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Making wine production “fair” through sports? An analysis of sports as an aspect of farm worker development in the Cape Winelands

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Questioning the role of sports in making wine production “fair”, this paper interrogates the tension between wishful benefits from sports and the contradictions in the way sports were experienced in the everyday. I selected the Fairhills Association, a Fairtrade wine initiative based in Rawsonville, Western Cape, as my case study because of its sports programme for the affiliated farm workers. Given the infamous history of exploitative labour practices, the move to transform the South African wine industry into a more ethical operation has evidently meant development projects for the workforce. So, the sports activities were sponsored by the Fairhills Association with explicit development goals. Drawing on my ethnographic observations recorded at the sports fields in Rawsonville and interviews conducted on the history and contemporary practices of sports among the farm workers, I argue that: irrespective of the intended outcomes from the sports-for-development project, sports, unwittingly, becomes a conduit to express, mobilise and appropriate desires for a better life by those stuck in relatively compromised positions of power.

Keywords: Farm workers, Sports, Fairtrade, Wine, Development, Ethnography

1. Introduction: ethnography of sports

Recording the ethnography of sports among farm workers in the Cape Winelands is a weekend activity. Between April 2012 and May 2013, I spent almost every weekend attending some form of sports activity in and around Rawsonville (a small rural town in the Western Cape, South Africa). One Saturday afternoon, 29 September 2012, with me in my blue Fiat Uno were two young people, Inga and Christiaan, who directed me to a rugby field that I had failed to locate on my previous attempts. The rugby posts were obscured behind the white buildings of a wine cellar and some rather tall trees. We turned off at a gravel road that ran parallel to the tarred road, and at about 100 metres was the entrance to the field, marked by a low gate. Mike, the coach of the Fairhills Football Club, greeted us as he collected the R5 entrance fee from the spectators arriving to attend that afternoon’s rugby games. Over the past four months, I had attended many soccer games with Mike, Inga and other soccer enthusiasts. As the rugby season approached, Mike invited me to the fundraising event he was organising around the pre-season friendly rugby games, and had instructed Inga to bring me to the field. From the gate, we drove to the other end of the field and parked next to other cars, not too far behind the rugby posts. Despite light drizzle, the rugby event had attracted a larger crowd than that usual for weekend soccer games. Rugby players (in at least four different uniforms) were warming up. The dense smoke from one corner indicated that *braai* (barbeque) meat would be on sale; and young people in small groups scattered across the outskirts of the field added another layer to the vibrancy of the afternoon. The rugby games started at some point between Inga informing me of who was who among the spectators and Christiaan pointing out his friends among the rugby players on the field. In and out of many conversations, casual laughter, local gossip and updates on scores, I (T) carved out a few moments for “research” to ask Christiaan (C) his take on the role of sports among the farm workers of Rawsonville. He responded:

C: Sports is good for us! It keeps us busy, and out of trouble! It keeps people away from drinking alcohol and other harmful things!

T: But didn’t you just tell me that all the rugby players on the field were drunk?¹

Christiaan’s response repeated the popular tropes about sports that I had heard time and time again, and from both those who were apparently in need of “development” and those who needed to do “development”. The above interaction succinctly draws out the tension this paper examines: the tension between the wishful benefits from sports that shape the sports-for-development discourses

1 This is a reconstruction of the conversations I had with a young soccer player (spectator on the day), recorded as field-notes (29 September 2012). All names used here and in rest of the text are pseudonyms.

and the contradictions in the way sports were experienced in the everyday. Of course, not all the rugby players on the field that day were drunk, and nor was a rugby game or any sports activity, in and of itself, a deterrent to alcoholism or a fix for other development problems. The aim of this paper is also not to inform if or how sports may (or may not) serve development ends, but to interrogate how sports come to have a relevance in the development of low-income, historically marginalised and often stigmatised groups. The group that my research focuses on is the farm labour employed in the wine industry of the Western Cape.

With its origins in slavery, a long history of exploitation and virtually no legal protection up until 1993, *farm worker* in post-apartheid South Africa is identified as a group or a category in need of “development” (Kaur 2017a). While contemporary development interventions may ostensibly be in response to this historical injustice and disenfranchisement, these rarely alter farm workers’ position of subalternity in deeply unequal and paternalistic relations of power that govern the social and political economy of commercial farming in the Cape Winelands (du Toit 1995; Montgomery 2014). Instead, development interventions often add layers to the existing unequal power relations and induce new forms of micro-politics to be negotiated (Bolt 2016; du Toit 1993; Rutherford and Nyamuda 2000). The argument – development programmes take on a life of their own beyond the intended, explicitly stated and promoted objectives – is well established in anthropological literature and studies on Southern African agrarian contexts (Bolt 2015; du Toit 2004; Ferguson 1990; Hartnack 2016; Rutherford 2004; Williams 2003). While similar inferences can be drawn from my research, the focus of this paper is specific to sports. I attend to how the possibilities and opportunities for and from sports play into the depoliticising and re-politicising of development interventions. Moreover, studying a trivial and seemingly benign aspect of farm workers’ life in a context implicated in more serious ethical, economic and political contestations adds a different perspective to debates on both development and agrarian labour relations.

