



# Mobilising non-participant youth: using sport and culture in local government policy to target social exclusion

David Ekholm & Sofia Lindström Sol

To cite this article: David Ekholm & Sofia Lindström Sol (2019): Mobilising non-participant youth: using sport and culture in local government policy to target social exclusion, International Journal of Cultural Policy, DOI: [10.1080/10286632.2019.1595607](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2019.1595607)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2019.1595607>



© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 28 Mar 2019.



Submit your article to this journal 



Article views: 279



View Crossmark data 

ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS



# Mobilising non-participant youth: using sport and culture in local government policy to target social exclusion

David Ekholm <sup>a</sup> and Sofia Lindström Sol <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Centre for Municipality Studies, Linköping University, Norrköping, Sweden; <sup>b</sup>Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Borås, Borås, Sweden

## ABSTRACT

The role of sport and cultural practices in policy initiatives tends to be assessed in both cases in terms of their assumed social benefits. However, the areas of sport and culture are often understood separately in research. Through an analysis of interviews with key local policy-makers and civil servants in two Swedish municipalities, the aim of this article is to explore how sport and culture are formed as means to promote social policy objectives regarding young people. In addition, we reflect on the political significance of this in relation to the development of local policy. The analysis demonstrates how a discourse of urban segregation and unequal opportunities underpins actions to mobilise non-participant and at-risk youth. This is achieved by establishing centres for sport and culture, and by enabling an educational approach which focuses on participation, empowerment and good citizenship. Reasons for mobilising practices involving culture and sport overlap, though each area of policy appears to be differently underpinned by discourses of *enlightenment* and *conformity*. Differences in emphasis between the discourses on sport and culture are discussed in relation to scientific discourse on the social utility of each policy area.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 September 2018

Accepted 12 March 2019

## KEYWORDS

Participation; culture; sport; young people; social exclusion

## Introduction

Policies involving sport and culture share common features. Practices in both areas have historically been assessed in relation to the potential benefits for individuals and society in general, such as health and fostering a democratic environment (Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Long and Bianchini 2018; Miles and Sullivan 2012). Some states, such as the UK, organise sport and culture policy within the same government departments (Long and Bianchini 2018), and in 2019 Sweden also established a government department for sport, culture and democracy at national level. Importantly, at a local level, many Swedish municipalities combine the two areas under the same policy committees, boards and administrations (Karlsson 2003).

However, the areas of sport and culture are seldom analysed jointly in research, with some notable exceptions (Hallmann et al. 2017; Long and Bianchini 2018; Miles and Sullivan 2012; Norberg 2008; Trondman and Lund 2008). There is a need for greater knowledge on the relationship between sport and culture in terms of policy, as policy-makers pay increasing attention to their use in facilitating social policy objectives, particularly in terms of combatting social exclusion in young people (Belfiore 2002; Coalter 2007; Preston 2011; Rimmer 2009). (See, for example, the importance of young people as a target group in the aims of national cultural policy in Sweden,

**CONTACT** Sofia Lindström Sol [sofia.lindstrom@hb.se](mailto:sofia.lindstrom@hb.se) Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Borås, Borås, Sweden

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Proposition 2009/10:3, and the political objectives of sport participation; SOU 2008:59). Given the ambitious expectations invested in sport and culture activities in terms of social objectives, it is important to understand the rationale of decision-making in policy, i.e. how these objectives are articulated, constructed and legitimised. The aim of this article is to examine how sport and culture are used as ways of promoting certain policy objectives, particularly with respect to youth participation and social exclusion/inclusion, in the context of Swedish policy. In the article, we demonstrate how sport and culture policy share a variety of common grounds but also different rationalities, important to note to understand as well as (re-)develop policy with respect to wider social policy objectives.

## **Policy context**

Sweden is an interesting case for analysis in terms of how sport and culture have become used to achieve different social objectives in national and local policy (Johannesson 2018; Norberg 2008). In Scandinavia, both sport (Norberg 2004) and cultural policy (Duelund 2008; Mangset and Hylland 2017) were developed in the post-WW2 era in tandem with the expansion of the welfare state. It was considered pivotal for governments to support sport and cultural practices in a variety of ways, and at the same time maintain a principle of arm's length in terms of state influence over the allocation of funding (Duelund 2008; Johannesson 2018), guaranteeing the relative autonomy of associations and federations (Norberg 2004). Historically, these concepts were intertwined in political agendas on national improvements, to form active, resilient and disciplined bodies (Lindroth 1988) through sport and democratic participation (Norberg 2004), integration and public health (SOU 2008:59). The value of culture and the arts lay primarily in their ability to educate, enlighten and civilise people (Duelund 2008; Skot-Hansen 2005). The main objectives for cultural policy in Sweden remain 'to support endeavours in literature, the performing arts, visual arts, music and cultural heritage' (Proposition 2009/10:3, 12). This policy definition of culture, which relates largely to the arts, will be used throughout this article.

A transformation in government thinking on welfare has prompted renegotiation in both policy areas in terms of the implicit and explicit principles involving the autonomy of civil society and an arm's length approach by government (Duelund 2008; Mangset and Hylland 2017; Norberg 2011). In the 1990s, as well as in times of austerity, governments increasingly justified state spending on culture in economic and social terms (Mangset and Hylland 2017). They have progressively formalised an expectation that sport and cultural organisations should act as tools for achieving social objectives (Duelund 2008; Johannesson 2018; Norberg 2011). In terms of sport, there has been a debate about the use of civil society as an instrument of government, and about sport associations being expected to implement social policy objectives (Fahlén and Stenling 2016). As in many other nations, cultural policy in Sweden is marked by tension between the intrinsic and the instrumental value of the arts (Belfiore and Bennett 2008). However, the greater tendency to link cultural and sport policy to the rest of society at local level (Johannesson 2018) makes local policy an interesting area for investigative research on issues around the value of both sport and culture.

