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Opportunity structures in sports for people with disabilities in Sweden

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CEDAR Working Papers 2021:15

Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research

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Comprising approximately three million members in nearly 20,000 non-profit local sports clubs, the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) is the largest popular movement in the country. Currently, the Swedish Parasport Federation (Svenska Parasportförbundet) administrates 15 sporting activities for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities or visual impairments. While almost everyone is member of a sports club at some point in life, relatively few people with disabilities (PWD) regularly take part in sports. This indicates there is inequality in the opportunity to pursue or access sports, which studies suggest is due to a range of factors at the individual, social and environmental level. Our study aims to identify and discuss opportunity structures for sports participation in Sweden by investigating how national, regional, and local policies shape the sports infrastructure for PWD and thus their access to it. We further consider a current organisational change of the Swedish Sports Confederation causing shifts in the infrastructural responsibility by including all sports governed by the Swedish Parasport Federation into the Special Sports Federations (Specialidrottsförbunden).

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Opportunity structures in sports for people with disabilities in Sweden*

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Abstract

Comprising approximately three million members in nearly 20,000 non-profit local sports clubs, the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) is the largest popular movement in the country. Currently, the Swedish Parasport Federation (Svenska Parasportförbundet) administrates 15 sporting activities for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities or visual impairments. While almost everyone is member of a sports club at some point in life, relatively few people with disabilities (PWD) regularly take part in sports. This indicates there is inequality in the opportunity to pursue or access sports, which studies suggest is due to a range of factors at the individual, social and environmental level. Our study aims to identify and discuss opportunity structures for sports participation in Sweden by investigating how national, regional, and local policies shape the sports infrastructure for PWD and thus their access to it. We further consider a current organisational change of the Swedish Sports Confederation causing shifts in the infrastructural responsibility by including all sports governed by the Swedish Parasport Federation into the Special Sports Federations (Specialidrottsförbunden).

* This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Grant Agreement No. 647125, 'DISLIFE Liveable Disabilities: Life courses and opportunity structures across time', headed by Lotta Vikström. This paper is the pre-print version of a chapter submitted (June 2020) to *Disability Sport in Europe. Policy, Structure & Participation. A Cross-National Comparative Perspective,* edited by Caroline van Lindert, Jeroen Scheerder & Ian Brittain (London: Palgrave), in which a revised version has been approved awaiting publication.

Introduction

With approximately three million members in nearly 20,000 nonprofit local sports clubs, the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) is the country's largest popular movement. Currently, the Swedish Parasport Federation (Svenska Parasportförbundet) administrates 15 sporting activities for people with physical and intellectual disabilities and visual impairments. The Swedish Parasport Federation is also the National Paralympic Committee and the accredited national programme for Special Olympics (Svenska Parasportförbundet, 2020). The Swedish Deaf Sports Federation (Svenska Dövidrottsförbundet, SDI) administers sports for the deaf and is not a part of the Swedish Parasport Federation, but SDI is a member of the Swedish Sports Confederation (SDI, 2020). In Sweden, while almost everyone is, at some point in their life, a member of a sports club, relatively few children with disabilities regularly take part in sports. The reasons for this disparity include a range of individual, social, and environmental factors that have been recognised in several studies and reports. For example, among sport participants, few opportunities are present in the design and access to being physically active (cf. Geidne, & Jerlinder, 2016; Kristén, Patriksson, & Fridlund, 2002; Wickman, 2017), and as a result, the chance for PWD to develop confidence and skills in sport and physical activity is limited (Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2013; Wickman, 2017; Geidne, & Jerlinder, 2016). This phenomenon has also been highlighted in several international studies in the field of disability sport (cf. DePauw & Gavron, 2005; Fay, 2011; Misener & Darcy, 2014). This structural inequality is evident at the recreational, as well as at elite, level, as PWD typically have fewer opportunities to participate in organised sports than nondisabled people (cf. Wickman, 2017; Geidne, & Jerlinder, 2016).

This chapter aims to identify and discuss opportunity structures for sports participation in Sweden by describing how national, regional, and local policies contributing to the sports infrastructure for PWD. Moreover, we give some reflections on the current organisational change in the Swedish Sports Confederation, which involves the inclusion of all sports currently governed by the Swedish Parasport Federation into the Special Sports Federations (Specialidrottsförbunden). With this shift in responsibility, the idea of sport participation by PWD in a traditionally nondisabled environment is in this chapter termed mainstreaming. At the end of this chapter, we identify methods of data collection or the lack of such methods in sports participation research according to the preconditions in Sweden.

