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Introduction: the blend of science and sport

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Science and sport are evidently two prominent features of modern societies, however in widely differing ways. Thus, this volume of *Sport in Society* deals with the interrelationship of these two decisive practices. This literal, and seemingly obvious, way of unpacking what conditions sport science might open for deepened understanding of both science and sport, as well as the time, place and collectives they flourish within.

Intuitively, one might place them on a scale of utility, where science probably would be understood as the more serious and useful of the two, which would leave sport at the gratuitous and frivolous end of the scale. Such normative prejudices will be challenged, in different manners, by the selected articles. Hence, the different ways in which sport and science interact, share characteristics, and even constitute each other will be scrutinized throughout the issue's different original articles.

Captivatingly, there are various illustrations, through history, in which sport has supported the emergence or the understanding of science. For instance, in a recent dissertation, media scholar Wing (2016, 13) exemplifies this by claiming that 'Western physics has been, at least until recently, very much a theory of bouncing balls'. Newton's physics, for example, is often explained by descriptions of how billiard balls interact. Sport, then, it seems, is a fertile soil for metaphors and idioms for both lay and scholarly discourses. Thus, could sport even be too readily available as a simile for the systematic production within academia? Such a view is heralded by Czarniawska and Bernward (1996) who instead, in their deliberations upon fashion, talk of a 'dominating masculine culture of the social sciences, where war, sport and technology are worth serious scrutiny and become a source of unproblematic metaphors' (ibid. p. 24).

Notwithstanding the fascination (and powers) of sport metaphors, could sport, as its representation in science, cope with firm scientific standards. In this respect, the tests whether sport science is to be regarded as 'scientific', in relation to characteristics, relevance and position, might lead to a problematic diagnosis, as well as an optimistic cure (Carlsson and Hedenborg 2014, 2015). For instance, the problems of instrumentalism, normativity and relativism appear to shadow the discipline's potential. At the same time, the importance and the impact of the subject could place sport science in a favourable position, in relation to science. In this respect, Wing writes (2016, 20): 'Play, games, and sport are good categories

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for cutting across and thus connecting disciplines that are cast on one side or the other of the divide between humanities and science'. Hence, the discipline, due to its subject, could amalgamate natural science and social science, in light of Latour's (1993) request in *We Have Never been Modern* (cf. Jonasson 2013). In addition, sport could work as a social laboratory for social science in general.

To stress, the ambition in the current volume originates from a previous volume in *Sport in Society* (see, above. Carlsson and Hedenborg 2014, 2015). The current volume will, harmoniously, take a departure in the relation of sport and science. But, in comparison to the emphasis on meta-theoretical discussions (ibid.), the reasoning in the novel essays will take a different direction.

In this respect, sport philosophers have regularly pointed to a common ground of science and sport: testing (Loland 2002; Jonasson 2014). In this respect, there is an interesting analogy between the trials of experimental science and of sport competitions. Both revolve around uncertainty, and therefore all components must be known and meticulously calibrated. A Latourian reading could extend this reasoning: while experiments aim to purify natural essences from human interference, sport aim to purify human essences from non-human components. Another approach to take on is the one that has to do with sport and sporting performances that may transcend the limitations of science. Sport is not only about measurable performances. So, how can one measure the joy many obviously feel when they performing sports or watching sports? Or, is it (ever) possible to really understand sports without reflecting on qualities and properties beyond the sporting experience in itself?

No doubt, the relationship between sports and science can be understood in many ways. In this issue of *Sport in Society*, we find a number of perspectives. They all scrutinize the relationship, from different angles, and with different conclusions.

In the first article, 'Sport: A Scientific Experiment?', Sigmund Loland claims, convincingly, that science plays an increasingly important role in sport. Innovative technology and research-based exercise regimes are vivid examples. However, as a challenge, in this essay Loland examines the possibilities and limits of scientific rationality in the progress of competitive sport. Hence, his essential argument is that sport has a value in itself, beyond the instrumental aims of science, and he thereby supports the idea of human excellence, in addition to the athletic (scientific) excellence. In this respect, Loland considers the present emphasis on scientific rationality as a threat to the (human) values of sport.

