Annette R. Hofmann (Hrsg.)

DAS PHÄNOMEN
E-SPORT

Eine sportwissenschaftliche Annäherung
aus verschiedenen Disziplinen

MEYER
& MEYER
MEDIA

Das Phänomen E-Sport

Allgemeine Hinweise

Annette R. Hofmann (Hrsg.)

DAS PHÄNOMEN
E-SPORT

**Eine sportwissenschaftliche Annäherung
aus verschiedenen Disziplinen**

Meyer & Meyer Verlag

Inhalt

Vorwort

E-Sport ist ein Massenphänomen mit Millionen von Anhängerinnen und Anhängern über den Globus verteilt. Nicht zuletzt ist dieser durch seinen Namen in die Welt des Sports eingedrungen. Obwohl virtuell durchgeführt, wird suggeriert, dass es sich hierbei um Handlungen handelt, die mit dem analogen Sport vergleichbar sind. In der Politik wie auch im Sport wird sehr kontrovers darüber diskutiert, ob E-Sport als Sport zu bezeichnen ist.

Auf internationaler Ebene erkennt eine Reihe von Nationen den E-Sport offiziell als Sport an. In Deutschland ist dies, obwohl im Koalitionsvertrag von CDU/CSU und SPD der Wunsch einer solchen Anerkennung formuliert wurde, nicht der Fall. Der Deutsche Olympische Sportbund (DOSB), der die Hoheit über den organisierten Sport in Deutschland hat, lehnt eine Anerkennung derzeit ab, wie er 2018 in seinem Positionspapier formulierte, das in diesem Band abgedruckt ist. Der DOSB unterscheidet zwischen *eGaming* und *virtuellen Sportarten*. Elektronische Sportsimulationen fallen laut seinem Verständnis unter virtuelle Sportarten. Ebenso wurde vom DOSB ein juristisches Gutachten zur Untersuchung der Gemeinnützigkeit von E-Sport in Auftrag gegeben. Der Verfasser dieses Gutachtens, der Jurist Prof. Dr. Peter Fischer, ist in diesem Band mit einem Beitrag hierzu vertreten.

Dieses Buch soll vor allem Sportwissenschaftlern und Vereinsfunktionären einen Einblick in die unterschiedlichen Betrachtungsweisen bezüglich des E-Sports geben. Die in diesem Band vorliegenden Beiträge decken nicht nur verschiedene (sport-)wissenschaftliche Perspektiven ab, sondern es werden auch unterschiedliche Positionen gegenüber dem E-Sport eingenommen.

Dabei sollen nicht nur ökonomische Aspekte der Profiszene beleuchtet werden, sondern auch die Gruppe der Freizeit-E-Sportlerinnen und E-Sportler wird in eigenständigen Kapiteln aufgegriffen.

Da der E-Sport auch vermehrt Eingang in Bildungsinstitutionen, wie Hochschulen und Schulen, findet, war es ein Anliegen, ihn auch unter (sport-)pädagogischen Bezügen zu beleuchten. Englischsprachige Beiträge von internationalen Kollegen ergänzen den Band und geben einen Einblick in die internationale Diskussion um das globale Phänomen E-Sport.

Jeder der 17 Beiträge steht für sich. Den Autorinnen und Autoren wurde freigestellt, welche Schreibweise des aus dem Englischen stammenden Begriffs E-Sport sie favorisieren, deshalb liegen vielfältige Schreibweisen wie E-Sport, eSport(s) oder esport(s) vor. Unterschiede finden sich auch hinsichtlich geschlechtergerechter Formulierungen. Hier werden die Ansätze der vorliegenden Wissenschaftstraditionen berücksichtigt.

Es soll noch darauf hingewiesen werden, dass alle angeführten Zahlen, die sich auf das Phänomen E-Sport beziehen, einem rasanten Wandel unterliegen. Zahlen, die gestern noch aktuell waren, sind heute überholt. Alle Autorinnen und Autoren haben in ihren jeweiligen Beiträgen mit den derzeit verfügbaren Zahlen gearbeitet. Abschließend möchte ich mich bei allen Autorinnen und Autoren für die überaus gute Zusammenarbeit bedanken. Ein besonderer Dank gehört Janna Wörner, die beim Redigieren der Texte mitgeholfen hat.

