratie-achtergrond*
- vii. *School/werk situatie (ouders/deelnemers)*
- viii. *Engagement (vrijwillig/opgelegd?)*
- ix. *Profiel deelnemers*
 1. *Motivatatie ten aanzien van het programma en sport in het algemeen*
 2. *Attitudes tav school*
 3. *Norm overschrijdend gedrag*
 4. *Zelfvertrouwen/zelfbeeld*
 5. *At-risk of...*

- f. **WHAT HAPPENS TO PARTICIPANTS** Welke **impact** hebben we met de activiteiten op de deelnemers (die gerelateerd zijn aan de uitkomsten die we via het aanbod wensen te bereiken). Het gaat enkel over deze impact waar specifiek via inputs op ingezet wordt (no wishful thinking): Welke veranderingen willen we bereiken bij jongeren ?

- i. *gedrag*
- ii. *kennis*
- iii. *attitudes*
- iv. *motivatie/ambities*
- v. *vaardigheden*
- vi. *ontmoeting/kennismaking*
- vii. *zelfvertrouwen*
- viii. *zelfbeeld*
- ix. *dagbesteding*
- x. *opnemen van vrijwilligerswerk*

- g. **WHAT RESULTS** Wat zijn de korte en lange termijn **uitkomsten** die we wensen te genereren met het aanbod? Formuleer ook de **visie** van de organisatie of deelwerking (indien niet al reeds gedaan in het begin). Het gaat enkel over deze uitkomsten waar specifiek via inputs op ingezet wordt (no wishful thinking). Welke veranderingen willen we bereiken bij jongeren op lange termijn ?

- i. **Korte termijn**
 - *Persoonlijke ontwikkeling*
 - *Sociale ontwikkeling*
 - *Toewijding tav het programma, organisatie (retention)*

- *Empowerment*
- *Probleem-, risico- en grensoverschrijdend gedrag*
- ii. **Lange termijn**
 - *Gezondheidswinst*
 - *Sport succes*
 - *Probleemgedrag*
 - *Werk en school situatie*
 - *Fysieke activiteit en sportparticipatie*
 - *Criminele feiten*
 - *Andere pro-sociale peer-groep*
 - *Middelengebruik*
 - *Gestructureerde vrijetijdsbesteding*
 - *Gezinssituatie*

h. SPORT PLUS

<< Indien er tijd en energie is want is eigenlijk al deel twee (program theories) >>

