

SPORTS TOURISM PARTICIPATION AT THE
WORLD GYMNAESTRADA:
AN EXPRESSION AND EXPERIENCE OF
COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Brighton
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2014

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Abstract

This PhD thesis is concerned with sports tourism as a way of experiencing a sense of self, belonging and location in the social world. It is about how identity is developed, expressed and experienced when gymnasts interact within their specific sports community while travelling to take part in a non-competitive, international group gymnastics event. In particular, the research aim is to identify and make sense of the meaning participants attach to their involvement in sports event tourism in the context of the 2011 *World Gymnaestrada* in Lausanne/Switzerland, the purely non-competitive, official world event of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

The research intends to contribute to a more comprehensive and differentiated understanding of participation in sports tourism. It is informed by a rich theoretical framework consisting of the conceptual notion of community, along with identity, Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' and Robert Stebbins' 'Serious Leisure'. All four concepts address questions of belonging and distinction, of similarity and difference, of access to and membership of a collective, and, last but not least, of locating oneself in the social world. Not only are these and related issues deemed under-researched, yet insightful in the field of sports tourism; they also emerge as significant themes and insights from the socio-historical analysis of the *World Gymnaestrada*.

Drawing on subtle realism as a philosophical position and informed by ethnographic principles, rich qualitative data were collected during a three-phase research process (pre-event, event, post-event), combining participant observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis. The findings reveal that participating in the *World Gymnaestrada* provides a platform to experience and conceptualise a sense of belonging to a group in both a physical and social way. The participants form a community whose constituents of affiliation endorsement are commitment, expertise and telling stories and whose basic foundation is travelling and being away from home. The *World Gymnaestrada* community is simultaneously social and physical, place-bound and spread beyond boundaries. It develops, expresses and experiences a collective identity that is episodic and, at the same time, perpetual in nature. The

community, hence, both challenges and balances many of the binaries the literature on community and identity proposes.

The contribution to knowledge is constituted on various levels. Firstly, the research provides an in-depth and context-based understanding of participation in sports tourism by identifying a variety of relationships between emerging research themes in the field. Secondly, the contribution to knowledge stems from exploring theoretical notions which emerge from the socio-historical analysis of gymnastics in a contemporary research setting that is beneficial for the theoretical ideas to emerge. Thirdly, the PhD thesis helps to better understand the notion of community in the twenty-first century by concluding with a context-based interpretation of the concept that connects sports tourism participation to wider issues in the social world in which it occurs. Drawing on the metaphor of hibernation, this interpretation suggests a unique form of community that is constituted and confirmed through intense social and physical encounters that keep the community's meaning alive in the participants' minds until they meet again next time.

Key words: Sports tourism participation; World Gymnaestrada; gymnastics; community; identity; sense of self; sense of belonging

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Acknowledgements

This PhD project has been a fascinating journey for me. The journey was not only about doing research, but also, and in particular, about personal and professional growth and development. It has been part of a major transformation period of my life and I am incredibly grateful to my husband Christian for his invaluable support during those years. Thanks a lot for being there, for listening, for asking me the right questions at the right time and for allowing me the space to take important and far-reaching decisions. I am also most thankful to my parents Jutta and Dieter for their particular way of backing me up those years.

I am most grateful to my supervisors Dr Nigel Jarvis and Dr Udo Merkel, not only for accepting to supervise me over the distance between Eastbourne and Munich, but also, and in particular, for their valuable and much appreciated guidance, advice, support and feedback, on one hand, and for allowing me the space to explore my ideas, on the other. I am indebted as well to Dr Cathy Palmer for her cherished feedback and also for her food for thought, specifically related to community theory.

Many thanks to my fellow students, Carla, with whom I had the chance to exchange ideas, thoughts and concerns through our regular Skype calls, as well as Brian, Michael, Rodrigo, Claudia, Maria, Evelise and Kirsti. Thanks for always making me feel part of our research student group, even if I was on site only occasionally.

I would like to express my appreciation to my former managers Margit Hug and Gordon von Godin who allowed me the flexibility to take days off to travel to Eastbourne whenever I asked for it. And many thanks go to my former colleagues Barbara, Cornelia and Wolfgang who took over my work and backed me up even in those moments where my stays in Eastbourne clashed with the busiest times of the year at work.

Special thanks go to my neighbour Hendrikje who, on a rainy Sunday afternoon in December 2011, asked me to join her to attend a guest lecture at the University of Philosophy in Munich held by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. My

spontaneous decision to go with her, experiencing Taylor's speech and my subsequent engagement with his work, profoundly shaped my way of thinking and seeing the world.

Last but not least, I am incredibly grateful to my research partners for inspiring me, for sharing their thoughts and for allowing me to discover their views and ideas on the World Gymnaestrada as well as to the Gymnaestrada team of the German Gymnastics Federation for allowing me to register as a 'researching participant'.

Doing my PhD research project has been an amazing, invaluable, eye-opening and precious journey. I am very glad I feel like the journey has not come to an end; it has just begun.

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research project is concerned with sports tourism as a way of experiencing a sense of self, belonging and location in the social world. More specifically, it is about how identity is developed, expressed and experienced when gymnasts interact within their specific sports community while travelling to take part in a non-competitive, international group gymnastics event, the World Gymnaestrada. This chapter outlines the rationale and background of this study including the research purpose, field and focus. Furthermore, it introduces and explains the research aim and objectives and presents the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background and rationale

Inspired by earlier research for my Master's dissertation, this project contributes to a more comprehensive and differentiated understanding of participation in sports tourism. In particular, this research is situated among, and builds upon, the growing body of academic studies that are concerned with comprehending involvement in sports tourism that occurs in the context of an event (see, for example, Coghlan 2012; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Green and Chalip 1998; Lamont and McKay 2012; Lyons and Dionigi 2007; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008). In broader and more generic terms, this project's research purpose is to *understand* a sports tourism experience, looking at it from the inside in order to make sense of the meaning social actors attach to their actions and interactions with others (Blaikie 2007). It is underpinned by the ideas of Max Weber (1864-1920), who argued social enquiry is concerned with *Verstehen*, empathetic understanding (Weber 1947). According to Weber (1947), *Verstehen* requires a holistic approach comprising both immediate observation (*Aktuelles Verstehen*) and locating action in its broader context involving non-observable facts (*Erklärendes Verstehen*). In the context of sports tourism and drawing on an autoethnographic approach, Coghlan (2012) argues sophisticated efforts to understand the details and subtleties of participants' experiences are essential.

According to her, failure to comprehend these could result in poor and unsuccessful management and policy decisions. This complies with Weed (2008a; 2008b), who suggested an understanding of sports tourism participation is necessary for understanding impact generation and for successful policy formulation and management.

As will be discussed in detail in section 2.2, the current state of knowledge on participation in sports tourism has been criticised, in particular, for its lack of methodological diversity, the dominance of positivist, quantitative research approaches, the rather descriptive than explanatory research focus and the less elaborated use of theories to underpin research results (see, for example, Gibson 2004; 2008; Green and Jones 2005; Weed 2006a; 2008a; 2009). Given these shortcomings, this research intends to provide a theory-driven account of sports tourism participation using a qualitative multi-method approach informed by ethnographic principles and underpinned by subtle realism as a philosophical position.

Hinch and Higham (2004) suggested that due to the heterogeneity of sports tourism, the specific sports segments have to be investigated separately. This study is about gymnastics, a concept of physical culture that originally coexisted side by side with the concept of English sports (Eisenberg 1999; Pfister 2003). In particular, this research focuses on the World Gymnaestrada, the strictly non-competitive, official world event of the International Gymnastics Federation FIG (Schwartz 2006). While many different kinds of sports, such as running, skiing and golfing, have been studied by sports tourism researchers, gymnastics, with more than 50 million active participants all over the world, has so far been neglected. This is notable for two reasons. First, since its emergence in nineteenth-century Europe, the gymnastics movement has developed a rich festival culture which has always entailed a considerable amount of travelling, first on a local and regional basis, later nationally and internationally. All the more surprisingly, this context with its long festival tradition has so far escaped researchers' detailed attention.

Second, and as discussed in depth in section 2.1, gymnastics festivals have had a meaning that went far beyond physical fitness and recreation. By combining mass

participation in gymnastics with social, cultural and political activities, the festivals have always provided versatile opportunities to develop, express and experience a sense of belonging to a community and a shared collective identity. With its focus on non-competitive group displays, today's World Gymnaestrada has continued this tradition, providing a promising, insightful context for research into sports tourism participation. In particular, the World Gymnaestrada as a research focus enables an in-depth investigation into how sports tourism participation contributes to the development and expression of both a sense of identity (Beedie 2008; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008) and a sense of belonging (Green and Chalip 1998; Lyons and Dionigi 2007; Rickly-Boyd 2012). Furthermore, the World Gymnaestrada allows for the exploration of additional emerging research issues in sports tourism, such as participation as a physical experience (Higham and Hinch 2009; Lamont and McKay 2012; Rickly-Boyd 2012), shifting experiences between being actively involved and viewing (Higham and Hinch 2009; Lamont and McKay 2012; Ryan and Lockyer 2002), and the particular role the travelling element plays in the sports tourism experience (Fairley 2009; Fairley and Gammon 2005; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Griffith 2013).

1.2 Research aim and objectives

Aligning the research purpose (*to understand* an experience), research field (*sports tourism* in the context of an *event*) and research focus (*the World Gymnaestrada*), it is the aim of this project to identify and make sense of the meaning non-elite, female German gymnasts attach to their involvement in sports event tourism in the context of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland¹.

The reason for this is three-fold. Firstly, aesthetic sports, in general, and gymnastics, in particular, provide a rich but under-developed context for investigations into sports tourism. More specifically, and as the previous section demonstrated, the research focus enables a variety of insightful, emerging themes in sports tourism research to be addressed. Notably, the World Gymnaestrada is a fruitful setting for investigating

¹ The two-minute video 'Summary of the World Gymnaestrada Lausanne 2011', which is available on YouTube, gives a short and succinct impression and overview of the event.

sports tourists with particular reference to community and identity issues. Secondly, to meet the research aim, a comprehensive qualitative research approach, both on a theoretical and methodological level, is needed. This project is conceived to contribute to addressing two of the major weaknesses of research into sports tourism participation, namely the lack of theoretical rigour and the dominance of positivist approaches. Thirdly, due to the considerable socio-cultural meaning the gymnastics movement has had in society since its emergence in the nineteenth century, it is a context that allows for broader connections to be made between sports tourism and wider social life. This complies with Dilley and Scraton's (2010, p. 137) argument that, in a leisure setting,

in order to develop a more sophisticated understanding, it is necessary to situate ... participation in relation to the social, cultural and political contexts that frame experience.

Likewise, it considers Heywood (1994, p. 180) who suggested that

the activity is not just an enjoyable way of passing time, but it is on the contrary capable of revealing things of importance about people – perhaps particularly the participants themselves – and the world.

Following from that, the research process towards reaching the overall research aim does not only entail the objective of understanding the World Gymnaestrada as a particular context for investigating sports tourism participation; the study also pursues the objective of comprehending how the findings may contribute to related theoretical debates and to wider issues in society. It is against the backdrop of these considerations that four research questions were formulated that will be elaborated on in the conclusion of the literature review (see section 2.4).

At this point, three additional issues need to be mentioned and briefly reflected upon. First, my own background as a rhythmic gymnast has shaped and inspired the selection of the specific sports context of this project, namely gymnastics. Having started this research project out of the desire to combine my academic interest in sports tourism with my favourite sport, rhythmic gymnastics, I acknowledge I am part of the social

world that I am studying. This, in turn, has implications for issues of positionality throughout the chapters. While the literature review and findings chapter are written with an impersonal and objective voice to provide a balanced and critical review of the different perspectives on both a theoretical and empirical level, in the methodology chapter, my subjective position will be acknowledged. There, an attempt is made to reflect on, and reveal how, my own background and involvement in rhythmic gymnastics may have shaped the lens through which I view my research context.

Second, these considerations are connected to the subtle realist position I have adopted in this project. Subtle realism affirms reality's existence, yet denies human beings' direct access to it (Hammersley 1992). In other words, the findings do not assume to mirror reality, but reflect my interpretation of my research partners' perception of their involvement in the event. Given that around 20,000 gymnasts from 55 countries participated in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada, my study could certainly have addressed a whole range of different perspectives and layers of reality. Strategically for me, a female German rhythmic gymnast conducting the study, however, the scope was restricted to encompass the view of female German participants exclusively.

Third, the World Gymnaestrada is a non-competitive event where getting inspired by and learning from other participants is part of the experience (Schwartz 2006). This implies not only performing oneself, but also watching other groups' displays. The literature review recognises exploring the merging roles of being a participant and a spectator, of actively taking part and of watching others, as a crucial theme for future research. The World Gymnaestrada is very suitable to address this phenomenon. Therefore, in the following, the terminology '*participation* in sports tourism' is understood in a broad sense: it denotes people who participate, no matter whether they are actively involved in activities or whether they view them.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. This first chapter has introduced the rationale, background, aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter two contextualises the research field and setting. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the research focus, exploring the socio-historical context of the World Gymnaestrada. It examines the emergence and meaning of gymnastics movements, before expanding on the development of gymnastics festivals, in general, and the World Gymnaestrada, in particular. A detailed account of the role national gymnastics festivals played as catalysts of the gymnastics movements is essential to understand the emergence, development and contemporary significance of the World Gymnaestrada.

In the second part, the chapter reviews the development and nature of understanding sports tourism participation. It evaluates critically the conceptual and theoretical debates and issues, and past research related to sports tourism participation. It illustrates and explains the extent to which typology development in the earlier stages of sports tourism research has entailed two major disadvantages, a lack of in-depth theorising, on one hand, and the dominance of positivist, quantitative research approaches, on the other. Even if the review reveals recognisable progress in this respect, it also highlights there is still the need for further theoretically underpinned in-depth studies. This applies, particularly, to the area of aesthetic sports, which are identified to be highly under-developed activities in sports tourism research.

The third part of the literature review chapter explores four theoretical areas that are particularly relevant for making sense of travelling to and taking part in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. These include: Stebbins' (1982) 'Serious Leisure' and Bourdieu's (1984) 'habitus', as well as the concepts of community and identity. The chapter argues that questions related to these conceptual ideas not only merit further in-depth investigation in the field of sports tourism, they also emerge explicitly and specifically as theoretical issues from the socio-historical analysis of the World Gymnaestrada.

The chapter concludes by bringing the three strands (focus, field, theoretical framework) together by synthesising them in four research questions that derive from the chapter's considerations and that guide the whole process of investigation. It needs to be acknowledged that, in the initial sections, the review draws considerably on two key thinkers in sports tourism research, Heather Gibson and Mike Weed, as they are the authors of many seminal texts in the field. Nevertheless, throughout the subsequent parts of the chapter, the emerging work and perspectives of a variety of writers from diverse countries and regions of the world is included and critically assessed.

Chapter three explains the research design that has been adopted for this research. It addresses general debates around the research purpose before identifying the specific theoretical perspective which underpins this project, drawing on subtle realism as a philosophical position. The questions of how and why an approach drawing on ethnographic principles is particularly suitable to meet this project's aim are addressed, linking methodological considerations back to the literature. In addition, I offer a critical reflection on my role as a former rhythmic gymnast competing up to the national level, researching a non-elite, non-competitive sports tourism context and the possible biases this may cause. The chapter elaborates how rich qualitative data were collected during a three-phase research process (pre-event, event, post-event), combining participant observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis. The different phases of the research process, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis, as well as evaluation criteria, are outlined. The final section of the chapter is dedicated to expanding on the strategies that have been adopted to achieve trustworthiness, ensuring that detailed and rich insights are created.

Chapter four presents the findings as well as their analysis and interpretation. The chapter outline draws on Wolcott (1994), who suggested that in a piece of ethnographic writing, description, analysis and interpretation should be interwoven through the text. Consequently, the findings are neither presented in chronological order of occurrence, nor separated by data collection method. Instead, a thematic approach is adopted, with each section addressing one of the eight themes that emerged from the data. The findings suggest participating in the World Gymnaestrada

provides a platform to experience and conceptualise a sense of belonging to a group in a physical and social way. Bodily and social group experience, fluid community affiliations, commitment, expertise, telling stories as well as the role of place and of going home are identified as major themes. The chapter argues these themes flow into a particular form and process of identity development. Selected quotes of the research partners underpin the argument in each section. Furthermore, the findings are linked to the issues and conceptual debates in the literature and compared to earlier studies in the field.

By way of answering the research questions, the final chapter provides a summary of the key findings, a theoretical synthesis and a critical assessment of the utilised conceptual notions. Here, the findings are also set in relation to wider social issues and debates and linked back to the literature. The chapter discusses the conclusions which can be drawn, such as the extent to which the World Gymnaestrada as a context for sports tourism participation challenges some of the binaries the literature on community and identity proposes. The contribution to knowledge and value of the study are evaluated on various levels. Furthermore, the chapter reveals the implications and limitations of the study. It concludes by suggesting possible future research directions to further advance the understanding of sports tourism participation and the role it plays in providing individuals with a sense of self, belonging and location in the world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study's aim of identifying and making sense of the meaning that non-elite gymnasts attach to their involvement in sports event tourism in the context of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada aligns the research purpose, field and focus. In the light of this consideration, the intention of the literature review is three-fold. Firstly, it contextualises the research focus by exploring the emergence of gymnastics movements and respective festivals in nineteenth-century Europe. This is essential in order to understand how the World Gymnaestrada emerged and developed throughout the twentieth century until today. Secondly, the chapter outlines critically the development and nature of understanding sports tourism participation and reviews relevant theoretical issues, debates, methodologies as well as past research findings. Thirdly, an in-depth review of those theoretical concepts that are deemed relevant to account for the nature of sports tourism participation in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada is provided. The chapter concludes by juxtaposing the three literature strands to identify the key research questions and the theoretical framework that will be used to underpin the findings. Figure 1 illustrates this three-step approach, which supports the structure of the literature review:

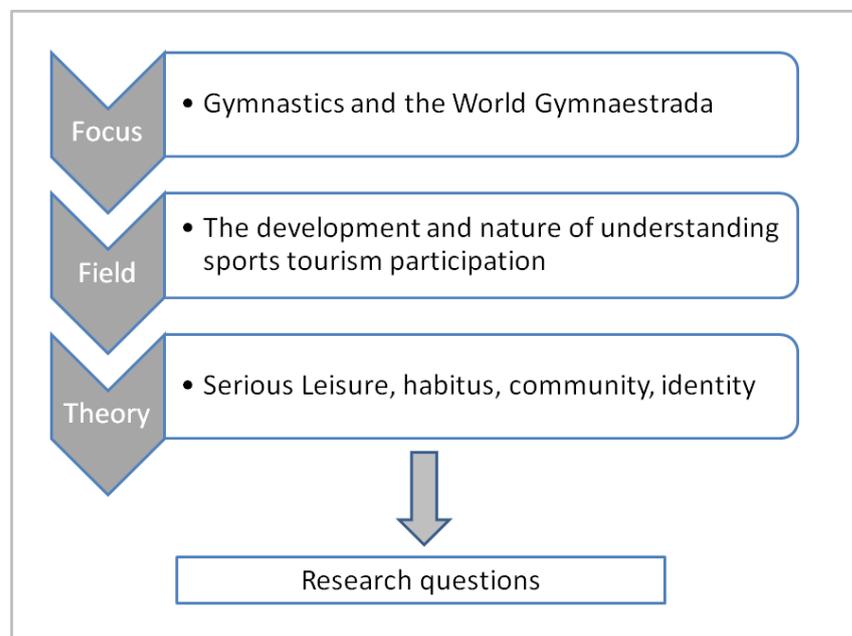


Figure 1: Approach and structure of the literature review

2.1 The socio-historical context of the World Gymnaestrada

This research addresses a particular form of aesthetic sports, namely gymnastics. Drawing on Kane (2010), who argues the fundamental understanding of a sports context can inform insightfully sports tourism research, the following chapter explores the socio-historical background and development of the particular event under investigation, the World Gymnaestrada. The first section examines the roots of the gymnastics movements and their social and cultural significance. It focuses on the two major gymnastics concepts emerging in nineteenth-century Europe, namely German *Turnen* and Swedish gymnastics. This account is crucial to an understanding of the historical origins of the World Gymnaestrada, the national gymnastics festivals that emerged in various European countries in the nineteenth century. Their significant role as catalysts and symbols of the very political gymnastics movements will be explored using the German gymnastics festivals as an example. The chapter continues to examine the development and meaning of mass gymnastics displays as a physical expression of belonging and national identity, before exploring the emergence and development of today's World Gymnaestrada. The detailed analysis of its historical roots provides valuable insights into understanding the context of this largely under-researched event. Furthermore, these considerations provide an essential foundation to identify which themes in sports tourism research this particular sports context is best suited to address.

2.1.1 The emergence and socio-political significance of gymnastics movements

Influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment era, the concept of physical culture developed in a number of European countries towards the end of the eighteenth century. In pre-industrial, mainland Europe, the term 'physical culture' was widely understood to incorporate almost all aspects relating to the body, such as health, hygiene and exercise. In the German regions, initiatives were put forward by Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839) and other philanthropists who favoured a utilitarian approach towards physical education (Krüger 1993; Pfister 2003). Physical

exercise was thought to contribute to the balance and education of both body and mind, to advance and maintain health, robustness, posture and control of the body. By engaging in exercise, the individual was expected to learn for life and prepare for its challenges (Krüger 1993; Pfister 2003; Trangbæk 2005). It should also contribute to form the character, and to develop positive virtues and values, such as discipline, obedience, morality, modesty and a sense of achievement (Krüger 1993; Pfister 2003).

Inspired by these ideas, a variety of distinctive concepts of physical culture emerged all over Europe in the nineteenth century. To understand the background and context of their development, a brief review of the political situation at that time is essential. In the early nineteenth century, the existing political order in Europe changed dramatically and challenged, as a consequence of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), existing power structures (Craig 1983; Hamerow 1983). After the defeat of revolutionary France, the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), led by the Austrian statesman Metternich, sought to solve and settle the political and territorial disputes that had arisen as a result of the wars. The main aim of the conference was to restore the old order, which pertained before the French Revolution, and to achieve a balanced system of the major powers in Europe, namely France, England, Austria, Prussia and Russia (Craig 1983; Hamerow 1983). The delegates redrew the political map of Europe by redefining boundaries, unifying territories and agreeing on cessions of land and war reparations. Germany remained split into 38 territories, a highly fragmented block in the middle of Europe that was planned to be a core element of the system of power balance, serving as a buffer and consolidator of stability (Craig 1983).

The delegates of the Congress of Vienna were often criticised for their reactionary and conservative striving towards re-establishing the old status quo, utterly ignoring the liberal and national movements spreading across Europe at that time (Craig 1983; Hamerow 1983; Salmi 2008). In unifying Norway and Sweden, keeping Poland under the control of Russia and insisting on the fragmentation of the German people, nationalistic efforts and desires were clearly disregarded for the sake of peace and stability in early nineteenth-century Europe. Despite, or perhaps, because of, these foreign policy efforts, nationalistic movements spread across Europe over subsequent

years, striving for national unification and liberation from foreign rule (Craig 1983; Salmi 2008). In this context, gymnastics movements and their 'national' festivals came to play a significant and influential political role.

The most influential concepts of physical culture which emerged at that time were the German and Swedish gymnastics systems that also came to be adopted and adapted in other countries (Lindroth 2006; Pfister 2003). *Turnen*, the distinctive German concept of gymnastics, was initiated by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) in the early nineteenth century. The launch of Jahn's concept needs to be considered against the backdrop of the political and social conditions prevailing at that time (Krüger 1993; 1996a; 1996b; Merkel 2003; Pfister 2003). After the Prussian defeat of Napoleon in 1807, the Prussian authorities recognised the need for major reforms of the army, faced with heavy losses of their military forces. According to the supporters of the so-called *Volksheer*, a militia recruited by the people instead of paid mercenaries, these losses should be overcome by making ordinary people fit for fighting (Eisenberg 1999). State-controlled physical exercises were considered to be the requirement for a successful army (Krüger 1993). The focus of doing physical exercises was no longer directed at the individual preparing for the challenges in life, as suggested by the philanthropists, but had now shifted to ensure military preparedness (Krüger 1993).

This physical component of gymnastics went hand in hand with a mental one. In view of the French hegemony and the territorial fragmentation of Germany at that time, both the army and the people suffered from a lack of self-confidence (Eisenberg 1999; Krüger 1996a; 1996b; Pfister 2003). Jahn's *Turnen* should not only produce fit bodies to fight external enemies, notably France, but was also directed at developing a sense of national identity. To raise national awareness and patriotism, and foster a sense of community among the people, Jahn complemented gymnastics exercises with non-physical activities, such as singing patriotic songs and taking country walks (Eisenberg 1996; Krüger 1996a; 1996b; Merkel 2003; Pfister 2003).

A similar development can be observed in Sweden, where Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) established a different concept of gymnastics (1776-1839) (Bonde 2003; Lindroth 2006; Pfister 2003; Trangbæk 2005). While working as a fencing teacher, Ling

introduced his rational system of physical exercise distinguishing between military, educational, medical and aesthetic gymnastics. Ling's primary concern was to improve the people's health (Lindroth 2006; Olofsson 1989). As in Germany, the political and social situation in Sweden in the early nineteenth century was influenced by the Napoleonic wars. After Sweden had to surrender Finland in 1809, a similar awakening and national upheaval occurred as in Germany (Pfister 2003). In the politically unstable situation that followed the wars, interest in a strong Swedish army grew considerably and, along with it, the need to train young men for military service (Lindroth 2006). State-controlled exercises, practiced both in the barracks and in schools, should contribute to prepare them to fight for their country (Pfister 2003). As in Germany, gymnastics in Sweden not only had a collective purpose related to the body, but included a mental, intellectual dimension. Ling's vision was to contribute to the revival of a Nordic identity through a balanced education of both body and mind. According to Lindroth (2006), one's body should be revitalised by practicing Ling gymnastics, while the soul should be strengthened by reading Nordic legends and poems.

Both Jahn and Ling managed to gain and mobilise many supporters (Pfister 2003). When searching for their success factors, an analysis of the social and cultural significance of German *Turnen* and Swedish gymnastics provides valuable insight. Jahn's gymnastics movement spread the idea of egalitarianism. He sought to integrate all participants into an equal community that should be free of social differences (Bonde 2003; Eisenberg 1996), which was contradicting the prevailing system of feudalism and formal social hierarchies. To underline the principle of equality, all *Turners* (German gymnasts) wore the same clothes both when practicing the exercises and when taking part in informal gatherings such as common excursions. The so-called *Gleichtracht* was a grey linen uniform that was affordable for less wealthy gymnasts and 'acted as a symbol of equality' (Merkel 2003, p. 74). Furthermore, instead of the formal German *Sie*, all *Turners* used the more informal *Du* to address each other (Eisenberg 1996; Merkel 2003). For Jahn, it was important that the *Turnbewegung* (German gymnastics movement) had a broad social basis and he sought to integrate gymnasts from diverse social classes (Eisenberg 1999).

It cannot be denied, however, that Jahn's aspirations of a Gymnastics for All approach were not fully implemented. Restrictions relating to engagement in gymnastics can be identified both in terms of gender and class. In Germany, under Jahn, girls and women were excluded from *Turnen*. As long as the rationale behind gymnastics' ensuring military preparedness was prevailing, the *Turnbewegung* (German gymnastics movement) did not recognise the need for females to engage in physical exercises (Krüger 1993). It was only when educational and health aspects of gymnastics received a stronger focus towards the middle of the nineteenth century (Pfister 2003; Trangbæk 2005), that the question of *Turnen* for girls and women was openly discussed. By contrast, gymnastics for females were advocated much earlier and more strongly in Sweden. According to Olofsson (1989), Ling argued that girls and women needed health in the same way as men did; they would need it even more in view of their giving birth. Ling equated females' biologically and anatomically induced mother role with the male task of serving in the army and used this equation to justify state-controlled gymnastics for both sexes.

Jahn's *Turnen* sought to integrate gymnasts from a broad social basis. Krüger (1996b, 1998) highlighted, especially towards the middle of the century, that craftsmen and young workers were the dominating social groups amongst the gymnasts. Yet he illustrates as well, that in the course of the century, more and more clubs had a reasonably homogenous structure of membership representing the working-, middle- and upper-classes. Jahn's Gymnastics for All approach was being implemented in that people from diverse social groups were involved, yet they were often institutionally separated.

Despite the only partial fulfilment of egalitarian ideals, especially in Germany, both German *Turnen* and Swedish gymnastics were striving for their respective communities to have a broad social basis. Despite the conceptual differences between German *Turnen* and Swedish gymnastics, in both cases, a collective meaning framed gymnastics and encompassed both body and mind. It can be argued the gymnastics community is one that is based on physical movements offering meaningful social and cultural anchors. While the social elements of gymnastics focus on a sense of belonging and social integration, the cultural activities contribute to the development and expression

of identity and help foster the community (Eisenberg 1996; Krüger 1996a, 1996b; Merkel 2003; Pfister 2003). In the context of the political and social conditions prevailing in the first half of the nineteenth century, the collective meaning of gymnastics was mainly politically motivated (Eisenberg 1999; Krüger 1993; Merkel 2003; Pfister 2003). Notably, German *Turnen* had a clearly identifiable political mission. Questioning the existing power structures and territorial fragmentation in Europe, it contributed to the foundation of a unified German nation-state and to the setting of boundaries (Eisenberg 1996; Krüger 1996a, 1996b; Merkel 2003; Pfister 2003). In this process and as the following section will reveal, national gymnastics festivals played an important and influential role.

2.1.2 National gymnastics festivals as symbols and catalysts of the gymnastics movements

The success of the gymnastics movements can be attributed to the social and cultural elements that provided German gymnasts with a sense of belonging, community and national awareness. Several authors (Düding 1984; Eisenberg 1996; Hofmann 2009; Krüger 1996a; Merkel 2003; Ohmann 2008) agree that these aspects were intensified through the regular celebration of festivities. It is against this backdrop that the emergence and development of national gymnastics festivals in Germany, Sweden and various other countries in nineteenth-century Europe needs to be understood. National gymnastics festivals functioned as forums and symbols of the nationalistic gymnastics movements and served as ‘catalysts in the process of building national identity’ (Krüger 1996a, p. 410). According to Bonde (2003), the relationship between gymnastics and national identity comes to the fore through the involvement in collective, emotional activities. Krüger (1996a, p. 410) also argued that

National identity and ‘we-feelings’ (‘Wir-Gefühle’) were less a question of organizations than of personal, emotional and social experiences being offered through the practice of making gymnastics.