Country profile

The capital of Sweden is Stockholm. Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The political power lies with the parliament (Riksdag) and government (Regering). The monarch has only ceremonial functions. The Parliament has 349 members of parliament in a single chamber. Sweden has three levels of domestic government: national, regional and local. In addition, the European level has become increasingly important since Sweden joined the European Union (EU) in 1995. The Government consists of a prime minister and 22 ministers and is the driving force in the process of legislative change, thereby influencing the development of the Swedish society. The government rules Sweden by implementing the decisions of the parliament and by formulating new laws or law amendments, on which the parliament decides. Since 21 January 2019 the Swedish Government consists of the Social Democratic Party (S) and the Green Party (MP) (Riksdagen, 2020).

There are around 10 million (0.13 per cent of the world's population) people in Sweden, of whom about 2 million are under the age of 18. Eighty-five percent of them live in cities. Over the last decades, Sweden has received a large number of immigrants. In 2015, a total of 163 000 asylum seekers came, of whom 114 000 arrived during the period September–December. 70 000 of them were children. In the same year, 35 000 children unaccompanied by a custodial parent sought asylum, of whom 26 000 arrived during the last four months of the year (SOU 2017:12). Approximately 19 percent of Swedes are born in another country, while about one in five children in Sweden has a family with roots in another country (SCB, 2020).

Disability in Sweden

The question of what is meant by disability (funktionshinder) and impairment (funktionsnedsättning) and the interaction between these is multifaceted. Five somewhat different ways of looking at impairment and disability are presented in Swedish disability research: an individual (Priestley, 1998; Danermark, 2005), a cultural (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002), a social (Thomas, 2004), a relational (Hjelmquist, Rönnberg & Söder, 1994), and a biopsychosocial perspective (World Health Organization, 2001). Disability organisations, state and county governments and foundations are all included among the funders of research and the question of interplay between the environment and the individual is central in Swedish disability research.

Estimations suggest the number of PWD in Sweden is between 1.3 and 1.8 million (FUNKA, 2020). However, any exact figure of the prevalence of disability and across nations is difficult to estimate due to different definitions of disabilities and because registers are not always accessible (Eurostat Report on Disability Statistics, 2010; Grönvik, 2009; Mont, 2007). International legal agreements such as The UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of the Child are examples of two important international legal agreements. The responsibility of fulfilling and exercising international law rests with the Swedish Government.

The Act concerning Support and Service to Persons with Certain Functional Disabilities (LSS) was enforced in 1994. It is a human rights law designed to offer people with extensive disabilities greater opportunities to lead independent lives, and to ensure that they have equal living conditions and enjoy full participation in community life. The law gives people with certain disabilities the right to personal assistance, a form of support that is mostly funded by taxes. The amount of help they receive is determined by the extent of their disabilities. People not covered by it can seek assistance from their local council/municipality under the Social Services Act (Socialtjänstlagen, 2020). In 2009, the Discrimination Act was introduced in Sweden, its general purpose being to strengthen the legal protection of the individual and to help victims of discrimination obtain redress and financial compensation. The purpose of the Act is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, functional impairment, sexual orientation or age, and is divided into two parts:

1. The proactive part of the law imposes a duty to take positive action and concerns working life and the educational system.
2. The reactive part of the law deals with the prohibition of discrimination in working life, in the educational system and in other areas of society.
   The Equality Ombudsman (DO) monitors compliance with these laws.

The UN's Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is a cornerstone of Swedish disability policy. The Swedish government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. Unlike the Standard Rules, the Convention is legally binding. As a result, Sweden has committed to ensuring that national legislation does not discriminate against PWD. The Swedish Sports Confederation seeks to ensure that all its activities are in agreement with the international legal agreements that the government signs (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2008).

Sports in Sweden

In the Scandinavian countries, sport is organised by voluntary, member-based, nonprofit and democratically structured sports clubs. Further, there is a relatively high degree of public funding of sport in these countries (Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010). The Swedish Sports Confederation was established in 1903 as the primary institution for voluntary organised sport in Sweden, and is commonly referred to as the Swedish sports movement (Idrottsrörelsen). The Swedish Sports Confederation holds a strong position in Swedish society and is trusted by the government to administer Swedish sport towards the government established objectives regarding civic education, public health, growth and entertainment (Karp, Fahlén & Löfgren, 2016). The government's role has traditionally been limited to decisions on the extent of funding and overarching goals for it, while the Swedish Sports Confederation has the mandate to decide on how to reach these goals. The low degree of conflict and the relationship, between the sports movement and Swedish authorities is generally ascribed to the 'Swedish model' and 'a typical feature of Swedish welfare politics'.

