



Sport, Recreation and Green Space in the European City

Edited by
Peter Clark, Marjaana Niemi and Jari Niemelä

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Preface

This volume is one of the major outcomes of an innovative interdisciplinary project on *Green Space, Sport and the City* based at the University of Helsinki between 2005–2007 and led by Professor Peter Clark (Department of History) and Professor Jari Niemelä (Department of Environmental Sciences) in collaboration with Dr Marjaana Niemi (Department of History and Philosophy, University of Tampere). The project was funded in 2005–2006 by the University of Helsinki European Studies Network with grants for two researchers for two years, and support for project meetings. We are grateful to the Network for its support. Thanks are also due to the Nessling Foundation for a grant to finance an international workshop in 2006 and to contribute to the costs of this volume. The City of Helsinki kindly made a grant towards the cost of some of the research for the project. We are also grateful to the Finnish Literature Society and the Editorial Board of the *Studia Fennica* series for including this book in their series.

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Helsinki 20 November 2009

Peter Clark
Jari Niemelä
Marjaana Niemi

1 Introduction

Sports areas comprise a significant part of the European urban landscape – for example, in London around 14 per cent of the urban space – and in some cities they are more extensive than nature reserves. They are potentially a major ecological resource and contribute significantly to urban sustainability. Since the end of the nineteenth century the growth of sports sites has had major consequences not only for the urban environment but for urban planning, municipal policy and public health. While the European sport and sports ground revolution was launched in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century, by the First World War British-type sports had spread to much of continental Europe and the Nordic countries. Yet, as we shall see in this book, the pattern of sports ground development during the twentieth century was highly varied across Europe, with major differences between countries. Regionality is clearly of major significance in examining environmental changes and impacts, as we show here.¹

In this volume 12 contributors from Finland, Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Italy examine the contested development of urban green spaces and sports sites from a comparative and transdisciplinary viewpoint, bringing together the expertise of historians, geographers and ecologists. Such a transdisciplinary approach reflects the growing concern of environmental studies with the idea of political ecology – the extent to which environmental changes and social processes are intertwined and interact. As Alf Hornborg and others have recently argued: ‘In integrating cultural, political, economic, and ecological perspectives... political ecology requires transdisciplinary analyses that handle the great variety of factors involved...’²

Since its beginnings, political ecology has primarily been concerned with rural development questions such as erosion, deforestation and desertification and with questions of ecological processes on a large scale, mainly in

1 See also A. Hornborg, ‘Environmental history as political ecology’, in A. Hornborg, J.R. McNeill and J. Martinez-Alier (eds), *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change*. Lanham: Altamira Press 2007, 1.

2 Hornborg, ‘Environmental history’, 3.

developing countries.³ In recent years, however, interest in urban environment has been growing, and political ecology has addressed many questions that are also central to urban history. One of the clearest connections between urban political ecology and urban history is an interest in tracing linkages between emergent urban forms and previous ones, including built and 'natural' elements. Both disciplines examine changing historical assumptions and ideas about the role of nature in the urban context – as a source of aesthetic pleasure, instrument of moral and social reform, place of encounter and sociability, potential site for redevelopment, site for ecological restoration and rehabilitation – and the ways these assumptions and ideas are linked to power relations and socio-economic processes such as urbanisation, industrialisation and de-industrialisation. As Stephanie Pincetl argues, the ways in which urbanisation or industrialisation 'have transformed the natural environment and appropriated and reallocated space and nature are indicative of relations of power as well as ideas of nature'.⁴

The chapters in this book shed light on several key themes central to urban political ecology and urban history: the evolution, creation and use of sports and recreation areas and their relationship to the changing assumptions about the role of nature in urban form; the way in which green or other sports areas have shaped and been shaped by gender and class relations; and the way in which the creation and use of these areas have reflected and reinforced changes in sports and leisure activities. The chapters also address the role of different actors, especially city governments but also state agencies and various associations, in the planning and management of sports areas. Finally, the book offers new insights into the environmental significance of sports areas in the wider debate about urban green spaces. One type of sports site which figures in a number of the following chapters is the golf course, which in recent decades has seen dynamic growth in many European countries.

Recreational areas and sports grounds represented, as we can see from Figure 1.1, only one new category of urban green space in the modern European city – along with the many different types of parks, allotment gardens, cemeteries, company gardens and the like. But the relationship of sport and green space has been a particularly controversial one, as many of the case studies below illustrate and as Jussi Jauhiainen reiterates in the wide-ranging concluding chapter. There are questions about the impact of organised sport including golf on urban ecology. Has it been destructive of urban biodiversity or have the effects been more variable? What is the impact

3 S. Pincetl, 'The political ecology of green spaces in the city and linkages to the countryside', *Local Environment* 12 (2007) 2, 87–92. See also P. Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing 2004, 5–12.