Annette R. Hofmann

Jim Parry

Computer Games are not Sports

1   Introduction

You can call computer games e-sports if you like – nobody can stop you. But why would you want to do that? What could be the motivation for attempting to rename computer games as e-sports? Usually, when people try to 're-brand' something, they have deep reasons for doing so. We used to do 'cookery' at school – now it's 'domestic science'. We also had RI (religious instruction) – now it's called RE (religious education). Our teachers had all been to TT (teacher training) institutions – now they all go for TE (teacher education). In these three cases, cookery sought to rebrand itself with a high-sounding science label, but this was justified by greater theoretical content and less actual cookery. RI and TT wished to cast off the implications of 'instruction' and 'training', and so re-branded themselves as 'educational' enterprises.

Similarly, if you really want to re-brand computer games as e-sports, you will need some justification for doing so. There really should be some test for this neologism to see if e-sports really are sports. For this, we will need a concept of sport against which to test it.

People use the word 'sport' to refer to all sorts of things. Hunting, shooting and fishing are 'field sports'; bull-fighting is a 'blood sport'; jogging is a 'recreational sport'; chess and bridge are 'mind sports'; dance wants to be 'dance sport'; yoga wants to be 'yoga-sport'. Our question is: are all these activities really sports? Does anything count as a sport, if someone wants to call it a sport? Does e-sport count as a sport, just because someone *wants* to call it a sport?

What I have in mind, when thinking about the concept of sport, is Olympic sport. And what I have in mind, when thinking about computer games, is just those games that are currently seeking recognition from the International Olympic Committee as Olympic sports. Now we stand in need of a definition of an Olympic sport.

To address this question, we need a methodology, and I shall employ the philosophical technique of conceptual analysis, which involves the search for 'logically necessary conditions' for the use of a word. I shall suggest six such logically necessary conditions for 'sports'. To begin with, they are all ***human*** activities. Secondly, they are ***physical*** activities – by which I mean that the physical element is crucial to direct engagement in the activity, and to its outcome, and thirdly it is physical ***skill*** that is at issue. Fourthly, all sports are ***contests*** (competitions) and, fifthly, they are governed by ***rules***. Finally, sports are ***institutionalised***, with national and international federations administering their affairs.

If we put these six 'criteria' together, we arrive at a simple definition of sports as: ***institutionalised, rule-governed contests of human physical skill***.[1]
This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, I will establish these criteria as definitive of Olympic Sport, and in the second part I will test them against the idea of Competitive Computer Gaming.

---

[1]   This philosophical methodology, and its product, this concept of sport, were first outlined and defended in the earlier paper 'E-sports are not Sports' by Parry, 2019.

2 Olympic Sports

To justify the six criteria, I shall now offer 'construals' of my six logically necessary conditions for the use of the word 'sport' (understood as 'Olympic sport'), giving reasons to support each criterion.

2.1 Human

Sport is a human enterprise. Whilst it is true that many animals (as well as human animals) frolic, gambol and play, other animals do not organise sports for themselves. And whilst it is true that animals sometimes participate in sport, they do so always and only at the behest of humans. The same is true of machines: where they are part of sport, they are always and only under the control of humans.

There is also an issue regarding the *degree* of human control, or the *significant contribution* of animal or machine involvement. Equestrian events are part of Olympic sport, but not greyhound racing or hare coursing. One reason for this is that in equestrian events the horse is always under the direction of the human, whereas in the latter events the animal is 'let off the leash'.

Olympic sport does not include motor sport. It includes sailing, but not motor-boating. Amongst other reasons, this is because the 'motor' element might be seen as making too significant a contribution to the result, whereas sailing (even though it does include technologies to enhance wind assistance) remains to a greater extent in the hands of the human. This observation is reinforced by the practice, in Formula 1 car racing, of showing separately the outcomes of two competitions: the drivers' championship and the constructors' championship. This is an admission of equally important contributions, which detracts from the human, as illustrated by the inevitable debates about whether the champion driver is the best driver, or merely the driver of the best car. This is motor sport, not (Olympic) sport.

In Robot Wars, a BBC TV show, teams of contestants build a robot within strict Build Rules, which give detailed information on the specifications of robot design, including weight, power, weapons and 'drive-train'. Then they fight a remote-controlled battle to the 'death' – the aim being to disable (and, preferably, destroy) the opposition (see http://www.robotwars.tv/the-show/). This makes for exciting and entertaining TV, but it is not sport. The main reason is that the contest is between machines, not between humans. To be sure, the humans controlling the movements of their robots have been highly involved in the creation and operation of these machines, and experience the intense emotions of battle (as do the spectators and viewers, such as me). But they are not, huddled as they are behind their controls in their sealed and bullet-proof enclosure, direct competitors. They are distanced remote-controllers, not allowed to touch their robots during the contest. This is not sport (although, I suppose, you could call it 'robot sport', if you wanted to), because the contest is only indirectly, and therefore inadequately, 'human'.[2]

Later, I will consider the contribution of the concept of the 'athlete' to the idea of sport, but we can already see its emergence in this required sense of 'human'.