The Swedish Sports Confederation received its first government grant in 1913 (Norberg, 2004), and has, since been receiving granted permanent annual state subsidies for sporting activities as the main provider of nationwide sport and on all levels, from recreational to elite level. Based on common understanding between the Swedish Sports Confederation and the government, corporatism and collaboration, or an 'implicit contract'(Norberg, 2011, p. 319) has been established. It has enabled the government to control its expenditure and the Swedish Sports Confederation to preserve its selfdetermination in a corporative collaboration (Fahlén, Eliasson & Wickman, 2015; Norberg, 2011; Karp, Fahlén & Löfgren, 2016). The Swedish Sports Confederation's main tasks include representing the voluntary and membership-based club sports in communication with authorities, officials, and the society; administering and distributing government funds to affiliated organisations; stimulating sports development and research; coordinating social and ethical issues, leading and coordinating antidoping work; coordinating international cooperation; protecting sports' historical legacy; and acting as the government authority for the 55 upper secondary elite sport schools with some 1, 200 students in 30 sports. (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2018).

The Swedish Research Council for Sport Science (2020) has been assigned the task of initiating, coordinating, and supporting sports research; providing information; and being responsible for monitoring state aid to sport and creating conditions which facilitate collaboration between researchers at universities and colleges and other key stakeholders in the field. Additionally, the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science is the only organisation in the field of sport and physical activity in the country with the requisite expertise and experience for both research and the monitoring of state aid. The organisation works closely with the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Special Sports Federations. Operations of the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science are financed partly by the Ministry of Culture through the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Ministry of Education and Research. A large proportion

of the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science's revenues is used for research funding (The Swedish Research Council for Sport Science, 2020).

In Sweden and as in the rest of Europe, Sport for All means adults' accessibility to practise competitive sports for fitness and recreational reasons. Denmark, Norway and Sweden (as in this case) have Sport for All as their main policy goal for sports (Skille, 2011). These countries also have among the highest participant rates in Europe (EU Commission, 2014).

