The place of 'place' in cultural studies of sports

by John Bale

Sport is a major element of culture and has attracted the academic interest of scholars from a diverse range of disciplines. Psychology, history, philosophy and sociology each possess several sport-oriented journals. Geographers have arrived relatively late on the sports studies scene, though the recent birth of *Sport Place: an International Journal of Sports Geography* suggests that a geographical involvement – especially in the United States – is at least growing, if not yet fully legitimized. Sport has lain uneasily within both social and recreational geography (fields in which it might most logically be expected to emerge), being viewed as an epiphenomenon whose ideological function has barely been considered. Although sports-geographic sessions have been held at annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers since the early 1970s and material on sports is now included in American introductory cultural geography texts (e.g. Jordan and Rowntree, 1982) as an exemplification of popular culture, a geography of sport remains in its formative stages. It has tended to adopt empiricist or positivist philosophies and while a humanistic trend is currently evident approaches embracing structuralist principles have barely emerged (Bale, 1988a). In contrast 'geographical' work authored by non-geographers in cognate disciplines such as sociology and economics has adopted a much more critical perspective on the phenomenon of modern sports.

This review seeks to highlight the nature of current geographical work on sport by both geographers *qua* geographers and by those undertaking geographical work in related fields of study. But more attention is devoted to a consideration of the significance of 'place' in sports, something which while being selfevident has been virtually ignored by the few geographers who have taken to the sports-geography field. Given that 'place' is a significant factor in a variety of sports contexts it is somewhat paradoxical that geographers have appeared relatively reluctant to contribute to the multidisciplinary field of sports studies.

I   Approaches to a geography of sports

Sports-geographic studies seem to have assumed five basic approaches. First, a relatively large number of studies have focused on the identification of temporal and regional variations in different sports attributes. For example, the diffusion of sports (Bale, 1982, Rooney and Johnson, 1983) and of innovations in sports (Bale, 1978) have been analysed via the Hägerstrandian model, though such approaches have been vigorously criticized because of their non-controversial perspective on the diffusion process (Badenhorst and Rogerson, 1985). Geographical variations in the 'production' of players or participants (e.g. Pillsbury, 1974; Rooney, 1969; 1974; Rooney and Macdonald, 1982; Bale, 1982; 1985; Ojala and Kureth, 1975; Harmon, 1985; Tomlinson, 1986; Curtis and Birch, 1987), usually adjusted on a *per capita* basis, and the study of 'fan regions' (Dow, 1978; Shelley and Cartin, 1984) have characterised the regional approach. Such studies have been criticized by Ley (1985) on the grounds that they:

> exemplify a research style where description takes precedence over interpretation. Maps of the spatial origins of professional sports players . . . invite interpretive accounts of the places and practices which produced such 'social facts'.

He then points geographers to the work of sports sociologists and stresses that 'cultural geography would be strengthened by drawing on it' (p. 417-18). Part of the overall purpose of the present review is to stress the considerable amount of crossdisciplinary work on sport relating to place and locality.

A second group of studies builds on the regional approach and focuses on the modelling and analysis of the migration patterns of elite athletes (McConnell, 1983; 1984; Marais, 1979; Rooney, 1987), a subject of considerable importance given the widening spatial margins of recruitment of athletes and the global system within which such recruiting occurs (Bale, 1988b). Of particular interest has been the analysis of the geographical dimensions of the US high school-university nexus, and Rooney (1987) has attracted nationwide interest as a result of his recommendations for the reorganization of the collegiate 'recruiting game' on more explicitly professional lines.

Another group of studies, principally authored by economists and other non-geographers, has explored the locational dynamics of sports *club* relocation and movement, frequently applying statistical and mathematical models (Quirk, 1973; Rivett, 1975; Walker, 1986). These have pointed to growing economic rationality in locational aspects of the world of sports and have predicted the optimal location patterns for future sports activity (Le Heron, 1978). The lower levels of the sports business hierarchies have increasingly been thinned out, greater shares of a declining spectator market progressively going to the most bourgeoisified clubs and economic imperatives have led to the marginalization or even extinction of the less successful clubs. Some observers have pointed out that when community is confronted with capital in such situations, the latter invariably wins (Lipsitz, 1984; Ingham and Hardy, 1985). Franchises can move but communities cannot (Ingham, Howell and Schilperoort, 1987). The relation-

ship between broader national economic patterns and the changing spatial pattern of professional sports has also been alluded to, in the context of the professional football industries in Britain (Connell, 1985; Goodey *et al.*, 1985) and Portugal (Gaspar *et al.*, 1982). In both cases the spatial patterns of the industry have come to reflect those of the growing tertiary orientation of the space economy.