2.2 Physical

Just as we had to construe the idea of the human, in order to explain its significance for our concept of sport, so we must also construe the idea of the 'physical'. In what *sense* is sport physical? If I say that chess is not a sport, because it is not physical, an objection might run as follows: when I move a chess piece, I must make a physical movement, and the physical movement might be more extended (or more gross) than that required for squeezing a rifle's trigger. My response would be, firstly, that the physical movement is not necessary (since I might alternatively simply tell someone else where to

---

2   Lopez Frias and Triviño, in their article *Will robots ever play sports?,* propose a kind of Turing test to distinguish between a robotic performance and a human sporting performance (2016, pp. 78-79).

move a piece on my behalf) and, secondly, that even if I moved it myself, the actual movement is irrelevant to the outcome of the game.[3] [4]

To take another example, in a recent case, Sport England refused to recognise duplicate bridge as a sport, and the English Bridge Union appealed. The judge, Mr Justice Mostyn, granted permission for the Union to bring a judicial review against Sport England's decision. The judge, who is himself a bridge player, is reported to have said, "You are doing more physical activity playing bridge, with all that dealing and playing, than in rifle shooting" (New Law Journal, 2015a).[5] I refer the reader to my previous comments. There is more physical activity in gardening than in bridge, but that doesn't make competitive gardening a sport, either.[6]

Sport is physical just in the sense that the actual physical movement produces the outcome, as in shooting[7]. Furthermore, in regard to shooting, it is false that the required movement involves merely squeezing a trigger. This fails to take into account the total-body control required of a shooter, including balance, stance, rifle hold, controlled breathing, etc, all of which contribute directly to the outcome.

Let us briefly consider an intensely 'physical' competitive event: the speed-eating contest[8], in which (for example) contestants consume as many hamburgers as they can in a specified time period, under rules that regulate

---

3   Another way in which chess can be played remotely is, for example, by mobile phone connected to a smart chessboard which moves the pieces on command (see BBC News, 2018).

4   This point is considered by Paddick (1975, pp. 14).

5   The High Court later held that bridge is not a sport. "Ruling in R (English Bridge Union) vs. Sport England [2015] EWHC 2875 (Admin), Mr Justice Dove held that Sport England and other sporting bodies are legally correct in using the European Sports Charter's definition of sport as "all forms of physical activity". Therefore, while bridge is often referred to as a 'mind sport', it did not satisfy the requisite of physical activity" (New Law Journal, 2015b).

6   Just in case you thought there was no such thing, see: https://storify.com/jem1ller/the-wacky-world-of-competitive-gardening.

7   Shooting is often (and I think erroneously) mentioned as an example of a relatively non-'physical' sport, e.g. Jenny et al., 2017, p. 10; Llorens & Mariona, 2017, p. 468.

8   E.g., see: http://www.majorleagueeating.com/. Their events have many resemblances to sporting events. For example, like e-sports events, they are attended by thousands of spectators.

chip-munking (holding food in the mouth in the final moments of an event), dunking (softening food in liquid), debris (requiring a clean eating surface) and vomiting. Is this a sport? Speed-eating might be seen to be meet the *human, institutionalised, rule-governed* and *contest* criteria of sport, but the spirit quails at the acceptance of the *physical* and *skill* elements. As intensely (even disgustingly) 'physical' as it might seem, this is not physicality (in the required sporting sense), because speed-eating is not a physical movement activity – its primary aim is consumption.

2.3 Skill

All sports require the development and exercise of human physical skill. This rules out those many activities that exercise human physicality, without demanding any significant level of skill-learning from the participant. Examples would include walking (not race-walking, which does require the learning of a prescribed and very specific set of skills), jogging, exercise-cycling, speed-eating, basic training routines, etc. Some might like to say that their daily dog-walking, or thrice-weekly jogging are their 'sport' – but I think most of them could be persuaded that this is more like their exercise than their Olympic 'sport', since a mere exercise routine does not require a significant skill component, and neither does it require the next component – contest.

2.4 Contest

All sports are contests. They are constructed as essentially contested activities. In sport, there is no pong without ping.[9] This rules out activities such as mountaineering, which is a challenge (or test[10]), rather than a contest. There is no answer to the question: if I make this or that move, what will

---

9   This is a joke. It trades on the name of the first computer game, which was called Pong. "It was as simple a game can be: just two paddles and a virtual ball that can be hit across a two-dimensional screen. ... one could see in this game the simulation of table-tennis" (van Hilvoorde, 2016, p. 1). Pong is a computer game, but not a sport. Ping-pong is a sport.