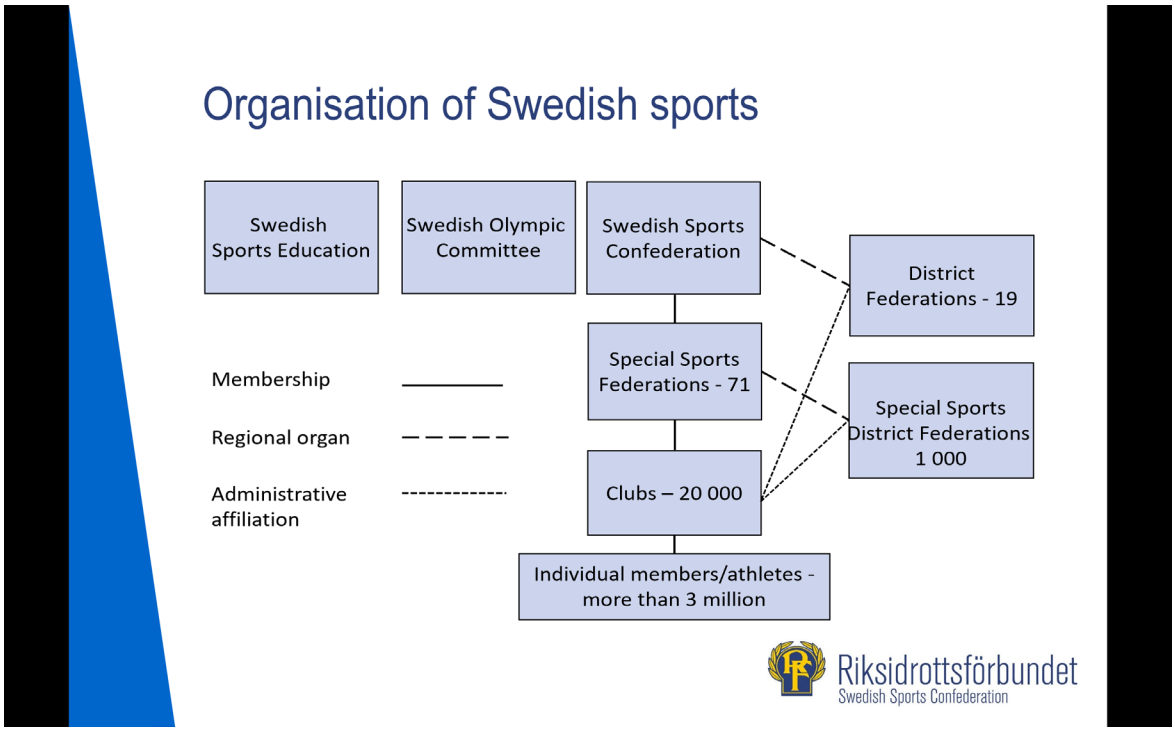

Figure 1: The organisation of the Swedish Sports Confederation https://www.rf.se/bidragochstod/Dokumentbank/ (Sweden, a sporting nation, 2019-06-02)

The National Paralympic Committee is not visualised in the figure above. The member organisation of the International Paralympic Committee in Sweden is the Swedish Parasport Federation. The Swedish Parasport Federation operates in the same manner and in close partnership with the National Olympic Committee in Sweden (The Swedish Parasport Federation, 2020).

The defining character of and main organising principle for contemporary club sports in Sweden is that of individuals forming and/or taking part as members in voluntary and membership-based sports clubs. the Swedish Sports Confederation is organised in what is called the Nordic model, which means that it is run as an independent people's movement (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2010), while it, like many other models of sports organisations, is primarily financed by the state and municipalities (cf Fahlén et al., 2015; Fahrner & Klenk, 2018). About 20,000 nonprofit clubs, with 650,000 voluntary leaders, form the basis for the Swedish sports movement. The clubs are members of the 71 special sports federations, depending on the sporting activities offered (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2010) The 71 special sports federations (https://www.rf.se/omriksidrottsforbundet/) organise more than 250 different

sports. These special sports federations, together with the 19 sports districts in Sweden have the task of supporting and assisting the sports clubs in the chosen district. The umbrella organisation, the Swedish Sports Confederation, has a monopoly on all federation sports in Sweden (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2010). Each special sports federation has its own board of directors which makes the ultimate decisions for the federation. That means all sports federations run in the same way the Swedish Sports Confederation does. The highest level of power is the biennial general meeting (Riksidrottsmöte RIM), where the 71 special sports federations choose a board of directors/national sports council that governs the Swedish Sports Confederation between the RIM. The Swedish Sports Confederation 's districts have their own board but no power at RIM. Approximately three million of Sweden's total population is estimated to be involved in organised sports in Sweden in one way or another – for example, as an athlete or as a voluntary nonprofit worker in the Swedish Sports Confederation (Stenling & Sam, 2017; (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2018), making it by far the largest popular movement in Sweden (not, at least, according to gender and diversity) considered to contribute to a number of positive social effects (Wickman, 2017).

