

# The Academization of Sport in Sweden

Sport Research, Higher Sport Education and The Sport Labor Market, from a Perspective of Knowledge



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

## Purpose & Questions

The purpose of the thesis is to understand the academization of sport in Sweden, from a perspective of knowledge. I.e. the process by which an area of knowledge becomes scientific.

Research questions:

- What knowledge is being produced through sport research (social science) in Sweden, and why?
- What knowledge is being mediated through higher sport education in Sweden, and why?
- What knowledge is demanded on the sport labor market in Sweden, and why?
- How does the three bodies of knowledge above relate to each other?

## Theory

The thesis is based on, and departs from, a perspective of knowledge, as formulated by Berger & Luckmann in *The Social Construction of reality* (1997). Where as knowledge is viewed as a social construction, and emphasizes the importance of the social context in which knowledge is produced, communicated, renegotiated and so forth.

Institutional- (Powell & DiMaggio 1991) and organizational theory (Slack & Parent 2006) is adopted when interpreting the results and trying to understand why the results appear as they do. I.e. in order to understand the academization process of sport in Sweden at a deeper level. Key concepts are: institution, institutionalization, path dependency and organizational ideal types and complexity.

## Method

Multiple methods are adopted, such as: document and content analysis, analysis of existing public statistics and informal interviews (Bryman 2002). Both archeological and genealogical methods (Ritzer 1996) are utilized in order to uncover and understand the academization of sport in Sweden. Data sources are:

Part 1, Sport research: Sport dissertations, journal articles, research reports, and interviews with key-informants.

Part 2, Higher Sport Education: Admittance statistics, curriculums, political propositions and education websites.

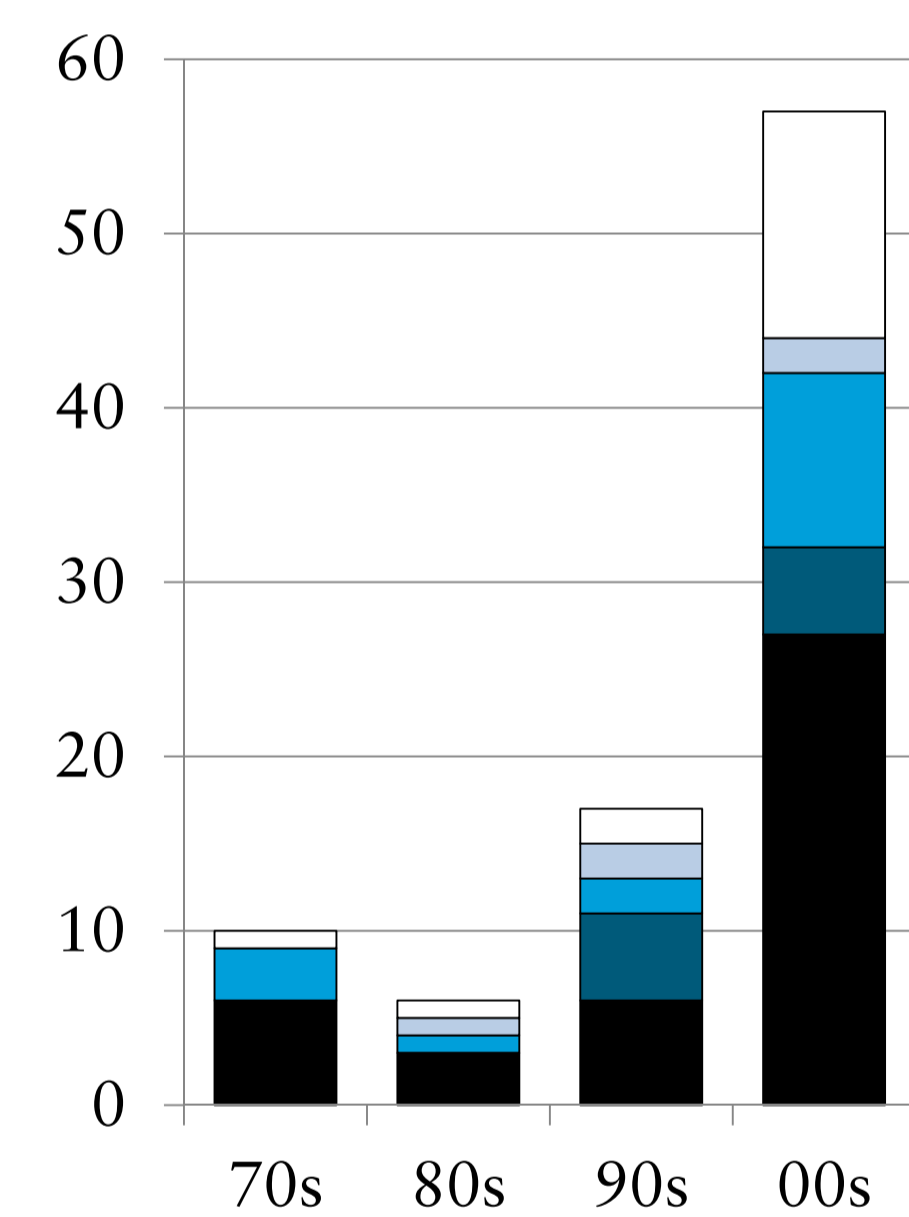
Part 3, The Sport Labor Market: Sport employment statistics, employment ad statistics and employment ads.

