

## „Sport“ - a suggested definition

(The [web-links](#) refer to the addresses <[www.claustiedemann.de/](#)> <[www.sport-geschichte.de/](#)> and <[www.kulturwiss.info/](#)>; the documents can be found in the respective directory <.../tiedemann/documents/>.)  
Cf. <.../sportdefinitionEnglish.html>

**"Sport" is a cultural field of activity in which people voluntarily enter into a relationship with other people in order to compare their respective abilities and skills in the art of movement - according to self-imposed or adopted rules and on the basis of socially accepted ethical values.**

*(auf Deutsch):* „Sport“ ist ein kulturelles Tätigkeitsfeld, in dem Menschen sich freiwillig in eine Beziehung zu anderen Menschen begeben, um ihre jeweiligen Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten in der Bewegungskunst zu vergleichen - nach selbst gesetzten oder übernommenen Regeln und auf Grundlage der gesellschaftlich akzeptierten ethischen Werte.

*(en Français) :* „Sport“ est un domaine d'activité culturelle, dans lequel les gens s'engagent volontairement dans une relation avec d'autres personnes afin de comparer leurs capacités et compétences respectives dans l'exercice physique adroit - selon des règles auto-établies ou héréditaires et sur la base de valeurs éthiques socialement acceptées.

*My German definition of "Sport"<sup>1</sup> was first put on the Internet in January 2002 and has been revised several times since then. The here presented English version is simply a proposal, too, which I would like to put up for discussion.*

*In the following, I will first explain why and how I define "sport", secondly I will discuss the limits and benefits of my proposed definition, and thirdly I will explain the individual elements of my definition.*

### 1. Define "sport" - why and how?

To define "sport" (in English) is a big task, especially for me, a German. My efforts are based on my (German) definition of the German term "Sport" and its explanation.

In (American) English, furthermore, there is a fine distinction between "sport" and "sports". The editors of the "Routledge Companion to Sports History" (Abingdon & New York, 2010), S. W. Pope and John Nauright, addressed this issue in their first footnote (p. 9) with resigned regret: *"Both of us (like most historians in our field) have consistently referred to our work as*

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<sup>1</sup> <.../sportdefinition.html> and <.../DefinitionSport.pdf>.

*'sport history' which somehow seemed a bit more serious than 'sports history'. Routledge preferred 'sports history' ..." - why at all?!*

For me, it's not only a "snobbish" attitude or "a bit more serious" (Pope and Nauright, *ibid.* p. 9) to use the term "sport" in the singular, but a question of the proper linguistical category. "Sport" (in German: "Sport") in general sense is an abstract term for a field of activity, and in this sense it's (in German) a *singulare tantum*; you can use it only in the singular. In English, "a (certain) sport" is a special kind of activity, one of many (in German: "Sportart"); in this sense, you can use it (in English) as well in the singular as in the plural. So when you say "sports", it *is always a number of kinds of (sporting) activities*.

The rare reflections on the term "Sport" by German authors mostly remain vague and unprecise. They find their culmination in Röthig's and Prohl's definition of "Sport" - or better: its avoidance - in the (German) "sport-scientific dictionary" ("Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon", 2003, p. 493): *"Since the beginning of the 20th century, S. has developed into a colloquial term used worldwide. Therefore, a precise or even unambiguous conceptual delimitation cannot be made."* (my translation, C.T.). In the core statement, it has been in the "Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon" since 1983. This capitulation to the necessary conceptual effort or even the explanation that it is from the outset not a meaningful undertaking because it is impossible, I consider a momentous step of thought, which in my opinion has negatively determined the German publications of the last decades.

**In my opinion, every scientist must have as clear a concept as possible of the subject of his science and explain it in his publications.** The idea that a physicist does not have an exact concept of physics, a lawyer does not have an exact concept of law, etc., might seem strange to all people. But this is exactly what most and most influential sport scientists in Germany (and also some in other countries and cultures) declare to be normal or even normative.

The result are scientific works in which everything is counted as "sport", even something as in my opinion absurd as "health sport". In connection with the fact that **according to the prevailing view (represented in the "Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon")** most sport scientists do not even strive for a clear terminology, **this results in complete arbitrariness and ambiguity in the discourse of sport science.**

Anyone who is not willing to accept this development (or this prevailing state in the meantime) must face the laborious task of clarifying "sport" (as the central concept of sport science); he/she must determine its scope or limits, and that means defining "sport". And such a (working) definition must be made public by every scientist. I am doing this hoping that all those who strive for clear concepts in cultural studies will give a productive resonance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the later mentioned, quoted and [linked](#) definitions of "Bewegungskultur" [movement culture], "Gewalt" [violence] and "Aggression" [aggression], and "Kunst" [art], as well as "Olympismus" [olympism] <.../VortragGoettingen2008.pdf>, and "Frieden" [peace] <.../FriedensHandbuchSport\_2.Auflage.pdf>.

A **definition** should determine and delimit the meaning of a term. For the sake of clarification: To understand a definition as a precept, regulation or the like would be a misunderstanding. Every thinking person forms his/her own opinion and uses words in his/her own meaning. But one should not exaggerate this subjectivistically or constructivistically. We are social beings, designed for exchange and understanding with other people, in science in any case. If we want to communicate with other people, who have their own use of words, we must - even in a not completely unimportant everyday conversation - be able to clarify our (respective) use of words, at least on request.

