



# The Sociology of Sport in Germany: Development and Recent Trends

## *La Sociología del Deporte en Alemania: Avances y Tendencias de Investigación*

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### Key words

- Sociology of Sport
- Germany
- History of Sport Science
- Sociological Theory
- Research Trend

### Palabras clave

- *Sociología del deporte*
- *Alemania*
- *Historia de las Ciencias del Deporte*
- *Teoría Sociológica*
- *Tendencias de Investigación*

### Abstract

As a reply to a contribution informing about the situation in Spanish sociology of sport (Sánchez-García, Moscoso-Sánchez and Piedra 2020), we give an overview on the development and recent trends of the sociology of sport in Germany. We start with a historical account of its institutionalization, and then follow up with an overview of established research topics and theoretical perspectives. For that, we draw on established German textbooks and introductions to the sociology of sport. Afterwards, regarding more recent trends, we focus on the development of the journal "Sport und Gesellschaft – Sport and Society". Finally, we describe how the sociology of sport within German sociology relates to the sociology of sport within sport sciences. We conclude our contribution by comparing developments in Spain and Germany, in order to identify similar international challenges for the sociology of sports and its journals.

### Resumen

Como respuesta al artículo sobre la situación de la sociología del deporte española (Sánchez-García, Moscoso-Sánchez y Piedra 2020), damos una visión general del desarrollo y tendencias recientes de la sociología del deporte en Alemania. Comenzamos con un relato histórico de su institucionalización para continuar con una descripción general de los temas de investigación establecidos y las perspectivas teóricas. Para ello, nos basamos en libros de texto alemanes consagrados y en introducciones a la sociología del deporte. Posteriormente, en relación con las tendencias más recientes, nos centramos en el desarrollo de la revista "Sport und Gesellschaft - Sport and Society". Finalmente, describimos cómo la sociología del deporte dentro de la sociología alemana se relaciona con la sociología del deporte dentro de las ciencias del deporte. Concluimos nuestra contribución comparando los desarrollos en España y Alemania, con el fin de identificar desafíos internacionales similares para la sociología del deporte y sus revistas.

## 1.- Development: Historical Origins and Institutionalization

The development of sociology of sports in Germany has already been described in several introductory textbooks (Heinemann 2007, 39-45; Emrich, Gassmann and Klein 2020), most extensively by Bette (2010). While these overviews separate the development into several stages, it seems important to emphasize that there are continuous strands, too, which have been forming the field of research over several – if not all – periods.

While some of the Anglo-American precursors of sociology, e.g. Spencer or Veblen, had explicitly discussed sports, early German sociologists such as Georg Simmel, Max Weber or Karl Mannheim touched on the topic only marginally. Thus, the discourse on sport and games in early 20th century consisted of contemplations by few sportsmen, philosophers, or journalists, and remained largely unsystematic (Bette 2010, 39-46). First attempts of specialization were undertaken by Heinz Risse (1921), and successively by few other works in the 1930s, focusing socio-historical (e.g. Kloeren 1935) as well as more contemporary developments (Bette 2010, 46-49). By that time, more and more German people were getting access to sports, as club members as well as spectators, and English 'Sport' was about to replace 'Turnen' as dominant physical culture (Eisenberg 1999). Against this background, the authors of the early writings developed an ambiguous perspective on sport and its place in modern society. On the one hand, sports were considered as a potential cure to 'intellectualism' and other supposedly 'degenerating' tendencies of modern society in general, and of German 'culture' in particular (see also Bette (2010, 24-27) on Risse). On the other hand, authors warned that sport would be endangered by a current crisis, caused by presumed aberrations such as professionalization and bureaucratization.