4 Pincetl, 'The political ecology of green spaces', 89. See also J.P. Evans, 'Wildlife corridors: an urban political ecology' and J. Byrne, M. Kendrick and D. Sroaf, 'The park made of oil: towards a historical political ecology of the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area', *Local Environment* 12 (2007) 2, 129–152 and 153–181; M. Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*. Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press 2003. For urban history, see for example P. Clark (ed.), *The European City and Green Space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg 1850–2000*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2006.

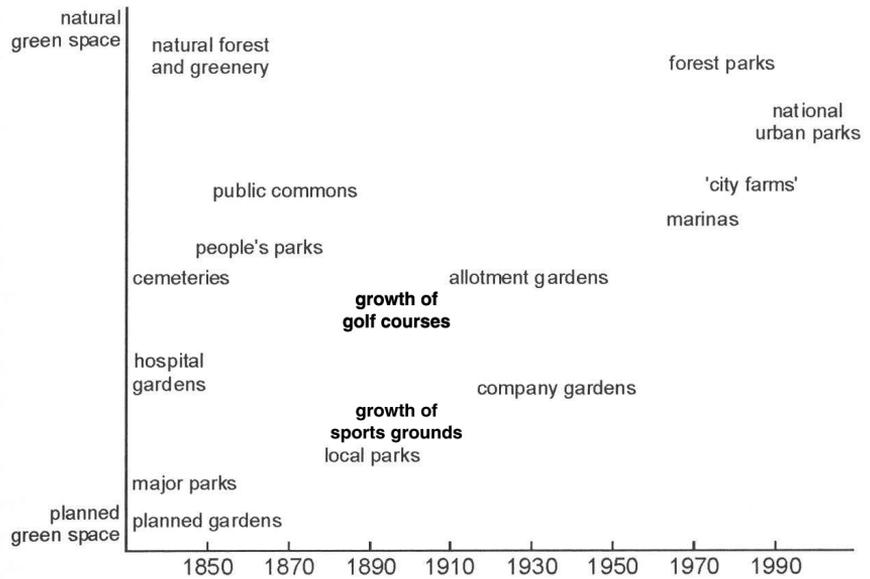


Figure 1.1 *The development of sports areas and green spaces in European Cities*

of sport on the construction and use of green space – has it promoted the contesting and segregation of spaces, disadvantaging non-sportsmen, women, and ethnic minorities, or has it a more social integrative role? Again what is the relationship of sport and public space – has it tended to encourage the privatisation of public space? The needs and impacts of different sports also need to be explored, whether golf, football or parkour.

In our introduction we try and spell out the broad framework of the development of sports spaces in European cities from the end of the nineteenth century to the present time, outlining in turn sports trends, the role of urban policy, and issues of environmental impact, before summarising briefly the case study chapters that follow.

Overall trends in sports spaces

So far the development of sports areas in modern European cities has attracted only limited research, and there is a need for more multidisciplinary study. Whereas sports activities, particularly organised competitive and commercial sports, have received widespread attention – for instance in Britain by John Lowerson, Wray Vamplew, Tony Mason, and others,⁵ in Finland by Henrik

5 J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle-Classes 1870–1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993; W. Vamplew, *Pay up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988; T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863–1915*. Brighton: Harvester Press 1980, on soccer.

Meinander,⁶ and in Germany by Christiane Eisenberg, Hajo Bernett and Michael Krüger,⁷ those extensive spaces in which such games and activities were performed have been frequently ignored. Despite the extensive literature on municipal parks in the nineteenth century, investigating garden styles, park design and social and educational functions, relatively little has been written about their evolution as sports and recreation venues.⁸ John Allan Patmore's work in 1970 studied the recreational use of urban parks in the 1960s in the context of national changes in leisure and land-use and some recent work has pointed to the growth of sports sites in the general development of urban green space.⁹ Research has also started to appear on individual sporting venues and on the growth of commercial stadia.¹⁰ However, only a handful of scholars have examined the broad range of sports sites in cities. The Danish social scientist Henning Eichberg has argued for an alternation of indoor and outdoor arenas for sport since the nineteenth century, while the geographer John Bale has proposed for Britain for a more steady growth of sports spaces linked to national identity and the growing commercialism and internationalism in sport.¹¹

All sports have their own distinctive profile and social scientists have identified over a hundred recognised sports, but as the following chapters suggest sports can be categorised in four broad types: organised amateur sports, essentially team sports; international competitive sports; commercial sports; and informal, individualistic sports. Linked to these different categories, it is arguable that the growth of sports areas in European cities has followed three main phases, though with major national variations.