## **Literature review**

Sports-based interventions targeting objectives for social inclusion are an integral part of welfare provision in contemporary welfare states today (Coakley 2011; Coalter 2015). On the one hand, interventions have primarily focused on education for empowerment, which fosters active and responsible citizens (Coalter 2007; Lawson 2005), using sport as a hook (Nichols 2007), and on the other hand they have been based on social relations and community development (Lawson 2005). This has been highlighted particularly with respect to deprived and excluded residential areas (Dacombe 2013). However, research also suggests that sports-based social interventions at best compensate for the challenges of segregation (cf. Coakley 2011; Coalter 2015; Ekholm 2018), based

on vague assumptions rather than empirical evidence (Coakley 2011; Coalter 2015), sometimes even reinforcing racial and social hierarchies (Long, Hylton, and Spracklen 2014).

The issue of the benefits of using the arts in other fields has always been fraught with controversy (Blomgren 2012). Cultural policy nevertheless claims that the (allegedly) social and/or economic impact of the arts is legitimate (Duelund 2008; Skot-Hansen 2005; Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Bonet and Negríer 2018). Young people, especially those 'at-risk' of social exclusion, are targeted in cultural policy (Eriksson 2016; Johansson and Hultgren 2015; Gibson and Edwards 2016). Two literature reviews on the impact on arts regarding young people have suggested that participation in the arts outside formal education or clinical settings can lead to personal and social benefits for adolescents, including improved health and well-being, social skills (Daykin et al. 2008), self-esteem and relationship building (Zarobe and Bungay 2017). However, many case studies lacked methodological rigor and some researchers even question whether it is possible to develop methodologies capable of measuring the impact of the arts (Belfiore 2002; Belfiore and Bennett 2008). Culture and arts-based interventions may well facilitate emotional well-being, but the question of underlying structures relating to exclusion remain unanswered (Merli 2010; Preston 2011).

Sport and culture practices are considered fundamentally competitive, though sometimes complementary ontologies are highlighted (Mumford 2018). Sport is characterised by competition, whereas culture and the arts are underpinned by aesthetics. On the other hand, sport practices are also seen as being slightly indeterminate and involving a level of performance which is often ascribed to arts and culture. Norberg (2008) notes similarities in the activities, such as a dynamic between the professional and the amateur, and the elite and the popular, as well as the way in which both culture and sport are often commercialised where other areas rely on public subsidy. Participation in sport and involvement in culture are usually studied as separate domains, even though these activities dominate leisure time for most young people and are often interrelated in terms of government bodies and administration (cf. Hallmann et al. 2017; Long and Bianchini 2018; Trondman and Lund 2008). Accordingly, these domains of leisure activity could benefit from being explored in relation to one another (Miles and Sullivan 2012).

Long and Bianchini (2018) spotlight policy-led attempts in the UK to bring sport and the arts closer together, though they conclude that the two policy areas are largely distinct in practice. There are certain similarities in the discourse they analyse, particularly in terms of the way social benefits are understood, and this 'appears to reaffirm the view that "art for art's sake" or "sport for sport's sake" is no longer sufficient, in and of itself, to warrant public funding' (Long and Bianchini 2018:9). Long and Bianchini (2018) see potential for further integration of arts and sport practices, particularly in terms of contributing to community development and public health. However, 'the way in which differences between "sport" and "the arts" are reinforced by the strategies [they] have examined does not bode well for efforts to integrate the two' (Long and Bianchini 2018,17). Examples include a study by Chatziefstathiou, Iliopoulou, and Magkou (2018) on the use of a combination of sport and the arts to achieve social objectives involving reclaiming urban space and the urban environment as a common resource for all.

## **Empirical material**

This article is based on interviews with policy-makers, municipal administrators and civil servants working in policy aspects of sport and culture on the one hand, and in municipal administration ('City East' and 'City West' municipalities) on the other.

Firstly, youth participation and policy are examined with reference to discourse on sport practices in the City East municipality. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from the municipality's Culture and Leisure Affairs Committee (in terms of political management) and its Department of Culture and Leisure (in terms of administration). In the City West municipality, discourse on cultural practices and policy were explored. Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from the Cultural Affairs Committee and the Cultural

Affairs Administration. Respondents were selected in both municipalities on the basis of their central position in local policy-making or administration, and because they were the most informed about the policy work conducted.

The general theme of the interviews focused on how sport and culture were perceived and used to fulfil policy objectives, how the informants attempted to approach marginalised groups and how participation was seen as a policy objective for young people in so-called areas of exclusion. Similar interview guides were used at both sites of investigation, structured around the following themes: (a) descriptions of local policy objectives, (b) descriptions of the target groups of young people and local areas, and (c) descriptions of sport and culture as a means of social inclusion and participation. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The two sites of investigation were selected for their particularly ambitious policies in terms of making use of sport and culture to fulfil objectives involving civic participation and social inclusion. In 2018, the City East municipality approved a flagship 'sport policy programme' (sanctioned by the Board of Culture and Leisure Affairs and the Municipal Council). The overarching objective of the municipal sport programme is to 'advance physical activity and movement', focusing on 'democracy and participation in an inclusive and including society'. The programme highlights two policy objectives: gender equality and social inclusion. These objectives are explicitly framed with respect to democratic ideals and standards of social justice. In this sense, sport is understood as an arena where democracy is enacted and used as a vehicle for encouraging democratic participation, gender equality and social inclusion. The programme applies to the broad population in general, but particularly targets 'children and youth, age 7–20, with underprivileged socioeconomic conditions' and 'girls, age 7–20, with a non-Nordic background'.