To this end, I take the sports aspect of the Fairhills Association, a Fairtrade wine initiative with an extensive farm worker development programme, as my case study. Mike, Inga, Christiaan and many others (but not all) present at the rugby field I referred to in the anecdote above were affiliates of the Fairhills Association. In a similar vein, the body of the paper engages with this somewhat ironic question of how sports contribute to making wine production more ethical or “fair”. In so doing, I contrast and examine how different parties and individuals at the Fairhills Association relate to, explain or contest the purpose and impact of sports in the lives of farm workers. Observations recorded at the sports fields and interviews conducted on the history and contemporary practices of sports among farm workers substantiates my concluding discussion on how sports,

unwittingly, became a conduit to express, mobilise and appropriate desires for a better life by those stuck in relatively compromised positions of power. Before contextualising the emergence of ethical sourcing or Fairtrade auditing and certification in the history and politics of farm worker development in the South African wine industry, I provide an overview of the Fairhills Association, and how and why I selected this initiative as my case study.

2. The Fairhills Association: a Fairtrade wine initiative

Fairtrade emerged on the global scene as a movement towards more ethical, just and sustainable production and consumer practices. An important goal of this movement was to benefit and empower those disadvantaged or exploited in the capitalist production and market mechanisms. In other words, it is a market-based social change effort that, through transparent, rigorous and third-party auditing of a product to contextually determined ethical standards, certifies commodities as Fairtrade (Raynolds et al. 2007). With this increased awareness and trend towards ethical consumption, the Fairtrade-labelled wine emerged as an opportunity to access a niche market in an increasingly globalising and competitive wine industry. With twin objectives to tap into this niche market and proactively participate in the post-apartheid project of social transformation, Origin Wines, an export company of South African wine, launched the Fairhills Association in 2005 in Rawsonville. In partnership with their long-term buyer, the Cooperative Group in the United Kingdom, Origin Wine invited their long-term supplier, the Du Toitskloof winery and affiliated wine farms, to be accredited as a Fairtrade wine brand (Herman 2010). Among the first and largest of its kind in the world, this Fairtrade initiative had to go well beyond simply getting its wine production operation audited by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation. The initiative of the envisaged scale required funds before any premiums could be earned from the Fairtrade wine sales, and these were raised through agreements with the UK buyers (Herman 2010; Montgomery 2014).

The Fairhills Association, therefore, was not simply a brand of Fairtrade wines but an extensive community development programme that provided welfare services and projects for the affiliated workforce and their dependants.² These improvements and services included: worker housing, community hall, day-care centre, crèches, craft centre, primary school, library, transport, adult education programmes, computer classes, secondary and tertiary level bursaries for young people, medical services, appointment of a psychologist, rehabilitation programme

2 For more details on the political economy of Fairtrade wine in South Africa, in general, and the Fairhills Association, in particular, see doctoral work of Agatha Herman (2010) and Alison Montgomery (2014).

for substance and alcohol addicts, and many social clubs, including sports (Herman 2010; Montgomery 2014). An important and celebrated aspect of Fairhills was its democratically elected *Joint Body* committee, which was made up of 40 farm worker members, two farm owners and one representative from Origin Wine, who jointly assessed and prioritised the development requirements of the worker community. The Joint Body represented about 1000 farm workers who were permanently employed by the grape producers (the land and business owners), also the suppliers of wine grapes to the Du Toitskloof winery. Almost all the social clubs and activities were organised and managed through the Joint Body, and sport was generally regarded as an important and preferred item on this list. This was evident in the fact that the Fairhills Sport Committee (FSC), a sub-committee of the Joint Body, had the largest membership and was allocated the greatest share of the budget. It was because of this distinct and visible presence of the Fairhills sports teams in the broader sports networks of Rawsonville that I chose to focus on the association as my case study. Next, I discuss the history and politics of farm worker development in the Western Cape's wine industry to contextualise my analysis of how sports were envisaged to meet the development goals of the project.