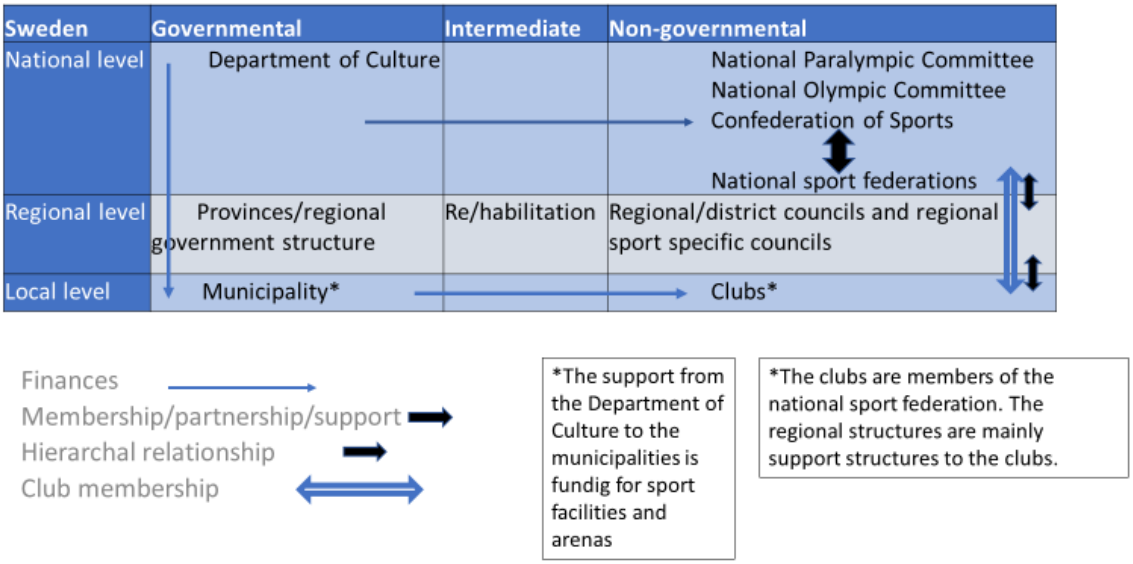

Figure 2. How the national, regional and local sports is funded and the co-dependency between the different geographical levels

The local sports clubs receive funding based on the activities they report in the local activity (LOK) support system. The local clubs register their activities in four different groups: girls 5–25 years, boys 5–25 years, leaders from 13 years old upwards, and PWD not depending on age and adults over 25 years of age. There are certain rules linked to this support system – such as the size of the group, the length of minutes the activity must be held for, and the number of coaches per group. Sports clubs are the main implementers of sport in Sweden (Toftegaard Støckel, 2010). According to the statistics from the Swedish Sports Confederation, only 421 local clubs in addition to the Parasport federations 540 member clubs of the approximately 20,000 registered sport clubs in Sweden mentioned in 2018 have active members with disabilities.

The mainstream clubs can register members with disabilities by 'ticking' a box if the training session had a member with a disability. The definition of who is a disabled athlete has been discussed, and the current data does not give a correct figure. The General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR) is also very strict, and the sports clubs are not allowed to gather, store, or use data that is not strictly relevant for the clubs' daily programmes. Although there is state support through LOK, the main funding for local sports clubs' activities comes from the municipalities and the members of the clubs. Therefore, the incentive to report for LOK is not high. The municipalities around Sweden own most sports facilities, both indoor and outdoor. The clubs rent the facilities for their programmes at low cost or no cost at all. The municipalities also support with local funding, and the amount differs from municipality to municipality. The members of the club pay a membership fee and a training fee. The training fee can differ, from nothing up to several thousands of Swedish kronor for a season. Depending on what sport they offer, the clubs are members of the national sports federations, and the federations support the clubs with capacity building, such as referee and coaching education, and they administrate local and regional league systems, such as the football leagues, at different competitive levels/competitions. The Swedish Sport district offices also offer capacity building and club development initiatives and processes (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2020).

State involvement and control of club sports has been increasing every year (Fahlén & Stenling, 2016; Fahlén et al., 2014; Norberg, 2011; Stenling & Sam, 2017), and with this money comes expectations and demands on the sports to help as a public movement. Fahlén and Stenling (2016) described this process as an attempt to create social change, with sports as a tool. This can be explained by the fact that the state, in the form of the government, gives the Swedish Sport Confederation financial prerequisites to be able to guide society through the sports of desired change, and the Swedish Sports Confederation, in turn, creates various programmes and strategies for its federations to implement this necessary change (Fahlén et al., 2015; Karp et al. 2014).

The disability sport system

Disability sports were organiszed in 1962 by the Swedish Federation of Disabled Persons (De Handikappades Riksförbund), a national association for people with mobility impairments. In 1969 the government report 'Sports for All' cited the importance of disability sports. In the same year, the The Swedish Parasports Federation, earlier the Swedish Sports Organisation for the Disabled (Svenska Handlikappidrottsförbundet) was founded and became one of 70 specialised sports federations within the Swedish Sports Confederation. Even before the inception of the disability sports organisation, the disability organisations and the sport organisations discussed, over a period of 15 years, where the disability sports organisation should best be placed (Wickman, 2017). The discussion was whether to organise it under the umbrella of the Swedish Sports Confederation or the disabled organisation for the physical disabled 'the Swedish Disability Sport Federation'. The government was, according to the current knowledge, not involved in how sports for PWD was to be organised.

Since 1969, the Swedish Parasport Federation administers sports for people with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and intellectual disabilities. Through collective mobilisation, the federation is an important player when it comes to influencing power, enforcing change, and raising awareness of issues that are important to make sports more equitable and accessible. In connection with the Swedish Parasport Federation's biennial general meeting in May 2013, the Parasport Federation decided to establish a long-term sustainable strategy for the inclusion of sports administered by the Parasport Federation but which could have their homes in various special sports federations. In 2014, the Parasport Federation conducted a survey to identify the conditions and then drew up action plans for collaboration and the future transfer and inclusion of sports from the Parasport Association to the special sports federations. Parallel to the start

of the inclusion process of the 18 sporting activities, the Swedish Parasport Federation has increased its work to recruit more members both in its own member clubs and special sports federations' member clubs. The Swedish Parasport Federation has also initiated projects to support the entire sports fraternity in Sweden, with its experience and competence supported by the Swedish Sports Confederation.

