



MULTIFUNCTIONALITY ON URBAN GOLF COURSES



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Multifunctionality on urban golf courses



Björkhagen Golf Club

There are many advantages with increasing the multifunctional use of golf courses. Possibilities and prerequisites may vary, but often prerequisites for multifunctionality already exist in the area. Golf courses are large and varied green areas, but only about a third of this area is used for golf. Remaining parts are natural areas which might be suitable for a wide range of other activities.

When cities grow, urban green areas are put under stress from both

development and a growing number of inhabitants seeking recreation. Green areas are important elements in a city as these provide us with a number of different services essential for our health and well-being; such as providing recreation possibilities and quiet areas free from traffic noise, cleansing the air from pollutants and lowering stress levels just to name a few. For many people, visiting a nature area is dependent on how accessible it is, as well as other facilities such as toilets and cafés in the area. Many people also feel safer in an area

with marked trails and pathways, with many other visitors and where there are continuous management and available information.

Broadening the use of the golf courses could therefore increase the willingness to preserve urban green areas, as well as connecting these golf courses to the surrounding society. A higher number of visitors could also contribute to the economy of golf clubs, visiting restaurants, cafés and in enjoying other activities.

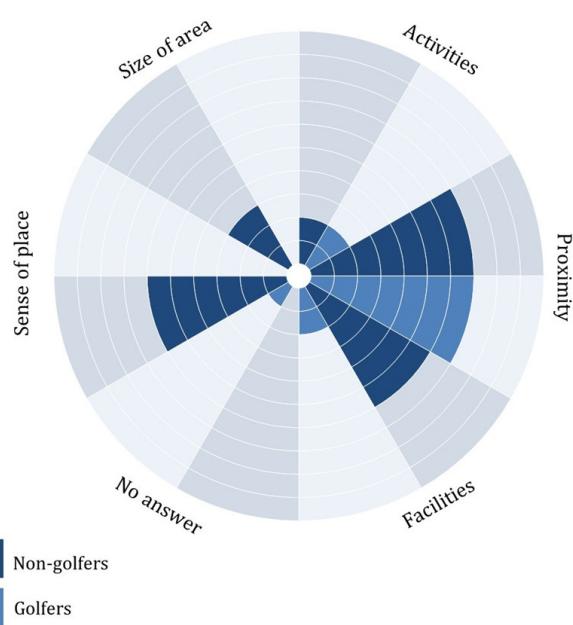
The project

During the spring of 2015, the multi-functionality of two golf courses in the Stockholm region were studied, Björkhagen Golf Club and Nacka Golf Club. To conclude, 30 different activities were identified on and around the two golf courses, with Björkhagen having many more activites than Nacka. If the number of activities can be seen a measure of multi-functionality, Björkhagen seems to be more multifunctional than Nacka. But why this difference?

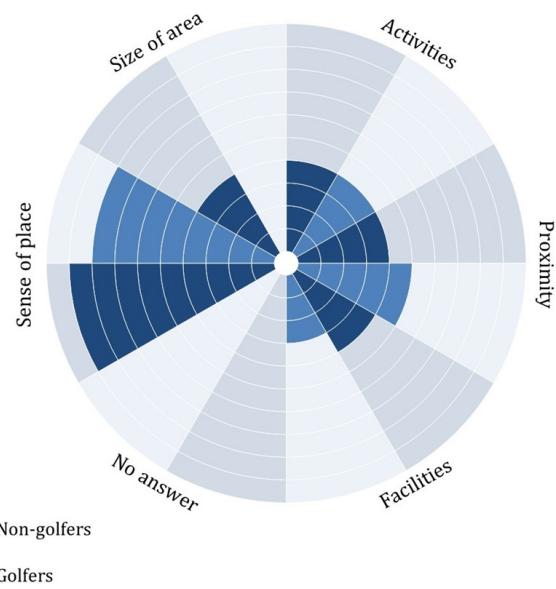
In order to find out why, golfers and other visitors in respective

study area were interviewed and asked questions ranging from where they live to their attitudes towards multi-functionality and what aspects they appreciate with the area they were visiting. These interviews were also complemented with observations and spatial analyses. With the data assembled, an attempt could be made to identify the reasons behind the more varied use of the area in Björkhagen Golf Club.