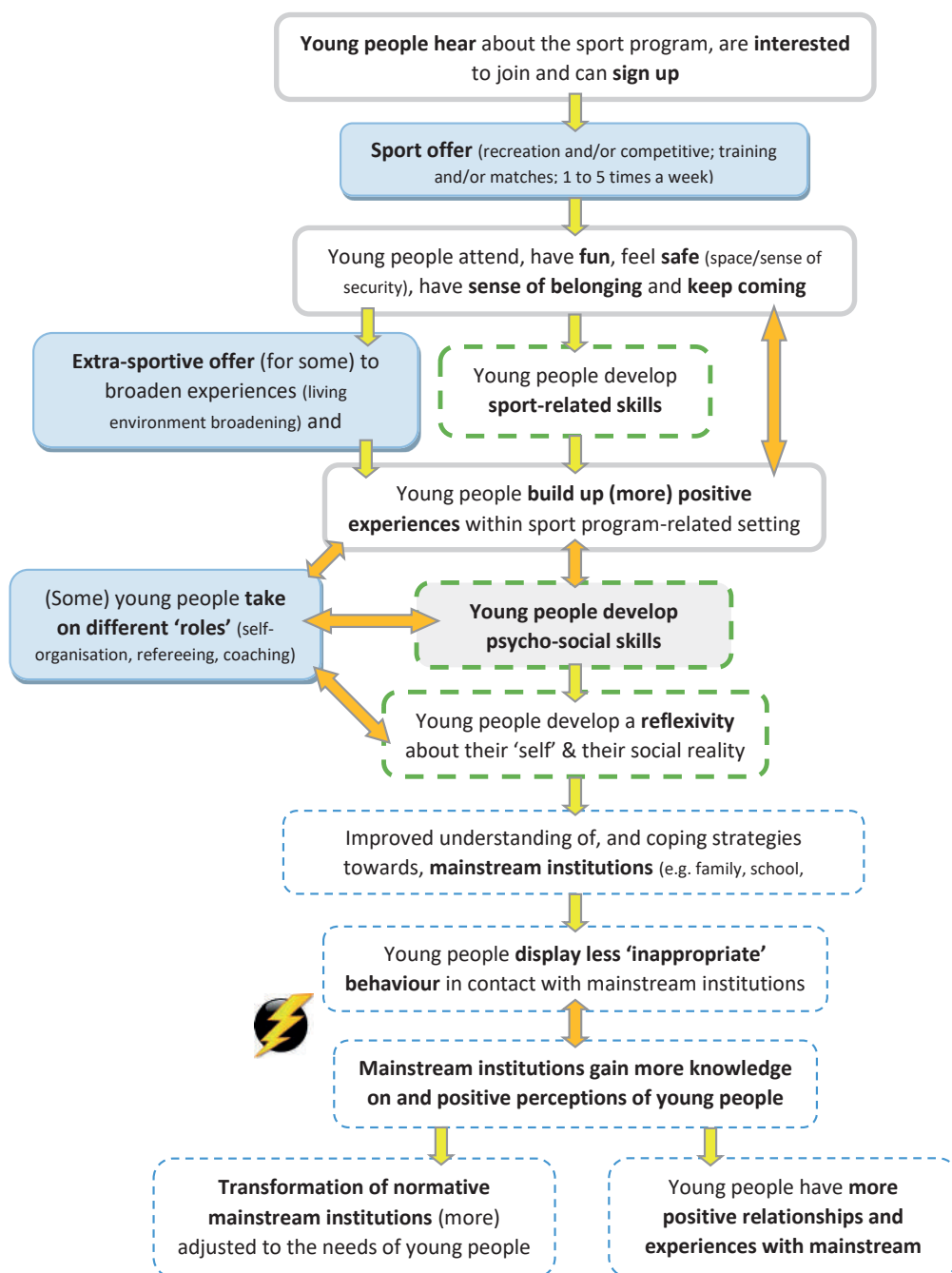
- i. Welke **sport of activiteit gerelateerde uitkomsten** willen we (en op welke wijze gaan deze uitkomsten bijdrage tot de gewenste impact op het individuele niveau)
- ii. Op welke wijze heeft de beoogde impact en uitkomsten een effect op het aanbieden van de sportactiviteiten; Worden er specifieke zaken gedaan net voor, tijdens of net na het sporten?
- iii. Welke begeleidingsstijl wordt gehanteerd tijdens de sport activiteiten en waarom?
- iv. Welke groeps grootte en soort groep (samenstelling) wordt beoogt?
- v. Specifieke regels? Duur? Opbouw van activiteiten? Aanbieden van techniek? Competentie?
- vi. Rol van begeleider tijdens/buiten de activiteiten?

2. Voorbereidende SESSIE DEEL 2: De logica expliciteren tussen de verschillende componenten (program theories)

- a. Na de eerste sessie gaan we proberen alles uit sessie 1 overzichtelijk in een schema te steken
- b. In de tweede sessie gaan we verder in op:
 - i. Verbindingen maken tussen de verschillende programma componenten
 - ii. De veronderstellingen die tussen inputs, outputs, impacts & outcomes zitten = the presumed cause-and -effect connections between programme components and route to desired outcomes
 - iii. Kritische succesfactoren waardoor we kunnen veronderstellen dat...
- c. Vragen die in de tweede sessie zullen centraal staan (working from right to left)

- i. What is current situation that we intend to change? And what factors create the situation. What factors contribute in creating a status-quo and what factors will contribute in changing the status-quo?
- ii. What will it look like when we achieve the desired outcomes?
- iii. What behaviours need to change for that outcome to be achieved? And why?
- iv. What knowledge /skills/values/attitudes do people need before the behaviour will change? And why?
- v. What activities/experiences/relationships need to happen to cause the necessary learning?
- vi. What resources will be required to achieve the desired outcome? How will such resources play a role?

Appendix 2: theory of change (chapter 2)



Appendix 3: survey for the assessment of self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy (chapter 2)

Questionnaire

Thank you in advance for filling in this questionnaire. Your answers will help us to organize sport activities for young people in the future in the best possible way. Take your time to read the questions when answering. This is not a test: there is no right or wrong answer. Do you have any questions yourself? Feel free to ask me.

What is your name? (first and last name)	What is the name of this club?
First name: Last name:.....