Jahn considered the regular celebration of festivities to reflect a genuine need of human beings (Ohmann 2008). According to Jahn, festivals not only enabled people to celebrate their interaction with like-minded individuals; they also served as a way of escaping from everyday life (Düding 1984; Zieschang 1973). For Jahn, it was crucial for the festivals to shape a national character and celebrate specific German traditions. In 1814, the German writer and politician Ernst Moritz Arndt adopted Jahn's suggestions. He recommended organising festivities in commemoration of the Battle of Leipzig (18 October 1813), during which Prussia and its allies defeated Napoleon and his troops. The celebration of such a historically crucial event had the potential of contributing to the development of a common spirit among the German people. Therefore, a call was published in several journals disseminating the idea of holding festivities on 18 October 1814 to remember the first anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig (Düding 1984).

In contrast to the festivals held later, there was not only one town hosting a major event, but many festivities took place simultaneously in different locations. As Düding (1984) argued, the enormous enthusiasm and support for the festivals held in 1814 reflected the patriotic attitudes among the population. The celebrations were repeated in the following years. Besides the common practicing of physical exercises and games, the programme usually consisted of a procession, lighting fires, singing patriotic songs, performances, foot races and speeches (Düding 1984; Zieschang 1973). Many of these elements still feature prominently in today's gymnastics festivals' programmes across Europe. According to Düding (1984), the annual recurrence of the *Turnfeste* (German gymnastics festivals), with their particular features, led to the development of a national rite that, by appealing to the emotions of the participating gymnasts and spectators, contributed considerably to the awareness of a common identity and the desire to push for the unification of the German people into one state.

After a politically motivated ban on *Turnen* from 1818 until 1842, several gymnastics festivals were held on a regional basis in southern German cities in the middle of the nineteenth century. After two events in Gmünd (1844) and Reutlingen (1845), the gymnastics festival held in Heilbronn (1846) marked an early climax in the festival calendar in the years prior to the revolution of 1848 (Krüger 1998). According to Krüger (1998), gymnasts from 35 clubs took part, which illustrates the supra-regional scope of

the festival. These festivals held in southern German cities in the middle of the nineteenth century mirror the emergence of a second core region of gymnastics within the German territories. Whereas the gymnastics movement under Jahn emanated from Prussia, the enthusiasm for *Turnen* grew particularly in the Southern German states in the 1840s (Krüger 1998). This is of particular importance as, at that time, Germany was still highly fragmented. Considering that, according to Jahn, the *Turnbewegung* (gymnastics movement) should contribute to German unification, the development of a second core area of gymnastics illustrates how the gymnastics festivals in this period supported German unification, particularly in a political and territorial sense.

Three national gymnastics festivals played a crucial role in the decade before the foundation of the first German nation-state in 1871. These three events (1860, 1861 and 1863) managed to bring together gymnasts from all German regions for the first time (Krüger 1996b). While previously the festivities under Jahn occurred on a local basis in different vicinities simultaneously, primarily in Prussia, the southern German states were holding popular events in the 1840s, as revealed above, followed by several festivals taking place in northern Germany in the 1850s. Despite their supra-regional scope, the southern and northern German events were not yet national; the participants were mainly drawn from the local surroundings. However, in 1860, an initiative was launched to bring together gymnasts from all German territories (Krüger 1996b). Theodor Georgii, one of the leaders of the gymnastics movement, and the Swabian gymnast Carl Kallenberg called upon all *Turners* to gather for the celebration of the first German *Turnfest* in Coburg, a town in the heart of Germany. To ensure that the message would reach all parts of the German territories, Georgii and Kallenberg used the official journal of German gymnastics as a medium of communication (Krüger 1996b). Indeed, around 1,000 gymnasts followed the call, an impressive number considering the difficult travel conditions of the time. Krüger (1996b) outlined how the organisers of the festival worked hard to ensure the participants could travel to Coburg by train, the most advanced mode of transport at that time, usually accessible only by the privileged. By negotiating with the regional railway societies to arrange the journey to Coburg by train, the organisers managed to provide the necessary travel

preconditions for unifying gymnasts from all parts of the German states (Krüger 1996b). Likewise, the event programme itself provided the scope for the celebration of the *Turners'* community. Fairly similar to the earlier festivals, activities relating to gymnastics and physical culture were combined with ceremonies, rituals, a procession and other politically meaningful practices. Although no agreement could be reached to establish a national association uniting all gymnastics clubs, the organisers were aware of the task the festival in Coburg should accomplish, that is, to serve as an example of a unified Germany (Krüger 1996b).

Krüger's (1996b) analysis of the gymnastics festivals in Berlin (1861) and Leipzig (1863) comes to a similar conclusion. After the festival in Coburg, the political authorities agreed to hold the second German *Turnfest* in the Prussian capital, Berlin, in 1861. This was of particular significance as it symbolised the fraternisation of Prussia with the German national movement. The celebration of German unity led by Prussia was the dominant theme during the festival in Berlin, coming to the fore in speeches and patriotic theatre plays featuring German history. According to Krüger (1996b), staging an event by and for the masses was even more conspicuous two years later in Leipzig: the festival was dominated by patriotic rites and ceremonies as well as an enthusiastically welcomed speech by the influential historian Heinrich von Treitschke that commemorated the defeat of Napoleon in the Battle of Leipzig exactly half a decade before.

Subsequently, the population became increasingly interested in and impatient about the still unresolved quest for a German nation-state. In this context, the festivals in Coburg, Berlin and Leipzig served as means of expressing national feelings in a collective way (Krüger 1996b); they served as catalysts (Krüger 1996a) of patriotic feelings. With the foundation of the German nation-state in 1871, Jahn's mission that *Turnen* should serve as a role model for unification was fulfilled; at the same time, it marked the beginning of the depoliticisation of the gymnastics movement. The foundation was laid for the depoliticisation of German *Turnen* which, however, would be changed again by the Nazis in the years before and during the Second World War (Krüger 1998; 2005).

2.1.3 The development and meaning of collective gymnastics displays

The common engagement in gymnastics by masses of people at the same time in a very ordered, disciplined and systematic way emerged as one of the most important features of the gymnastics festivals in the nineteenth century. During both the German *Turnfeste* (Düding 1984) and the Swedish gymnastics festivals launched in 1877 (Lindroth 2006), the festivities combined manifestations of bodily exercises and non-physical activities, such as processions through the hosting city. The mass displays of gymnastics were a physical and symbolic expression of belonging and national identity (Düding 1984; Lindroth 2006). At the same time, they reflected the intense debates between the different systems of physical culture in nineteenth-century Europe. The 'correct' way of conducting gymnastics was the object of far-reaching socio-cultural and political disputes. The debates were aimed at identifying the system judged to be best suited to appeal to each society with its specific social, cultural and political context and requirements (Pfister 2003).

Jahn's *Turnen* was characterised by its wild, spontaneous war-like games, such as imagined fights against enemies or attacks on fortresses (Pfister 2003). His advocacy of free exercises instead of a formalised system reflected his somewhat romantic perception of the wars and tournaments of the Middle Ages (Eisenberg 1999). In contrast, Ling's exercises in Sweden formed a rational system and had to be practiced in a systematic way and in a clearly defined order (Lindroth 2006; Olofsson 1989; Pfister 2003; Trangbæk 2005). Despite the conceptual differences of these approaches, the mass displays of exercises with and without apparatus, practiced at the same time in a disciplined and organised way, were one of the most defining elements of the gymnastics festivals in both countries. The mass displays were seen as a patriotic demonstration of a common will and national unity. They were a powerful physical symbol of coherence and strength (Krüger 2011b; Lindroth 2006), motivated by the political aim of setting national boundaries.

Similarly, in Eastern Europe, mass displays as a symbol of belonging found their expression in the *Slets*, the gymnastics festivals of the *Sokol* movement (Carr 1987;

Nolte 2002), as the gymnastics movement was called in former Czechoslovakia. Carr (1987) argued that it was particularly through the mass callisthenic displays performed at the *Slets* that a visual message of brotherhood, unity and teamwork (Carr 1987) was offered to the Czechoslovak people. This message was stronger than anything else as it could reach even those who were illiterate (Carr 1987). The moving, enthusiastic, well-choreographed and colourful displays of thousands of gymnasts at the *Slets* were considered to be an expression of a common will, directed by the political leaders (Nolte 2002).

The displays made the individual feel like being part of a whole (Carr 1987). They 'were intended to demonstrate the idea that the individual should make his [sic] personal interests and abilities subservient to the common good' (Carr 1987, p. 88). The collective gymnastics exercises can be considered to be a physical symbol of expressing belonging to the gymnasts' community. The gymnastics festivals in nineteenth-century Europe comprised a distinctive set of physical and non-physical rituals. They constituted and confirmed the meaning of and belonging to a community, expressed both physically and non-physically, serving the political aim to raise national awareness and devotion.

Also in the twentieth century, strong connections between collective gymnastics displays and political aims related to fostering national identities were identifiable. Mass displays infused with political meaning flourished, in particular, under Stalinism (Edelman 1993) as well as in the fascist political culture (Hoberman 1999; McDonald 1999). Stalinist rituals of sport included the Russian version of the multisport festival *Spartakiad* as well as the so-called *Physical Culture Day*, introduced in 1923. Notably in the context of the latter, the Stalinist leadership strategically utilised dramatically orchestrated mass gymnastics displays to stress egalitarianism and military preparedness through physical culture (Edelman 1993). Also under the fascist regime of the Nazis, collective physical exercises clearly served the state's objectives and fostered the prevailing ideologies (Hoberman 1999).

The idea of politically exploiting the sense of belonging that was expressed through mass gymnastics displays has continued throughout the twentieth and early twenty-

first century. McDonald's (1999; 2003) and Merkel's (2008; 2010a; 2010b) accounts of India and North Korea respectively illustrate contemporary relationships between the body, physical culture and political agendas. McDonald (1999) investigated how the national volunteer corps organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) utilises collective physical exercises to spread loyalty and dedication to the Hindu nation in modern India. Drawing on two ideological mass spectacles, the *Arirang* Festival and the *Prosper our Motherland* show, Merkel (2008; 2010a; 2010b) explored the complex role outdoor mass gymnastics performances play as a propaganda tool in North Korea. The spectacles are read by Merkel (2008; 2010a; 2010b) as a multi-layered political device, fostering the belief in the value of collective achievement and the subordination of the individual to the group, while demonstrating North Korean pride and a vision of Korean reunification. In both the case of India and North Korea, physical exercises practiced by masses of people are infused with political meaning. They share the notion of involving and celebrating the efforts and achievements of the collective, rather than the performance of an individual elite athlete.

Despite these even more recent connections between political objectives and physical exercises practiced by the masses, a second tendency is clearly identifiable in the development of collective group displays. Here, these continue to be a physical expression of belonging, yet without explicitly pursuing the purpose of strengthening a political body. Instead, they are meant to contribute to personal fitness, health and well-being, on one hand, and to provide the individual with a 'home for the soul', on the other, to use the words of the former German president Theodor Heuss. Prior to the re-foundation of the German Gymnastics Federation after the Second World War in 1950, he proposed a new direction for the gymnastics movement. He suggested the only meaning of *Turnen* beyond physical exercise should be to provide the individual with social bonds and a 'home for the soul' (Krüger 2011a, p. 118), thereby emphasising the social rather than political meaning.

In this second developmental strand, group displays are part of Gymnastics for All. Also called general gymnastics, Gymnastics for All offers diverse movement opportunities for people of all ages, involving both gymnastics with and without apparatus as well as gymnastics and dance (Schwartz 2006). Within both the German (Dieckert 2011) and

International (Schwartz 2006) Gymnastics Federation, this form of gymnastics is an area in its own right, coexisting side by side with elite, competitive forms of artistic and rhythmic gymnastics, trampoline and aerobics. This dual strategy of general versus competitive forms of gymnastics (Dieckert 2011) can be considered to be a reflection of the struggle between the gymnastics movement and English sports that developed at the end of the nineteenth century. The growing popularity of the concept of English sports introduced the orientation towards competing, setting and breaking records and quantifying results to the world of gymnastics (Eisenberg 1999; Pfister 2003). After a period of resistance, throughout the twentieth century, many gymnastics branches were, step by step, converted into competitive sports – they came to be ‘sportified’ (Pfister 2003). Rules, apparatus and facilities were standardised to ensure comparability of performance when gymnasts competed against each other. More recently, some competitive elements and forms have even been introduced to the world of collective gymnastics displays. Overall, however, the essence of Gymnastics for All continues to be defined by its non-competitive, inclusive, democratic, grassroots philosophy. Its key festival on a global scale is the World Gymnaestrada.

2.1.4 The emergence and development of the World Gymnaestrada

The accounts of the role national gymnastics festivals played as catalysts of the gymnastics movements, as well as the development and meaning of collective displays, are crucial to an informed understanding of the emergence and development of the World Gymnaestrada. Its origination is closely connected to the evolution of the national gymnastics festivals in various European countries. Collective displays of several hundreds of gymnasts still feature prominently in their programmes. Yet the festivals remained current, adapting their character and programmes to the changing social, political and cultural conditions (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010; Krüger 2011b). Two movements particularly stand out in this context. First, women were gradually allowed to participate in the festivals (Pfister 2011). Second, the national gymnastics festivals have received an increasingly international flavour. Already from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the organisers of national gymnastics festivals

started to invite delegations from abroad to attend and take part in the respective festival (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010; Krüger 2011b; Lindroth 2006). Invitations were initially sent to neighbouring countries: for example, a Finnish delegation was invited to take part in the fourth Swedish gymnastics festival held in Stockholm in 1882 (Lindroth 2006). The trend towards internationalising the national gymnastics festivals has grown until today. In Germany, thus, the *Turnfest* (gymnastics festival) in Berlin 2005 was officially labelled 'International German Gymnastics Festival' (Krüger 2011b).

The internationalisation of the national gymnastics festivals, in general, and in particular, the Swedish ones laid the foundation of the World Gymnaestrada. In 1939, several weeks before the outbreak of the Second World War, the Swedish Gymnastics Federation held an international gymnastics event in Stockholm to commemorate and honour the founder of Swedish gymnastics, Per Henrik Ling, who had passed away 100 years earlier (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010; Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011). The so-called Lingiad attracted 7,399 participants from 12 countries (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011). The Lingiad was meant to offer gymnasts from all over the world the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of gymnastics in a purely non-competitive environment where all participants should see, meet and learn from each other (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010). When the event took place again in Stockholm 10 years later, in 1949, along with a gymnastics and health conference, the poor weather prevented many spectators from attending. Consequently, the second Lingiad was a financial disaster and holding it again was out of the question (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010). During this event, however, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) held their general assembly. There, the idea of an international non-competitive gymnastics event was brought forward by the Dutch FIG official Johannes Heinrich François Sommer (Kihlmark and Widlund 2010; Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011). The idea was approved one year later, where Sommer also presented the name of the event, World Gymnaestrada:

Gymna-, which comes from the word gymnastics; *Estrad-*, the word for stage / tribune for recreational sport; and *Strada-*, which stood for the long road that was already laid down by the gymnastics clubs and was still being followed (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011, p. 103).

The first World Gymnaestrada took place in Rotterdam in 1953, attracting 5,000 participants from 14 nations (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011; Schwirtz 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the cities that have hosted the event since then and illustrates the development of the number of participants and federations they came from:

Table 1: World Gymnaestradas 1953-2011

Year	Host City	Host Country	Gymnasts	Federations
1953	Rotterdam	Netherlands	5,000	14
1957	Zagreb	Croatia	6,000	17
1961	Stuttgart	Germany	10,000	16
1965	Vienna	Austria	15,600	26
1969	Basel	Switzerland	9,600	28
1975	Berlin	Germany	10,500	19
1982	Zurich	Switzerland	14,200	22
1987	Herning	Denmark	17,300	26
1991	Amsterdam	Netherlands	18,400	30
1995	Berlin	Germany	19,200	34
1999	Gothenburg	Sweden	20,800	37
2003	Lisbon	Portugal	21,600	45
2007	Dornbirn	Austria	22,000	57
2011	Lausanne	Switzerland	19,100	55

Source: World Gymnaestrada 2011

The World Gymnaestrada is the official world event of Gymnastics for All, the recreational sports discipline of the International Gymnastics Federation FIG (Schwirtz 2006). Underpinned by the philosophy of Gymnastics for All and the original ideas of the Lingiad, the World Gymnaestrada is an international event which aims to promote and celebrate the diversity of gymnastics in a non-competitive environment and to offer the opportunity to learn from each other. While competitions feature in the programmes of today's national gymnastics festivals and some forms of Gymnastics for All, the World Gymnaestrada has maintained the original non-competitive idea of the gymnastics movements. Its one-week programme consists exclusively of various forms

of group displays. Based on the peaceful, inclusive Gymnastics for All philosophy, four 'Fs' summarise the philosophy of the World Gymnaestrada: fun, fitness, fundamentals and friendship (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011; Schwirtz 2006). The World Gymnaestrada aims at building bridges and fostering understanding between people. Participation is open to everybody, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality or skill level (Schwirtz 2006). Collective displays of all forms of gymnastics are a means to build bridges between the different facets of gymnastics as well as between the gymnasts themselves. According to the International Gymnastics Federation (2012b), the objectives of the World Gymnaestrada include:

- Promoting the value and diversity of Gymnastics;
- Encouraging the growth of Gymnastics for All worldwide;
- Providing incentives for meaningful work within FIG Member Federations;
- Inspiring enjoyment in exercise and encouraging personal activity;
- Demonstrating the unlimited possibilities of different ideas of Gymnastics for All;
- Presenting the most recent findings and developments in Gymnastics for All;
- Assisting in the general and technical education of Coaches;
- Bringing together gymnasts from the four corners of the globe as a contribution towards the friendship of nations; and
- Presenting the diversity of Gymnastics to a wider public.

While gymnasts have been the subject of sociological investigations (Barker-Ruchti 2009; Barker-Ruchti and Tinning 2010; Birrell and Turowetz 1979; Kerr 2012; Kolt et al. 1999; Snyder 1990; Weiss 2000), the World Gymnaestrada itself is largely under-researched. The most comprehensive work identified so far which examines this event through a more sociological lens is, perhaps, a study by Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011). Based on field research conducted during the 2007 World Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn, Austria, the authors explore the extent to which today's concept of Gymnastics for All contains elements of its origins, namely Swedish Ling gymnastics. In doing so, they use three conceptual pairs for their comparison: general-elite, collectivism-individualism and modesty-ambition. Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011) emphasise Ling's rejection of competition and achievement as well as his strong support of a collective perspective. In Ling gymnastics, the particular focus was on the group (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011, p. 105):

Working together as a team was regarded as contributing to the individual being pushed into the background; the individual had to give way to something greater.

Based on their observations of several performances at the 2007 World Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn, Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011) conclude this non-competitive, collective idea is still to be found in today's concept of Gymnastics for All. Even if many performances take the form of grandiose shows (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011), it is still 'the collective's achievement that is most central'; the 'individual is like a building block in the entire composition of the performance' (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011, p. 112). This was confirmed by the participants they interviewed. Seen from their perspective, 'the display form was regarded as highlighting the collective in a positive way: being together as a team signified solidarity and fellowship' (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011, p. 113). On the other hand, when their interview partners were asked to compare competition and display, being assessed as an individual was considered rather important as well. Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011) conclude both collectivism and individualism matter for their interview partners, with the former being emphasised in displays and the latter coming to the fore in competitions.

In the light of this differentiation, the World Gymnaestrada as a purely non-competitive event can be considered to be a context which provides participants with rich community experiences. All this occurs in a location away from home and, hence, requires travelling to, and staying in, the host destination to participate in the event. It is to the research field of sports tourism this chapter now turns.

2.2 The development and nature of understanding sports tourism participation

Gymnastics festivals, in general, and the World Gymnaestrada, specifically, provide rich opportunities to travel to take part in diverse experiences. Understanding participation is one of the significant research topics in the field of sports tourism. After outlining

the development of sports tourism, as well as the early debates and issues of defining and conceptualising the phenomenon, this section reviews a variety of typologies that have been developed to organise the heterogeneity of sports tourists. The section then progresses onto a more specific examination of those concepts, themes and findings that have emerged on the way towards making sense of sports tourism participation before discussing relevant methodological issues and approaches. Furthermore, a review of those sports contexts that have been explored will be provided, illustrating that aesthetic sports like gymnastics have so far escaped detailed academic attention.

2.2.1 The development of sports tourism

While the link between sports and tourism has a long history and can be traced back to ancient times, it has grown significantly from the second half of the twentieth century onwards (Gibson 1998a; Higham and Hinch 2009; Ritchie and Adair 2002; Weed and Bull 2009). Weed and Bull (2009) argued the emergence and dramatic growth of contemporary sports tourism can be ascribed to two different sets of key factors. The first one involves a continuation of developments which had already commenced in the previous century, such as increased leisure time, growing affluence and improvements of transport technologies. The second one comprises aspects and phenomena which have emerged more recently, such as changing values and attitudes in society along with a growing commercialisation and globalisation (Weed and Bull 2009).

Both the decrease in working hours and the increase in holiday time have contributed considerably to the growth of sports tourism in the West (Gibson 1998a; Higham and Hinch 2009; Ritchie and Adair 2002; Standeven and De Knop 1999). While these developments have shaped society as a whole from the nineteenth century onwards, they led to dramatically increasing opportunities for engaging in leisure activities after the Second World War. People had more time to travel to watch sports away from home, to actively engage in physical activities while on holiday and to participate in competitions (Dreyer and Krüger 1995; Kurtzman 2005; Weed and Bull 2009). This went hand in hand with a growing affluence. From the 1950s onwards, many people in

the West did not only have more time but also had more disposable income to engage in sports tourism opportunities (Dreyer and Krüger 1995; Page and Connell 2009).

These factors were reinforced through further changes in society (Weed and Bull 2009). Already from the nineteenth century onwards, the growing urbanisation and industrialisation had changed employment patterns, with work being spatially separated from home (Holden 2006). Work itself became much more formalised and rationalised. The increasing alienation arising thereby encouraged people to seek fulfilment and self-actualisation in leisure activities (Freyer 2006; Holden 2006). In this context, sports and tourism activities played a major role in fulfilling these needs. They became crucial aspects in the lives of many people as separate activities and combined as sports tourism (Weed and Bull 2009). These developments both affected and were affected by an increasing democratisation. While sports and tourism originally were an exclusive upper class affair, wider parts of society were gradually able to access these activities (Standeven and De Knop 1999; Weed and Bull 2009), mainly due to the mitigation of time and income constraints. The more recent aspect in this context is that 'by the end of the twentieth century, not only were the means available to enable most people to participate, but so too was the expectation' (Weed and Bull 2009, p. 14). Being involved in sports and tourism pursuits has increasingly been promoted for its positive contributions to improve people's well-being (Standeven and De Knop 1999). Weed and Bull (2009) proposed these developments came to the fore in the guise of two types of sports tourism. The first one, outdoor activities, is an expression of the rising importance of health and fitness, whereas the second, sports events, illustrates the growing need for particular experiences and spectacles (Weed and Bull 2009).

Given the increasing significance of sports tourism in the lives of many people, it is not surprising it became increasingly attractive for providers to both react to and proactively shape these trends (Standeven and De Knop 1999; Weed and Bull 2009). While improvements of transport technologies laid the foundations of this process, 'the development of cheap air travel in the 1960s linked to charter flights and package holidays ... allowed many forms of sports tourism to flourish' (Weed and Bull 2009, p. 13). The accommodation sector expanded and tour operators diversified their

products to meet the needs of the diverse segments within sports tourism (Page and Connell 2009; Weed and Bull 2009), ranging from hiking, golfing, mountain biking and multi-sports holidays to city breaks that included tickets to watch an international sports event. Sports event tourism is an example that illustrates how the varied segments further diversified, encompassing not only active participants and spectators, but also coaches, officials and volunteers (Weed 2008c; Weed and Bull 2009).

Mega-events, such as the Olympic Games or the Soccer World Cups, have attracted an increasing number of visitors from across the globe. Also, small-scale events at a grass roots level (Higham and Hinch 2009; Hinch and Higham 2004), such as the Masters Games in Australia (Gillett and Kelly 2006; Trauer et al. 2003), came to be increasingly popular. Particularly from the 1990s onwards, the development and growing professionalism of non-elite mass participation events, such as marathons, enticed not only thousands of participants to travel to the host destination, but also their families and friends (Higham and Hinch 2009; Trauer et al. 2003).

Given the increasing number of people attracted by sports events and the expected economic benefits, destinations have engaged in fierce competitions to bid for events (Preuss et al. 2007; Weed and Bull 2009). Economic benefits of hosting events come to the fore in the form of increased revenues, improved infrastructure and the generation of employment opportunities (Kasimati 2008; Standeven and De Knop 1999; Weed and Bull 2009). Hosting events has acted as a catalyst for the development of infrastructure and sports facilities that can be used by local residents in the post-event period (Standeven and De Knop 1999; Hinch and Higham 2004; Weed 2008a). Weed and Bull (2009, p. 22) argued even 'failed Olympic bids have attracted a large amount of public and private sector investment to provide some facilities and infrastructure'. Destinations have also recognised the value of city marketing and image creation through event-related media exposure (Fredline 2005; Green et al. 2008; Sofield 2003). At first glance, the increasing television coverage of sports events seems to be counterproductive in terms of sports tourism as it might encourage people to stay at home to watch sports (Weed and Bull 2009). It has, however, contributed to the growth of sports tourism as it advertised and promoted a variety of physical activities

and has enticed people to experience related events on site close to the action (Chalip 2006; Weed and Bull 2009).

Hosting events has provided valuable stimuli for sports tourism development, but also other types of sports tourism, such as holidays with sports content, have increasingly offered tourism destinations diverse opportunities to attract new and repeat visitors, to gain a competitive advantage and to expand target group profiles (Weed and Bull 2009). In both urban and rural areas, in particular in the West, planners and government officials have increasingly recognised sports tourism as a beneficial way to develop, diversify and regenerate destinations (Standeven and De Knop 1999; Hinch and Higham 2004). In urban areas, sports tourism has featured prominently in revitalisation schemes; the same applies to rural and coastal regions where, based on the natural resources, sports tourism initiatives have increasingly come to play a crucial role in regional development strategies (Bull 2006; Daniels and Norman 2005; Weed and Bull 2009).

Despite numerous advantages and benefits, it cannot be denied that the emergence and development of contemporary sports tourism has also entailed a variety of controversial aspects. Positive economic impacts, such as income generation, improved infrastructure and employment opportunities, need to be balanced against possible negative effects, such as inflation, revenue leakage and over-reliance on tourism as the prime sector of the economy (Fredline 2005; Daniels 2007; Standeven and De Knop 1999). A comparable observation applies to socio-cultural aspects of sports tourism development. Tourism planners have increasingly recognised cost-benefit analyses need to consider not only improved living conditions for the host communities and the protection of regional heritage, but also the possible disintegration of cultural communities, overcrowding and tensions between hosts and tourists (Deery et al. 2004; Fredline 2005). All this needs to be set against environmental impacts such as noise and air pollution, littering and erosion through overcrowding, water pollution and the disruption of animals' way of life (Fredline 2005; Smith 2009; Standeven and De Knop 1999). Overall, there is a growing consensus that sports tourism can exploit its development potential, in particular, if the initiatives and opportunities consider reconciling economic, socio-cultural and environmental

impacts, bringing into line both short-term and long-term benefits (Fredline 2005; Smith 2009).

Sports tourism has come to play an important role in the lives of many people in the Western world. Academic research into this phenomenon, however, is still in its early developmental stages (Gibson 2008; Weed 2008a; Weed and Bull 2009). Sports tourism is a more recent field of scholarly interest shared by the two traditionally separate fields of sports and tourism (Ritchie and Adair 2002; Sofield 2003). Weed (2008a) suggested one of the earliest publications on sports tourism is a paper written by Don Anthony in 1966 in which he addressed the role sports may play in leisure tourism. Standeven and De Knop (1999), Weed (2008a) and Weed and Bull (2009) proposed it is in the 1970s that sports tourism gained increased attention from academics. The first key publication can be traced back to Glyptis's (1982) seminal study on sports tourism in five European countries (Schwark 2006; Standeven and De Knop 1999; Weed 2008a; 2009). Weed (2008a) argued that in this publication Glyptis (1982) raised an issue that still has relevance today, namely that the sports-tourism link mainly exists from the perspective of participants; suppliers, providers and policy makers, however, often treat sports and tourism as separate spheres. Several years later, Gibson (1998b) observed a lack of integration in sports tourism policy, education and research, too. This is clearly reflected in early attempts to define and conceptualise sports tourism, as the following section will show.

Drawing on earlier work, Weed (2008a) identified two major strands in the sports tourism literature of the 1990s. The first one, he argued (2008a, p. 2), 'focused on advocacy, simply attempting to identify a link between sports and tourism, and to establish it as a legitimate field'. The second strand was concerned with quantifying the link, measuring and counting the volume and potential of combining sports and tourism (Weed 2008a). This focus on quantification has endured in the early years of the twenty-first century. Indeed the dominance of positivist, quantitative, largely descriptive approaches is, along with a lack of theoretical rigour, one of the major weaknesses of sports tourism research (Gibson 1998b; Gibson 2008; Green and Jones 2005; Weed 2008a; Weed 2009). Addressing these challenges is one of this project's objectives.

Despite the increasing significance of sports tourism as a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon of academic interest, there are critical voices that question either the legitimacy of sports tourism or the approaches to how it is being studied. Silk and Amis (2005) critically addressed the mutual relationship between sports tourism and the utilisation of place and space. Questioning the 'lascivious representations of urban life' (Silk and Amis 2005, p. 280), they called for a critical approach to sports tourism research that should recognise that space is always contested. They argued sports tourism should be analysed within paradigms addressing social conflicts, power relations and contemporary political debates. This has been echoed by Dimeo (2008), who suggested sports tourism lacks a critical edge. He challenged the consensus that 'sports tourism is a good thing' (Dimeo 2008, p. 603) and contended scholars in the field should critically reflect on whether sports tourism may need to be banned due to its negative impacts on the environment and society. According to Dimeo (2008, p. 603), the progress of sports tourism would profit from studies that discuss and 'undermine the value of sports tourism per se'.

As a reaction to this critique, Weed (2009) suggested there are various possible responses that should not only consider management and policy issues, but that should also be embedded in wider sociological debates and discussions. He argued (2009, p. 11) 'the most inadequate response would be not to engage in the debate'. He noticed as well, despite the criticisms raised, that there have been signs indicating that sports tourism has gradually matured as a field of academic study. According to Weed (2008a; 2009), these include, amongst others: a variety of key or landmark publications, the development of the *Journal of Sport & Tourism (JS&T)* as a credible, peer-reviewed academic journal, the recognition as an academic area by other fields and disciplines and the existence of a community of scholars. Furthermore, he identified a strong conceptualisation of the field and a growing number of empirical studies with a solid theoretical and methodological underpinning. Finally, he contended that a further indicator of maturity is 'that researchers in the field can be self-reflexive, self-critical and responsive to external challenges' (Weed 2009, p. 12).