The City West municipality explained its cultural policy goals in relation to social policy ambitions, emphasising the importance of enabling young people to influence and participate in culture, and linking the value of culture to its ability to 'foster social cohesion and trust' and strengthen 'democratic values and equality'. For example, the municipal council had carried out a plan to improve equality, based on a number of investigations into issues of social, economic and health segregation in the city, where culture formed part of the proposed solutions to these issues, specifically targeting young people deemed at risk of social problems and exclusion. The municipality has a history of formulating cultural policy on the basis of cultural policy research and was the first in the country to implement cultural planning, which sees publicly funded culture as an aspect of the more general social policy of the city.

Thus, the two municipalities represent ambitious objectives in terms of sport and culture as vehicles for promoting democratic ideals and social inclusion. This article does not analyse the policy documentation itself, but the documents serve as background and were used as criteria for selecting empirical material. The focus instead is on analysing how social policy is developed in practice through the norms, knowledge and actions of policy-makers and administrations in the two municipalities.

## **Theoretical and methodological framework**

Research on social policy and political administration often focuses on formal documents and regulations. This type of policy is often articulated as solutions to a specific problem, prescribing actions which must be implemented (cf. Bacchi 2009; Wedel et al. 2005). Inspired by anthropological (Wedel et al. 2005) and constructionist (or post-structuralist) (Bacchi 2009) perspectives, this article takes an alternative approach.

We consider social policy and administration as processes where a number of different actors work together to create policy in practice, with an analytical focus on how practices arise and appear (Wedel et al. 2005). Accordingly, the scope of the research extends to how practitioners involved in policy work construct meaning. The activities in question aim to develop social inclusion and contribute other kinds of social benefits to society, individuals or groups of individuals. Articulation of policy, viewed as discourse, can be implicit or explicit, though it is imbued with notions about the problems it targets and the

objectives of social change. Here, discourse refers to knowledge as a productive force, forming institutions or social norms (Bacchi 2009). This means that social problems and technologies of governing social change, which are carried out as ‘solutions’, are underpinned by a certain rationality inherent in how policy is articulated, and which is subject to analysis. Therefore, the meaning and understanding of how solutions are expressed in this pronounced form of politics, administration and activity need to be investigated in the form of immediate descriptions (cf. Bacchi 2009). When it comes to promoting participation and social inclusion as a focus for policy and solutions to social problems, the concept of ‘mobilisation’ has analytical significance. It highlights how certain individuals are grouped (displaced and reassembled) and given opportunities to participate, as well as how the aspirations of individual subjects are encouraged and manipulated (cf. Callon 1986; Edwards 2002). The current investigation recognises and makes use of this conceptual approach in analysing the discourse and rationality of sport and culture in local policy.

### ***Analytical procedures***

In practice, the analysis was conducted in three interrelated steps. First, a thematic analysis (cf. Braun and Clarke 2006) was conducted, based on the empirical descriptions provided in interviews, and informed by the theoretical concepts of problematisation and rationalities of governing. Five different themes were constructed, spotlighting various areas of local policy discourse. Second, the discourse of each theme was interpreted and analysed, based on the analytical concepts presented. This analysis succeeded in highlighting a range of similar and overlapping topics involving implicit and explicit notions of mobilisation, which constitute a discursive rationality in terms of mobilising young people. This means that in this step, interpretations were theoretically guided by the analytical concepts in question. Third, the policy areas were analysed systematically in relation to each other, to clarify similarities and differences in the ways problems and solutions are rationalised.

## **Results and analysis**

From the empirical material analysed, certain descriptions of the problems and proposed solutions recur. Interestingly, these descriptions overlap between the two policy areas, sport and culture, and between the two contexts examined. Accordingly, the discourse from both policy areas displays certain similarities. This section is divided into five subsections covering the most important themes analysed. These involve how segregation in the city leads to unequal access to sport and culture/the arts, the importance of mobilising young people who do not participate, the activities and meeting places promoted to address problems of non-participation and segregation, how education for empowerment and citizen formation is enabled, and how mobilisation is understood in each of the two policy areas.

### ***Problematising the segregated city and the supply of sport and cultural practices***

A point of departure for articulating policy in both policy areas involves segregation in the Swedish urban landscape, which leads to unequal access to sport and cultural practices and activities. In the following excerpt, the Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs in City West elaborates on the challenges of urban segregation and unequal opportunities for young people and suggests that culture has a role in alleviating the problem.

It's clear that we live in one of the most segregated cities in the country [...] I mean, these divisions (between rich and poor areas) have worsened [...] and here, culture is important (Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs, City West).

Accordingly, segregation underpins unequal opportunities, which affect perceptions of who culture is for, and who has access to a sense of belonging, i.e. inclusion and exclusion in terms of cultural institutions in the city. This problematisation also applies to City East with respect to the

importance of sport, where it was highlighted that segregation could lead to a loss of 'confidence and hope when many people in vulnerable situations live in the same area ... it tends to spread' (Chair of Culture and Leisure Affairs Committee, City East). Apart from leading to unequal living conditions, the effects of segregation emphasised in these articulations generate the risk of inaction resulting from feelings of hopelessness and limited access to opportunities for participating in sport and cultural practices.

In the following excerpts, the respondent highlights how limited supply of opportunities to practice is a question which needs to be addressed by political administrations.

In most areas, if you want to play football, it's clear. You go to this club, you turn to this place and you meet these people. But here, the conditions are so deprived, which is why we need to assure equal possibilities in these areas in relation to other areas. Each area has its conditions, but here we need to step in and provide support (City District Coordinator, City East).

