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## Politicisation of migrant leisure

### a public and civil intervention involving organised sports

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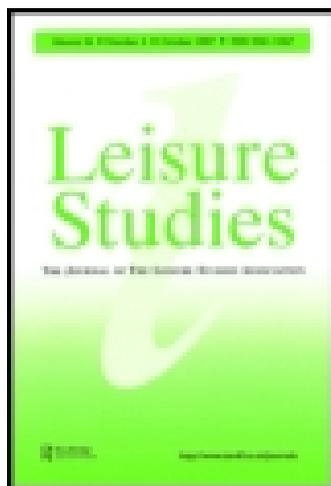
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## Politicisation of migrant leisure: a public and civil intervention involving organised sports

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Using the perspective of governmentality this article aims to contribute to an understanding of the rationalities of specific political interventions, and the techniques used to monitor the leisure activities of particular target groups. This process of politicization is revealed here through a case study of an intervention that provides sporting activities in holiday periods for migrant children and adolescents living in so-called socially disadvantaged areas (DGI Playground). The analysis highlights the rationality that the leisure time of migrant youth is a potentially dangerous time slot and they must be engaged in organized sports; that is not only healthy but also civilizing and character forming leisure time activities. Techniques of monitoring the intervention are developed in a partnership between public institutions, regional umbrella organizations and local sports clubs leading to a need for employment of welfare professionals. Furthermore, the article illustrates that in the discursive construction of subject positions for the target group, migrant youth tend to become clients and recipients of public services rather than potential members of civil sports clubs. These findings are supported by ethnographic interviews with participants that show how youngsters who took part in DGI Playground were able to reflect the official aim of the programme and relate this to their desire to have fun and hang out with their friends. The article ends with a discussion of the further scope of applying critical theoretical perspectives to studies of migrants' leisure and sports activities.

**Keywords:** governmentality; political thinking and techniques; ethnicity; socially deprived

### Introduction

Sport as leisure activity has become central to political attempts to 'civilise' the 'people' in Denmark (Anderson, 2002; Korsgaard, 2002). Over time, childhood and the teenage years have come to be considered crucial phases that are deemed legitimate targets for civilising and controlling measures (Coninck-Smith, 2000; Kofod, 2009; Løkke, 1990; Sode-Madsen, 2003). Since 2000, the Danish state's interest in and support of interventions aimed towards specific target groups of children and young people has become more goal-oriented, and there has been an increase in the number of partnerships between civil and public organisations involved in delivery of the programmes (Høyer-Kruse, Thøgersen, Støckel, & Ibsen, 2008; Ibsen &

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Eichberg, 2006). One contemporary target group for these interventions is so-called socially disadvantaged children and young people, which tends to mean migrant youth (Agergaard, 2011).<sup>1</sup>

This article sets out to illustrate the current politicisation of the leisure time of migrant youngsters in Denmark; a policy that aims to promote participation in organised sports. By deploying the governmentality perspective (developed from Foucault's work), we aim to contribute to an understanding of the rationalities of specific political interventions and the techniques used to monitor the leisure activities of specific target groups. Further, we will discuss the subject positions offered in these kinds of political intervention through a strategically selected single-case study.

In Denmark, there are various programmes designed to promote 'the integration of ethnic minority youth' into club-organised sports (see Agergaard & Bonde, 2013). In this case, the articulation of the leisure time of migrant youth as a potentially dangerous time slot is made explicit in the political reasoning leading to the programme. That is the government's action plan for: 'The prevention of extremist views and radicalization among young people' that appears as a result of the right-wing turn of Danish immigration policy and post 9/11 images of Muslim youths being vulnerable to radicalisation and extremist views (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Rydgren, 2004; Wren, 2001). Nevertheless, the specific initiatives spelled out in the action plan are broadly targeted at youngsters of mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds in so-called vulnerable neighbourhoods. In particular, initiative No. 16 (in the action plan) mentions the need to: 'establish sports opportunities for children and young people in vulnerable neighbourhoods during holiday periods'. Additionally, the plan stresses the general need to support children and young people from these areas in their participation in leisure time activities.<sup>2</sup>