Furthermore, scientists have to clarify their key concepts from the outset, without waiting for demand. When sport scientists unasked tell themselves and the interested public what they understand by sport and why they use this term this way, they only do what is necessary; if they don't, it's a serious obstacle to understanding. In this sense, **defining is a necessary input for the scientific exchange of knowledge and opinions.**

Of course, definitions are not instruments that should or could change reality in the first place; rather, it is mainly the found (objectively given) reality in them that should be brought into the (subjective) concept in a clear and selective way. "in the first place", "mainly" - with this choice of words I have already indicated that in all words, thus also (or even more) in definitions, an idea of what reality *could be (or should be for me)* is represented. This is what makes subjectivity unbreakable.

With my words (and thus also definitions) I do not pursue a purely objectivist ideal (which is not achievable anyway). On the other hand, I don't understand my wording as merely subjectivist, voluntaristic or even constructivistic. This means that I accept the priority indicated above, in which both are abolished: **Definitions should be as clear and selective as possible and at the same time at least indicate in all fineness how reality *could (or should) be.***

Several types of definitions can be distinguished: Real (or essence) definition, nominal definition, declarative definition, ostentatious and operational definition. I propose - according to a philosophical tradition going back to Aristotle - a so-called **real definition**. It should determine the essence of the entity to be defined by indicating the next higher genus (*genus proximum*) and the species-forming difference (*differentia specifica*). Mistakes can be made in a proper definition if, for example, it is too narrow or too wide, contains contradictions, is unclearly formulated, contains a negative formulation or even the word to be defined itself.<sup>3</sup>

If one wants to work out such a definition, as it is offered by the way in most dictionaries and encyclopaedias, one must think first of all therefore, to which **genus** (i.e. taxonomic group) sport belongs, which terms are settled on the same level and which is the **next**

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Regenbogen, Arnim; Uwe Meyer (Eds.) (2013): Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe, founded by F. Kirchner and C. Michaëlis, continued by J. Hoffmeister, completely new ed. by A.R. and U.M. Hamburg: Felix Meiner 2013 (= Philosophische Bibliothek, vol. 500), keyword „Definition“.

**higher genus** (term level, *genus proximum*). To assign the term apple, for example, to the genus fruit would go one step too far, because pome fruit is the next higher genus. **For me, the next higher genus for the term "sport" is "field of activity"**. Sport is one of many fields of activity for me. I have already somewhat limited the abundance of fields of activity by the adjective "cultural". I will explain this element of my definition and all others in more detail below (point 3).

In the second step one has to name the "**species-forming difference**" (*differentia specifica*), i.e. what distinguishes the (cultural) field of activity sport from other (cultural) fields of activity. This should be formulated as succinctly and clearly as possible with words or terms that are as generally understandable as possible. From the fundamental necessity that the terms used here must be defined again, some authors conclude that such an approach were infinite or even circular, which were a serious violation of the definition rules; therefore one could or should not even try such. This concern is as puristic as it is infertile. In my opinion, it is both sufficient and necessary to accept the indeed *logically conceivable circularity* as a "blur" in order to acquire a great gain in conceptual clarity *in practice*.

It is clear that **this definition is also subjective**, the result of (my) action and (my) decision. **This subjectivity is inescapable**. Others will act and decide, formulate and define differently. Science consists of dealing with other subjects, their actions and decisions. Scientists offer in principle and publicly to justify their own actions and decisions in a comprehensible way and thus to make them verifiable. And other scientists are confronted critically with the same claim.

When Röthig and Prohl in the "Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon" claim that "therefore" "a precise or even unambiguous conceptual delimitation" of "sport" were not possible, they refuse to accept what (sport) science fundamentally constitutes; they thus remain in everyday language use - and with them already more than a generation of (esp. German) sport scientists.

By the way: the (logical) conclusion, claimed by the word "therefore", is inadmissible; because from the (appropriately named) conceptual properties "colloquial" and "used worldwide" it cannot (simply) be concluded that the term "sport" cannot be defined "precisely or even unambiguously".

**All elements of my definition of sport are necessary, and only together they are sufficient**. This means that an activity no longer belongs to "sport" even if only one of the defining elements is not given. This is a figure of thought, which makes possible a clear demarcation, and that is finally the literal sense of 'defining'.

## 2. Limits and benefits of this sport definition

### My proposed definition only covers part of the everyday and colloquial term

**"sport"**. According to this, much can no longer be referred to as sport (at least in scientific wording), that is called so in everyday language use (e.g. "health sport"). The difference is indeed considerable!

In many discussions I have learned that many people are reluctant to use the word "sport" in this (narrow) meaning. This is probably not only a clinging to the usual, it is probably above all defending against a feared "attack" on a meanwhile socially deeply anchored value consciousness: Sport and/or sportiness is felt by most people of our society as a high value and is emotionally deeply anchored as such; this applies probably all the more to most sport scientists. In the eyes (or "hearts"!) of many, a much narrower concept of sport seems to query a part of their lifestyle that they (want to) understand as "sporty".

The conceptual change proposed by me may - at least in the beginning - lead to considerable uncertainty. My proposal to use the term "culture of movement" (in German: "Bewegungskultur") as a wider generic term for the activities which, according to my definition, can no longer be classified under "sport", does not seem to be able to simply compensate for the "loss of sportiness" which is perceived as emotionally significant by many.

In my opinion, the greatest and most general benefit of this conceptual clarification arises for the discourse of sport *science*: If sport scientists know from each other what they understand by "sport", they can - especially with different views - talk to each other in clear awareness of their (different) use of the central concept of their science. The prerequisite for this, of course, is that each one has his/her own concept of sport (elaborated and communicated).