10 For the test/contest distinction, see Kretchmar (1975).

the mountain do next? It is not contesting with me. 'It' (or, rather, possibly, the weather conditions) may set challenges for me, but that's different. I think that this rules out not just mountaineering, but many other 'Outdoor Activities' or 'Outdoor Pursuits'. In fact, they are so called just because participants wish explicitly to deny that they are 'sports', given their ethos which rejects competitiveness, regulation and institutionalisation. As Krein (2015) remarks, regarding 'nature sports':

> (…) I argue that adapting nature sports to fit into formal competitive frameworks is problematic because, when we do so, the focus shifts from athletes interacting with natural features to athletes using natural features to outdo other athletes (Krein, 2015, p. 271).

It also rules out dance, which is not an essentially contested activity. A tango might be performed as a ritual, a display, a celebration, or as part of a social event, without its being compared to, or judged against, any other performance (indeed, this is most usually the case). Such a non-contest instance of dance might be performed identically to a competition performance, when various performances are judged one against another in a dance contest. This shows that dance is not an essentially contested activity.

Of course, you can *make* a contest out of anything, including dance. Piano playing is not essentially contested, but the famous Leeds International Piano Competition[11] has demonstrated that music competitions are both possible and desirable. However, despite the high levels of human physical skill (of a kind) being contested, no-one would dream of calling this 'sport'.[12] The International Olympic Committee held art competitions at the Olympic

---

11   See: https://www.leedspiano.com/2018-competition/. This year, it provides live free-to-view international streaming.

12   Papineau (2015; 2017) stresses that the primary purpose of sport is the exercise of physical skills, whilst the primary purpose of music, dance and other arts lies elsewhere. Indeed, Papineau takes the extreme view that sport is "any activity whose primary purpose is the exercise of physical skills" (emphasis by author).

Games between 1912 and 1948, awarding gold, silver and bronze medals.[13] This does not mean that art was considered to be sport. There were sporting events and separate art competitions, consisting of five disciplines: architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture. Art was recognised as an important cultural companion to sport, but the two were not confused.

2.5 Rule-governed

I assume that it is uncontroversial that all sports are rule-governed (although this is of the first importance both for the concept of sport and for the normative status of sport). If so, this rules out all those activities which do not require rule specifications to determine the outcomes. Field sports, for example, are a matter of going out of the house and killing animals. How you do that is up to you.[14] Jogging can be done as and when the spirit takes you – no rules apply. Resisting the imposition of rule structures upon surfing is at the heart of the 'soul surfing' versus 'competitive surfing' debate.

> The (counterculture discourse) holds on to an ethos of informality, and even an anti-establishment 'rebel' identity … the ocean and its ecology forge a spiritual experience. Others refer to surfing as creative expression, an art. Others still just see it as something fun to do. The vast majority of surfers have no interest in surfing as sport (Evers, 2016, n. p.).

In rejecting the idea of surfing as a sport, surfers had to deny one or more of the logically necessary conditions suggested in this article. Surfers reject rules and the institutions that claim to represent surfers and surfing.

---

13 The Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the reviver of the modern Olympic Games, anonymously won gold for literature (poetry) in 1912.

14 What I mean by 'field sports' is something pretty informal. Of course, when, for example, fishing becomes more formalised, angling contests might qualify as sport. Clay-pigeon shooting (a sport) uses a shotgun, but wild boar hunters (field sport) can use anything they like.

2.6 Institutionalised

Sports are those rule-governed contests of human physical skill that have achieved institutionalised status. Again, of course, we have to construe this term – to say more about what kind and level of institutionalisation is required for our concept of sport. Later, I shall explore the nature and status of efforts towards the institutionalisation of computer games but, for now, it should suffice to say that a sport has achieved institutionalisation if it has managed to provide a coherent representation of itself to its national and international constituencies, evidenced by national and international federations. In the case of surfing, the jury is still out, despite its recent acceptance as an Olympic sport. Many surfers argue that the various organisations with competing claims to represent them are only representing their own commercial interests.

To conclude this section, let me re-emphasise that my suggestion of these six logically necessary conditions is just that: a suggestion for discussion. It is just my attempt to map the logical geography of 'Olympic' sport, and of course this is open to criticism and improvement.[15] The next section will seek to assess the claims of computer games to be (Olympic) sport, as described previously.