One programme set up in response to the plan was DGI Playground. This programme, which was awarded a government grant of nearly 2.8 million Danish kroner (just under 400,000 euro), was a three-year intervention that ran between 2010 and 2012 in six so-called socially disadvantaged housing areas in and around the two biggest cities in Denmark.<sup>3</sup> The programme organisers were regional umbrella organisations for local sports clubs (DGI)<sup>4</sup> and both local sports clubs and public institutions for children and youths (youth clubs, social housing counselling centres, pre- and after-school programmes, etc.) involved in organising the programme activities. The primary target groups were 6–10-year-old children and 11–15-year-old young people. These groups were offered organised sports activities during school vacations between 2010 and 2012, and the hope was that the participants would continue in organised leisure time activities once the intervention had ended (DGI-Storkøbenhavn & DGI-Østjylland, 2010).

### **Literature review of sport as migrants' leisure**

There is very limited research that considers various groups of migrant youngster's leisure activities as an independent topic of research. Rather, national and international literature tend to focus, first of all, on participation rates in sports and physical activity of migrant youth, and secondly, on the integration and assimilation of ethnic minority youngsters in sports in relation to the political focus of many European countries.

The few existing studies on participation rates that are relevant to this study show that as a group, ethnic minority youngsters (and particularly girls) participate less in club-organised sport than their ethnic Danish counterparts (Agergaard, 2008; Ibsen et al., 2012). Notwithstanding, these kinds of studies disguise great diversity within the group of ethnic minority youth and the fact that the socio-economic variable and overall resources, rather than ethnicity in itself, can explain migrant youngster's lesser participation in organised sports (Nielsen, 2013). Moreover, both self-reported and physiological measures have shown that the physical activity levels of ethnic minority youths equal that of ethnic Danish youngsters living in the same areas (Agergaard, 2008; Ibsen et al., 2012; Nielsen, 2013). Thus, migrant youngsters appear more likely to participate in self-organised physical activities outside the organised leisure programmes than in the club-based sporting activities pursued by many ethnic Danish children and adolescents. Thus, when it comes to meeting Denmark's leisure policy standards for the civilisation of youth through participation in organised sports, ethnic minority youngsters have been turned into 'the usual suspects' (Nielsen, 2013).

Existing literature on sport as migrant leisure has come to focus on the integration of ethnic minority youth, and as such tends to reflect the political focus on migrant leisure, albeit with critical observations (Agergaard, 2011; Agergaard & Sørensen, 2010; Gregersen, 2011; Michelsen la Cour, 2013). Also, the international literature on migrant leisure predominantly focuses on organised and recreational sports as elements in processes of migrants' assimilation or integration into mainstream society (e.g. Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Lee & Funk, 2011; Maxwell & Taylor, 2010). Studies show that while some sports clubs enter into interventions to 'recruit and retain' girls and boys from minority backgrounds, many sports clubs are engaged with their present members and therefore reluctant to offer programmes for people from minority backgrounds (Hanlon & Coleman, 2006).

It is more rare to find studies that focus on the diversity within the group of ethnic minorities and inquire into the transnational embeddedness of specific migrant groups and individuals, as a key to understanding their organised and self-organised leisure activities. The few studies of this nature tend to focus on migrants' cross-border connections and leisure activities, which they understand as examples of the ways in which migrants integrate, while remaining in contact with their home countries (Li & Stodolska, 2006). Other studies have pointed to the significance of leisure activities in nature-based settings and/or public spaces for migrants' sense of belonging in their new countries (Lovelock, Lovelock, Jellum, & Thompson, 2011; Peters, 2010). These studies argue that, even though activities in public spaces may not be specifically designed to facilitate integration into mainstream society, self-organised leisure activities can promote mutual respect in societies with increasing diversity.

