

Ethnographic Perspectives in Sport Science in Germany —Status Quo and Developmental Potentials

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Abstract: The question of the significance and importance of ethnographic approaches within the German-speaking sports sciences could briefly be answered with a "negative report", if one is interested in having a look at studies that are explicitly accounted as *ethnographic*. This estimation changes, if the perspective is widened and the idea of "estrangement of the own culture" (i.e. the sports culture), as one main principle of research interest in sports sciences, is taken as a basis.

The vitality of the development, establishment and variation alone of so-called youth cultures (and their interpretations of sports) or even the exclusiveness and extremeness of particular traditional areas in sports (e.g. top-level sport) contain to a substantial extent experiences of foreignness. However, with the areas mentioned a complete naming of items is not intended. In fact, in this context efforts increased in the last few years to understand such "life-worlds", which can be described with the term "life-world ethnography", although the particular authors did not do so themselves.

Against this background the article describes the following issues at hand: first, it deals with the explication of a kind of ethnographic self-conception which opens up additional possibilities for sports science, secondly, existing studies in sports science are examined for these possibilities, and finally, the question of potential benefit of a explicit and systematic integration of ethnographic research into sports science is discussed. In the conclusion, the disciplines of sport sociology and sport pedagogy are mentioned.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Ethnography, Sociological Ethnography and Sport Ethnography](#)
- [3. Sport Ethnography—Starting Points](#)
- [4. Sport Ethnography—Developmental Potentials](#)
- [5. Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Author](#)

[Citation](#)

1. Introduction

If you ask for ethnographic approaches in the German-speaking sport science¹, you will disappointingly find out that you are hunting a phantom. Ethnography can

1 It is essential to narrow this down right from the beginning. An overview of the whole sport science can not be provided. This does not seem to be essential yet, as certain disciplines of sport science have no reference towards ethnography anyway. Hence, the following article will focus on sport sociology and sport pedagogy, because in the last few years the stimulus for ethnographic research has basically been derived from sociology and partially also from pedagogic fields.

not be found as a topic that is dealt with explicitly. This is surprising, because on the one hand for example in social sciences an increased attention towards approaches that proceed ethnographically can be noticed in the last few years. On the other hand the topic "sport" with its post-modern variety of facets could offer enough potential starting points for ethnographic problems. [1]

If you enter the world of sports and explore it with open eyes, you can find numerous occasions that cause surprise, in the first place probably the insight that *the* world of sports apparently no longer exists (if it ever has existed at all). Apart from ordinary football players, who participate in league matches every weekend and in training sessions during the week, you can find active people who feel nothing unusual about a hall filled with sand and exercising a sport called beach-volleyball, which refers semantically to sun, sea and wind. Others, however, apparently follow willingly the commands of a so-called "drill-instructor" and await full of expectation the exercises, that were traditionally more likely to be reserved for military basic training. Meanwhile, athletes on spinning-wheels, connected to cables, cover a distance in front of a video screen that at least evokes the illusion of movement, while the afterwork-jogger who floats through the fresh air shrugs his shoulders and accepts such activities only with meditative calmness. The worlds of sports have apparently become numerous and according to the perspective you start from bear a considerable potential of strangeness. This in turn argues for the fact that the question for subsequent ethnographic offers should not be forgotten. [2]

Therefore two dimensions will be treated more explicitly in the following: on the one hand the current situation of ethnographic research in sport science, and on the other hand the question of possible, but so far too little scooped potentials of a sport science that proceeds ethnographically. Several steps are needed for this: an explication of an ethnographic self-image that is currently developing in sociology is followed by a transformation onto the "own culture", the culture of sport. With the help of some examples it will be pointed out, that there certainly are approaches of "alienation from the own culture" in sport science, although it cannot be described as an existing tradition, because these approaches as a rule rather follow an "implicit" ethnography. According to sport science, some proposals of systematisation will be submitted and possible potentials for the future will be discussed. The assumption that sport science with an ethnographic effort of a systematic alienation from the alleged self-evident can come to a conclusion on its own, serves as a basis for all these reflections. [3]

2. Ethnography, Sociological Ethnography and Sport Ethnography

At this point it can obviously not be the aim to present a differentiated, historical and systematic derivation of current ethnographic approaches. However, at least a brief illustration of important origins and roots should not be abandoned, because it is the only way to lay elementary foundations that are necessary for an understanding of the main concerns of ethnography. [4]

Originally ethnography refers to a methodological instrument within ethnology or cultural anthropology. Recording or tracing foreign, i.e. originally not European, cultures was in the centre of these researches. They principally go back to the beginnings of colonialism and the simultaneous discovery of the "New World" (which soon became "New Worlds"). Other interpretations relocate ethnographic approaches back to classical antiquity (cp. e.g. HONER 1993, p.34; MÜHLMANN 1986, pp.25ff.). Dealing with foreign cultures, with "the other" in contrast to "the own" is the major objective, independent from such temporal timings. To pick it out as a central theme in this way was normally guided by a superiority of the researchers over the objects of research, the "barbarians" or "primitives". Despite these frequently unilateral considerations and often simultaneous legitimization of the claim to submit and exploit "the others", this perspective at the same time sowed the seeds of a rather comparative ethnology, whose main focus lay on *the understanding of a foreign culture and the adoption of the perspective by the researching ethnologist*. This presupposed a participation in the life of the culture that had to be explored and also marked somehow the birth of modern ethnography. It is often connected with the names of Franz BOAS and Stanislaw MALINOWSKI. Their criticism of the "arm-chair ethnography" in connection with their demonstration of "being there" mark a central turning-point of the ethnological paradigm at the beginning twentieth century. [5]