Work concerned with the externality and multiplier effects of sports events represent a fourth group of sports-geographic studies. Relatively simple empirical approaches to the impact of quite modest sporting events (Marsh, 1984) and the application of local multiplier models to the impact of major professional sports teams (Schaffer and Davidson, 1975; 1985; Rosentraub and Nunn, 1978) and to individual sports events such as the Open golf championship (Blake *et al.*, 1979) typify such studies. These are parallelled by those which conceptualize the area over which sports-induced impacts are felt as externality fields (Bale, 1980; Fien and Lynn, 1983; Humphrys, Mason and Pinch, 1983). Given the significance of sporting impacts of various kinds, these studies are highly topical and might be expected to develop further in terms of methodology and technique. Indeed, a recent report by the Henley Centre for Forecasting (1986) stressed the need for more impact studies of sports events at the local level of scale.

A final group of studies displaying a more humanistic and cultural-geographic perspective is essentially concerned with sport and the cultural landscape. Although it remains true that 'geographic literature on sport and recreation gives scant attention to the tangible landscape that sports produce' (Lewis, 1983: 255), a growing crossdisciplinary interest has been shown in the sports landscape (Oriard, 1983; Eichberg, 1982; 1986; Neilson, 1986; Wagner, 1981; Adams and Rooney, 1984; Raitz, 1987), providing a rich store of ideas on the character of sports places. The sports environment, like the workplace, has experienced 'increased territorial partitioning [which] can mean increased specialization and division of activities' (Sack, 1986: 173) and recurring themes in this kind of work include the growing artificiality, spatial confinement and partitioning of the sport environment, though Eichberg (1986) does stress the presence of a number of 'green revolutions'[1] in sports since the early eighteenth century, presently typified by the skiing, orienteering and running booms (Winters, 1980). Considerable emphasis has also been placed on the effect on the sport experience of the gradual reduction in the number of landscape elements within the overall sport-landscape ensemble (Raitz, 1987) as parks become 'concrete saucers' (Neilson, 1986) and fields are transformed into synthetic carpets. From a more radical perspective, allusion has been made to the essentialaly 'antinature' character of sport 'with an overwhelming amount of concrete rather than just pure uncontaminated, unmanipulated nature', and the 'near-laboratory settings in which the unidimensionality of competitive sports can unfold itself under controlled conditions. Pure nature has too much variation in it; too much "noise" ' (Galtung, 1984).

Implicit in these studies are themes of placelessness (Relph, 1976), territorial-

ity (Sack, 1986) and rational landscapes (Relph, 1980), though a more explicit tapestry of ideas integrating scientific humanism, rationalization, dehumanization and reduced gratification (for 'players' and spectators) from the sport experience in a sport-landscape context, remains to be fully woven. However, it is clear from such studies that the ideas of Relph and Sack on placelessness and territoriality respectively could be readily explored and expanded in studies of the sports landscape.

An early paper by J.B. Jackson (1957) drew attention to the effect of new types of mechanized and technological sports on the participants' changed experiences of nature and landscape and incidental comments by other geographers reinforce the view that considerable potential exists for humanistic geographical studies into the relationship between sport, landscape and experience. Appleton (1982), for example, alludes to some sports which 'directly exploit the pleasure-giving potential of nature by intimately incorporating the perceptual experience of the natural environment with the activity itself', orienteering integrating physical activity and environment 'to the furthest limits so far achieved in any recreational activity' (p. 85). This again exemplifies a 'green' perspective on sport in contrast to the parallel contemporary movement which increasingly distances sport from nature with the numerous artificial and confined spaces within which many sports take place. Yet we still need to know more about the ways in which we have subdivided and allocated geographic space to sports 'and what these geographic patterns – as they have changed through time – have to tell us about basic rituals' of popular culture (Lewis, 1983: 255).