It is these pieces of information, along with reflections on the tendencies in our own and others' research, that have led us to the theoretical perspective of governmentality that we have been employing for some years now (Agergaard & Michelsen la Cour, 2012). This perspective is relevant since we have identified a need to question the taken-for-granted marriage between migrant children and youth's leisure activities and integration and assimilation processes. That is, we feel that the governmental thinking behind current attempts to get migrant children and youth to partake in organised sports needs to be studied further. The governing techniques inherent in public-civil partnerships and programmes targeted at migrant

youth also deserve further inquiry. In so doing, our focus in this article will be on the ways in which the DGI Playground programme is shaped by specific governmental rationalities and techniques that attribute ethnic minority youth with particular subject positions.

### **Governmentality and subject positions**

The concept of governmentality was developed in Foucault's later work (Foucault, 1991), and has been further expanded through contributions from Mitchell Dean (1999/2010), Nicholas Rose (1996, 1999) and Peter Miller (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991). In the initial text on 'governmentality', Foucault (1991) sets out to identify how the conception of government has changed from the sixteenth century onwards. In so doing, Foucault makes use of the term governmentality in two ways: first of all, at a general level, to identify the rationalities or mentalities of governing and secondly at a specific level to identify the techniques of government that developed from the late eighteenth century onwards. In comparison to earlier forms of sovereign and repressive power, this specific form of governance developed with the emergence of a modern political economy and concerns about the welfare of the population. In modern society, the state uses a whole series of governmental apparatuses to exercise power over the conduct of the lives of groups and individuals.

The dual perspective on the thinking and techniques of governing is also expressed in the description of the object of governmentality analysis as the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1991, pp. 102–103; Foucault, 2000, p. 341). Thus the analytical focus is directed towards the thinking and techniques that are designed to shape, guide and direct individuals' and groups' behaviour and actions in publicly desired directions. The concept of conduct may signify both the act of governing someone and the ways in which these persons govern their own acts; i.e. their behaviour (Dean, 1999/2010, p. 43). Thus, governmentality studies focus on the interplay between technologies of domination and technologies of the self, with particular attention being paid to acts of self-regulation on behalf of public as well as civil programme partners.<sup>5</sup> Foucault's perspective has been criticised for not explaining why individuals take up some subject positions, rather than others (Hall, 2000). In his later work, however, Foucault also acknowledges some agency in the role subjects play in constituting and recognising themselves as subjects (Foucault, 2000).

This article will also inquire into the position of the subject (particularly the programme participant). In the case to be discussed, a political intervention is implemented to transform the illegitimate identity of children and adolescents as seemingly subject to radicalisation and extremism in so-called socially vulnerable areas into a legitimate identity of sporting participants and potential club members. Our analysis will show the variety of subject positions revealed by the intervention, while also inquiring into the ways in which individual participants interpret their roles.

### **Methods and material**

A single-case study is chosen in order to address the specificity of factors involved (Stake, 1995, 2010). Through this study, we will inquire into the ways in which specific public and civil actors relate to the political aims of the programme and the

specific techniques used in monitoring the programme. However, the specific case study will also illustrate broader trends in the professionalisation of leisure time organisation and the clienting of migrants as recipients of leisure time activities.

In our case study of the DGI Playground intervention, a variety of methods have been used. These range from analysis of documentary material and quantitative data, through focus group interviews with Playground employees and representatives from local sports clubs as well as the involved public institutions, to ethnographic observations and interviews with the participants in the various areas covered by this case study.

The material for this article derives primarily from data generated during 2012 – the final year of the programme. This material includes both explicit and reflective expressions about the programme development that are useful in our analysis of the thinking behind the programme, and the techniques used to govern it. Our analysis is primarily based on six focus group interviews that involved a total of 28 informants, as well as more than 50 ethnographic interviews with children and adolescents from all six living areas. The participants in the focus group interviews were selected as the main representatives of the Playground employees and the various civil and public cooperation partners in the specific areas. The interviewees were almost without exception of ethnic Danish background, middle class and of mixed gender. Due to the nature of ethnographic interviews, the participants in these interviews were picked at random while aiming to cover a representative sample of the age range (6–15 years of age), both gender and mixed ethnicity of the participants. For the sake of anonymity, we neither use real names nor provide biographical and contextual information about the specific housing areas in which the informants were employed or participated.