How long have you been practising sport here?	How often do you practise sport here every week? (training and matches)
<input type="radio"/> This is my 1 st season <input type="radio"/> This is my 2 nd season <input type="radio"/> This is my 3 rd season <input type="radio"/> This is my 4 th season <input type="radio"/> More than 4 seasons	<input type="radio"/> 1 time <input type="radio"/> 2 times <input type="radio"/> 3 times <input type="radio"/> 4 times <input type="radio"/> More than 4 times

Do you like playing sports here?	<input type="radio"/> Yes, very much <input type="radio"/> Kind of <input type="radio"/> Not really <input type="radio"/> No, not at all
---	---

Now some general questions will be asked:

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	○	○	○	○
2.	At times, I think that I am no good at all.	○	○	○	○
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	○	○	○	○
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	○	○	○	○
5.	I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.	○	○	○	○
6.	I certainly feel useless at times.	○	○	○	○
7.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least equal with others.	○	○	○	○
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	○	○	○	○
9.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	○	○	○	○
10.	I take a positive attitude towards myself.	○	○	○	○

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. When trying something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. If I can't carry out a task at the first attempt, I keep trying until I can.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. When I decide to do something, I start working on it right away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Failure just makes me try harder.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I do not seem to be capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel insecure about my ability to do things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Finally, I would like to ask you some other questions. You can write your answer on the dotted line or by circling/ticking off your answer.

I am a:	Boy / Girl	What is your age? years
Besides being active in this club, are you active in any other of the following leisure activities?	<input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Youth association <input type="radio"/> Music academy <input type="radio"/> Art academy <input type="radio"/> Drama school (theatre) <input type="radio"/> Other sport club <input type="radio"/> Other:	What is the postal code of the place where you live? (you may also mention the city or municipality)
Do both of your parents still live together?	<input type="radio"/> Yes, they live together <input type="radio"/> No, they live separately <input type="radio"/> My father passed away <input type="radio"/> I never knew my father <input type="radio"/> My mother passed away <input type="radio"/> I never knew my mother	How would you describe your living situation?	<input type="radio"/> I live with both my parents <input type="radio"/> I (mostly) live with my mother <input type="radio"/> I (mostly) live with my father <input type="radio"/> I live independently (alone, with friends, partner, ...) <input type="radio"/> Other:

What is your nationality?		In what country were you born?	
In what country was your mother born?		In what country was your grand-mother born? (mother of your mother)	
How long have you been living in Belgium?	<input type="radio"/> All my life <input type="radio"/> For year(s)	Which language do you speak at home? (several options possible)	<input type="radio"/> Dutch <input type="radio"/> French <input type="radio"/> Moroccan-Arabic <input type="radio"/> Turkish <input type="radio"/> Berber/Tamazight <input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Other:
What do you currently do?	<input type="radio"/> GSE (general school) <input type="radio"/> ASE (artistic) <input type="radio"/> TSO (technical) <input type="radio"/> VSE (vocational) <input type="radio"/> VSE (part-time) <input type="radio"/> SSE (special) <input type="radio"/> OKAN (bridging class for newcomers) <input type="radio"/> I am at high school <input type="radio"/> I am at university <input type="radio"/> I follow a course <input type="radio"/> I work <input type="radio"/> I am looking for work <input type="radio"/> Other:	Have you ever doubled a year in school? What is the highest diploma you have obtained?	Yes / No <input type="radio"/> I'm still at school <input type="radio"/> No diploma <input type="radio"/> Primary school <input type="radio"/> Secondary school <input type="radio"/> Higher education <input type="radio"/> University <input type="radio"/> Other:
Did you ever get suspended from school?	Yes / No	How many times did you get suspended? times
Do you have concerns about your own future? (worry, fear, uncertainty)	<input type="radio"/> No, never <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> Very often	To what extent do you get by at home financially? (have enough money to get by)	<input type="radio"/> Very easy <input type="radio"/> Easy <input type="radio"/> Rather easy <input type="radio"/> Rather difficult <input type="radio"/> Difficult <input type="radio"/> Very difficult

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire!

Appendix 4: interview guide young people (chapter 3)