3. History of farm worker development in the South African wine industry

The institutionalised approaches to community development for farm workers started to appear on the farming scene in the early 1980s. By the late 1970s, the international pressures against apartheid and trade boycotts had manifested into political and economic crises, prompting 'moves for restructuring' and other legislative changes in the wine industry (du Toit 1994: 376). In 1982, the Rural Foundation (RF) (also known as *Landelike Stigting*, in Afrikaans) was established 'to improve farm workers' conditions' in the Western Cape (du Toit 1993: 317). The operations of the RF were innovative for its time, to the extent that these were framed in managerial terms. The concept of farm workers' need for development or empowerment was completely absent well into the mid-20th Century (ibid). The political and economic calculations at the time the RF took off were very different. As David Mayson (1990) argues, the large-scale endorsement of the RF's objectives and efforts by the apartheid government and the white farmers were as much an attempt to pre-empt the radicalisation of coloured farm workers by growing trade unions and anti-apartheid struggles, as it was to build a committed and productive labour force and improve 'the poor image of the industry in the face of looming sanctions' (du Toit 1993; Ewert and du Toit 2005: 319; Ewert and Hamman 1999). The reform efforts of the RF did improve the living conditions of the on-farm permanent workforce and their dependants, albeit without challenging the core assumptions of the racialised, paternalistic order.

An understanding of the unique character of farm paternalism in the Western Cape is important to contextualise the expectations and assumptions that underpin farm worker development discourses and activities. While deeply rooted in the social fabric of farm life, paternalism was not simply exploitative, but shaped and was shaped by farm workers’ and farmers’ expectations from each other (du Toit 1995; 1994). The self-conception of farmers ‘as benevolent but firm protectors and disciplinarians of a grateful and appreciative population of on-farm servants’ is particularly relevant in shaping the farm worker development discourse (Ewert and du Toit 2005: 319). Farmers were not only able to inform and influence what constituted development for farm workers, but the expectations shaped within this order extended well beyond farm workers’ relationship to the farm or the farmer (Mayson 1990). It is in this context that provision of social and sports activities would continue to be a part of farm worker development, both as approved by the farmers and realistically expected by farm workers. Andries du Toit exemplifies this in the context of emerging trade unions, who, as he argues, would not simply represent farm workers’ interests as workers, but ‘will also take up a wide range of issues affecting ... [workers] as a broader community – from addressing alcoholism to arranging bicycle-races, domino contests and trips to the sea!’ (1993: 336). The imprints of this paternalist past were only too apparent in the range of issues that the Fairhills Association, launched only in 2005, took on.

Just as the activities of the RF and the expectations from the trade unions, the increasing trend in the wine industry towards Fairtrade certification can be attributed to the social and economic changes at the turn of the political transition from apartheid to democracy (du Toit 2002). The uncertainty about the political changes that might follow the ascension of the democratic government particularly threatened the structures that had benefited from, and maintained their monopolistic advantage through, ‘close links to the major white political parties’ (Williams 2005: 478). The wine industry was among such institutions. For instance, the KWV,³ a wine producers’ cooperative that had been performing a statutory role in the South African wine industry since 1917, responded to the political changes by bidding to privatise. The custodians of the wine industry argued that the conversion into a company would ‘make it easier for KWV to raise capital and ... to create a *development trust*’ (ibid: 482, my emphasis). While this move further exposed ‘the provenance and allocation of its assets; labour relations in the industry; [and] its monopolistic structure’, the KWV was forced to abandon its privatisation plans (ibid). In the end, ‘after two years of legal

3 ‘KWV originally stood for the Ko-operatiewe Wijnbouwers Vereniging van Zuid Afrika Beperk (Co-operative Wine Growers Association of South Africa Ltd). It changed its Dutch name to the Afrikaans: Koöperatiewe Wynbouersvereniging van Suid Afrika Beperk in September 1993 (van Zyl 1993, 292)’ (cited in Williams 2005, n. 1).

wrangling', in an out-of-court settlement, it agreed to fund a trust over a period of 10 years, with an obligation for, among other things, the 'development and empowerment of farm workers' (Ewert and du Toit 2005: 330).

Although continuous in its response to economic and political pressures with the RF and the KWV in establishing trusts and initiatives for farm workers' development, the context in which the wine industry embraced Fairtrade was that of loss of the kind of state support it had enjoyed before the end of apartheid, deregulation of the market and the establishment of tighter farm labour laws and regulations (du Toit 2002; Kruger and Du Toit 2007; Moseley 2008; Ponte and Ewert 2009). However, consequences of these changes were more complex for both the farm labour and the industry. Deregulation and the removal of sanctions opened up South African wines to more lucrative international markets (Kruger and du Toit 2007). At the same time, the supply chain was becoming more buyer-driven, with greater competition over quality, price and ethics, as well as from the new entrants in wine production from Latin America (ibid). As Kruger and du Toit argue:

There were distinct advantages to differentiating one-self from the rump of white-owned and commercial agriculture, and persuading consumers that by buying the products of a "social" project they are participating, vicariously, in South African democratization and change (2007: 205).