The change from a perspective of cultural anthropology to a perspective of social sciences is closely connected with a fundamental insight, that a closer look does not clarify where one's own ends and the foreign begins. Modifying a well-known proverb one could ask: "Why roam so far a field, if strange parts are still nearby?" "Strange parts begin 'not merely at the boundaries of our society ... but ... at the boundaries of ourselves" (GEERTZ quoted from ELLRICH 1999, p.69). This citation of the famous culture anthropologist C. GEERTZ refers radically to the crucial point of the development of an ethnography of social science, i.e. a principle shift of the boundaries of strangeness. Some starting points for an ethnography of the own culture can already be found in the first half of the twentieth century, e.g. in the famous studies of the "Chicago School". In the last two decades, however, in the course of modified interpretations of fundamental social structures within the scope of theories of modernisation, ethnographic

approaches² can also be noticed increasingly in the German-speaking social sciences. How can that be explained? [6]

While classical and stratified societies were still featured by a relatively simple structure and a precise class distinction which can be turned into perfectly plausible illustrations of social structures by a broad and only rudimentary sophisticated analysis and presentation, this seems to be more problematic within modern and functional differentiated societies. Large-area survey-instruments still measure any phenomena, but it is increasingly (i.e. in more and more subareas) becoming questionable, if these surveys actually correspond with social realities. The scope of options of complex societies (cp. e.g. GROSS 1994) and the corresponding tendency towards individualisation leads in consequence to a vast variety of lifestyles and life concepts with heterogeneous structures of relevance.

"If however, as written by Schütz and Luckmann, 'in a borderline case the area of common knowledge and common relevance shrink below a critical point, communication within the society will hardly be possible. Societies emerge within society.' And this is precisely the decisive report for the postulated necessity of an ethnological attitude of a sociologist towards his own culture, because it implies that under these circumstances for every type of society, for *every* group, even *within* society, different *kinds* of knowledge and first of all different *hierarchies* of kinds of knowledge are relevant, or could be relevant respectively" (HITZLER 1999, p.478).³ [7]

In modern societies we are more and more confronted with potentially foreign, i.e. first of all incomprehensible phenomena, lifestyles and domains, and thus the development of a device that senses and analyses strangeness is of vital importance. The description of scenes, milieus, cultures or small "life-worlds" becomes the predominant task of sociological ethnography. It has the task "to render that, what people do for other people who do not do it, more comprehensible and understandable, or rather to deliver an insight or give an

2 For a differentiated presentation of these briefly described developments compare e.g. HONER 1989; 1993; HITZLER 1999; 2000, pp.469f.; HIRSCHAUER & AMANN 1997, pp.7ff. These works deal with the treatment of sociological ethnography and approaches of social sciences, as well as with differences that occurred within the own paradigm. To illustrate this HITZLER said: "Everybody attempts to persuade everybody, about what ever before and now at last really—and seriously will have to be discussed. Nobody understands how the other can do what he does, without having clarified what had to be clarified a long time ago. Some insist on the necessity of a foundation debate. Others plead for a refinement of the arsenal of methods. Others want to get back to empirical subjects. Others state that especially these have finally to be *verortet*, i.e. *founded* theoretically. Others hardly return from the field. Again others hardly enter the field any more. Many reinvent a lot. Some complain, that a lot of the new is well known. Nobody comprehends why nobody follows him on the right path to reliable data, to valid interpretations, to relevant findings. Almost everybody talks about rules. Almost nobody sticks to these, which others try to make valid. Everybody talks 'pro domo'. And all talk at once. Briefly: Things are there like other 'family table talk' (...)—and first of all like the discussions about 'true' theories of an *explaining* sociology and about the right methodology and methods of *standardised* social research" (2000, p.464, all quotations which are taken from German books or articles are translated by the author). To avoid misunderstandings it should be mentioned that my own position refers to the approach of the so called life-world ethnography, because there are more (potential) connections to some traditions in German sport science.

3 This quotation also refers to obvious relations of sociological ethnography to phenomenology as well as to the sociology of knowledge. At this point this coherence can only be mentioned, but not interpreted further.

impression of more or less foreign worlds for non-members—in foreign worlds that by no means have to be in spatial distance, but can also be in immediate vicinity (HITZLER 2000a, p.28). [8]