- **Kan je de club eens omschrijven?** Waaraan **denk** je als je aan de Wolf Pack denkt? [*'safe space'*]
 - **Sport je al lang bij deze club?** Hoe ben je hier **beland**? Hoe **vaak** train je/heb je match?
 - Welke **activiteiten** organiseert de club?
 - Sportactiviteiten / andere activiteiten / welke activiteiten doe **jij** hier allemaal?
 - Wie zorgt voor de **organisatie**?
 - **Wat betekent de Wolf Pack voor jou?** Wat betekent basketbal? Wat zou je doen mocht de club er niet zijn geweest?
- **Kan je jezelf in drie woorden omschrijven?** Hoe zie jij jezelf? [*cultuur van het zwijgen*]
 - Hoe zien **anderen** jou? (coach, andere spelers, vrienden, ouders, leerkrachten)
 - Hoe kijken spelers, coaches en ouders van **andere teams** naar jullie? Ervaringen?
- **Zijn jouw ouders betrokken bij het basketbal?** Steunen ze jou? Voldoende? Willen?
- **Kan je de wijk eens omschrijven waar de je woont en bent opgegroeid?**
 - **Wat vind je van die wijk?** Woon jij er graag? **Waarom wel/niet? Veranderen?**
 - positief / neutraal / negatief [*maatschappelijk kwetsbare (thuis)situaties, cultuur van het zwijgen, 'problem posing' en mate van 'bewustzijn'/'conscientization'*]
- **Heb je een bepaalde droom die je voor jezelf ziet?** [*cultuur van het zwijgen (fatalisme) vs hoop*]
 - Stel dat jij burgemeester was, wat zou jij doen zodat je die droom kan realiseren?
 - **Men zegt soms dat "sportclubs (in het algemeen) een rol kunnen spelen in jongeren een betere toekomst te geven"** → geloof jij dat? Waarom wel/niet?
- **Vertel eens over jouw relatie met Ron/de coach(es)?** [*dialogisch, reflectie en actie (praxis)?*]
 - Hoe is hij/zij als **persoon**? (persoonlijkheid) [meerdere coaches mogelijk]
 - Beschrijf eens een doordeweekse **training**? → **Op welke manier** geeft hij/zij coaching? Hoe is zijn/haar **stijl**? Waar focust hij/zij op tijdens training? Wat **doen** jullie ervoor en/of na?
 - Beschrijf eens een **matchdag**? → Op welke manier geeft hij/zij coaching? Hoe is zijn/haar **stijl**? Waar focust hij/zij op tijdens de match? Wat doen jullie voor en/of na de match?
 - Doen jullie nog **andere activiteiten** buiten trainen en matches? Hoe gaat de coach dan met jullie om? Wat doen jullie dan allemaal?
 - Welke **emoties** zie je vaak ontstaan op de club? Hoe gaat de coach daarmee om?
 - Vind je het **nodig** dat een club meer doet dan enkel op sportieve prestatie te focussen? Dus ook op het sociale zaken focust. Waarom wel/niet?
- **Vertel eens over jouw relatie(s) met de andere spelers?**
- **Zijn er ook andere mensen op de club die geen speler of coach zijn?**
 - Wie? [*bv. vrijwilligers, ouders, partners van de club*] Hoe is jouw contact/relatie met hen?
- **Voel je je ondersteund door de club/coach? Met betrekking tot wat dan? Op welke manier?**

- Welke zaken vind je **goed** aan de club? Waarom **komen en blijven** jongeren hier sporten?
- Welke zaken vind je **minder goed** aan de club? Wat **ontbreekt** er volgens jou?
- Op welke manier zou de club jou het **best** kunnen ondersteunen?
- Is dat haalbaar denk je? Kan een club of de coach dit doen? Waarom wel/niet?
- **Denk je dat door hier te komen sporten (!) sommige zaken in jouw leven veranderd zijn?**
 - Mbt **jezelf**? Welke verandering? Komt dit dan door (het sporten in) de club?
 - [geloven in jezelf en zelfvertrouwen?]
 - Mbt **anderen**? Welke verandering? Komt dit dan door de club?
 - Mbt bepaalde **plaatsen** waar je komt (bv. school, thuis, ... en contacten)? Welke verandering? Komt dit dan door de club?
 - De club op zich als '**open club**' voor jullie (vs andere clubs binnen VBL)?
 - Andere veranderingen? ...
- **Zijn er nog zaken die je wil zeggen?** Vragen die je hebt?
 - Een boodschap aan de burgemeester/schepenen van sport?

Appendix 5: interview guide sharing circle young people (chapter 3)