Given the infamous history of exploitative labour practices, particularly the dop-system⁴ and its ramifications in the form of high levels of alcoholism and foetal alcohol syndrome across the generations of farm workers (London 1999; Marcus 1989; Scully 1996; Williams 2016), making South African wine "fair" enough for the Fairtrade certification evidently meant development projects for the workforce (Herman 2010; Kruger and Du Toit 2007; Montgomery 2014; Williams 2003). A Human Rights Watch report published in 2011 reported ongoing human rights violations against farm workers by their employers, once again giving the industry negative publicity internationally. Frustrated with the farm worker strikes of 2012-13 (coinciding with the time I was conducting fieldwork), a wine maker related in an interview that:

You see, in the wine industry there is quite a trend of doing ethical, upliftment, especially in the Western Cape. It is a political thing. The fact that Western Cape, its government not being

4 See Gavin Williams's recent article on dop system, in the history of the South African wine industry. He explains: 'The *'dop [tot] system'* refers to the practice of giving wine to male farm workers at regular intervals during the working day, which was general throughout the Cape winelands by 1890' (2016: 893).

National government, there's quite some politics. All eyes are here, always looking for negative things to nail the wine industry with. Because wine industry is big agricultural business of the Western Cape, not so in any other province, that is why the whole ethical thing is such a strong point.⁵

Therefore, a constellation of factors, including contestations over access to markets, domestic political pressures, economic opportunities, negative publicity, entrenched racialised paternalism at the commercial farm, and even a genuine sense of responsibility to transform the unjust practices in the wine industry, all played into seeing farm worker development as a strategic solution. The Fairtrade auditing and certification, and associated social projects, took on the politics of their time (see in particular: Montgomery 2014; Moseley 2008; Herman 2010; du Toit 2002), and yet, examining how these continue or depart from an historical trajectory adds an important context to my analysis of sports aspect of the Fairhills Association. In the next section, I examine the meanings and expectation to which sports serve in making wine production “fair”.

4. Making wine production “fair” through sports?

Although the Fairhills Association is situated in a farming region of the Western Cape with the worst reputation for racism, unfair labour practices and alcoholism, the project, by relative standards, was considered successful (Herman 2010; Montgomery 2014). So, what does sports do in the relative success of the project? How were sports envisaged in the project? The project manager of Fairhills, a thoughtful young white man with no generational history in the South African agrarian world, shared the following in an interview I recorded with him:

Sport has always been a very important aspect of Fairhills. Our very first event in 2005 was actually a sport day, which we held in Rawsonville. Sport is also very important to the people in Rawsonville, due to the fact that it also creates opportunity for the people to do something by themselves, in the sense of spending their free time. In the past, the alcohol abuse problems that South Africa has, specifically in this area: up till three years ago, Rawsonville was in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for highest alcohol consumption, per capita, per person.⁶

Few would dispute claims to the passionate following of sports among ‘the people in Rawsonville’, as well as the high levels of alcoholism among the Cape’s

5 Interview with a wine maker, Worcester, February 2013.

6 Interview with Fairhills Association’s project manager, Stellenbosch, January 2013.

farm labour. Over the course of my fieldwork, I recorded six rugby clubs and about 20 football clubs, and some kind of sporting action could be observed almost every weekend in and around Rawsonville.⁷ The archetypical image of drunkard farm worker is a legacy of the dop system, whereby workers received daily rations of wine in exchange for their labour. Still, Rawsonville's claims to the world record in 'highest alcohol consumption' is, at best, a legend. Yet, the rumour made the rounds in the many conversations I had over the course of my year-long fieldwork (also see Levine 2013: 66–7). The South African wine industry, however, does feature in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the largest wine cellar in the world: the KWV wine cellar in Paarl, Western Cape.⁸ While raising the topic of the dop system irked the white farmers, problems of alcoholism have remained a central feature in the development needed for farm workers since the 1970s, if not earlier (du Toit et al. 2008; Kaur 2017a; Williams 2003; Wilson et al. 1977). Sport has also been seen as a deterrent to alcohol abuse, a way to occupy the workers when they were not labouring on the farms (Kaur 2017a; Van der Waal 2014). Still, in establishing the brand of the Fairhills Association, sports also contributed in particular ways, as the project manager elaborated:

To build this project we have to focus really heavily on sports. And that was where we started. Everything was basically on sports. If you look at our DVD, a lot of the footage is around sports. That was also because at the beginning, the first four years of the project, due to the income of the project and everything and because we really focused on really providing good quality crèches for our children and focused on education. So, we didn't really have enough money left to create projects for the adults. Because at that stage we only focused on the small children, the infants, the primary school children and secondary school children. So, sport was basically the one thing that we can use towards our advantage to keep the adult people busy.⁹

In other words, sports activities accomplished many objectives of the project. It served as a deterrent from substance abuse, helped keep 'the adult people busy', all at the same time providing good footage for promotional purposes.