The probably most well-known examples of such foreign "cultures just around the corner" can be found in youth research that flourished for a number of reasons in the last few years (cp. among others: HITZLER, BUCHER & NIEDERBACHER 2001). The reactions of "normal adults" range from a simple lack of understanding and plain ignorance to mostly embarrassing attempts of imitating juvenile lifestyles. At this point the matter is not an evaluation of such receptions, but a clarification what could be meant by a "potential of strangeness" of the own culture. The differentiation of the youth into numerous and frequently fast changing cultures, tribes and scenes or the like alone shows how important such explanations are in order that—as in the citation above by SCHÜTZ and LUCKMANN indicated—communication does not terminate, because no form of a common language seems to exist any more. Parents bearing misery know what has been described, passers-by in the pedestrian area dominated by skaters know it as well. In order that an ethnography of social science can meet these demands, it needs specific devices to acquire and decode strangeness and—as will be shown later on—even more important an explicit self-conception. [9]

If you turn towards methodological and methodical aspects of ethnography, you will easily get into trouble, especially if you want to work out the differences in qualitative social research, which also came to the fore in the last two decades.⁴ It can be agreed that sociological ethnography has to be assigned to and submitted to the paradigm of qualitative or interpretative social research. According to the considerations made so far and the—although only adumbrated—cross references to phenomenological and hermeneutic origins, this is hardly astonishing. Problems occur, however, while defining the peculiarities and particular characteristics. Thus HITZLER points out that "ethnographers use as a matter of principle the whole arsenal of methods of empirical social research," whereby a preference for non-standard methods is also predominant (cp. HITZLER 2000a, p.21). SCHÜTZE confirms this as well, when he states that "the ethnographic perception can be realised by all methods of interpretative qualitative social research" (1994, p.190). There are obviously methods within ethnographic research, however, *no specific ethnographic methods*. Thus SCHÜTZE draws the following conclusion: "I don't think, that according to the current level of knowledge, one can talk of a specific ethnographic method or survey technique" (ibid., p.226). [10]

Thus it does not make sense to propagate an artificial autonomy of sociological ethnography on a methodical level. Ethnographic approaches in the field of social sciences, with their general concern to reconstruct the "sense" of social realities (cp. HONER 1993, p.34) and to "understand" social realities (cp. HITZLER 2000, pp.461ff.), follow superior objectives of interpretative social research. With the

4 This problem, which should be stated in advance, also exists to a comparable extent for the domain of sport science. The following considerations can in this respect also be valid for sport science.

concern of questioning reflexively as well as systematically the "how" of the process of understanding⁵, ethnography holds its predetermined course and documents with it merely its claim to be accepted as a "normal science". But where does the "differentia specifica" of the sociological ethnography lie? "The vital quality criterion of methods within the scope of ethnographic research is in our discretion, if and in how far they are suitable to reconstruct the relevance, knowledge and practices of the researched in their original sense" (HITZLER 2000a, pp.22f.). [11]

To meet this challenge, ethnographic methods place special emphasis on particular characteristics of the *attitude* towards research:

- The first thing to be mentioned here is the attempt of adopting a perspective, which already played a decisive role for the development of a modern ethnology. The attempt to understand a culture "from the inside" can best be described with the image to see the world "through somebody else's eyes", although in reality this cannot be done entirely, because one can not replace the other or the strange completely. This basic principle has to be understood as a kind of regulative idea that has to be recovered reflexively, in order to complicate systematically any forms of rash seizing of the foreign world. Permanently establishing a systematic attitude towards strangeness and a continuous "*Befremden* of the own culture" serves as a means of choice (cp. HIRSCHAUER & AMANN 1997, pp.27ff.). Since we feel naturally at home in our own culture, the "*Befremden*" does have a particular importance especially for the researcher of assumed life-worlds. [12]
- To meet the demand of a description as broad as possible, the ethnographer has to refrain from evaluations, i.e. to give preferably precise open-minded descriptions in a phenomenological sense. Thus, on the one hand doubts have to be integrated systematically in the process of understanding, "doubts about the interpreter's prejudices, doubts about subsumptive certainties in everyday life and science, and finally doubts about reductionist explanations" (HITZLER 2000a, p.27). On the other hand—and this should also be mentioned in particular—social science ethnographers expect a partial amorality, which is displayed by a neutral attitude towards procedures and practices within the field of research. If you want to understand the "unknown", you have to abstain from moral considerations that arose from your own set of values.⁶ If you do not want to do that, you should not conduct ethnography. If you want to consult ethnography in order to prove your own prejudices scientifically, you have completely misunderstood the principle of

5 This cannot be explained any further at this point. The keyword "representation crisis" stands for an aspect of ethnographic self-reflection that has been more and more receptive in the German-speaking area since the 1990s (cp. e.g. BERG & FUCHS 1993; GEERTZ 1997). From my point of view, it would be important for sport ethnography to integrate these problems in its considerations right from the beginning.