Sports tourism has developed into a significant socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. It provides rich opportunities for competing academic perspectives to

engage in wider social debates. The preceding examples characterise sports tourism as a diverse phenomenon particularly in relation to sports events. Higham and Hinch (2009, p. 3) suggested the research focus in this area has shifted from economic-impact analyses of mega-events 'to more fine-grained and critical analyses' of sports events. In this respect, they argued that more sports tourism research is needed, in particular in the context of non-elite, non-competitive events in second-tier cities. Similarly, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010) as well as Wicker et al. (2012) criticise the lack of and deficiencies in knowledge about small to midsize events, in particular those that attract mass participation. Focusing on the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland, it is this sort of event that provides the context for this research. With the event attracting nearly 20,000 gymnasts from 55 countries around the world, it could be classified as a mega-event (Roche 2000). Due to the lack of global media coverage and an absence of universal appeal, however, it seems to be more appropriate to categorise it as a 'special event' (Roche 2000). The distinction between non-event and event-based sports tourism (Kaplanidou and Gibson 2010; Weed 2009) leads over to the conceptual debates and issues that have marked the early academic discourses in the field.

2.2.2 Conceptual debates, issues and research topics

Initial attempts to build on and advance the knowledge base in and around sports tourism and to understand its nature tended to treat it as a link between two separate fields (Sofield 2003; Weed 2008a; Weed 2009; Weed and Bull 2009). One of the often quoted definitions was proposed by Standeven and De Knop (1999, p. 12) who argued sports tourism involves

All forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for non-commercial or business / commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality.

Linking and merging sporting characteristics with tourism definitions marked the early phase of academic interest in sports tourism (Sofield 2003; Weed 2008a; Weed 2009;

Weed and Bull 2009). Gammon and Robinson (1997) and Robinson and Gammon (2004) differentiated between 'sport tourism' and 'tourism sport', the distinguishing factor being the prime motive to travel. According to them, sports tourists' primary travel reason is sports. For the latter category, on the other hand, taking a holiday is the most important motive for travelling, while sport activities play a subordinate role, a secondary reason to make a journey (Gammon and Robinson 1997; Robinson and Gammon 2004). Similar approaches have been proposed by Pigeassou et al. (2003) and Sofield (2003). These definitions and categorisations share a commonality in that they take either sports or tourism as a starting point, defining and categorising either the sports activity from a tourism perspective or tourism in terms of sport.

These discussions have been severely criticised for subordinating either sports to tourism or vice versa (Gibson 1998b; Gibson 2008; Hinch and Higham 2004; Sofield 2003). These approaches did not add new knowledge nor did they recognise the synergies between the two fields (Sofield 2003; Weed 2008a; 2009; Weed and Bull 2009). Weed (2008b, p. 15) contended, for example, Standeven and De Knop's sports tourism definition

is really no definition at all as it doesn't add anything to an understanding of the area that couldn't be established from definitions of sport and of tourism as it simply identifies tourism activity involving sport. In fact, such a definition would seem to cast doubt on whether sports tourism is a serious subject for study, or whether it is merely a convenient descriptive term with little explanatory value.

Instead of establishing the primacy of one of the two fields over the other, Gibson (2008), Hinch and Higham (2004), Sofield (2003) and Weed (2008a; 2009) underlined the need to focus on the unique nature of sports tourism, on those elements that make it to be more than a simple combination of the two domains. Schwark (2006) raised the question as to what extent doing sports at home differs from being involved in physical activities at the tourist destination. His narrow concept of sports tourism included a cultural dimension by limiting the scope to include only physical activities that are specifically rooted in the culture of the host destination. For him, sports tourists are, for example, dancers who travel to Argentina to learn 'Tango Argentino'.

This conceptualisation, however, seems to ignore all those physical activities within sports tourism that are not specifically tied to the culture of the host community.

Weed and Bull (2004) took a different approach when determining the unique nature of sports tourism. For them, the distinctive feature of sports tourism is the unique interaction of three components, namely *activity*, *people* and *place*. The interaction of *activity* and *place* implies certain types of activities, such as skiing, requiring specific resources that are not transportable. In this case, travelling to a mountainous area is a necessary condition to be able to perform the activity. Other types of activities such as running are not tied to specific resources. Yet, the quality of resources might be better somewhere else. In this case, travelling to another place might be linked to particular landscapes or a good ambiance (Weed and Bull 2009). The interaction between *people* and *place* comes into play, when travellers attach certain memories to a specific destination (Shipway and Jones 2008). For a runner, this could be the place where s/he took part in the first marathon. A holidaymaker might exceptionally remember the place where s/he tried windsurfing or canoeing for the first time. The third type of interaction, the one between *activity* and *people*, has been studied by Green and Chalip (1998) in their research on sports subcultures in the context of a women's flag football tournament. They emphasised that 'playing *per se* is necessary but probably not sufficient to attract and retain participants. Players seek opportunities to celebrate the identity that they and their fellow players have chosen to share' (Green and Chalip 1998, p. 285, original emphasis).

Weed (2008b) suggested any of the three components *activity*, *people* and *place* plays a key role in the sports tourism experience, yet emphasised it is their interaction that characterises the unique nature of sports tourism. This synergy

establishes the phenomenon as *related to but more than the sum of* sport and tourism, and thus establishes sports tourism as something that cannot be understood simply as a tourism market niche or a subset of sports management (Weed 2008b, p. 16, original emphasis).

The analysis of the interaction and synergies between activity, people and place illustrates sports tourists do not form one homogenous group, but that there are

heterogeneous categories. The types of sports differ in their dependency on resources; peoples' attitudes towards their chosen sports vary, to mention just a few. The considerable growth of sports tourism has been accompanied by various differentiation processes. Over and above identifying what makes sports tourism distinct from a mere combination of both fields, Hinch and Higham (2004) emphasised the need to be aware of the differences between the various segments within the field. Therefore, a conceptualisation of sports tourism needs to allow for studying its distinctive features in a broad range of contexts made up of different physical activities (Hinch and Higham 2004; Weed 2008b). While Schwark's (2006) approach only allows the inclusion of a very limited range of activities, Weed and Bull's (2004) view of sports tourism as the unique interaction of activity, people and place acknowledges the complex and diverse nature of sports.

Weed (2008b; 2009) argued that such conceptualisation also has a considerable impact on the terminology used, namely either 'sport tourism' or 'sports tourism'. While he acknowledged himself 'these may seem like pedantic debates, they are significant because they have affected the way in which different authors and reviewers have addressed sports tourism' (Weed 2009, p. 3). He argued the term 'sport' in 'sport tourism' relates to sport as a social institution and homogeneous category; the term 'sports', however, refers to the variety of physical activities that may be part of the sports tourism experience, hence acknowledging the complexity of sports (Weed 2008b; 2009). Therefore, in an attempt to harmonise terminology, he suggested utilising the term 'sports tourism' instead of 'sport tourism', as proposed by Gibson (1998b; 2008). In line with this, throughout this project, the terms 'sports tourism' and 'sports tourist(s)' are used. A similar terminological issue occurs in terms of one field which is closely related to, and often overlaps with, sports tourism, namely event tourism (Weed 2009). Here, the terms 'sports event tourism' and 'event sport(s) tourism' are often used interchangeably. To emphasise the particular context of sports, this project employs the term 'sports event tourism'.

Gibson (1998b) already addressed the overlap between sports tourism and event tourism in her critical analysis of the literature prior to 1998. To organise the existing body of knowledge, she proposed three broad categories: actively participating in

sports tourism ('active sport tourism'), travelling to watch sports tourism ('event sport tourism') and venerating attractions such as sports stadia ('nostalgia sports tourism') (Gibson 1998b, p. 49). While this distinction recognises the crucial differentiation between active participation and passive consumption, this categorisation of research topics has been subject to critique: Gibson's (1998b) 'active sport tourism' was criticised for concentrating exclusively on leisure-based physical activities while travelling; her category 'event sport tourism', however, focuses on the spectator experience and, as such, does not specifically acknowledge that events may involve active participation, such as non-elite or recreational mass participation ones (Weed 2009).

Weed (2008a; 2009) adopted a different approach to organising the research topics in the field. Based on the main thematic categories of a special issue of the *European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ)* on 'Sports Tourism Theory and Method' guest edited by him in 2005, he proposed 'Understanding the Sports Tourist', 'Impacts' and 'Policy and Management Considerations' to be the major research themes. For Weed (2008a), participation, impact generation as well as policy and provision are interrelated. In a systematic review of sports tourism research conducted between 2000 and 2004, Weed (2006a) identified the most-researched topics in the field to be behaviours, profiles and motivations (38% of the reviewed articles), impacts (25%) and provision (24%). In terms of activities, the most popular areas were sports event tourism (40%), outdoor and adventure sports tourism (29%) along with skiing and winter sports (15%). Aggregating topics and activities, Weed (2006a) identified event impacts to be the most researched combination (23%), followed by sports tourists' behaviour in relation to outdoor activities (20%). This is confirmed in a meta-review published three years later (Weed 2009). Here again, sports event impacts turned out to be among the key research themes, albeit with a thematic shift from studying impacts to the more strategic approach of event leverage (Chalip 2006; Weed 2009). Furthermore, in his more recent review, Weed (2009) concluded that a more holistic view on event impacts, including social and environmental impacts, has started to supersede a purely economic perspective. This seems to address a critique he had raised earlier that

too often sports tourism's social and cultural aspects are overlooked in favour of an economic analysis. However, economic aspects are derived from social and cultural interactions (Weed 2008b, p. 16).

Weed (2008a; 2008b) argued an understanding of participation is necessary for comprehending the impacts sports tourists generate and to manage policy and provision. According to Weed (2008a; 2008b), to advance understanding on the complexity of the phenomenon, it is crucial to study not only the impacts sports tourists generate, but also in particular the actors who generate the impacts. Therefore, he stressed that investigating sports tourists' participation and behaviour should even precede any considerations of impact generation, policy formulation and management. This complies with the view of Gibson (1998a; 2005), Gillett and Kelly (2006), Green and Jones (2005), Higham and Hinch (2009) and Hinch and Higham (2004), who have also emphasised the particular relevance of understanding sports tourism participation in the wider context of research in the field. First attempts to address, organise and categorise participation in sports tourism entailed the development of a variety of typologies. It is to the discussion of these typologies, their significance and limitations this chapter now turns to.

2.2.3 Categorising sports tourism: The significance and limitations of typologies

It is not only necessary to identify what makes sports tourism unique; it is also crucial to be aware of the differences between distinct categories within the field (Hinch and Higham 2004; Weed and Bull 2009). In an attempt to address and organise its complexity, early approaches to better understand sports tourists entailed the development of a variety of typologies. Even if sports tourism is markedly heterogeneous, similarities between the categories can be recognised, allowing for the construction of models and typologies (Weed and Bull 2004; 2009). Glyptis (1982) was among the first to classify demand by proposing five categories:

- sports training,
- 'up market' sports holidays,
- activity holidays,
- holidays with sporting activities and
- sports spectating

The latter category appears significant as it heralds the distinction between 'active sport tourism' and 'event sport tourism' made by Gibson (1998b) several years later, implying participation can be either active or passive. Very similar categories have been developed by Dreyer (1995), who distinguished between sport holidays, holiday sports, travelling for training and / or competition purposes and event travel.

In their review of earlier sports tourist typologies, Weed and Bull (2004) pointed out this distinction between active and passive sports tourists has been adopted by other authors. In his model of adventure, health and sports tourism, Hall (1992) juxtaposed the level of activity with the level of competitiveness. He used the degree of competitiveness to categorise different sports and developed a continuum ranging from competitive to more recreational activities. Using similar categories, namely competition / recreation and activity / passivity, yet with a different intention, Gammon and Robinson (1997) and Robinson and Gammon (2004) distinguished between 'sport tourism' and 'tourism sport'. Subsequently, they divided these categories into 'hard' and 'soft' participants. According to the two authors, the distinguishing factor between 'sport tourism' and 'tourism sport' is whether the prime motive to travel is sports or taking a holiday. Similar to Hall (1992), the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' is based on whether the level of commitment is geared more towards competition or recreation. These two typologies enable a differentiated view on the levels of competitiveness and activity involvement of the sports tourists under investigation.

When getting back to the unique nature of sports tourism with its interaction of activity, people and place, it is worth noting all the above mentioned typologies focus on the *activity* component. Therefore, Weed and Bull (2009) criticised Hall's (1992)

model for being one-dimensional. Weed and Bull (2009) commented that Standeven and De Knop (1999) went one step further by combining *activity* with *place* in a two-dimensional model. The two authors underlined sports tourism as offering 'a two-dimensional experience of physical activity tied to a particular setting' (Standeven and De Knop 1999, p. 63, original emphasis). By plotting the tourist and sports experiences against each other, they categorised sporting activities in a grid according to their interaction with place:

The grid allows us to plot the position of different sporting activities in different touristic settings according to the nature of the activities and the geographical resources in which they take place (Standeven and De Knop 1999, p. 63)

Besides their activity-place classification, Standeven and De Knop (1999) developed a differentiated sports tourist typology using the active / passive classification, a holiday / non-holiday segmentation and a differentiation between holiday sport activities and sport activity holiday. The latter is again similar to Gammon and Robinson's (1997) distinction between 'sports tourism' and 'tourism sport'. In their passive sport category, Standeven and De Knop (1999) further subdivided between a 'casual observer' and 'connoisseur', with the latter being a person who has a considerable knowledge of the sports s/he is watching. This distinction implies different levels of commitment not only among those actively involved but also among those who are passively engaged in sports tourism. This has also been raised by Weed and Bull (2009), who suggested another category relates to 'vicarious' sports tourists. This classification suggests there are actors who, while not actively participating, engage and interact with active participants much more than merely watching them as passive sports tourists do.

With the aim of creating an 'analytical tool, both to appreciate the complex nature of the sports tourist, and to develop a greater understanding of the sports tourism phenomenon', Weed and Bull (2009, p. 110) developed a typology that focuses on the *people* dimension in its interaction with *activity*. Their 'Sports Tourism Participation Model' is based on the sports tourism demand continuum that Jackson and Weed (2003) had used in earlier works. Six types of sports tourists are differentiated

according to their level of commitment, ranging from 'incidental' to 'driven'. Weed and Bull (2009) argued that what makes this distinction different from the above-mentioned competition / recreation typologies is the movement from one level to the next implies an increase of the level of ability. Furthermore, this typology is much more detailed and considers differences with regards to trip decision and participation factors. Weed and Bull (2009), however, criticised the model as it does not properly consider the level of interaction between people and activity. Drawing on Green and Jones (2005), Weed and Bull (2009, p. 112) argued

it fails to recognize the importance of trips involving sports tourism to individuals' perceived self-identity (Green and Jones, 2005), the result being that, even where levels of participation are low, the importance placed on that participation can be significant.

To overcome this weakness, they proposed the 'Sports Tourism Participation Model', which 'plots sports tourism participation against the importance placed on sports tourism behaviours' (Weed and Bull 2009, p. 113), illustrated in Figure 2.

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Figure 2: Sports Tourism Participation Model

Source: Weed and Bull (2009, p. 113)

Weed and Bull (2009) argued the crucial point is if the degree of participation is low, the importance attached to the activity may not inevitably be low as well. For some people, their participation level in sports during their holidays may be low, yet they are keen to tell their sports stories when returning home. That may apply to both active participants and spectators. Even if their participation is low, the importance attached to it may be high. Their engagement in sports while on holidays or the spectator experience may play a crucial role in their self-concept and identity. By integrating the level of importance in their participation model, Weed and Bull (2004; 2009) have developed a typology that emphasises the importance of identity, involvement and commitment in understanding sports tourists.

The development of sports tourist typologies, of course, helps to identify distinctive sports tourist groups and clusters. This general strength of typologies, however, also implies a major weakness (Luft 2005). Despite their usefulness to approach distinct sports tourism categories, Green and Jones (2005) criticised the typologies for oversimplifying the structure of the field and for providing only a static picture. They argued the typologies 'demonstrate a tendency to examine the activity itself rather than the meanings, norms and values of the individual undertaking the activity' (Green and Jones 2005, p. 165). Although Green and Jones (2005) argued Weed and Bull's (2004) 'Sport Participation Model' had begun to examine this issue, they suggested more research needs to focus on the sports tourist experience to gain a deeper understanding of their participation. Likewise, Gibson (2008, p. 29) contended 'researchers need to move beyond profiling the active sport tourist into explanations of participation or non-participation'. Weed (2009) supported this proposal and criticised the state of knowledge in the field for the often descriptive rather than explanatory research focus and the less elaborate use of theories to underpin research results. A more profound use of concepts and theories has been identified as a major issue to advance the understanding of sports tourism and the nature of participation (Gibson 2004; 2008; Green and Jones 2005; Weed 2006a; 2008a; 2009). The next two sections are dedicated to considering the two main points of critique sports tourism researchers have been faced with, the lack of theoretical underpinning, on one hand

(section 2.2.4), and the dominance of positivist research approaches, on the other (section 2.2.5).

2.2.4 Making sense of sports tourism: Understanding the nature of participation

Research into sports tourism participation has frequently been criticised for its insufficient theoretical underpinning (Gibson 2005a; 2005b; Higham and Hinch 2009; Weed 2006a; 2009). In a systematic appraisal of peer-reviewed sports tourism research published between 2000 and 2004, Weed (2006a, p. 19) identified 'less than two-thirds of the studies (62%) had a clearly articulated theoretical basis'. Already in 1998, Gibson called for a more varied use of theories in sports tourism research. She stressed the need to theoretically address 'Why?' questions that go beyond answering descriptive 'What?' questions.

Even if these concerns have been echoed in more recent publications (Shipway and Stevenson 2012; Lamont and McKay 2012), some progress has been made (Weed and Bull 2009) and researchers have indeed adopted several approaches to make sense of sports tourism in a more sophisticated way. One theoretical area that has been widely utilised to provide a more profound understanding of both active (Funk and Bruun 2007; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Kim and Chalip 2010; Kim and Ritchie 2010) and passive (Daniels and Norman 2005; Kim and Chalip 2004; Smith and Stewart 2007; Snelgrove et al. 2008) participation in sports tourism relates to motivational theories. With motives accounting for the reasons for doing something and motivation being concerned with 'more deeply rooted psychological needs and desires' (Page and Connell 2009, p. 75), this theoretical strand, perhaps, addresses 'Why?' questions in an immediate, direct and straightforward way.

The use of motivational frameworks for researching sports tourism builds upon studies that investigate sports and tourism motives separately. The reasons why people engage in sports includes aspects such as general fitness, skill development, goal achievement and the desire to win (Weed and Bull 2009). To identify travel motives,

different approaches can be identified. Dann (1981), for example, classified travel reasons as escaping from, or escaping to, a place. This concept has been further developed using a differentiation between push and pull factors as outlined by Kim and Chalip (2004). Whereas push factors are those that cause a desire to travel, pull factors influence which destination is selected. Weed and Bull (2009) suggested that the four travel motive categories developed by McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) have 'immediate relevance to sport' (Weed and Bull 2009, p. 71): physical motives including fitness and health, interpersonal motives such as sociability, cultural motives as well as status and prestige motives. In the light of this overlap, motives appear as a powerful, explanatory concept for researching the link between the two. This is even more obvious when considering that, beyond the study of those motives relating to sports and to travelling in a separate way, another approach explicitly links the two and deals with why sports enthusiasts travel, or need to travel, to engage in sports. Examples include touring that is required if either the necessary resources or the infrastructure are not transportable (Weed and Bull 2009). In this approach to sports tourism motives, a direct explanatory link is made between the components *activity* and *place*. Considering as well that above mentioned interpersonal motives cater for the *people* component, it could be concluded that studying motives provides valuable insights into understanding the core of sports tourism, the interaction between *activity*, *people* and *place*. However, the question needs to be raised as to what extent motives are indeed able to capture meaning. If certain motive categories account for the reasons or intentions why people do something, is it not primarily the period *before* acting (Kaufmann 2009; Schütz and Luckmann 1973) these may refer to? Does making sense of sports tourism's meaning not also relate to the importance or value of participation which might only be grasped *after* completion of an activity, hence requiring a more holistic approach to investigating participation?

Another approach to comprehend the nature of involvement in sports tourism takes the tourism experience as a starting point (Shipway and Stevenson 2012). According to Ritchie and Hudson (2009), one of the items that characterise tourism experiences is that they are multifaceted. This was also suggested by Getz (2008), who recommended the adoption of a holistic perspective in the study of tourism experiences by breaking

them down into behavioural elements (conative dimension), emotions and attitudes (affective dimension) as well as elements of perception (cognitive dimension). A 2012 special issue of the *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, edited by Shipway and Stevenson, 'follows this emerging path' (Shipway and Stevenson 2012, p. 81). In one of the articles, Coghlan (2012) discussed her study of a cycling charity challenge event aimed at determining both the manifest and latent elements of the tourism experience by way of an autoethnographic analysis of diary entries. She suggests her findings raise questions on how to comprehend unspoken aspects of participation in sports tourism, such as fear or anxiety. She calls for undertaking more sophisticated efforts to understand the details and subtleties of participants' experiences as '[f]ailure to recognise and acknowledge these nuances may lead to misleading managerial suggestions, poor policy design and unsuccessful new initiatives' (Coghlan 2012, p. 120-121).

Higham and Hinch (2009) take each of the three elements activity, people and place as an overarching theme for their consideration of sports tourism within the context of discourses on globalisation, identity and mobility. They suggested (2009, p. 12) making sense of the particular nature of sports tourism

requires that the unique features of sport and tourism, as they exist in combination, are understood and considered in an integrated manner so as to allow an exploration of the heterogeneity of sport tourism phenomena (Higham and Hinch 2009, p. 12).

It could be argued that an isolated analysis of each of the three elements contradicts the *synergetic and integrated* aspect of the interaction between activity, people and place that captures sports tourism's essence. On the other hand, however, is it not exactly the other way round? In other words, is it not the interactive element as such which suggests that making sense of, and having a closer look at, each element in a disconnected way has a lot to reveal about the other two aspects, too, and how all three are linked? Against the backdrop of these considerations, the following review critically examines key themes, concepts and findings of research into sports tourism

participation, deemed relevant for this project, focussing on each element separately, while at the same time indicating the link between them.

Activity

Having a closer look at the *activity*-related aspect involves making sense of sports tourism participation through the lens of the very nature of the pursuit undertaken on the trip, namely sports. While many approaches to defining sports exist, one common denominator is its involving bodily practice, requiring some sort of physical skill (Haywood et al. 1995). This specific feature, constituting the essence of sports tourism's *activity*, so far seems to have escaped significant attention among sports tourism scholars (Higham and Hinch 2009; Lamont and McKay 2012). Lamont and McKay (2012) criticise, in particular, that researchers have neglected the significance of embodiment in the sports tourism experience. They draw on Crouch (2000), who emphasised the complex nature of embodied practice. According to Crouch (2000, p. 63), '[e]mbodiment denotes the ways in which the individual grasps the world around him/her and makes sense of it in ways that engage both body and mind'. Engaging in the physical practice of sports, therefore, is considered to be a particular way of perceiving the surrounding environment, of being involved in and engaging with it. Crouch (2000) clarified this notion when he suggested:

'Embodiment' is a process of experiencing, making sense, knowing through practise as a sensual human subject in the world. The subject engages space and space becomes embodied in three ways. First, the person grasps the world multi-sensually. Second, the body is 'surrounded' by space and encounters it multi-dimensionally. Third, through the body the individual expresses him/herself through the surrounding space and thereby changes its meaning (Crouch 2000, p. 68).

Higham and Hinch (2009) agreed it is the physical and sensory nature of sports that makes participation in sports tourism a particular phenomenon. They suggested:

Physical practices and physical ways of knowing are also important parts of identity narratives. To a large extent, it is the physical culture of sport that is responsible for its passion, tension, excitement and drama. The sensory

dimensions of sport as a physical practice provide unique links between the sport tourists and the sites they visit (Higham and Hinch 2009, p. 70).

There are two commonalities between Crouch's (2000) and Higham and Hinch's (2009) lines of thought that appear to be particularly noteworthy. First, both emphasised the physical and bodily essence of the *activity*, constituting a particular, namely sensory, way of perceiving *place*. Second, they agreed that accentuating the physical practice establishes a specific kind of experience through which *people* can express themselves. In both cases, the interconnected nature of sports tourism's essence clearly comes to the fore. This integrative aspect of the physical *activity* shaping the way *people* experience *place* is also emphasised by Szczechowicz (2012):

Tourists explore the area that surrounds them in a dynamic way, making a mental and physical effort. The significance of this fact can hardly be overestimated, since tourists' personal involvement in exploration gives them a chance to feel emotions and have experiences unavailable *via* passive behaviour (Szczechowicz 2012, p. 229).

Rickly-Boyd's (2012) study of highly committed rock climbers is among the small number of more detailed investigations into the role the physical nature plays in the sports tourism experience. She identifies her research partners feeling a significant relationship between body and mind during their involvement in rock climbing. They appreciate, in particular, the physical and emotional challenges they face on the rock. Underpinned by Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, accounting for a situation in which one's skill level is met with the right level of challenge, Rickly-Boyd (2012, p. 94) identifies that her research partners experience a particular state of mind characterised by a focus on nothing else but the bodily activity, resulting in a feeling of timelessness. While these moments of experiencing flow are scarce and short, they are later relived and reconstituted in conversations and discussions with their climbing fellows: 'These expressive moments allow climbers to recapture bits of that flow experience and stay energized in their down time' (Rickly-Boyd 2012, p. 95). The moments of physical *activity* extend beyond their immediate experience by recalling

memories and sharing them with other *people*, hence another connection between the elements of sports tourism's essence caused by the *activity*.

Apart from its physical nature, another feature of sports activity is it usually involves a certain achievement- or goal-orientation (Haywood et al. 1995). In their investigation of the 2005 World Masters Games, Walker et al. (2010) utilise two different modes of achievement orientation along with three modes of experience to create a cluster analysis of the attending athletes. Drawing on the sports psychology literature, they distinguish between ego-orientation, 'Being the best', and task-orientation, 'Doing the best', and found the existence of both in their sample. Likewise, in their study of the 2005 Australian Masters Games, Gillett and Kelly (2006) noticed their research partners considered goal achievement, as a result of the physical activity, to play a significant role in their perception of the sports tourism experience. Gillett and Kelly (2006) were surprised to discover that winning a medal contributed considerably to their study participants' motivation to take part in the event and established this for both casual and serious participants. A concept that helps to differentiate between these two forms of commitment is Serious Leisure, which has been widely used to frame the results of research into sports tourism participation. Due to the centrality of the concept for this research, it will be explored more in detail in section 2.3.1.

It is not only the physical, sensory nature of sports and its goal-orientation that characterise the central *activity* of sports tourism, but also the nature of athletic display along with the uncertainty of outcome (Higham and Hinch 2009). It is these features that make sports particularly attractive for watching (Higham and Hinch 2006; 2009). Hence, it is not only the active engagement in, but also the viewing of, physical endeavours that make up sports tourism's *activity*, as already revealed in the early typologies. Yet this mutually exclusive active-passive-binary has recently been questioned. Lamont and McKay (2012, p. 327-328) argue that 'the static dichotomies and taxonomies that dominate sports tourism research are inadequate for capturing the fluid identities and relations characteristic of postmodern tourism'. In a study of the 2011 Tour de France, they identify how a group of customers of a commercially organised package tour 'alternated fluidly between kinaesthetic and gazing modalities' (Lamont and McKay 2012, p. 326). Apart from being a spectator watching the

professional cyclists, the research participants were able to cycle parts of the official route of the Tour de France themselves. Having in mind their bicycles were transported by coach, Lamont and McKay (2012, p. 322) comment:

Upon reaching an agreed meeting point, the coach waited and became the transition point where participants changed, stowed their bicycles and switched from cyclists to spectators.

Drawing on the sociological perspective of postmodernism, Lamont and McKay (2012) establish that participants in sports tourism can assume a dual role that encompasses both being an active athlete and a spectator. This recently emerging theme appears to be an insightful avenue for advancing the knowledge on sports tourism participation. Not only does it respond to the call for overcoming the static and descriptive binaries, it also addresses the conflation of the two core dimensions of sport tourism's *activity*, and, hence, acknowledges their interfaces. Further research is needed to investigate to what extent the oscillation between the kinaesthetic and viewing experience also occurs in other research contexts.

People

Making sense of sports tourism participation through the *people* lens addresses '[q]uestions about who we are, what sort of people we are, and how we relate to others [that] are central to debates in social theory' (Mansfield and Chatziefstathiou 2010, p. v). In their guest editorial of the 2012 special issue of the *Journal of Sport & Tourism* on experiencing sports tourism, Shipway and Stevenson (2012) reduce the four compiled papers (Coghlan 2012; Hallmann et al. 2012; Houge Mackenzie and Kerr 2012; Rickly-Boyd 2012) to a common denominator by suggesting they all address the link between sports tourism experiences and identity. They comment:

At an individual level these experiences provided an opportunity for participants to form, change or confirm ideas about themselves. These experiences develop their sense of self and of achievement. They appear to be a part of an evolving process of identity creation/confirmation. This process is not just internally focussed and involves identification of the individual

participants place within a wider group of people engaged in that activity (Shipway and Stevenson 2012, p. 83).

Two issues in this quotation merit a more detailed consideration. First, Shipway and Stevenson (2012) propose an individual's self-definition may derive from a sense of achievement, hence establishing an immediate connection between *people* and *activity*. Second, they acknowledge sports tourism experiences occur and have an impact on both an individual and a more collective level. They suggest participation contributes to the development and expression of both a sense of self and a collective sense of belonging, with the two being inextricably linked (Jenkins 2008).

On a more individual level, research has identified participation in sports tourism is motivated by a search for oneself which can stem from being actively engaged (Beedie 2008; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Green and Chalip 1998; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008) or from watching others (Fairley 2009; Snelgrove et al. 2008). The *people* lens of sports tourism's essence is not only about the search for, and discovery of, oneself, it is also about experiencing and expressing group cohesion (Rickly-Boyd 2012). In their study of a women's flag football tournament, Green and Chalip (1998) identified in the early developmental stage of sports tourism as an academic field that, for their research partners, the celebration of a shared identity and of belonging to a subculture seemed to matter more than the place where the event occurred. Adopting an inbound rather than outbound perspective in terms of tourism, yet expressing a similar line of thought, Ziakas and Costa (2010) explore how a celebratory event taking place in a rural community contributed to the consolidation and reconnection of the local community's social fabric. Both cases accentuate sports tourism provides opportunities to constitute and confirm belonging to, and being part of, a group that transcends the self.

Looking for and discovering the true self in and through sports tourism has been characterised as a search for authenticity. Hinch and Higham (2008; 2009) and Rickly-Boyd (2012) drew on Wang's (1999) concept of existential authenticity to underpin their studies of sports tourism participation. Wang (1999) differentiated between several types of authenticity. While objective authenticity relates to the genuineness

of an object, constructivist authenticity refers to the symbols of, and meanings attached to, the respective object. Existential authenticity, in turn, is based on actual experiences and the feelings and emotions an individual develops in and through them. Wang (1999) identified two types of existential authenticity that seem relevant in the context of these considerations, even if the concept as such has recently been subject to postmodern critique (Reisinger and Steiner 2006). The first type, intra-personal authenticity, is concerned with bodily feelings and self-making, thereby confirming the *people-activity* connection. The second one, inter-personal authenticity, refers to experiencing friendship and family ties as well as solidarity and *communitas*. The individuals are not only in search of their selves, but also look for authentic relations between them, which is directly connected to embodied practice. Following from that, in her study on the highly committed, mobile subculture of rock climbers, Rickly-Boyd (2012, p. 101) concludes that 'existential authenticity ultimately comes from fleeting moments and self-examination surrounded by individuals with similar intentions'.

