.

How can we study sport from a sociological perspective?

Methodological questions and empirical findings from the social world of football[1]

Dariuš Zifonun

I.

In this essay, I will discuss some methodological problems in the sociology of sport: What might be useful analytical concepts for the study of sport? What is the relation between the sociology of sport and general sociology? What methods can we use to analyze sport and how do they relate to fundamental theories of sociology? In order to narrow these very broad questions, I want to focus on the issue of cultural diversity and social integration. My general point is that the key concepts social scientist have used in the past (i.e. culture and society) and secondary concepts like integration based on them might not prove sufficient for the analysis of present-day societies. They have to be reinterpreted and others need to be added. I will present empirical findings we have made during our ethnographic research in the football milieu in Germany to illustrate my point and to suggest same preliminary answers to the questions I raised at the outset.[2]

II.

Let me, however, start by quoting from a book that has recently been republished in German, Alfred Schutz's and Thomas Luckmann's 'The Structures of the Live World'.

From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge the question of integration is fundamentally linked to knowledge. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann in their book have shown that personal identity emerges in the process of socialization. Step by step the child identifies with significant others, then with the generalized other and thus internalizes society as such and the objective reality established therein, including its norms and values (cf. Schutz/Luckmann 1973; cf. also Berger/Luckmann 1966: 129ff.). From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge this process of socialization, is at the heart of what we call the social integration of the individual. It is the internalization of the social stock of knowledge. However, and Schutz and Luckmann are

very clear at this point, there is no similar distribution of knowledge in society. The social stock of knowledge is divided on the one hand in general knowledge, shared by all members of society and easy to be accessed, even if there are different 'versions' of this general knowledge, and on the other hand in special knowledge, specific to certain groups and types of roles within society. Now, at the end of the chapter on the social stock of knowledge, Schutz and Luckmann conclude by stating "still one particular problem must be mentioned. The differentiation of 'versions' of general knowledge can, given certain socio-historical presuppositions, progress to the point where broad provinces of general knowledge finally become the special property of social groups, classes, etc., often in the form of 'ideologies'. If, in a borderline case, the province of common knowledge and common relevances shrinks beyond a critical point, communication within the society is barely possible. There emerge 'societies within the society'" (Schutz/Luckmann 1973: 318).

III.

What Schutz and Luckmann suggest here has twofold implications, one historical, the other theoretical. The historical question is: has the nation state come to the point where it has become 'subverted' by societies within itself? Or put another way: Is the degree of cultural diversity within national societies that big, that we can no longer speak of a 'national culture'? If this was the case, it had far reaching theoretical and conceptual consequences as the social sciences would lose hold of their object of analysis: society itself. Schutz and Luckmann point at this when they use the paradoxical expression 'societies within the society'. We know that there are 'groups' and 'subcultures' within society, but it is already hard for us to perceive of larger units the society might be a part of, but to have the same level of sociation (*Vergemeinschaftung*) on two levels ('societies within the society') is clearly a conceptual disaster (that's why Schutz and Luckmann put it in quotation-marks) and it shows us that Schutz and Luckmann's language is getting problematic, too. It also signals a new type of complexity of the social world.

IV.

Let me move on to my empirical case to get a better understanding of this new complexity, before we turn to the question of how we might theorize this new situation.
Within traditional rural Turkish culture there exists a rigid separation between inner and outer sphere. The family is the inside world, the arena of economic reproduction. On the other hand, everything outside, starting already to a certain degree with the village, and increasing from neighboring villages to the district government etc. is regarded as outside and hostile and a

threat to the survival and maintenance of the family. The relations within the family and within the village are hierarchical (depending on age, gender and status) and based on the social obligations to family and village. Relationships to the outside world are almost entirely limited to the head of the family.

Within this cultural formation ‚arkadaşlık’, friendship, and especially the friendship between young men, represents a counter-world. It allows for close relations to persons, other young men, from outside the family. It is based on voluntariness, equality (in status) and reciprocity. Hierarchy, leadership and the pushing through of individual interests are time wise limited and need the recognition and acceptance of the whole group of friends.