By the way: The colleagues who pleaded for a change of term from "sport" to "movement" science have thus (apparently) avoided the necessity of defining "sport" as the central concept of their science, but they have considerably increased their problem. An immense number of issues has to do with movement! I am astonished at all that representatives of philosophy, physics, sociology, psychology or many other fields of science have not already protested against the claim that (former) sport scientists have made already some time ago to be the (very and only) scientists of "movement" - especially in the challenging singular "movement *science*". After all, movement is a very complex concept and central in many fields of science!

To work out an "own" definition of "sport" seemed to me necessary already for a long time due to general scientific theoretical considerations. However, I only made a real attempt when I was preoccupied with preliminary considerations on an overall presentation of sport history. I had to clarify the conceptual question more seriously than before: What exactly did I mean by "sport"?

In publications on sport history, I had noticed long time before that many authors - mostly already in the prefaces - have great difficulty "applying" the term sport to earlier times; I call

this the *anachronism syndrome*. They mostly justified their concerns with today's broad use of the term sport, which includes many earlier not existing practices. Thus they entered a conceptual "dead end"; for with what words should they name the phenomena of that time? And don't further conceptual concerns emerge then?

I can only avoid this conceptual dilemma by checking whether I can speak (and write) about "sport" both in the present and in the past. This in turn requires a clear definition.

**With my definition**, I have found what I consider to be a useful solution. The definition originated from the investigation of the present times and circumstances, but due to its general formulation **one can also grasp the essence of what** (of course from a today's point of view) **can be called "sport" in the distant past**.

In order to fill the big gap between my narrow concept of sport and the boundless concept of sport, which is used in everyday life and unfortunately also by most sport scientists, I propose to use a word with a larger scope of meaning: "culture of movement". Therefore **I will speak of "culture of movement and sport" in the future, if I want to grasp the area of today's everyday term "sport"**. I have also published and explained a proposal for the definition of the term "movement culture" ("Bewegungskultur") on the internet, with explanations, too<sup>4</sup>:

**"Movement culture" is a field of activity in which people deal with their nature and environment and consciously and intentionally develop, design and present their physical abilities and skills in order to experience an individual or shared gain and enjoyment that is important to them.**

If you use "sport" and "movement culture" as terms like I suggest, it is unimportant when and how these words have been used so far; because with my definition I explain how I want to use a word now (and in the future), what it means for me here and now.

In my opinion, the much-discussed terminological concerns of sports historians (I call it the anachronism syndrome, which particularly affects authors researching ancient sport history) are based on the fact that these authors have not been able (or have been afraid) to clarify the meaning of the term "sport" (by a definition). But if one faces this - admittedly difficult - task, such concerns can be overcome. Some (especially US-) authors (such as Mandell, Poliakoff and Guttmann) have shown this in their (different) ways. The usefulness of any definition can (and should) of course be argued about - with a scientific claim.

In my opinion, the clearest proposal for a definition of "sport" so far has been presented by the German Meinhard Volkamer (1984): "Sport consists in the creation of arbitrary obstacles, problems or conflicts, which are predominantly solved by physical means, whereby the participants agree on which solutions are to be allowed or not allowed" (my translation, C.T.). It

<sup>4</sup> see <.../movementculturedefinitionEnglish.html> and <.../DefinitionMovementCulture.pdf>; in German: <.../bewegungskulturdefinition.html> and <.../DefinitionBewegungskultur.pdf>.

seems strange to me that Volkamer, in his 1987 version, removed the binding to agreed rules from his proposed definition.<sup>5</sup>

A (rare) example for the discussion hopefully to be continued about a sport concept (especially for sport historians) is the controversy in the first issue of the journal "Sport und Gesellschaft - Sport and Society" of 2004 between Christiane Eisenberg and Michael Krüger, in which Eisenberg - in my opinion rightly - reproached Krüger (representing most other German sport historians and scientists) for not (having and) using a clear sport concept.<sup>6</sup> By proposing a definition (which I do not share), she has at least promoted the scientific discussion, which has so far been culpably neglected.

### 3. Explanation of the individual elements of my "sport" definition

*Here, I will briefly explain the individual elements of my definition of "sport" below:*

**"field of activity"**: This is the "*genus proximum*" for the term "sport". Field of activity (not: activity!) should clarify that "sport" is an abstract issue, not an object, condition or the like. "Sport" is also not a term for an activity, but a generic term (a field) for many activities. Swimming, running or sailing are not from the outset sports, but are words for certain activities, which - *only in a certain form!* - belong to the (cultural) field of activity called sport. In another form they *can* also be words for everyday activities; then they belong to the field of activity called everyday life.

If one wants to name an activity, one must use a verb. Unfortunately, in German we do not have a simple one (such as "sporten"), but only a compound one: "Sport treiben" generally refers to activities in the field of sport (= sporting activities). By the way, the composition of the words "Sport treiben" also makes it clear that "Sport" in German is an abstract term that needs a verb to name the activity in this field. In English it seems similar: there is no single verb (like "to sport") but the compound (like "to make sport").

The fact that the acting ones are humans (e.g. not animals) seems to me self-evident, but must nevertheless be clearly formulated; there are authors who advocate the thesis that animals also practised "sport" (or "physical exercises", Neuendorff 1930; Weiler also argues similarly in 1989<sup>7</sup>). This will hopefully become clearer with the following explanation of "cultural".