This variety of approaches demonstrates the breadth of geographical studies of sport. Yet eclecticism may have distracted us from the centrality of *place* in modern sport. Wagner (1981) has stressed the essential *spatiality* of sport, defining it as 'culture *and* geography'. He emphasizes 'the eminently spatial formulation of its drama' (Wagner, 1981:89; see also Oriard, 1976), a microspatial drama which can be described in the language of spatial analysis (Gattrell and Gould, 1979; Gould and Gattrell, 1979; Gould and Greenwalt, 1981). However, it is not only space but also *place* – the central focus of the present review – which aids an understanding and appreciation of the significance of sport in modern society.

II   The place of place

The significance of 'place' in sport alerts us to the potential contribution of *geography* in sports studies. Sport meshes with place in at least three rather different but significant ways. First, place appears to affect sporting performance and sporting outcomes, not only in a physical geographic sense, but also through the application of ideas relating to territoriality and community. Secondly, sports (and especially international sports) provide one the few remaining means of

satisfying what MacAloon (1981) termed 'crosscultural voyeurism', i.e., a kind of *popular ethnography* in contrast to the analogous high culture forms typified by the gentlemen's club and the geographical society. Thirdly, a number of *topophilic* aspects of sports relate to ideas of place-attachment, place-pride and boosterism. Each of these may be reviewed in turn.

1   *The home-field advantage*

Place is of central importance to the outcome of sporting contests and reference is frequently made to the socalled 'home-field advantage'. Many studies have drawn attention to the fact that, in team sports especially, the home team appears to have an advantage over the visiting team, an advantage which is reflected in more home than away wins, more goals or points scored at home, and fewer goals or points conceded at home. This effect appears to have persisted from (at least) the late nineteenth century in British football (Pollard, 1986) and has been shown to exist in several team sports in both Europe (Stefani, 1983) and North America (Edwards, 1979; Varca, 1980). Limited evidence of an apparent 'distance decay' effect also exists in relation to the home advantage, at least one study showing that the probability of winning is associated with distance of game from home field (Schwartz and Barsky, 1977).

A central problem in such studies is the explanation of *why* such a home advantage should exist. Malmberg (1980), who like Wagner (1981), stresses that sports possess 'special territories' and are essentially struggles over space, is one of the few geographers to allude to this phenomenon. He believes that 'it is difficult to find another explanation for this than territoriality' (p. 204). Pollard (1986), on the other hand, presents a number of other hypothesized causes, i.e., the presence of local crowd support, the opposing teams' travel fatigue, referee bias, special tactics, as well as greater familiarity with (and defence of) the local 'territory'. If familiarity with the microgeography of the home field *was* the major factor influencing the home-field advantage we might expact the phenomenon to be most evident in those sports where surfaces, sizes and peripheral architectures of the sports sites were most varied. However, research in the United States has shown that it is in the sports where the site conditions are most likely to be almost identical from place to place (e.g. basketball and ice hockey) that the home advantage is greatest (Mizruchi, 1985). In such situations the crowd before which teams perform is at its most intimate, providing support for the view that the home advantage is best explained by the greater presence of moral support from spectators, the sports event providing a forum for the 'celebration of local community' (Schwartz and Barsky, 1977; Mizruchi, 1985). It should be noted, however, that it has been shown that in *decisive* matches, playing at home may actually be a *disadvantage*, the paradoxical result of the excessive expectations of a supportive audience interfering with the execution of sufficiently skillful responses (Baumeister and Steinhilber, 1984; see however, Gayton *et al.*, 1987).