7 The number of soccer clubs fluctuates around farming seasons, labour migration cycles, and other factors. One important factor is longstanding networks of unofficial and autonomously organised football games, played for money or other bets (see Kaur 2016: 172–210). The soccer clubs regularly emerge, break and merge, depending on availability of finances, transport and interpersonal relations. Therefore, recording an accurate number of soccer clubs in the region, even over the course a year, was not possible.

8 See: <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-wine-cellar> [Accessed: 27 February 2018]

9 Interview with Fairhills Association's project manager, Stellenbosch, January 2013.

Moreover, ‘Fairhills has to benefit all equally and therefore the social premium must focus on the community rather than the individual’ (Herman 2010: 211). Had the amount spent on sports activities simply been divided equally among all the Fairhills farm worker members, the individual gains would have been insignificant. The amount spent on sports and the number of beneficiaries at all the sports events, however, could be made to look impressive, at least in quantitative measures; at the same time, the positive and joyful experience of sports could be translated as a community development effort. Still, spending the money, raised from international buyers to help make the wine production more ethical, on sports required some persuasion. Here I refer to Agatha Herman’s (2010) research because she interviewed a range of stakeholders of Fairhills, including the buyers and the funders of the project. As the extract from Herman’s interview with the Fairtrade wine buyer in the UK shows, the idea of sports as a way to develop farm workers was contested from the very start. The UK buyer argued:

[The project manager] had got in touch to say well ‘what we’re going to do to start off this whole project is we’re going to have this sports day and have all the communities together.’ And I remember thinking what are you doing a sports day for? ... spending our money on a sports day, that’s not really helping, is it? And then I realised when they sent us the video, it was the very best thing he could possibly have done because what he got was all those communities together who’d never got together really before, they had a fun day but it gave them this sense of being all, a community. I guess we take it for granted don’t we? When we went to see them after that, all they could talk about was this sports day and that made me realise what a major impact it had had on them (quoted in Herman 2010: 209).

Clearly, the promotional videos with footage from sports days and enthusiasm for sports in the in-person conversations served well to prove the impact of sports as ‘the very best thing’. Yet, the idea of bringing ‘communities together who’d never got together really before’ was curious, given the history of sports among farm labour, including the sports under the banner of the RF in the not too distant past (Kaur 2017a: 290–1; Mayson 1990). Yet, this claim was substantiated in another interview conducted by Herman with two farm worker Joint Body representatives, who informed:

Before the project was there, we didn’t know each other so much because some of the farms is that side, other farms is there, other farms is there and one farm is far from the other farms and so on. Now, since the project started is coming here, we see much from one another ... some weekends on Saturdays is sports day and so on, we come together and we are together

for the whole day and evening, so the joint body meet, we know now who is who, who stay there and who stay there and on the sports day, we see each other, one another and now we know that one and that one (quoted in Herman 2010: 208).

This farm worker testimony is particularly persuasive as evidence of the benefits of sports and the best use of the funds received from the donors. Building on Herman's multi-stakeholder research on how the changing ethical concerns of international consumers with greater buying power interact with local politics, ideologies and entrenched traditions in the specific context of the Fairhills Association, I elaborate on the range of meanings sport took on in the lives of the Fairhills farm worker members, when observed from a very different positionality and enquired with a different set of research questions. For example, Herman infers from her many conversations with farm workers, farmers and the appointed psychologist at Fairhills that 'the introduction of new activities [i.e. sports] at weekends has apparently supported a decrease in' substance abuse; promoted 'an increased sense of responsibility and community amongst all members of Fairhills'; 'fostered a growth in self-esteem amongst the workers who have been empowered'; and 'improved the relationship between farmers and farmworkers' (2010: 209-10). These inferences were based on subjective claims that hold intuitive resonance, and get reproduced by all kinds of social actors, including farm workers. Moreover, the triviality and seemingly benign impressions of sports in a context implicated in more serious ethical and political concerns allows for a generous reading of the impact of sports. The point worth contesting here is the claims to the "newness" of sports activities in the social experience of farm workers.