## Results

### Sport Research

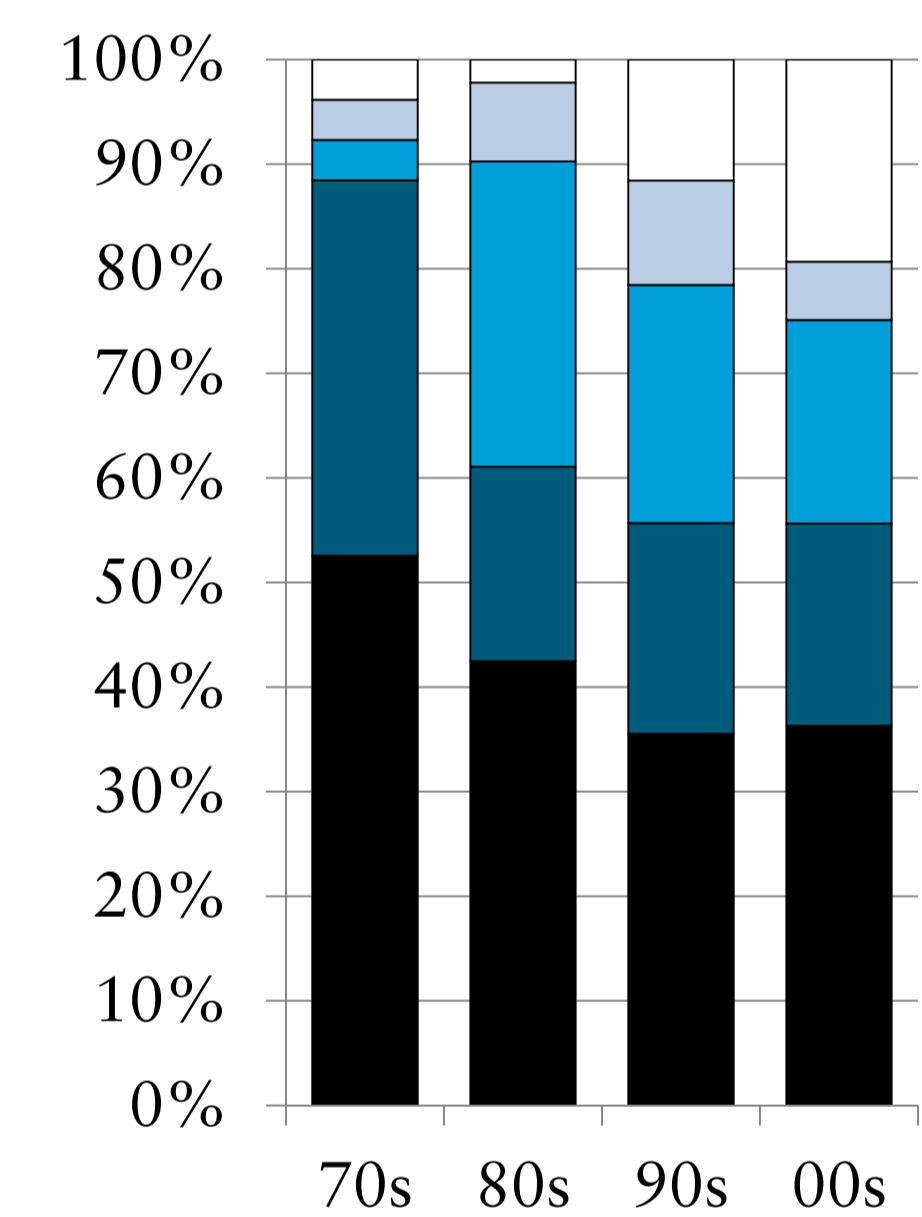
Sport research within the social sciences first kicked off in Sweden during the 1970:s, and has increased significantly ever since. Historically the production of knowledge has been dominated by the disciplines of pedagogy, psychology, history and sociology. They still dominate although other disciplines have become more and more engaged in sport research over time. During the first decade of the new millennium one fifth of the sport research was produced outside the four dominant disciplines. Sport research is in other words becoming more and more differentiated.