"Field of activity" also means that the people in this field do something themselves, act actively, in connection with the other elements of this definition. People who, for example,

<sup>5</sup> VOLKAMER, Meinhart: Zur Definition des Begriffs "Sport". In: Sportwissenschaft, Schorndorf, 14 (1984) 2, pp. 195 - 203; VOLKAMER, Meinhart: Was ist "Sport"? - Versuch einer Definition. In: M. Volkamer: Von der Last mit der Lust im Schulsport. Probleme der Pädagogisierung des Sports. Schorndorf: Hofmann 1987 (= Schriftenreihe zur Praxis der Leibeserziehung und des Sports; 189). pp. 51 - 67.

<sup>6</sup> EISENBERG, Christiane: Gegenstandsbereich und politische Zielsetzung der Sportgeschichte. Anmerkungen zu Michael Krügers "Anmerkungen". In: Zs. Sport und Gesellschaft - Sport and Society, Stuttgart, 1 (2004), 1, pp. 92 - 95.

<sup>7</sup> WEILER, Ingomar: Leitperspektiven zur Genese des Sports. In: Nikephoros, Hildesheim, 2 (1989), pp. 7 - 26.

merely watch other sportsmen and sportswomen therefore do not act in the field of sport, but in other fields of activity, which, however, can be brought into *connection with* sport. (Rioting) football "fans" are for me therefore not necessarily a topic for sport scientists, but first and foremost one for psychologists, sociologists or the like.

**"Cultural"**: On the basis of the natural circumstances and conditions, which humans have influenced and changed (and still do) to an increasing extent, people develop their ways of life culturally / socially. In the tribal history of "homo", the ability to (self-)reflect means a decisive step towards the development of communication, language and free, playful thinking. Only after this development step can one speak of "sport" (and other cultural fields of activity such as "art"). **Culture is the conscious, reflected shaping of one's own development**, both at the level of the human species and at the level of the individual human being.

The cultural characteristic of sport becomes particularly clear in the development of the sport rules (*see below!*); people have thought about how they want to and can shape the militant comparison with other people in such a way that it could, for example, develop from bloody seriousness (as it is partly described in the 23rd song of Homer's Iliad) to a playful fight for higher art of movement.

The cultural quality of sport is not "proven" by the fact that people in other cultural fields of activity - such as fine arts or literature - have dealt with sport. This (wrong) line of thought was (and still is) a popular element of public speeches, but remains misleading as an attempt to enhance sport as a relatively new cultural field with the consecration of already recognised "elder" cultural areas. Such dubious figures of thought are rather harmful, they are above all not necessary at all.

**"Voluntary"**: This criterion excludes those people who act under pressure or coercion, even if their activity otherwise fulfils all other criteria for sport, e.g. most gladiators in Roman arenas (*see below the remarks on "on the basis of socially accepted ethical values"!*).

Voluntariness should not be confused with joy, pleasure or similar, by the way! The currently (in German) so-called "Schulsport" (literal: „school sport“), for example, although it may be experienced by many as joyful, does not belong to sport for me, insofar as it is part of compulsory education (compulsory schooling, legal constraint!), i.e. it is not practised voluntarily (up to a certain age). The former German term "Leibeserziehung" ("physical education") was more honest.

Even in the "Bundeswehr" (army) and other closed institutions one should not speak of "official sport", because this activity is part of the service, i.e. not voluntarily exercised; fitness training would be more appropriate; even more honest would probably be the terms combat training or (para-) military training, if forms of movement are practised with weapons.

Outside of school lessons, military service, etc., the same people can, of course, do sport(s),

just voluntarily; but within such coercive systems one should renounce this a label fraud. For me, compulsory sport is a contradiction in terms.

Under the conditions of (actual) "professionalism", athletes can (or must) gradually give up or lose the voluntariness they may have experienced in the beginning. The so-called "professional sport" functions to a large extent like a coercive system, from which people cannot at least simply and easily "get out". These circumstances sometimes suggest the (in my eyes correct) statement: "This is not a sport (anymore)"! Also the frequent comparison (or more precisely: the equation) of today's professional athletes with antique gladiators has its (limited) justification in this.

**"to enter into a relationship with other people"**: A single person without a relationship to others is (already biologically) hardly viable. Social-cultural life without human relationships would be a contradiction in terms. Beyond this (banal) basic insight, an activity to be called "sporty" is only justified by the fact that a human being in this field of activity enters into a special, *comparative* relationship (*see below the remarks to "compare"!*) with at least one other human being *through his/her acting so*.

Comparative relationship means for me that it is valid only for humans among themselves as basically same beings. No person can compare himself/herself with a mountain, for example, even if colloquially "the mountain" is called an (athletic?!) "opponent", even by otherwise serious sport scientists (such as Güldenpfennig). For me this is not a "relationship" (to a human being), but a "relation" (to a thing).

Who only trains and compares his own physical (movement) performance with the goal of surpassing it as much as possible, has no relationship with an other person. This is of course legitimate, but he/she does not make sport in my sense, but rather culture of movement: Such a person deals with his/her nature (and environment) and consciously develops his/her physical abilities and skills in order to experience a significant gain and pleasure for him/her. This corresponds exactly to my definition of "culture of movement". And it is no less good, has nothing devaluing, but is simply something other than sport (in my sense).

A relationship with an other human being can also be taken up across temporal and local boundaries inwardly, *in the imagination*, with a human being in a completely different place, even with a human being (as a role model or competitor) who is no longer alive. Such an indirect, inner relationship is the basis of the *record principle* in sport<sup>8</sup>, according to which the aim is to outperform achievements which have already been achieved at some point and about which there is a handed down, credible, and traceable report (this is the original meaning of the English word "record").