The executive members of the FSC were among the farm workers who had lived and worked in Rawsonville and the surrounding region for a long time. It was clear from the many conversations I had at the sports fields that they were attuned to the history and extent of sports participated in by the farm workers in the region. One of the soccer enthusiasts, Kobus, I interviewed because of his role in soccer administration since the 1980s turned out to be a Joint Body representative on the Fairhills Association. Relating the history of soccer in Rawsonville, he explained:

On every farm there was a team, or one team come out of two farms, or so. But that time it was, the Landelike Stigting [Rural Foundation], was part of the apartheid government. And if the boss of the farm says "you must play soccer, you work on my farm, you must play soccer!" And then there was a team on that farm! May be the team rise there for only 2 or 3 weeks, there was baie [many] soccer games and toks [soccer boots] and so on.

There was a lot of teams, there was two leagues: a “A” stream and a “B” stream that time. It was alright!¹⁰

The 1980s RF had also prioritised infrastructure and social development projects for farm workers in their attempts to enhance the image of the wine industry, in the context of looming sanctions against apartheid. In addition to state subsidies to improve or build houses and other amenities (community halls, sports fields, crèches, clinics, etc.) for the workers, the RF’s approach to community development was to create on-farm ‘liaison committees’ comprised of worker representatives. These were aimed at improving communication channels between farm workers and farmers, giving workers a platform to express their demands, address alcoholism and other social ills, and organise leisure-time activities and social clubs, including sports to build ‘community spirit’ (Mayson 1990). Among these efforts, organised sport ‘seemed to be the first way in which the community developers tried to develop the community’ (ibid: 190). While the political context in which the RF operated was different to that of Fairhills, the parallels between the approaches of the two initiatives were striking. Mayson’s research also shows that sports among farm workers had existed long before the institutionalisation of the RF. While the RF made negotiating resources for sports easier through the liaison committees, the community developers employed by the RF organised large-scale sports days. Outside these sports-for-development efforts, Kobus also shared how he continued to provide administrative support to run the soccer leagues during and beyond the RF’s operations. He elaborated that even after the termination of the RF’s activities, many farm worker soccer teams continued to ‘play for money and brandy and so on’.¹¹ It is in this format that soccer maintains its popularity among the working-class people across South Africa (Kaur 2017b). Clearly, sports had a life of its own among the farm workers, and so took on many contrasting meanings, some of which I discuss in the next section.

5. Sports: ‘... to have a better life!’

The primary responsibility of the FSC was to plan and allocate the sports budget to the affiliated sports clubs and to support their activities. It was clear that consistent access to resources to maintain the competitiveness of a sports club was among the benefits that Fairhills-affiliated sports-enthusiast members appreciated the most. The Fairhills sports activities included: an annual Sports Day (since 2005), a farm games festival (since 2012) and sports clubs in soccer, netball, rugby and

10 Interview with a farm worker who had been a soccer administrator during the 1980s and 1990s, long before Fairhills was established, Rawsonville, January 2013.

11 ibid

chess. The goal of the sports day and the festival-like events was to develop community spirit and social cohesion among the farm workers from the different Fairhills farms, whereas sports clubs were to support regular participation in the regional competitive leagues, and as the project manager explained, these created an 'opportunity for the people to do something by themselves'. Given the sparsely populated vast farmlands, no access to public transport and wages too low to enable a large majority of the farm workers to buy or maintain personal transport, the isolation or marginality experienced by farm workers was directly related to the terms of employment. Therefore, it could be argued that it was the transport, not the sports activities *per se*, provided by Fairhills that played an important role in enhancing the mobility of farm worker-members. For example, among all the soccer clubs I engaged with during fieldwork, it was only the Fairhills Football Club that had reliable access to transport for their games, a distinct privilege that was enviously noted by many soccer clubs in Rawsonville.

Still, there were exceptions. For example, the chairperson of a small but competitive rugby club, the Klipdrift Rugby Club, Neil, was a foreman at a Fairhills farm. However, he did not participate in any of the Fairhills activities. Neil and his wife were critical of some of the youth activities of Fairhills. Upon attending a church meeting with them, it became clear that their criticism was based less on their personal experience with Fairhills, and more on the interpretations their church had assigned to the selected activities. The Klipdrift Rugby Club had been in existence since 1985, and despite the fact that most of the players of the club, in one way or the other, were connected to the Fairhills Association, they did not play for the Fairhills rugby team, nor did the club benefit from the sports budget of the FSC. While Neil's position as a foreman had exempted him from "needing" development, his higher salary and that he owned personal transport had made him a desirable person for the chairperson's position. The examples of long-standing rugby club and regular soccer games organised independent of the development interventions dispels the idea that sports were "new" activities for farm workers, yet these say little about the hopes for and dissatisfactions with the terms of access to sports.