Diagram 1.1. Sport dissertations within different disciplines in Sweden (n).



Legend: Pedagogy (black), Psychology (dark blue), History (light blue), Sociology (grey), Other (white)

Diagram 1.2. Distribution of sport research on different scientific disciplines in Sweden.



Legend: Pedagogy (black), Psychology (dark blue), History (light blue), Sociology (grey), Other (white)

### Higher Sport Education

Before the 2000:s there were only four higher sport educations in Sweden, all of them with a focus on pedagogy. But in 2002 something happened, in one year five new sport educations started, more than doubling the amount of sport science educations. Possible explanations to the explosive development are: (1) commercialization, professionalization and medialization processes of sport in Sweden reaching new heights, and (2) a series of educational reforms, enabling: (a) universities to offer new types of educations and (b) more citizens to partake in higher education.

Diagram 2.1. Higher Sport Educations (HSE) in Sweden (n).

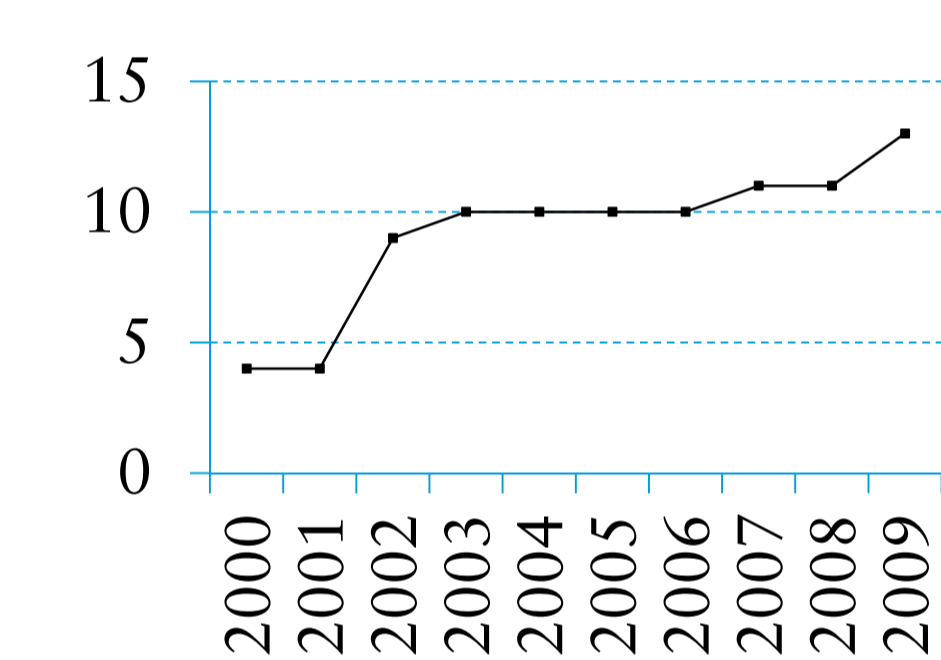
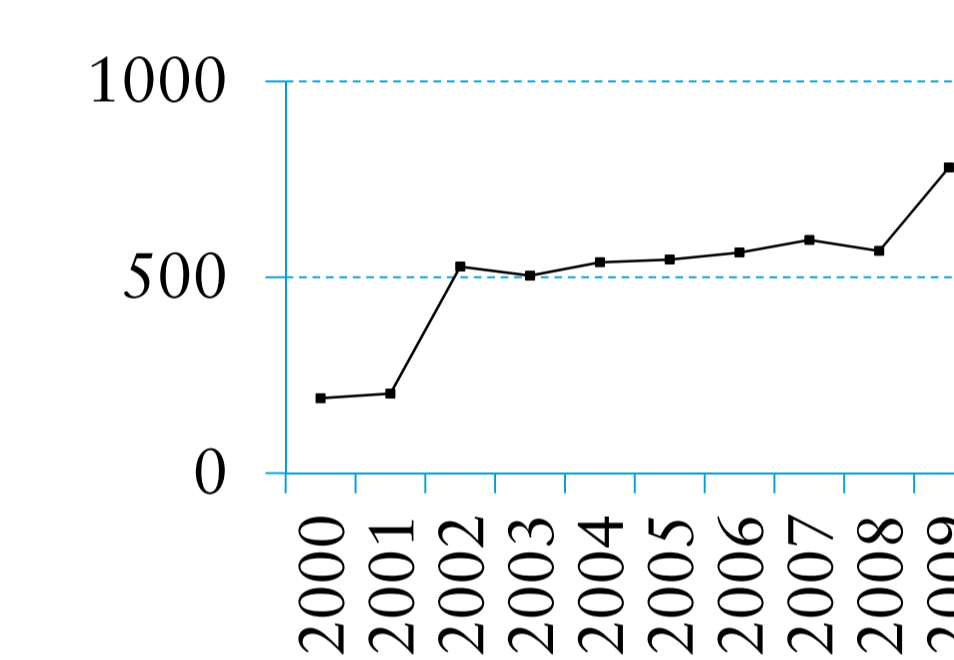


Diagram 2.2. Students admitted to HSE in Sweden (n).



In 2009 the number of sport educations had risen to 13, admitting close to 800 students annually. In order to better understand the educations, and what kind of knowledge they mediate, the literature within every education, and every one of its orientations, was analyzed. The goal was to identify different types of sport educations. Every orientation within every education was also treated as a separate education due to their varying content. Through the analysis, 22 separate educations, within six different types of higher sport educations could be identified, see table 2.1.

Almost half of the sport educations were categorized as Sport management educations. I.e. nine of the educations were dominated by management knowledge, such as economy, law, organizational theory, HRM and marketing.

Table 2.1. Sport educations, and students admitted, within different education types 2008.

Education type	n	n	%
Management	9	275	48,6
Coaching	5	71	12,5
Health	3	82	14,5
Culture and Society	2	26	4,6
Medicine and Physiology	2	87	15,4
Psychology	1	25	4,4
Total	22	566	100,0