Now, traditional Turkish football is governed by the ideas and rules of ‚arkadaşlık’. It does not allow for a clear and definite leading player, there are no clear position on the field, the players orient themselves towards the ball and individually move all over the field, every player attempts to keep the ball to himself as long as possible and express his skills. Individual excellence is the highest value. The coach is in a precarious situation as he is regarded to disturb the equilibrium of equality between friends.

From this background, for young Turkish men from families who have migrated to Germany, to enter a German football club is an act of individual integration. It means to give up the Turkish style of football for the German one, a style that is based on clear hierarchies and positions, incompatible with the traditional notion of ‚arkadaşlık’. To enter a German football club goes along with the loss of knowledge specific to their own culture and the loss of their socio-structural embeddedness. This is one of the reasons why many young Turkish males join ethnic Turkish teams.

However, if we look at Turkish teams in Germany today, we find that they don't play traditional Turkish style anymore either. To illustrate this I want to draw on an example from a Turkish team from the city of Mannheim. The team plays in the 2nd lowest division, i.e. they are leisure time players.

The example is a forward move typical of this team: The move starts with a free kick from within the team's half of the field. Player One kicks, player Two defers, waits for his team mates to take up promising positions and then passes the ball to player Three. He plays a short pass to player Four, who passes the ball back to player Two. On another short pass the ball is back to player Three who performs a short pass to player Five. Eventually, player Five shoots and scores the goal.

What is striking here is that the team needs only 27 seconds to move the ball from within there half to the goal, without kicking the ball over a long distance. On the contrary: Five players are involved in this move, all of them use quick short passing. The decisive element of this move is the moving triangle established by Players Two-Three-Four. The players do not keeping the ball

to themselves, they try not to pass by their opposite number. From the way they move and treat the ball, you can tell that they are technically skilled individuals. However, they do not try to express their individual technical excellence. The focus in on being able to let lose of the ball as quickly as possible for another player to do the same. The team uses a passing game, not a running game. The focus is on the loose ball not on the save ball.

What we find here is a football-style that has been radically transformed: It is characterized by a moving network of relations rather than the permanent attempt of individual players to take the leading position (i.e., have possession of the ball). The players are not defined by their individual performance, but by their position within the network. This style is not as static and based on subordination under the rule of the one genius-boss (German model) but also not ten geniuses involved in an attempt to display their individual excellence (classic Turkish model). In order to fully understand the new quality of this type of football, we have to return to traditional Turkish culture for a moment.

What is the reason for the strong individualism in traditional Turkish soccer? Even though *arkadaşlık* makes possible close relationships between equals, *arkadaşlık* is nevertheless governed by the logic underlying outside relations within traditional Turkish culture: the expression of one's own strength or competitiveness aims at showing others, that one is willing and able to get into a conflict if this should become necessary, i.e. if one's position of equality is being questioned, even if these others are attributed as friends, as they are nonetheless from outside the family and thus potentially a threat. Thus, what we see here is not only the transformation of a football-style but the transformation of the concept of *arkadaşlık*: from collectively limited rivalry among equals for temporary leadership to decentral networks of relations.

Now, it is within the context of the migrational situation of Turks in Germany, that *arkadaşlık* changes its meaning. Equality and reciprocity, the key features of *arkadaşlık*, are being redefined. What are the characteristic of this migrational situation? Family relations and inter-generational relations are getting less hierarchical and less important as the family loses its position as the focal point of economic reproduction. Instead, work outside of the family becomes the key site for economic reproduction. The division of labor in the German economy leads to both a horizontal and vertical differentiation of positions in the working world. As a consequence, *arkadaşlık* loses its importance as an egalitarian counter-world to the family. At the same time, the working world with its division of labor replaces the horizontal outside relations in the village as blueprint for the relations between the young men. In soccer, the consequences of these general changes are, that a clear and lasting division of horizontal positions is introduced (like for example between attacker and defender), and also clear and lasting hierarchical positions are introduced (between leading players and those who have less influence on the team and team decisions; also the coach can achieve a much more stable and powerful position). Thus, differences in position and