6 This aspect is of course lively discussed again and again, especially when dealing with the toleration of illegal or illegitimate procedures. This discussion can not be presented in greater detail either. According to a puristic proceeding of ethnography one should right from the beginning be aware of possible demands that are made on potential ethnographers by such claims.

ethnographic understanding. At the same time, especially the meticulous ethnographic descriptions can obviously be misused for exactly that purpose. [13]

- At least in recent ethnography, to get as close as possible to the ideal of an "inner" understanding of foreign worlds, the principle of a (temporal) membership in the field of research is considered to be indispensable. Stepping into the field, an observing participation or even more demanding an "existential engagement", is therefore one of the indispensable prerequisites of sociological ethnography. Understanding from the inside can only be "gained, if one (also) gets involved with a topic existentially, if one 'treats' the topic practically for at least a certain time. For the practice of research this means that it is best to try to 'become like one ...' in the field" (HONER 1993, p.46). The intensity of participation can vary to a great extent, according to the duration as well as the "existential engagement". As a general rule, an intimate familiarity with the field ("being there") will be regarded as an attribute of quality in ethnographic studies (cp. ELLRICH 1999, pp.81f.). [14]
- The principle of participation can be presented incompletely, if the counterpart, i.e. the alienation, is not mentioned. Only the interplay of (temporal) existential participation and (temporal) reflexive alienation leads to that potential of benefiting from insights, which can render ethnographic studies that are useful. The problem of "going native" or of "*Verkaffern*", when alienation does not work, is well-known to ethnographers and leads to a final aspect of ethnographical method. [15]
- The ethnographer is basically interested in descriptions, he or she participates actively in the life of the field, however, he does not want to alter, to do missionary work or "to improve" the field of research. This—you might say—"lack of interest" while dealing with bare description of foreign life-worlds has again and again held critically before ethnographers⁷. [16]

Taking together these different aspects of sociological ethnography, a specific form can be identified, that makes it plausible to speak of an innate "research programme" (cp. HITZLER 2000a, p.17). All in all, this programme is to a greater extent based on an *attitude towards research* than on a canon of own methods⁸. The acceptance and the necessity of an ethnographic perception in the light of the special features of complexly structured modern societies should be beyond dispute, the more so as sociological ethnography does not raise the claim to possess a *passe-partout* for a solution for all social problems. [17]

7 This is at least valid for the "classic" forms of the also modern sociological ethnography. However, this general attitude is criticised in the last few years, because ethnographic approaches are increasingly used as an instrument of advice, e.g. also in organisation development. In this case concrete hints of changes are expected by (ethnographic) advisors. Ethnography has to face so far unknown problems. Particularly in times of application oriented research policy the question is virulent, whether ethnography can cope with a lack of modifications. This also should be discussed more detailed (cp. Chapter 4).

8 In terms of selected research domains, for example corporeal/body experience, specific research methods seems nevertheless necessary. But this point will not be elaborated here. In my opinion the treatment of the problem mentioned above requires a specific qualitative ethnographical approach, however it is still debatable, if "(more) subject adequate" methods actually meet the demand of a certain "autonomy" or if the approaches that have been developed "only" represent another modification of already existing methodological procedure.

If you now turn, after all these general considerations, to the domain of sport and sport science, two aspects initially catch your eye: on the one hand an extensive abstinence of ethnographic approaches in the research of sport science, and on the other hand a predestination of the social domain of sport for ethnographic considerations⁹. If you first of all ask for possible reasons for this abstinence, you will generally have to rely on assumptions. Without doubt, ethnographic approaches are right from the beginning only useful for some disciplines of sport science. In this context one can think of sport sociology, psychology and pedagogy, which at least own something like an affinity in principle. But for every of these candidates problems arise again: sport sociology as the first candidate has only very limited personnel resources and additionally in the scope of this limited personnel, representatives of a tradition of qualitative social research in a broader sense are exceptions. Something similar applies for sport psychology. It is true it holds slightly greater resources, but it also has a tradition of research that is orientated to more standardised methods. Moreover, the closeness to ethnography is also an exception in general psychology. What remains is sport pedagogy, which is by far the strongest discipline of sport science concerning personnel. Here, firstly, a traditional orientation towards problems of physical education can be noticed, which leads to a restriction of research areas. Secondly in the past, empirical research of realities of sport did not belong to the core of a sport pedagogical self-image. Thirdly, because of its divided self-conception as a "practical science" sport pedagogy concentrates on an alteration of existing realities employing certain normative guidelines. A demand that seems not to be compatible with the ethnographic self-image that has been described. This rather disillusioning balance is admittedly in opposition to a noticeable trend to a more frequent use of qualitative methods within the mentioned disciplines of sport science. This provides at least some starting points for a continuing engagement with possible connections of sport science and ethnography. [18]

Another potential link seems to be the topic "sport". The predestination of the phenomenon sport mentioned above results from the dynamic development which "the" sport has passed through in the last few decades, and probably will pass through in the future. An only perfunctory look suffices in order to realise that the originally monolithically constructed sport increasingly adapts traits and a differentiation towards more and more part-worlds. New groups of addressees, new allocation of meaning, the combination of already existing patterns to new, patchwork-like models of doing sports lead to a diversification of the originally rather manageable and simple-structured world of sport. Like in the past, it can not be taken for granted any more, that talking about sport does automatically mean talking about competition oriented forms of club sports. If you talk about

9 This diagnosis applies for the German-speaking area. Within the Anglo-American tradition of sport science there are at least several explicit references to ethnographic approaches, though it has to be stated that they do not compose of the main stream of analyses in social sciences. This greater proximity to ethnography can probably be explained with a stronger tradition of social science in this research field. The recently published foundation work by SANDS (2002) that carries the likewise artless and expressive title "Sport Ethnography" can be regarded as the so far most elaborate expression of sport scientific ethnography within the Anglo-American speech community. Bearing the implicitness of an "emerging discipline", the book has all traits of a guide book that is based on a remarkable number of preliminary works. The sport ethnography in the German speech community seems still to be far away from that.