The focus group interviews were conducted to inquire into the aims (rationalities) of the different public and civil partners and the governing tools used in the development of the intervention. Generally speaking, the focus group interviews were informative about the Playground employees and different collaboration partners' perspectives, and validated the various interviewees' utterances (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). In the ethnographic interviews, the participants were asked about their understanding of the aims of the activities and their experiences, and how this related to their leisure activities (organised and self-organised). The focus group interviews have been taped and transcribed, while note taking was used in the case of ethnographic interviews that were conducted during the programme. For both kinds of interviews, we have developed schemes of meaning condensation.

In applying the governmentality perspective, we have, first of all, focused on the material in the focus group interviews that covered the Playground employees and various collaborating partners' understanding of the aim of the intervention (the thinking). Secondly, through the focus groups interviews and information about the programme's development, we have created an overview of the crucial monitoring procedures (techniques) applied in the programme over the three-year period. Thirdly, we have focused on the subject positions offered to the participants through the public and civil partners' descriptions of the intervention as well as its development. Finally, the ethnographic interviews will be used to provide some insight into the ways in which participants relate to the political rationalities and subject positions offered to them, even though the analysis will focus on migrant youth as a group in line with the perspective of governmentality.

### **Thinking; transforming migrant leisure**

A variety of perceptions of the rationale behind the DGI Playground programme may be found in the various collaborating partners' descriptions of the project. Generally speaking, these range from the Playground employees' focus on the political issue of offering organised leisure activities to children and adolescents in the specified areas as a means of crime reduction and anti-radicalisation, through public employees' concerns with simply getting the local youngsters involved in activities, to the local sports club leaders' desire to recruit new members. Notwithstanding the differences between these approaches, the collaboration partners join forces around the shared idea that the programme should engage migrant youth in organised leisure activities.

The ways in which the Playground employees focus on the engagement of youngsters from the target locations in specified activities do not surprisingly reflect political aims of ensuring security in the areas, preventing criminal activities and so on. The aims of the programme seem to be formulated in softer phrasing although the political aims of preventing radicalisation and extremism are still expressed.

It gives such a peace in the areas that something is happening. It triggers activity, and then perhaps there are fewer youngsters to make trouble and what the heck they go around doing. (Employee, DGI Playground)

In accordance with the political procurement that ensured their employment, the Playground employees tend to emphasise that young people in the areas are potential troublemakers and sport will provide them with 'good' and 'healthy' activity.

When Playground employees in the various local areas are asked directly to provide a rationale for the presence of DGI Playground in their area, several of them refer to a previous situation where self-organised networks of passive and bored youth hang around on street corners. The Playground employees were not present in the areas before the running of the programme, and in many of the areas, other programmes providing organised leisure activities were already running. Still, hanging out, it is argued, means migrant youth members risk being recruited to radical groups. Another Playground employee explains:

The most important thing is, that they see an alternative to hanging around in the shopping center. This is not the way you need to go just because you have another ethnic background than Danish ... (Employee, DGI Playground)

Thus, self-organised leisure activities and social networks in the areas are looked upon with suspicion, rather than as options for children and adolescents to engage with peers in activities that reflect their interests. Accordingly, DGI Playground was implemented in the target areas in order to introduce what is perceived as productive activity, in line with the traditional Danish civil association; the sports club with its associated positive values of civilising children and youth (Andersen, 2002), democracy and social capital (Agergaard, 2011; Michelsen la Cour, 2013).

In explaining their views on the rationality of the programme, the various types of public employees from youth clubs, social housing counselling centres, pre- and after-school programmes, etc. tend to represent the broader governmental thinking about the target group. They do not refer to the specific political goals of preventing anti-radicalisation and extremism, but represent the current welfare political rationalising on the need for all youngsters in so-called vulnerable areas to be involved in organised activities.