When sociology was, after the Nazi era, (re-)established at universities in (West) Germany, the former discussion was taken up again – but now with more systematic theoretical frameworks, which sociologists tried to elaborate further by applying them to sports (Heinemann 2007, 39-44). The crucial question at stake still was: which function does sport have in modern (or, depending on the theoretical perspective: industrialist, capitalist, civilized, etc.) society? (Emrich, Gassmann and Klein 2020, 9-10). Helmuth Plessner (1956) explained the increasing fascination for sport mostly with two aspects: In industrial society, with its dominance of machinery (in a technical *and* social sense), sport would let the human body come to its

own right, and it would allow for recognition of the – otherwise anonymous – individual and its performances (see also Schürmann 2020). However, other scholars considered such compensations as deceptive. Already in 1941, Adorno had argued: "Modern sport, one might say, attempts to restore to the body a part of the functions it has been deprived of through the machine. This attempt, however, is in order to train men the more inexorably to serve the machine. Sport virtually transforms the body itself into a kind of machine." (Adorno 1941, 395) And when the advocates of sport wanted to rehabilitate it – after it had been a useful and easy-to-handle tool for the Nazi regime – as a joyful, ludic activity for its own sake, this was countered by disciples of the Frankfurt School, which had then become prominent in post-war Germany. The 'Sportkritik' argued that leisure and sport would only serve the demands of work (Habermas 1958), that sport itself would increasingly become work-like (Rigauer 1969), and that it would generally reproduce capitalist ideology (Vinnai 1972). The proponents of sport insisted that it was nonetheless attracting many people, because it would realize key principles of industrial society – rewards for performance in a fair competition with equal opportunities – (Lenk 1972), maybe even better than industrial society itself (von Krockow 1972).

While this controversy dominated the academic as well as political debates on sports throughout the 1970s, and for quite some time afterwards (see Meier, Haut and Ruin 2016), also other theoretical perspectives and topics had been introduced from the 1960s on. Especially Günter Lüschen helped connecting Germany with the international sociology of sport (Bette and Rütten 2015). Contributions by scholars such as John Loy, Alan Ingham, or Gregory P. Stone were successively made accessible to the academic community in Germany (Lüschen 1966; Hammerich and Heinemann 1975; Lüschen and Weis 1976, the latter also published in Spanish), and helped to establish sport as a serious sociological subject. In particular the works of Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (Elias and Dunning 2008; Haut et al. 2018) received considerable attention and brought socio-historical aspects of sports to the forefront, what is also reflected in other approaches by Eichberg (1973) or Hopf (1979).

However, the institutional establishment of German sociology of sports took not place within sociology, but within sports science. In the light of the 'sporting arms race' with the GDR, and the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich to come, the FRG was interested in generating scientific knowledge as well as career opportunities for elite athletes (Bette 2010, 59-63). From 1970 on, chairs and departments for sport science

were established, research funding was provided via the 'Federal Institute of Sport Science' (BISp), the journal 'Sportwissenschaft' (today the 'German Journal of Exercise and Sports Research') was founded, and the German Sports University in Cologne was granted the right to award higher academic degrees (PhD and Habilitation) in the new discipline. Sport students' curricula then also included sociological seminars. Successively the first professors for the sociology of sport were appointed – all of them still trained sociologists and philosophers, not sports scientists: Bero Rigauer in Oldenburg (1975), Gunter Gebauer at the FU Berlin (1978), Volker Rittner at the German Sports University in Cologne (1979) (Bette 2010, 52-53). The first textbooks introducing the discipline were published (Grieswelle 1978; Heinemann 1980; Rigauer 1982), and a section for sports sociology was funded within the German Association of Sport Science (dvs) in 1983.

According to Bette (2010, 53-55), German sociology of sport has then, since the late 1980s, entered a stage of growth and diversification, with more topics, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Heinemann (2007, 42-45) points to signs of differentiation already in the 1970s, i.e. from the very beginnings of institutionalization of the discipline. Both agree, however, about the major strands of this increasingly diversified research: Scholars closer to general sociology kept discussing sports' function in society, or suggested to consider sport from the perspective of a sociology of the body (Rittner 1974; Klein 1984; Bette 1989; via Gugutzer 2004; up to Gugutzer 2017). Scholars closer to sport sciences focused on organized sport in a narrower sense, addressing more 'practical' problems of German sport associations and clubs (Schlagenhauf 1977; Winkler 1988; via Emrich, Pitsch and Papathanassiou 2001; up to Thieme 2017a). This more 'applied' research often promises third-party funding by the sport organizations involved, but it also often comes with strong competition between sociology and other sub-disciplines of sports sciences. For instance, violence (Pilz 1982), social problems (Klein 1989), or social inequalities (Hartmann-Tews 1996; Haut 2020) are not only topics for the sociology of sport, but also for sport pedagogy. Recreational sport and physical activity are addressed by sport psychology or public health studies, too, and analyses of elite sport are often carried out from economic or sport management perspectives nowadays (Emrich, Gassmann and Klein 2020, 15). Such an intersection of social scientific disciplines is also apparent in the journal *Sport und Gesellschaft* – Sport and Society: certainly, its launch in 2004 – together with the founding of the *European Journal for Sport and*