2   Crosscultural voyeurism

International sports events can be interpreted as latter day forms of the international exposition and learned geographical, historical and anthropological societies of the late nineteenth century. In his monumental biography of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, MacAloon (1981) stresses the nineteenth-century growth of popular ethnographic displays at international exhibitions, 'wild west shows' and the like. At these events, foreign *people* as well as artifacts were displayed to a voyeuristic European and North American populace. The significance of the exposition was the opening up to a mass public a view of places which had previously been the preserve of the rich (or of the handful of officials and soldiers who had served in the colonies). At the time when the intellectual and social elites were organizing outlets for the dissemination of 'scientific' ethnology and cultural studies, popular and mass culture was 'formalizing and elaborating its own means to the same end [and] . . . the appeal of the Olympic Games is based in no small part upon the continuing tradition of popular ethnography' (MacAloon, 1981: 136). It is no accident that the early Olympic Games were held in conjunction with international expositions and at the 1904 Olympics at St Louis, 'anthropology days' were held at which 'representatives from various peoples considered primitive and worthy of observation' were put into competition with one another (Mrozek, 1983: 164). This may have represented the apogee of the association of special sports with particular racial groups, though the association clearly lingers on in the minds of many observers of the world of sports. Yet many of the elements of these early events reappear in present day international sports events, the emphasis on place differences, already built into team sports, being stressed not only by tv commentators but by the presence of national flags, anthems and processions. In what other contexts do so many people see so many others from such varied places? The size of the Olympic audience may result in large part from the felt need for receiving living, dramatic images of 'others' with whom we are increasingly conscious of sharing a shrinking world (MacAloon, 1984: 217). Crosscultural voyeurism is most readily satisfied through sports events, latter day and popular analogues of the learned anthropological and geographical societies. As such, events like the Olympics and World Cup are comparable to other popular spectacles and in many ways their settings and environments are similar (Park, 1985). As landscapes of spectacle major sports events may be amenable to the same kind of analysis as that undertaken by Ley and Olds (1988) into similar forms of 'heroic consumption'.

It has been noted that international sports persons are likely to be the *only* representatives of particular nations that many people ever encounter, either directly or vicariously (Walton, 1984). As a result, opinions and perceptions of entire nations may be based on those nations' most visible representatives. These are more than likely to be sporting celebrities. The qualities of these individuals are internalized as qualities of the nations they represent, especially by sports fans. Such stereotyping is fuelled by the television presentation of sport, relaying

as it does a particular image and building on the existing emphasis on place differences in most sports in order to provide a point of reference for the viewer (Whannell, 1983). Sports participants represent their countries more than by simply being on the field of 'play'. For example, Cole (1972) drew attention to the fact that for many people Brazil was strongly identified with Pele and that Britain was associated more with Bobby Charlton than Sir Francis Drake and more with Wembley than Westminster. Sport therefore provides a fundamental stage for the presentation of place to a global audience.

3   Topophilic aspects of sports

Interesting and rewarding as the above avenues of enquiry undoubtedly are, the present review will concentrate on the topophilic aspects of sports. Although landscape characteristics of sports activities or localities in which sports take place might justifiably be included as contributing to topophilia, attention in the present paper is given to the extent to which sports 'couple sentiment with place' (Tuan, 1974: 113), not landscape. Sport is arguably one of the major stimuli in presenting images for topohilia at local, regional and national scales and we here focus on two different, but not unconnected, forms of sport-related topophilia. These are (i) the place-bonding or place-attachment function served by sports, reflecting sport-induced localism, regionalism and nationalism and (ii) the place-boosting function of sports, or the more active and vigorous assertion and projection of a place's prowess because of its sporting attributes. The boundaries between these two areas are inevitably blurred and they are arbitrarily separated here for purposes of convenience and organization.

a   Place bonding and sport: J.B. Jackson (1984: 20) noted that it is the sports arena which is 'the legitimate successor of the agora or forum: it is where we demonstrate local loyalties – loudly as the Greeks would have done . . .'. It is noteworthy that Jackson alludes to the sports arena in this respect and not to the concert hall, church, theatre or tavern as a site for the display of local loyalty. It is through the mass cultural form of sport that strong positive identification with locality, region and nation is perhaps best generated. It has been stressed, for example, that it is in sports that 'the representative teams throw segmental units (i.e., schools, municipalities or nations) into clear-cut confrontations that occur much less frequently in other areas of social life' (Henricks, 1974). For most of the time, communities 'have few common goals. They fight no wars, seldom engage in community rallies, and are rarely faced with such crises as floods or tornadoes that can engender a communal spirit' (Coleman, 1961: 42). Sports events, be they between schools, cities, regions or nations, do produce this communal spirit. The community appeal of sports was well documented in several of the classic interwar American community studies. For example, in *Middletown* it was emphasized that civic loyalty was centred 'around basketball more than any one thing', no distinction dividing the crowds which packed the

high school gymnasium (Lynd and Lynd, 1929; 435). It has been suggested by Coleman (1961) that where sports serve to bond educational institutions – as in the American high schools and colleges – alternative ways, more conducive to the intellectual aims of educational establishments, should be sought to satisfy the functions served by sports. In the quarter-century since Coleman's paper, it cannot be said that any real alternatives to sport have emerged. As Lever (1983: 9) notes, 'high culture – opera, ballet and the visual arts . . . unite elites . . . . Only popular culture can promote universal communication and shared experience for the masses'.

