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The reader is indeed a wonderful Anglo-American academic textbook tradition – a collection of texts on a specific, albeit possibly widely defined, subject, often by different authors from different time periods, with the aim to summarize the state of research in a specific area of knowledge, and hence – at best – also point to future development. idrottsforum.org has over the years reviewed readers about sports and gender, physical education, sports and society, sports tourism, sport studies and women and sports in the United States, and coming up are two readers, of sports ethics and critical Olympic research respectively. And not only the reader tradition is good, the books may turn out really good too, which some of the reviews testify to. They may, on the other hand, become rather less than good, which some of our reviewers have had to point out. In this update we are pleased to publish a rigorous review of a reader that is good in some parts and less well in others.

John Nauright and Steven Pope has put together *The New Sport Management Reader* (Fitness Information Technology) as a clarion call for sports management students and practitioners, to draw attention to the need for a more critical and reflexive approach to the education and practice of sport management, and to initiate a debate on the subject and its research questions. idrottsforum.org was fortunate enough to acquire Cecilia Stenling as reviewer for this, in terms of number of pages as well as contentwise, comprehensive volume. Her insightful and critical reading clearly points out the book's strengths and weaknesses, and should be able to guide revisions for future editions.

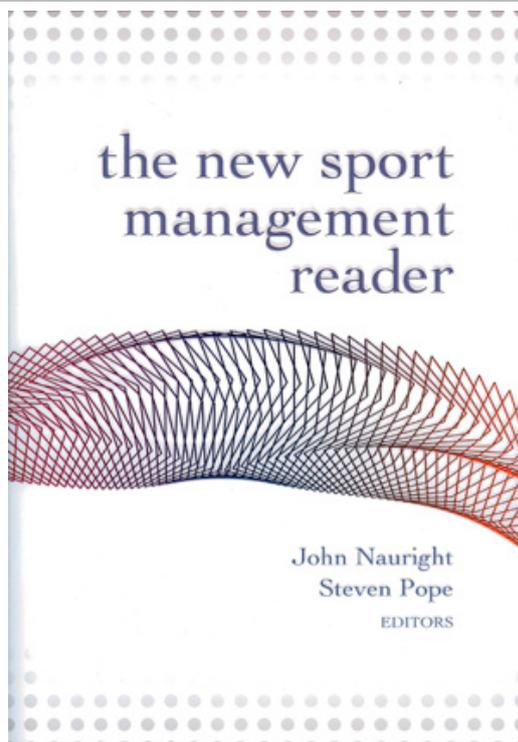
## Cherrypicking is recommended

**Cecilia Stenling**

Pedagogiska institutionen, Umeå universitet

*John Nauright & Steven Pope* (red)  
**The New Sport Management Reader**  
594 sidor, hft.  
Morgantown, WV: *Fitness Information Technology* 2009  
ISBN 978-1-935412-01-4

There is a plethora of textbook-like sport management literature, often written in a Human Kinetics-flavored, best-practice kind of fashion. The *New Sport Management Reader*, a collection of previously published journal articles edited by John Nauright and Steven Pope sets out to be something different than the best-practice inspired books dominating the field of sport management. Thrilled with this approach I dove into the book, hoping to strengthen my own knowledge of the field and the arguments used for my own research. However, perhaps I should have trusted my previous knowledge of the field and scented trouble when discovering that the editors and quite of few of the authors were unknown to me. Anyhow, the following is an attempt to give fair account of the thirty chapters (spread over nearly 600 pages) comprising the volume. In order for that to be possible, a description of the arguments underpinning the book is necessary, so bear with me while I walk you through the arguments leading up to the actual content of the book and my assessment of how this content manages to live up to the overall purpose of the book.



## The approach

The editors introduce the book by putting forward the central arguments as follows “the core focus of the academic field of sport management has evolved to the point whereby the pragmatic, technical-training aspects of professional preparation have been privileged while simultaneously, critical, interdisciplinary thinking has become marginalized.” (p. xvii). Furthermore, it is argued that sport management research has been presented as neutral and value free, with little regard for the historical, social, political, and cultural context in which the work takes place.