*Society* – can be considered as a further step to greater autonomy and establishment of the sociology of sport (Bette 2010, 55; Heinemann 2007, 44). However, it must be mentioned that *Sport und Gesellschaft* is not only a journal for sociology of sport, but for social sciences in a wider sense, explicitly naming "history", "philosophy", and "economy" in its subtitle.

Thus, it is not easy to estimate the current standing of German sociology of sport, especially in relation to other social-scientific perspectives. In 2010, Bette counted 12 full professors for sociology of sport (all of them in sports sciences institutes, none in a sociology department). In 2014, Dessauer et al. (2014) identified only 6 professors for sociology of sport – but another 26 who were denominated 'social sciences of sport', 'sport and society', 'sociology and economy of sport' or similar. Also for 2014, Emrich and Thieme (2017) compared the numbers of publications from different sub-disciplines of German sport sciences, and found a clear dominance for sports medicine (1817 publications) and exercise research (1379), followed by pedagogy (597), psychology (499), sociology (494), history (428), politics (293), economy (201), and sport management (192). Thus, sociology seems of minor relevance. But if we don't draw strict boundaries to history, politics or economy, the social sciences of sport in a broader sense seem rather strong, and the sociology of sport still is one of its leading perspectives.

## 2.- Established research topics, questions and theory perspectives

As a result of these historic developments, today, specific ways of sport-sociological thinking are so well established within German sports sciences that they are essentially canonized. Most prominently, this means there are research topics, questions, and theory perspectives that recur frequently and also enjoy a heightened level of unquestioned legitimacy within the sport-sociological field. To describe these, we summarize the discussions in German textbooks and introductions to the sociology of sport (Heinemann 2007; Weis and Gugutzer 2008; Bette 2010; Thiel, Seiberth and Mayer 2013; Güllich and Krüger 2020).

### 2.1.- Research topics and questions

All commentators of the German textbooks and introductions to the sociology of sport agree that German sociology of sport is concerned with sport's meaning in (or its function for) society in general,

and how it is changing (or not) in line with (or different from) other developments. Although debates have never been as harsh again as in the 1970s (see above), changing sport culture and its socio-theoretical interpretation have continuously been relevant topics (e.g. Cachay and Thiel 2000; Gebauer et al. 2004; Schürmann et al. 2016). Apparently, the same can be said of sport organisations: research on clubs and associations, on their finances and members, voluntary work and professionalization etc. were central right from the beginnings of the institutionalization of German sociology of sport and have been carried on and developed further ever since (e.g. Schlagenhauf 1977; Winkler 1988; Emrich, Pitsch and Papathanassiou 2001; Braun 2011; Breuer and Feiler 2019). The body has traditionally been a topic somewhat closer to sociologists than to sports scientists, but it is also considered as a central and continuously addressed issue (Rittner 1974; M.Klein 1984; Bette 1989; Gugutzer 2004; 2017) in all introductions to sociology of sport. Furthermore there has always been an interest in the factors enabling or hindering sport participation and physical activity, on the one hand with a focus on processes of socialization to and within sports (e.g. Becker 1982; Brinkhoff 1998; Burrmann 2020), on the other hand with a focus on how social inequalities affect the access to sport activities (e.g. Voigt 1978; Hartmann-Tews 1996; Nagel 2003; Haut 2011). Finally, deviant behavior and social problems (e.g. Pilz 1982; Klein 1989; Bette and Schimank 1995) in sports are considered as permanently relevant fields of research.