Despite the fact that the Swedish research community have addressed problems in Swedish sports, such as for example poor recruitment from underrepresented groups (cf. Kulturdepartementet, 2011, Riksidrottsförbundet, 2005; Karp, Fahlén & Löfgren, 2016), it seems that voluntary sports clubs within the Swedish Sports Confederation have focused mainly on children and youths with few including and adapted programmes directed at PWD except from the sports that the Swedish Parasport Federation had (and to certain extent still have) the administrative responsibility for. Many researchers who study different aspects of implementation and change in Swedish sports have found that there is one dominant logic, the logic of competition and ranking, that imbues all sports practices in Sweden regardless of the activity's aim (Eliasson, 2009; Engström, 1999; Fahlén & Aggestål, 2011; Fahlén & Karp, 2010; Karp, 2000; Sjöblom & Fahlén, 2010; Stenling & Fahlén, 2009).

The body of knowledge concerning the sports movement's ongoing attempts in Sweden to increase accessibility has highlighted several explanations for the limited range of fitness and recreation activities for PWD (Geidne, & Jerlinder, 2016; Kristén, Patriksson, & Fridlund, 2002; Wickman, 2017). For example, difficulties in transforming accessibility projects into permanent activities due to organisational resistance to change, has been identified (cf. . These results point towards organisational frames that limit both accessibility to the sports clubs and the range of the activities within the clubs. These results are well in line with the extensive research on sports policy implementation, which has shown that sports clubs are rather resistant to external change initiatives (Fahlén, Eliasson & Wickman, 2015) and that ideals formulated on a political level have little impact on everyday practice in the sports clubs (Sjöblom & Fahlén, 2010; Skille, 2010; Stenling & Fahlén, 2016). Scholars have described these structures as solid and consequently hard to change (cf. Coalter, 2007; Skille, 2008, 2010; Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). What has been noted in previous research is that, if insufficient resources are made available for the removal of barriers in the environment, this can be regarded as an expression of the oppression of certain people. Similar ideas are expressed in the proposition, "From Patient to Citizen" (Proposition 1999/2000:79).

Inclusive sport

'Strategy 2025 – a Strong Parasport in Sweden' (The Swedish Parasport Federation, 2020) is the collective name for the Swedish Parasport Federation's strategic work to be completed in 2025. The changing process is now in motion and is composed of 14 of the initial 18 special sports federations. Table tennis, swimming, powerlifting, and judo have been handed over already (The Swedish Parasport federation 2020). In the long term, the organisational change in Swedish sports means that the Parasport Federation will also change according to the need and circumstance.

During the Swedish Sports Confederation biennial general meeting in May 2017, the Swedish Sports Confederation decided that the current strategy 2025 was to be divided into five development pathways (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2017a). One of the pathways is 'inclusive sport for all'. Inclusion means that the same opportunities should be available to all members of the Swedish Sports Confederation irrespective of their ability, background, age, gender, wealth, or

place of residence. One of the key principles of the organisational change towards the inclusion of sport for PWD is that according to SSC's 'strategy 2025', PWD should, in a broader inclusion perspective, have equal opportunities to undertake different sports on all levels (from recreation to elite) and should be afforded similar opportunities as those enjoyed by their nondisabled peers. In practice, this means that the special sports federations are encouraged to play a more significant role in expanding their programmes and service to include PWD. The focus on organisational change in Swedish sports is derived from the fact that although the efforts and stakes (for example, financial support for adapted sport equipment and administration plus education of trainers and coaches) are high for PWD in the current transition from the Parasport Federation to Special Sports Federations, the effects and consequences are not equal for all. According to previous research (Sørensen & Kahrs, 2006), fulfilling the objective of an integrated sports organisation is not without risks and efforts – especially when it comes to people with severe disabilities, who need extra support and adjustments. When comparing PWD (especially people with severe disabilities) with nondisabled peers, they face a considerably greater risk of dropping out of sports, becoming early leavers from training and competitions, or remaining in activities that are difficult to include in any of the existing special sports federations (for example, goalball and boccia). The main target group of the Swedish Sports Confederation and the government has been to include people with different backgrounds (with regard to country/ethnic group), as well as girls and women. In 2020 the Swedish Sports Confederation, through cooperation with the Swedish Parasport Federation, initiated generic parasport coaching education and added information on its website concerning inclusion of PWD for the first time. (The Swedish Sports Confederation, 2020 ab).