Because local sport organisations, and the practices provided by them, suffer from deprivation, municipal agencies need to support and facilitate sport participation and engage community actors in terms of collaboration. In all these excerpts, articulations make it clear that residential areas in the urban periphery are particularly vulnerable and challenged, and this is put forward as a framework for interpreting the solutions involving sport and cultural activities proposed by the municipality.

### ***Mobilising participants***

The general objective of both sport and cultural practices is articulated in terms of mobilising the young people who do not participate. Although participation does not generally have a fixed meaning, it is recurrently seen as a core objective of sport and cultural practices. Civil servants repeatedly mentioned that there were certain groups of young people it was important to engage in sport and cultural practices, for a variety of reasons. The civil servants also noted that these groups were difficult to reach. In the following excerpt about cultural practices, the manager of a museum unit explains the importance and significance of encouraging certain target groups to participate.

It's imperative to retrieve the voices of the suburbs as well as those of other areas, but especially those without opportunities ... [...] We speak of participation in terms of, well, disabilities, or the suburban 'new Swedes'. These are the ones you ... I associate participation with. These are the people we need to reach, these are the problems we need to alleviate [...]. In these suburban areas, young people and children are the main target groups (Head of Museum Unit, Cultural Affairs Department, City West).

The civil servant expresses the importance of the perspectives of these groups. Integrating 'their' perspectives fits well into the general aspiration of involving these groups of young people in cultural practices. A similar point is made with respect to sport practices, that young people could prosper in groups in civil society and that, ideally, the role of the municipality should be to facilitate entry into meaningful leisure activities, as indicated in the following excerpt:

Many of them would improve their lives if they participated and got involved in an association. The municipality needs to act in a range of ways for that to happen; we need to support the right things. [...] The purpose is to involve as many as possible to become active members of associations. But people never get there if you don't create a point of entry (Civil servant, Department of Municipal Affairs, City East).

Here, public and municipal administration explicitly provides a means of *breaking into* practices. In other words, breaking in means a way of accessing the world outside from the segregated area, combatting the conditions of life in the area and using sport as a bridge into education, employment or inclusion in other aspects of city life.

### **Providing activities and meeting places**

To address the kind of problematisation outlined above, and to mobilise non-participant youth, several necessary measures are highlighted in the discourse. These involve offering facilities such as activities and spaces and opening opportunities for participation and involvement in culture or sport. Here, key elements are considered to include involvement in and collaboration with civil society, mobilising peers within groups of young people in a semi-professional capacity and making certain 'houses' available.

Mobilising young people can make them the subject of educational interventions, which will be considered in more detail in the next subsection. In the case of both sport and cultural practices, the involvement of civil society in approaching young people and encouraging them to participate is described as a key prerequisite if they are to take an active role. In the following excerpt, the Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee in City West describes the effectiveness of actors from civil society and the community in relation to the limited potential of public agencies.

Culture is important ... culture, sports, civil society ... especially all the voluntary actors in [City West], civil ... society, civic organisations. They are imperative. We need to cooperate with these actors, as the municipality may not always reach families in most need of help with their kids. Civil society does or could ... perhaps a Somali association that could get in contact with the mothers (Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee, City West).

According to this excerpt, local associations are positioned as a bridge between society and families/children. Consequently, municipal administration needs to form a bridge between civil society and community actors. In this way, the political rationality of social inclusion guides outreach from municipal government to civil society, to families and children (or the other way around: children and families), (cf. AUTHOR). In other words, sports associations may constitute one of these ways of bridging interaction and can be utilised as a means of integration for instance. The following excerpt on sport highlights the aim of supporting local associations.

An association struggling to attract boys and girls with ethnic backgrounds can apply for additional funding to incorporate ... well, under-represented groups, simply [...] If you do it correctly, sports can be a great force to be reckoned with ... if it's done correctly, under the right conditions, with the right leaders who are properly trained ... if it's a long-term ambition ... then it can be a great way of integrating people into an organisation. I'm convinced this is the case. [...] A municipal objective is to help associations incorporate these groups of people in different ways (Civil servant, Department of Culture and Leisure, City East).

Public agencies are able to provide opportunities directly in terms of making facilities available, and they can support local associations in providing access to practice. An important aspect of this endeavour involves making use of semi-professional peers in groups of young people to act as facilitators for sport and cultural practices. Another means of approaching young people is to engage them directly, for example by employing them in organised activities, allowing them to form a bridge between young people and municipal administration or institutions. Involving young people in a semi-professional capacity in culture and sport activities helps keep the institutions 'in sync' with their target group and helps them continue to be relevant. In the following excerpt, this is discussed by a civil servant working in a cultural venue for young people in City West.

An idea was hatched [...] to employ young 'ambassadors', with the job of speaking to other adolescents about the opening of a cultural venue somewhere in the city centre, to talk about what the venue should do. We employed 20, no, 19 young people who worked for six months, and went out into every part of the city, to schools and recreation centres, town squares and clubs, various places (Former Head of Unit 2, Cultural Venue for Young People, City West).

Here, peers were employed as 'ambassadors', using their experience and identity in the communities as a means of approaching and involving other young people in sport and culture practices. In particular, the ambassadors and their contribution were expected to enrol and engage young

people in the ‘house of culture’ and encourage them to participate in practices there. In a similar way, peers were deployed as agents in terms of mobilising sport practices. In the following excerpt, a civil servant describes how the administration facilitates ‘self-organisation’ (In Swedish, ‘egenorganisering’ has a connotation of empowerment and responsibility) particularly through engaged peers.

Our ambition is to open the eyes of the young people .. [the area]. [...] We want them to be aware of the opportunities. Through cooperation and self-organisation, we create different kinds of activities, including sports. There’s a guy here who’s started a youth association through us .. with the aim of playing basketball two hours a week. It’s an open basketball practice on Saturdays, where he and the local youth association take on young people who want to participate in basketball without competing (Civil Servant and Youth Centre Recreation Leader, Department of Culture and Leisure, City East).