And so we are organizing activities for the kids and the youngsters out here in the area. Simply to involve them in something, or not just something, but in activities during the summer holiday period, so they use their energy. (Public employee in youth club)

For the public employee quoted above, the type of activities provided by the programme seem less important than simply ensuring that the youngsters in the area are kept occupied. Organised leisure activities are seen as a way for local youth to use up their energy, so that this energy is not used in what is perceived as socially unacceptable pastimes. Nevertheless, in several of the areas, occasions occurred where Playground-organised activities, such as football tournaments, led to conflicts between various groups of youngsters. In one case, the organised activities did not only lead to internal conflict among the participants, but also to conflict with instructors, and the police had to be called to resolve the situation.

Local sports club leaders and coaches' views on the aim of DGI Playground had some commonalities with what we have seen above, but it is also in quotes from civil society representatives that we find the greatest variety in their hopes and aspirations for the programme. The sports club coach quoted below, like the public employee above, is first and foremost occupied with engaging youth in the area in organised activities, but also hopes that participants, who have taken part in the programme, might be motivated to join more traditional sports clubs.

The most important thing for us was to involve the ones that were there. And so we hoped that we could promote ... Of course, that is, some had greater abilities than others, but the purpose from the outset was to get everybody involved. So they get a great experience the very same day and may come back later. (local sports club coach)

In mentioning the option that the participants *may* come back later, this coach, like many of the other sports club representatives interviewed, expresses the hope that DGI Playground could be a potential recruiting ground for sports clubs. Depending on the club, the DGI Playground participants may be attractive to the sport clubs' representatives as new *talents*, who could lift the standard of sport played in the club; as *participants*, who will simply increase the number of club members; or as *civil actors*, who, through their (and their parents') involvement, may contribute to the organisation of sports in the area. An analysis of the subject position for the participants that comes to prevail in the programme will be made clear later. First follows an analysis of the techniques used to govern the programme.

### **Techniques; monitoring leisure time activity**

Following the perspective of governmentality, a central part of governing is not only the thinking behind a political initiative, but also the techniques used to control a specific programme. In line with Foucault's description of the modern form of governance where statistical measurements are used to monitor the welfare of the population, we shall see that the techniques used to manage DGI Playground rely heavily on statistics. These techniques also fit with the political expectations of the fund givers to the reporting from programme partners to whom public issues have been outsourced (Agergaard & Michelsen la Cour, 2012).

From the focus group interviews, it seems that the Playground employees relied heavily on statistics when making decisions about DGI Playground's development. These employees collected data for each programme year in order to demonstrate that the projects were meeting their targets regarding the number of activity days

and hours, as well as desired population participation and frequency of participation. The quantitative monitoring of DGI Playground over the first two years revealed that the initiative had proved less successful in recruiting the older children (particularly 13–15-year-olds). For a project financed to prevent radicalisation and extremism among youth, reaching this target group seemed to be an important success criterion for the Playground employees. In the last year of DGI Playground (2012), they therefore introduced a programme that trained young people (16–21-year-olds) to be coaches.

The introduction of training programmes for young adults signified a switch in the programme's focus from encouraging participation in organised activities to providing the skills needed to run activities in the housing areas as well as creating local role models. The trained youngsters would be qualified to coach in existing local clubs and could even set up their own sports organisations. They also would hold the potential to motivate other young people in their localities.

If you manage to involve local youth you have obtained a lot. They are in more direct contact with the children and they hold knowledge about the areas. (Program employee, DGI Playground)

With the involvement of young adults, the programme became focused on a specific target group and also the potential benefits of forging links with local social networks. This change of focus may be conceived as an attempt to empower the participants to be able to involve themselves in valuable voluntary work for their local communities. According to Dean, even if empowerment processes improve the participants' involvement, they are most often directed towards achieving specific political goals, forming part of governing techniques that expect the target group to adhere to specific subject positions as liberated individuals (Dean, 1999/2010, p. 123f).