Which other topics are considered most relevant depends, of course, on each scholar's own perspective. Research on deviant behavior, for instance, can be further distinguished into literature on violence, doping, or corruption (Frenger and Pitsch 2020). Colleagues who are rather interested in current developments of sport and their sociological interpretation, differentiate the respective field of research according to societal processes, e.g. globalization, the influence of media or technique (digitalization), trends towards risky or extreme sports, etc (see respective chapters in Weis and Gugutzer 2008; Alkemeyer, Brümmer and Janetzko 2020). Those who are more concerned with organizations also specify their field further, e.g. focus elite sport or voluntary sport clubs, and then also tend to focus specific actors within these organizations, e.g. athletes, coaches, or referees (Emrich, Gassmann and Klein 2020). Research on social inequalities, finally, seems to give gender (Sobiech and Günther 2017) and migration (Mutz 2012) greatest attention, while age or disability are not (yet) recognized as much, and interest in class seems to have declined (Nobis

and Albert 2018). Despite the broad variety, there are also some topics which seem present in recent international discussions (Giulianotti 2015), but which are not yet recognized as crucial in the German standard literature, e.g. sport mega events, environment, nationalism, or sport for development.

## 2.2.- Theory Perspectives

Apart from criticizing a general lack of theoretical reflection in sociology of sports, Rigauer (2008) distinguishes three paradigmatic perspectives, in line with rather common classifications: one focusing actors first, structures second (e.g. rational choice); one focusing (communicative) structures first, actors second (e.g. systems theory); and an intermediate one, trying to address the structuration of agency or agency within structures (e.g. figurational and practice theory). Bette (2010, 135-140), on the other hand, argues that the three general levels of research that Niklas Luhmann prominently described as relevant in sociology are also the three levels sport sociological research should address: interaction, organization, and society.

More specifically, Heinemann (2007, 26-38) names as central approaches: individualistic theories, inspired either by economic paradigms (rational choice), or symbolic interactionism; systems theory (Luhmann), and figurational theory (Elias). Bette (2010, 140-142) emphasizes the dominance of systems theory in German sport studies, and confirms the relevance of the Eliasian approach, too. Further he mentions approaches inspired by Bourdieu or cultural studies to the list of important paradigms. Thiel, Seiberth, and Mayer (2013, 16-24) refer to systems theory, action theory, figurational theory, and "cultural/practice theory" including not only Bourdieu, but also Foucault. Furthermore Emrich, Gassmann, and Klein (2020, 7) name functionalist and structuration theory as relevant perspectives.

Of the "major theories and approaches" presented in Giulianotti's international textbook (2015), Luhmann's systems theory (still) seems dominant in German sociology of sports, other functionalist perspectives do not matter. Also actor-centred approaches (both rational-economic and interpretive-sociological) are considered more important. Elias and Bourdieu are frequently mentioned, while (physical) cultural studies or poststructuralist perspectives are rather exceptional. Since the 1970s, marxist or neo-marxist approaches seem to have vanished, postcolonial theory is rather unknown. Also other 'critical' perspectives that Weiß and Norden

(2013, 19-23) refer to, such as feminist or conflict theories, are not considered as relevant in the German introductions to the sociology of sport.

As described above already, sociology of sports cannot always be clearly demarcated from other social sciences, as it intersects with other disciplines, such as philosophy, history, law, psychology, economics, pedagogy, political science, geography, anthropology, and others. This is true for Germany as much as for other countries (Emrich, Gassmann and Klein 2020, 9; compare Marschik et al. 2009; Giulianotti 2015)