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Tiedemann, Claus (2013): Gedanken zum Rekord-Prinzip im modernen Leistungssport - oder: Vom Rekord-Prinzip zum Rekord-Wahn im Sport. Lecture addressed (13.02.2013) to the local group in the city of Kiel of the German Olympic Society. <.../Sport\_ohne\_Rekord.pdf>

In my opinion, the "record principle" in sport is harmful and expendable.<sup>9</sup> In principle, in sport it is not the question of providing a performance that has not been surpassed so far (superlative), but rather a better one in concrete comparison *here and now* than the competitors (comparative). The fixation on the achievement of ever new top and best performances (records) is not only a hazard for the athletes' health, it is also generally not good for the society.

In the competition itself, in which the **here and now principle** applies, the relationship is immediate: **the other people are known to me, close in time and space (and I to them), the desired comparison takes place directly with them.** The establishment of a relationship with another person and the associated intentions and goals are - as psychological processes - not always easy to be recognised in the individual, concrete external actions, sometimes not at all. In my opinion, however, the intentions and goals are decisive for the relationship of the people involved and thus for whether or not their actions are to be located in the field of sport. Therefore the (social and) psychological context has to be considered carefully.

An example: When I sprint to reach a bus, I don't act sporty. The action of the sprint may be (almost) the same as that of an athlete in training or competition, viewed from the outside; but my sprint to the bus does not happen to me - at the level of that action! - to enter into a (comparative) relationship with other people. In sports training or competition, however, I sprint to get myself - on the level of this action! - to enter into a (comparative) relationship with other people.

Perhaps the boundaries of meaning become even clearer when I take the example just mentioned to extremes: If, during the sprint to the bus, I saw another person sprinting to the bus from the other side the same distance and if I somehow agreed with him/her that we could both compare, compete, the who of us reached the bus door earlier, then all the definition elements for "sport" would be given: Out of this small everyday situation we both would have made a small, fleeting situation of "sport".

In many activities, which are colloquially and broadly assigned to sport, the relationship element at the activity level itself and / or the aim of comparison according to rules is missing (*see below!*), for example in movement training for the purpose of rehabilitation (so-called "health sport!"), jogging (except as training for a competition), juggling, dancing (except tournament dancing), fitness training or "body building"; they are therefore not sporting activities for me, even if people may live a (different!) kind of relationship (e.g. sociability) during or with this activity. The relationship with (at least) one other person must be necessary for the activity itself, must be lived in it and through it, and it must contain the other ele-

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<sup>9</sup> cf. Tiedemann, Claus (2015): Zum Umgang mit Zeit und Geschichte im Sport - wider die Rekordsucht. Lecture, held at the XIXth CESH-Congress (22.10. 2015) in Florence (Italy) (to be published in the congress minutes). „On dealing with Time and History in Sport“: <.../LectureFirenze2015.pdf>; in German: <.../VortragFlorenz2015.pdf>

ments of definition (intention of comparison, etc.) if the activity is to belong to the field of activity "sport". For me, the above-mentioned and many other activities belong predominantly to the field of activity "culture of movement".

However, the boundaries are not rigid. One can - as shown in the example (sprint to the bus door) and as can be seen in the cultural history, e.g. of dancing and gymnastics - make a lot of things into a sporting activity, convert into a "sport".

**"abilities"**: The differently gifted people have or develop different possibilities for action in different fields of activity, including sport. The term "abilities" rather refers to general, comprehensive possibilities of acting which can be based on talent, genetic "equipment", constitution, practice and experience, e.g. being quick to react or flexible or persevering or being able to assess a complex situation quickly and correctly.

In the course of cultural history, the sometimes considerable differences in the possibilities of acting of different people - congenital or acquired - have led to different classifications of competitors in the sense of a "fair" comparison of the "art of movement" (*see below!*), especially according to age, body weight, gender and type of disability (in this historical order). Since each such classification represents an (arbitrary) regulation (*see below!*), it can and should be disputed. The fact that, for example, there is no (even) classification according to body length means that in some sports small people hardly have a chance compared to large ones (and sometimes vice versa); I consider this to be problematic; however, it can (also) be regulated.

**"skills"**: This term describes more specific acting possibilities, smaller action elements, which can be acquired / developed in particular through intensive practice (training), e.g. safely handling dumbbells, jumping a somersault or (while sailing) driving a fast turn / jibe.

At least in the past it was possible for (adult) people to have certain movement abilities or skills of such a high level due to their inherited trait and/or natural and cultural living conditions alone that they were not only competitive in sports without any additional special training effort, but were also superior to people from other cultural areas, e.g. the Ethiopian marathon runner Bikila Abebe 1960 in Rome (at that time even barefoot) and still in 1964 in Tokyo (but then with running shoes).

In general - also with Bikila Abebe, but in a culturally different way - the development of sporting action possibilities consists of a long process of learning, practising, training, mostly under guidance. This also has usually been the case in earlier times and cultures.

But there were also "natural talents" who - only apparently - "just like that" would have been competitive in the "sports" developed by Europeans (and Americans). At the beginning of the 20th century, German / European colonisers in today's Rwanda, for example, were astonished to discover that there were many young men in the "Watussi" tribe (today: Tutsi) who

jumped above heights that were far above the high jump "world record" of that time. However, the young Tutsi did not acquire this ability for a (sporting) competition, but as proof of their acquired manhood. It was a socially anchored form of movement culture.<sup>10</sup>

**In the "art of movement"**: Every activity has a motor part, even if it may be small and hardly perceptible from the outside. A designation of the field of activity to be defined only with the term "movement" would therefore not be very selective.