Another central governing technique emphasised during focus group interviews relates to the administration of DGI Playground. In several of the housing areas, the public as well as civil partners have experienced a need for a local coordinator – 'a puppet master' to take responsibility for the preparation and running of the intervention. The role of the 'puppet master' is described as a daily coordinator of practical things and activities, someone who can 'function as the link' between the various institutions and 'pull the strings' of the involved parties. With a traditional understanding of hegemonic power, the image of a puppet master may be perceived as someone with a sovereign power to control the acts of the involved actors that are reduced to marionettes.<sup>6</sup> In the DGI Playground intervention, we find a more subtle form of power suggested in the role of a local administrative coordinator.

It takes a lot of work to get out here ... since you are in an area where there are a lot of different persons (institutions) involved. People who need to talk together and that takes time. (Social housing employee)

This need for a 'puppet master' to coordinate the multiple projects running simultaneously is indicative of a style of governance, where the tasks of coordinating and monitoring become central.

This reflects a broader trend in the development of the neoliberal model of government, where political issues are outsourced. Thus, cooperation in public and civil partnerships and statistical monitoring of the outsourced grants are the techniques left to ensure some kind of likelihood that the political goals are achieved

(Power, 1999). This leads to the need for administrators and the development of new welfare policy professions (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2012; Villadsen, 2004, 2007); welfare professionals that do not belong to a specific occupation, but serve as employees tied to specific organisational goals (Evetts, 2011). DGI Playground, for example, employed a number of people whose job it was to coordinate and monitor the intervention within and across the various targeted housing areas. This is not a straightforward job; however, since it is a role that straddles both public and civil organisations, and sometimes the duties and expectations can be ambiguous or even conflictual. The Playground employees have to navigate between the role of the civil club leader who serves the interests of local associations of people, and the role of the public servant whose job it is to fulfil overall political goals. Similar conflicts of interest can be seen in the subject positions of the children and young people involved in the programme.

### **Subject positions; public clients (and sports club members)**

In Foucault's perspective, subject positions are formed by historically specific discourses, while the subjectivity given to the individual is the option to constitute or recognise themselves within the available discursive formations (Foucault, 2000). With this understanding, it is relevant to look at descriptions of the role of the participants given by the programme partners. We shall see that the legitimate subject position for participants range from being a member in a sports club to the role as a client of public services. The balance of power between these subject positions is illustrated below.

Initially, DGI planned that the Playground employees should ask children and youngsters from the areas for a small membership fee for their participation in DGI Playground. This was an attempt to avoid the situation where the programme was seen as a free alternative to the traditional sports clubs that charge membership fees, and also to prepare the target group for future membership of such clubs.

The idea was to sign up for something and oblige them to come regularly. I don't think they have learned that. (Social housing employee)

The general perception across the areas was that the educative aim was not fulfilled as DGI had hoped. The usual explanation given was that the participants (and parents) never became familiar/accustomed with the fundamental principles of membership in organised leisure. Another Playground employee explains:

They (the parents) had never paid for these kinds of activities ever before. Programme activities have always been offered for free, why should they all of a sudden pay? (Employee, DGI Playground)

This statement reflects the subject positions attributed to the inhabitants of the target areas as clients that have become used to the provision of social services (in this case sports), rather than economically constrained citizens. Parents and adolescents in the areas are expected to be unwilling (or not able) to pay money in order to participate in sports, which is also the reason given for why so few sign up to become members of organised sport clubs.

The focus group interviews conducted in the last programme year reflect a general recognition that DGI Playground's participants must be provided with sporting activities as if they were clients of public services (of leisure). Some of the

Playground employees argued that it was too soon to try and encourage the youngsters to become sports clubs members, and that this could be part of a future intervention.

Children have at least been activated. The next step, which could be awesome, is that you can develop the programme, so we are better able to pull them into clubs, so we can do something annually, representing a new system in the programme, which means that we can possibly lure them into clubs in the local area. (Employee, DGI Playground)

The Playground employee cited above seems to distance him/herself from the aim that children and adolescents from the area should be recruited as members of sports clubs during the DGI Playground intervention, and suggests instead that this objective could be part of a future programme.