In this excerpt, a young person assumed responsibility for organising basketball practice within the realm of organised leisure, supported and facilitated by the municipal administration. In turn, promoting and supporting the activity made it possible to fulfil aspirations in terms of mobilising young people.

Most notably, with regard to mobilising young people, ideas around providing spaces – a ‘house’ or ‘houses’ – recur in statements. Administrations are anxious to provide this type of space to mobilise young people and enable them to participate in sport and culture. In the following excerpt, the idea of providing a building is commensurate with concepts involving the perspectives of young people and organising activities on their terms, according to their interests.

Who defines culture? It needs to be a venue for all, regardless of people’s financial situation, regardless of where in the city they’re from – and that’s the point; young people are deciding what takes place in that venue. Adults are not the ones who decide. Adults should not do *for* young people; young people should do things for themselves (Former Head of Unit 1, Youth Culture House, City West).

In other words, the political ambitions are very clear in terms of sourcing buildings for mobilising young people and including them socially by providing a specific location for cultural practices. In addition, with respect to sport, an ‘all-activity house’ could potentially provide a venue for local associations and sport practices organised by young people themselves. Here, the ‘house’ is promoted as a meeting place and platform for democratic development, in addition to a place for sports associations.

When we finish this activity house ... this is difficult, you can’t say otherwise. But if we get it to run the way we want it to, with a library, which is a democratic platform from which we’ll work with this new concept, this democratic platform, to ‘pull’ people into the area, I believe we’ll be able to teach them about democracy, teaching them their democratic rights and all that. But also, the conclave of associations and municipal leisure activities, such as the studios, can help guarantee that meetings will take place (Chair of Culture and Leisure Affairs Committee, City East).

Here, the building in question becomes a platform for giving the municipality a very visible presence in terms of introducing democratic values and notions, bringing them to the fore in excluded areas, and training the residents in these values. In other words, there is an assumption that the residents (as well as the residential area) lack these competences. Even, in the above excerpt, the house is presented as a meeting place for both sport and cultural practices, yet municipalities differ in whether they wish to create spaces for ‘general activities’ or meeting spaces, or more specific ‘cultural activities’.

### ***Enabling education and citizen formation***

Importantly, educational interventions are enabled when they approach young people and mobilise them to participate in sport and culture. Both these practices are understood to have educational potential, forming and shaping the behaviour of young people. The following excerpts describe the role of pedagogy within sport and cultural practices. In terms of cultural practices, the Head of the Museum Sector in City West makes it clear that the more prominent position of education and learning

in the museums is a consequence of the fact that it is 'political directives that are important. There is a greater focus on young people and children; they are clearly a targeted group, especially in deprived areas' (Head of Museum Sector, City West). The importance of cultural participation could even be understood in terms of managing risks and dangers in deprived urban areas in segregated cities. The Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee stresses that 'we face the risk of, we risk losing these children that might end up in destructive environments, in drug abuse or criminal gangs ... violence' (Chair of Cultural Affairs Committee, City West). This involves a preventative role for education, preventing future problems through individual learning arrangements, through cultural practices for example. The Chair of the Cultural Committee suggests that providing young people with 'the opportunity to play the violin or guitar or something can open a door for them'. In addition, the rationality in providing cultural practices and sport involves concepts of socialisation and developing certain competences, which are also a form of learning. In the following excerpts, the educational focus is on personal development through participation in practices.

I really believe in, and focus on, self-fulfilment (in young individuals). I try to take notice if any young person is busy doing something here – drawing or discussing a topic – I try to highlight their interest: "Tell me more. What is this about? How about doing an exhibition here at the library? It won't cost you anything!" (Educator, City Library, City West).

This orientation towards education and empowerment is also highlighted in the following excerpt, with respect to participation in sport.

Here, we believe strongly in self-organisation. We notice how each individual grows. It's about empowerment ... really taking responsibility for their own leisure time. If you give them these opportunities .. to become a leader or to take the stage during a DJ-event or whatever, they grow as individuals. This self-organisation is instrumental (Civil Servant and Youth Centre Recreation Leader, Administration of Culture and Leisure, City East).

Here, self-realisation and empowerment stand out as the dominant rationality behind personal development and learning. Having the opportunity to be responsible for carrying out activities, as well as taking an active part in them, is seen as an important virtue in young people. Public administrations can therefore facilitate this by providing the right opportunities for these educational strategies in terms of culture and sport.

### ***Legitimisation and/or instrumentality***

Sport and cultural practices can each be understood as instruments of local policy objectives. This raises an interesting difference. The civil servants in the cultural institutions stressed the importance of marginalised groups, especially young people from deprived areas, participating in their activities to keep them relevant and to further legitimise city institutions. Differences in the discourse in terms of the importance of youth participation in sport activities involve the extent to which it is considered a prerequisite for becoming a relevant citizen.

Civil servants speak of the importance of self-realisation through engaging in sport and cultural practices, but the discourse on participation in sport tends to take the issue further and frame self-realisation as a step towards moving into higher education and employment. Civil servants in the cultural sector are reluctant to instrumentalise their activities in this way. Instead, self-realisation becomes a goal in itself. In the following excerpt, a museum unit manager explains how persuading young people to participate becomes a way of legitimising cultural practices in the city. In this excerpt, he answers a question about what will happen if they do not manage to engage non-participant and marginalised youth.

You do the future a disservice, and the users (of the museum) a disservice, and yourself, because you've made yourself irrelevant! I really think so [...] No, we need to change, to evolve, otherwise we're dead, and we might as well close (Museum Unit Manager, City West).