With the word "art" (of movement) I want to point to a graded consideration of the *quality of movement*, through which a differentiation from everyday movements in particular becomes clear. Instead of "in the *art* of movement" I could also say "**in the skillful movement**". "Art origins in ability" - this saying (in German: "Kunst kommt von Können") has been in my head with the word (component) "art", and not possible aesthetic meanings of art.<sup>11</sup> The point at which the nature, extent and significance of the (skillful) movement are sufficient to designate an activity as sporting is not fixed, but remains open in this definition; this can and must be discussed and argued about.

**It must depend on the skillful movement** that must be at the centre of the activity. How many calories are consumed is not essential. The sentence "sport is when you sweat and take a shower afterwards" remains a nice definition joke.

So, for example, playing chess does not count as a sport for me, because playing chess does not *essentially* depend on abilities and skills in the field of movement art, but on the mental-strategic and tactical activity. Chess players of the highest skill levels need hardly move at all; they only have to say "e2 - e4" and "e7 - e5" to each other etc. in order to play (start) a game of chess according to all the rules of the art (e.g. in correspondence chess). The fact that chess players also put physical strain on themselves during their competition games and therefore sometimes also undergo fitness training does not change the fact that it is not essential for them to move artfully. At tournaments they may get into sweat, but this remains part of everyday physical strain, which can be better endured with trained fitness. "Shuffling clogs" remains in the area of everyday movements, is even basically dispensable and certainly not to be settled in the area of movement art. Also when "flashing" it does not depend substantially from the movement. It is of course helpful to be able to get the opponent's watch going as quickly as possible with concentrated movement; however, the decisive factor remains the intellectual performance to make the right draws.

By the way, only the so-called protection of existence as a (founding) member of the German (meanwhile "Olympic") Sports Federation prevents the German Chess Federation from being excluded. Everyone involved is probably aware that chess is not (a kind of) sport. Since the

<sup>10</sup> cf. TIEDEMANN, Claus: "Sport-Bilder - und ihre Bedeutung für Sporthistoriker". Lecture, held 2006 in Vienna: <.../VortragWien2006Englisch.pdf>; in German: <.../VortragWien2006Deutsch.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> cf. my definition of "Kunst" (art) with explanations: <.../art-definitionEnglish.html> and <.../Art-DefinitionEnglish.pdf>; in German: <.../kunstdefinition.html> and <.../DefinitionKunst.pdf>

International Olympic Committee (IOC) has even recognised bridge games as well as chess as a sport, it has lost for me at the latest any credibility as "guardian" of the idea of sport (even if I myself like to play chess and bridge).

A somewhat different borderline case is "motor sport", especially "automobile sport". Here it seems to depend to a significant extent on the quality of the equipment that is available to the drivers (similar to "equestrian sports", *see below*). When Michael Schumacher, "record world champion" in Formula 1, was almost never able to drive at the top again in the season after his last title defence, because his (new) racer was obviously worse than those of his competitors, it became apparent that in "automobile sport" (at least in Formula 1) the device is probably more important than the driver, who was (at that time) still regarded by his competitors as the (actually) better one. Because my understanding of sport depends on the art of human movement, I don't count car racing among the sporting events.

It seems similarly questionable to me in dressage and show jumping, where the class of the horse often determines the comparison. Just think of the "miracle mare" Halla, who 1956 in Stockholm carried the injured and heavily sedated Hans Günther Winkler to the finish line in the second round of show jumping to win the gold medal without any faults, or of the former "miracle horse" Totilas, who was supposed to guarantee his new (dressage) rider Matthias Rath victory - as long as it was healthy.

The sporting principle could be "saved" or re-established in such competitions, for example, if at least the people qualified for a final fight (e.g. the last four) had to prove themselves with all the foreign equipment or horses. By the way, such a rule has already existed in the past for horse riding.

In the flat race the respective horses are honestly named as "winners", the (respective, changing) jockeys only in second line; this is obviously not a kind of sport in the sense of my definition, even if the operators and fans traditionally (with nostalgic, obsolete "historical" reasons) attribute themselves to sport. The fact that even the breeders or respective owners of the horses are also celebrated as sporting winners (wrongly, because they are really not active in the field of skillful movement) points to the late feudal origins of this social phenomenon, which in today's capitalist society continue to be cultivated.

In discussions with me - of all me, a violinist and viola player! - some people argue: Musicians have to practice the highest art of movement with their instruments, they are in relationship with other people, they strive for high performance in organised comparisons, etc., in short: According to my definition, making music with instruments is probably also a kind of "sport". This is opposed - despite the correctness of the individual statements - by the fact that movement for instrumental musicians is a means for a purpose, that the sense of playing an instrument or even singing does not consist in (skillful) *movement*, but that movement when making music *serves* to produce (melodious) sounds, no matter how demanding,

strenuous and sweaty this activity may be.

In sport, it is important to master a previously agreed and regulated challenge through skillful movement(s) and to be better than the competitors; the "leibliche" (perhaps better than bodily!)<sup>12</sup> art of movement is the determining factor, what matters. The extent of physical movement is not fixed.