Kalle Jonasson's contribution, 'Sport qua Science', takes a solid departure in Michel Serres's reasoning, and is basically directed towards the use of sport as a possible asset of knowledge in Academia. Thus, by mapping and analyzing the usage and appliance of a concept, the 'quasi-object', a new perspective of the relationship between sport and science is explored. The 'metaphor of the ball' – and how the ball is passed in team-settings, for sure, appears to be recognized in social science and humanities. Still, due to the target, and the mixed methods strategy, Jonasson detects parallel Sport Science in Academia that goes under the radar of regular sport disciplines; a sort of 'Sport AS Humanities', which goes beyond the regular quarrels (if sport is 'bad' or 'good'), and instead, acknowledges sport as a knowledge asset, beyond the ideological badge

The third article, 'Situated Knowledges in Sports', produced by Kutte Jönsson, elaborates upon Donna Haraway's understanding of the concept of 'situated knowledges', as a mean to understand the (situated) 'stories' that are intertwined in the relationship between sport

and sciences and the narratives of sport science. In this respect, the essay copes with the 'scientification of practice'. To quote Jönsson, Sport Sciences have to handle, 'stories we can believe in', and is a part of.

'The Role and Relationship of Science and Ethics in the Evaluation of Fair Play in Sport', by Angela Schneider and Michel Gonsalves, has the ambition to produce critical analysis of the relationship between sport science and ethics, by analyzing various forms of 'fairness' rules and policies. Thus, Schneider and Gonsalves state, initially, that the relationship between science and ethics can, actually, have an impact on professional careers and competitive balance. However, formal rules, policy and fair play, have to be challenged, and Schneider and Gonsalves make this effort related to fairness and science, from a philosophical and feminist perspective.

In some sense, the fifth article 'Sex, Drugs, and Science', by Jörg Krieger, Lindsay Parks Pieper and Ian Ritchie, rests on Schneiders and Gonsalves' contribution in regard to the relation of sport, fairness and science. In this respect, the article traces and analyzes the history of two important policies in sport: i.e. rules against drugs and 'ambiguous' athletes in women's events. Thus, the articles divide the policy (related to current policy in science) and the history in three different periods, and find essentially that the actual stakeholders, during these periods, relied more upon medical, scientific and technical practices, than on ethical standards, to define and control fairness in sport.

No doubt, the scientific attitude is also illuminated in Daniel Svensson and Sven Sörlin's articles 'The "Physiologization" of Skiing'. By drawing attention to the 'ski lab', as an interesting subject in regard to the rationalization and technologizing of sport, Svensson and Sörlin contributes to the Latourian conceptualization of scientific work. Thus, they detect a physiologization of the ski sport – and endurance sports in general – in which scientists, sport organizations and specialized coaches have transformed natural and individual training to something universal and scientific. In addition, Roslyn Kerr also has Latour as her theoretical point of departure. Her target in 'The Role of Science in the Practice of Talent Identification' is the operation of science in talent identification. In the article, Kerr tracks the changing talent identification systems adopted in the sport of rhythmic gymnastics in New Zealand over approximately 20 years. What she describes is a process – decision-makings – that has gradually transformed from 'the perspective of scientism' and 'scientific testing' towards local knowledge and experiences, at least among empowered gymnastics coaches.

In 'Laboratory Production of Health and Performance', Kass Gibson continues the analysis of the 'sport lab'. Gibson is, initially, sceptic towards critical studies of discursive power of biomedical knowledge in sport, exercise and physical activity, due to the lack of foundation in empirically grounded materials. Thus, Gibson, by an ethnographic investigation, with data collected from over 1000 h of participant observation and 53 semi-structured interviews, has the ambition to empirically explore how underlying political and social values are articulated. The findings present the production of exercise physiology knowledge as characterized by dehumanization as well as rehumanization processes, in which exercise physiology knowledge appear as 'applicable' as well as 'desirable'.

The issue ends by Bo Carlsson's article, 'Science Slam' and the Sportification of Science', in which he demonstrates a different link between science and sport, in the wake of the efforts to 'popularize' science and its presentation to common people. Sport's relation to society could be grasped in its connection to science. Thus, there seem to exist two parallel processes: the scientification of sport and the sportification of science. Undoubtedly, science

has become an important part in the development of sport, particularly in elite sport. As regards the relation between science and sport, an opposite trend has also been observed, in which sport logic influences the (popular) presentation of science. In this respect, this essay portrays the 'sportification of science', by making reference to 'Science Slam' and 'Grand Prix in Science'.

The ambition by this volume is to attract Sport Sciences' attention towards the relation sport and science, in familiar contexts as well as in unusual settings and perspectives.

To end up, Loland, initially, warns against the rationality in the scientific progress of (human) sport, whereas Carlsson, at the end, is critical to the current 'sportification' of science. However, the works of, for instance, Kerr as well as Gibson seem to moderate these critical departures. Thus, considering these different approaches and warnings dialectically, the 'blend of sport and science' is problematic, and asks for more research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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