The unfortunate state of sport management research is perceived to be an effect of the fields’ dismissal of and/or insulation from what is somewhat sloppily termed “the cultural turn”, which affected many social science disciplines during the latter half of the 1900s. While the “sister disciplines” of sport sociology, sport history and sport psychology all (some more than others) underwent paradigm shifts in response to the cultural turn, allowing research to be conducted from multiple paradigms, sport management got stuck in the positivistic view of research and its relation to practice, leaving a gap between the neat descriptions, and the messy, ambiguous and politicized nature, of sport management practice. With this view of the state of the sport management field as a point of departure, the book was developed as a call for a more critical approach to sport management education and practice.

” *I will browse the parts, advising prospective readers to pick the cherries of my choice, thus avoiding the (in my view) somewhat sour apples of the volume.*

In this call, the editors turn their hope to efforts to contextualize and thereby understand sport management through the key concept of culture, connoting the core assumptions and values held by individuals in particular communities and societies. By taking this “new approach”, the editors hope the book will contribute to the broadening of the terrain of sport management and the view of sport as first and foremost a social technology. So far so good.

## The book

The reader is divided into three parts. Due to the voluminous nature of the book, it is impossible to give a thorough (or in some cases any) account of the chapters included in the book. Hence, I will browse the parts, advising prospective readers to pick the cherries of my choice, thus avoiding the (in my view) somewhat sour apples of the volume.

According to the editors, the first part of the book “Critical Approaches to Sport Management”, provides several provocative calls for sport management scholars to engage with epistemologies and methodologies associated with cultural studies and sociology. Furthermore, the essays are said to provide a valuable overview of some complex theoretical concepts and research traditions from outside of sport management which can be used to redefine the conceptual frameworks of the field.

As such, the first part (six chapters) of the book more than well live up to the “call” of the book as a whole and the specific purpose and outline of the first part of it. However, the individual chapters are quite specific in its content (as with all the chapters of the book), and might therefore appeal to readers with a specific theoretical/epistemological/methodological interest. For example, for those interested in the “what” and “how” of feminist epistemology and its implications for sport management research, chapter 3 could serve as a useful introduction. Chapter 4 is a suitable chapter for those interested in sport management research from the perspective of ethnicity. The chapter delineates the epistemology of Critical Race Theory (CRT), and provides some methodological approaches as well, which might be used in conjunction to CRT. The focus of the following chapter (5) is the role played by so called “urban regimes” in the development of sports-related strategies in connection to the marketing of cities. The chapter provides both an outline of Urban Regime Theory and vivid empirical examples of how such an approach may be used in research practice. My personal favorite though, is the first chapter, an article which delineates the difference between doing research on sport organizations with the outset of understanding and thus designing efficient organizations (the business economics approach) and doing research on sport organizations with the outset and of understanding how organizations are designed and with what consequences and for whom (the sociological approach), advocating for the later version. The chapter is an article to which I personally often refer when explaining my point of departure in studying sport organizations.

While the first part consists of chapters dealing with topics and approaches corresponding to the outset of the book, the remaining two parts vary greatly in those regards. Part two, “case studies”, features an applied case studies approach. According to the editors, readers will encounter “critically informed research focused within three key topical areas of sport management: marketing and sponsorship, consumption, and governance and policy development” (p. xxiii). Some of the chapters respond well to the critical approach sought after by the editors, while others easily might be placed in the very paradigm the editors seek to question. Take for example chapter 13 which examines the relationships between different kind of variables and attendance at Spanish football games, “seeking