Another area that is often disputed in discussions with me is, for example, the question of whether or not (the olympic "sport-") shooting is a sport, as I define it - except shooting hunters, soldiers, policemen, etc., of course. The fact that targeting requires to control movement with a tendency to limit it as much as possible (especially in biathlon, when the cross-country athletes struggle against their movements caused by heavy breathing), seems to indicate that shooting does not fit the definition. For me, however, it is a special art to *control* the movement in a way to master it so skillfully, that a promising situation is brought about, which one can use to meet the target. The extent of the movement visible from the outside is (when shooting and in principle) not what matters here. Anyone who ever tried sport-shooting (with pistol or rifle) will confirm this; when shooting at moving targets (trap) as well as in archery, even the layman will probably be able to understand this. A similar argument could also be made (and refused) with regard to the "holding" and "standing" parts in gymnastics or figure skating.

By the way, in the realm of shooting "sport", it should be considered to generally replace the actually used lethal guns by nonlethal ones, by new rules, or if necessary, by law! This would meet the ethical commitment at the end of my definition (*see below!*).

**"compare"**: People with their abilities and skills can and want to (apparently in almost all cultures) compare themselves with other people in the field of the art of movement as well, in order to determine the better in different modes of activity, which have been and still are developed culturally for the sake of better comparability ("sports"). This happens by its nature in the form of a *direct* regulated comparison ("competition") in a certain place at the same time (with or without witnesses and / or referees).

Since the 19th century, also *indirect* comparison systems have been developed which increasingly brought more individuals or groups into competition with each other and which were / are not designed for a selective, immediate decision. To this end, people have developed various forms of preliminary, challenge or qualification competitions, first of all in the team sports (leagues, round matches, etc.), then also in the individual sports. The *forms* of such comparisons constitute the empirical richness of sport history. The motives behind the individual people or teams involved or the social groups supporting them, the significance of these comparisons for them, are also interesting historical and current circumstances.

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<sup>12</sup> cf. TIEDEMANN, Claus: „Body Turn“ - how many „Turns“ does „the Body“ tolerate? Difficulties with real and terminological Turns. Lecture, held (19.09.2009) at the XIVth International CESH-Congress in Pisa; <.../VortragPisa2009Englisch.pdf>

The mere display of even the most highly developed abilities and skills in the field of movement art (e.g. circus artistry) is not a sporting activity for me, because (or insofar as) here the comparative relationship to at least one other person *in this field of activity* is missing or not essential. There are many former (top) sportsmen and -women who have switched to the show sector (e.g. figure skaters); according to my understanding of the term, they change from "sport" to "culture of movement". They perform their high art of movement without primarily striving for comparisons with other people. One can also compare specific artists with others, but the comparison is then brought to them from the outside and does not essentially lie in their own activity.

Since one's own acting is a necessary component of my definition, all those who only incite other people to a comparison in the field of movement art are not "sportsmen" either, as e.g. the English "gentlemen" did in the late feudal resp. early capitalist period ("patronage sport"). They let their servants or other (paid) people compete against each other (in horse-racing, running, sailing etc.) and bet on the outcome (hence "Wettkampf" in German!).

It may be irritating that it was precisely this delegating of their actions ("sportsmanship") that was the cultural-historical origin of the (early, English) term "sport". Letting other people act for themselves is still occasionally a historical remnant in today's "sport", for example when the owners of large (and very expensive) sailing yachts are declared regatta "winners" according to the rules on construction and equipment, even if they were not on board at all. They are not sportsmen for me (*see above the remarks on horse racing!*). As an active member of their crew, they are of course.

**"According to self-imposed or adopted rules"**: Since sport is about voluntary activities as well as about a comparison of movement abilities and skills, the people in this field of activity must compound with or adopt (proven) rules according to which the better, the winner of the competition, is to be ascertained and determined. Without such an agreement - for me of course on the basis of respect for one's own life and that of others (*see below!*) - sport would easily become a rampant, destructive struggle, war.<sup>13</sup> Incidentally, there is much to be said for the assumption that the most deadly duel is a "predecessor" of sport, which has been culturally "defused", "tamed" in the course of cultural development by limiting through rules.

No matter how bizarre the agreed rules may seem, how difficult to understand they can be for outsiders; as soon as they are understood and accepted by all the actors involved, they constitute for them their own (cultural) field of activity - in other words: sport - in which the "victory" is also fought for with rules-utilising hardness.

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<sup>13</sup> cf. Tiedemann, Claus: "Gewalt, Kampf und Aggression in Sport und Bewegungskultur". In: European Studies in Sports History, Vol. 2, Nr. I (Spring 2009), pp. 85 - 104 <.../Gewalt-Beitrag-ESSH-Spring2009-2.pdf>; updated English version: „Violence, Fight / Battle, and Aggression in Sport and Movement Culture“: <.../LectureSevilla2005English.pdf>; updated German version: <.../VortragSevilla2005Deutsch.pdf>.

The "fairness" often invoked in this context is another term to be clarified which, in my opinion, is often wrongly located in cultural history and, moreover, excessively morally charged. For me, the core of fairness, not only for cultural-historical reasons, is the regularity and the resulting predictability, reliability, on the basis of which all those involved gain security of action when fighting (or betting) for victory (or for material advantage in bartering; the English word "fair" still means a togetherness, at which goods are exhibited and exchanged, traded).<sup>14</sup>

**"on the basis of socially accepted ethical values"**: I "slaved away" with this definition element, and for a long time I was not completely satisfied. At first my formulation was "without wanting to harm them or themselves". I wanted to make it clear that I wanted to rule out any intentional harm. In sports, carelessness and unfortunate situations, "in the heat of the moment", *can* lead to harm; that is ethically not a fundamental problem. The only important thing is that there is no intention, no deliberate negligence, no endorsing accepting. This should always be (self-) critically and thoroughly examined and clarified, if necessary also by referees. In the best case - and fortunately often - this succeeds by the parties involved agreeing immediately afterwards (often without words, with glances and gestures) and peacefully separating (for example with a conciliatory handshake), in order to continue fighting for success in the sporting competition unburdened after this good clarification with rule-utilising hardness.

