

SPORT

BEYOND DEFINITIONS



2ND CONFERENCE OF THE



INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
OF SPORT ANTHROPOLOGY

5-6 JUNE 2025

KU LEUVEN, BELGIUM

SPORTANTHRO.ORG

CALL FOR PAPERS

SPORT: BEYOND DEFINITIONS

Sport resists easy generalisation – social scientists now accept there can be no universal definition. Nonetheless, a set of ideas have coalesced into the institution commonly known as ‘Sport’. This modernist – now neoliberal – notion has become hegemonic worldwide, and it increasingly delimits the possibilities of social action. If in fact we study two phenomena – the diverse phenomena ‘sport’ and the particular modernist notion of ‘Sport’ – then scholars must situate their analysis within the contexts that shape these concepts. Furthermore, if modernist ‘Sport’ has become a social institution, then we must consider its praxis, how the notion of ‘Sport’ is mobilised and perpetuated.

If now is the time to move past defining ‘sport’, we invite scholars to explore with us the affordances of both sport and ‘Sport’. To examine the social conditions that these concepts instantiate, and how this shapes social action. To consider what sport allows social actors to achieve in the present, and to imagine for the future. To explore what people and anthropologists do with sport. To explore how people perpetuate the notion of ‘Sport’, attempt to change it, or mobilise it for different purposes. Above all, we are interested in the interplay between these aspects of sport and Sport.

Assessing this interplay reflects how researchers produce knowledge. Contextualising sport & Sport illustrates how sporting ideas are tightly integrated within local forms of knowledge, avoiding common narratives of imposition and resistance. By analysing ‘Sport’, one can illustrate how meanings form and move from individual to group to ‘humanity’. Rather than laterally comparing ‘like kinds’, pitting Sport against sport allows for ‘vertical’ comparison across scale. Examining our own study reflects how and why popular concepts like ‘Sport’ complicate our capacity to capture and write about them.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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For the 2nd INSA conference, we invite scholars to explore the affordances of sport, now and into the future. We invite paper abstracts from all adjacent disciplines, and especially encourage those ‘outside’ anthropology to contribute to this debate.

We invite abstracts around (but not limited to) the following themes:

- What people do socially during sport/Sport
- How participants navigate established norms in ‘Sport’
- How the idea of sport/Sport is mobilised for different purposes
- Conflict between notions of sport vs ‘Sport’
- How social navigation reinforces this conflict
- Comparison across sporting scales (micro/macro)
- How sport is mobilised for social good i.e. EDI, post-conflict
- How social and physical infrastructures of sport impact ‘Sport’
- The impact of digital technologies on sport/Sport
- How environmental concerns complicate sport and ‘Sport’

To submit, please send your title, name, affiliation, and abstract (including 3 keywords) to admin@sportanthro.org **by the 19th March**. Abstracts should be no more than 250 words in length.

KEY DATES:

February 19 – March 19: General Call for Participation

March 24: Decisions made to presenters

April 1 – May 15: Registration Open

June 5 – 6: 2025 Annual Conference in KU Leuven.

Check our website (www.sportanthro.org/conference) for more information, including travel advice, accommodation options, special events, things to do, the updated program, and late breaking information. To join our mailing list, visit www.sportanthro.org/join