### 3.- Recent trends in the light of the journal "Sport und Gesellschaft"

To give an account of more recent trends in German sociology of sport, but also to provide a comparative case for "Sociología del Deporte", we firstly focus on developments of "Sport und Gesellschaft – Sport and Society". The journal was established in 2004 and has been publishing three issues per year since then. It is the official journal of the "Sektion Sportsoziologie" within the German Association of Sports Sciences and the only German journal for "sociology, philosophy, economy, and history of sports", as stated in the subtitle. Apart from main research articles, which undergo a double-blind peer review, the journal also includes book reviews, conference reports, and other forms of contributions, such as comments on developments in the profession or in politics of sport. Most contributions are in German language, but English submissions are welcome as well. (<https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/sug/sug-overview.xml>; rev. 25/09/2020)

In the first few years after the launch, the journal published a few more contributions, but since then a typical issue has three main articles, a book review, and one or two reports or comments. Especially the number of book reviews was higher until 2010, and has clearly decreased since then, while other forms of contribution kept rather stable.

Regarding the disciplines involved, the journal had a sociological focus from the very beginning. Throughout the years, and still today, more than half of the main articles apply a sociological perspective. Clearly, the second important discipline (in terms of numbers) in "Sport und Gesellschaft" is the economy of sport, adding up for about twenty per cent of the articles published. There were even more economic papers published in the 2000s, in the last years it have been only two per year – probably due to the launch of "Sciamus", the German journal on sport and man-

agement, in 2010. Also political science and history of sport had been somewhat more prominent in the early years of "Sport und Gesellschaft", during the last years about one article per year can be ascribed to each of these disciplines. Finally, few contributions – maybe one paper in two years – have come from sports philosophy, pedagogy or psychology.

The topics and fields of research covered in "Sport und Gesellschaft" still fit, by and large, in the categories that were identified in the German textbooks and introductions to the sociology of sport (see above): Continuously, a majority of the articles are concerned with aspects of organization. Within this field, problems of voluntary sport clubs, such as recruiting members and volunteers, are being addressed constantly (e.g. Thieme 2017b), from both sociological and economic perspectives. The regulation and financing of elite sports was a more prominent topic in the early years of the journal (e.g. Meier 2004), but its relevance has somewhat declined more recently – probably because such topics are nowadays also discussed in journals with a more specific focus on sport management. Changing sports culture and its interconnectedness with general processes of social change (e.g. globalization, individualization, digitalization etc.) has drawn ongoing attention in the journal, too. Accordingly, there has also been a continuous interest in social theories, but in a specific manner: Papers in "Sport und Gesellschaft" frequently test mid-range theories for sport as an exemplary case (e.g. Flatau, Pitsch and Emrich 2012). But a genuine focus on social theory, like in the 1970s discussion on sport and capitalism, are rather seldom (e.g. Böckelmann, Johnen and Schürmann 2013). Another interesting observation in this respect is that scholars closer to sociology (than sports sciences) have devoted less attention to the body, which has not vanished as a topic but was more frequently addressed in the first years of "Sport und Gesellschaft", but – in line with general sociology – rather turned to practices and interaction (e.g. Alkemeyer and Michaeler 2013; Müller 2014). Finally, as a last major field of research, many scholars continuously published on sport participation and physical activity. These contributions often focus social inequalities regarding the participation of specific groups. Most frequently addressed are children and youth (e.g. Zander 2016) – often in connection with problems of socialization –, as well as migrants and their "integration" (e.g. Adler Zwahlen, Nagel and Schlesinger 2019). Ageing and gender issues (e.g. Sobiech and Hartung 2019), are prominent topics, too, while class seems to have lost scholarly interest (except Nobis and Albert 2018), and disability or sexual orientations haven't gained as much until recently

(Boehlke and Müller 2020). Of the other “traditional” topics in German sociology of sport, spectators and fans are not most, but continuously researched (e.g. Fürtjes 2013), while papers on violence and doping are rather scarce. Only if subsumed, together with sexual abuse or unfairness, broadly as deviant behavior, the field of research is still relevant. Articles on sport and (social) media appear not too often, but regularly (e.g. Ludwig and Oelrichs 2020). Some trendy topics of the international research agenda, such as sport mega events and national identity (e.g. Emrich et al 2015) have been addressed recently, but others such as environmental issues or sport for development have not entered “Sport und Gesellschaft” yet.