This rather benign view can be contrasted with one which recognizes the ideological basis of modern sports. Young (1986) stresses the solidarity function of sports in which class conflict is replaced by place conflict, legitimating local, regional and national loyalties. For example, in Wales rugby became a 'rallying point for the articulation of "Welshness" instead of class feeling' (Hargreaves, 1986: 44) and in British football especially, 'groups of similarly placed, deprived and exploited working-class youth from different localities strive to defend the communities symbolized by the teams they support' (Hargreaves, 1986: 44). Sport may be especially important in the construction of consensus (from the perspective of the dominant class) and this can be attributed in part to its *serialized* nature. Unlike many other civic rituals, sport possesses an element of succession; it has a season and its contests tend to appear on a regular and predictable basis (Ingham, Howell and Schilperoort, 1987: 458).

It has been pointed out that sport is one of the few things in modern life in which 'large, complex, impersonal and predominantly functionally bonded units such as cities can units as wholes'. At the national scale, sport 'has come to function as one of the principal media of collective identification . . . one of the few peacetime occasions when nations are able regularly to unite' (Dunning, 1981: 26). While functional bonding may be characteristic of modern, achievement-oriented, meritocratic society, segmental bonding does continue to exist 'notably in the important representation through sport of concepts of locality and nation' (Horne and Jary, 1987: 96), providing bonding and status through ascription. This latter form of bonding is seen by Dunning and his associates (1988) as being most potent in working-class communities. Such localism, it is argued, has contributed in no small part to the football hooligan phenomenon, an issue we return to below.

The degree of localism which is engendered may differ between sports. Team sports are more strongly linked to place than those in which individuals participate against each other. But differences exist between team sports too; cricket 'did not hold the loyalty of, and have the same significance for, the urban masses as football did' (Hargreaves, 1986: 71) – the result, in part perhaps, of cricket's greater association with the quintessential Victorian values reflected in the control of the sport lying with those whose roots were in land rather than in commerce and industry (Hargreaves, 1986: 71).

A practical implication of sport-place attachment is felt when the relocation of professional sports teams is mooted. Such suggestions are invariably opposed by local fans. Such 'intense identification between people and places' (Jackson and smith, 1984: 33) suggests that football clubs and their stadiums are examples of Relph's 'authentic places', given the sentiment and attachment generated by them. In a study of local residents' reactions to the possible relocation (over a few kilometres) of London's Chelsea Football Club, it was found that Chelsea would simply not be 'Chelsea' if it relocated over even very short intraurban distances (Bishop and Booth, 1974). As pressures increase to relocate British football clubs, 'it will become essential to test rigorously the extent to which the clubs are tied to their surroundings and, more pertinently perhaps, the extent of this tie in the future' (Bishop and Booth, 1974: 29). Such a view assumes that community can play a valid role when confronted with capital – something Ingham and Hardy (1984) doubt in a North American context. In the US, for example, baseball and football franchises have relocated on frequent occasions since the late 1950s. In such cases, objections from communities to the loss of 'their team' have been readily overridden by the ideology of enterprise. In Britain it remains to be seen whether the apparent success of community groups in opposing the relocation of clubs like Oxford, Fulham and Luton are temporary or whether they will eventually succumb to the pressures from dominant groups.

Related closely to, and resulting from, place bonding and loyalty is place pride, a form of psychological well-being, deriving from the success, or even presence, of a sports team. Pride in place through success in sports has been explored from several perspectives, some impressionistic and some rather more rigorously quantitative. A study undertaken in 1973 looked at the changed self-image of the people of Sunderland following the surprise FA Cup win of Sunderland over the favourites, Leeds United. Although people remained only too painfully aware of Sunderland's economic, social and physical problems, the Cup victory had altered people's selfperception:

> There is now something more to identify with in being from Sunderland: everybody in the country knows they won the cup, more of them might know where Sunderland is – Sunderland has been 'put back on the map' (Derrick and McRory, 1973: 15).

One resident was reported as commenting that 'a not particularly glamourous town feels more proud of itself after a win of this sort' (p. 18) and one can see 'the attitude of the people in Sunderland to winning the cup as blowing a metaphorical raspberry at the establishment' (p. 19). Similar responses to sport success have been reported in the case of soccer in Brazil (Lever, 1983). How long such feelings continue to exist after the initial experience, and *who* actually benefits from such sports success, remains to be explored.