rank, incompatible with *arkadaşlık* in the context of traditional outside relations in the village, become possible. Finally, a third contextual change influences the relations between the friends. Within the foreign and sometimes hostile German society, a shift of emphasis emerges: away from the position of the individual to (the cohesion of) the group as such (at the end of the move described above, the scorer does not celebrate himself but the team by showing the front side of his team jersey to the audience). The individual person is granted its identity and self-confidence by way of his participation in the group, his acceptance by the group, collective group efforts and group success. While status differences might pose a threat to the cohesion of the group, the positioning against German mainstream culture and society has a reintegrating effect. The Turkish club allows for a transformation of the outside relations of the young men. The transformation is carried out collectively and safeguarded by the group. This transformation is, as I already mentioned, integrated in a whole web of transformations: the division of labor in the working world, the reduction of significance of the family, the decreasing hierarchical structure of intergenerational relations, the loosening up of the rigid boundary between inside and outside.

All of these transformations can be interpreted as adjustments to the new social circumstances. These adjustments are being carried out collectively by the Turkish migrants, so that its members do not lose their family relations, their social embeddedness and their cultural identity, a loss they would face in the case of individual assimilation.

What emerges, is a new group, in our case, the Turks of Mannheim-Hochstatt. This group comprises Turkish migrants from different regions of Turkey, with diverse religious creeds, political orientations, etc. They establish a new group with a general stock of knowledge of their own. Thus, the Turkish 'colony' makes possible the transformation and at the same time it creates new social structures: the closure of the group by means of internal marriages, new systems of rank and status, etc.

Yet, there is still more to be draw from the example discussed above:

1. Turkish football in Germany is part of a transnational football-world: There is a constant exchange of players between the ethnic Turkish teams in Germany and teams in Turkey. Thus, only to look at the integration of Turkish players and teams into the German system means to neglect the fact, that Turkish football in Germany is at the same time part of football in Turkey and that sports success, social status and identity depend in part on the participation in these transnational networks (cf. Portes et al.1999: 229).

2. The shift from dribbling to passing game is not an unprecedented event. Historically, in English soccer it occurred when football changed from a gentleman's pure play performed only for the pleasure of the participating young members of the upper class (in the 1850ies) to the sports for the crowd, performed by professional players and used by the

urban masses as a means for collective identification and with success rather than pleasure as its ultimate end (cf. Weiss 1999: 41ff.). In today's global football world, short passing and technically sophisticated football is highly popular. Today football is a feature of cultures all over the world. An international market for players has emerged as well as permanent international leagues and championships and a global media audience for these events. All of this has led to a homogenization of football styles. At the same time seemingly identical styles have taken on different meanings. They have been used to express diverse attitudes and have become a means for representing distinct cultural identities.

3. Football is a part-time world. The players and fans also life lives as family members, they go to work or school etc.

4. Turkish players chance their memberships. All the players in the move described above have also been members of 'German teams' and often players return to German teams after playing for an ethnic Turkish club for some time.

V.

If we keep these empirical findings in mind and return to the conceptual issues I have raised at the outset, I think it becomes clear that social integration, in the way we have come to think of it, might not be the appropriate concept for analyzing the phenomena at hand.

Traditionally, we think of integration as a quality of a pre-existing social system. We usually take for granted the cultural and social unity of a national society, the stability and definiteness of the positions of its members and their social relations. We assume shared relevances and a large province of common knowledge.

Today, however, we have to face multiple levels of integration, with new *Vergemeinschaftungen* emerging and old ones changing. The analytical division between general knowledge and special knowledge is no longer sufficient as it does not account for the overlapping of stocks of special knowledge and the existence of something like the general knowledge of a part-culture which itself is divided in subgroups with special knowledge of their own.

As a consequence, the question of integration has to be reformulated and asked in ways different from before: we can no longer ask the question of the integration of individuals or groups into a social system, but now we have to shift our attention to

• what are the relevant arenas of integration and sociation (*Vergesellschaftung*),

• what are the modes of integration and

• what are the relations between the diverse levels of integration?