To discuss the tension between the proclaimed and wishful benefits of sports and the desires for particular kinds of opportunities from sports, I draw on a group conversation I recorded with the executive members of the FSC. Mike, the soccer coach of the Fairhills FC, introduced me to the members of the FSC, given my interest in learning more about the sports activities of Fairhills. In the winter months of August 2012, Mike informed me that the Fairhills youth and the FSC would be meeting at the Fairhills community hall, where I could speak to both groups, the young soccer players and the executive members. While Mike facilitated my conversations with the youth, we both had to wait until the FSC's

planning meeting was over. Finally, I was invited to a small room, where about 12 FSC members were gathered. This was the first and the only conversation I had with this collective, and therefore, I did not have the opportunity to learn any more about the individuals. And even in the conversation on the evening, only a few were more open about engaging with me. I opened the conversation by asking for their views on the importance and benefits of sport to the worker communities of Rawsonville, the response to which was a cynical hope or desire for opportunities to compete at professional sports. The excerpt I illustrate from this conversation focuses on one member, Jan (J), and his response to my (T) questions:

T: do you see any other benefit of doing sports ... other than becoming a sports professional?

J: no, not in this valley!! Not here in this town!

T: but what about, as they say, doing regular sports keeps you healthy, keeps you out of trouble, good for your concentration, good for discipline, good for team work, fun; is that something seen important?

J: yes, yes! Of course! All that or something like that!! Only value for yourself [or] for other people. Not really for me! Yes, I want my boy to play rugby here and then I want people like WP, Sharks [professional rugby clubs in South Africa] to come, and have a look for my boy, and I want him to play there! But there is no way, because no-one comes looking for talents.

T: that is what you really value, no other benefit, like health or fun?

J: if the people come out and have a look how the people play in this town, that will benefit!

J: ... And you see, one of the children is playing rugby or soccer, to provide, to make money for you, and to have a better life!¹²

There was a lot of texture, animation and emotion (not so easy to bring out in transcribed words on a flat piece of paper) in the way the FSC executive members shared their aspirations for sports. Before responding to my questions, they took their time to assess me and the situation. Many of them might have seen me at the soccer fields, particularly attending the unofficial games in and around Rawsonville. Moreover, I was introduced by Mike (who was not an executive member of the FSC), and I sensed that they were more ambiguous about my

12 Interview/open discussion with the group of farm worker-executive members of the FSC, Rawsonville, August 2012.

positionality and why I had asked to meet with them. The ice was broken when Jan candidly announced that there was little significance to sports participation in the absence of real opportunities to excel at it. This spurred some laughter and side comments, reminding him that sports were just to 'keep the youth busy'. Many silently observed the exchange, while Jan assertively dismissed this view, pointing out at the potential that sports had 'to make money for you'. It was through political contestation and persuasion that these members were elected to the leadership positions in the FSC and the Joint Body, with years of experience in the valley and in its ways with sports, farm worker development and on-farm social and political relations. Since I showed little interest in knowing the benefits of the Fairtrade project, the strategic calculations might have been very different in deciding what and how much to share. It was clear that Jan was not going to let me or anyone else distract him with any other "benefit" than the charms of professional sports that lures him to consider it as a worthy pursuit in the first place. The likes of Breyton Pause¹³ and Heini Adams¹⁴, professional rugby players with backgrounds not too dissimilar to that of farm workers, gave all the more reason to believe in the possibilities that sports can offer 'to have a better life'. Yet, a combination of pessimism and optimism was interwoven into the way this conversation flowed. It is likely that some of the optimism might have been caused by my presence, particularly in a hope (explicitly expressed) that I might have connections to scouts they wish would come looking for talent in the valley. For some these aspirations were genuine and for others a reason to mock the ambitions that seemed beyond the reach of people in their condition. In response to my naïve questions and ideas about development of and through sports, Mike had often related to me that 'people don't get along with each other here'.¹⁵ Or was it that different people had different interests, lives and hopes, and even the farm worker members of the Fairhills Association were 'not an undifferentiated mass' (Ferguson 1990: 281)?

13 Breyton Pause has played for the national South African rugby union team, the Springboks, since 1999. He grew up on a farm in Koue Bokkeveld, Ceres, where many of his peers work as farm workers.

14 Heini Adams grew up in Roodewal, a locality known for high rates of crime in Worcester area. He comes from a materially humble background, and was (at the time of fieldwork) an admired local hero, playing for a professional rugby club in France.