sport today, you can either mean this more or less "traditional sport" or you can also mean one of the numerous other "loose connections" of movement, body experiences and life-styles, that are present in our society. The result is—like in many other domains of social life as well—an increasing complexity and ignorance. Admittedly, this is in turn a good starting point for ethnographic research: questioning the so self-evident world of the (too) familiar sport about something unusual, astonishing and marvellous as well as the opening of new or "foreign" worlds of movement in order to make them comprehensible for all those who do not participate directly in these worlds, offer a virtually ideal field of activity for potential ethnographers in sport science. There is little that is more beneficial for a reflexive sport science than a preferably differentiated knowledge of its subject-matters and fields of phenomena. [19]

Thus the opportunity and also the signification of ethnographic research within sport science seems to be evident, but at the same time, the conclusion of an actual marginality of this approach in the field of sport keeps also its validity. If you have a closer look at the current situation, you will also find indications towards inquiries, that can perhaps be labelled with the term "*implicit ethnographic perspectives*". These will be specified more precisely now. [20]

3. Sport Ethnography—Starting Points

If you try to systematise existing approaches of ethnographic considerations of sport life-worlds, you will in a first access find two clearly distinguishable starting points. [21]

On the one hand there is the possibility to investigate the fields of phenomena of sport life-worlds from a position *outside* the sport. Although this perspective does not seem unusual, it should nevertheless be emphasised that other ethnographically relevant sciences have a lot of difficulties in picking out sport as a central theme, because sport can be considered as a social phenomenon that is widespread and also has an obviously increasing relevance. However, these rather sporadic accesses can also give a fresh impetus to a sport scientific discussion and can open up subsequent offers, so that at this point a cursory treatment seems to be sensible. [22]

In the scope of sociology¹⁰, however, mostly very indirect considerations of movement, sport and body take place, especially in the domain of youth research, because with a qualitative oriented presentation of the so-called "youth cultures" these topics come to the fore automatically (cp. sheer prototypically WENZEL 2001). Here the techno-scene can be regarded as an illustrative example (cp. e.g. HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 1998; KLEIN 1999). Now, the question can of course be raised, if and in how far an ethnographic analysis of the techno culture can be connected with the phenomenon sport. But here exactly lies the attraction of a comparison of sportive life worlds and current life

10 The presentation has no claim of completeness. It rather illustrates ways to an ethnographical access. Despite this restriction, it should also be mentioned, that a complete presentation could not be based on significantly more sources.

worlds of young people, who celebrate a differently structured combination of movement and corporeality. For sport scientists the reason for this "*Befremden*" can be the insight that the actual arrangement of the combination of youth—movement—corporeality must no longer necessarily lead to models of traditional sport. Detailed descriptions of life worlds, scenes or cultures in question that can frequently be found, do sometimes also bear explicit ethnographic traits (e.g. HITZLER & PFADENHAUER 1998). The reason is simply that ethnographically oriented social scientists examine a moving field of phenomena of youth culture with their genuine instruments. The studies about life worlds of body-builders that were presented by HONER are also genuinely oriented towards social science, but aligned more directly to the phenomenon sport (cp. 1985; 1995). Here again it is not a genuine sport orientated, but a sociological point of view that focuses on a "system of meanings", which can also be found in sportive contexts, i.e. body-building. Traditional sportsmen or sport scientists may of course put a question mark over such an assessment, but HONER tries to make clear her own intention: "Though body-building is neither an Olympic discipline, nor are body-building associations (so far) members of the German Sport Association. However, this seems anyway not to be a mandatory criterion of defining the phenomenon sport. I find it more relevant that *all body-builders* describe themselves as athletes, or at least also as athletes" (1995, p.53). This self-interpretation of the people involved leads to a confrontation with the "system of meanings" of sport, which may provoke astonishment, *Befremden* and maybe even disaffirmation by others. Yet this can only happen against the background of an ethnographic description. HONER's works about body-building are, as far as I know, the only studies that attempted to link up with the world of sport with an explicitly stated ethnographic demand¹¹. [23]

Besides sociology, pedagogy also has a "strange" view on sport, although I think there is a crucial difference that seems to be rooted to a pedagogic programme. The considerations of H. RUMPF provide good examples (cp. 1986). Due to his pedagogically justified concern to vote against modern rooted "mechanistic images of humans and bodies", RUMPF tries to describe the life-world of an institute of sport science and the people acting there (ibid., pp.86ff.). Because of his perspective as a sport scientist RUMPF presents a "strange view"-portrayals of athletes who likewise reduce themselves to mechanic bodies. What is interesting about this kind of presentation is the unusual perspective, that provides differentiated descriptions of sequences of movement. RUMPF does not explicitly label his own procedure as ethnographic, but still a distinct proximity is obvious. His ethnographic concern can be seen by referring to the phenomenological method and choosing "With a strange view" as the title of his reader. However, there are obvious deviations, because RUMPF takes an