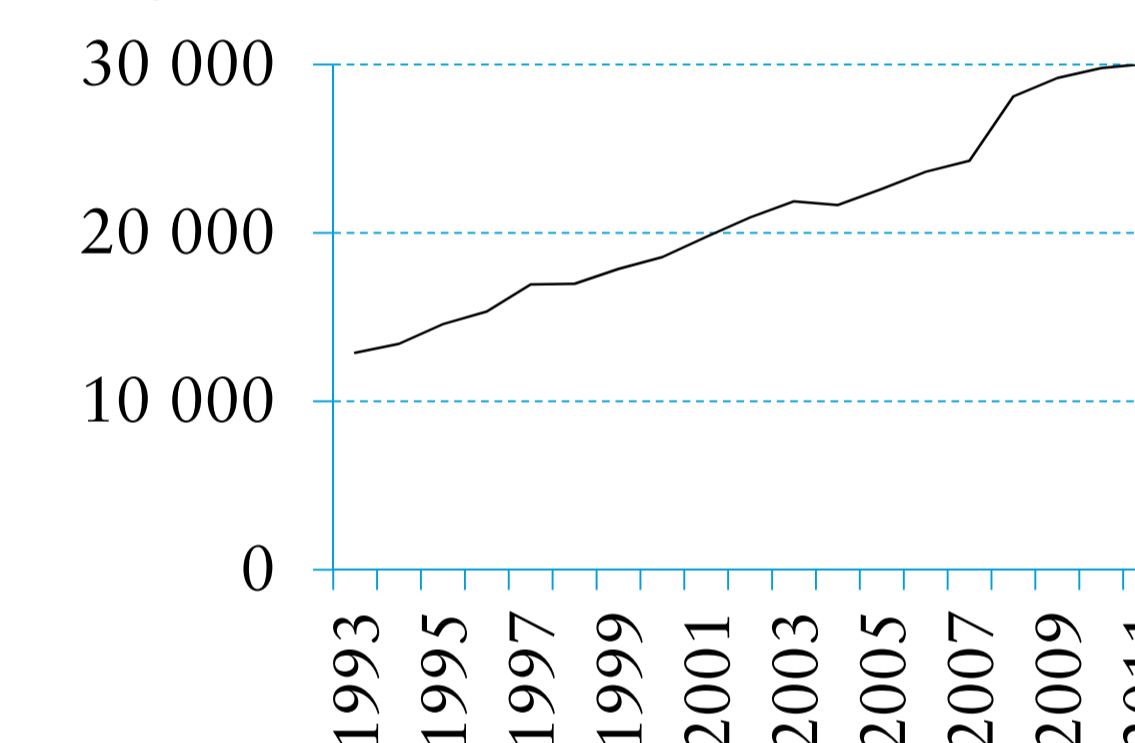
The second most common was coaching educations, there were five of them. There was three health-, two culture and society, two medicine and physiology educations, and one psychology education.

### The Sport Labor Market

There have been employees within sport organizations for a long time in Sweden. However, there have never been as many as today. The number of employees within sport organizations in Sweden have increased dramatically in later decades, more than doubling in amount between 1993 and 2011. The number of sport organizations with employees have increased even more rapidly, tripling the number of organizations with employees during the same time period.