Participation in sports tourism raises, and addresses, questions about how *people* see and define themselves and how they relate to, and interact with, other like-minded individuals. These debates do not only matter in the substantive context of sports tourism as an academic field, but relate to wider central discussions in social theory. To better understand these processes and to what extent this contextual area may contribute to these debates, more research is needed into the role sports tourism plays in developing a sense of self (Higham and Hinch 2009; Shipway and Stevenson 2012) and in shaping and supporting the idea of a community that may transcend the actual leisure or sports tourism experience (Dionigi and Lyons 2010). Due to the centrality the concepts of identity and community play in the context of this research, a more detailed review of the related and relevant theoretical ideas and approaches is provided in sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.

Place

Addressing the meaning of sports tourism through the lens of *place* refers to the fundamental characteristic of tourism, namely a temporary stay in a location away from home (Page and Connell 2009). Chalip and Costa (2005), Harrison-Hill and Chalip (2005) and Kim and Chalip (2010) have investigated how possible synergies between sports and destinations, hence between *activity* and *place*, attract particular sports tourist *people*, and how sports tourism and related events can help shape the brand and profile of a destination. Chalip and McGuirly (2004) provided a condensed explanation for these considerations:

Just as attractions can bring visitors to the destination, the destination can provide attractions that bring visitors to an event and that persuade event visitors to stay beyond the period of an event. In fact, there is evidence that event attendees can be attracted to non-event tourism opportunities available at the host destination (Chalip and McGuirly 2004, p. 268-269).

The role the destination plays in the sports tourism experience appears to be ambiguous and complex, occasionally even paradoxical. On one hand, *places* themselves, for example stadia or sports museums, may be considered sports tourist attractions, especially if these testify to a rich past, as studies on the link between sports tourism, nostalgia and heritage have demonstrated (Fairley and Gammon 2005; Ramshaw et al. 2013; Ramshaw and Gammon 2005). On the other hand, research has identified 'sport tourists' initial connection with the destination is often secondary to the event itself' (Filo et al. 2013, p. 101). Fifteen years before Filo et al.'s (2013) study was published, Green and Chalip (1998, p. 286) already recognised, for the female flag football players whom they investigated, the 'event itself is more important than the destination'.

In their study on the Gold Coast Marathon, Chalip and McGuirly (2004) provided a differentiated insight into this ambiguity. Having the perspective of providers in mind, they focused particularly on the importance of bundling elements of sport events with the attractions of the host destination. The researched participants were categorised as dedicated runners, running tourists, active runners, and runners who shop. The

participants were asked to express the level of importance they attached to different event elements that support their sport's subculture, as, for example, marathon parties. Furthermore, they had to assess selected destination elements, such as organised sightseeing tours. In line with the travel behaviour analysis of Ritchie (2004) and Weed and Bull (2009), Chalip and McGuirty (2004) concluded that dedicated runners were less interested in destination activities than in event elements that enabled them to engage in their subculture. Running tourists, in contrast, who were less involved in sports, attached more importance to the destination bundles.

Given these findings, would this not imply that, for those at the dedicated end, *place* plays a role which is subordinate to *activity*? And would this assumption, then, not challenge the conceptualisation of sports tourism as the unique interaction of *activity*, *people* and *place* understood as a solid balance? This view, however, would misconceive the integrative and synergistic nature of sports tourism's essence. Consequently, a more differentiated analysis is required in terms of the role the *place* element may adopt in the interaction between the three dimensions, and especially in terms of how it is connected to *people* and *place*.

Two aspects need to be addressed in this context. First, being in a *place* away from home can be considered to be the basic premise for sports tourist *people*'s search of 'Who we are' and 'How we relate to others'. It is through the very act of travelling from home that participants escape from their common environment in a temporal and spatial sense (Fairley and Gammon 2005). This, in turn, enables them to discover 'a sense of self that remains unrealized in everyday life' (Rickly-Boyd 2012, p. 96). Fairley (2009), Gillett and Kelly (2006) and Shipway and Jones (2008) go one step further to argue that being outside of daily life is even a vital precondition for the construction, expression and celebration of sports tourists' identities and communities. These considerations point to the need for further explorations of the complex role *place* plays in the overall sports tourism experience.

Second, there are cases in which a specific *place* carries a particular meaning in a certain kind of sports which entails that travelling to and engaging in the activity at that location becomes a special moment in the tourist's sports career (Griffith 2013;

Weed and Bull 2009). This may be the case when a marathon runner takes part in the New York marathon for the first time, but also when individuals are dedicated 'to an art outside of their own cultural history' (Griffith 2013, p. 1). In her study of the Brazilian martial art of capoeira, Griffith (2013) suggests for dedicated, foreign capoeiristas, travelling to Brazil, in general, and to Salvador, specifically, plays a crucial role in reinforcing their legitimacy as capoeira practitioners. They visit Salvador to learn and train with a Brazilian mestre which, in turn, helps them to demonstrate their commitment to the activity. Drawing on the notion of apprenticeship pilgrimage, she argues:

What I term apprenticeship ... focuses on the changes that happen to the individual and his or her social standing within a specific field because of what he or she has learned and the relationships he or she has built at the pilgrimage site rather than the inherent satisfaction one feels at simply reaching a quasi-sacred sports site (Griffith 2013, p. 3).

She proposes the meaning the visited site entails for the individual does not stem from simply being there, but from learning skills related to the pursuit and from building relationships with like-minded practitioners. Her view points to the particular meaning the notion of *place* entails as compared to *space*. Lew (2001) suggested place and space are two different concepts. While space refers to a concrete location as such, place is space that is infused with meaning (Higham and Hinch 2006). Drawing on the perspective of cultural geography, Sack (1988, p. 642) explained the notion of place more in detail:

Geography explores the experience of being situated in the world, of being in place. Place provides a fundamental means by which we make sense of the world and through which we act. To be an agent, one must be somewhere.

For Sack (1988), people themselves form and shape place through what they are doing, 'activities allow us to create places and instill them with meaning (Sack 1988, p. 643). The development of a sense of place usually requires a longer stay than the temporary nature of tourism seems to allow for (Tuan 1975). Yet, in the context of sports tourism, it is in particular the bodily nature of the *activity*, which entails a rich

potential of connecting *people* to *place* (Crouch 2000; Higham and Hinch 2009). Higham and Hinch (2006, p. 41) pursued this argument by suggesting that ‘people themselves can have ‘place-making qualities’’. Tuan (1975, p. 152) expanded on these considerations and contended:

Place is a center of meaning constructed by experience. Place is known not only through the eyes and mind but also through the more passive and direct modes of experience, which resist objectivation.

One commonality between these lines of thought is particularly insightful in this context, namely that *place* is highly subjective. The perception of *place* depends on what it means to *people*, or on the meaning they attach to a *place* (Tuan 1975; 1991). In sports tourism and adopting a geographic perspective, Hinch and Higham (2004) built on these ideas and arguments. They (2004, p. 100) suggested that, [w]hile the geometric characteristics of space can be objectively measured, place is much more subjective in nature’. The meaning a *place* entails for an individual is dynamic; it is subject to change, constantly under construction and reconstruction (Higham and Hinch 2006).

The concept of *place* is recognised by both leisure and tourism scholars (Crouch 1999; 2000; Lew 2001; Lew et al. 2004) as well as in sports (Bale 1993; 1994). Higham and Hinch (2006) proposed to draw on these bodies of literature to make sense of sports tourism participation, in general, and the nature of place, place meaning and place identity, specifically. Yet here again, the *place* element should not, and cannot, be considered in isolation. It is the relationship, synergy and interaction between *place*, a physical *activity* and the meaning *people* attach to both the place and the activity that characterise the essence of the unique nature of sports tourism.

The interaction of activity, people and place

The analysis of sports tourism participation through the lenses of *activity*, *people* and *place* in a separate and disconnected way, as it occurred in the previous sections, was done on purpose. This separation for analytical purposes has not only revealed a lot

about each of the three dimensions or lenses in isolation, it also, and more importantly, provided fruitful insight into the synergistic nature of the three elements and, as a consequence, into research themes that merit further investigation and theorising.

The previous sections have shed light on the holistic interaction between *activity*, *people* and *place* in sports tourism in at least three different ways. First, through being engaged in a physical *activity*, *people* experience not only *place*, but also themselves and others. This way of interaction came to the fore, particularly, in Rickly-Boyd's (2012) study of lifestyle-climbing, in which she identified a relationship between the bodily nature of the activity, being outside of everyday life and the (re-)discovery of a sense of self and belonging. Second, it is being in a *place* outside of the home environment, which allows individuals to connect to other like-minded *people*. The foundation for this connection, in turn, is formed by the shared interest and engagement in a specific physical *activity*, as revealed by Green and Chalip (1998) in their study of travelling football subcultures. Third, and last but not least, being involved in a physical *activity* shapes the nature of *place*, as it is experienced and subjectively perceived by *people*. This way of interaction came to the fore particularly in Griffith's (2013) investigation of non-Brazilian capoeiristas travelling to Brazil to validate their legitimacy as capoeira practitioners.

This holistic view of the interaction between *activity*, *people* and *place* reveals several themes and issues that merit further attention in academic studies. The bodily nature of the *activity* points to the need to shed further light on sports tourism as a physical experience as well as the alternation between kinaesthetic and viewing perspectives. Furthermore, more research is needed to enquire how participation in sports tourism contributes to the development and expression of both a sense of self and sense of belonging. Finally, the notion of *place* and the meaning *people* attach to it requires gaining fuller insight into the role travelling and being outside of everyday life plays in the view of sports tourists. How to investigate these themes is a question of selecting appropriate research methodologies and approaches. It is to these and related issues this chapter now turns to.

2.2.5 Researching sports tourism: Methodological considerations, approaches and problems

Over and above an insufficient theoretical underpinning, research into participation in sports tourism has to face a second major criticism, namely one concerning methodological issues. In his systematic appraisal of peer-reviewed research conducted between 2000 and 2004, Weed (2006a, p. 13) identified the 'most featured topic in the articles was the behaviours, profiles, and motivations of sports tourists (38%)'. This seems to be a considerable number of studies, yet he continued to emphasise 'much of this work is fairly basic, providing profiles of, rather than explanations for, sports tourists' behaviours' (Weed 2006a, p. 13). Furthermore, Weed (2006a, p. 20) claimed that 'sports tourism research lacks methodological diversity, with 71% of primary and secondary research articles utilising a positivist approach'. This critique has been echoed by Downward (2008), Gibson (2004), Green and Jones (2005) and Harris (2006). Like Weed (2006a; 2008b; 2009), they have criticised research into sports tourists for its focus on answering 'what' rather than 'why' questions, for the dominance of positivist, quantitative research approaches and a lack of methodological diversity.

This weakness, however, should not be considered in isolation. Instead, it needs to be assessed against the overall research development in the field. As the previous sections revealed, early attempts towards advancing the understanding of sports tourism participation were concerned with the development of profiles, typologies and descriptions. Studies with a descriptive purpose generally provide 'a detailed account, or the precise measurement and reporting, of the characteristics of some population, group or phenomenon, including establishing regularities' (Blaikie 2010, p. 69). Therefore, by their very nature, descriptive studies produce classifications, typologies or profiles that may be used to predict future behaviour (Blaikie 2010; Phillimore and Goodson 2004). In an early empirical study on sports tourists, Nogawa et al. (1996), for example, explored the socio-demographics, motives, travel patterns and expenditure of Japanese sports tourists who participated in a 'sports for all' event. Trauer et al. (2003) developed a profile of participants in the South Pacific Masters Games based on their motivation. Other profiles and classifications are related to specific kinds of

sports such as golfing (Hennessey et al. 2008; Tassiopoulos and Haydam 2008). In a more recent study, Kim and Ritchie (2010) develop a classification of golf tourists and offer distinct typologies based on travel motivation.

Over and above developing profiles, other positivist studies have established patterns, cause-and-effect relationships or regularities in sports tourism behaviour based on correlations between variables. Kim and Chalip (2004), for example, examined the relationships between motives, interest and constraints to attend the FIFA World Cup in 2002. In a study of adventure travellers, Sung (2008) aimed to classify subgroups based on their travel characteristics and attempted to understand how the identified segments varied in perceiving adventure travel. In two more recent studies, the researchers focus on generating patterns of association: Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010) investigate the extent to which event satisfaction influences attitudes and behavioural intentions to take part in a recurring small-scale sport event. Walker et al. (2010) explore athletes taking part in the 2005 World Masters Games by investigating how three types of experience and two types of achievement orientation interact. While these studies are valuable in analysing, explaining and predicting behaviour, a drawback is that 'research aimed at generating these typologies may serve to strengthen or even construct stereotypes' (Phillimore and Goodson 2004, p. 11).

The reviewed studies contributed to the generation of knowledge on sports tourists by describing, explaining or predicting behaviour. They generated profiles based on descriptions, established relationships between variables, or tested hypotheses to predict behaviour. Hence, the core of the methodological critique was not aimed at positivist research and quantitative methods as such; yet it was raised against the unquestioning use of these techniques based on convention 'without any consideration of the epistemological or ontological grounds for doing so' (Weed 2008b, p. 20), without checking their appropriateness to fulfil the research purpose (Weed 2011). Weed and Bull (2009, p. 296) clarified:

The intention is not to suggest that a 'scientific revolution' replacing the dominant positivist approach in sports tourism research with a different dominant approach is required. Rather, the recommendation is that the sports tourism research enterprise makes an effort to become epistemologically and

methodologically heterogeneous and diverse, as befits a multidisciplinary research area that draws on a range of subject areas for synergistic insights.

There is still a need for positivist research into sports tourists utilising quantitative methods as long as their use clearly matches the purpose and questions under investigation. In this respect, Weed (2011, p. 102) identifies Jarvis and Blank's (2011) study on the motivations of travelling volunteers at the 2007 World Gymnastics Championships in Stuttgart, Germany, as 'an excellent illustration of the appropriate use of quantitative methods, underpinned by a positivist epistemology'.

The question, however, is whether these studies really offer an in-depth understanding of why sports tourists do what they do. Is it really possible to reveal the underlying reasons of social action and interaction when researchers adopt the perspective of an objective and detached outsider using quantitative methods? But it is exactly the uncovering of the deeper reasons of sports tourism involvement that is one of the crucial tasks for researchers in the field. Weed (2008b, p. 17) contended

the greatest need in sports tourism research is the development of a greater understanding of sports tourism participation experiences underpinned by a clear conceptualisation of the ontological nature of sports tourism.

Likewise, Downward (2008), Gibson (2004) and Green and Jones (2005) postulated the need to move beyond variables and to identify the underlying processes and reasons for undertaking a certain activity. In light of this perspective, positivism clearly has its limits. While this approach is useful to measure and correlate variables, reveal cause-and-effect relationships and to develop law-like conclusions and generalisations (Blaikie 2010; Saunders et al. 2003), researching how a specific experience is perceived by an individual requires a constructionist, interpretive approach (Blaikie 2010; Crotty 1998; Saunders et al. 2003). It is in this context that the call for promoting interpretive, qualitative approaches in sports tourism research (Weed 2009) needs to be viewed.

There is a growing number of studies of sports tourists in which interpretive research designs have been established and qualitative methods used. One of the very early

examples is Green and Chalip's (1998) investigation into the motives of female football players travelling to take part in a football tournament. By examining the players' experience of taking part in the event, the researchers identified the attractiveness of the event as a place to celebrate a shared identity and subcultural style. They concluded it is the event itself that attracted the participants rather than the host destination. In this exploratory, often-quoted study (see for, example, Higham and Hinch 2009; Weed and Bull 2009), the researchers adopted a qualitative, grounded theory approach. In terms of methods, the researchers used participant observation, open-ended interviews and tournament documents.

Green and Chalip's study (1998) revealed connections between sports tourism, subcultural practices and personal identity. Uncovering relationships is usually associated with the research purpose of providing causal explanations for certain behaviours. In this case, however, the established link had nothing to do with revealing cause-and-effect relationships or statistical associations between variables. Instead, it is one between concepts that emerged from the data. By adopting an interpretive approach based on qualitative methods, the researchers were able to reveal an underlying, hidden layer of reasons for participation in the event, namely the celebration of a shared identity and subculture.

In their study on non-local participants in the Master Games in Australia, Gillett and Kelly (2006) explored participants' motives. For studying motives in sports tourism, several researchers have used quantitative methods (see, for example, Kim and Chalip 2004; Kim and Ritchie 2010). Gillett and Kelly (2006), however, revealed that they explicitly opted for a *qualitative* investigation of participants' motives as they wanted to assess 'not only known motive factors ... but also those that are unknown to the researcher at the time of data collection' (Gillett and Kelly 2006, p. 246). Measuring and counting items in a structured way, as is the case when using quantitative methods, presupposes the researcher clearly knowing all possible variables in advance. Yet, if a study aims at exploring and discovering unknown motivational items, using a qualitative approach is the more promising avenue to capture the complexity of reality (Blaikie 2010; Flick 2006).

A similar approach was adopted by Shipway and Jones (2007) in their study of distance runners taking part in an event in Cyprus. They used a quasi-ethnographic design based on both participant and non-participant observation. Lyons and Dionigi (2007) and Sugden (2007) investigated active sports events tourists also utilising qualitative techniques; the studies provided by Fairley (2008; 2009) and Frew and McGillivray (2008) are examples of qualitative investigations into passive sports event tourists which clearly illustrate researchers in the field have started to respond to the critique. Nevertheless, to develop a deeper understanding of sports event tourists, more research is needed that is conducted within interpretivist paradigms (Downward 2008; Harris 2006; Weed 2009). Also, Shipway and Jones (2007, p. 382) postulated:

In order to understand the social world of sport tourism, future research needs to be qualitative in its nature rather than to conceptualising sport tourism in terms of variables and the relationship between them.

Another issue appears noteworthy as it has considerable methodological effects, especially when researching sports event tourism. Chalip (2006, p. 110, original emphasis) reflected on the particular nature of an event and its implications for researchers:

Events are temporary and they happen quickly. If one wants to study the Summer Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, or the Commonwealth Games *in situ*, then one has only a few weeks every four years to collect data, and the location of those data changes each time. What one collects depends on the research plan, and it is hard to follow-up. Small incidents may represent significant phenomena, but the significance may not be apparent at the time.

The temporary nature of an event with its precise starting point and end (Getz 1991) confronts the researcher with the challenge to collect data within a short and clearly defined period (Chalip 2006). Weed and Bull (2009, p. 40) suggested that to advance the knowledge in the field, there is a need to focus on the 'broader experience, rather than simply on the attendance at the event'. They used Fairley's (2008) study of fans attending Australian football league games to emphasise Fairley (2008) not only

investigated the fans' stay during the event, but also their coach journey. Weed and Bull (2009, p. 40) argued

in addition to the destination experience, there is a place experience of the bus journey itself, where past, present and future interact in an experience drawn from reliving the past (previous trips), enjoying the present (current trip), and anticipating the future (what will happen on the rest of the trip).

It is crucial to review briefly the time-frame of data collection in various studies. Often researchers in sports event tourism collect their data during the actual period of the event (Frew and McGillivray 2008; Green and Chalip 1998; Lyons and Dionigi 2007; McCartney and Osti 2007; Menzies and Nguyen 2012; Preuss et al. 2007; Shipway and Jones 2007). In their study of participation motives, in turn, Gillett and Kelly (2006, p. 247) deliberately decided to conduct interviews before the festivities 'in order to control for the influence of any actual event experiences that may possibly affect the interpretation of their own motives'. Likewise, Kim and Chalip (2004) collected their data before, while Jarvis and Blank (2011) and Filo et al. (2013) conducted their survey in the months after the event. While Gibson et al. (2003), Lamont and McKay (2012) and Nogawa et al. (1996) enriched the data gathered during their investigated events through additional information gained in the post-event period, there seems to be a lack of studies that research participants before, during and after the event. Such a broad and extended approach to data collection may be a way forward to meet Weed and Bull's (2009) call for more far-reaching investigations of the experience over and above the pure event attendance.

After having explored the development and nature of understanding sports tourism participation in the light of the two main points of critique researchers in the field have been faced with, the next section considers the different sports scenes that have been explored in the context of sports tourism studies. This is significant as it shows that sports tourism research into aesthetic sports has largely been neglected so far.

2.2.6 Sports tourism research into aesthetic sports

Due to the heterogeneity of sports tourism, there is not only one way of understanding sports tourists. Therefore, it is necessary to examine specific sports segments separately (Hinch and Higham 2004). A review of the variety of sports scenes academics in the field have addressed so far shows that empirical studies in sports tourism have focused on both individual and team sports. In terms of individual sports, scholars addressed long distance running (Chalip and McGuirly 2004; Filo et al. 2013; Funk and Bruun 2007; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008; Sugden 2007; Wicker et al. 2012), cycling (Bull 2006; Coghlan 2012; Lamont 2009), golfing (Gibson and Pennington-Gray 2008; Harris and Lepp 2011; Hennessey et al. 2008; Kim and Ritchie 2010; Petrick and Backman 2008; Sung 2008; Tassiopoulos and Haydam 2008) and tae kwon do (Kim and Chalip 2010). Additional individual sports included outdoor activities, such as horse sports (Daniels and Norman 2005), kayaking (Kane and Zink 2004), mountain sports (Beedie 2008; Houge Mackenzie and Kerr 2012; Papadimitriou and Gibson 2008), climbing (Rickly-Boyd 2012), paragliding (Costa and Chalip 2008), skiing (Hinch et al. 2005; Hudson et al. 2010; Vaske et al. 2008) and surfing (Barbieri and Sotomayor 2013; Dolnicar and Fluker 2003). In terms of teams sports, researchers have analysed, amongst others, basketball (Chen 2006; Chen 2010), football (Fairley 2008; 2009; Gibson et al. 2003; Green and Chalip 1998; Wise 2011), rugby (Davies and Williment 2008; Higham 2005; Higham and Hinch 2002; Kane 2010; Morgan 2007; Ritchie 2004) and soccer (Frew and McGillivray 2008; Kim and Chalip 2004; Weed 2006b).

To approach the variety of physical activities in sports tourism research, Standeven and De Knop (1999) have drawn on the Haywood and Key Model of Sport. In this model, Haywood (1994) and Haywood et al. (1995) examined sports based on the nature of the challenges a sport imposes. Those can be either interpersonal or environmental. If a sport imposes an interpersonal challenge, it is based on combat or contest; in both cases, opponents are directly confronted with each other. What makes these physical activities particular is that they are naturally competitive (Haywood 1994; Haywood et al. 1995). Standeven and De Knop (1999, p. 53) argued in this case

competition is not simply necessary; it is the sufficient condition to define the nature of the activity. Winning (or losing or drawing) is unavoidable; it is the ultimate goal, the whole purpose of engaging in the activity.

While these activities, such as fencing or basketball, may be pursued for the purpose of fun, competing and outplaying the opponent is the fundamental feature of these sports (Haywood 1994; Haywood et al. 1995). Bjelac and Radovanovic (2003) argued it is this competitive element which constitutes the attractiveness of a sports context in tourism. They proposed (2003, p. 260):

Sports is, in itself, attractive, but this attractiveness is realized through competitions – events – which have to be organized at a particular time and place, in accordance with specific rules.

This argument has been further elaborated by Deery et al. (2004, p. 239), who suggested 'for sport to attract people, it would invariably be competitive sport'. As competitions usually take place in the context of some sort of event, they even equated sports tourism with sports event tourism (Deery et al. 2004). This delimitation, however, ignores those activities that fall into the category of environmental challenges in the Haywood and Key Model of Sport. These derive from 'the physical laws of gravity and friction and are a result of pitting the body against those natural forces' (Standeven and De Knop 1999, p. 51). These challenges imply a need to overcome the inertia of the body (Haywood 1994). Environmental challenges are subdivided into those imposed by nature such as snow or water and artificial ones, for example apparatus such as the trampoline. A further distinction is made between purposive and aesthetic challenges. The former ones are imposed by sports, such as climbing or athletics, and are directed towards the outcome of an activity. The latter, in turn, are those in which the style and aesthetics of human movement is the most crucial element (Haywood 1994; Haywood et al. 1995; Higham and Hinch 2009). Best (1988, p. 481) specifies this distinction by suggesting:

A purposive sport is one in which ... there is an indefinite variety of ways of achieving the end... By contrast, an aesthetic sport is one in which the purpose cannot be specified independently of the manner of achieving it.

While, for example, in soccer or basketball, it does not matter how players score as long as they do so, in aesthetic sports like gymnastics, by contrast, it does indeed matter how the purpose of the activity is achieved as 'that purpose inevitably *concerns* the manner of performance' (Best 1988, p. 481, original emphasis). While in purposive sports means and end can be separated, in aesthetic sports they cannot (Best 1988).

Comparing the Haywood and Key Model of Sport with the sports contexts which have been addressed so far in sports tourism research reveals many of the investigated activities fall into the category of interpersonal challenges, such as basketball, rugby or tae kwon do. Others, for example mountain sports and kayaking, can be classified according to the natural challenges they impose. It is, however, noteworthy that those activities imposing aesthetic challenges have not yet been thoroughly researched. Among the few exceptions are McCleary et al. (2005), who studied the demographics, characteristics, travel patterns and motivations of participants in a ballroom dancing event as well as Griffith's (2013) study into the martial art of capoeira. Furthermore, for Ziakas and Costa's (2010) investigation into the role festivities play to foster the community's social fabric, the sports context was provided by a synchronised swimming event.

Within aesthetic sports, gymnastics also represents an under-developed context in the study of sports tourism, perhaps with the notable exception of Jarvis and Blank's (2011) investigation of volunteer motivations at the 2007 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Stuttgart, Germany. Yet, there is a lack of studies that explore gymnasts who actively participate in sports tourism. This is noteworthy for both quantitative and qualitative reasons. First, with its 130 member federations and more than 50 million active participants around the globe, the International Gymnastics Federation is among the largest sporting organisations in the world (International Gymnastics Federation 2012a). Hence, there is a considerable sports tourism potential, especially when considering the varied events and competitions taking place around the globe every year, at international, national and local levels. Second, over and above this quantitative aspect, investigating gymnastics as a context in sports tourism

research matters due to the strong social and cultural meaning gymnastics has always entailed, far beyond pure physical exercise (see section 2.1). Maguire (2011, p. 858) suggests that sport is always embedded in wider socio-cultural processes and structures and that 'any study of sport must also be a study of the society in which sport is located'. Considering the connections to, and meaning for, social life that has permeated the development of gymnastics from its emergence until today, researching this particular context could perhaps contribute to generate an additional layer of understanding sports tourism participation, namely one that also, and specifically, addresses the link between sports tourism and wider social issues.

2.2.7 Summary

Understanding sports tourism participation is one of the major topics on the research agenda in the field. Early attempts to better comprehend sports tourists entailed the development of a variety of typologies. While these managed to deconstruct the heterogeneity of sports tourists by identifying distinctive groups and categories, they were criticised for over-simplifying the structure of the field and for their focus on description rather than explanation. The focus on typology development in the earlier stages of sports tourism research has entailed two major disadvantages, a lack of in-depth theorising, on one hand, and the dominance of positivist, quantitative research approaches, on the other. The preceding review has addressed these weaknesses, but it has also revealed that the body of theoretically grounded research in sports tourism has advanced. Furthermore, following the critique, researchers have indeed utilised a greater range of methodologies drawing on interpretive approaches. Yet, in spite of the clearly recognisable progress, the analysis has also demonstrated there still remains the need for further theoretically underpinned in-depth investigations of a variety of sports tourism contexts. This applies even more to the area of aesthetic sports which were identified as highly under-researched sports tourism activities.

The attempt to make sense of sports tourism participation by taking each of the elements *activity*, *people* and *place* as a lens of analysis has shed light on some of the themes and issues that merit further academic attention. The corporeal nature of the

activity points to the need for a more detailed investigation of sports tourism as a physical experience as well as addressing the potential oscillation between the kinaesthetic and the viewing perspective. The *people* lens calls for more research to enquire how participation in sports tourism contributes to the development and expression of both a sense of self and sense of belonging. Finally, the *place* element requires gaining fuller insight into the role travelling and being outside of everyday life plays in the view of sports tourists.

While there is a general agreement on the need to frame studies within theoretical ideas to ensure a coherent body of knowledge on sports tourism (Gibson 1998b; 2005a; Higham and Hinch 2009; Weed 2008b; 2009), diverging perspectives exist relating to the sources of such theorisation. Gibson (2005a; 2008) has suggested sports tourism studies should be framed by concepts and theories from related fields, such as tourism, sports and / or leisure. Weed (2009), meanwhile, proposed studies should be based on frameworks from relevant disciplines such as sociology, geography and / or psychology. In the following, four theoretical areas that do not only address the elicited thematic areas will be reviewed; with one concept deriving from the field of leisure and the other three being sociological in nature, this project also intends to synthesise insights from both suggested areas.

2.3 Theorising sports tourism participation

Four concepts are particularly relevant for making sense of travelling to and the taking part in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. These include: Stebbins' (1982) 'Serious Leisure' and Bourdieu's (1984) 'habitus', as well as community and identity. Not only were questions related to these concepts deemed under-researched in the field of sports tourism, they also emerged as theoretical issues from the socio-historical context of the World Gymnaestrada. Since their beginnings, gymnastics festivals possessed a meaning that went far beyond physical fitness and recreation. They provided a forum for participants to express and experience a sense of belonging and a shared understanding of themselves and their place in society. It is these notions that are at the core of all four concepts that are addressed in the following.