11 Incidentally, this is also reflected in the places of publication. One work was published in the journal "Sportwissenschaft" (1985), another, more methodological oriented, in a reader collection of essays with the title "Soziologie des Sports—Theorieansätze, Forschungsergebnisse—Forschungsperspektiven" (1995). Especially the latter placement raises some expectations, but it has to be stated, that HONER's stimulation has not been developed further systematically within sport sociology. The discussion has not surpassed basic approaches and "perspectives for perspectives". Such a development could be achieved by sport sociology itself instead by representatives of the general sociology, which are only sporadically attached to sport.

unequivocal stand and evaluates his descriptions. An ethnographic description is interwoven with a pedagogic evaluation, that does not endorse a "reduction" of the human body to a "mechanic corpus" in the scope of sportive activity. This of course touches a problem of pedagogic ethnography which will crop up again at a later stage. Here we can find the attempt to discuss the phenomenon sport from a pedagogical and ethnographical perspective, while fading out the perspective of sport science. [24]

Sociology as well as pedagogy takes a closer look at the "strange" domain of the phenomenon sport that have been presented as examples. Thus for a comparative analysis they open up "new" perspectives, because they generally operated from a different angle—one that can not be found in sport science. A different situation again occurs if sport science attempts to alienate its genuine domain of the phenomenon sport to some extent artificially. In a narrow sense this involves what can be meant by "alienation from the own culture" (cp. HIRSCHAUER & AMANN 1997). For many sport scientists a culture is "own" insofar as they as a rule pass through very intensive processes of socialisation, which can lead to a high degree of occupation¹². This lack of distance can not at last be quoted as a further argument for an inner establishment of an ethnographic disposition in sport science. Also for this perspective some initial approaches will be presented briefly. [25]

The works of SCHWIER (e.g. 1997, 1998, 2000) deal with this overlapping of sport sociology and sport pedagogy. Similar to the already mentioned generally sociological approaches, also SCHWIER's analyses aim at the presentation of scenes of youth culture, where the emphasis understandably lies on sportive youth scenes (e.g. skaters, young basketball players on the streets). Such strategies are especially complemented by body emphasising scenes, like the movement of ravers for example. The interest of sport science in these new movement oriented youth scenes lies primarily in their novelty and, referring to traditional sport, their dissociation from sport. Insofar it is surely not mistaken to interpret these scenes in a sense of "(sport) distant"—but interestingly also movement and body related—worlds. SCHWIER pays attention that his presentations are not left without theories, but he wants to attach certain frames to them on the basis of background theories. The two pillars are constituted by BOURDIEU's concept of habit (cp. SCHWIER 1998, pp.7ff.) as well as the "Cultural Studies" (cp. 2000) that were intensely discussed in recent publications. Although both theories are certainly not directly related to ethnography, their relations are nevertheless conspicuous. BOURDIEU himself was the author of explicit ethnologic works at the beginning of his career (cp. 1976) and his probably most popular work about "fine distinctions" (cp. 1982) can without great effort be considered as an ethnographic work, although there is more to it. Something comparable should be valid for the conception of "Cultural Studies", because on the one hand they constantly reappear in the self-descriptions of sociological ethnography, but on the other hand they lay claim to a theoretical independence (cp. e.g. HÖRNING & WINTER 1999). In SCHWIER's work,

¹² The prerequisites for "existential engagement" in terms of observing participation as well as for "going native" in terms of being addicted to sport thus exist similarly.

though the theoretical classification are clear and elaborated, methodological allocation is rather vague. Without doubt an orientation to qualitative research methodology can be stated (cp. e.g. 1993; 1999), but an explicitly formulated ethnographic classification can not be found. The proximity to the "Grounded Theory" in the style of GLASER and STRAUSS leads him to the point that his examinations of interesting objects "are not a priori limited by the initial formulation of questions, but that they are focussed on having the behaviour pattern of play and movement for an adequate and only slightly dissociated theme and on the individual experiences in their concrete relationship towards social reality" (1999, pp.99f.). After comprehending in most cases the inspiring and interesting interpretations of his analyses, it is still difficult to deduce what relative importance his different methodological approaches, theoretical embedding and own attitudes have exactly for interpretative work (cp. 1998, pp.39ff.)¹³. In terms of the interpretations supported so far, with regard to SCHWIER's approach, implicit ethnographical elements can definitely be found. [26]

This is also valid for newer analyses that deal with—according to the perspective—a somehow or completely different field, the high performance sport with children and young people. Again this involves a kind of children or youth culture, or even not, if you for example take into account, that this field is basically structured by adults. Especially in the discussion of sport pedagogy, this field has been the topic of vehement controversies again and again, because the normative sport pedagogical conception of a successful childhood and adolescence did not seem to be compatible with the demands of high-performance sport for young talents. In retrospect, especially the lack of a systematic revelation of the whole field in these early discussions appears to be conspicuous. The irrefutable fact of loosing the childhood was considered as self-evident by one side, while the other side praised the character-forming effects of exercising on the bars. By now a number of in most cases qualitative studies have been presented in order to fill that empirical gap. From an ethnographic point of view the work of research groups, who dealt with the field of female gymnastics, is interesting. But as stated before there are only some hints to an explicit ethnographic approach (cp. THIELE 1999; FREI, LÜSEBRINK, ROTTLÄNDER & THIELE 2000). [27]