6 H. Meinander, *Towards a Bourgeois Manhood: Boys Physical Education in Nordic Secondary Schools 1880–1940*. Helsinki: Finnish Society of Science and Letters 1994; S. Aalto, 'Urheilu – viihteestä viihdetoimisuudeksi', in *Helsingin historia vuodesta 1945*. 2. Helsinki: City of Helsinki 2000, 341–485.

7 C. Eisenberg, "English sports" und deutsche Bürger: Eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1800–1939. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 1999; H. Bernett, *Leichtathletik im geschichtlichen Wandel*. Schorndorf: Hoffmann 1987; M. Krüger, *Körperkultur und Nationsbildung: Die Geschichte des Turnens in der Reichsgründungsära – eine Detailstudie über die Deutschen*. Schorndorf: Hoffmann 1996.

8 H. Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, devotes only a few pages to sports grounds; though Catharina Nolin's study of Stockholm parks *Till Stadsbornas nytta och förlustande*. Stockholm, Byggförlaget 1999, has more on the new changes. M. Hannikainen, *Park life: an urban environmental history of Battersea Park, 1846–1951* (Unpublished Masters thesis, History Department, University of Helsinki, 2005) is an excellent study of the transformation of municipal parks for sport.

9 J.A. Patmore, *Land and Leisure*. London: David and Charles 1970.

10 For attempts to position the development of sports sites in the general development of urban green spaces see several of the chapters in Clark (ed.), *The European City*; see also P. Clark, S. Jokela and J. Saarikivi, 'Nature, sport and the European city: London and Helsinki 1880–2005' (paper at a conference on 'Nature in the City', German Historical Institute, Washington, December 2005), to be published in S. Dümpelmann and D. Brantz (eds), *The Place of Nature in the City* (forthcoming).

11 J. Bale and C. Philo (eds), *Henning Eichberg. Body Cultures: Essays on Sport, Space and Identity*. London: Routledge 1998; J. Bale, *Landscapes of Modern Sport*. Leicester: Leicester University Press 1994.

The first phase, from the later nineteenth century up to the 1920s, was a time when many organised sports were established and spread, mainly on an amateur basis. As noted, Britain led the way. Though some organised elite sports had existed earlier, the mid Victorian era was a watershed. Traditional football was transformed, largely through the medium of the public schools, into two organised games – football (soccer) and rugby: the *Football Association* was formed in 1863 and the *Rugby Football Union* in 1871. Hockey spread quickly in the 1870s as a middle-class game with the *Hockey Association* established in 1886. Athletics developed from the 1860s with the *Amateur Athletic Club* founded by 1866. Golf advanced strongly in late Victorian Britain as did lawn tennis.¹² A similar if later chronology of the establishment of sports is evident in the Netherlands (see Chapter Four) and other European countries.¹³ Across Europe, the growth of organised sports reflected strong demand created by urbanisation, rising incomes, increased leisure time and a greater awareness of sport as vital for health. There was also important elite and bourgeois support, as the ruling classes saw organised sport as a means of promoting new notions of masculinity, national identity, military education, and the improvement of the lower classes, linked to ideas of eugenics.

With the expansion of organised amateur sports came a slow growth of outdoor sports and recreation sites, with pitches marked out in more or less standardised geometric form, often situated in public parks. By the 1890s London County Council controlled over 400 cricket pitches, 300 tennis courts, and a hundred or so football pitches, but generally the provision of public sports facilities was not a high priority. The erection of stadia for commercial and international sports likewise made only limited progress before the First World War.¹⁴

The second main phase of development from the 1920s up to the 1960s saw a massive proliferation of sports venues for organised amateur activity, including recreation grounds in old and new municipal parks, specialist sports grounds, school and factory sports fields, outdoor swimming pools, as well as indoor facilities. Demand was strong as a result of the mass popularisation of sports after the First World War linked to better living standards, further reductions in working hours, a new attitude to nature and improved public (and later private) transport. In the post-war period demand for sports facilities accelerated, and there was growing if still lagging participation by women. In the late 1960s over a third of male Londoners (and 16 per cent of women) said they played sport regularly or occasionally, and in the next decade about half of the residents of Helsinki were actively engaged in outdoor sports. The period also saw a significant expansion of large stadia for commercial and international sports (such as the Olympic Games) which

12 H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780 – c.1880*. London: Croom Helm 1980, 114 et seq.; Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle-Classes*, 73, 79, 81.