Here, the participation of marginalised young people who do not normally participate is a way of ensuring meaningful, relevant activity and by extension, the survival of the institution. Incorporating new target groups into the museum's activities has enabled the institution to 'gain new perspectives and new insights' (Museum Manager, City West), and given it a way to remain relevant, which is important for accessing public financial support.

Sport practices, on the other hand, are considered relevant as an instrument for empowerment, self-realisation and competences which help improve or escape current (poor) living conditions and positions of marginalisation. Sport participation is thus a platform for change.

We're trying to get them to lead an activity, to engage them in arrangements and associations [...] If you have meaningful leisure time, you improve your well-being, and so a lot of other things work better for you ... And more specifically, you can go on to study and work and so on (Civil Servant and Youth Centre Recreation Leader, Department of Culture and Leisure, City East).

Here, the respondent spells out her view of how sport and leisure activities she organises herself can help access opportunities outside her current location and help her to 'go on' to study and work. In this sense, mobilising young people is, and is considered to be, important in terms of including them in both sport practices and society as a whole. It is important to note that inclusion in society involves gaining access to environments and opportunities *outside* the suburban area of deprivation and marginalisation.

## Discussion

Sport and culture share a variety of common features. Both are considered to contribute to alleviating social issues such as inequality and are targeted in policy for their alleged ability to strengthen democratic values, issues which are especially important in terms of young people in the city. However, policy for sport and policy for culture are seldom analysed together in research. The aim of this article is to examine how sport and culture are seen as a solution to policy problems, particularly with respect to youth participation and social exclusion/inclusion, in the context of Swedish policy. Given the limited scope of the observation and analysis, involving only two municipalities in a single country, there is a case for more empirical exploration in other political and geographical contexts. This study has nevertheless delivered important findings which provide a nuanced understanding of sport and culture as instruments of policy.

The analysis generated some common themes with respect to how social change is problematised, and how solutions are suggested in both sport and culture as policy areas. In this sense, social segregation is constructed as leading to exclusion and limited opportunities for participation, so that participation in sport and culture could help include young people, especially if practices are supported or maintained by the municipality. In line with this, the main objective in terms of enabling social inclusion involves mobilising young people at risk of not participating. In both policy areas, this is believed to be best achieved by creating spaces and opportunities for engagement in cultural and sport practices. These places and practices can be used as a focus for fulfilling educational aims or as an arena for citizen formation, for instance helping empower young people towards self-realisation.

Interestingly, two differences highlighted by the analysis deserve further attention. One of these involves the degree of instrumentalisation (cf. Fahlén and Stenling 2016; Belfiore and Bennett 2008), and the other concerns educational dimensions of the targets involved in instrumentalisation.

First, some respondents were reluctant to speak of the benefits of cultural participation beyond the immediate experience of pleasure or gaining knowledge and insight from a cultural event. In contrast, other respondents spoke of sport participation in terms of personal gain, and as a means of feeling included in their community/society as a citizen. This is compatible with differences in the rationality of educational policy and echoes a tradition in cultural policy of being reluctant to instrumentalise culture and the arts (Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Blomgren 2012).



Second, the analysis of the discourse highlighted a different emphasis in each of the policy areas in terms of empowerment. Here, we outline a discourse of what we call *enlightenment* in relation to a discourse of *conformism*. Both concepts are well covered in previous literature (cf. Bonet and Négrier 2018; Duelund 2008; Lawson 2005; Skot-Hansen 2005). They are not the only ways in which empowerment is perceived as a vital part of social inclusion strategies, but they are different in terms of *how* they consider it possible to achieve social inclusion. With respect to the discourse on how cultural practices are perceived, enlightenment thinking provides individuals with resources for self-expression and expansion of the mind (cf. Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Skot-Hansen 2005). It is a tool for questioning preconceived notions of the world, and allows individuals *breaking out* from whatever is holding them back, such as the limitations of majority norms in society. In terms of the discourse on how participation in sport can facilitate social inclusion, a conformist model suggests that empowerment provides resources for adapting to the norms of the majority society (geographically and discursively located outside the area of exclusion), with respect to employment and education. This therefore involves *breaking in* to the community of the majority (cf. Ekholm 2018) in terms of valid norms and how the conduct of the majority population is perceived (cf. Long, Hylton, and Spracklen 2014). These rationalities and discourses stand in contrast to each other, indicating that social inclusion could have different meanings and that empowerment could have different purposes. Our analysis underlines how these specific rationalities are linked to each policy area and align with previous knowledge about policy objectives in terms of sport and culture (cf. Bonet and Négrier 2018; Coalter 2007; Duelund 2008; Lindroth 1988).

This paper raises the possibility of overlapping forms of understanding in the sense of potentially seeing cultural practices as an arena for meeting others, for learning and accepting certain societal norms regarding group behaviour, and for understanding oneself as part of a collective. They also involve an opportunity to articulate the potential of sport to promote individual development and question preconceptions about norms, developing individuality and expanding the horizon of the individual body and soul. At the very least, the findings encourage reflection on how enlightenment is downplayed in discourse on sport, and how discourse on conformism is understated in empirical material on culture.

Without making judgements about the relative importance of culture or sport practices for the scope of social policy or policy-making in general, the analysis highlights the fact that mobilising young people as a way of encouraging social inclusion involves a political context and has political meanings (cf. Bacchi 2009; Eriksson 2016; Norberg 2011). Given the disturbing gravity of the problem, it is not difficult to question the potential of culture and sport to meet this enormous challenge (e.g. Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Coakley 2011; Preston 2011). Perhaps the merits of cultural and sport practices need to be evaluated in their own right before they are seen as potential instruments of external social objectives. At the very least, the potential for targeting serious social challenges needs to be assessed, so that expectations in terms of promoting social inclusion are calibrated with the feasible (and sometimes limited) outcomes. Logically, cultural and sport practices both have the potential to provide contexts for personal and social development (cf. Lawson 2005; Long and Bianchini 2018; Miles and Sullivan 2012; Zarobe and Bungay 2017), so it may be attractive to incorporate them into policy objectives. However, neither sport nor cultural practices are designed or used at a structural level to reform society, or to target social exclusion and social problems caused by segregation. This may be a reason for their popularity in (post) political policy (Ekholm 2018). In this respect, and in terms of the common political, historical and institutional context, it is useful to analyse them in relation to each other.