15 Recorded as field notes, from many conversations I had with the football coach of Fairhills, January 2013.

6. Concluding remarks

The appeal of sports in development projects relies on its enjoyable, educational and healthy lifestyle-promoting attributes. At the same time, popular stories of rags-to-riches through sporting success has made it an attractive option, a real opportunity for upward socio-economic mobility. The conflation of these starkly different expectations of sports serves well in generating enthusiastic testimonies and whole-hearted embracing of sports in development interventions by a range of different parties. As my study of the sports aspect of the Fairhills Association shows, there were a number of interests at play: for the project manager, sports helped with the development of community cohesion and produced good footage for promotional videos; for the donors, the soundbite testimonies valorised the best use of their money; for the farm worker who managed the soccer club, access to transport made all the difference; for those in the middle management and better paid positions, they could continue with their sports without interference from or negotiations with Fairhills; for some of in the executive positions of the Joint Body, excelling at professional sports was considered most valuable. The deeper the engagement with even more diverse range of people involved in sports and the kinds of developments they seek, the longer and denser the list of expectations and the complexity of meanings attached to sports were likely to be.

Notwithstanding, given the history of racial segregation and exclusion in South African sports (Archer and Bouillon 1982; Booth 1998; Grundlingh 1995), the competitive sports in post-apartheid South Africa offer new possibilities and terms for success in life, in which farm workers were no longer disenfranchised, at least not in the same way as the historical, economic and political entrapments of their occupation. Rhetorically, sports represent a level playing field, where, as Mills argues, ‘societal elites are stripped of their traditional head starts and privileges, and in which they have to face the challenge of others with only the resources of their own bodies to secure ascendancy’ (2005: 1). While the world of sports, including the political economy of South African professional sports, operates on its own logics of inherited class, racial and gendered inequalities (Desai 2010), at the level of community development broadly, and in the case of farm workers specifically, sports, even temporarily, opens up a space to negotiate on new or different terms. It was the relative triviality of sports in the context, I argue, that may have allowed for greater democratic control over the sports budget. Sports may never be as necessary as bread, it may still, at times, take on more or less importance, without directly playing into the precariousness of farm workers’ structural positions. In other words, sports may be a safe space to express discontent, assert deeply held desires and push for a better deal, without necessarily jeopardising livelihoods.

Moreover, the organisational arrangement of the Fairhills Association did give some of its farm worker members a degree of decision-making powers, unlike the 1980s Rural Foundation, where farmers, ultimately, were able to control every aspect of development to be delivered on their farms (Mayson 1990). Herman argues that such democratic participation in the decision-making processes ensured a more empowered future for the workers (2010). However, given the foundations of farm labour relations in racialised authoritarian paternalism, continued poor wages, large-scale externalisation and casualisation of labour since the early 1990s, and government's continued failure to protect farm labour rights (du Toit 1993; 2002; du Toit and Ally 2004), the success of this kind of democratisation relies on how well the intermediaries in the process will be able to articulate, negotiate and defend the interests of workers (Kruger and Du Toit 2007: 214). These intermediaries cannot simply external ethics auditors, trade unions or international consumers, but also and more so, those from within the workforce in middle and senior managerial positions (see for example: Addison 2014; Bolt 2016a). Attention to welfare projects explicitly places labour conditions on the agenda of ethical trading; the implicit message, however, remains that to be an ethical employer (or to ensure the wellbeing of the workforce) within the South African wine industry requires supplementary fund raising. As with KWV's approach to establish a development trust in the late 1990s and the South African Agricultural Union and the apartheid government's joint effort to institutionalise and subsidise the RF in the 1980s, Fairtrade's approach continues to operate on the assumption that individual wine producers cannot financially afford fair wages and just conditions for the farm workers.

By way of conclusion, I argue that irrespective of the intended development goals to which the Fairhills Association allocated funds for sports activities, sports, unwittingly, ended up serving as a conduit to express, appropriate and mobilise desires for a better life. By contrasting the different explanations for sports' use in the development of farm workers, I show how contingent these were to the time, place, political calculations, ideological dispositions, and individual negotiations with layers of power-relations. Moreover, in translating the need for ethical standards and fairer labour practices in the wine industry into a project of community development, farm workers were subsumed as an undifferentiable mass with uniform desires and collective needs. Positive connotations to community development might serve well to source funds in a context where donors seek quick results and large beneficiary numbers as evidence of the impact. Yet, when examined with a different set of questions, "community" only ends up denoting shared subalternities, a compromised position of power, of those assigned to its membership. The claims to sports as an aspect of community development for farm workers in an industry that cannot sustain fair

labour practices without external funding raises more pressing questions than I can discuss within the scope of this paper. Still, situating my analysis in the broader structural and historical context shows how discourses and projects of sports-for-development were shaped by a combination of political calculations and emotional attachments. By questioning the role of sports in making wine production “fair”, I argue that the tension between wishful benefits, desires, and experiences of sports illustrates, not simply a misunderstanding between different actors, but the very condition of their subalternity it aims to address.

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