Or to sum up: Instead of taking for granted society we have to look at the dialectical relation

between individual and society and we have to pay attention to processes of establishing social structures (*Vergesellschaftungsprozesse*) as a part of the social construction of reality.

What are concepts that might be helpful in answering these questions? What concepts can we use, for example, to describe the 'group' of Turkish migrants I have introduced to you. What is a fitting term for their 'social environment', the German society they are facing, or for what I have called 'German teams'. How can we account for overlapping, multiple and part-time memberships?

I want to just name a few concepts:

1. *social world*: Anselm Strauss (1978) employs this term for social relationships that are maintained within relatively strongly institutionalized communicative conditions in which members require of each other an obligation to shared activities. Social worlds can demonstrate a great amount of 'geographical distribution', be relatively 'open to the surrounding environment' and integrate organizations and institutions of the most different sorts.

2. *migrational milieu* instead of 'ethnic group' to emphasize that the shared culture of the group is a product of the common migrational experience and itself represents a collective response to this experience.

3. *nation-state*: the nation-state as a territorial institutional system will continue to play a crucial role in our lives. We suggest to use 'nation-state' instead of 'nation' to indicate that while a shared culture cannot be taken for granted, the institutional system is still in place.

4. *ethnoscape*: a phrase Arjun Appadurai's (1996) has coined for describing delocalized, transnational communities with strong and continuous relations between country of origin and host country.

5. It is from Simmel that we might borrow the concept *social circles* which includes all forms of social amalgamation. Simmel considers an increased 'crossing of social circles' to be typical for modern societies. Multiple memberships not only lead to "external and internal conflicts", but they are also "loci of enrichment, of the expansion of interests and relationships" (Simmel 1992: 468). It is exactly in relationship to this potential dual value that 'interethnic contacts' within shared institutional and social settings, i.e. social worlds, must undergo empirical analysis before they may be classified as either burdened by conflict or 'enriching'.

Bibliography

Appadurai, Arjun (1996): Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. In: Appadurai, Arjun: Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, Minneapolis, London, 27-47

Berger, Peter L./ Luckmann, Thomas (1966): The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, New York

Portes, Alejandro, et al (1999) : The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 22, No. 2, 217-237

Schutz, Alfred/ Luckmann, Thomas (1973): The Structures of the Live World, London

Simmel, Georg (1992/1908): Die Kreuzung sozialer Kreise. In: Simmel, Georg: Soziologie. Untersuchungen uber die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Frankfurt a.M., 456-511 (English: Simmel, Georg (1955/1908): The Web of Group Affiliations. In: Simmel, Georg: 'Conflict' and 'The Web of Group Affiliations', New York, 125-195)

Strauss, Anselm (1978): A Social World Perspective. In: Denzin, Norman K. (ed.): Studies in Symbolic Interaction. An Annual Compilation of Research, Vol. 1, Greenwich, 119-128

Weis, Otmar (1999): Einfuhrung in die Sportsoziologie, Wien

Author

Dariuš Zifonun
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Department of Political Science
251 Hamilton Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3265
zifonun@email.unc.edu

Dariuš Zifonun, Dr. rer.soc., is Visiting DAAD Professor at the Center for European Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include sociology of knowledge, sociology of migration, qualitative research methods, politics of memory and organization theory. Recent publications include *Gedenken und Identität. Der deutsche Erinnerungsdiskurs*. Frankfurt a.M./New York 2004 and Segregation oder Integration? Die soziale Welt eines 'türkischen' Fußballvereins in Mannheim (with İbrahim Cındark). In: *Deutsche Sprache*, 32 (2004) 3: 270-298.

2005 6 21
Dariuš Zifonun   2005   4 1 9 30
                    European Integration and Europeanization

                                                              21   CCE
                                  2004
                    ' European Opportunities' and ' Limits of Democracy' Current Issues
in European Integration(–   )
                5 27

    CCE   2005 6 24   "The Cultural Significance of
the Hooligan Discourse and Everyday in Football"
        Center for European Studies at University of North Carolina, USA
(Adjunct Associate Professor)