

History at the Intersection of Sports and Politics Programme

Session 1 (15.00-16.55 CEST)

This session will consider different ways of conducting historical research into sports history, both from more 'top down' as well as a more 'bottom up' approaches. Consequently, this session will consider the place of sports history within the broader history discipline and the domain of political history more specifically. Attention will be paid to the types of sources and methodologies that are of interest to the political sports historian as well as the methodological difficulties that one may encounter.

1) An Unavoidable Violence. Hunting from the Aristocratic *Loisir* to the Crisis of a 'Bloody Sport' – Bruno Farinelli (University of Antwerp)

Since the 1990s, sociology has investigated how societies have developed and implemented the concept of sport. A common theory considers sport as an element in the process of civilisation and the progressive normalisation of violence. Sport has imposed increasingly restrictive rules that have progressively made leisure activities less violent or, in the case of contact sports, a space where violence is controlled. Hunting too has been considered as a leisure activity subject to such processes. Within the evolution of hunting from aristocratic *loisir* to sport, sociologists and historians have identified a progressive distancing from hunting's most violent practices. Unlike other 'sportification' processes, however, violence cannot be eradicated from hunting. This unavoidable violence raises the question of whether it can be considered a sport at all. The relationship between humans and animals has changed considerably, and today hunting is widely criticised by animal rights activists, with some more radical groups arguing that it should be banned. The roots of these changes and the evolution of hunting practices run much deeper and are entangled with political history. From primitive hunting to noble medieval falconry, from modern *chasse à courre* to the use of firearms, hunting has undoubtedly been a factor in the civilisation of human society. This paper aims to retrace the evolution of hunting as a leisure activity from the *Ancien Régime* to the present day, following some specific axes: the evolution of the human-animal relationship, the gender dimension and hunting as a space for politics and diplomacy. Even today, hunting is a practice that is more than just a 'bloody sport'.

2) Centring from the Margins: Contextualizing Black Canadian Sport History – Ornella Nzindukiyimana (St. Francis Xavier University)

Sport history literature emphasizes that cultural practices are always anchored within a political and historical context. Power relations within Western capitalist societies have historically been spread and reified through struggles for equal access to sporting fields. Thus, a history of sport in Canada as seen through the perspective of Black people not only strives to contextualize embodiments of complex socio-cultural and economic forces, but also locates sport within national and international political history. Indeed, to discuss the first Black Canadian Olympian is to conduct a study of immigration policies; to analyse the fighting record of an expatriate Canadian heavyweight boxing champion is to

investigate the Interwar erosion of the British Empire's soft power; to retrace Black women's integration into sport in the early twentieth century is to extend understandings of social mobility and resistance. These are histories from the margins whose positionality requires strategic interrogation of archives.

3) The sexist rhetoric about women's inclusion in sport in the 1930s and its resonances in today's trans-exclusionary policies – Clare Tebbutt (Trinity College Dublin)

In the last few years in the US there have been some seventy state bills proposing a ban on trans athletes competing in sports, especially at school level. During the same period, a number of sports governing bodies have proposed a ban on transwomen's participation, most notably, World Rugby. These moves reflect a broader tendency for transphobia in politics and society in our current moment. These debates about who gets to qualify as a woman for the purposes of women's sport, are, however, far from new. This paper will draw on media coverage of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin to explore how sex and gender variance were major sources of concern for organisers. The paper will conclude by considering how the 1930s histories can illuminate the present debates - and vice versa - and what it means to be examining a topic with so much contemporary resonance.

4) Uncovering the Hidden Histories of Women Boxers and *Lucha Libre* Wrestlers in Mexico – Marjolein Van Bavel (University of Antwerp)

Since the 1920s and 1930s, boxing and *lucha libre* wrestling have become immensely popular within Mexican society. Although women also entered these sporting spectacles as athletes, their stories have remained largely hidden from history. This marginalization at the hands of scholars mirrors and can be partially explained by the fact that women were banned from boxing and wrestling in the Mexican capital for much of the twentieth century. Their prohibition pushed women boxers and wrestlers underground and to the margins of the Mexican Republic, which makes their histories harder to uncover. Placing these women's histories centre stage provides important insights into the ways in which sporting spectacles intersect with the gendered socio-political ideologies that are expressed within sports environments, legal frameworks, the political ambitions of authority figures and administrations, mass culture, and society as a whole. It sheds light on the multiple and changing socio-cultural beliefs about Mexican women's proper social and bodily roles in a broader context of socio-political transformations. It also shows the power of transgressive women to upset conventional gender norms and to bolster historical transformation. This paper will also draw attention to the fact that the method of oral history is especially suitable for recovering the voices and experiences of women that have too often been ignored or discarded by historians in the past.