13 See below Chapters by Pim Kooij, Christiane Eisenberg and Fulvia Grandizio.

14 Hannikainen, Park life: an urban environmental history of Battersea Park; Clark, Jokela and Saarikivi, 'Nature, sport and the European city'.

attracted growing media attention and so helped stimulate public interest in sport generally.¹⁵

The last main phase of development in sports sites occurred from the 1970s and 1980s with the rapid expansion of informal, individualistic and commercial sports as well as the growing competition from rural pursuits, and, partly as a consequence, the relative decline of amateur organised sport. There was increased provision for informal sports (climbing walls, skating parks, jogging tracks, orienteering areas) alongside the expansion of commercial venues (football stadia, health clubs). Most striking has been the escalating number of golf courses. There was a major take-off in Britain in the 1960s and from the 1980s courses multiplied in other European countries, usually run by private companies and in some cases by international chains. By comparison, facilities for amateur and international sports may have generally stagnated reflecting reduced public use and interest and changes in municipal policy and planning.¹⁶

This phased chronology of development tells only part of the story, however. As several of the chapters below reveal, there were important national and even local variations in the growth and type of provision of sports grounds and other facilities. Whilst the Netherlands generally followed Britain during the twentieth century in the growth of mainly outdoor, ‘green’ sports grounds, in Germany the trend was more towards ‘grey’ sports facilities, including artificial tracks and indoor sports complexes, at least until the last decades of the twentieth century. In Finland there was a combination of grey and green sites, and also ‘white’ facilities because of the long snowy winters. In Italy the growth of public sports grounds in the twentieth century was apparently meagre, with most facilities owned by the elite or private companies.¹⁷

As we noted earlier, even where it exists, sports space – like all urban space – may be heavily contested. Sports areas may exclude many more than they admit: local residents kept out from private golf courses, lower-class people unable to afford membership of private sports clubs or pay the access charges for municipal facilities; women discriminated against by heavily segregated, male-dominated sports, at least before the last decade of the twentieth century.¹⁸ Sports activists have often set the agenda for the design of recreational space. Niko Lipsanen points out in Chapter Twelve how even municipal sports facilities in Helsinki appeared increasingly fenced, turning into segregated spaces reserved for sportsmen. If demand, including

15 Clark, Jokela and Saarikivi, ‘Nature, sport and the European city’; K. Lento, ‘The role of nature in the city: green space in Helsinki, 1917–60’, in Clark (ed.), *The European City*, 189 et passim; P.L. Garside, ‘Politics, ideology and the issue of open space in London 1939–2000’, in Clark (ed.), *The European City*, 71; *Surveys of the Use of Open Spaces: 2 vols.* London: Greater London Council, 1968–72, 1.

16 Patmore, *Land and Leisure*; Clark, Jokela and Saarikivi, ‘Nature, sport and the European city’; Bale, *Landscapes of Modern Sport*, 49 et seq., 84.

17 See below Chapters Two – Six.

18 For a recent polemic on gender inequality in sport: E. McDonagh and L. Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is not Equal in Sports*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008. This has little on the spatial dimension.

the changing pattern of sports activity and organisation, has had an important effect on the configuration of green recreational space, so has the supply, and in the next section we turn to outline the changing nature of public provision of sports areas in European cities.

Sports areas and municipal policy making

In many European countries city governments and other local authorities have been the key providers of sports and recreation areas since the late nineteenth century. What has influenced urban policy-makers to provide and maintain sports grounds and other recreational facilities? How have their motives changed over time? And to what extent did municipal sports policies get caught up with other pressing policy issues such as public health, law and order, social welfare and economic development? The following discussion focuses on the role and rationale of city governments in providing sports and recreation facilities in Western and North European countries. In Southern Europe city governments have often played a less active part, as Fulvia Grandizio's Chapter on Italian cities clearly shows.