In one of the many discussions about the concept of sport, it has become clear to me that it is more general and better to refer to (general) ethical values, and that the addition "socially accepted" refers to the norms as culturally dynamic, its constant change (hopefully in a good direction!) makes clear, both within a certain society and in comparison of different societies (*see below the example pankration!*).

In general, it is true in (almost) all societies that no one may intentionally harm another human being. This applies in particular to the relationship of responsibility adults (parents, trainers, etc.) have towards children and young people. My earlier formulation, which expressly also addressed self-damage, was particularly determined by the problem of doping. Doping and other possible forms of self-damage are also excluded by the new more general wording (as well as partly by the reference to the sports-specific rules and regulations). However, in this area there are unfortunately scandalous repression and cover-up efforts as well as too weak control and sanction possibilities.

In the field of sport, too, the general ethical norms naturally apply first and foremost; the "rules" specially agreed for each kind of sport represent further, supplementary norms. Regularity is a necessary, but not sufficient determining factor for sport; it only by itself does not

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Tiedemann, Claus: „Ist Fairneß noch gefragt? Vom Ethos des Sports (Statement).“ In: Menschen im Sport 2000. Statements for the congress „Menschen im Sport 2000“, Berlin, 5. - 7. 11. 1987. Ed.: DSB. Frankfurt a. M.: Editor's edition 1988. pp. 49 - 51. Preprint in: Hochschulsport, Darmstadt, 15 (1988) 2/3, pp. 4 - 5. <.../Fairness1987.pdf>

establish an ethical standard (*see below the remarks on boxing*) as it is generally accepted or demanded by society.

In questions of sport ethics, it is dubious for me and necessary to discuss whether the legal principle "*lex specialis derogat legi generali*" also applies here, i.e. whether a special sports rule precedes the general ethical rules and undermines them. One example is the current boxing rules, according to which it is "allowed" to (severely) injure one's opponent (*see below!*). I think that this legal principle should not apply in sport. However, this question should be discussed intensively and responsibly in general and in each individual case.

A positive example of the primacy of general ethical standards over rules based solely on the sport is in sailing - similar to the road traffic regulations, by the way - the requirement to perform a "manoeuvre of the last moment" as far as possible, even if according to the right of way rules one would have the right to maintain one's course. The sense is obvious, not to harm anyone, not even the ships. Whoever does not follow this general, superordinate rule (without necessity) will be made co-responsible and possibly disqualified for the following collision despite his "right of way".

Depending on the sense and tradition of a (kind of) sport, sport specific rules are sometimes ethically problematic, especially in combat and risk sports. Boxing, for example, is an ethical border area for me, because according to the *current* rules, it is part of the meaning of boxing to tend to make the opponent by rule-utilising toughness incapable of fighting and thus also to accept serious consequences for the health (up to death) for oneself and the opponent. Numerous deaths directly "in the ring" and even more cases of severe damage to the health of boxers are sufficient for me not to regard boxing *in its current form* as a (kind of) sport.

The rules could be changed by the (international) boxing federations in such a way that these severe circumstances or consequences would be decisively alleviated, for example by changing the design of the boxing gloves. Only after the rules have fundamentally "defused" would we be able to recommend our children with a good conscience that they could take part in this potentially very interesting sport. The half-hearted regulations of a (controversial in its effectiveness) head protection have obviously not decisively reduced the health risk.

About forty years ago, the USSR boxing organisation made a completely repressed, in my opinion revolutionary attempt to reduce the kinetic energy (and thus the effect) of straight shots to estimated 5 percent by changing the position of the hands in new boxing gloves (*in the sketch above*). For this purpose, boxing gloves were proposed in which the middle hand was slightly angled upwards and the finger joints were held slightly curved in an open position in the glove (*source: report in the German daily newspaper "Unsere Zeit" (uz) of 1978, Sept. 29*).

This change of the rules would have considerably reduced the health risks to boxers caused by numerous minor concussions. Boxing would have been changed in the direction of modern fencing, in which since a long time only *symbolic hits*, light touches, have been achieved, which are determined with high technical effort. Unfortunately, this proposal has not been taken up. One may therefore assume that the majority of the boxing officials (even in the amateur and youth sector, which was "only" concerned at that time!) was (and still is) interested in preserving the questionable "attraction" of boxing as a possible (considerable) health hazard.

Historically, in my opinion, the ethical limit of the prohibition of foreign or self-damage has been clearly crossed from the outset in Roman gladiatorism, even if the opponents were volunteers (which certainly sometimes happened). In my opinion, gladiatorism should therefore not be dealt with in representations of sport history; for I cannot count it as part of the culture of movement either.

Also in some so-called "high-risk sports" the limit of self-damage is in my opinion reached or exceeded.

The concrete demarcation can and must also be argued about in this part of my definition in any case; everyone will want to draw the demarcation somewhere else, but should - especially as a scientist - disclose his (her) motives and reasons for it.