3   Competitive Computer Games as Sports?

For the purposes of this paper, I shall consider e-sports to be 'competitive computer games'[16]. This enables me to concentrate primarily on the kind of e-sports that are currently most popular and that are currently being touted as sports, some of which are actually seeking recognition as Olympic sports. As shown, I have defined sports as institutionalised, rule-governed contests

---

15 For example, there may well be other putative logically necessary conditions worthy of discussion – such as 'shared values and comitments'. At present I think that, while this is an important feature of sport, it is an outcome of criteria 5 and 6 rather than another and separate criterion.

16 For a detailed discussion of various definitions of e-sport, see Karhularti, 2017, pp. 44-45.

of human physical skill. Since it is clear and obvious that competitive computer games are rule-governed contests, only four criteria remain open for discussion: human, physical, skill and institutionalisation. I shall take them in turn.

3.1 Human

Just as in Robot Wars, the contestants are physically distanced from the action, so are computer game contestants. They are remotely contesting over what they can make happen on a screen as a result of their manipulations of a console. The contest is indeed (in a sense) a human vs human contest, but only in the way that a spelling contest is also human vs human. However, a spelling bee is not sport, and the interactions in computer games are also inadequate for sport, on a human level.

Computer gamers (like the Robot Wars controllers) also experience the intense emotions of battle (as do the spectators and viewers). But they are not, coddled in their special armchairs, direct competitors. They are distanced, image-manipulating remote-controllers. This is not sport – although, I suppose, you could call it e-sport (analogously to robot-sport), if you really wanted to – because the contest is only indirectly, and therefore inadequately, 'human'.

3.2 Physical

To be sure, there might be plenty of physical action and effort in computer gaming – but the question is whether the physical exertion involved is adequately physical in the required sense. For example, Kane and Spradley (2017) rely on a spurious stipulation and a failure to adequately construe second-level concepts. 'Physical exertion' is accepted as a criterion just because the dictionary says so, and the kind of physical exertion appropriate for 'sports' is unexplored. Of course, levels of physical exertion, thus unconstrued and unspecified, can easily be demonstrated, just as they can in gardening, coal-mining, cookery or sex.

As noted earlier, the sporting sense of 'physical' requires that the movements bear a direct relation to the outcome of the event. The actual movements made must directly produce the result. This was one reason for our disqualification of chess and Robot Wars from sport. In the present context, considering computer games, Holt makes an interesting distinction between a *domain of execution* and *a domain of application.*

> The domain of execution is subject-specific, a matter of where the execution occurs; by contrast, the domain of application is object-specific, where the action's outcome is meant to obtain (Holt, 2016, p. 8.).

Holt (2016) goes on to assert that a crucial difference between sports and computer games is that the technological nature of computer games necessarily separates the two domains. Whereas in sport the two realms coincide (where I take my shot is the same actual realm in which I aim to score a goal), in computer games the skills executed in the actual domain must necessarily be transposed into a virtual domain (from my $399 gaming throne,[17] I operate my console so as to achieve digital effects on a screen).

This is one way of clarifying, specifying, exhibiting the lack of direct physicality in computer games, that argues against its status as sport.

3.3 Skill

Whilst all sports require the development and exercise of human physical skill, not all human physical skills qualify as sporting skills, such as those skills required for gardening, art or craft production, sex, or playing a musical instrument. So it is not enough to claim that, because computer gaming requires human physical skill (of some kind) that this qualifies it as a sport. To be sure, there is plenty of skill involved in manipulating those little buttons, and doing so faster (with more hits) than others – but the question is whether this counts as skill of the required kind, and the comments in the

---

17   For a gaming throne, see https://usa.clutchchairz.com/product/pewdiepie-edition-throttle-series/.

last two sections argue that it does not. But there is a further consideration, relating to the distinction between fine and gross motor skills as a means of distinguishing sports from non-sports (or, in our case, to distinguish the relatively fine motor skills of console control from the relatively gross skills of Olympic sport).

I concur with Holt's admonition (2016, pp. 7-8) of Meier (1988) and Hemphill (2005) for their too-ready acceptance of the difficulty of 'drawing a line' between gross and fine motor skills. Often it is suggested that, because of the supposed difficulty in drawing a precise line between the two, this disqualifies it as an indicator. This is false. Difficulties at the margins do not disqualify. There is no precise line to be drawn between men and women, and borderline issues are the source of well-acknowledged problems for women's sport. However, this does not mean that we cannot tell a man from a woman; nor that we cannot make borderline decisions (difficult and somewhat arbitrary though they may be).

So the gross/fine distinction, focusing on the use of large/smaller muscle-groups, does not seem to me to be unhelpful, as a general indicator. However, the intuition underlying this distinction might be recast in terms of 'whole-body' skills, as follows. Even in shooting, it is the exercise of whole-body control and whole-body skills that are decisive. Here, again, the image of the Olympic athlete floats before us: the skills required in Olympic sports are the 'whole-body' skills of the athlete.