The four concepts and their related bodies of literature interact in a specific way to constitute the theoretical framework and lens of exploration for the research setting. As the findings chapter will reveal, *community* is the most central concept, drawing in particular on two key theorists, Cohen (1985) and his work *The symbolic construction of community*, on one hand, and Turner's (1969) notion of *communitas*, on the other. Yet, to start with, it is Stebbins' (1982; 1992) *Serious Leisure* qualities that characterise the central behavioural devices of the community members. The concept of Serious Leisure shapes the core of the collective's shared *habitus*, those internalised rules and dispositions that are taken for granted in the community (Bourdieu 1977; 1984). It is these two concepts, hence, which support and underpin the development of a portrait of the World Gymnaestrada community. Being part of this community, last but not least, gives rise to the development, expression and experience of a very specific form of *identity*, the fourth element of the theoretical framework. Figure 3 visualises these conceptual relationships, with community being the key notion:

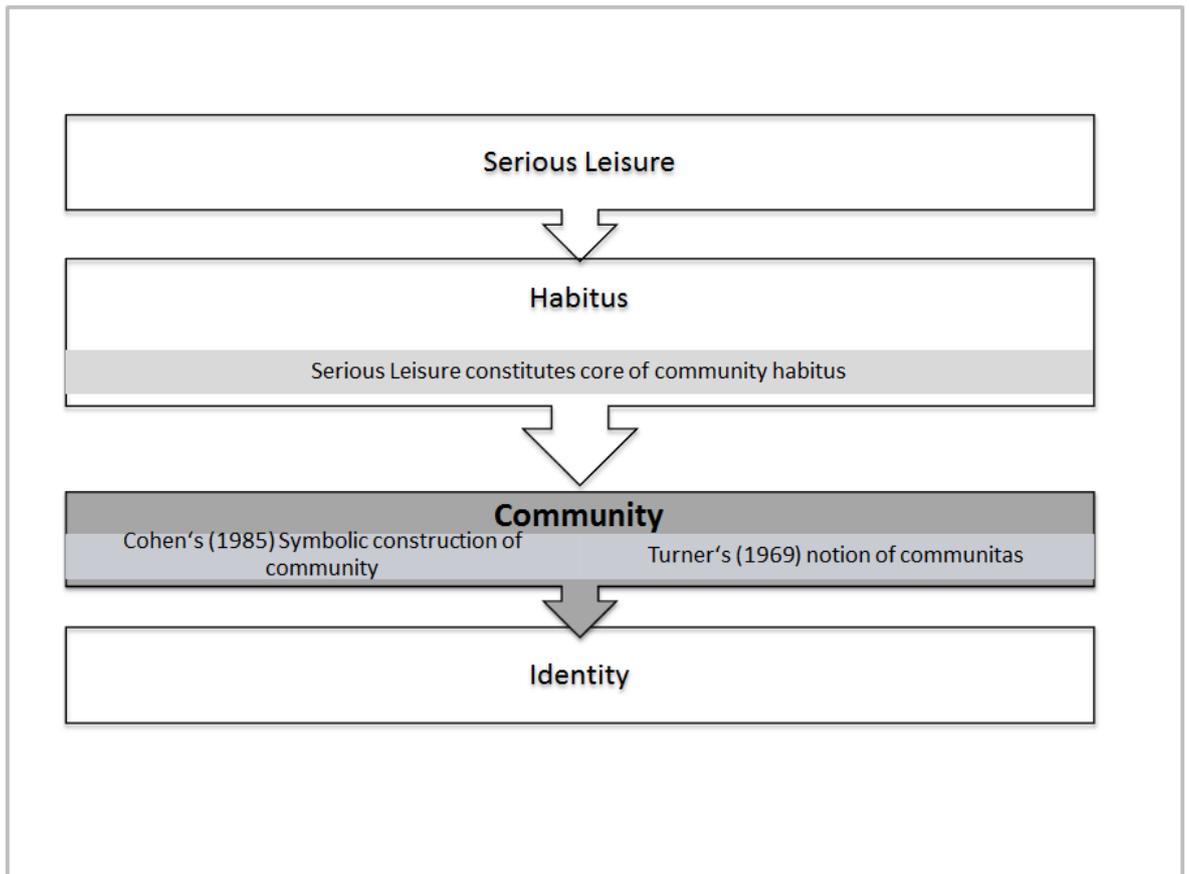


Figure 3: Conceptual relationships of the theoretical framework

The following sections are dedicated to exploring the four elements of the theoretical framework. It starts with addressing the concepts of Serious Leisure and habitus, before reviewing the literature related to identity. The chapter then progresses onto exploring the key notion of community. Three aspects guide the review of all four concepts. First, in each section, the corresponding theoretical construct is introduced in some depth. Second, a review of relevant sports tourism research that has utilised the concept is provided. Last, it will be explained why each of the four concepts is appropriate for developing a more sophisticated understanding of participation in sports tourism.

2.3.1 Serious Leisure

The distinction between 'sport tourism' and 'tourism sport' revealed sports tourists vary in the importance they attach to the sports activity (Gammon and Robinson 1997; Robinson and Gammon 2004). Likewise, in Weed and Bull's (2009) 'Sports Tourism Participation Model', the level of commitment to the sports activity is one of the core dimensions. A tool that provides further insight into sports tourists who are to be found at the committed or driven end of the sports tourism demand continuum is Stebbins's (1982; 1992) concept of Serious Leisure. Stebbins (2007, p. 5) conceptualised it as:

the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience.

Higham and Hinch (2009, p. 128) appreciated the value of this concept as it 'has helped to detrivialize the field of leisure studies ... by distinguishing between casual and serious forms of leisure'. Green and Jones (2005) argued the concept dissolves the dichotomous categories between work, duty and seriousness on one hand, and leisure and relaxation on the other. The concept acknowledges that 'leisure may be – at times – closer to work than traditional conceptualisations of leisure' (Green and Jones 2005, p. 166). Dilley and Scraton (2010, p. 125) agree, suggesting the concept is a significant theoretical advance 'as it frees notions of leisure from the idea that all leisure is casual, fun, enjoyable and hedonistic'. Instead, leisure may involve goal-orientation, long-term commitment, perseverance and dedication.

According to Stebbins (1982; 1992), Serious Leisure is defined by six qualities that set it apart from casual leisure. The qualities include the need to persevere and to negotiate constraints to participation; considerable effort based on knowledge, training or skill; gaining durable benefits as a result of participation, such as self-actualisation, self-enrichment, or feelings of accomplishment and belonging; the development of a career in the activity, involving progression, stages of achievement and turning points; a unique ethos derived from the activity; and a strong level of identification.

The utility and relevance of Serious Leisure to account for what occurs has been assessed in a number of research contexts, relating to both tourism (Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001), sports (Dilley and Scraton 2010), events (Getz and McConnell 2011; Jarvis and Blank 2011), and also sports tourism (Green and Jones 2005; Kane and Zink 2004; Shipway and Jones 2007, 2008), to name but a few. What makes the field of sports tourism particular for exploring Serious Leisure is that the manifestation of its qualities is reinforced by the travel component (Green and Jones 2005; Higham and Hinch 2009). The need to persevere, for example, does not only relate to the leisure activity, such as overcoming failure, fatigue, injury, stress or anxiety; it also includes additional constraints caused by the very act of travelling, such as cost or time. The Serious Leisure sports tourist has to persevere and negotiate both activity- and travel-related barriers that would likely lead to non-participation in the case of a casual leisure sports tourist. Green and Jones (2005, p. 167), hence, argued 'serious sport tourists could be said to represent an extreme form of serious leisure'. Closely related to that is the need to undertake significant effort based on specialist knowledge, training or skills. Here again, the need to travel acts as a reinforcing factor as the Serious Leisure sports tourist has to prepare and undertake effort not only for the activity, but also for travelling (Green and Jones 2005).

Examining the other qualities, such as obtaining durable benefits from engaging in the pursuit, including boosting self-esteem, enabling self-expression or facilitating social interaction, reveals that the effect of fostering the qualities through travelling may also proceed in a positive way. Green and Jones (2005) noted similar benefits have been revealed as popular travel motives; hence, when touring to engage in the activity, the act of travelling may reinforce the benefits gained from the actual pursuit. Also, undertaking a journey to take part in an event related to the activity on a local, regional, national or even international level can serve as a means to advance one's career in the activity and, likewise, as a marker of one's career stage. Furthermore, travelling in order to pursue a Serious Leisure activity contributes to the construction, confirmation and display of one's leisure identity (Green and Jones 2005). This has been confirmed by Shipway and Jones (2008) in their study of the 2007 Flora London Marathon. The authors concluded (p. 67) 'the very act of travelling to London allowed

the running identity to become more salient and more enduring'. Travelling has the potential to enhance Serious Leisure participation as it provides 'a time and place to interact with others sharing the ethos of the activity' (Green and Jones 2005, p. 164). In their study of a women's football tournament in Florida several years earlier, Green and Chalip (1998) discovered that the attraction of the event was its potential to celebrate a distinctive football subculture. These findings increase the need to further explore questions such as the extent to which travelling to another place impacts on the unique ethos or identity people derive from their activity.

Stebbins' (1992) notion of a unique ethos has been juxtaposed with several concepts, subculture being one of them. As the term subculture is often associated with groups that differ from social norms (Crosset and Beal 1997), Higham and Hinch (2009, p. 138) argued the term subculture should only be used where a sport is 'marginalized within the dominant culture'. Alternatively, they suggested using the term sub-world, which they see as being consistent with the concept of Serious Leisure:

These social worlds are defined as large and highly permeable, amorphous and spatially transcendent forms of social organizations made up of people sharing common interests and common channels of communication. As such, they offer advantages for inquiry into this dimension of sport tourism activity relative to the traditional focus on subculture (Higham and Hinch 2009, p. 138).

In an earlier publication, Green and Jones (2005), however, questioned the appropriateness of the term sub-world. They argued 'the unique ethos of serious leisure participation represents the *shared ideas and values* of a group of people rather than merely the segment of people from a broader population' (Green and Jones 2005, p. 173, original emphasis). Furthermore, they underlined these values and ideas are indeed often in contrast to those of broader society which would speak for the validity of the term subculture. Against the backdrop of increasingly fluid boundaries and membership processes, Wheaton (2007), however, warned researchers to revisit the notion of subculture and to assess critically its usefulness in empirical and theoretical terms. Alternatively, in relation to Stebbins' unique ethos, Bourdieu's concepts *habitus*, *field* and *cultural capital* have been discussed by Green and Jones (2005) and

Kane and Zink (2004). Due to their significance for this research, these concepts are further explored in section 2.3.2.

A critic of Serious Leisure and of its application claimed it fails to situate leisure participation in its wider social context (Dilley and Scraton 2010). Dilley and Scraton (2010) argue research has tended to concentrate on the individual actor and on the respective leisure activity rather than situating participation in the broader social and cultural setting in which it occurs. Interestingly, Stebbins (1982) himself did contextualise his conceptual statement of Serious Leisure against the wider social conditions. He suggested that the increasing serious orientation towards leisure stems, in particular, from a variety of contemporary changes in society, such as the reduction of the number of official weekly working hours. It is under these circumstances, people increasingly utilise the realm of leisure to seek self-expression and fulfilment (Stebbins 1982). Considering this point of critique, it can be argued the explanatory power of Serious Leisure can be deployed in particular if the leisure activity under investigation is assessed against the backdrop of broader socio-cultural conditions of life.

A second point of critique refers to a limitation in terms of its utilisation in sports tourism research. It cannot be denied that the strength of the framework to develop a more sophisticated understanding of participation applies to only a very limited range of sports tourists, namely those at the committed or driven end of the sports tourism demand continuum. The less committed or incidental types of sports tourists can – if at all – only to a limited extent be explained within the Serious Leisure framework (Higham and Hinch 2009). So, utilising the concept implies the participants under investigation display a certain level of dedication and commitment which needs to be identifiable.

If this is the case, however, the Serious Leisure concept has been considered to have considerable potential for future studies into sports tourism participation (Green and Jones 2005; Gibson 2008; Higham and Hinch 2009). Green and Jones (2005, p. 178) argued it is useful to ‘acknowledge the seriousness with which both active and passive sport tourists assign to their leisure, and the strong identities that can result from such participation’. In addition, Higham and Hinch (2009, p. 142) underlined the explanatory

power of the concept in sports tourism research as it has the 'potential to combine considerations of personal identity with considerations of place' and 'has intriguing parallels with investigations into subculture'. These remarks point to the particular strength of Serious Leisure qualities to account for sports tourism participation also in relation to other conceptual constructs, such as community and identity, which are explored in more detail in sections 2.3.3 (identity) and 2.3.4 (community).

2.3.2 Habitus

Pierre Bourdieu is among those sociologists whose concepts and theories have not only been applied to the realm of leisure and sports; he himself has explicitly dedicated some of his thinking to understanding leisure involvement, in general, and sports engagement in particular (Haywood et al. 1995). However, 'Bourdieu was concerned not with sport *per se*, but with behind-the-scenes factors of socialization and social differentiation that instil different sporting tastes' (Giulianotti 2005, p. 153, original emphasis). Bourdieu (1979; 1984) conducted extensive research to demonstrate and explain relationships, notably between individual dispositions and preferences, social class and the adoption of specific cultural practices, including sports. He was concerned with identifying the extent to which day-to-day activities are part of, related to, and impacted by wider social life (Jarvie and Maguire 1994). Jarvie and Maguire (1994, p. 183-184) proposed that what makes Bourdieu's work particularly enriching is he examined 'what people actually do in these practices without losing sight of the wider patterns of social life'. By this, they point to the recurring connections Bourdieu was eager to make between his research on leisure, sports and the body, on one hand, and his concern with broader social issues, debates and structures, on the other.

In his attempt to explain the phenomena emerging in his studies, Bourdieu was primarily concerned with overcoming the prevailing dichotomies between objectivism and subjectivism, macro- and micro-sociology, agency and structure, and freedom and determinism (Haywood et al. 1995; Jarvie and Maguire 1994; Jenkins 1992; Kahlert 2009). He theorised social life is not an aggregate of individual behaviour determined by the rules of society. Nor did he see society to be entirely based on actions and

decisions taken by each individual independently. For him, social life and practice follow a logic that involves both intended and unintended, conscious and unconscious processes (Jarvie and Maguire 1994). That is why,

at one and the same time, Bourdieu wants to examine both the objective structures which unconsciously act to orient and constrain social practice and the subjective dimension which focuses upon the social genesis of mental structure (Jarvie and Maguire 1994, p. 185).

For him, as for his contemporary Giddens, structures were 'both the medium and the outcome of activity' (Layder 1994, p. 144). Embracing both perspectives, and drawing on a term used by Mauss (1973), Bourdieu elaborated the concept of *habitus* to bridge agency and structure (Jenkins 1992). According to Bourdieu (1977), each individual's practices follow the logic of unconscious rules, of dispositions that are taken for granted and internalised in early childhood. They are developed through experience within the family and social surroundings and not explicitly learned. It is these dispositions that make up the habitus, guiding an individual in undertaking certain actions and in adopting a specific behaviour. The habitus, therefore, not only generates practices, but also narrows down its possibilities (Bourdieu 1977; 1984). It contains and operates based on a consistent 'logic of practice' (Haywood et al. 1995, p. 240) that reflects itself in all tastes and preferences of an individual.

The role of the habitus as a bridge between agency and structure is most obvious when considering the 'habitus is not only a structuring structure ... but also a structured structure' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 166). On one hand, the habitus is shaped by an individual's 'conditions of existence' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 166); on the other hand, it guides the individual's practices depending on the conditions of a specific situation. All this happens at the point of intersection between the intended and the unintended (Jarvie and Maguire 1994), so partially unconsciously and therefore cannot be overcome (Haywood et al. 1995). As soon as an individual has successfully learned and internalised certain practices, these proceed to the level of unconsciousness and become part of the body:

This practical notion, though originally developed as part of a conscious learning process, is remembered as a habitual response. These habits are so successfully learned that they become sedimented in the body. They become the body. As with sports and leisure performers, so too with social actors, it is the doing that counts (Jarvie and Maguire 1994, p. 187-188).

Bourdieu uses the metaphor of sports to account for his notions of habitus and social practice. When a sports performer learns a movement, s/he consciously reflects on doing it until it is gradually internalised and finally becomes an object of unconsciousness (Jarvie and Maguire 1994). This metaphor helps explain the way 'that the body enacts marks and habits that have been absorbed and reproduced through practices occurring in a structural context' (Jarvie and Maguire 1994, p. 186).

According to Engström (2008), the habitus can only be fully understood when it is related to two other key concepts developed by Bourdieu, namely *capital* and *field*. In the formation process of one's habitus, commencing in early childhood, individuals develop different forms of capital that mark their position in a specific social field. A field is a specific segment within society in which individuals share a common interest and struggle for their place within it (Bourdieu 1984). The habitus determines the range of properties and resources one possesses. If an individual manages to gain material or symbolic benefits from these properties and resources, these become capital in a specific field. Bourdieu distinguished between economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Kahlert 2009; Moingeon 1993). The position of an actor in a field depends on the extent and composition of his/her capital. The ability to move up and down, or to gain power within the field, is directly influenced by the ability to increase the capital volume or change its composition (Bourdieu 1984).

The habitus not only shapes an actor's practices in general, but also the pursuit of certain cultural and leisure activities. Bourdieu (1984) argued the development of preferences for specific activities and consumer goods, notably in the areas of arts, food, leisure and sports, follows logically from an individual's habitus. The habitus is the basis upon which all leisure choices are made. The selection of a specific activity depends not only on the material conditions, but also on the activity's social significance and distribution. While some activities are popular and accessible to a

wide range of actors, others are more exclusive and offer the potential of differentiation. According to Bourdieu (1984), individuals develop tastes and preferences according to the level of distinction they offer. As he suggested, 'like every sort of taste, it unites and separates' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 49). He argued that through pursuing a certain activity and absorbing the related practices, an individual expresses both belonging to a specific group and differentiation from others. This mechanism serves as a powerful means to affirm one's identity. At one and the same time, through producing and reproducing those practices, an individual's 'membership of humanity as a whole but also of specific communities' is reflected, constituted and confirmed (Jarvie and Maguire 1994, p. 189). The individual is in a position to feel comfortable not only with himself/herself, but also with like-minded people within the same community (Jarvie and Maguire 1994).

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1979; 1984) attempted to illustrate the relationships that exist between the adoption of a distinctive lifestyle and the adherence to a specific social class or segment. Through selecting an activity, the individual is able to display membership of a particular social class while at the same time setting himself/herself apart from others. Bourdieu (1984) argued that access to a more exclusive activity does not necessarily depend on material factors, but, in particular, on the competencies that are needed to appreciate, understand and engage with the activity. A ticket for an arts museum may not necessarily be much more expensive than a trip to the cinema. The distinctiveness of visiting an exposition derives from the knowledge that is needed to make sense of and appreciate arts works. This knowledge and the required competencies are part of the habitus formation process.

So, when Bourdieu (1984) identified that social class and the pursuit of specific leisure activities are closely interrelated, it is not only economic capital and material prosperity that determine the decision for or against an activity; the formation of a preference depends as well on cultural competencies, spare time and social factors. In terms of sports, Bourdieu (1978, p. 838) suggested it is the

[h]idden entry requirements, such as family tradition and early training, and also the obligatory clothing, bearing and techniques of sociability which keeps

these sports closed to the working classes and to individuals rising from the lower-middle and even upper-middle classes.

Furthermore, engaging in a specific activity depends on the meaning attached to it either by the individual or a social group. In this context, Bourdieu equates 'meaning' with the denotation 'value' (1984, p. 171). The meaning or value that is attached to a sports activity needs to be defined in terms of the habitus; the latter, in turn, frames the whole selection of practices. He acknowledged the meaning that is attached to a certain activity can vary considerably:

Because agents apprehend objects through the schemes of perception and appreciation of their habitus, it would be naïve to suppose that all practitioners of the same sport (or any other practice) confer the same meaning on their practice or even, strictly speaking, that they are practicing the same practice (Bourdieu 1984, p. 208).

With particular reference to sports, Bourdieu (1978; 1984) identified considerable meaning differences, which depend on a variety of variables – 'how long ago, and how, the sport was learnt, how often it is played, the socially qualified conditions (place, time, facilities, equipment), how it is played (position in a team, style etc.)' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 209). Another variable refers to the perception and attitude an actor or social group adopts towards the body. Interestingly, in this respect, Bourdieu (1984) explicitly discusses the example of gymnastics. According to him, gymnastics can serve as a means in itself for ascetic or more intrinsic purposes or as a way to build a strong and/or healthy body. Furthermore, the meaning derives from the cultural capital or social benefits of the activity. The latter help the individual to gain a distinctive position in a field by differentiating himself/herself from others through the activity (Bourdieu 1978; 1984). It is here the distinctive element again comes to the fore.

Bourdieu's theoretical considerations have been applied by sports scholars (Engström 2008; Purdy et al. 2009; Wacquant 1995; Wade 2011), in tourism (Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001) and sports tourism (Green and Jones 2005; Kane and Zink 2004; Kane 2010). In a related study on wine tourism, Ravenscroft and van Westering (2001)

proposed that distinction manifests itself when being part of a specific social world to which others do not, or only partially, belong. In the case of wine tourism, tourists are allowed to access parts of this world, for example, by taking part in a wine degustation. Yet, '[t]his access serves only to convince them how little they know, thus legitimising the prestige of the 'full members' of the social world' (Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001, p. 149). Full members, in this case, are those wine connoisseurs who have the knowledge and competencies to appreciate and evaluate the quality of wine, a form of cultural capital casual wine tourists do not possess. Hence, being a full member of the social world and having the related knowledge is the decisive factor for distinction from others (Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001). This process occurs through bodily practice: 'people 'become by doing', rather than 'doing to become'' (Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001, p. 149). Similarly, in their sports tourism study on the kayaking social world, Kane and Zink (2004) found that participants in a 14-day kayaking tour gained capital particularly through a heli-kayaking trip, which was 'the critical tour experience' (Kane and Zink 2004, p. 343). Participants were able to realise this capital through telling stories both to their kayaking fellows and to those outside the kayaking world. The tales formed a sort of symbolic capital through which the heli-kayaking participants were able to display their belonging to a specific social world that is accessed only by a limited number of persons (Kane and Zink 2004).

When *Distinction* was published, Bourdieu prompted an intense public debate, especially among French bourgeois intellectuals, who either praised his work as a major advance or confronted him with severe criticism (Jenkins 1992). Bourdieu has been criticised for adopting a too-mechanistic perspective close to structuralism, assuming that human actions are determined by structure (Giulianotti 2005; Jenkins 1992). Bourdieu was challenged with the criticism that his empirical studies were mainly restricted to France and Algeria. Furthermore, some of his critics claimed that the relationship between habitus, social class and the selection of specific activities are not as obvious as Bourdieu suggested (Giulianotti 2005; Jenkins 1992). Another methodological concern relates to the issue of how to research the habitus formation process. In a longitudinal study focusing on sports in Sweden, Engström (2008), for example, investigated to what extent differences in sporting practices in childhood and

adolescence, and differences in cultural capital affect sporting habits in later life stages. Engström (2008) demonstrated the breadth of sporting activity and the grades in physical education to be two important variables which he determined as indicators of a so-called sports habitus. He illustrated these variables indeed had a significant impact on sporting activities in later life stages. Here, however, the question needs to be raised as to whether Engström's (2008) use of the term 'sports habitus' does not derive from a too-narrow understanding of the term habitus. Does a sports habitus not contradict Bourdieu's habitus concept referring to dispositions that guide an individual's behaviour in a universal and holistic sense?

In spite of the critique, Haywood et al. (1995, p. 241) judged that 'Bourdieu's analysis is a significant advance upon conventional leisure research'. The authors appreciated, in particular, that Bourdieu not only describes the distribution of leisure activities among the population, but also provides *explanations*. It is in this context that Bourdieu's concepts and theories have a crucial role to play in sports tourism research. Bourdieu (1984) suggested the habitus frames how individuals select their practices and preferences. These, in turn, enable them to display belonging to a certain group while setting boundaries from others. It is through this somewhat holistic approach that Bourdieu's theory of distinction appears to be a powerful theoretical tool for grasping the heterogeneity of sports tourism. Bourdieu (1984) acknowledged that even within an activity there can be considerable meaning differences, matching the variety of different subgroups that exist within sports tourism. Applying Bourdieu's ideas to sports tourism promises fruitful, explanatory potential into why sports tourists do what they do. More specifically, if the pursuit of a sports activity, guided by an individual's habitus, serves as a means of setting oneself apart from others, the question can be raised as to what extent this process is enhanced through the travel element. How does the distinction process work if people do not interact with their activity and like-minded individuals in their home environment, but if they travel to another place do so? The application of Bourdieu's theoretical ideas in a sports tourism context appears to be an encouraging way forward to answer these kinds of questions.

2.3.3 Identity

The notion of *identity* is an important concept used widely throughout the social sciences. It is both complex and contested (Bradley 1996; Hall 1996; Jenkins 2008; Woodward 1997). Already in the 1990s, Hall (1996) identified a paradoxical situation related to the concept. He noted (1996, p. 1) 'a veritable discursive explosion' in the use of identity as a theoretical notion, while, simultaneously, its validity and significance have increasingly been challenged and questioned. He argued that identity is an idea

operating 'under erasure' in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all (Hall 1996, p. 2).

Essentially, identity refers to an individual's understanding of himself/herself and others (Jenkins 2008). It 'involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on' (Jenkins 2008, p. 5). This understanding of himself/herself derives from multiple, sometimes contradictory, sources, such as gender, age, nationality, ethnic group and social class, as well, for example, as job roles or leisure preferences (Jenkins 2008; Woodward 1997). The extent to which an individual is able to shape these identities and to which these are structurally constrained is contested. For Woodward (2000), identity is formed both through individual agency and structural constraints. While an individual can, for example, decide to identify with a specific sports team, other identity reference points, such as nationality, age and gender, involve less or no choice.

Identity plays a crucial role in social life. Even if it may evolve and change in the course of one's life, it provides an individual with a sense of location in the environment and offers orientation in a complex world (Woodward 1997). Being aware of and understanding another individual's identity may tell something about the person one is dealing with and provide an indication of how to relate to him/her. Jenkins (2008, p. 105) suggested:

Our ability to identify unfamiliar individuals as members of known categories allows us at least the illusion that we may know what to expect of them.

While psychologists tend to be more interested in personal identity, that is, how individuals view themselves, sociologists lean more towards investigating social identity (Bradley 1996). According to Tajfel (1974, p. 69), social identity is ‘that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [sic] knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership’. For Jenkins (2008), however, the differentiation between personal and social identity is not substantial. For him (2008, p. 17), identity is always constituted in and through social relations and interactions:

Identifying ourselves, or others, is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation.

Identity is based on, and negotiated through, interpersonal relationships; it comprises comparison, involving both similarity and difference (Bradley 1996; Jenkins 2008; Woodward 1997). The former denotes something one has in common with others, while the latter emphasises what sets an individual apart from others. Strongly connected to a constant interplay between similarity and difference is that identity comprises both something which makes an *individual* unique and something which is shared with a *collective* (Jenkins 2008; Woodward 1997). Through being different from others, the individual sees himself/herself as unique, while having something in common with others makes an actor feel and express belonging to a bigger whole. Jenkins (2008) suggested these processes happen in a constant and simultaneous interplay, and hence, for him, the ‘social’ in ‘social identity’ is superfluous.

Nearly two decades earlier, Taylor (1991) had taken the relationship between identity and social relationships one step further. For him, the foundation of identity is its dialogical nature. An individual’s understanding of himself/herself and their place in the world always depends on, and is negotiated through, a dialogue with others (Taylor 1991; 1992). This view is similar to Jenkins (2008). What makes Taylor's (1991;

1992) argument distinctive, however, is that, for him, identity is not only constituted and confirmed in relation to others, it should also be *meaningful to* others:

Defining myself means finding what is significant in my difference from others. I may be the only person with exactly 3,752 hairs on my head, or be exactly the same height as some tree on the Siberian plain, but so what? If I begin to say that I define myself by my ability to articulate important truths, or play the Hammerklavier like no one else, or revive the tradition of my ancestors, then we are in the domain of recognizable self-definitions (Taylor 1991, p. 35-36).

For Taylor (1991; 1992), it is not sufficient to say identity is about similarity and difference: it is about similarities and differences which matter to others. According to him, an individual's self-definition is always embedded in wider 'horizons of significance' (Taylor 1991, p. 39), that is, in a context of values and issues that transcend the self. As accounted for later in this section, this view is the fundamental assumption on which his critique of contemporary society is based.

Jenkins (2008) distinguished identification from identity. He suggested comprehending 'who is who' and 'what is what' is not just a 'thing', but a process involving identification: 'It is not something that one can *have*, or not; it is something that one *does*' (Jenkins 2008, p. 5, original emphasis). This process proceeds throughout the whole life, occurring during early and later socialisation, in and through institutionalised practices and in everyday social interaction (Jenkins 2008). Identity is continually negotiated in and through interpersonal encounters that also determine whether an individual's understanding of himself/herself and others may be accepted or not. He pointed out identity needs to be endorsed by others. Jenkins (2008) drew on Goffman (1959) to argue the validation of an individual's identity occurs in and through how he/she presents the self in a social context. Using the metaphor of a theatrical performance, Goffman (1959) suggested social contexts and interactions form a stage on which people become actors who play roles. Identity is the result of a coherent presentation of self that is accepted by the audience, formed by the other social actors. Whether identity is accepted, or not, by others depends on the extent to which a social actor understands, internalises and performs the rules and communication patterns that are prevailing on stage (Goffman 1959).

Critiques of Goffman's (1959) work have questioned, in particular, whether a performed presentation of self can be a real and authentic reflection of an individual's identity (Kaufmann 2009). Leaving aside this critique, what makes these considerations matter in the context of this research is their emphasis on the significance of identity affirmation and validation by others. Identity 'can never be essential or primordial, so it has to be made to *seem* so. We have to be made to *feel* 'we'' (Jenkins 2008, p. 176, original emphasis). Jenkins (2008) suggested that rites and rituals play a crucial role in this respect. Rituals do not only constitute and confirm identification with a collective; they also help celebrate the essence of particular identities. Furthermore, they may accompany the transition from one identity to another (Jenkins 2008). Inspired by the work of van Gennep (2005), originally published in 1909, and Turner (1969), Jenkins (2008, p. 174) identified a growing consensus 'that humans experience life as a series of transitions from one identity to another'. During a ritual, individuals distance themselves from a former understanding of themselves, pass through a transition period and finally adopt a new, often collective, identity (Turner 1969). The celebration of a ritual that accompanies this process makes the individual '*feel* that she [sic] belongs and is part of the greater organisational whole' (Jenkins 2008, p. 175, original emphasis).

The assumption of changing identities refers to the core of contemporary debates on whether an understanding of 'who is who' is fixed or fluid. Much has been written on how social change has impacted individuals' concepts of themselves and others (see, for example, Bauman 2000; Bradley 1996; Jenkins 2008; Taylor 1991; Woodward 1997). Despite some differences between the approaches and perspectives, there is a general agreement (Bradley 1996; Jenkins 2008; Taylor 1991; Woodward 1997) in that traditionally, identities, such as those based on gender, class, race or nationality, provided the individual with a reasonable stable core of self-understanding. Globalisation, changing patterns of production and consumption, along with a rising individualism, are, however, considered to have increasingly led to a fragmentation of identity (Bradley 1996; Jenkins 2008; Taylor 1991; Woodward 1997). Bauman (2000) is among those who argued identity has lost its stable core. In *Liquid Modernity*, he suggested that what characterises today's times is that many social actors no longer

have fixed points of reference for the construction of identities; instead, these are liquid and moving. He (2000, p. 7) argued:

It is such patterns, codes and rules to which one could conform, which one could select as stable orientation points and by which one could subsequently let oneself be guided, that are nowadays in increasingly short supply.