Session 2 (17.05-19.00 CEST) – The global perspective offered by sports history

Sport being a global phenomenon, this session will ask the question to which degree and in which ways sports history may help to make political history more global.

1) Crossing Boundaries: New Approaches to the Interaction between Sport and Politics in Modern Western European History – Harm Kaal (Radboud University)

Although sport is often framed as the ultimate 'Other' of politics, it is hard to ignore that the two realms are intimately connected. Yet, historians have scarcely reflected on the nature of this connection in modern Western European history, or on how the politicization of sport has actually taken shape, and how actors and institutions have delineated, navigated and crossed the boundaries separating the two spheres. This presentation tackles these questions through an analysis of three vectors of politicization: political communication, struggles over the use of space, and governance and policy-making. Based on a discussion of recent work at the intersection of political history, sport history, political science, geography and communication studies, the article unearths the relationship between sport and personalized modes of political representation, explores the role of sport spaces as sites of community building and conflict, and considers the instrumentalization of sport in policy schemes of the welfare state. It shows how sport was drawn into the orbit of the state, maps the various actors and institutions at the intersection of sport and politics (ranging from local residents' groups to international NGOs), and highlights the gendered, exclusionary nature of new popular forms of political communication through sport. All in all, the presentation argues that sport is a highly relevant field to engage with for those interested in the history of political power, representation, communication and governance.

2) Nationality Swapping in the Olympic Field. Cases and Contexts from the Middle East 1998-2016 – Gijbert Oonk (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Nationality swapping in global sports challenges common conceptions of citizenship, belonging and national identity. Athletes who represent a country in which they are not born are increasingly scrutinized and subject of debates among academics, sport legislators, sport federations and in the (international) media. The practice has become so prevalent, that the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) felt obliged to reinforce and tighten their regulations regarding nationality changes. Their efforts were especially targeted towards countries in the Middle East. Our data show, however, that only 13,8 per cent (N=695) of the cases were related to the Middle East. A relatively large numbers of both male and female athletes that obtain passports in Middle Eastern countries come from Africa (especially Kenya). The combination 'rich oil countries' and 'vulnerable African athletes' may well have triggered the concerns of the IAAF. In fact, this was the reasons why the IAAF started to register passport swaps and regulate them. Nevertheless, World Athletic officials did not highlight the existing nature of college (sport) scholarships in Canada and the USA. Therefore, the practices of Middle Eastern countries in allowing passport swaps should be seen as a challenge to western notions of citizenship and national identity.

3) A global arena? Transnational approaches to public protest against mega sporting events, 1960s to the present – Paul Reef (Radboud University)

Large international sporting events are often the object of political histories of sport focusing on nation-building and sports diplomacy by states. This paper shifts the focus to a more bottom-up perspective of how a range of social movements, citizens, and INGOs have contested mega sporting events. Starting in the 1960s, local movements opposed

the negative consequences of hosting the Olympic Games, while international sporting events also became a platform for transnational human rights or anti-Apartheid activism. How have these non-state actors politicized sport and projected new political ideals and moral values upon it? And at the same time, how have the organizers of sport events and especially international sport organizations sought to keep sport apart from political contention and deal with opposition? By using sport events as a prism to explore protest from a global angle, sport history can provide a common entry point beyond existing national or disciplinary boundaries. As such, sporting contests are distinct global spaces shaped by different local, national, and international actors, and, crucially, global media attention. Yet there are limits to this global scope: not every country can host mega sporting events, international sporting organizations and INGOs are often dominated by actors from the Global North, and source accessibility and language skills can form obstacles for incorporating local voices in research. Nevertheless, by focusing on popular protest and the dynamics of (de)politicization and governance around mega sporting events, sport history provides both an insightful lens and new perspectives to globalize political history.

4) Title – Susan Brownell (University of Missouri-St. Louis)