Theoretically, analysing the problematisation and the rationality underpinning how social policy objectives are defined and enacted in practice has made it possible to outline the variety of technologies involved in the mobilisation and education which seem to be facilitating social inclusion. This approach has allowed researchers to outline the ways in which the rationalities of enlightenment and conformity influence how social inclusion is perceived. Analysing sport and cultural policy together can therefore reveal nuances and insights which add to our understanding of sport and culture as a means of promoting social inclusion. This is timely and important in periods of changing relations between

government bodies and sport/cultural practices, where there are even more explicit expectations in terms of the benefits for policy and social inclusion which sport and culture are deemed to bring (cf. Norberg 2011; Duelund 2008). Consequently, sport and culture need to be analysed in relation to the ways they are assessed politically (cf. Long and Bianchini 2018).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributors

**David Ekholm** has a PhD from Linköping University, Sweden. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at Linköping University. Ekholm's main research interests involve social work and social policy in relation to contemporary transformations in the welfare state, with a particular focus on interventions for young people in terms of social inclusion.

**Sofia Lindström Sol** has a PhD from Linköping University, Sweden, and is currently working on postdoctoral research at the University of Borås. Her current research project explores participatory processes and methods in local cultural policy. Her research interests involve arts management, audience development and artistic work.

## Funding

This work was supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences) under grant RMP17-0979:1.

## ORCID

David Ekholm  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6252-9220>

Sofia Lindström Sol  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4331-4950>

## References

- Bacchi, C. 2009. *Analysing Policy*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson.
- Belfiore, E. 2002. "Art as A Means of Alleviating Social Exclusion: Does It Really Work? A Critique of Instrumental Cultural Policies and Social Impact Studies in the UK." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91–106. doi:[10.1080/102866302900324658](https://doi.org/10.1080/102866302900324658).
- Belfiore, E., and O. Bennett. 2008. *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Blomgren, R. 2012. "Autonomy or Democratic Cultural Policy: That Is the Question." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 18 (5): 519–529. doi:[10.1080/10286632.2012.708861](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2012.708861).
- Bonet, L., and E. Négrier. 2018. "The Participative Turn in Cultural Policy: Paradigms, Models, Contexts." *Poetics* 66: 64–73. doi:[10.1016/j.poetic.2018.02.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.02.006).
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. doi:[10.1191/1478088706qp063oa](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa).
- Callon, M. 1986. "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Breiuc Bay." In *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* edited by J. Law, 196–223. London: Routledge.
- Chatziefstathiou, D., E. Iliopoulou, and M. Magkou. 2018. "UrbanDig Project: Sport Practices and Artistic Interventions for Co-Creating Urban Space." *Sport in Society* 1–14. doi:[10.1080/17430437.2018.1430485](https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1430485).
- Coakley, J. 2011. "Youth Sports: What Counts as 'Positive Development'." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 35 (3): 306–324. doi:[10.1177/0193723511417311](https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511417311).
- Coalter, F. 2007. *A Wider Social Role for Sport*. London: Routledge.
- Coalter, F. 2015. "Sport-For-Change: Some Thoughts from a Sceptic." *Social Inclusion* 3 (3): 19–23. doi:[10.17645/si.v3i3.222](https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v3i3.222).
- Dacombe, R. 2013. "Sports Clubs and Civic Inclusion: Rethinking the Poverty of Association." *Sport in Society* 16 (10): 1263–1278. doi:[10.1080/17430437.2013.821252](https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.821252).