The impression given is that once the Playground employees had decided that there was little hope of recruiting children and young people from the programme directly into more traditional sports clubs, then the prevailing subject position attributed to the youngsters in the housing areas was that of clients of publicly funded activities. This underlies the political reasoning behind the programme: that children and adolescents from so-called socially vulnerable areas are liable to become criminal gang members without organised leisure activities and should be subject to some level of social control.

No matter whether the participants are mentioned in Playground employees' phrasings of the aims to 'pull them into the clubs' or 'make them see an alternative to hanging around in the shopping centre', the subject position given to participants is problematic. As Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2004) have pointed out, when specific 'problem identities' are discursively developed, it is the person (or group) that is identified as the problem, not structural barriers, such as socio-economic issues and lack of sports facilities in the area. Even children and youngsters in the target areas refer to these problem identities when describing the aim of the programme.

### **Participants' understandings of the programme and their role**

When reading through our notes from the ethnographic interviews, it is notable that youngsters in the various areas discursively reproduce the programme partners' understanding of the aim of DGI Playground, even if it appears that many of them already participate daily in both organised and self-organised leisure activities. There are also indications of some negotiation of the programme aim and the subject position in the ways in which the participants simply link the programme activities to their ongoing leisure activities.

In accounting for the aim of the programme, several youngsters reflect the institutional reasoning of DGI Playground. For instance, one of our informants describes the aim in accordance with the political goal: 'to get people over here instead of making trouble'. A few of the children identify the political linkage of sport and health, and say the aim is 'activating children. Because they (parents ed.) do not want children sitting at home watching television and being obese'. Still others interpret the rationality of the project to be aligned with their own wishes 'to have fun' and 'to be together with your friends' during vacation periods.

Several of the children and adolescents refer to their leisure activities, stating that they already 'go to something'. This normative expression typifies the relation

Danish children and youngsters develop to sports as organised club activity (Anderson, 2001). The difference between the activities provided by DGI Playground and other programme/club activities in the areas doesn't seem important for the participants. Moreover, they describe the programme activities provided by DGI Playground in a similar manner to the self-organised activities in the areas. For instance, one participant describes the activities as: 'Just hanging out with friends, playing soccer and being outside and doing various things'.

The Playground employees confirm these participant conceptions of the programme during the focus group interviews. They report that children and adolescents from the areas are keen on a limited range of activities, such as football in the case of boys in particular. Also, statements were made about the tendencies for some children to 'cruise' or even 'to shop' between different activities.

... some do not like the sports activities of the day, like the club for girls that we are running, so they go shopping between various activities. (Social housing employee)

Even though this type of autonomous behaviour is discussed (as not achieving the desired civilising effect), the Playground employees have accepted this along with the participants' preference for sporting activities that they might already play in the areas. In some localities, DGI Playground managed to involve a number of children and young people in activities that were new to them, such as handball and golf. But, on the whole, the activities most often cited by the Playground employees as successful in engaging a high number of participants, were those that the youngsters already played in their self-organised leisure time. Cricket is a good example of this tendency, as this activity was dominated by children who were already members of and active players in existing cricket clubs.

When asked what they would have done without DGI Playground, several children answered that they would have been outside on the playing field anyway. Others replied that they may have been bored, so might have spent more time inside playing on the computer and hanging around. Some participants were aware that the authorities viewed bored youth as undesirable: 'They don't want us to be bored'. Generally, the participants perceived the programme activities as beneficial, even if it was left unnoticed that being a participant meant they had a specific subject position that was associated with a need for them to be under public surveillance.

It is not possible here to isolate the effect of the intervention on the leisure activities of the participants and the degree to which children and young people in the areas would have been involved in sports or other types of self-organised activities if DGI Playground had not been there. But nothing in the ethnographic interviews suggest that the ones who participated may be potential recruits of radicalisation and extremism. Moreover, it is difficult to see how these 3–4-week long activities in even longer school vacations over a 3-year period could make a difference in the areas.

