

Dear EASM 2018 Conference Team,

After being awarded the EASM Alberto Madella Scholarship, I was extremely excited to attend the 26th annual European Association for Sport Management in Malmo, Sweden. The conference location was superbly placed, as I arrived I had time to spend a day in Copenhagen, Denmark, before finding my hotel in Malmo. Initial impressions of Malmo were warm, friendly and very welcoming. After a splendid meal in one of Malmo's beautiful restaurants I was ready for the conference opening ceremony. The conference commenced with a key note from a scholar I have long admired; Joseph Maguire. His work on sport, migration and identity politics was not disappointing, specifically some of the arguments he presented in relation to key power struggles, interdependencies and the long-term consequences. Over the course of the conference I attended some excellent and provocative presentations, with a host of sessions relevant to my research interests. One paper in particular which stood out was 'How sports events create value' by Reinhard Grohs. Having an active interest within my own research regarding how consumers co-create value, I found this presentation insightful and engaging, particularly the findings, which reported that 'managers of sport event brands must be aware that they have limited control over their organizations' value creation'.

I thoroughly enjoyed the first day of the conference, but it was the second day of the conference I appreciated the most as a spectator. On the second day I attended the special issue workshop entitled 'exploring new routes within brand research in sport management'. This session activated some lively discussion about many contemporary areas. Presentations delivered by Professor Bettina Cornwell and Professor Simon Chadwick on influencer marketing and social media conversations on sports brands were fantastic. The day concluded with a fascinating walking tour of Malmo, the walking tour was conducted by a very knowledgeable and passionate local lady who told many stories as we walked around some beautiful places in Malmo.

The fantastic experiences did not end on the second day. The final day of the conference was arguably the best for me. I delivered my presentation on this day, so I believe I got the most out of the conference in relation to my own research interests on this day. My presentation went well and the scholars who came to see my presentation provided a stimulating and supportive environment to probe a little more about my research. I found this very rewarding and this has

also allowed me to shape and sharpen some of my work going forward. I had quite a few scholars approach me at the end of the presentation who were interested in my work, some to invite me to submit my full paper to their respective journals, it was a great experience. The conference ended with a controversial but very entertaining keynote speech from Professor Mike Weed. I thoroughly enjoyed Mike's speech, he highlighted the privileged position sport has enjoyed over the years, noting ultimately that sport is a bad investment to develop national pride (an interesting position) and the controversy surrounding economic impact studies and data used as propaganda rather than evidence. It was a unique and enjoyable way to end the academic part of the conference.

The conference went beyond meeting my expectations, and I specifically need to mention at this point the closing banquet at Malmo City Hall. What a phenomenal way to close the conference, this was by far my favourite night, what a privilege to be invited by the Mayor of Malmo to dine silver service in the City Hall. I also had the pleasure of being seated next to some fantastic academics and practitioners which allowed me to engage in some great networking opportunities.

To the team at EASM, thank you very much for providing me with this unique and wonderful opportunity.

Conference delegate and Alberto Madella award holder - Kimberley Hardcastle