The initial statement of—if at all—an implicitly ethnographical perspective in certain disciplines of sport science is after a more detailed presentation of ethnographic-oriented approaches still valid. The relative importance of isolated existing ethnographic accesses of the parent sciences on the phenomenon sport is similarly marginal, especially concerning the reception of such approaches within the sport. Besides this pessimistic finding, there are reasons for more

13 Without wanting to interpret this aspect too deeply, it seems interesting to me, that the interpretation of skater cultures (cp. 1998, pp.44ff.) is supported by a large number of pictures. But: pictures virtually reveal little more than: "I have been there." In this respect from an ethnographic perspective they take over the function of proving an intensive participation in the field. Something similar can also be determined for hints that occur from time to time and refer to the relevance of a frequent presence in the field, of informal talks etc. However, the significance of these "secret methods" remains sketchy.

optimistic predictions, because despite the diagnosis of marginality there are still tendencies for an openness and intensification in dealing with ethnographic approaches. Those developmental potentials will finally be elaborated on. [28]

4. Sport Ethnography—Developmental Potentials

On the one hand the potentials are above all based on the predestination of the phenomenon sport for ethnographic studies. The intimacy and implicitness with which modern societies treat this phenomenon, and thus somehow "normalised" it, applies if at all only for a specific part of the whole range of ligatures of corporeality and movement. If sport science is also interested in accessing the fringes, niches, shoals and white spots of this field for a systematic analysis, it will hardly be possible to circumvent a further integration of procedures that are sensitive for the unknown¹⁴. If on the other hand parts of the "scientific community" see themselves as advocates of a clearly determined traditional sport and thus mutate to "court scientists" of the organised sport, one has to do without irritations due to unreasonable demands of strangeness (cp. also BETTE 19999, pp.278ff.). [29]

Apart from challenges that are provided by the domain, some potential is possibly contained in a generation change within sport science. All signs are that the rising generation of sport scientists is more open-minded, concerning the exploration of the domains that have just been mentioned¹⁵. "Sport" is perceived and explored in its current plurality and dynamism, what in all leads to an enlargement of the perspective. It should not be forgotten that in spite of the fascination of the "exotic" in normal sports too "the adventures can start right around the corner", i.e. the ethnographic view on the self-evident (e.g. the "usual" club sport) should despite a fascination of the extraordinary not get lost. Both aspects signify modern ethnographies. [30]

If you continue with these optimistic predictions, an ethnography of sport should sooner or later develop something like an own research programme, like it has been the case for social sciences. Such a programme would have to specify different aspects: [31]

1. It can not be the aim to develop an own methodology and methods of an ethnography of sport science, because in my point of view such an independence does not exist. In the first instance an intensive and

14 The work of SCHIERZ (1995) has also to be mentioned here, which can basically be understood as an ethnographic access to the variety of meanings of movement culture. SCHIERZ reinforces this interpretation by an explicit fall-back to the idea of "thick descriptions", that was promoted by C. GEERTZ (ibid., pp.101f.). Concerning the dimensions of strangeness, this approach is particularly interesting because you can basically see which potentials of strangeness can already be unfolded in sport science, if e.g.—like in this case—a sport pedagogue enters the ordinary field of movement science, which is still dominated by natural sciences. As far as I know, this ethnographic approach was not met with good resonance, first of all because within the system of movement science there seems to be no disposition for irritations from 'outside'".

15 The works on "implicit" ethnography that have been presented before confirm this impression. They originate without exception from younger German junior scientists.

differentiated reception of the state of knowledge outside sport science¹⁶ is more important. The aspect of an observing participation and an "existential engagement" respectively should particularly be taken into consideration. HONER reports in this context on "sport specific practical field problems" (cp. 1995, p.56), that almost exclude a genuine adoption of the perspective of participants in a number of potential sportive research domains. Thus, in the domain of high-performance sport, the ethnographer can not "really" slip into the garment of a participant. This is definitely true for other domains as well, but due to the in most cases essentially given engagement in sportive domains, problems of a special kind arise concerning the "virtual membership" that is striven for. SANDS for example mentions particular "risks": "In sport ethnography, if participation is part of the field work, physical injury is always a possibility ... Exposure to such risks, however, makes the experience of participation more real to the ethnographer" (2002, p.97). The question to be discussed is, how far should the engagement in the field be extended in order to get an adequate image of the life-world that has to be examined. Surely, there is no universally valid formula, but it has to be reviewed for example, if deficits that develop due to "reduced" (i.e. rather avoiding risks) engagement, can at least in parts be compensated by a possibly broad spectrum of different data from the field. [32]