Furthermore, these are skills that are not only *required for successful engagement* in the sport, but that also contribute to the *development of the whole human*. To be sure, engaging and practising my jiggling and joggling skills will improve my ability to jiggle and joggle, just as my practice of keyboard skills will improve my ability to type – but neither can contribute to the development of the whole human in the way that Olympic sport does, in its valuing of 'whole-body' engagement.[18]

---

18   This is a reference to the philosophy of 'Olympism' – but space does not permit further explication (see Parry, 2006).

4   Institutionalisation

All sports are founded on rules; and so are computer games. This suggests some level and kind of organisation behind things, but the problem lies in construing just *what* level and *what* kind of organisation are we looking for here, to count as 'institutionalisation'?

Abanazir (2019) calls the sets of rules the 'source', and he points out that the source of sports and the source of computer games differ in important respects. In sport, "... the source is created by the rule-making powers of an organisation having the power to lay down the rules of the game. But in computer games, ... the source is the video game, which consists of the 'code' (so the code developer is the rule-maker) and the audiovisual representations (controlled by the publisher, who is an incorporated body within a particular jurisdiction)" (Abanazir, 2019, p. 121).

This means that there are no associations overseeing computer games, consisting of members or joint ventures of sports team owners creating a legal person with a view to laying down the rules of the source and the tournaments. Instead, we see a "dispersed production process", where publishers organise tournaments for their own games.

> When we consider the number of computer games and the number of publishers (which are actually industry rivals), we can see that the chances of establishing an umbrella organisation (institution) determining the production of video games and the tournaments based on them in a cohesive manner is almost impossible (Abanazir, 2019, p. 125).

These observations are supported by Karhularti's notion of 'executive ownership'.

> Since sports can only be administered, organized, and overseen (but never owned) by companies, the statuses of those sports cannot be compared to those of esport, which are defined by executive owner-

ship" (2017, p. 49). "For an organized competitive practice to be considered esport, it should rely on a commercial play product that is governed by an executive owner (2017, p. 52).

Another problem is the fast pace of change in e-sports fashion. Tournament organisers rapidly drop any game that loses popularity, to be replaced by a competitor. The fluid and fast-paced commercialised development of computer games, and the competitive production process, place serious constraints on the emergence of the kind of stable and persisting organisational structures characteristic of sports governance. As Abanazir says: "This situation … calls for another take regarding the analysis as to whether e-sports would qualify as a sport or not." At the very least, "… judgements passed upon the institutionalisation of e-sports are, at present, premature" (Abanazir 2019, p. 127).

5   Conclusion

I have argued that e-sports are not sports because they are inadequately 'human'; they lack direct physicality; they fail to employ decisive whole-body control and whole-body skills (and cannot contribute to the development of the whole human); and because they are not institutionalisable (i.e. their patterns of creation, production, ownership and promotion place serious constraints on the emergence of the kind of stable and persisting institutions characteristic of sports governance). Thus, e-sports fail on four of the six proposed criteria for sport, when failure on just one would be enough to disqualify.

Neither will recourse to 'resemblance' arguments help out. For example, there are those who wish to assert that sport is religion. Often, their tactic is to try to show some *resemblance* between sport and religion. Sports fans 'worship' their stars, Wembley is a 'cathedral' of football, we 'pray' for victory, we have 'faith' in our team; so, it is said, sport is a kind of religion. It seems to me that this might show at best only that sport *resembles* religion; not that sport *is* religion.

Similarly, it is often suggested that, because e-sports bear some resemblance to some quality or characteristic that has been attributed to sport, this is evidence that e-sports are sports. It is not. E-sports may attract large crowds, players may be called 'athletes', earn a lot of money, train hard, etc. But there are also very many non-sport activities that bear some resemblance to some quality or characteristic that has been attributed to sport.

Competitive computer games do not qualify as sports, since they do not pass the test. No matter what 'resemblances' may be claimed, computer games are just that – games.

Bibliography

Abanazir, C. (2019). Institutionalisation in e-sports. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 13* (2), 117-131.

BBC News. (2018). *CES 2018: Square off smart chessboard moves its own pieces*. Accessed 12 January 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/av/technology-42657084/ces-2018-square-off-smart-chessboard-moves-its-own-pieces

Evers, C. (2016). *Why adding surfing to the Olympic Games is bad news for surfers*. Accessed 5 January 2018, http://www.huckmagazine.com/perspectives/surf-olympics-bad-idea/

Hemphill, D. (2005). Cybersport. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 32* (2), 195-207.