For Taylor (1991), it is not the fragmentation of identity, as such, which causes individuals to lose orientation in a world of growing complexity. What worries him (1991, p. 4) is that '[p]eople no longer have a sense of a higher purpose' and that identity formation is no longer embedded in moral values and an order that transcends the self. According to him, the challenge of the present is to find a balance between an individual's self-definition that is true to oneself and at the same time significant to others.

In contrast to Bauman (2000) and Taylor (1991), both Cohen (2002) and Jenkins (2008) proposed that identity is much more stable than it appears to be. Interestingly, Cohen (2002, p. 166) criticises his own work, claiming that he distances himself from his earlier 'attribution to identity of the characteristics of relativity and an ephemeral nature; and concomitantly, the denial to identity (communal or individual) of constancy'. The debates on and paradoxes of whether identities are fixed or fluid, stable or fleeting are not finally resolved; they provide an insightful context for further empirical research in order to better understand contemporary times.

With people officially spending less time in the workplace than they used to, engaging in leisure and sports activities has increasingly become an important area for identity construction in multiple ways (Stebbins 1982; Woodward 1997). In sports tourism, identity related themes have been explored in a whole range of different contexts. Research focused on identifying the underlying processes of how participation in sports tourism is, or becomes, part of one's self-concept (Beedie 2008; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Green and Chalip 1998; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008). In their study of the experiences of runners travelling to the 2007 Flora London Marathon, Shipway and Jones (2008) drew particularly on social identity, underlining its usefulness to explain

group behaviour. They emphasised that social identity theory ‘focuses upon the importance of individuals defining themselves in terms [sic] the groups to which they belong (‘we’) rather than their own personal characteristics (‘I’)’ (Shipway and Jones 2008, p. 63). According to them (2008, p. 64), social identities have a crucial role to play in sports tourism:

They provide the individual with a sense of belonging, a valued place within their social environment, a means to connect to others, and the opportunity to use valued identities to enhance self-worth and self-esteem.

Similarly, Higham and Hinch (2009) explained how identity in sports tourism is established based on comparisons and the identification of differences. Other scholars investigated these themes relating to fan identification (Fairley 2009; Snelgrove et al. 2008). In this context, Kruger and Saayman (2012) make a crucial differentiation between spectators who identify with a specific kind of sports, versus those devoted to individual athletes or teams. Other studies have focused on, amongst other areas, the relationship between sports tourism and national identities (Harris and Lepp 2011; Vincent and Hill 2011; Wise 2011), volunteer identification (Jarvis and Blank 2011) and the effects of leveraging identity to promote sports event tourism (Green 2001).

Drawing on Shamir (1992), Green and Jones (2005) argued that a recreational activity plays a crucial role within the process of identity formation, especially when it supports an individual’s core values and beliefs, on one hand, and his or her talents and skills, on the other. In this context, Higham and Hinch (2009) suggested both tourism and sports separately and, in particular, the combination of both are important for identity formation processes:

It is the combination of the tourism industry’s economic incentive to respond to the need for tourists to develop personal narratives with sport’s unique ability to function as a culturally based attraction that makes sport tourism particularly significant in terms of identity formation (Higham and Hinch 2009, p. 68).

They argued it is the sensory nature of sports as a physical activity that provides individuals with a particular means of exploring the place they visit. A profound attachment to the place can lead to the construction and confirmation of an individual's identity (Higham and Hinch 2009). The recognition that people's identities can derive from the interaction of a physical activity with the setting in which it occurs illustrates that the application of the identity concept is insightful for sports tourism research. Its explanatory strength can be enhanced by overtly including the spatial dimension of sports tourism. Still, this raises the question as to how identities are developed through participating in sports tourism. Shipway and Jones (2007, p. 382) suggested more research is needed into the 'reciprocal processes by which individuals develop their identities through participation in sport'. This helps to provide a more detailed understanding of the meanings of sports tourism participation.

Identity issues in sports tourism are often studied in conjunction with, or as part of, other concepts and theories. Higham and Hinch (2009) considered sports tourism in the context of three key themes. Alongside globalisation and mobility, the concept of identity guides their analysis. They suggested that in times of globalisation, identity issues in sports tourism become even more important. They affirmed the view that globalisation has resulted in a 'crisis of identity' (Higham and Hinch 2009, p. 57) in which individuals seek new ways of defining themselves. Sports tourism has been identified as one important means of overcoming this crisis (Higham and Hinch 2009). In-depth investigations are needed to fully understand these processes of identity development in sports tourism, and also how sports tourism can be an important source of collective identification.

2.3.4 Community

The concept of *community* is among the very attractive and powerful ideas of the social sciences. It is simultaneously compelling and hard to define (Amit 2002; Blackshaw 2008; Cohen 1985; Hamilton 1985), ubiquitous and obscure (Blackshaw 2008), 'elegant but infuriatingly slippery' (Hamilton 1985, p. 7), denoting some kind of 'idea about a collective way of being in the world' (Blackshaw 2008, p. 326). In the

editor's foreword to Cohen's book (1985) *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Hamilton (1985) indicated that already by the mid-1950s, more than 90 definitions had been used by social scientists. Not surprisingly, the sheer number of approaches has increasingly been utilised to question the analytical value and quality of the concept (Amit 2002; Blackshaw 2008; Cohen 1985). The question was raised as to what the concept actually stands for. What does it mean? Does it mean anything at all? Cohen (2002, p. 167) identified:

'Community' is used so variously, even inconsistently, and so loosely that, paradigm considerations apart, it has ceased to be of any obvious analytical use as a category in social science. It indicates collectivity or communality or even just similarity of a sort, but these can be at any level from the global to the local.

In spite of this conceptual vagueness and ambiguity, Amit (2002) noted that scholars have not ceased approaching, utilising and addressing the concept. In the light of these considerations, he (2002, p. 1) raised two very valid questions:

So why, at this juncture, should we return our attention and analyses to such an ostensibly hackneyed term?

[W]hat is it about this idea and / or form of sociality that continues to so engage our attention?

Cautious attempts to answer the latter question in particular refer to the concept not only being an intellectual idea, but also a 'powerful everyday notion', representing the very basic human need of togetherness and solidarity (Jenkins 2008, p. 133). Bauman (2009) provided a vivid illustration of the warm feelings the idea of community elicits, mediating the image of a warm and pleasant place:

The vision of community ... is that of an island of homely and cosy tranquillity in a sea of turbulence and inhospitality. It tempts and seduces, prompting the admirers to refrain from looking too closely, since the eventuality of ruling the waves and taming the sea has already been deleted from the agenda as a proposition both suspect and unrealistic (Bauman 2000, p. 182).

Bauman (2000; 2009) suggested the conceptual notion of community depicts a pleasant style of life that individuals strive for, which, however, is no longer available. Blackshaw (2008, p. 333) encapsulated Bauman's key arguments by claiming:

if we were really honest with ourselves we would acknowledge that community ways of being together, in which the identity of the individual cedes to the collective habits of the majority, disappeared with the onset of modernity.

Central to Bauman's (2000; 2009) line of thoughts is 'the paradox that it was only when we were no longer sure of community's existence that it became absolutely necessary to believe in it' (Blackshaw 2008, p. 332). The rise of individualism in modern times and the right of each subject to individual freedom and to select its own shape of life (Taylor 1991) has challenged community, both as an intellectual concept and in everyday life. Obviously, the latter has a major impact on the validity and significance of the former. If, as Bauman (2000; 2009) argued, community is incompatible with modern times, the question needs to be, and has been, raised to what extent the conceptual notion of community is still able to account for today's social reality (Amit 2002; Bauman 2000; Blackshaw 2008; Jenkins 2008). In the light of these considerations, there seems to be a growing consensus for the need to reinterpret the concept in a rich and meaningful way in order to understand what community means today (Amit 2002; Bauman 2000; Blackshaw 2008; Jenkins 2008).

The call for reinterpretation needs to be seen in the context of the development and conceptual transformation of community as a theoretical tool. The idea already featured prominently in the work of the early sociologists, such as Durkheim, Weber and, especially, Tönnies (1972; 2012) who, at the end of the nineteenth century, drew the crucial distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. While the former denotes a collective based on deep personal ties within a family or neighbourhood, the latter refers to interpersonal relationships that are more formalised, calculated and instrumental. Tönnies (1972; 2012) suggested two different forms of human will are the foundation upon which social relations are built. *Wesenswille* (essential will), characterising *Gemeinschaft*, follows an individual's instinctive need to serve the goal of the collective; *Willkür* or *Kürwille* (arbitrary will), marking *Gesellschaft*, is

instrumental and purposive. Perhaps expressed in somewhat simplified terms, in the case of the latter, the collective is a means to an end; in the former, it is a means in itself. While *Gemeinschaft* relates to traditional, pre-industrial, rural collectives, *Gesellschaft* arose in the urban settings of modernity. According to Amit (2002), Tönnies' approach is but one example of how scholars have utilised the concept of community to investigate the relationship between social change and cohesion in society. A further example relates to Durkheim (1997), who, in *The Division of Labor in Society*, originally published in 1893, distinguished between two forms of 'what it is that binds society together' (Giddens and Sutton 2013, p. 12). According to Durkheim (1997), *mechanical solidarity* is found in more traditional pre-industrial societies characterised by a low division of labour. Here, people are held together by common values and beliefs and by sharing a set of rules. In modern societies, in turn, the growing division of labour entails a distinctive form of cohesion, namely one marked by specialisation, differences and mutual interdependence, which Durkheim (1997) called *organic solidarity*.

Synthesising the original sociological theorising on the idea of community, Blackshaw (2008, p. 327) suggested

it was usually defined firstly by breaking it down into the sum of its parts – namely the ideas of geographical propinquity, putative shared identity and common affective union – and secondly by explaining that these constituent parts should only be understood with the proviso that community is also more than these.

According to Blackshaw (2008), the foundation of a community was initially linked to a specific geographical locale, a shared interest or a sense of emotional attachment. All these three forms were usually based on, and shaped by, 'real' social relations. In line with Blackshaw (2008), Amit (2002) suggested that, from the 1980s onwards, the notion of community shifted away from necessarily accounting for face-to-face togetherness. Instead, with the work of Cohen (1985) and Anderson (1991), the concept became imagined and immaterial.

In *Imagined Communities*, originally published in 1983 and reissued in 1991, Anderson (1991) provided an attempt to understand community as not relying on everyday face-to-face social relations. His idea of an imagined community derived from his thinking about nationalism. He argued a nation is a socially and mentally constructed entity with a shared history and culture. According to Anderson (1991), the imagined aspect of this community entails that not all of its members will ever know or meet each other face-to-face. Yet, through the images, rituals, symbols and messages distributed through mass communication and technology, each member becomes aware of his/her compatriots' existence, mediating the shared emotion of belonging to an imagined entity.

This line of thinking of community as an immaterial construct evolved in Cohen's (1985) book *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Amit (2002, p. 5) suggested, in this work, 'community had become less a matter of social practice and institutions than a symbolic framework for thinking about and conveying cultural difference'. According to Cohen (1985), community is a meaningful system of cultural practices, patterns and values which provides its members with a sense of belonging. Cohen (1985) argued the element which most clearly represents the distinctive character of a community and its sense of difference is its boundary. This is in line with Barth (1969) who, in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, suggested a group is defined by its boundary that sets apart its members from those outside of the group. Barth (1969) argued the boundary itself is maintained by the social interactions and relationships between present and potential members. For Cohen (1985, p. 12), the 'boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction'. What Cohen, however, emphasised is not the boundary as such, but what people think about it, what it means to them, or, 'more precisely, about the meanings they give to it' (Cohen 1985, p. 12) and how it is experienced.

What Cohen's (1985) and Anderson's (1991) work share is that community is 'to be found in 'thinking' rather than in 'doing'' (Jenkins 2008, p. 138). Both their ideas mark what Amit (2002, p. 4) labels the 'interpretative turn' in the development of the concept. Theorising about community shifted away from it being place bound, rooted

in institutions and based on face-to-face interaction; it converted into something imagined, a symbolic construct, an idea which is infused with meaning (Amit 2002; Blackshaw 2008; Jenkins 2008). Somewhat paradoxically, it is the imagined, or even virtual, nature of community which entails the need for reviving face-to-face relations. Amit (2002, p. 8) suggested:

If communities must be imagined, then by the same token, what is imagined can only be truly felt and claimed by its members if they are able to realize it socially, in their relations and familiarity with some, if not every constituent.

The real and the imagined aspects of community appear to be inextricably linked, reinforcing each other. Assessing Anderson's (1991) and his own work, Cohen (2002, p. 170) suggested their conceptualisations of community either as an imagined collective or symbolic construct 'did not deny the reality of communities. They were just attempts to capture what it is that people use the word to signify.' In contrast to Bauman (2000; 2009), Cohen (2002) clearly affirmed community's overall existence, albeit in a distinctive way. He considered the reality of community to reveal itself in what the concept means to people. He suggested (2002, p. 170):

The referents of the word may have changed, no longer necessarily expressing locality or spatial contiguity, but the sense has not.

According to Cohen (2002), the concept refers to some sort of communality, something that individuals appear to share. People do not need to agree on everything they do. They may just be connected to each other in a narrow way or for a restricted purpose. For Cohen (2002, p. 167-168), it is not necessary that 'the condition of community extends beyond the specific item which people are presumed to share'. People may have one specific item in common, but nothing else. What matters for him is the meaning an individual attaches to the communality, the joint interest or collective purpose. Perhaps hinting at Bauman (2000; 2009), Cohen (2002, p. 169, original emphasis) argued:

‘Community’, then, has become a way of designating that *something* is shared among a group of people at a time when we no longer assume that *anything* is necessarily shared.

It is this restricted aspect of the concept’s nature which, for Cohen (2002), is consistent with, and able to account for, contemporary social life. According to him, this way of conceptualising community is not compromised by the vagueness of the concept nor by the missing consensus on an accepted theory; instead, it hints at and specifies how scholars should use it, namely within a specific setting. The notion’s ambiguity does not entail ‘that we should ban it from use – only that it is futile to try to theorize community other than in its *particular* uses’ (Cohen 2002, p. 169, original emphasis). For Cohen (2002, p. 169), the crucial task is ‘to identify the field and its extent, and the significance to it of what it is that is deemed to be shared’.

One such field in which the notion of community has been explored in different respects is sports tourism. The crucial role sports tourism plays in providing opportunities to develop and live a sense of belonging and to share experiences has been studied both in relation to those actively participating in (Gillett and Kelly 2006; Green and Chalip 1998; Lyons and Dionigi 2007), those watching (Fairley and Gammon 2005; Fairley 2009; Weed 2006b; 2007), and those hosting (Costa and Chalip 2008; Fredline 2005; Ziakas and Costa 2010) sports tourism. The community theme has started to receive particular attention not only for lived experiences, but also for the more recent phenomenon of watching sports tourism events in public spaces, such as pubs. This aspect is particularly noteworthy as people increasingly travel to the destination hosting an event even if they do not have direct access to the event. Weed (2007, p. 411) suggested the ‘need for proximity is to the experience rather than to the game’. He identified that the shared experience of watching the game together is deemed more important than the proximity to the event (Weed 2006b; 2007). Chalip (2006) argued that more research is needed to better understand how participating in or watching sports tourism activities enhance social belonging, cohesion and camaraderie. Likewise, Shipway and Jones (2008) proposed to further explore the

processes and mechanisms of how meaning is created when people interact within a sports community.

In their study of older adults participating in the 2001 Australian Masters Games, Lyons and Dionigi (2007, p. 377) examined 'what community means to older people as it manifests in and through the context of Masters sports participation'. In their qualitative investigation, they took the *sense of community* construct developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986) as a sensitising concept. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), a stable sense of community is constituted of four elements: membership, shared emotional connection, fulfilment of needs, and influence. These features were generally supported in Lyons and Dionigi's (2007) investigation in which four major themes emerged: a shared sporting interest, comrades in continued activity, relevant life purpose and giving back. Their findings repudiated earlier claims that community experiences in leisure contexts are 'largely episodic, emotional and fleeting, and do little to provide sustained experiences of community' (Lyons and Dionigi 2007, p. 375).

These claims of a temporary community experience can best be understood with the help of the concepts *communitas* and *liminality*, initially proposed by the ritual theorists van Gennep in 1909 (2005) and Turner (1969). Liminality refers to a temporary state that occurs in the middle stages of rituals when participants no longer have their pre-ritual status, but have not yet reached the stage they hold once a ritual is completed. *Communitas* is a particular form of community felt by people who experience liminality together (Turner 1969). It denotes a community characterised by the erosion of social distinction and barriers, a deep sense of equality and cohesion, solidarity and community spirit. In their examination of nostalgic experiences in sports tourism, Fairley and Gammon (2005) referred to *communitas* as a state in which the 'structured, institutionalized roles and statuses of everyday life are reversed to a state of anti-structure where individuals act as social equals' (2005, p. 191).

Like community, *communitas* is a contested concept. It has been criticised, in particular, for 'the determinism of the model which limits its usefulness' (Eade and Sallnow 1991, p. 5). Eade and Sallnow (1991) argued the necessary alignment with anti-structure ignores the complexity of the conditions under study. It is this particular

acknowledgement of a research context outside everyday life, however, which makes *communitas*, as a specific form of community, a powerful, explanatory tool for understanding sports tourism participation. At the same time, a sports tourism context appears to be appropriate to contribute to the reconceptualisation and reinterpretation of the community as a theoretical concept. The temporary nature of the experience provides an insightful setting for exploring the notion that a sense of belonging may not need to be based on deep, enduring face-to-face relationships, but that individuals are able to form a community for a limited aspect or purpose (Cohen 2002). Furthermore, the very act of travelling to another place to engage in sports tourism is perfectly compatible with the understanding of community as no longer necessarily being place-bound. Therefore, despite the critique, it also appears insightful for investigating the notion that a community of interest can spread beyond geographical boundaries. But how does community or *communitas* manifest itself in the context of sports event tourism? And to what extent does the collective encounter continue to have an effect on its members over and above the sports tourism experience? Lyons and Dionigi (2007, p. 386) argued that more research is needed in other sports contexts to explore the 'transcendent nature of leisure-derived community'.

2.4 Conclusion: The World Gymnaestrada as the focus for researching sports tourism participation

Gymnastics festivals have a long tradition stretching back two centuries. They have attracted participants first on a local and regional basis, then later nationally and internationally. This extension of the geographical scope of the participating gymnasts naturally mirrors the fact that a considerable amount of travelling has occurred, and still occurs, in relation to the festivals. Since their appearance, they have provided participants with a platform to experience the unique interaction of *activity*, *place* and *people*. Nevertheless, aesthetic sports, in general, and gymnastics, in particular, are rather under-researched activities in sports tourism. This project intends to contribute

to filling this void, in line with Ziakas and Costa (2010), who argue that more research is needed to explore the nexus of sports, tourism and aesthetic activities.

The current state of knowledge in the field has generally been criticised for its lack of methodological diversity, the dominance of positivist approaches and quantitative methods, the largely descriptive research reports and the less elaborated use of theories to underpin findings and discussions. Even if researchers have started to consider these concerns, there remains the need for further, more sophisticated and theoretically underpinned in-depth investigations. The preceding literature review has evaluated critically, in particular, four concepts that are deemed insightful and relevant for research into sports tourism participation: Serious Leisure, habitus, identity and community. All four concepts address questions of belonging and distinction, of shared experiences, of similarity and difference, of access to and membership of a collective, of practices that transcend the self, and, last but not least, of locating oneself in the increasingly complex social world. Not only were related issues deemed under-researched in the field of sports tourism, they also emerged as significant themes and insights from the socio-historical context of the World Gymnaestrada. Since their emergence in nineteenth-century Europe, the meaning and importance of gymnastics festivals went far beyond physical fitness and recreation. By combining mass participation in gymnastics with social, cultural and political activities, the festivals have always provided multifaceted opportunities to develop, express and experience a sense of belonging and a shared collective identity, both in a physical and non-physical way. With its focus on non-competitive group displays, today's World Gymnaestrada has continued this tradition. Interconnecting participation in this under-researched event with sports tourism, the four theoretical concepts interact as a theoretical framework and lens of exploration, as specified in section 2.3, raising the following research questions:

- To what extent, and how, does sports tourism participation in the World Gymnaestrada shape the development, expression and experience of a sense of belonging to a community?
- To what extent, and how, is access to, and membership of, the community negotiated, affirmed and validated?

- What role do spatial and temporal aspects – the *place* element and temporary nature of sports event tourism – play in this context?
- To what extent, and how, does the World Gymnaestrada community develop, express and experience a shared identity?

Understanding the particular research context in terms of these theoretical ideas is, however, not a one-sided relationship. It is also the aim of this project to make a contribution to related theoretical debates. More specifically, first, the research seeks to contribute to the reinterpretation of community in the sense of its being real or imagined, place-bound or spread beyond geographical boundaries. Second, the project's findings intend to help inform the question as to whether today's identity, as it manifests itself at the World Gymnaestrada, is fixed or fluid, stable or fleeting.

To explore these research questions, a qualitative approach is utilised. The following chapter outlines the research process and methodology along with the relevant epistemological issues.

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3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research design that has been adopted to identify and make sense of the meaning non-elite, female German gymnasts attach to sports event tourism in the non-competitive environment of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland. Section 3.1 addresses theoretical considerations, starting with a discussion of the debates around the research purpose. It identifies this project's theoretical perspective and illustrates as to how it informs the study of meaning. Furthermore, the questions are addressed how and why an approach drawing on ethnographic principles was used. Section 3.2 elaborates the selection of methods, the different phases of the research process, the reflective statement, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis as well as evaluation criteria.

3.1 Research approach: Theoretical considerations

The selection and elaboration of a research approach should be suited and designed to generate the kind of knowledge required to meet the research aim and objectives (Blaikie 2007). Research approaches are underpinned by differing assumptions about the social world, about reality and knowledge, which need to be elaborated (Blaikie 2010; Crotty 1998). In this sense, section 3.1.1 outlines the debates framing this research's aim on a more general level, before sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 explain the approach adopted for this project in light of both the debates and my own assumptions. The sections illustrate how a subtle realist worldview, drawing on ethnographic principles, underpins the process of investigating the research questions, while being embedded in the more general debates around the research aim and purpose.

3.1.1 Debates related to the research purpose

One of the crucial elements of any research design is the elaboration of the research purpose, presenting the intent of the entire study (Creswell 2009). A research purpose is a reflection of the type of knowledge a researcher intends to produce (Blaikie 2010). When making decisions on how to advance knowledge in a field, researchers see themselves confronted with a variety of dilemmas and debates. Many of them ‘... are derived from the fact that it is necessary to adopt both ontological and epistemological assumptions when conducting social research’ (Blaikie 2007, p. 38). The intention here is not to review and discuss all of these debates in detail as extensive literature exists already (see, for example, Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Flick 2006). Nevertheless, before providing a discussion on the theoretical perspective and appropriate methodology, a critical reflection of those debates which frame this project’s research purpose is essential.

This project did not start with a research problem in the social world as such, but was conceived following the call to move forward the understanding of sports tourists, linked to my personal interest. The purpose of this project is to understand and make sense of the meaning attached to sports event tourism in the non-competitive environment of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. It investigates how a very specific event is experienced and interpreted by individuals. In terms of epistemological and ontological issues, this investigation falls within the scope of a constructionist, interpretivist research approach (Crotty 1998; Saunders et al. 2003).

The paradigm debate between positivism and interpretivism and their respective ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions has a long tradition (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Flick 2006; Phillipmore and Goodson 2004). Positivism considers reality to be made up of events that exist independently of human consciousness and which can be grasped by the human senses. The one and only knowledge about this reality is one which is generated through experience (Blaikie 2010; Chalmers 1999; Crotty 1998; Phillipmore and Goodson 2004). It is assumed that in this reality regularities exist beyond space and time. These do not form causes, but general laws that can be discovered by objective,

detached and value-free researchers (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The positivist approach has been subjected to critical scrutiny. The main point of critique has been raised against the assumption that the social world can be studied using the principles and methods associated with the natural sciences (Blaikie 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Positivism has been attacked for its dealing only with the observable, for the separation of facts and values and for its focus on quantification (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Critical reviewers of positivism reject that human behaviour is a causal reaction to external stimuli. Instead, to advance understanding of the social world, they suggest studying the intentions and motives of social actors, significant elements of social life that cannot be found in the natural world. Furthermore, it has been argued the human mind does not start with a 'blank sheet', but that both social actors and researchers import their assumptions to the investigated context instead of being objective, detached and value-free (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Chalmers 1999; Crotty 1998).

The critique of positivist assumptions has been brought forward by a variety of philosophical streams, grouped under the generic term interpretivism. According to Crotty (1998), the origins of interpretivism are often linked to the ideas of Max Weber (1864-1920), who argued social enquiry is concerned with *Verstehen*, empathetic understanding (Weber 1947). Drawing on Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), interpretivism opposes an 'interpretative approach (*Verstehen*, understanding) needed in the human and social sciences with the explicative approach (*Erklären*, explaining), focused on causality, that is found in the natural sciences' (Crotty 1998, p. 67, original emphasis). While related debates continue, there appears to be a consensus today that both explanation and understanding are appropriate purposes to pursue in social inquiry (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998). Drawing on Giddens (1976), Blaikie (2010) argues the difference between the two is whether insight is created by either causal or reason explanation. Explaining is concerned with identifying cause-and-effect relationships, regularities and the mechanisms that generate them; understanding, on the other hand, is

provided by the reasons or accounts social actors give for their actions. The latter is also associated with the meaning of an event or activity in a particular

social context, either that given by social actors or the meaning that researchers derive from social actors' accounts (Blaikie 2010, p. 72).

Following Blaikie's (2007; 2010) approach of clearly distinguishing explanation and understanding, explanations are generated by researchers who adopt the perspective of the 'outsider'. Understanding, on the other hand, is produced by researchers who look at a phenomenon from the 'inside' (Blaikie 2007) by making sense of the meaning that social actors give to their actions and 'by grasping the subjective consciousness of that conduct' (Giddens 1976, p. 55). With its focus on studying meaning rather than identifying cause-and-effect relationships, this research intends to provide understanding rather than explanation. Adopting the perspective of an insider, the aim is to understand and make sense of meaning in the context of sports event tourism. This constitutes the foundation for the selection of the appropriate research methodology which will be considered later in this chapter.

Interpretivism adopts a particular perspective towards ontological and epistemological questions. As Blaikie (2010, p. 99) emphasises, in interpretivism,

social reality is regarded as the product of its inhabitants; it is a world that is interpreted by the meanings participants produce and reproduce as a necessary part of their everyday activities together.

Interpretivists argue people are active agents who are able to shape the social world in which they live (Gertenbach et al. 2009; Reimann et al. 1975). They reject the stimulus-response model underpinning positivism, which assumes human behaviour is a causal reaction to external stimuli. Instead, the philosophical perspective within interpretivism implies individuals attach meanings to their actions and make sense of them (Blaikie 2007; Reimann et al. 1975). They interpret stimuli 'and these interpretations, continually under revision as events unfold, shape their actions' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 8). In line with social constructionism, it is assumed individuals construct meanings in the process of engaging with and interpreting the world around them (Crotty 1998). As one and the same stimulus can

mean different things to different people, interpretivists argue it is impossible to determine standard interpretations which explain human behaviour. This view has challenged and questioned the value of standardised research methods focusing on quantification (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Interpretivists argue, in order to understand social life and human behaviour, inquirers need to find ways to access people's meanings and the intentions they pursue with their actions. To do so, they suggest adopting the view of those being researched, an insider perspective (Blaikie 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), which relates back to the distinction between understanding and explaining made earlier.

Like positivism, the interpretivist paradigm has also come under critique. Points of criticism address in particular that the influences social structures and institutions may have on the behaviour of an individual are disregarded (Giddens 1976). Furthermore, not only do individuals interpret their actions, so do the inquirers who study individuals' actions (Giddens 1976; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This aspect is at the core of postmodernist ideas that challenge the views in which social science was traditionally conducted, questioning the authority of social scientists' accounts (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Spencer 2001). While postmodernism is a much-debated and contested term, several lines of thought that break with the ideas of modernity can be isolated (Blaikie 2007; Sands 2002). Postmodern theorists reject absolute truths and grand narratives. They argue that all knowledge is relative and context-based. Not only are social realities and meanings constructions that are subject to a constant re-construction, but so is knowledge based on those meanings (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998; Sands 2002). In qualitative research, the ideas proffered by postmodernists and poststructuralists, such as Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), led to the so-called representational crisis (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This crisis expresses the view that researchers are not able to grasp and understand meaning, they can 'no longer directly capture lived experience' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 19). Instead, reality, meaning and experience are considered to be linguistic constructs that are created while social researchers produce their texts:

Language is no longer a mirror of reality or a means of conveying meaning; it is accepted as context-dependent, metaphorical and as constituting reality (Blaikie 2007, p. 49).

Postmodernism has challenged the traditional ways of social inquiry. Blaikie (2007) distinguished three possible ways of reacting to the postmodern turn. The first, the *defeatist* stance, gives up 'all hope of being able to provide any kind of systematic understanding of social life' (Blaikie 2007, p. 51). The second, the *converted* stance, accepts the issues postmodernism has raised and is content with the kind of knowledge it allows. The third, the *reformist* stance, is the position adopted in this project, namely to

take on board those ontological and epistemological criticisms of modernist science that cannot be avoided, such as the claims for context-specific, multiple and socially constructed realities, and the need to recognize both the tentative nature of knowledge, with its time and space limitations, and the researcher's role in knowledge production (Blaikie 2007, p. 51).

This position implies being content with limited aims and aspirations regarding the intended research results and outcomes, recognising that knowledge is relative, constantly evolving and context-based while still sharing the belief that researchers can provide insightful knowledge and understanding of the social world. Sands (2002) argued one of the major implications of postmodernism for social enquiry is the use of reflexivity on the part of the researcher. This view involves an awareness that inquirers play an active role in a research context and that their position is framed by their own assumptions, values and socio-cultural background (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sands 2002).

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective: *Realism, relativism, reflexivity*

The theoretical perspective pursued in a research project is constituted by the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions which inform the choice of an appropriate research methodology (Creswell 2007; Crotty 1998):

Inevitably, we bring a number of assumptions to our chosen methodology. We need, as best as we can, to state what these assumptions are. This is precisely what we do when we elaborate our theoretical perspective. Such an elaboration is a statement of the assumptions brought to the research task and reflected in the methodology as we understand and employ it (Crotty 1998, p. 7).

The elaboration of the theoretical perspective is crucial as '[d]ifferent ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world' (Crotty 1998, p. 66). Drawing on Crotty (1998, p. 7), the term 'theoretical perspective' is used in this chapter to refer to 'the philosophical stance that lies behind our chosen methodology'. The particular challenge in the context of this research was to identify a perspective that achieves the research aim of understanding and making sense of the meaning attached to sports event tourism in a non-competitive gymnastics environment. Furthermore, my own assumptions and worldview, as well as the outlined contemporary theoretical debates in the social sciences, need to be considered.