Björkhagen respondents on why they are visiting the area Björkhagen golf club and surroundings



Nacka respondents on why they are visiting the area Nacka golf club and surroundings



Answers from interviews reveals differences in reasons to visit the two golf courses. The value rose for Björkhagen (left) shows the main reason for the visit to be the proximity of this green area, while the value rose for Nacka shows that here it is the sense of place, in the form of nature experiences, peace and quiet, that is the main reason for the visit.

Studied aspect		Björkhagen	Nacka
Attitudes of the golfers towards multi-funtionality		Positive	Positive
Other visitors perceived availability to the golf course and surrounding green areas	Available	4	4
	Not available	2	1
	Do not know	4	5
Access to facilities (restaurant, toilets etc.) Tillgång till faciliteter (toaletter, restaurang etc.)		Not very important	Not very important
Importance of landscape features	Differences	In Björkhagen a lake, otherwise similar	
	Interview answers where landscape appearance was mentioned as important	6 out of 20 respondents	17 out of 20 respondents
No. of inhabitants in the surrounding areas		19 855	6 270
Importance of accessibility	Travel distance (km)	Golfers	5,0
		Other visitors	3,9
	Interview answers where proximity was mentioned as important	14 out of 20 respondents	9 out of 20 respondents
	Communications within 1 km from the golf courses	9 parking lot areas 26 bus stops 2 metro stations	6 parking lot areas 20 bus stops 0 metro stations

Studied factors for multifunctionality. In general, attitudes towards multifunctionality were positive among golfers and other visitors alike. Differences in use therefore seem to be due to physical structures in the surrounding landscape and a high accessibility to the area, rather than the attitudes of the two golf clubs and of the golfers and others visiting these close-to-urban green areas in Björkhagen and Nacka respectively.

Concerning attitudes towards multifunctionality, the studied golf courses seem available for other visitors than just golfers. Golfers were on average positive to a broader use of the area and among those visiting the area in another purpose than golf, there were few who felt the area to be unavailable for them as non-golfers. Only smaller differences between Björkhagen and Nacka makes it difficult though to draw conclusions of whether it is the attitudes of golfers that makes the difference in multifunctionality. Concerning the attitudes of the two golf clubs, differences in opinion were expressed, although these seem to have a low impact on the occurrence of other visitors. Nacka Golf Club representatives expres-

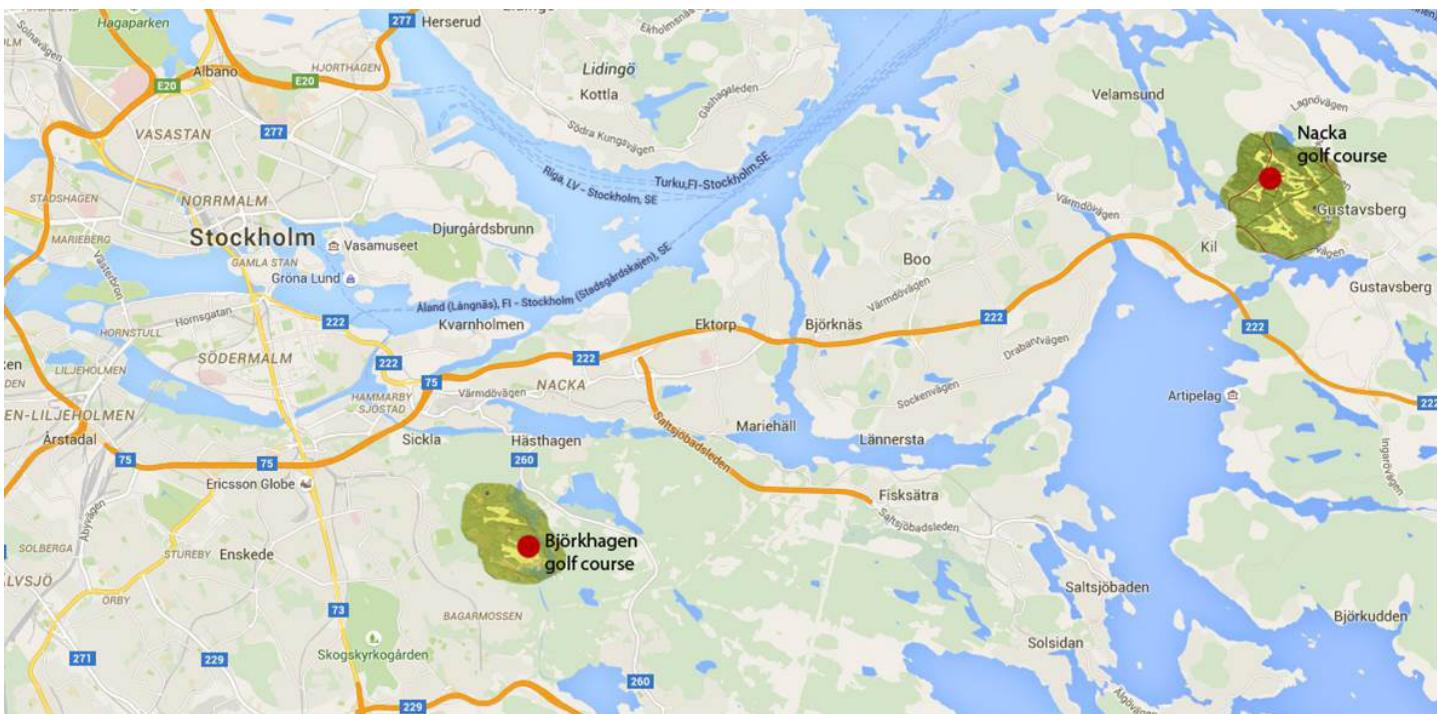
sed a more positive view on enabling more activities than the representative from Björkhagen Golf Club. This could be due to frictions that Björkhagen Golf Club felt they have experienced when non-golfers use the area.