2. Another desirable step would be a systematisation of the domain. It is surely true, that in principle every part of life-worlds contains something "strange" and can be observed with "a strange view" respectively. Thus "the" sport can also be considered as a *completely* strange world. Furthermore the question has to be posed, whether it would not be useful to systematise the potential of strangeness in sport. If ethnographers examine for example children or teenagers in sport, being strange already arises from the difference in age, which is similar to examinations of disabled by not disabled persons. If children and teenagers are examined in the domain of high-performance sport, the degree of unfamiliarity increases again, because not only the addressees, but also the domain is extremely strange in most of the cases. Something similar could be said about the permanently changing domain of extreme sports. A systematic analysis of the potential of strangeness in modern sportive life-worlds could help, from a scientific point of view, to develop priorities for concrete research programmes, because—as mentioned at the beginning—the resources for research are of course limited and emphasising the features is inevitable. According to this, individual preferences can and should of course not be excluded, but a research programme, that serves as a map for the research field, could nonetheless offer landmarks for interested parties or novices. [33]

Another aspect has to be taken into account. The modern and up to date society is intensely "informed". "Embedded" in this society are often even the newest, most unknown and strangest life-worlds. As a rule media can inform faster and more vividly about numerous domains of phenomena, that could

¹⁶ This estimation can also be found in the already mentioned work on sport ethnography by SANDS (2002). In large parts of the book findings from anthropology and ethnography are presented, that are later supplemented by examples taken from the domain of the phenomenon sport. If particular features are pointed out, they are on a different level.

also be a topic of ethnographic (qualitative) research. This is also and maybe especially valid for sport, although it has to be mentioned restrictively that making sport a subject of discussion in the media is extremely one-dimensional, e.g. focused on some activities of professional sports. Also in this case it is valid: trends, special worlds, peculiarities are enacted again and again in lifestyle magazines and reports—and therefore in principle "public". Even the "naivety" towards the own society has changed over the last 50 years, i.e. ethnographic research probably always encounters areas of response that are at least partially caused by social sciences themselves. Only in exceptional cases the "tabula rasa" is still the projection surface of ethnographic research, on the contrary predetermined transparencies transferred by mass media can be found, that frequently enough compete seriously with scientific interpretations. That means research business gets more difficult, as it does not involve monopolistic presentations of something new/strange any more, but the deconstruction of already existing patterns—and the latter is a difficult business, regardless how profound the alleged knowledge of the recipients actually is. A research programme of sport ethnography would have the task to contrast the deep structures of research fields with the surface structure of medial presentation and thus to a certain extent to maintain "being strange" opposed to rash pocketing tendencies of popularisation by mass-media. [34]

3. Ethnographic examinations are in general very complicated and time consuming, and moreover they have no explicit "interest of application". In times of research with third-party funds and claims of intervention this does not really increase their attraction. Ethnography in general and sport ethnography in particular have to take up the challenge. Especially sport science, which considers itself as an application oriented behaviourist science, will in case of a successful documentation of efficiency and benefits beyond "nice anecdotes" probably turn more frequently towards ethnographic researches. Some basic approaches already exist in organisational research (cp. e.g. SZABO 1998), in which consulting programmes actually belong to the repertoire by now. Comprehending the examined life-worlds is supplemented with concrete possibilities of intervention and controlling, which leads to a situation that is according to the self-image of ethnography not easy to cope with. Methodically such alterations of basic components are also supplemented with methodical variations, that allow for example in the case of "focussed ethnography" accurate, virtually microscopic examinations of particular parts of selected research fields and thus an immediate and a more direct feedback to the "client" (cp. KNOBLAUCH 2001). The research programme of sport ethnography should respond to these developmental tendencies and necessities, although there is still little agreement within sociological ethnography itself, according to the evaluation of such rather drastic modifications of the ethnographical self-image. Increasing acceptance within sport science is dependent on increasing relevance. [35]
4. Sport ethnography has also to consider the specific, traditionally more problematic relation of pedagogy and ethnography (cp. for this purpose KELLE & BREIDENSTEIN 1996; ZINNECKER 1995; 2000), because the

sport pedagogic domain is still characterised as a central dimension of the self-image of sport science. A "self-sustaining ethnographic inhibition in pedagogy" verified by ZINNECKER (2000, p.387), which has several reasons that cannot be dealt with in detail, has to be made a subject of discussion. Pedagogy in general and sport pedagogy in particular lack, under the influence of differentiated modern societies, an important source of information, if they remain in isolation due to a latent and largely unarticulated unease. Obvious advances in the discussion about high-performance sport of young talents show, that references are also possible in sport pedagogy (cp. THIELE 1999). Working out starting points especially in the very notable domain of physical education (at school) would yet also be important. The current tendency towards school development research could also according to physical education turn out to be "ethnography friendly" (ZINNECKER 2000, p.386), because the specific needs and their concentration on the development and support of teaching and learning profiles is particularly predestined for the use of ethnographic procedures. However, sport pedagogy would have to decide, that it gives priority to the current tendencies of general school development, what has not been done to an adequate extent so far. [36]

5. Conclusion

Talking about a sport ethnography is more a desire than reality. The previous considerations were meant to explain, that an intensive inclusion of ethnographic perspectives in the research of sport science could absolutely be beneficial. According to this, modifications to some ethnographic guiding ideas have to be made, but especially sport science should, while "*Befremden* from the own culture", take notice of the chance of self-reflection and the benefit, that can arise if perspectives are relativised. This is of course always connected with a feeling of insecurity. Whether sport science or at least parts of it are capable of doing so remains to be seen. "To leave the words to the gazing eye"—this sounds easy but is frequently very difficult, especially in the domain of science. [37]

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