As the Swedish Sports Confederation has made the decision that PWD should be able to enjoy equal opportunities as their nondisabled peers, it has emphasised its responsibility: administrate sports for nondisabled people. In 2020, 27 of the 71 sport federations were funded to develop and support parasport in Sweden. The funds were disseminated for the first time in 2020 to support the development of adapted sport environments (The Swedish Sport Confederation 2020c).

An important notification is that the Swedish Deaf Sports Federation, Svenska Dövidrottsförbundet (SDI) is not a part of the Swedish Parasport Federation. It was founded on November 6th 1913 and is the joint promotional and administrative body for all organised deaf sports in Sweden. The SDI is a member of the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Swedish Confederation of Sports Education, SISU and is the highest authority of regional deaf leagues and sports clubs, organized in regional Deaf Sports Divisions. The Swedish Confederation of Deaf Sports is a special category organization, which means it encompasses many different sports. It is like a miniature RF (SDI, 2020).

The regions

The different political regional councils administrate support to the sports fraternity according to the 19 political regions. Governmental regions operate differently. The governmental regions sometimes use the Swedish Sports Confederation district/regional sports offices to disburse money to the special sports district/regional offices for, for example, football and parasport. Sometimes, the regional special sports federations receive funding directly from the governmental regional offices. In some regions, the political regions host or pay for the rent of the offices of the Swedish Sports Confederation district offices or district sport councils offices,

where the district or regional sports federations are also often renting offices from the Swedish Sports Confederation district offices.

Across Sweden there are examples of development environments for sports for disabled, for example (from north to south) the development and competence centres in Östersund, Eskilstuna and Malmö. These centres are three examples of local government involvement in sports.

Östersund, a city in the middle of Sweden with just below 50,000 inhabitants

The current political programme of sport in Östersund municipality was developed between 2018 and 2019, with a focus on arenas and facilities for sport. All groups in the society, including PWD, were considered in the programme—for example, all arenas must be accessible and there shall be offered a range of different activities to ensure a wide reach for inhabitants. In the 2018–2019 programme, the main objective is to ensure facilities to improve people's health. The Committee of Culture and Leisure was recently given the task of developing a new strategy for the development of sport in the municipality by the Municipal Council, with the aim of giving premise to the development of sports to a larger extent (Johan Palm, administration manager of sport and culture affairs at Östersund municipality on 14th February 2020). The council is supporting several large efforts and activities regarding parasport, such as recent and planned parasport events. The Special Olympics invitational games were held in Östersund between 1st and 4th February 2020 (https://specialolympics.se/so-games/). Several winter parasport games (including Para ice hockey, Nordic skiing, and biathlon) were held in 2019 and hosted in Östersund http://winterparasport.com/

Malmö city, the third-largest city in Sweden (316,000 inhabitants)

The Municipal Council, with its different committees, is mandated to budget and ensure the implementation of programmes linked to the council's action plan towards the accessibility and development of sport for all, including PWD. The yearly budget with the directions is the main document that regulates the support for sports on a yearly basis in Malmö. Disability is mainstreamed and therefore mentioned in all the documents.

Eskilstuna, 67,000 inhabitants

Eskilstuna has a sport political plan for the period 2016–2021. (Eskilstuna municiplaity 2020) (The plan includes four main target groups. Girls, boys, girls with other ethnic backgrounds, and PWD. The programme has mainstreamed PWD under each objective in the sports political plan.

