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The Symbolic Meaning of Places for Sports and Gymnastics in a Frontier Area

Gymnastics have been a symbolic part of the struggle for national identity between Danes and Germans. In the same way some places have been ascribed special importance in connection with the exercise of gymnastics and sports.

This paper examines the two most important “gymnastics and sports places” in the frontier area between Denmark and Germany, and also the symbolic meaning of the location and the way sports and gymnastics have been exercised. Of special interest are the way sports and gymnastics have been used to keep “the spirit” of the location alive.

The paper is based on sources from the German and Danish Turn- and gymnastics movement in the frontier area, on interviews and on a cultural analysis of the two locations.