Regarding the theory perspectives, it is hard to identify major trends in the journal, as topics and approaches have multiplied and diversified. Certainly, Luhmann’s systems theory still is one of the most prominent perspectives. Also, papers drawing on organisational theories do appear frequently, but not frequently enough to differentiate further between the specific approaches (neo-institutionalism etc.). Bourdieu is still frequently referred to – especially when scholars research and discuss social inequalities in sport participation –, while Elias’s figurational theory is mentioned seldom. Discourse theory and approaches of gender studies seem to have gained somewhat greater relevance. Finally, there is an obvious trend towards theories of practices and interactions. This, as we will show in the following chapter, is also one of the key overlaps with the research on sport that happens in German sociology.

#### 4.- Sport in German Sociology

Above, we described how the institutional establishment of German sociology of sports did not take place within sociology but within sports sciences, and how this prominently reflects in that full professors for sociology of sport are established at sports sciences institutes and not in sociology departments. However, this is not to say that German sociology does not conduct research on sports: instead, it addresses sport as a research topic only whenever the expected research results promise insight into other areas of sociological research. Usually, that is the case when the research results allow advancing and developing sociological theory, be it, e.g., regarding the theory of world society (Stichweh 2013; Werron 2010), or regarding how sports affect gender constructions (Müller 2016).

In this chapter, we will delineate the research of sport in German sociology. To do this, we will first de-

scribe the difference in the use of theory between the research of sport in German sociology and the sociological research of sport in German sports science. Then we will show which are the thematic priorities in the sociological research of sport in German sociology. And finally, we will describe new methodological developments and how these influence the sociology of sport.

#### 4.1.- The two sport-sociological theory cultures: The sociological research of sport in German sociology and in German sports science

Inasmuch as German sociology addresses sport as a research topic only whenever the expected research results promise advancing and developing general sociological theory, it can be said that sociological research on sport in German sociology and in German sports science have fundamentally different ways of thinking (Fleck 1979 [1935]) with regard to the question of what role sociological theory should play in research. This difference can be described more precisely in analogy to the differentiation of cultural sociology and sociology of culture (Alexander 2003): Accordingly, German sports science tends to conduct research that can be characterized as the sociology of sport: The emphasis is on research in which sociological methods are used to describe specific sports phenomena. The results are especially relevant within sports and for other sports sciences. In German sociology, on the other hand, the research paradigmatic orientation of sport sociology is more prominent. It aims to obtain sociological findings in the field of sport that are also analytically relevant in general sociology and, above all, contribute to theory development.

These specifically different relations to theory and theory formation have repeatedly been discussed and evaluated regarding their respective epistemic strengths and weaknesses (see for an earlier discussion Rigauer 2003 or more recently Staack and Haut 2019). Most recently, Staack and Schwank (2021) conducted a literature review on sport-sociological work that aims to contribute to sociological theory development in general. They comparatively relate their assessment of the status quo in the year 2020 to the assessments other sociologists have published in reviews of sports sociological research over the past 15 years (Gugutzer 2005; Gugutzer 2009; Fahrner 2010; Reicher 2014). This comparison shows that there is a new development: Overall, the development of sociological theory is still rarely the central goal of sports sociological research. However, some recent sport-sociological publications from the field

of German sociology are characterized by complex intertwining of theory and empiricism and in doing so generate and develop sociological theory. Primarily, they develop middle-range theories, while work on social theory and on theory of society still hardly ever takes place.

#### 4.2.- Thematic focuses

If one looks at the thematic focuses of sports sociological research in German sociology today and relates them to previous developments, this shows that nowadays thematic focuses are often continuations of previous developments. One central continuity is that the majority of research today still focuses on analyses of competitive/professional sports (and less on analyses of amateur sports). These analyses of competitive/professional sports are sociologically very insightful, especially when being undertaken from a historically comparative perspective, as in competitive/professional sports, various socio-cultural phenomena are condensed in a special way (as, e.g. constructions of age, gender, attractiveness, performance evaluation, bodies, habitus, etc.). They thereby, for example, allow sociologists examining how, contrary to its popular description as hyperinclusive, sport evokes in its very own way the formation of differentiations and thus discriminations among people (e.g. Müller and Steuerwald 2017). Or, for another example, the analyses allow examining how competitive/professional sport is a specific socio-cultural arena in which constructions of what 'health' is are constantly being renegotiated (e.g. Scholl 2018).