Discussion and reflections

This work aims to identify and explore opportunity structures for sports participation by analysing how national, regional, and local policies contributing to the sports infrastructure for PWD. Moreover, this chapter explores if the policies are in accordance with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Further, the chapter will explain the various ways in which sports for PWD is governed in Sweden. In 2015, Sweden was the destination for thousands of refugees who were scattered around the country – adding

to the number of foreign-born people already living in Sweden on a permanent basis, which corresponded to 16 percent of the country's population at the time (SCB.se). This major change in society led to a high degree of exclusion in society and challenges to make sports accessible for a broader population. Formally, the Swedish Sports Confederation , as part of the civil society, is autonomous from the state while dependent upon subsidiaries (Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010). In recent years, the Swedish government has specifically directed major funds to the sport movement and to sporting programmes for contributing to the integration of migrants (Fundberg, 2017). In this regard, the Swedish Parasport Federation is no exception. Great efforts are needed to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in order to address inequalities and social exclusion in sport and in society at large. The inclusion of children with disabilities in sports has gained increased recognition in the international research literature. Despite these research efforts, our knowledge of what supports inclusion in sports is still in its infancy. While some studies have explored inclusion in sports in Sweden (e.g., Geidne & Jerlinder, 2016; Kristén et al., 2002; Wickman, 2015; Wickman, Nordlund, & Holm, 2018), research in the Swedish context is still scarce.

Much has happened in the last half century, since the Swedish Parasport Federation became part of the Swedish Sports Confederation. Many roadblocks have been identified and removed. Most of Sweden's modern indoor facilities today have adapted premises, which means good accessibility for children and young PWD, and in many places, leadership training and try-out days in sports are offered, with a special focus on the intended target group. As mentioned earlier, the Swedish sports movement is, in many ways, an important element of society and has a huge development power, with over three million members, but it does not exist in a vacuum, unaffected by influences and ideological flows. In times of societal transformation, changes are made that reveal strengths and weaknesses that were not previously visible, which can give room and opportunities to find new ways of development. As this chapter has attempted to show, the Swedish sports movement has the knowledge and overall experience of sports for children, young people, and adults with disabilities; therefore, it should be a good pathfinder and explorer of new opportunities in creating meaningful, socially relevant, and sustainable sport policies for the future. The questions that has not been answered yet is if the inclusive process in Swedish Sport Confederation will be successful in creating a context in which different stakeholders and athletes interact and shape the field of (disability) sport in innovative ways so it will be accessible for all. Apart from this, it is important to address the complex social problem of encouraging non-active people to engage in sport in a sustainable manner, a process that will be problematic when it will not be possible to track Paralympic athletes in the members registers in Swedish Sports Confederation in the future. Knowledge sharing and learning processes across the Swedish Sports Confederation on vertical and horizontal level will be of importance.

In order to pursue their sport, PWD need access to a strong development environment for their sports. It is important to have a shared understanding of how such a development environment can be created, and how different stakeholders and the sports movement can play to their strengths to do so (combining, for example, academia's scientific method and sport's practical applications). The main responsibility for the development environment lies with the sports movement, but what form it takes will depend on the closeness of the relationships and collaborations between the the Swedish Sports Confederation, the Swedish Parasport Federation and the Special sport Federations. As such partnerships evolve, they can become increasingly integrated, adding to their value for the parsport athletes' development.

During the present century, the development of research questions, such as gender and intersectionality feminism as well as the growing theoretical awareness, has probably benefitted from the academic position of research and researchers. But at the same time disability organisations have reacted critically, as they found themselves having little influence on research that is done, a reaction that includes dissatisfaction with what is experienced as inability of researchers to make research politically relevant. What started in a society with a centralised structure and ambitious social engineering ideal now has to find its role in a more decentralised structure where reform ambitions and the role of social movements like disability organisations are different. To balance the need for autonomous research with the ambition of being politically relevant without falling for the temptation of being politically correct is one of the challenges social disability research in Sweden will have to deal with in the near future.

The barriers that people with disabilities (PWD) meet involve many societal domains including family life, social participation, contacts with welfare agencies, school, work, and not at least sport. Even if their right to live in society on the same basis as others is stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they face discrimination and are not given the same opportunities to participate fully in society (WHO, 2011). A study that investigate the inclusion process in the Swedish Sports Confederation of PWD among stakeholders on different levels of the Parasport Federation (Nordlund, Wickman, Vikström, in press), show that the respondents are positive to the inclusion process. However, there are complex contradictions and cross-currents in the way they describe the process. Their experiences highlight political and ideological tensions about inclusion and representation and remind us of the need to document the experiences of PWD. In particular when several of the paralympic athletes that will be directly affected by the inclusion process is skeptical to it. The risk is that they will not experience the Swedish Sports Confederation as a community that represent empowerment and resistance of disablist attitudes, and in which a sense of inclusion and belonging is experienced.

Acknowledgements

This study is part of a project headed by Lotta Vikström, which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 647125, 'DISLIFE Liveable Disabilities: Life courses and opportunity structures across time', 2016–2021).

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