factors which may be useful in order to estimate cash-flows for a club's valuation" (p. 231). Or chapter 10 which sets out to examine what player brands are and from where they derive their characteristics, features and strengths, in order to advise the sport management practice on how to create a "player brand". Another example is the peculiar chapter 11 which aims at investigating (in the service of the sport management practice) in what way sports brands can capitalize on the Hip Hop movement. It might even be possible to question whether some of the chapters in the second part of the book may be considered to be research (if one considers well defined research questions, critically considered methodology, use of theory in some way and a positioning of the study within a wider field to be appropriate criteria for research). On the other hand, when some of the more well-renowned (from my point of view) authors appear, the chapters really are examples of critical sport management research. Take for example Adams and Stevens' chapter (18) on the governance of women's hockey in Canada, and its implications for the status of the same. Chapter 16 and 17 by policy-researchers Barrie Houlihan and the late Mick Green respectively, also represents what I might consider critical sport management research. All in all, part two of the book is a somewhat confusing mix of tasty cherries and sour apples.

Part three of the book "Emergent Themes:

Development, Human Rights, Media Culture, and Sports Tourism" is said to "present work that might be characterized as socio-cultural approaches to sport management" (p. xxiv). Unfortunately, despite the purported cohesive character of the chapters ("socio-cultural approaches"), part three also represent quite an uneven collection of articles. There are some genuinely "good" (in terms of the research criteria listed above and the purpose of the book) chapters.

For example chapter 22 which examines the politics of corporate identity mediating the relationship between national team athletes, media, sponsors, media attachés, and other sporting officials during the preparations of the Canadian National Swim Team for the 2000 Olympics Games. Another example is the well-known article by Brackenridge, (chapter 30) on the development of child protection initiatives and its implications for the prioritization of gender equity on the English sport policy agenda. However, there are some chapters, which I conceive of as sour apples in this part of the book too. For example, chapter 26 "Assessing the Impact of Sports Mega-Events in Transition Economies: EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine", can hardly be considered to be research. Even though one should not overestimate the value of "rigorous" data collection, "the Polish Wikipedia" (p. 504) is not usually considered to be a reliable source of data.

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### Overall Judgment

The introduction to the new sport management reader, paraphrased in the first section of this review, clarifies that from the perspective of the editors (read: the American perspective), sport management is a research field with a clear (if not undisputed) connection to the parent discipline of business economics. However, from my point of view, the scope of sport management research is the empirical phenomenon of organizing and managing sport (on various levels), a phenomenon which may be understood from multiple points of departures (theoretical, epistemological, methodological, etc.). I believe I share this view with European scholars who are interested in studying the sport management practice, be that from the outset of the discipline of history, psychology, sociology, law, education, etc. In that respect, the book knocks on an already open door.

Furthermore, even though the editors wish to enter the game (to continue the saying) with this book, it appears as though some aspects have been forgotten. The always, from a Scandinavian (and dare I say European) perspective, current topics of volunteers (recruitment, education, retention, motivation, etc.), participants (structure, inclusion/exclusion, drop-out, etc.), elected officials (gender, influence, etc.), and not least the character (structures, cultures, etc.) of organizations in which the majority of sporting activities are carried out in Scandinavia, are almost completely missing in the reader. Not to mention the voluntary sport sector as a part of civil society (similarities/differences to other civil society sectors, relation to authorities, etc.), an increasingly interesting topic for Scandinavian sport scholars in the era of neo-liberalism and accountability.

During my reading of the book, I could not help but wonder on what grounds the editors chose the chapters. Some of the chapters clearly relate to the overall purpose and ambition of the book, while some easily could have been substituted by articles published in journals which are familiar to Scandinavian scholars. While *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing* is represented by no less than eleven chapters, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and *Sport in Society* only "sports" one and two chapters respectively. If the editors really were serious about widening the horizon of sport management research, perhaps they should have expanded their search for articles written in the spirit they wish to convey through the book. An even better approach would be a compilation of articles written especially for a volume, which also would benefit the stringency of such a book.

However, the sour apples, lack of stringency and the MIA of the above mentioned topics in the book do not take away its merits. There are quite a few highly interesting, well-conveyed studies reported throughout the book. My

recommendation for prospective readers is therefore to take a peep at the table of contents and then locate the journals in which the chapters of your interest are originally published; probably they will be available for free in your local university library.

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