Place pride is opposed by place shame. When Brazil lost the World Cup to Italy in 1982, police in Sao Paulo registered nine suicide attempts compared with a daily average of less than one (quoted in Pollner and Holstein, 1985: 292).

As regional and economic divisions have intensified in Britain during the

1980s, regional as well as racial abuse has become an increasing feature of terrace culture (Redhead, 1986). Local pride, articulated through terrace chants and songs, is also emphasized in the profusion of studies concerned with football hooliganism, whether as in Marsh *et al.*'s (1978) view of violent outbursts being associated with a defence of territory, or in the view that it is the local football team that provides the main source of community identification through which the rough male working class can achieve status (Dunning *et al.*, 1988). Comments from selfconfessed football holligans display a perverse form of place pride in no uncertain terms:

> I am fighting for Darlington. Not the team – the town. I feel proud of the town and want to defend it from people who say its not very good.[2]

> . . . I won't take verbal when we go away. I won't take it from a northerner. I followed this team for *years*. . . and I'm not going away with the team for some dirty northern ponce to spit over me . . . (quoted in Robins, 1984).

Indeed, it has been suggested that 'as more home-grown talent becomes exported abroad and overseas talent imported, the *spectators* become more and more *the* representatives of the areas the clubs are named after' (Pratt and Salter, 1984: 211).

Most observations of place pride in a sporting context are recorded anecdotally. A somewhat different approach has explored psychological well-being and sport team success by analysing the relationship between a university's sports success and the extent of use of its psychiatric clinic (Pollner and Holstein, 1985). Far from finding that clinic use declined when teams won, it was established that its use was 'indifferent to the play and performance of major athletic teams' (p. 304), suggesting that there may be more to local sports success and well-being than anecdotal evidence suggests.

b Place boosting and sport: Sport has provided a major source for place boosting since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Boosterism, a persistent though not solely American phenomenon, has involved sport to boost places large and small, either by stressing, for example, the success of high school football or basketball teams in small town Texas and Indiana (respectively), or through the successful application by cities such as Los Angeles or Barcelona to host the Olympic Games.

Boorstin (1965) has emphasized the importance of boosterism in the growth of both American frontier settlement and the evolution of the US system of higher education. Sport was used to boost both. The presence of a college boosted a town and the presence of a sports team boosted the college in a way an orchestra, theatre or debating society could not. Boosters gravitated towards sports because of their high level of visibility and mass support (Frey, 1985). In large part it is the booster mentality which 'explains' the many recruiting abuses currently characterizing college sports in the US (Rooney, 1987).

Boosterism, like place pride and place bonding, is a form of localism or local

patriotism. As with nationalism, localism possesses a number of manifestations in the ordinary, or vernacular, landscape. National flags and motifs have been presented as symbols of nationalism in the North American landscape (Zelinsky, 1986; Konrad, 1986) and the analogous material culture symbol for localism might best be typified by the welcoming sign or booster billboard, a significant element of the modern American landscape. A recurring feature of such billboards is their allusions to local sporting prowess. Zelinsky (1988) avers that by far the largest category of celebrities glorified on such welcoming signs are locally bred athletes while the lauding of local school and college teams is even more prevalent:

> Usually artless but large, positioned strategically in the last open curve of a farm-to-market road, these handmade brags are as often as not the sole claim or welcome encountered on the threshold of a Texas town. Even approaching Gonzales, where the first battle of the Texas Revolution took place, the only notice posted anywhere by the townsfolk reads: 'This is Apache Territory, District Champions 1958'. It is a truer measure of their values than art or war or politics: the way they choose to declare themselves (Winningham, 1979: 8).

In such towns success in high school football 'is their only claim to recognition by the larger world' (Winningham, 1979), something mirrored in hundreds of places, large and small, throughout the nation.