Another continuity is that gender sociological questions are increasingly thematically central. Over the past 25 years, gender sociology has become increasingly institutionalized, as outlined in recent anthologies (e.g., Frohn et al. 2019). In the course of this progressive institutional establishment, the gender-sociological sociology of sport has diversified considerably. This can be seen both in the research questions posed and in the research paradigms followed: The research questions address, for example, various contexts of gender, sexuality and power or gendered bodies and the gendering of bodies (e.g. Sobiech and Günter 2017) but also the effects of institutional-organizational gender divisions in sport (e.g. Heckemeyer 2018) as well as gender discrimination resulting from the structural and cultural normative bisexuality of sport (*ibid.*, or, focusing on how to deal with transgressions of this binarity, Krämer 2020). The paradigmatic diversification, in turn, can be seen, among other things, in the fact that the gender-sociological

sociology of sport takes up new topics and, in addition, deals with them in new ways, especially questions of intersectionality and diversity in sport. This is manifested in particular in the fact that the analysis of practices of "human differentiation" (Hirschauer 2017) has become more central. Although there has been a long tradition of research in sports science on issues such as 'race' and 'disability', there is still a long way to go, as the research was always primarily aimed at integration and inclusion issues, and was therefore strongly pedagogically and politically motivated. The paradigmatic diversification now leads to these topics being addressed and negotiated in a genuinely sociological manner.

#### 4.3.- Methods and methodologies

The existing introductions and textbooks on German sociology of sport mentioned above do not pay special attention to the research methods applied, but assume that the approaches established in general sociology are used in sociology of sports, too (Thiel, Seiberth and Mayer 2013, 25-29). As we will show now, this assumption is insofar not completely correct as recently, there are methodological developments in German sociology, especially regarding qualitative methodology, that change how today sports as a research topic is addressed in German sociology. These developments all have in common that they specifically focus on the body as a key element in constituting social reality.

First, there are specific developments in sociological performance and movement analyses. This kind of sociological research often focuses on dance analyses, but not exclusively. It studies how performativities of movement practices not only permeate and influence sports and dance, but also everyday routines (Klein and Göbel 2017)

Second, a variety of ethnographic approaches has established itself. These ethnographic approaches predominantly take up micro-sociological perspectives and from here tackle issues of sociological theory, mostly with a focus on interactionist sociological theory. Addressed research questions are, for example, how bodily knowledge is taught and acquired (Schindler 2011), how practices of knowing about and knowing with the body change over time (Schmidt 2015) or how bodily authenticity and gender authenticity are practically (co-)constructed (Staack 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). The most popular of these new ethnographic approaches is probably the praxeographic approach, which is a form of ethnography that focuses specifically on analyses of practices, often focus-

ing on coordinative practices or practices of subjectivation (Brümmer 2018; Alkemeyer 2013).

Thirdly, there are methodical developments that somehow transcend ethnographic interaction analysis. One of them is the neo-phenomenological sociology, which has a unique focus on the lived body. The developers of this theory often use the sport as an empirical example (Gugutzer 2015). The empirically most elaborated methodical development somehow transcending ethnographic interaction analysis is possibly the sociological analysis of sports that bases on ethnomethodology, videography and conversational analysis (e.g., Meyer and von Wedelstaedt 2017). And last but not least, the Luhmannian systems theory is fruitfully connected to qualitative sports sociology as well, and with this theoretically elaborated approach transcends ethnographic interaction analysis (Heck 2019).