Holt, J. (2016). Virtual domains for sports and games. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 10* (1), 5-13.

Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C. & Olrich, T. W. (2017). Virtual(ly) athletes: Where esports fit within the definition of 'sport'. *Quest, 69* (1), 1-18.

Kane, D. & Spradley B. D. (2017). Recognizing Esports as a sport. *The Sport Journal*, Accessed 5 January 2018, www.thesportjournal.org/article/recognizing-esports-as-a-sport/

Karhularti, V. M. (2017). Reconsidering Esport. Economics and executive ownership. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research, LXXIV*, 43-53.

Krein, K. (2015). Reflections on Competition in Nature Sports. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 9* (3), 270-286.

Kretchmar, R. S. (1975). From Test to Contest: An Analysis of Two Kinds of Counterpoint in Sport. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 2* (1), 23-30.

Llorens, M. & Mariona, L. (2017). eSport Gaming: The Rise of a New Sports Practice*. Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 11* (4), 464-476.

Lopez Frias, F. J. & Triviño, J.-L. P. (2016). Will robots ever play sport. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 10* (1), 67-82.

Meier, K. V. (1988). Triad Trickery - Playing with Sport and Games. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 15* (1), 11-30.

New Law Journal. (2015a). *Could bridge be a sport?* Accessed 1 January 2018, https://www.newlawjournal.co.uk/content/could-bridge-be-sport

New Law Journal. (2015b). *Bridge: Aa mind game but not a sport*. Accessed 1 January 2018, https://www.newlawjournal.co.uk/content/bridge-mind-game-not-sport

Paddick, D. (1975). What makes physical activity physical? *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 2* (1), 12-22.

Papineau, D. (2017). *Knowing the Score. What Sports Can Teach us about Philosophy (and what Philosophy Can Teach us about Sports).* London: Constable and Robinson.

Papineau, D. (2015). *Sports and Games*. Lecture in Toronto, March 27, 2015. Accessed 3 February 2018, https://www.humanities.utoronto.ca/uploaded_files/content/1630/file/Papineau_Sports_and_Games.pdf

Parry, J. (2006). Sport and Olympism - Universals and Multiculturalism. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 33* (2), 188-204. Also published as: Sport, Universals and Multiculturalism. In A. Muller (Ed.), *Concepts of Culture: art, politics and society* (pp. 267-290). Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Parry, J. (2019). E-sports are not Sports. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 13* (1), 3-18.

van Hilvoorde, I. (2016). Guest Editorial. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 10* (1). doi: 10.1080/17511321.2016.1171252

Ansgar Thiel & Jannika M. John

Ist eSports Sport? Über die Ausbreitung virtueller Wettkämpfe und deren potenzielle Folgen[19]

1 Der Aufstieg des Phänomens eSports

Der eSport hat in den letzten Jahren einen unglaublichen Aufstieg erlebt. In diesem Aufstieg kommt ein grundlegender Wandel im Hinblick auf digitale Spiele zum Ausdruck – eine verstärkte Hinwendung zu kompetitiven Organisationsstrukturen. Dieser geht inzwischen so weit, dass diskutiert wurde, ob eSport Teil der Olympischen Spiele 2024 werden könnte.

Formate wie *League Of Legends, DOTA 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, StarCraft II, FIFA, Overwatch, Heroes Of The Storm, NBA2KX, Rocket League, Call Of Duty* sind die bekanntesten unter einer Vielzahl an wettkampfmäßig betriebenen elektronischen Spielen, die sich teilweise erheblich in den ihnen zugrunde liegenden Spielmechaniken unterscheiden. Definitorisch ist noch nicht abschließend geklärt, was genau unter eSport verstanden wird; vielmehr sind die vorliegenden Definitionen teilweise sehr unterschiedlich.

---

19   Dieser Beitrag ist eine überarbeitete und deutlich erweiterte Fassung des bereits auf Englisch publizierten Beitrags von Thiel & John (2019).

Eine derzeit recht populäre Definition bezeichnet *eSport* als das *wettkampf-mäßige Spielen von Videospielen*[20] (Jenny, Manning, Keiper & Olrich, 2017). Aus dieser Perspektive ist der Terminus eSport synonym zum Begriff des wett-kampfmäßigen Videospielens bzw. *Competitive Video Gaming* zu sehen.