### **Concluding discussion**

Using the perspective of governmentality, the analysis has illustrated specific and yet general tendencies in the governing of the leisure time of migrant children and young people in so-called vulnerable housing areas as a specific target group in Denmark. In analysing the political rationalities, we have identified the overlaps (and divergence) between the ways in which Playground employees, public and civil

partners describe the aim of the intervention. The shared thinking is that migrant youth should be taking part in the kind of civilising activity provided by organised sport, rather than self-organised sports or unstructured leisure time activities.

From the analysis of the techniques used in the specific programme, it appears that the focus is on producing politically recognised activity and monitoring the amount of this, and also to some extent, empowering the target group to become involved in the local organisation of sport. This however is linked with a need for professionalising the organisation of migrant leisure, with administrative personnel employed to coordinate and monitor the development of the programme activities.

The descriptions of the programme seem to be aimed towards empowering migrant youngsters to attain the subject position of a participant in organised sports. However, from the materials we gathered in our case study, it appears that, there is a tendency for the participating children and young people to become clients or recipients of organised sports activities, while the goal of producing future members of regular sports clubs is postponed to a future intervention. Also, our analysis has shown that the participants do not experience a great difference between organised and self-organised leisure activities. Some even seem to resist or negotiate the subject position offered to them by participating in programme activities, as if it was part of the leisure activities that they normally participate in, and by pointing to their own aim of participation in the programme as having fun and hanging out with their friends.

The governmentality perspective encourages scrutiny of the thinking and techniques behind the benevolent interventions carried out by public and civil organisations. There is much scope for further utilisation of critical theoretical perspectives to study migrants' leisure activities. As pointed out in the literature review, researchers have tended to focus on sports participation rates of migrant youth and the role of organised leisure in migrants' integration and assimilation processes, and in so doing, have reproduced the political efforts in the area. Further studies should critically examine the taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in interventions in the leisure time of specific target groups, and unfold to a much larger extent than has been possible here the ways in which programme partners, employees and participants alike perform, transform and negotiate their roles in political interventions.

## Notes

1. Today, this is among others illustrated through the target groups mentioned in various public funds administrated by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs (Retrieved June 5, 2014 from <http://sm.dk/arbejdsomrader/arbejdsomrader/tvaergaende-omrader/puljer>).
2. Retrieved October 24, 2012 from [http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/4443E64E-3DEA-49B2-8E19-B4380D52F1D3/0/handlingsplan\\_radikalisering\\_2009.pdf](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/4443E64E-3DEA-49B2-8E19-B4380D52F1D3/0/handlingsplan_radikalisering_2009.pdf).
3. So-called vulnerable or disadvantaged areas have been the focus of Danish welfare policy for quite some time. In 2005, the present government developed a so-called anti-ghetto, social housing strategy and since 2010, there has been a list of ghetto areas, which is revised once a year. The three criteria for being designated a ghetto and thereby a target for political intervention are: 1. The number of immigrants and their offspring from non-western countries exceeds 50%, 2. The number of 18–64-year-olds without job or education is above 40%, 3. There are more than 270 cases pr. 10,000 citizens, where inhabitants above 18 years have been sentenced for specific crimes. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from [http://www.mbl.dk/sites/mbl.omega.oitudv.dk/files/dokumenter/Almbo/liste\\_over\\_saelrigt\\_udsatte\\_boligomraader\\_pr\\_1\\_okt\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mbl.dk/sites/mbl.omega.oitudv.dk/files/dokumenter/Almbo/liste_over_saelrigt_udsatte_boligomraader_pr_1_okt_2012.pdf).

4. For simplicity, DGI will be used here for both regional umbrella organisations.
5. Similarly, the Danish sociologist Kasper Villadsen points to a historical development in discourses of social policy in Denmark, where social networks, voluntary organisations as well as individuals are drawn in new discursive formations of the client (Villadsen, 2007, p. 34).
6. See Lash (2007) for understandings of hegemonic and post-hegemonic power in cultural studies.

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