- **Introductie: 'deelkring'**
 - Deelkringen zijn bedoeld om op een respectvolle, zorgzame manier jongeren toe te laten een aantal zaken te gaan 'delen' (ervaringen, meningen, perspectieven, etc.) in een kring. Een deelkring wordt meestal geleid door een (of twee) overeengekomen facilitator(s).
 - Welke regels? -> Communicatie? Mening durven geven? Iedereen mening geeft? (bv. bal doorgeven)
- **Algemene vragen**
 - Vertrouwen (in coach Ron) → hoe komt zo iets stand? Vanaf wanneer vertrouw je iemand?
- **Ik heb al een paar keer met Ron gepraat en een van de dingen die vaak terugkomt is dat er wordt geprobeerd om jullie over verschillende zaken te doen nadenken/reflecteren.** Daar wil ik graag meer over weten, wanneer dat gebeurt, hoe dat dan gebeurt, enz.
 - Ik wil graag dat je eens nadenkt of er dit voorbij seizoen een moment is (of momenten zijn) geweest waarbij je **over jezelf** (gedrag, emoties, andere zaken) hebt nagedacht/gereflecteerd door hier bij Wolf Pack te sporten (en aanwezig te zijn)
 - Ja/nee, indien ja: even aanduiden op board
 - Over wat gaat dit denken over jezelf?
 - Vinden je het **nodig** dat je soms wordt aangezet om over jezelf na te denken?
 - Kunnen jullie aangeven op **welke manier jullie met elkaar omgaan bij de Wolf Pack?**
 - ...
 - Wat leren jullie hier allemaal?
 - Leren jullie dit ook op school? Thuis? ...
 - Denken jullie daar vaak in team over na hoe jullie als team met elkaar omgaan?
 - Zien jullie die **manier van met elkaar omgaan terugkomen in de samenleving (buiten de club)?**
 - Ja/nee? ...
 - Vinden jullie het leuk om activiteiten te doen zoals:
 - Bv. coach Carter (racisme)
 - Bv. ontmoeting met straatkinderen Bolivia / ...
 - Wat doet dit met jullie?
 - Zijn er andere thema's waar jullie soms zorgen over maken?
 - Bv. suikerfeest op school feestdag van maken?
 - Andere? Bv. armoede? Dat niet iedereen altijd even veel kansen krijgt?
 - Vinden je het **nodig** dat je soms wordt aangezet om over de zo'n zaken (m.b.t. de samenleving) na te denken?

Biography



Zeno Nols (Born on 28 November 1986 in Antwerp) obtained a Master in Sociology at the University of Antwerp in 2009 and a Postgraduate in Sports Management at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2010. In 2010, he started working as a social researcher at the research group Sport & Society (Vrije Universiteit Brussel). He has worked on various research projects on the social added value of sport with regard to participation, development, employment, detention, social integration and inclusion, and critical citizenship. In 2014, he started a doctoral study on 'Social change through sports-for-development initiatives' from a critical sociological and pedagogical perspective. Within this study, he investigated how and to what extent urban sport for development (SfD) initiatives can contribute to development and social change, and how this can be monitored, evaluated and supported.



Photo of the Wolf Pack Basketball Club U16, 2017

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SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES. A CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Within our cities, a substantial proportion of young people are still growing up in socially vulnerable situations, with the risk of social exclusion from various institutions such as education, leisure time and the labour market. It is increasingly assumed that sport can be a means to reach these young people and 'work' with them. The rhetoric, policy measures and wide range of initiatives that use sport for development and social change can be accommodated within the term 'sport for development' (SfD). However, underlying the dominant SfD discourse, there are a number of problematic assumptions that corresponds with the broader societal discourses about these young people, their problems and their needs. An accurate needs analysis is, nevertheless, essential for an effective and efficient approach to the problems that young people face, and therefore also through SfD. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that the relationship between sport participation and

positive development depends on a combination of different contextual factors, educational components and pedagogical processes. Since these studies take the broader societal context in which young people find themselves too little into account, this doctoral study departed from a critical sociological perspective in order to examine how and to what extent SfD initiatives can contribute to development and social change and in what way this can be monitored, evaluated and supported.

Within this study, Zeno Nols worked together with six urban SfD initiatives from Brussels, Antwerp and Genk: Brussels Boxing Academy, Brussels Jiu-Jitsu Academy, Antwerp Wolf Pack, City Pirates Antwerp, Kras Sport Antwerp and Opboksen Genk. These initiatives are experts in the field of sport for development and should be recognised for it.

The research unit Sport & Society (SASO) focuses on the study of developmental, societal and policy-related issues regarding sport involvement of various segments of the population (e.g., youth, elderly, people with disabilities). These issues relate to sport participation within different contexts (i.e., organised, informal and alternatively organised sport) and levels (i.e., grass root and elite sport). SASO has advanced theories and methodologies with regard to the measurement, development and enhancement of the processes and performances of sport policy and sport organizations. In relation to grass root level sport, SASO has developed a special interest in studying individual and social meanings of sport participation among specific 'target' groups (e.g., socially deprived youth, ethnic minorities). This interest originally resulted in conducting primarily applied and policy preparing research.