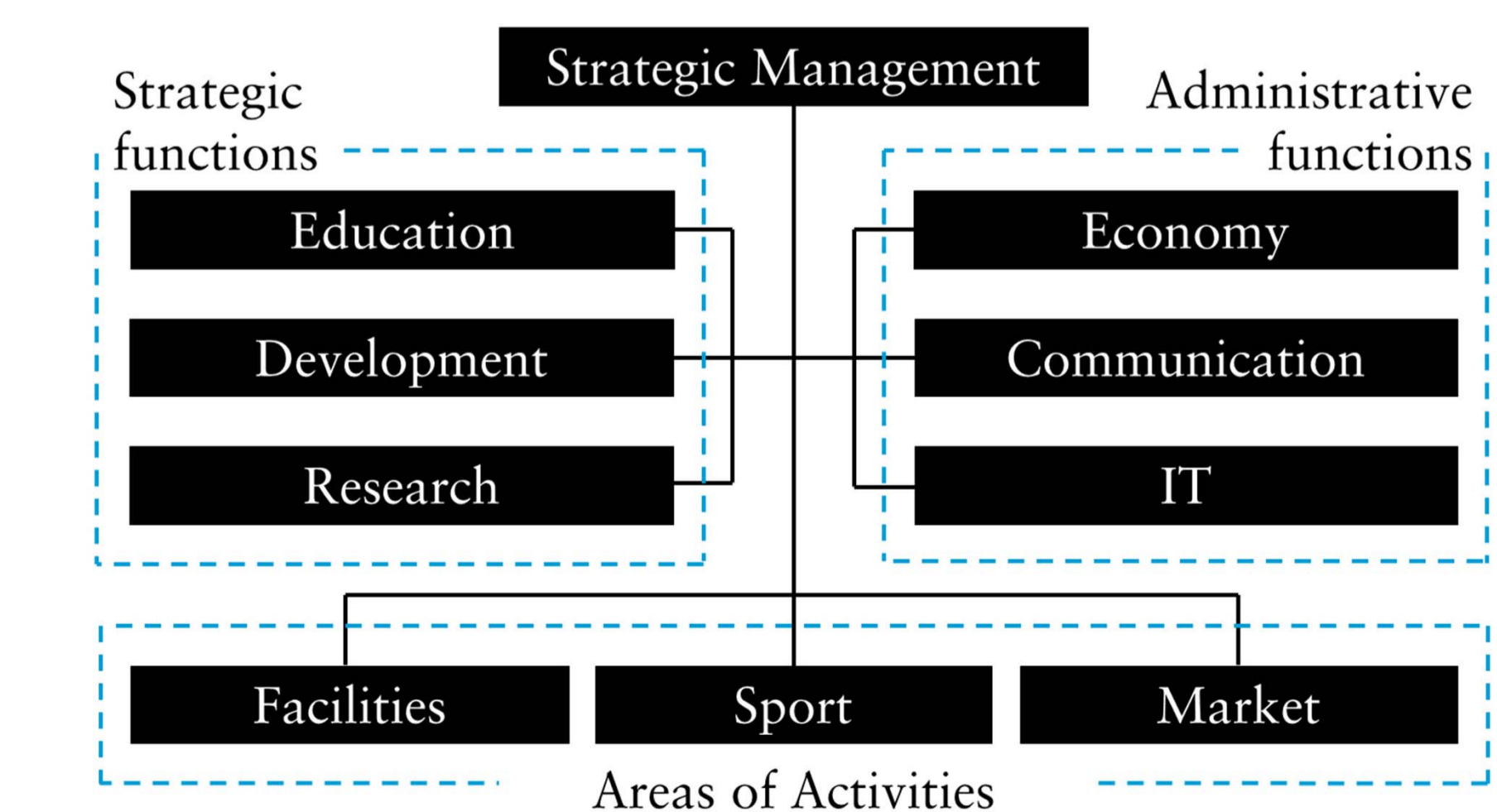
Correspondingly, the number of employment ads issued by sport organizations have also increased significantly the latest 15 years. Upon closer inspection, however, one can see that the majority of the increase consists of part time, and time-limited employments. Most of the ads are also issued by the relative novelty of companies organizing sport for children.

Diagram 3.1. Employees within sport organizations in Sweden (n).



When analyzing employment ads issued by sport organizations, a number of professional roles, for which knowledge demand looked remarkably multifarious, could be identified. Examples of the most common ones are: sports counselor, sports coach, general manager, finance manager, fitness instructor, personal trainer and communications operative. The professional roles operates within different organizational areas (see figure 3.1), and can be divided in to four groups depending on (a) if specific sport knowledge or another area of knowledge is primary to the role, and (b) if the professional role is on strategic or operative level.

Figure 3.1. The typical complex sport organization in Sweden.



## Conclusion

Sport organizations have existed for a 100 years, sport research within social science has been conducted for 40 years, and higher sport educations have been around for 10 years. Following different lines of history the bodies of knowledge within research, education, and sport organizations inevitably develops differently. The different institutions aren't born in a vacuum, they are established, developed and reproduced in social and ideological contexts. There is very little research being done within the area of Sport Management in Sweden today, even though there are many sport management educations, and professional roles, demanding such knowledge. There have been a differentiation within sport research in later years, but the expansion is mainly in areas irrelevant to Sport management. Sport research in Sweden is highly institutionalized, and is to a large extent reproducing itself. The path dependency sport research seems to be experiencing ought to be addressed in order to forward the development of sport research, to better fit the needs and demands of sport educations and sport organizations. How? That's a political issue...

## References

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