Multifunctionality then could also lead to various management problems and also overuse of an area. Conflicts between users, a too high pressure on facilities and damages to the nature are problems that may arise and which must therefore be in mind when planning for multifunctionality.

Furthermore, of importance for a multifunctional use are also the landscape elements shaping the

area. These differ somewhat between the study areas, in Björkhagen there is a lake with a beach while in Nacka there is not, explaining somewhat the higher number of activities in Björkhagen. Interesting to note, some activities identified only in Björkhagen require landscape elements that already are present in Nacka. The area in Nacka is thus less well used than Björkhagen, although the potential for a broader use of Nacka is clearly already in place.

The landscape seems otherwise to be especially appreciated in Nacka. 17 out of 20 respondents mentioned the natural landscape to be the reason why the visited the area, nearly three times as many as the



Björkhagen respondents giving the same reasons. Since the number of activities are fewer in Nacka, a conclusion can be that a beautiful landscape as such does not promote multifunctionality, but do attract visitors. The main reason for visiting Björkhagen was however not the beautiful landscape. Here, the most important aspect for visitors and golfers alike were the proximity of the golf course to the city. For both golf courses, other visitors than golfers lived at approximately the same distance, but the golfers in Björkhagen lived on average 10 km closer than the golfers in Nacka. Björkhagen golfers also visited the golf club area for other purposes, something unusual for the Nacka golfers.

With this in mind to this, also interesting is the accessibility of the two golf courses. Within a radius of 1 km the respective golf course, an inventory was made on communications accessible such as bus stops and parking lots. Again a difference

between Björkhagen and Nacka was observable, with Björkhagen having a larger amount of communications. This also reflects the number of inhabitants in respective area, with approximately tree times as many inhabitants around Björkhagen study area compared to the inhabitants around Nacka study area.

That there are better communications, a higher number of inhabitants and also a lake, seem to be the reason why more there are more visitors and different activities in Björkhagen when compared to Nacka today.

Prerequisites for multifunctionality on golf courses seems then to be more related to spatial prerequisites such as surrounding landscape elements and a high accessibility, rather than the attitudes of those golf clubs, golfers and visitors using these close-to-urban golf courses and green areas.

FACTS

Stockholm Resilience Centre

This study was done as a project in the course *Urban Social-Ecological Systems* at Stockholm Resilience Centre. The Centre, as part of Stockholm University, conduct research and education on the governance of social-ecological systems. The course focuses on these interactions in urban contexts, and how we manage these when cities grow. The project work was made by the students Maria Isaksson, Maria Sima, Emma Hillström, Patrik Isacsson, och Jonas Andersson.