## 5.- Conclusion

Comparing the development of German and Spanish sociology of sport (according to Sanchez et al. 2020), similarities seem more apparent than differences: In both countries, philosophers and early sociologists started thinking about sports at the beginning of 20th century, but an institutionalization and systematization of sociology of sports had to wait until about 1970. Also in both countries, these processes were intertwined with a growing importance of sport/physical education at schools, and thus a growing need for teacher training in sport science as an academic subject. And in both cases, this development came together with campaigns promoting sport activities for wider parts of the population ("Sport for All") in the 1970s. However, to our impression it seems that German sports policy – and thus also research in the sociology of sports – focused on the role of organized clubs as providers of sport, while in Spain a bit more attention seems to have been devoted to informal sports as well. For instance, Spanish colleagues report about a general Survey on Sports Habits which has been carried out repeatedly since 1980; in Germany, a detailed nationwide survey on the activities of the population was never conducted – while research on problems of organized clubs and associations has been funded extensively throughout the years (most recently Breuer and Feiler 2019). This may also be intertwined with another, temporal difference: the support of research on elite sports in connection with hosting the Olympic Games. As described earlier, the competition with the GDR led to increasing political and financial support of sport sci-

ence, starting in the advent of Munich 1972. Although sociology of sport was not the discipline with the largest funding, it certainly benefited considerably from the upgrading of sport science. This boost of sports science and sociology of sport through public interest in the Olympics can be found in Spain as well, but it came about with the 1992 Games in Barcelona. That may fit with the notion of our Spanish colleagues that the consolidation and differentiation of the discipline took place in the last 20 years or so, while similar processes in German sociology of sport appeared one or two decades earlier.

Regarding the topics and theoretical perspectives, it seems difficult to classify and compare the growing and increasingly diversified field of research in both countries. However, again similarities are easier to identify than differences: The changes of sport and its meaning in society, physical activity and social inequalities, social problems and deviant behavior, have been equally addressed in Germany and Spain. Increasing interest in gender studies, but also in ethnography and new (informal) sport cultures and identities can also be found in both countries. In terms of theoretical approaches, we are not sure if the recent turn to practice theory in German sociology of sports (see above) is equally reflected in Spain, but "Foucauldian influences and gender approaches within the context of feminism" (Sanchez et al. 2020) have gained attention in Germany, too. Apparently the prominence of Luhmann's system theory still is a German particularity, while figurational sociology seems to be more established in Spanish sociology of sport.

One difference seems striking to us: While our Spanish colleagues (ibid.) described the relation between sociology and sports science, and also the work of both sections in the respective professional associations, as a rather fruitful interaction and exchange of empirical problems and theoretical concepts, in Germany there seems to be a broader gap between sociologists interested in theory development and sport scientists interested in more "applied" research on recent problems of sports (see above, section 4). This is also emphasized by the editors of one of the most recent German volume on cultural sociology of sport (Alkemeyer, Brümmer and Janetzko, in press). They assume that German sociology of sport has underwent a prioritization of research perspectives which are designed for supporting the organized sport system in fulfilling its social/political functions – and runs the risk of neglecting concrete manifestations of sport practices and their implications for sociological (and cultural) theory. However, our stock-taking of German sociology of sport reveals, firstly, that the tension between theoretical interests



of sociologists and the more “applied” empirical focus of sport scientists is not new, but has been shaping the discipline from the beginning of its institutionalization (see also Rigauer 2003; Bette 2010; Staack and Schwank 2021). And secondly, we didn’t find evidence that the fraction interested in developing sociological theory has lost ground lately, but has been visible with numerous prominent publications throughout the last years. But nonetheless, we agree that the polarization between sport “practitioners” avoiding theoretical reflection and theorists marginalizing empirical and “applied” questions of sports does exist (compare already Bourdieu 1988), and it seems indeed strong in current German sociology of sports. Maybe this is a rather specific problem that does not necessarily apply for the development of the discipline in Spain. But if it does, there is certainly a need for an academic journal linking the poles of the field to each other, by picking up new theoretical developments as well as new empirical findings, and by enabling fruitful discussions between the multiple perspectives that are nowadays shaping sociology of sport. In that sense the establishment of “Sociologia del Deporte” is an appropriate answer to the challenges of the field, and we send our colleagues all the best wishes for the future development of the journal.

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