The presence of local billboards, like the national flags or motifs, is thought by some to derive 'from a spontaneous, unforced expression of loyalty' (Zelinsky, 1985: 174) to a place by the local citizenry. Such alleged spontaneity is thought by Zelinsky to be 'peculiarly fascinating', but such a view ignores the possibility that such expressions of localism may, in fact, be far from spontaneous and are frequently tutored by business interests of various kinds (Ingham and Hardy, 1984). This is especially the case with *professional* sports teams and Ingham and Hardy (1984: 98) question whether 'representational/professional sport franchises were *authorized* by the communities in which they were located'. Rather, community interest was more likely to have been mobilized in support of the economic interests of sports entrepreneurs, real-estate developers, and the business class in general.

The visual symbols which, through sports, exemplify place boosting in the USA have analogies at different scales and in different countries. A recent development in the style-culture of British soccer supporters in the north of England has been the adoption of the Irish Tricolour as a form of display. This is:

> not entirely innocent or unconnected, and the geographical regrouping . . . of north of England *and* Scotland against the rest is part of a stylistic contempt for the selflabelled trendy, fashionable teams and fans of the south' (Redhead, 1986: 20).

Likewise, football-oriented graffiti may be frequently used to boost place, claim territory, or act as a territorial marker. Landscape expressions of localism, like nationalism, *do* vary from country to country (Zelinsky, 1986: 175), the result, perhaps, of the different national ideological filters through which such pervasive sentiments as a sense of place have passed before being expressed and experienced in the vernacular landscape. Yet the billboard, bumper sticker and

graffiti say essentially the same thing, namely the communication in the landscape of an expression of localism through sports.

Personal displays of identification with a place through sports are different from permanent artifacts. Badges, brooches or T-shirts professing support for a place can be removed if the wearer wishes to be distanced from the team or place in question. Indeed, the public display of association with place has been shown to wane following team defeat, only to rise during periods following team success (Cialdini *et al.*, 1976).

III   Conclusion

An interest in the geographical study of serious, competitive sports has grown in the last two decades, although at a relatively slow rate when compared with the prolific increase in output of sport-related research by, for example, sociologists, psychologists and historians. Geographers have not been prominant in interdisciplinary research into sport-related topics; neither have they participated to any extent in interdisciplinary conferences on sports. Geographers who *specialize* in the geography of sports are few in number with greater visibility in North America than Europe and, despite the involvement of British geographers in work funded by the Sports Council, their contribution has mainly been in the areas of recreation and leisure. Finally, because of the broader interpretation of what constitutes cultural geography in the USA (and, perhaps, because of the greater devotion to sports in North America) the study of sports has found a more prominent place in American than in European cultural-geographic studies as many of the references cited in this paper clearly show.[3] However, it is equally clear that much of the most stimulating 'geographical' work on sports has been authored by non-geographers.

The use of sports to provide insights into geographical questions has tended to be the exception rather than the rule (see Pred, 1981, for a noteworthy exception) and the focus of most sports-geographic study has been to further our knowledge of sports. While this research direction might be expected to continue, sport could provide a productive laboratory for furthering geographical understanding. For example, sport and its landscape artifacts might aid us in disclosing 'the meanings that human beings attach to areas and places and to relate these meanings to other aspects and conditions of human experience' (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987: 96). And because place and locality lie at the heart of sport, sports geography has the potential to more fully and critically explore the symbiosis between sport and place.

Sports geography has tended to follow mainly empiricist and positivist approaches, failing to explore the structural and ideological significance of sport in society and a central problem in sports geography is that it lacks a conceptual base different from that of any other kind of 'adjectival geography'. As a result, it readily falls into the 'yet another thing to be mapped' syndrome. A way

forward may be first to recognize the significance of sport in modern society and then to work towards an integration of notions of popular culture, localism and cultural geography. There can be little doubt that it is through sport that current manifestations of localism (and regionalism and nationalism) are most visible. For this reason, if for no other, geographical involvement in sports studies might be expected to develop and grow.

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Acknowledgements

IV Notes

[1] Much fascinating work on 'green waves' in the historical evolution of modern sports has been undertaken at the Institute for Sport Research at Gerlev Folk Academy at Slagelse in Denmark. Although this is summarized in English (Eichberg, 1986), the most detailed treatment remains in Danish (Eichberg, 1985; Eichberg and Jespersen, 1986; I am grateful to Helle Ringgaard for a translation of the former).

[2] Quoted in *The Guardian*, 19 December 1986.

[3] Rooney's influence must be strongly emphasized in accounting for both the growth of sports geography in the USA and for a long line of postgraduate students who have worked on sports geographic projects at Oklahoma State University.

V References

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