Allgemein lassen sich die elektronischen Spiele, die gemeinhin unter eSport gefasst werden, in drei große Disziplingruppen aufteilen: So gibt es Strategie-spiele, sogenannte *RTS* (*Real-Time Strategy*) oder MOBA- (*multiplayer online battle arena*) Spiele, zweitens *Ego-Shooter* (FPS; *First-Person Shooter*) und drit-tens die *Sport- und Rennsimulationen.*

eSport ist eine rasant wachsende Industrie, die weltweit immer mehr Spie-ler/innen anzieht und einen hohen ökonomischen Wert besitzt. Den größten Marktanteil, sowohl in finanzieller Hinsicht als auch bezogen auf die Anzahl der Spieler/innen und Zuschauer/innen, haben Echtzeit-Strategie-Spiele, ge-folgt von Ego-Shooter-Games und den Sportsimulationen (Murray, 2019). For-mate wie *FIFA 18,* die zu den Sportsimulationen gerechnet werden, wurden in den ersten 11 Monaten nach Markterscheinen rund 24 Millionen Mal verkauft. In der gleichen Zeit wurden mit *FIFA 18* rund sieben Milliarden Begegnungen registriert und mehr als 20 Millionen Spieler aus 60 Ländern haben an offizi-ellen Online-FIFA-Wettkämpfen teilgenommen (Talens & Doherty, 2018).

Verbesserte technologische Möglichkeiten, wie eine bessere Streamingtech-nologie oder schnellere Internetverbindungen, haben vermutlich einen nicht unwesentlichen Anteil an der globalen Verbreitung des eSports, da es nun auch für Privatpersonen möglich ist, von zu Hause aus kompetitive Video-spiele zu spielen. In einer Umfrage der PricewaterhouseCoopers GmbH Wirt-schaftsprüfungsgesellschaft im Jahr 2017 mit 1.001 Teilnehmern im Alter von 14-35 Jahren gaben 80,6 % der Befragten an, mehr oder weniger regel-mäßig Videospiele zu spielen, wobei 55 % der männlichen Befragten anga-ben, sogar mehrmals pro Woche Videospiele zu spielen. Dabei gab es keine nennenswerten Unterschiede in Abhängigkeit vom Alter der Befragten. Fast

---

20 Im Folgenden wird der Terminus *Videospiel* synonym mit dem Begriff *Computerspiel* verwendet.

drei Viertel (73,9 %) der Befragten kannten den Begriff eSport, von denen sich wiederum 3 % als professionelle Spieler und 29,2 % als nicht professionelle eSportler bezeichneten (Ballhaus et al., 2017).

Das Phänomen eSport beschränkt sich keineswegs nur auf die Spielenden selbst, sondern erreicht eine zunehmend größere Zahl an Zuschauern. Die Integration von Elementen in den eSport, die bisher dem traditionellen Sport vorbehalten blieben, wie bspw. Online-Broadcasting, Liveveranstaltungen, Sponsoring, Einsatz von Sportanalysten, Kommentatoren und Talentscouts, trägt darüber hinaus dazu bei, dass sich die Inszenierung von eSport-Wettkämpfen immer mehr an die Inszenierungen analoger Sportwettkämpfe annähert – zumindest dem äußeren Anschein nach.

Heute konsumieren alleine in Deutschland knapp 11 Millionen Menschen regelmäßig eSport-Events über Online-Streaming-Plattformen wie YouTube®, Twitch® oder Smashcast®. Selbst bei Liveveranstaltungen im Spitzenbereich bewegen sich die Zuschauerzahlen im fünfstelligen Bereich. So waren bei den League of Legends Worlds Finals 2014 in Seoul 45.000 Zuschauer live vor Ort. Die Finalrunde des League of Legends World Championships im Jahre 2016 wurde von insgesamt 43 Millionen Zuschauern miterlebt. Im gleichen Jahr wurde die Gesamtzuschauerzahl (online oder im Stadion) im internationalen professionellen eSport auf ca. 323 Millionen Zuschauer beziffert. Für das Jahr 2020 werden weltweit sogar rund 589 Millionen Zuschauer erwartet.

Entsprechend interessant ist der eSport damit auch aus kommerzieller Sicht. So wurden mit eSport weltweit im Jahr 2016 insgesamt 300 Millionen Euro umgesetzt (Ballhaus et al., 2017) und es ist mit steigenden Umsatzzahlen in den kommenden Jahren zu rechnen.

Auch vor den Universitäten macht der Aufstieg des eSports nicht halt. Länder, die traditionell ein starkes Collegesportsystem besitzen, wie die USA oder auch Australien, folgen derzeit dem Beispiel asiatischer Universitäten und nehmen den eSport in ihr kompetitives Universitätssportsystem auf. Dies reicht so weit, dass eSportler, vergleichbar mit talentierten Athleten aus traditionellen Sportarten, Stipendien für ihr eSport-Engagement erhalten können, um ihr Studium zu finanzieren (Jenny et al., 2017).