The theoretical perspective adopted in this research project is framed by *realism*, *relativism* and *reflexivity*. Combining these three elements is built upon the contemporary position which recognises the value of overcoming the dichotomy of research paradigms, accepting each of them has its strengths and weaknesses (Creswell 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Instead of adopting one research paradigm in a straightforward way, this position argues that researchers are required to tailor the theoretical perspective to the research aim and purpose. The components of different perspectives can be combined if they are carefully reflected upon and as long as their assumptions do not contradict each other (Creswell 2009; Crotty 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Combining realism, relativism and reflexivity to shape this project's theoretical perspective is based upon the acceptance of two propositions: first, that social constructionism can be 'at once realist and relativist' (Crotty 1998, p. 63), and, second, that reflexivity is not seen to be 'undermining researchers' commitment to realism' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 15). Therefore, in this project, *realism* is understood as an ontological position, underpinned by *relativism* as an epistemological

notion. Drawing on Hammersley's (1992) subtle realism, a particular form of realism, it is argued there is a real world which exists independently of one's mind and ideas about it. It is a world in which objects exist, but do not have a meaning as such. People construct meaning and make sense of their actions, objects and experiences (Crotty 1998). While reality exists, however, the knowledge about this world, and what it means, is constructed, is relative (Crotty 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). While the world is *real*, both the meanings attached to it and the knowledge about those meanings is *relative*. Mitigating the paradigm debate between positivism and interpretivism, subtle realism affirms the existence of knowable phenomena independently of one's thoughts, but breaks with the idea 'that we have direct access to those phenomena' (Hammersley 1992, p. 52). Instead, it is recognised that knowledge does not represent, nor reproduce reality, but is relative, constructed and infused by socio-cultural assumptions (Blaikie 2007; 2010; Crotty 1998; Hammersley 1992). It is the latter aspect where the third element of the theoretical perspective of this project comes into play, namely *reflexivity*.

What the postmodern turn has entailed in particular is a critique against knowledge claims made by social scientists who omit an acknowledgement of their own role and biography (Blaikie 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sands 2002). Postmodernism has challenged and changed the relationship between the researcher and those being researched (Blaikie 2007). The changes involve researchers needing to acknowledge they are part of the world being studied and that their background influences what is researched, how and why. The selection of what inquirers perceive, interpret and write happens in the context of their own assumptions and biographies (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sands 2002; Spencer 2001). Reflexivity requires researchers to locate themselves in the context and to reflect on their own role in the research as well as the relationship with the research partners, without imposing themselves or being self-indulgent (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). So when I reflect upon my own relationship with my research project later in this chapter, this should not be understood as an autoethnographic account; rather, it acknowledges I, as a researching rhythmic gymnast, am deeply involved in the social world I am studying. While remaining focused on the meanings my research partners developed and

attached to taking part in the World Gymnaestrada, I am aware of the role my own background might have played in the construction of knowledge – *relative* knowledge about *relative* meanings attached to a *real* world, embedded in a process of self-reflexivity.

3.1.3 Research methodology: An approach drawing on ethnographic principles

This project's theoretical perspective, based on realism, relativism and reflexivity, informs the choice of the methodology suited to fulfil the research purpose (Crotty 1998). The selection of a methodology, therefore, needs to be assessed against the context of both the theoretical perspective and the research purpose, informing in turn the data collection methods (Crotty 1998).

Several methodologies are concerned with making sense of meaning and gaining an understanding of social phenomena (Creswell 2007). They differ amongst others in their philosophical stance, making reference to one of the many perspectives within the interpretivist paradigm, such as hermeneutics, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Blaikie 2007; Crotty 1998). These streams all share the assumption that human actions are based on, or shaped and infused by, meaning, which matches this project's theoretical perspective. They differ, however, in their view as to what extent meanings are embedded in the culture or value system of a society or group. Crotty (1998) argues symbolic interactionism and phenomenology adopt opposing positions in their attitude towards culture as a guiding meaning system. While symbolic interactionists affirm culture to be the 'meaningful matrix that guides our lives' (Crotty 1998, p. 71), phenomenology 'treats culture with a good measure of caution and suspicion' (Crotty 1998, p. 71).

These different philosophical positions are reflected on a methodological level. Phenomenological researchers strive for understanding the lived experiences of individuals related to a specific phenomenon (Creswell 2007). Those inspired by the founder of this stance, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), adopt a more descriptive approach, seeking to capture the 'essence' of a phenomenon. His ideas were further

expanded by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), who adopted a more interpretivist, hermeneutic approach to phenomenology (Creswell 2007; Crotty 1998). In ethnographic research, in turn, underpinned by symbolic interactionism, the key to disclosing meaning is culture (Crotty 1998). Meaning is not revealed through investigating individual experiences of a phenomenon as in phenomenology. Instead, it is unveiled through studying the cultural practices, shared values, behaviour, language and symbols developed from and expressed in interactions between the members of a community (Crotty 1998; Kaufmann 2009). The selection and justification of a methodology in this research therefore depends on this project's stance towards the role shared practices and patterns play in the construction of meaning within the social group under investigation.

The literature review revealed the World Gymnaestrada is a rich context for providing community experiences. The event presents the variety of gymnastics exclusively through group displays. By the time the 2011 World Gymnaestrada started on 10th July 2011, the gymnasts had rehearsed together with their group for at least one year. They travelled to and experienced the event together. They were accommodated in schools, sharing a classroom with their group members. They presented their performance as a group, based on a high level of interaction deriving from the common practice of physical movements. The World Gymnaestrada is a stage on which gymnasts interact not only in a social way, but also physically through practicing and performing gymnastics movements in unison. All these interactions, both social and physical, entail the potential for the development of shared practices. The study thereof falls within the realm of ethnography, where meanings are revealed precisely through investigating shared patterns and through identifying what it is like to be part of the group under study (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Based on this assumption, in my project, understanding the social and physical interactions, expressed in symbols, movements, a common language, shared values and behaviour, is considered to be the key to disclosing the meaning gymnasts attach to taking part in the World Gymnaestrada. Therefore, an approach drawing on ethnographic principles is the appropriate way forward to fulfil the research purpose.

It remains to be reflected to what extent this methodological choice is consistent with the theoretical perspective, framed by *realism*, *relativism* and *reflexivity*. As outlined above, the social and physical interactions of Gymnaestrada participants entail the potential for the development of shared values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour. No matter whether these shared practices are constructed or exist independently of our thought, they evolve when individuals interact frequently (Creswell 2007). Drawing on Taylor (1991), they are *real* in that social actors are faced with and cope with them in their interactions with other individuals. In line with Taylor (1991) and symbolic interactionists, it is assumed these patterns and practices serve as a meaning system. They shape both the meanings that individuals construct, being *relative* to each other, and the knowledge produced about them, requiring *reflexivity* on my side.

While there are debates about definitions and delimitations, ethnography as a research methodology is generally concerned with providing a rich and detailed portrait of a specific social group (Atkinson et al. 2001; Fetterman 1989; 2009). While other methodologies also study individuals who share practices, the particular feature of ethnography is that researchers investigate these patterns and interactions in the natural setting in which they occur (Atkinson et al. 2001; Creswell 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The ethnographer adopts the perspective of an insider (Atkinson et al. 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Ethnography aims at producing a detailed account of the shared patterns, beliefs, behaviour and language of a social group (Creswell 2007; 2009; Fetterman 1989). In this context, the term ethnography refers to both the process of studying a cultural group and the final, written product as the outcome of the research (Creswell 2007), no matter whether its style is realist, confessional or impressionist (van Maanen 2011). The written product reflects an account of the findings of the research process, during which the ethnographer is usually immersed in the daily life of the culture under study for an extended period of time (Creswell 2007; Fetterman 1989). This seems to contradict this project's research setting, which is formed by an event, characterised in part by its limited duration with a clear starting point and end (Getz 1991). This research, however, does not portray gymnasts as such as they interact and engage in their activity in their daily lives, but those who travel to Lausanne to participate in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. The

limitedness of the event is, hence, the very defining characteristic of the group under study.

Holloway et al. (2010) discuss the appropriateness of ethnography in events research. There, as they argue (Holloway et al. 2010, p. 77)

the setting is already temporally and spatially bound, and observation would commonly last as long as the event itself in order to maximise data-collection opportunities.

In their view, the limited duration of an event does not contradict the use of ethnography. Rather, they consider this specific event feature to be a vital foundation for modifying and adopting research methodologies and methods to meet the needs of contemporary research settings. They clearly see the value of ethnographic research in an events context in its exploring 'the meanings of events for the participants who experience and are involved in it' (Holloway et al. 2010, p. 82). These considerations link back to the literature review, where the limited duration was revealed to be a natural challenge any researcher faces when investigating a context in sports event tourism (Chalip 2006). The chapter has argued that one of the ways of overcoming this issue is to investigate attendees not only during the event, but also before and / or afterwards. Accordingly, the period of data collection for this project did not only encompass the event days in Lausanne, but also the preparation period during which I immersed myself in the display rehearsals, as well as a post-event phase. The details on the research process and the exact time line are provided in section 3.2.2. Even if, or just because, the event in Lausanne was of limited duration, I immersed myself in the field before and went back to my research partners afterwards. Leaving the field in Lausanne did not mean the end of data collection. Instead, it marked the beginning of the post-event data collection period. This three-phase research process (pre-event, event, post-event) does not only comply with the earlier-mentioned need for research on sports event tourism to focus on the 'broader experience, rather than simply on the attendance at the event' (Weed and Bull 2009, p. 40); it also addresses the methodological issue of extended immersion in the field that is required in robust ethnographic research.

3.2 Research design: Methods and process

The previous three sections highlighted the general debates framing the research purpose, explained this project's theoretical perspective and justified the methodological choice. It has been illustrated how the research purpose, theoretical perspective and methodology relate to each other. By presenting how ethnographic principles were actually implemented in this research, the following sections outline the choice of research methods, the different stages of the research process, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis as well as evaluation criteria.

3.2.1 Research methods

Both Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Flick (2006) argued that no research method, taken on its own, is able to ensure an in-depth understanding of an aspect of social life. The combination of several methods adds breadth, depth and richness to an enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Flick 2006). The choice of methods involves deciding what types of data are needed to meet the research purpose and to answer the research questions. According to Blaikie (2010), data appropriateness depends on both methodological considerations and pragmatic aspects, and has implications for the question of whether to select quantitative or qualitative methods or a combination of both. For Blaikie (2010), as for others (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Flick 2006), the divide between quantitative and qualitative research is a question related to data collection, not to aspects of methodology. For Blaikie (2010), the approaches differ in whether data are collected, converted and analysed in numbers or words. Data in numbers are generally used to count frequencies and measure selected aspects of social life; data in words, in turn, express social actors' meanings and are collected either in the 'technical language of the researcher or the everyday language of the respondents' (Blaikie 2010, p. 204). As the understanding of gymnasts as sports event tourists is under-developed, the added value and knowledge gained through counting and analysing frequencies of meanings is deemed to be less promising and insightful as compared to an in depth-study based on qualitative data. Although quantitative

designs, such as a survey approach, could provide further insight, the decision was made to use a multi-methods approach based on qualitative data collection techniques exclusively, with each method informing the others. This approach is not only in line with this research's focus on understanding rather than explanation; it also follows the call for a more profound use of interpretive research designs based on qualitative methods in sports tourism research, as identified in the literature review.

In terms of data collection, the particular feature of ethnography is that a researcher studies a group in its natural setting (Fetterman 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Hence, in this project, participant observation was used as the main data collection technique. Participant observation can be practiced in a variety of forms, ranging from being a complete participant, totally involved in the research community, to being a complete observer who maintains distance from those being observed (Flick 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Throughout this project, different levels of participant observation were used strategically, as the following section discusses in detail. The different forms of participant observation all share the belief that 'practices are only accessible through observation; interviews and narratives merely make the accounts of practices accessible instead of the practices themselves' (Flick 2006, p. 215). Weber (1947), however, argued that both observation and the accounts produced by social actors are needed to grasp and understand meaning. His concept of *Verstehen* (empathetic understanding) distinguishes between *Aktuellem Verstehen*, understanding through observation, and *Erklärendem Verstehen*, explanatory understanding (Weber 1947). While the former refers to the immediate observation of a situation, the latter implies setting action in its broader context 'involving facts that cannot be derived from immediate observation' (Weber 1947, p. 94).

Weber's (1947) concept of *Verstehen* involves the study of both the observable and the non-observable, recognising that meaning can be expressed both verbally and non-verbally. Drawing on this approach, the selection of research methods needed to ensure both dimensions are covered. Consequently, interviews were also used to collect data. These ranged from unstructured conversations incorporated into the observation periods, to semi-structured interviews conducted outside the natural setting. Using interviews to collect data on meanings recognises these involve aims,

intentions or motives that may be covert; social actors may not be aware of them. Through asking questions in an interview, the researcher encourages reflection to disclose those hidden dimensions of meaning (Blaikie 2007). In addition, what an activity means needs to be seen in a temporal context. Meaning has to do with how significant an experience is for an individual (Taylor 1989). While an aim or intention may precede an activity, the final value or significance gained from it may not yet be observable during the event, but may only be grasped after completion of an experience (Schütz and Luckmann 1973). Considering this temporal aspect of catching meaning in the sense of significance, both pre- and post-event interviews played a crucial role in the process of data collection.

Combining participant observation, informal conversations and in-depth interviews along with document analysis allowed for making sense of both verbal and non-verbal, observable and non-observable levels of meaning (Flick 2006). The findings generated through each method complemented each other. Pre-event interviews were conducted to raise awareness of issues that merited closer observation during the event. The data gained through observation raised questions and issues that were further studied during the interviews after the event. In addition to and informed by the individual conversations, a group interview was conducted with seven gymnasts who were members of the core research group. While the use of group interviews has advantages and disadvantages, it was felt important insights could be gained, when social actors share their views on a common experience, with each respondent stimulating the others to recall memories (Flick 2006). All this was supported by an on-going analysis of documents and 'grey literature', such as electronic newsletters sent to participants and official documents provided by the German Gymnastics Federation and the World Gymnaestrada organising committee. The research process followed a circular approach that closely linked data collection and interpretation (Flick 2006).

3.2.2 Research process

No matter which culture is studied, the particular tension with which ethnographic researchers are faced is that they are 'simultaneously concerned to make the strange

familiar, so as to *understand* it, and to make the familiar strange, so as to avoid *misunderstanding* it' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 231, original emphasis). As I had never been to a World Gymnaestrada before, I had to make the strange familiar. On the other hand, I conducted my research on and in a culture with which I am familiar. While my own rhythmic gymnastics environment has not been directly part of this research project, it is where I started to reflect on a variety of issues. This adds an additional layer to the three-phase data collection process. The weekly routines with my rhythmic gymnastics group at that time, and the events and competitions we travelled to, helped me to develop questions on what we do and why we do it. I officially informed both my coach and group members about my project and all agreed to be indirectly involved in this research. The observations and conversations with them, in particular during the period from September 2010 until July 2011, helped me to make the familiar strange, to detach myself, to engage critically with my data and to approach the perspective of my research partners in an open-minded way. In parallel, I started reflecting on my own involvement in this research. Mansfield (2007, p. 117) relates the tension I was faced with to Norbert Elias's concept of 'Involvement-Detachment', where it is 'presented as a way of explaining, understanding and working with ever-changing balances of passion and reason in scholarship'. According to Coffey (1999), this tension between emotional involvement and reason should not be resisted, but accepted. Coffey (1999, p. 158-159) argued:

Emotional connectedness to the processes and practices of fieldwork, to analysis and writing, is normal and appropriate. It should not be denied, nor stifled. It should be acknowledged, reflected upon, and seen as a fundamental feature of well-executed research.

In the process of making the familiar strange, I gradually discovered the lens through which my perceptions and observations may have been filtered. Having started this research project from the desire to combine my academic interest in sports tourism with my favourite sport, rhythmic gymnastics, this was indeed a sometimes emotional process. I often felt as if somebody held up a mirror to me. And at the beginning, I also often felt somewhat like a 'betrayor' and pondered over the question whether I really wanted to tell 'our' gymnastics secrets to the academic community. I smiled to myself,

when this thought arose, but, at the same time, it made me experience the impact of a researcher on his/her project. The more I became aware of this, the more I understood the significance of a careful reflection about my own involvement in and during the research process.

What is my position in relation to the key research issues, such as gymnastics and collective group displays (*activity*), travelling as a gymnast (*place*) and connecting to like-minded *people*? To what extent might my own rhythmic gymnastics story have shaped the lens through which I view my research? What does my lens look and feel like?

It is above all a lens full of passion, of fascination for rhythmic gymnastics, this combination of arts and sports, which has been part of my life from early childhood onwards. The lens is about aesthetics, grace, expressing femininity, creativity, about artistry, using the body to express myself, feeling the music. It is about body movements performed in harmony with the hand apparatus rope, ribbon, ball, clubs and hoop. It is about the fascination of interpreting a piece of music with my body language.

I was six years old when I took part in a rhythmic gymnastics workout for the first time. From the beginning, I enjoyed learning to coordinate body movements with the apparatus rope, ball and hoop, later with the ribbon and clubs. I also liked the other girls in my group. Some of them quickly became close friends.

The lens saw me touring across the country to take part in training camps, competitions and performances which occurred in places I probably would have never travelled to otherwise and where I usually came to know and see two things: gyms and train stations. The place itself played only a subordinate role.

My reflection on these experiences made me realise I would need to be particularly attentive not to over- or underestimate the significance the tourism experience would play for my research partners.

Being away from home while still very young, these training camps were like little adventure trips for me. Arriving Friday night at the hosting club or training centre somewhere in Bavaria, we were usually accommodated in the gym, a dance studio or classroom, equipped with a sleeping bag and a mattress. Chatting at night with my fellow gymnasts while we were supposed to sleep was very exciting, at least the first night. This would be different the next evening, when, after six or seven hours of

training, I would have preferred sleeping in a nice, warm bed instead of lying on a hard mattress. On Sunday, after additional hours of training, we said goodbye to each other, knowing we would see each other again soon, at the next training camp or competition.

I took part in both individual and group competitions where six (nowadays five) rhythmic gymnasts perform a routine together. My club was particularly successful in group competitions. Together with my team mates, I won the South German Championships in 1989, at the age of ten. Three years later, I was allowed to join the most advanced team in my club. The team had won the Junior German Championships the year before and I recall being very proud that I was asked to join the team. Obviously, the routines were tough. I felt I had to go far beyond my limits, without making much progress. Yet, instead of seeing that as a motivator to improve my skills, I gradually lost my self-confidence. I struggled for several months, but did not want to give up. I wanted to persevere at least throughout the season until the German Championships. After the season, I was totally exhausted and decided to quit the team.

The lens is infused by me experiencing physical, emotional and mental stress, not keeping pace with the requirements needed to move on in the competitive system, being confronted with and having to accept bodily limits, going through a tough and long process of making peace with myself and my body.

In the course of the research process, I realised it is most probably these experiences that have played a significant role in evoking and shaping my strong interest in exploring a non-competitive research setting.

When I put aside the competitions for a moment, several pleasant memories are worth recalling. I remember our displays in the Munich Olympic Hall in front of several thousand spectators, in a show on TV and at an international sports trade show. It was a very welcome change to perform for an enthusiastic audience and not for the critical eyes of the competition judges, who carefully monitor every move you make and record each error.

The lens is about amazing emotions I feel during a group performance – my group's name is called, I feel the rush of adrenaline flowing through my body, my group and I take up the initial position of our choreography, the music starts, my body does automatically what has been rehearsed and rehearsed, again and again, in line with my group, trusting each other; we conduct the last movement of our routine, the music stops, there is this short moment of silence before the audience starts applauding; I close my eyes and enjoy the spectators' response. It is an amazing feeling to be part of a whole, to touch spectators and to be rewarded for it with their applause.

When I started working close to Munich after graduation in 2002, I had the chance to join a new club that had a team in my age group, competing regionally and nationally in Group Rhythmic Gymnastics & Dance. In terms of the skill level, I had to accept taking a step back, but I did not care; I was so glad to have found a new team and to hold apparatus in my hand again on a regular basis.

I particularly remember my club's trips to regional and national gymnastics festivals which meant 50 - 70 gymnasts, aged between 12 and 65, travelling and enjoying the festival together, being accommodated in a classroom, equipped with a sleeping bag and a mattress, not to forget the plastic mug for drinking Prosecco at night.

The lens is about being part of a group of very different women, accepting each other as we are, in a cosy atmosphere in which our lives outside the gym play only a subordinate role. This comes to the fore particularly when travelling to competitions or gymnastics festivals where I know what school accommodation means, what it is like to share a classroom with the fellow gymnasts, feeling the team spirit, while also running the risk of becoming 'stir-crazy'.

Yet how do my research partners perceive these issues? It is about their perspectives, not about mine. I realised I would need to be particularly attentive not to attach importance to issues which might not exist.

In subsequent years, once I had already started my PhD, I was repeatedly encouraged to become a judge. Something inside me constantly resisted any of these attempts to involve me. Yet there were a few occasions where I could not escape. It was extremely hard for me to apply the scheme of assessment criteria when a group performed in front of my eyes. Constantly, the question bothered me to what extent it is really possible to quantify and objectively assess the groups' displays? These experiences led me even to question whether I still wanted to compete myself?

The lens is about learning to, and having to, accept judges' decisions, both frustrating and surprising ones, in a sports environment in which performance cannot be assessed using a stop watch or tape measure.

But this reflection also raised the question to what extent my frustration about the system of quantifying rules might have been reinforced by me exploring a non-competitive research setting? Perhaps, not only did my biography as a (rhythmic) gymnast have an impact on my research, but also the opposite happened?

At the same time, I realised my own biography entailed the risk of me idealising the non-competitiveness of the World Gymnaestrada and I knew I needed to be attentive to observe and listen to my research partners with a fresh and open mind.

In May 2013, I was finally ready to stop competing. Subsequently, I moved (back) into the world of dance, ready to enjoy and appreciate the dynamics and flow of movements without having to subordinate myself to quantifying rules and regulations. And I am delighted to discover and explore the resulting experience of freedom.

The lens is shaped by me discovering the world of dance, working on similar body movements as in rhythmic gymnastics, albeit without hand apparatus. These experiences keep asking me the question as to why doing one and the same body movement, a jump or turn, in a dance studio is so different from doing it in the gym?

What is it that makes my research setting particular? Is it the atmosphere, the PEOPLE, the ACTIVITY as such, travelling to a different PLACE for the sake of it?

There must be something special about participating in the non-competitive World Gymnaestrada, and I am curious to discover what it is.

This biographical background information is an indicator of the relationship I have with my research. It is ultimately a relationship of a former rhythmic gymnast, competing up to the national level in group rhythmic gymnastics, researching a non-elite, non-competitive sports tourism context. It is especially this elite/competitive versus non-elite/non-competitive dichotomy that may cause bias if not reflected upon carefully, raising the question whether I am an outsider or an insider. As an outsider, I may perhaps not gain access to data or will not even understand what is occurring. In spite of the dichotomy, I argue that I am an insider. I grew up in the German gymnastics system which involves a lot of tacit knowledge I needed to tease out during the research process. Over and above that, there are more specific aspects I share with my research partners, allowing me to adopt an insider rather than outsider perspective. Without intending to anticipate my findings, what I have in common with my research partners is the fascination of group gymnastics. Furthermore, both my research partners and I engage in gymnastics with a goal in mind, namely to perform in front of spectators. Working towards a common aim involves a period of preparation and rehearsals, no matter the skill level, no matter whether one is training towards a competition or a non-competitive performance. Also, in terms of socio-demographic

aspects such as gender, race and class, I, a female, white, middle-class researcher, have common grounds with my research partners. In spite of these commonalities, my perception may have been filtered through the lens I outlined and strategies to overcome related concerns of trustworthiness will be illustrated later in this chapter.

The process of making the familiar strange helped to inform the process of making the strange familiar, of understanding the meaning attached to taking part in the World Gymnaestrada. The latter is the event or case selected to study the non-elite, non-competitive research setting of my project. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), ethnography involves additional forms of sampling over and above choosing the overall case. They argue '[e]qually important, often, is sampling *within* cases' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 35, original emphasis), especially when a case such as the World Gymnaestrada is not one so small that it can be studied in detail. Sampling within cases is carried out along three levels: time, people and context (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Starting off with the latter, it is along these three aspects that the research process will be outlined.

Context

Sampling along context within a case acknowledges that in any setting different contexts can be distinguished (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 39) emphasise these do not equal places, 'recognizing that these are social constructions not physical locations'. They underline the need to select those contexts which are of particular relevance to the focus of study. The World Gymnaestrada programme consists of different elements or layers of context. Framed by the opening and closing ceremonies, the core of the programme consists of group performances by a minimum of ten gymnasts, covering all forms of gymnastics, presented both open-air on several stages in the host destination and indoors in the city's exhibition centre Beaulieu (for a map of event sites, see Appendix A). Each group usually performs their choreography three times in different places during the event.

Large group performances are presented open-air in a stadium by at least 200 gymnasts, with each group usually presenting their show twice. Further aspects of the programme encompass national evenings, allowing each federation to display their gymnastics activities combined with folklore elements, an educational forum and the FIG Gala, a show organised by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) (Schwartz 2006).

While I intended to balance my field observations across those elements, the main context was selected to be the activities related to the large group performance of the German Gymnastics Federation in which I took part myself. Under the title and guiding theme 'Cut your own path', 500 gymnasts from all regions of Germany presented a 30-minute choreography consisting of five parts. As each part of the choreography reflected different skill levels, age groups and gymnastics forms, the German large group performance was selected to be the major research setting as it was judged to be an appropriate snapshot of the multi-faceted character of the event. While for some presentations, such as the national evenings, groups have to apply and are selected to perform, in the case of the large group performance, participation is open to any gymnast who is a member of a gymnastics club within the German Gymnastics Federation. On the one hand, this facilitated access to the field, one of the major challenges ethnographers often face (Fetterman 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007); on the other, it secured the non-elite Gymnastics for All setting on which my research focused. Selecting this context impacted the further sampling decisions across time and people.

Time

From a temporal perspective, the research process encompassed three phases, each involving different research methods (see Figure 4). To cope with the challenge of having to understand a social group whose very foundation is shaped by the shortness and temporal limits of an event, data collected during the event week were complemented by pre-event and post-event data collection phases.

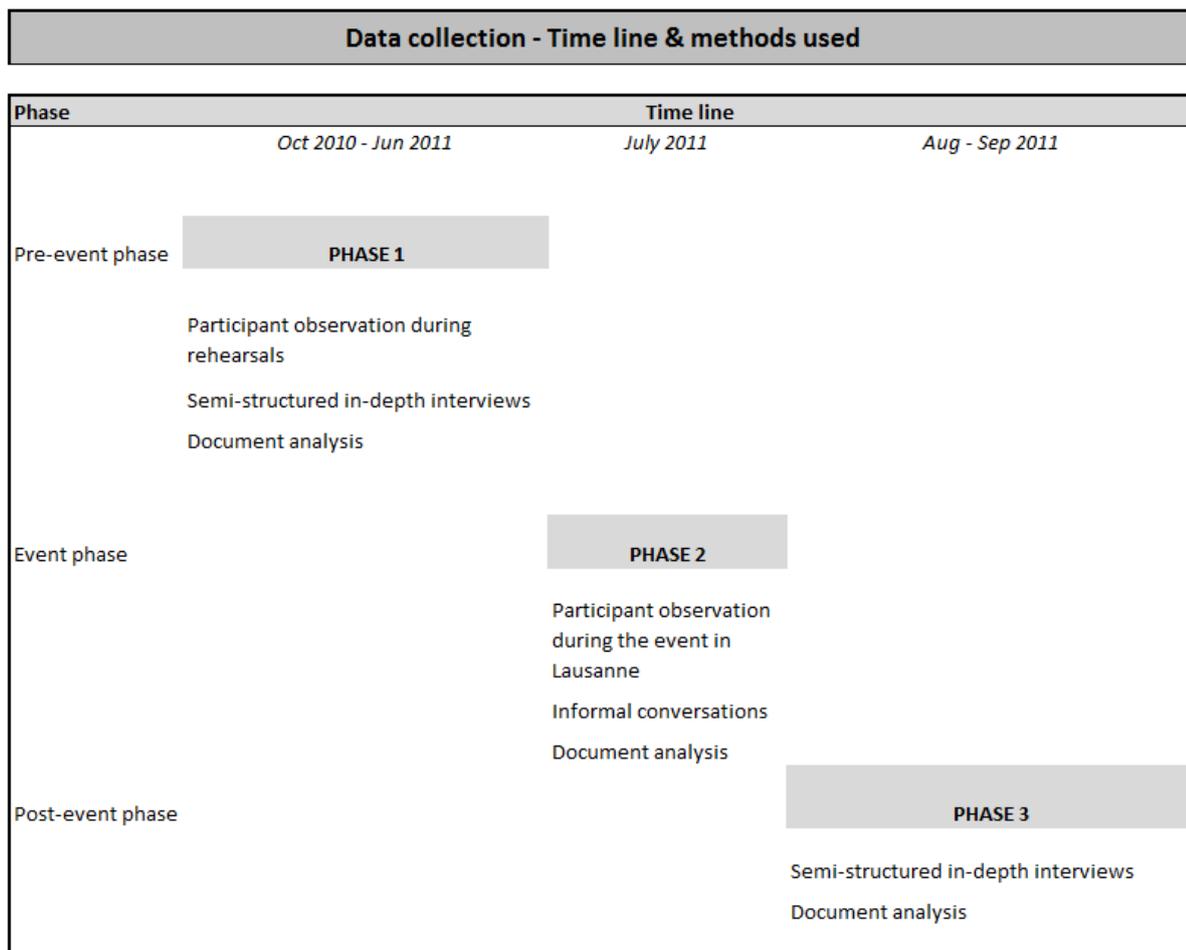


Figure 4: Data collection phases and methods used

In the pre-event phase (October 2010 until June 2011), participant observation was used during the rehearsals for the German large group performance. The practices started on a regional basis. I attended those organised by the Swabian Gymnastics Federation in South West Germany. In May 2011, all participants were invited for a weekend at a location close to Frankfurt, where the different regional groups came together. The rehearsals offered me the opportunity not only to observe and listen, but also to conduct a variety of informal conversations during the breaks and social gatherings. These were complemented by formal pre-event interviews conducted in March and April 2011. In parallel, a variety of documents were analysed. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the German gymnastics movement, several special documents were published in 2011, such as a booklet on the history of the

German Gymnastics Federation and movement (Hofmann 2011). These documents were studied along with the materials, such as newsletters, provided by the German Gymnastics Federations and the World Gymnaestrada organising committee.

