



**Exam commission:**

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Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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Faculty of Psychology and Educational  
Sciences – Department of Social Welfare  
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**Prof. dr. Eivind A. Skille**  
The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

**Promotor:**

**Prof. dr. Marc Theeboom**  
Faculty of Physical Education and  
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Vrije Universiteit Brussel

We cordially invite you to the public defence  
of the doctoral dissertation of:

**REINHARD HAUDENHUYSE**

which will take place on Wednesday,  
March 28 at 18:00 in room D2.01 (Building D),  
located on the campus of Etterbeek

**THE POTENTIAL OF SPORTS  
FOR SOCIALLY VULNERABLE YOUTH**

Promoter: Prof. dr. Marc Theeboom

Prof. dr. P. Van Roy  
Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy

Please confirm your presence by March 23, 2012: [cvdhouck@vub.ac.be](mailto:cvdhouck@vub.ac.be)

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## Presentation of the dissertation

Sports are often recognized as an opportunity to engage socially vulnerable youth in a leisure context and not just in terms of participation in sports activities, but across a range of issues, including education, employment and training, community leadership and healthy lifestyles. However, how sports practices can effectively contribute in creating such broader outcomes stays unclear and has been dealt with much scepticism. The purpose of the dissertation was to gain a better insight in how sports practices working with socially vulnerable youth could effectively generate wider social outcomes. The dissertation is built around three main chapters.

Regarding working with socially vulnerable youths in a sports setting, it was described in the first chapter that the knowledge of the specific situation of youths, a good command of sports organizational and didactical skills and understanding of the wider processes of social vulnerability would assure some success in organizing sport-plus programs that could create an added value beyond mere participation. By positioning the framework of social vulnerability, we were able to identify specific coaching and organizational processes that could be researched in different sports settings.

Drawing on the findings from the field research conducted in a Flemish (northern region of Belgium) sports (boxing) project, the second chapter critically discusses coaching dimensions with regard to perceptivity towards youth's well-being, motivational climate, authority relationships, socio-psychological competences, the sports model and working towards competence. Apart from these socio-pedagogical coaching dimensions, this chapter also describes how the cultural capital of coaches interacts within the context of the sport-plus initiative.

Whereas the second chapter has mainly focused on how sports are delivered, the third chapter looks at the experiences young people have had in the context of the selected sport-plus practice, with the purpose of better understanding the potential of sports for socially vulnerable youth. From the field research it was found that boxing, within the setting of the sport-plus practice, meant different things for different participants. Considering the unique personal and situational characteristics of young people that were involved in the study, it could be reasonably expected that participating in the boxing initiative, generated unique experiences, which had divergent outcomes. The dissertation concludes with implications for policy and practice and formulates future research pathways.

The dissertation was made possible thanks to the support of the Flemish Government (*Steunpunt voor Beleidsrelevant Onderzoek Cultuur, Jeugd en Sport*).

## Curriculum Vitae

**Reinhard Haudenhuyse** was born on February 20th 1982 in Gent (Belgium). In 2005 he obtained a Master's degree in Physical Education (option physical activity, fitness and health) at the University of Ghent. He holds an additional Master's degree in Conflict and Development (Third World Studies) obtained at the University of Gent in 2006. In 2008 he started his doctoral dissertation at the department of Sport Policy and Management at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His research interests revolve around youth sports, sports-based social interventions, monitoring & evaluation and sport pedagogy. He has several publications in international and national peer-reviewed journals and gave several presentations at international and national forums.