- Daykin, N., J. Orme, D. Evans, D. Salmon, M. McEachran, and S. Brain. 2008. "The Impact of Participation in Performing Arts on Adolescent Health and Behaviour: A Systematic Review of the Literature." *Journal of Health Psychology* 13 (2): 251–264. doi:[10.1177/1359105307086699](https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105307086699).
- Duelund, P. 2008. "Nordic Cultural Policies: A Critical View." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 14 (1): 7–24. doi:[10.1080/10286630701856468](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630701856468).
- Edwards, R. 2002. "Mobilizing Lifelong Learning: Governmentality in Educational Practices." *Journal of Education Policy* 17 (3): 353–365. doi:[10.1080/02680930210127603](https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930210127603).
- Ekhholm, D. 2018. "Governing by Means Of Sport for Social Change and Social Inclusion: Demarcating The Domains Of Problematization and Intervention." *Sport in Society* 21 (11): 1777–1794.
- Eriksson, B. 2016. "Taking Part, Sharing Power, or Heading for the Exit? Youth Participation in Cultural, Social and Political Life." In *The Democratic Public Sphere: Current Challenges and Prospects*, edited by H. K. Nielsen, et al., 149–174. Vol. 2016. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Fahlén, J., and C. Stenling. 2016. "Sport Policy in Sweden." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 8 (3): 515–531. doi:[10.1080/19406940.2015.1063530](https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2015.1063530).
- Gibson, L., and D. Edwards. 2016. "Facilitated Participation: Cultural Value, Risk and the Agency of Young People in Care." *Cultural Trends* 25 (3): 194–204. doi:[10.1080/09548963.2016.1204049](https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2016.1204049).
- Hallmann, K., C. Muniz Artime, C. Breuer, S. Dallmeyer, and M. Metz. 2017. "Leisure Participation: Modelling the Decision to Engage in Sports and Culture." *Journal of Cultural Economics* 41 (4): 467–487. doi:[10.1007/s10824-016-9275-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-016-9275-8).
- Johannesson, J. 2018. "Kulturpolitisk Styrning Och Kulturpolitiska Reformer I Sverige [Governing and Reforms of Cultural Policy in Sweden]." In *Kulturpolitisk Styrning. Ansvarsfördelning Och Reformer Inom De Nordiska Ländernas Kulturpolitik Inom 2000-Talet [Governing of Cultural Policy. Responsibility and Reforms in the Nordic Countries' Cultural Policy in the 2000s]*, edited by N. Kulturfakta, 67–80. Stockholm: Kulturanalys Norden.
- Johansson, B., and F. Hultgren. 2015. "Rum För De Yngsta. Barn Och Föräldrars Delaktighet I Kulturverksamheter [Room for Our Youngest. Children's and Parent's Participation in Cultural Activities]." *Vetenskap för profession* 32: 2015. Högskolan i Borås.
- Karlsson, D. 2003. "En Chimär Av Endräkt [An Imagination of Unity]." PhD diss., Gothenburg University.
- Lawson, H. A. 2005. "Empowering People, Facilitating Community Development and Contributing to Sustainable Development." *Sport, Education and Society* 10 (1): 135–160. doi:[10.1080/1357332052000308800](https://doi.org/10.1080/1357332052000308800).
- Lindroth, J. 1988. *Från Sportfåneri till Massidrott [From Games of Sport to Mass Sports]*. Stockholm: HLS Förlag.
- Long, J., and F. Bianchini. 2018. "New Directions in the Arts and Sport? Critiquing National Strategies." *Sport in Society* 1–20. doi:[10.1080/17430437.2018.1430484](https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1430484).
- Long, J., K. Hylton, and K. Spracklen. 2014. "Whiteness, Blackness and Settlement." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40 (11): 1779–1797. doi:[10.1080/1369183X.2014.893189](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.893189).
- Mangset, P., and O. M. Hylland. 2017. *Kulturpolitikk. Organisering, legitimering och praksis [Cultural policy. Organisation, legitimization och praxis]*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Merli, P. 2010. "Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107–118. doi:[10.1080/10286630290032477](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630290032477).
- Miles, A., and A. Sullivan. 2012. "Understanding Participation in Culture and Sport, Mixing Methods, Reordering Knowledges." *Cultural Trends* 21 (4): 311–324. doi:[10.1080/09548963.2012.726795](https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2012.726795).
- Mumford, S. 2018. "The Aesthetics of Sport and the Arts: Competing and Complementary." *Sport in Society* 1–11. doi:[10.1080/17430437.2018.1430478](https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1430478).
- Nichols, G. 2007. *Sport and Crime Reduction*. London: Routledge.
- Norberg, J. R. 2004. *Idrottens Väg till Folkhemmet [The Road of Sport to the Welfare State]*. Stockholm: SISU idrottsböcker.
- Norberg, J. R. 2008. "Idrottsrörelsens Utveckling I Gränslandet Mellan Stat, Marknad Och Civilsamhälle – Några lakttagelser [The Sport Movement's Development in the Borderline between State, Market, and Civil Society – Some Remarks]." In *KulturSverige 2009. [CultureSweden 2009]*, edited by S. Beckman and S. Månsson. Swecult, Norrköping: Linköpings University.
- Norberg, J. R. 2011. "A Contract Reconsidered? Changes in the Swedish State's Relation to the Sports Movement." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 3: 311–325. doi:[10.1080/19406940.2011.596157](https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2011.596157).
- Preston, S. 2011. "Back on Whose Track? Reframing Ideologies of Inclusion and Misrecognition in a Participatory Theatre Project with Young People in London, Research in Drama Education." *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 16 (2): 251–264. doi:[10.1080/13569783.2011.572370](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2011.572370).
- Proposition. 2009/10:3. *Tid För Kultur, Regeringens Proposition [Time for Culture, Government Proposition]*. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
- Rimmer, M. 2009. "'Instrumental' Playing? Cultural Policy and Young People's Community Music Participation." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15 (1): 71–90. doi:[10.1080/10286630802682193](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630802682193).
- Skot-Hansen, D. 2005. "Why Urban Cultural Policies?". Robertsen, J (ed.) EUROCULT21. Integrated Report. Helsinki: Lasipalatsi Media Centre, pp. 31-39.

- SOU. 2008:59. *Föreningsfostran Och Tävlingsfostran. En Utvärdering Av Statens Stöd till Idrotten. [Socialisation for Participation in Association and Competition. An Evaluation of Government Support to Sports]*. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
- Trondman, M., and A. Lund. 2008. "Kan Man Idrotta Kan Man Väl Kultura – Till Kritiken Av Konstruktionen Av Statistiska Kategorier [If You Can Sport, You Could Culture – A Critique of the Construction of Static Categories]." In *KulturSverige 2009 [CultureSweden 2009]*, edited by S. Beckman and S. Måansson. Swecult, Norrköping: Linköping University.
- Wedel, J. R., C. Shore, G. Feldman, and S. Lathrop. 2005. "Toward an Anthropology of Public Policy." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 600 (1): 30–51. doi:[10.1177/0002716205276734](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716205276734).
- Zarobe, L., and H. Bungay. 2017. "The Role of Arts Activities in Developing Resilience and Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People a Rapid Review of the Literature." *Perspectives in Public Health* 137 (6): 337–347. doi:[10.1177/1757913917712283](https://doi.org/10.1177/1757913917712283).