In the decades preceding the First World War the increasing interest in improving the health of the nation and boosting national efficiency put pressure on municipal authorities to seriously reconsider their public health policies. In the nineteenth century the focus of health policies had been on improving urban sanitary conditions: water supply, sewage system and refuse disposal. By carrying through the sanitary reforms, municipal health authorities had managed to overcome devastating epidemic diseases such as cholera and typhoid, but many other serious health problems remained, including tuberculosis which killed thousands of young people in all European countries each year. After much discussion and careful consideration municipal authorities in most European countries started to shift their attention from sanitary issues to people and their habits at the turn of the twentieth century. The aim was to safeguard the health of urban populations, and especially the urban youth, and to build up their resistance to diseases by encouraging them to adopt hygienic habits and a healthy, active lifestyle.¹⁹ To make the lifestyle changes possible, municipal authorities sought to provide health education but also to improve the access to green spaces and to provide public play grounds and sports areas where children and young people could play and exercise.²⁰

19 For the changing focus of public health policies, see M. Niemi, *Public Health and Municipal Policy Making: Britain and Sweden 1900–1940*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2007; S. Sheard and H. Power (eds), *Body and City: Histories of Urban Public Health*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2000; D. Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies*. London: Sage Publications 1995; M. Jauho, *Kansanterveysongelman synty: Tuberkuloosi ja terveyden hallinta Suomessa ennen toista maailmansotaa*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto 2007.

20 See for example, C. Nolin, 'Public parks in Gothenburg and Jönköping: secluded idylls for Swedish townfolk', *Garden History* 32 (2004) No. 2, 197–212; D. Pomfret, *Young People and the European City: Age Relations in Nottingham and Saint-Etienne*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

In the interwar period and immediately after the Second World War, city governments intensified their efforts to promote the physical well-being and moral socialisation of the young by providing new sports and recreation opportunities. Both cities and states saw sports and recreation areas as an important element in emerging welfare policies, and after 1945, a vital part of a new welfare society. Some proponents of sports areas emphasised the value of sports as such, whereas others aimed to promote activities combining the beneficial effects of sports and 'nature'. They stressed that a harmonious combination of physical exercise and nature experiences would help maintain the well-being of city dwellers and raise them to a higher level of fulfilment in their lives.²¹ The types of sports and recreation sites that were built depended on these ideals but also on negotiations between different interests and groups. In the recent volume on *The European City and Green Space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg, 1850–2000* (2006), there is a wide-ranging discussion of the factors shaping planning policy on green space (from urbanisation itself to international ideas and municipal expansion); the role of planners, architects, politicians, developers and others in decision-making; and the effects of such policies on the urban landscape.²²

Sports policies have always served many objectives, and this was particularly true in the tumultuous inter- and post-war periods. States and cities did not provide sports areas only as part of welfare policies but also to promote national political and military agendas, especially during the interwar years. Furthermore, official support for sporting activities and recreation facilities was heavily influenced by the need to enhance social cohesion and contain conflicts in urban society. Municipal authorities were (and still are) important intermediaries in the formation of collective identity. In this role, they encouraged social networks and associational life based around workplaces, schools, clubs and societies. These collectivities – from cooperative societies to drama groups and sports clubs – had an important role in modern urban society, since they provided 'a basis for orderly belonging', diminishing apathy and disaffection.²³ Furthermore, sports activities and sports clubs were seen as an efficient way to discipline people and to channel their aggressions into socially acceptable avenues. In pre- and post-war cities, where different social, political and language groups contended for power and influence, sports activities provided a safe outlet for tensions.²⁴ However, the solution to one problem often created other problems. As discussed by Katri Lento and Suvi Talja in Chapters Two and Three, the fact that sports policies were seen as a means of containing urban conflicts perpetuated the existing gender inequality in the public provision of sports facilities. It was usually young men who were seen as a threat to public order and were to be

21 Pomfret, *Young People and the European City*; D. Pomfret, 'The "city of evil" and the "great outdoors": the modern health movement and the urban young, 1918–1940', *Urban History* 28 (2001), 405–427.

22 Clark (ed.), *The European City*.

23 M. Savage and A. Warde, *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity*. London: Macmillan 1993, 150–151.

24 See for example, Aalto, 'Urheilun – viihdeestä viihdeteollisuudeksi'.

Green space has become a major issue in European cities in recent years as a result of enhanced environmental awareness, urban marketing, planning policy and growing population densities. Up to now, however, the subject of sports areas and grounds has attracted little research, despite the fact that since the First World War such public and private areas – from football pitches and running tracks to golf courses and tennis courts – have often comprised one of the most important and extensive types of green space in the European city.

This book presents a pioneering comparative and multidisciplinary analysis of the development, use and impact of sports areas in the European city from the start of the 20th century up to the present time. Employing a range of historical, spatial and ecological approaches it examines when and why sports areas evolved, the contribution of municipalities and the private sector, the role of gender and class, and the impact on the urban landscape and ecology. Chapters cover urban sports areas in Finland, Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, illustrating the contrasts in the provision of green space across Europe.



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