The pre-event interview findings and my observations in this period informed the data collection in Lausanne from 9th until 17th July 2011. During the event, again participating, observing, listening and informal conversations were the main methods of data collection. The schedule of my observations was pre-structured by the activities related to the large group performance, with more details provided in the following section. Leaving the field, on 17th July 2011, was not the end of data collection but the beginning of the post-event interview period from August to September 2011. Conducting interviews between six and eight weeks after the event seemed to be an ideal timeframe. My research partners were already able to recall their memories with a certain distance while still remembering details relevant to their experience. The interviews were used to verify the findings of the pre-event interviews, reflect on the event experiences, recall post-event memories and helped me to check, elaborate and make sense of my observations in Lausanne.

While the interviews in the pre-event period were only loosely structured around the issues 'engagement in gymnastics', 'event participation' and 'event-related tourism activities', the post-event interviews were semi-structured (Flick 2006). An interview guideline was built upon themes derived from the observations in Lausanne and the literature. It contained aspects such as highlights (and possible lowlights) of the Gymnaestrada experience, comparing Lausanne to earlier Gymnaestrada events², activities, perceptions and emotions during the week as well as potential future Gymnaestrada plans.

In the interviews, there were several situations during which I experienced the mutual character of a conversation as Palmer (2009) had in her research into the relationship between heritage tourism and English national identity. As I had shared many experiences with my research partners in Lausanne, it was not only me posing

² As the following section reveals, all but one interview partner attended at least one World Gymnaestrada before going to Lausanne.

questions as a researcher, but I was also asked questions about my own experiences. Like Palmer (2009), I was confronted with the dilemma whether to disclose or conceal my own thoughts. I was aware of the need to remain detached to avoid impacting on the expression of my research partners' perceptions (Palmer 2001). When research partners asked me questions about my own experiences, my strategy usually was to confront them with a counter-question. Alternatively, I decided to reveal my own thoughts as, like Palmer (2009), I found that disclosing my own experiences tended to give rise to deeper conversations.

In specific selected cases, notably when my key informants were involved, towards the end, I let the formal interview fade into an informal conversation which I deliberately used for member-checking purposes (see later in this chapter). All in all, the different temporal levels of the data collection process built upon each other, informed each other and corroborated each other. Sampling across time was closely linked to sampling people as the majority of my research partners were involved both before, during and after the event.

People

The large group performance provided not only the context for the three phases of the research process, but also the setting for the selection of my research partners. The core of my research partners was formed by a group of 11 gymnasts aged between 43 and 66 from South West Germany. For more than 20 years, they have been involved in group gymnastics with hand apparatus. Training under their coach Antonia³, they perform regularly in local and regional events and have been travelling significantly to regional and national gymnastics festivals. Furthermore, they are all very experienced World Gymnaestrada participants. For Antonia, Lausanne was her 8th World Gymnaestrada; all other group members had participated in a World Gymnaestrada at least four times. I revealed myself as a researcher in the course of the first rehearsal day in October 2010. From the beginning, Antonia and her group were very supportive of my research and they allowed me to travel with them from their home to Lausanne

³ All first names used are pseudonyms to protect the research partners' anonymity.

and back, which provided many opportunities for observing and listening. Likewise, many other large group performance participants of the Swabian gymnastics federation were willing to support my research, forming the second layer of research partners along with additional participants of the German Gymnastics Federation.

Seeing each other frequently during the rehearsal period enabled me to become acquainted with them and to establish trust and relationships based on respect, appreciation and reciprocity, key values in any ethnographic project (Creswell 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In line with the others, I rehearsed the routine for the large group performance at home between the practice dates. This was thought to be a simple strategy to be able to focus on observing and listening during the rehearsals without being distracted by working on the routine; yet it soon turned out to have the positive effect that my research partners became even more supportive and accepted me as one of their own. While not being deliberately or consciously conceived as such, this could fall under what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 66) call 'impression management' to help establish rapport and trust.

I was permitted to join the Swabian participants whenever I wished during the week in Lausanne. The two rehearsals on site along with the two performances in the stadium were scheduled dates and times where I knew we would meet. The waiting times before and between the performances offered valuable occasions to listen to the participants' conversations and stories or to observe their emotions and behaviour. Likewise, it was respected when I detached myself, as, right from the beginning, I was aware of the risks of 'going native', of key informant bias and that my findings may reflect the view of my core research partners exclusively (Fetterman 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sands 2002). Hence, during my field research, I made sure to go back and forth between the members of my core group, the other large group performers of the Swabian Gymnastics Federation and other Gymnaestrada participants. Sharing the same accommodation, a school in Morges, 15 kilometres outside Lausanne where the German delegation stayed, made it easy to get in touch with other German participants to check the perspectives of my Swabian core group against as many different views of the German delegation as possible. During the 15-minute walk from the school to the train station in Morges, I engaged in informal

conversations that could be readily followed up in the accommodation. These insights complemented my field observations during both event and tourism-related activities in Lausanne, such as performances both in the city centre and the exhibition area, guided city tours and social gatherings.

The following overview provides a brief presentation of my key research partners (11 gymnasts of my core group and seven participants of the additional layers) in the alphabetical order of their assigned pseudonym. The main characteristics identified in the outline include the age, occupation, marital status, family size, the length of involvement in gymnastics, and how often they have taken part in the World Gymnaestrada so far. The latter point is crucial as it demonstrates the variety of earlier Gymnaestrada experiences among the research partners.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Antonia | She is 64 years old, retired, married and has two children. She has been in her gymnastics club since she was seven years old. She actively participates in general gymnastics and is the coach of two groups. Lausanne is the 8 th World Gymnaestrada for her. |
| Bärbel | She is 43 years old, has a commercial occupation, is married and has two children. She has been a member of her gymnastics club since her mid-20s. Lausanne is her 5 th World Gymnaestrada. |
| Birgit | She is 55 years old, is a teacher, married. She has been involved in gymnastics since her childhood, is both actively involved, as coach and official for group gymnastics. Before Lausanne, she had attended one other World Gymnaestrada. |
| Charlotte | She is 47 years, a child care worker, married and has two children. She has been a member of her gymnastics club since her early 20s. Lausanne is her 7 th World Gymnaestrada. |

- Christina Aged 66, she is retired, married and has two children. She joined her gymnastics club in her early 20s. Lausanne is the 8th World Gymnaestrada she attended.
- Erna She is 59 years old, a homemaker, married, two children. She has been actively involved in her gymnastics club since her childhood. Lausanne is her 4th World Gymnaestrada.
- Eva She is 62 years old, has a commercial profession, is married and has one child. She has been in her gymnastics group for 18 years. Before Lausanne, she had attended three World Gymnaestradas.
- Evelyn She is 52 years old, has a commercial profession, is married and has two children. She joined her gymnastics club in her early 20s and had attended three World Gymnaestradas before Lausanne.
- Gerda She is 65 years old, retired, married. She has been an active member of her gymnastics club for 25 years. In Lausanne, she participates in a World Gymnaestrada for the 7th time.
- Heidi She is 60 years old, a physical education teacher, married and has two children. She has been involved in her gymnastics club since her childhood, both actively and as a coach working with young children. Lausanne is the 2nd World Gymnaestrada for her.
- Irene She is 64 years old, retired, married and has two children. She has been an active member of a gymnastics club since childhood. When she moved, she joined her new club in 1981. Lausanne is her 8th World Gymnaestrada.
- Maria She is 60 years old, self-employed, married and has two children. She has been in her gymnastics club for 19 years, with Lausanne being her 5th World Gymnaestrada.
- Miriam She is 47 years old, has a commercial profession, is married and has three children. She joined her gymnastics club in 1991, yet was involved

in gymnastics from childhood. Before Lausanne, she had taken part in four World Gymnaestradas.

- Nadine She is 37 years old, is a physiotherapist, single. She has been actively involved in artistic gymnastics and team gym since her childhood and now is a team gym official. In Lausanne, she took part in a World Gymnaestrada for the 1st time.
- Sabine She is 52 years old, an accountant, married. She has been involved in her gymnastics club since a child. Lausanne is her 3rd World Gymnaestrada.
- Theresa She is 41 years old, a teacher, single. She has been involved in gymnastics since she was a child, acrobatics in particular. She is both actively engaged and works as a coach. Lausanne is her 3rd World Gymnaestrada.
- Ulrike She is 25 years old, a student, single. She has been actively engaged in artistic gymnastics since she was three years old. In Lausanne, she took part in a World Gymnaestrada for the 3rd time.
- Uta-Maria She is 56 years old, a teacher, married, has four children. She has been involved in her gymnastics club since her 30s. Lausanne was the 3rd World Gymnaestrada in which she participated.

A range of research partners was interviewed in terms of life experiences. However, they formed a relatively homogenous group as they were all non-elite gymnasts, female and German. They differed in their professional background, yet they were all white and middle-class, which is generally representative of other German gymnastics groups. Purposive sampling was adopted to identify the research partners. Blaikie (2010) argues that this kind of sampling strategy is appropriate, in particular, when in-depth investigation is the aim of a study. As all but one of my research partners had already attended at least one World Gymnaestrada before Lausanne, it was assumed they would have much to reveal. Yet, as with any purposive sample (Blaikie 2010), it

cannot be concluded their experiences and meanings are representative of all non-elite, female, German World Gymnaestrada participants.

Being in close contact with my research partners during the whole week in Lausanne enabled me to make arrangements with them for my post-event interviews. This ensured that post-event memories of the same persons could be checked against the observations made during and before the event.

3.2.3 Ethical considerations

Research drawing on ethnography raises several ethical issues that need to be considered. Asking for permission to collect data in a specific field, gaining informed consent from participants, assuring confidentiality and raising awareness of the ownership of data are the main aspects in this context (Flick 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). These issues are even more challenging when a study is conducted partially or completely in a covert way. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 57), it is common in ethnographic studies ‘that some people are kept in the dark while others are taken into the researcher’s confidence, at least partly’.

In my research, ethical concerns arose from the adopted research methods, namely participant observation and interviews. To gain access to the field officially, I registered as a participant of the German delegation, which was approved by the German Gymnastics Federation. In a written communication, I informed the officials of this organisation about my project, explicitly outlining that the primary motive of my participation was related to my research. From the beginning, the German Gymnastics Federation was aware of this research and my registration as participant of the German delegation was officially approved. Likewise, I informed the choreographer and coaches of the large group performance.

The field observations during the rehearsals and the event were conducted with both overt and covert elements. Covert observation needs to be considered carefully in terms of ethical concerns. Calvey (2008) and Homan (1980) argued, however, covert observation may be justified for practical reasons or if the character and quality of the

results may be affected by the researchers revealing themselves as such. While the latter did not seem to be an issue in the context of this project, the former was: as the event organisers hosted nearly 20,000 participants, with the German delegation comprising 1,900 thereof, for reasons of practicability, I was not able to inform all participants they may be observed. Palmer (2009) illustrated, when conducting partly covert research, she lets herself be guided by reflections on whether her observations might harm those being observed. My approach to the partly covert nature of my research draws on this guiding principle, which is also in line with Flick (2006). As long as no conversation was taken up with persons I observed but was not acquainted with, the individual privacy of the observed person was not compromised, as my notes could not be linked to any personal data of those being observed. Yet, as soon as a conversation started, I was striving for a clear and open communication outlining that my primary purpose of taking part in the World Gymnaestrada was for my research. In line with the principle of informed consent (Flick 2006), when talking to other participants both during the rehearsals and on site during the event, I revealed myself immediately as a researcher to provide the respondent with the chance to discontinue the conversation. No situation occurred that would have made it necessary to terminate a talk, either during the rehearsals or during the event. Furthermore, to address issues of confidentiality, all research partners were asked whether they would agree that the information they were providing could be included in the research.

Also, when conducting my formal interviews, I was striving for a non-ambiguous communication. Following the principle of informed consent (Flick 2006), all research partners were briefly informed about the purpose of the research, how the information they provided would be used and the measures I was adopting to ensure confidentiality. Then they were asked for permission to be interviewed, which was granted by all research partners. To respect their privacy in the relatively small world of German gymnastics, all first names were replaced with pseudonyms.

3.2.4 Data collection and analysis

The adoption of the qualitative multi-method approach in my project resulted in a vast range of data that were systematically analysed. Data collection and analysis were an on-going process, following a circular rather than linear model as it is typical in qualitative research (Flick 2006; Maxwell 1996). Once new data were obtained, these were immediately reviewed, passing through continuous analytical stages. The process of analysis was based upon Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 159), who suggested that in ethnographic research:

We must be prepared to go beyond the data to develop ideas that will illuminate them, and this will allow us to link our ideas with those of others; and we must then bring those ideas back to test their fit with further data, and so on.

Extensive notes were taken in the field to keep a detailed record of the observations. One of the biggest challenges in the field is how to determine those aspects that will be relevant for data analysis and, hence, merit being observed and recorded (Flick 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Following Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and Sands (2002), a detailed record was kept of the day, time, place and context in which the observations arose. Upcoming analytical ideas were marked specifically as such and were strictly separated from observations, as suggested by Fetterman (1989) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007). The third layer of field notes encompassed a personal journal in which my own feelings, thoughts and emotions were recorded, both during the pre-event period and on site in Lausanne.

Keeping notes during the rehearsals did not cause any major challenges as it was common for participants to write down steps of the routine or comments made by the choreographer or coach. During the event week in Lausanne, I attempted to be as discreet as possible when making field notes. I usually had a piece of paper and a pen in the wrapper of my accreditation card, which accelerated the process of noting aspects I came across. In writing down observations, attempts were made to avoid research partners taking notice. There were incidents, however, where this could not be completely avoided. A full record of the hand-written notes during the day was

produced at night when all notes were typed onto a computer. Here again, there were occasions where research partners discovered me sitting and typing. Sharing a classroom with ten other gymnasts in the school accommodation, I sometimes had trouble finding a location where I could work in privacy. I usually attempted to find a quiet place in a hidden corner in the basement of the school.

The pre- and post-event interviews were conducted face to face in a location proposed by the interview partner. In some cases, interviews had to be conducted on the telephone when extensive travelling to the research partners in Swabia would have delayed the research process. In this respect, a trade-off decision had to be made. The added value derived from interviewing the same research partners after the event as before and during the event was considered to be higher than the potential loss of accuracy caused by an interview situation on the telephone as compared to a face-to-face one.

The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. With the consent of all research partners, those interviews were taped and fully transcribed verbatim. Poland (2002) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) noted there are common rules for preparing transcripts that should be considered. Their consideration of establishing a clear system of notating, for example, laughter, pauses and intonations was taken on board. Where a word was unclear and could not be identified when listening to the tapes, these were marked with a question mark. Specific notes were also made, for example, when a comment was made with an ironic undertone. Drawing on Creswell (2007), additional notes were taken to keep a record of the interview situation.

All data were reviewed and analysed in an on-going process of identifying codes and themes. The use of CAQDAS (Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software), the programme NVivo in particular, was considered, yet dropped. Creswell (2007) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identified the advantages of utilising CAQDAS programmes, such as organise, store and administer data, as well as facilitating themes, categories and codes. Yet Creswell (2007) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) also warned that researchers may feel distanced from their data and field work. I felt this remoteness would impact on my intention to gain an in-depth understanding

of meaning. Instead of using CAQDAS, printed versions of both field notes and interview transcripts were analysed and reviewed. Themes and patterns were systematically identified, developed, compared and coded, and were then re-examined against the data (Creswell 2009). Being aware of the issue of transcription and analysis in a multi-language study and drawing on Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Small et al. (1999), all data were analysed at the outset in the original language, German. Yet, as soon as codes, categories and themes started to emerge, these were defined in English. During this process, the corresponding statements of my research partners were translated into English. To avoid fragmentation and to allow for consistent coding and analysis, all translated passages were denoted with the page number of the German transcripts. This facilitated the process of checking the translations against the originals, especially when codes and themes had to be relabelled and redefined (for selected extracts of the codes and categories, see Appendix B; for the emerging themes and their relationships, see Appendix C).

The codes were further developed to identify conceptual and theoretical themes. These were used to explain the findings within existing frameworks, to elaborate theory and to develop new conceptual ideas. Blaikie (2007; 2009), Haig (2005) and Richardson and Kramer (2006) argued the process of revealing the meaning people derive from or actively assign to their activities requires a particular logic of enquiry, namely abductive inference. While induction is concerned with identifying generalisations based on observations of individual statements with a certain level of probability (Blaikie 2007; Chalmers 1999; Richardson and Kramer 2006), deduction means 'applying general rules to specific cases' (Richardson and Kramer 2006, p. 499). Instead of proceeding in an inductive or deductive way, abductive reasoning is needed when revealing the hidden and underlying reasons for human action (Blaikie 2007; 2010; Kornmeier 2007; Richardson and Kramer 2006). According to Richardson and Kramer (2006, p. 500), abductive reasoning is the 'appropriate method for making sense of new (or unknown) situations'. Originally presented by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Kornmeier 2007; Richardson and Kramer 2006), the abductive strategy focuses on revealing meanings, motives and intentions that guide people in their everyday activities. According to Blaikie (2007), abductive

reasoning starts with reviewing those accounts individuals give on the meanings they attach to their actions and interactions with others. As this is usually done in a taken-for-granted manner, the provision of accounts needs to be encouraged by the researcher (Blaikie 2007). Social actors express meanings in their own words, which are then analysed by the researcher against the context of existing or new theoretical ideas. In this way, *relative* knowledge is generated about *relative* meanings attached to a *real* world.

3.2.5 Criteria for evaluation

The theoretical perspective of this project recognises that human knowledge is relative and context-based. If relative knowledge is produced about relative meanings attached to a real world that exists independently of one's thoughts and ideas, it is crucial to identify the evaluation criteria adopted throughout the research process. There have been extensive debates in the literature about whether the traditional evaluation criteria used in quantitative research, validity, reliability and objectivity, can be applied to qualitative research, whether they need to be amended or if alternative criteria need to be developed (Decrop 2004; Flick 2006; Hammersley 1992). There have been several approaches to amend and redefine the terms validity, reliability and objectivity for qualitative research (Decrop 2004; Jamal and Hollinshead 2001). One of them is a typology developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Their criteria to enhance trustworthiness in a qualitative study include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility corresponds to the traditional quantitative criterion of internal validity and is concerned with whether the findings reflect the truth (Decrop 2004). As the identified meanings are relative, they are obviously not 'true', as such; this would counteract the nature of qualitative research, in general (Decrop 2004; Lincoln and Guba 1985), and this project's theoretical perspective, specifically. Yet the identified meanings need to be credible in that they are relevant to the research partners. The question related to credibility is whether the research partners find the identified meanings to be accurate (Hammersley 1992). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed

several strategies to achieve this. One they suggested is that data be triangulated. While triangulation is a contested term, it can be understood in relation to this project that data were collected using a multi-methods approach, drawing on both verbal and non-verbal, observable and non-observable aspects. Furthermore, particular attention was paid to ensure that many different perspectives were included, as was outlined earlier. Extended engagement in the field is another strategy to address credibility (Creswell 2007; Decrop 2004; Lincoln and Guba 1985). With this project studying a group that is defined by the limits of an event, the issue of prolonged immersion in the field was overcome by collecting data not only during the event itself, but also in pre- and post-event periods. Another strategy to enhance credibility is member checking (Decrop 2004; Erlandson et al. 1993; Lincoln and Guba 1985). As the meanings attached to their experiences are constructed by those being researched, Erlandson et al. (1993) argued both the data and their interpretations should be verified by those persons. In line with this call for member verification, some key ideas developed in the course of the research project were shared and discussed with selected key informants.

Transferability refers to external validity or the extent to which findings can be generalised (Decrop 2004; Erlandson et al. 1993). While generalisation as such contradicts the nature of qualitative research, this criterion is concerned with whether research findings are applicable to other settings. It is achieved by providing 'thick' descriptions and by purposive sampling (Decrop 2004; Erlandson et al. 1993). Transferring the findings of a study to another context presupposes highlighting the typical character of the research setting in the form of thick descriptions (Blaikie 2010; Decrop 2004). This implies a sample which has the potential to provide rich detail and insight that is relevant to teasing out the typical aspects of the research context (Erlandson et al. 1993). As mentioned earlier, purposive sampling was the strategy adopted in this project.

Dependability is based on the traditional criterion reliability and is concerned with how consistent are the findings (Erlandson et al. 1993; Hammersley 1992). Qualitative research is not concerned with producing replicable findings as such, recognising that knowledge is always context-based (Flick 2006); instead, achieving dependability

entails ensuring the data collected and recorded by the researcher correspond to what actually happened (Decrop 2004). Drawing on Lincoln and Guba (1985), both Decrop (2004) and Erlandson et al. (1993) proposed maintaining a dependability audit trail, as has been done in this project. In particular, the trail highlights in a transparent way the different stages of the research process, changes that occurred in the design and critical incidents.

Finally, confirmability draws on objectivity and consists of looking into how neutral are the findings. As mentioned earlier, the postmodern turn involves being aware that inquirers always play an active role in a research context and that a researcher cannot be completely objective (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sands 2002). Confirmability, then, strives for ensuring both findings and conclusions derive from the data in a logical manner. It is also revealed by keeping an audit trail, recording the different stages and procedures of the analytical process (Erlandson et al.1993, Lincoln and Guba 1985).

3.3 Conclusion

The outlined research design and chosen methods intend to understand and make sense of the meaning that non-elite, female German gymnasts attached to their involvement in sports event tourism in the non-competitive environment of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland. From an ontological and epistemological view, this presupposes social actors are active agents who develop and assign meaning to their experiences. Drawing on subtle realism (Hammersley 1992), the theoretical perspective which underpins this project recognises that meanings are relative constructs, assigned to phenomena which exist independently of thought. Owing to the significant role that shared practices and patterns play in the construction of meaning, a methodology drawing on ethnographic principles was adopted.

Not only are meanings constructed and relative, but also the knowledge about them is neither 'real' nor 'true'. It can only be a more or less elaborated approximation (Crotty 1998; Hammersley 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In the context of

participant observation, one of the primary methods in this project, this becomes salient as it is impossible to be everywhere, to listen to everything and to observe all interactions (Flick 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Palmer 2001). Nevertheless, as the section on the evaluation criteria has illustrated, it is possible to apply quality criteria that make the research process trustworthy through attempts to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This view matches the reformist stance that this project adopts towards the postmodern turn: to be satisfied with limited aspirations regarding the intended research results and outcomes, while still sharing the belief that researchers can provide insightful knowledge about and understanding of the social world.

In conclusion, the knowledge created in this project is context-based and may not represent the meanings developed by all World Gymnaestrada participants, nor by all non-elite, female, German gymnasts. Yet, with a research focus on a group of gymnasts delimited by skill level, gender and nationality, the qualitative multi-methods approach and the outlined strategies to achieve trustworthiness ensure that valid and rich insights were created.

4. FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents, analyses and interprets the primary data collected through the rich qualitative multi-method approach. To gain a holistic understanding of the research issues (Fetterman 2009), the three phases of data collection (pre-event, event and post-event) and the different methods used informed each other. In order to develop an overall picture of what it means to participate in the World Gymnaestrada, the gathered data were examined in an on-going procedure, passing through continuous analytical stages (Flick 2006). Wolcott (1994) suggested, in ethnographic writing, three core elements, namely description, analysis and interpretation, should be interwoven. First, describing its main features makes the reader familiar with the culture under study, addressing and answering the question 'What is going on here?' This stage should be closely intertwined with data analysis and interpretation (Creswell 2007; Wolcott 1994). The latter two have the task to identify patterns and regularities, to compare the case with other known studies and to turn to theory to make sense of the data (Creswell 2007). Connecting these stages in ethnographic writing is also in line with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 197) who argued 'there should be a dynamic balance, a constant interplay between the concrete and the analytic, the empirical and the theoretical'.

The write-up of this chapter takes these considerations on board. Instead of presenting the findings in chronological order of occurrence or separated by data collection method, a thematic approach has been adopted, with each section addressing one of the themes that emerged from the data. Extracts of the empirical results are utilised to underpin the argument and to establish connections with issues and questions that were identified in the literature review. Similarities and differences of the participants' perceptions are revealed and compared to earlier studies in the field. Furthermore, each section is related to questions posited within wider conceptual and theoretical debates. As a stylistic device, the present tense is mainly used for interview statements and the past tense for observations. This acknowledges Weber's (1947) distinction between immediate observation (*Aktuelles Verstehen*) and setting action in its broader context involving non-observable facts (*Erklärendes Verstehen*). While the former is based on observations in a specific and immediate moment, related to the past in the

period 2010 - 2011, the latter contains the broader picture and extends into the present.

The concepts of *community* and *communitas* and related discourses proved to be particularly insightful to explain, analyse and interpret the findings. Participating in the World Gymnaestrada provides a platform to experience and conceptualise a sense of belonging to a group in a physical and non-physical way. This theme, which already emerged from the socio-historical context of gymnastics, is the clearest finding. The results reveal bodily and social group experience (theme 1), fluid community affiliations and processes of boundary setting and transgression as major themes (theme 2). This suggests the World Gymnaestrada participants under study feel part of a distinctive and special 'group' that can be theorised drawing both on Cohen's (1985) approach to *community* and Turner's (1969; 1982) *communitas*. While the former was more prominent at the beginning of the event week, aspects of the latter came to the fore throughout the whole period, albeit more strongly towards the end of the week.

These concepts are, however, not fully sufficient for grasping the complexity of the research setting. Other themes which emerged from the data were: the importance of commitment (theme 3); performing, watching and providing feedback (theme 4); perceiving Lausanne (theme 5); telling stories about shared and unshared experiences (theme 6); and going home (theme 7). These themes constitute a portrait of the World Gymnaestrada community and flow into a particular form of identity development that is based on 'being nothing but a Gymnaestrada participant' (theme 8). While the notions of *community* and *communitas*, along with identity, are used primarily to make sense of the findings, additional theoretical ideas are needed to underpin and understand 'what was going on' at the World Gymnaestrada. Consequently, Stebbins' (1982; 1992) Serious Leisure concept and Bourdieu's (1984; 1989) work on habitus, practice, taste and distinction will be added to complement the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Figure 5 provides a visual overview of these eight themes which emerged from the data:

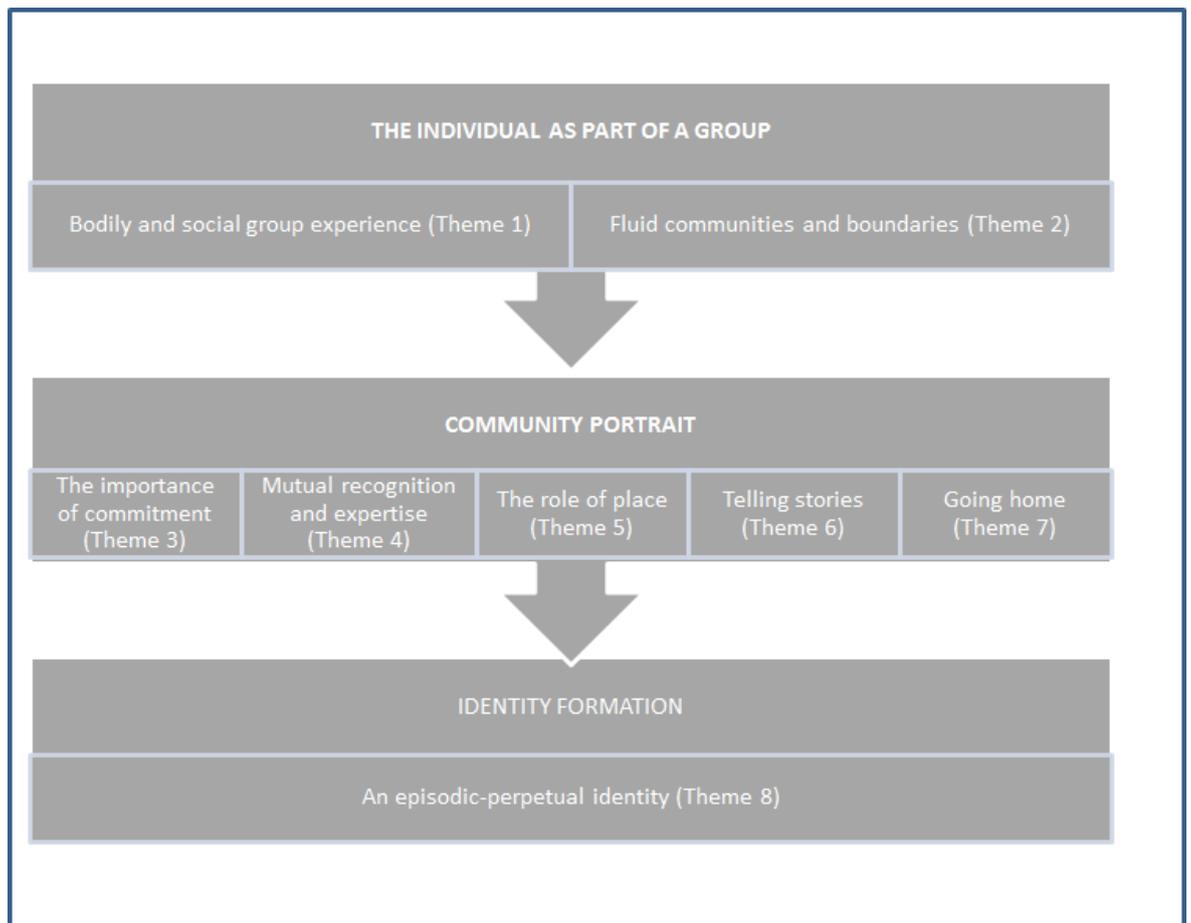


Figure 5: Overview of themes that emerged from the data

4.1 The individual as part of a whole: The Gymnaestrada as a social and physical community experience

What makes the Gymnaestrada special is you go there with a group you really belong to.

Theresa's description of what makes the World Gymnaestrada distinct for her reflects accurately the key theme that emerged from the observations and interviews. Taking part in the World Gymnaestrada makes the individual feel part of a whole. It provides a platform to experience a sense of belonging to a community. Antonia explains: *'It is like a big family. You never feel out of place, you are just part of it.'* For Antonia,

Lausanne was her eighth Gymnaestrada. All of her group members had participated at least four times. So did Gerda. For her, it was the seventh time she was enjoying the event. She comments, *'For us, what matters is to spend time with each other.'* For the group, travelling to the event is a way of enjoying being together, of having more time for each other than in everyday life. Maria highlights what makes the event special to her: *'You are together 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, except when you go to the bathroom.'* Also, when asked before the event what they were most looking forward to, being away with the group was a common answer mentioned by all research partners in one form or another. Eva gets to the point, saying what matters most to her is *'The group'*.

It is, however, not only gymnastics groups who participate in the event. There are also individual gymnasts who register. But even for them, the World Gymnaestrada provides a chance to feel part of a set of people. Birgit, for example, is the only person from her club who travels to Lausanne. She belongs to a gymnastics group at home, but her fellow gymnasts were unable to participate. She explains that they perform displays only on a regional level. For her, participating as a sole member did not cause any problems. She comments *'If no other person from my club takes part, I go on my own'*. For Sabine, the situation was similar. After trying hard to persuade her gymnastics colleagues to join her, like Birgit, she decided to attend Lausanne alone:

I tried to convince my club mates for weeks, but nobody wanted to join, so I go on my own. And now they say, we should have come with you.

Both Birgit and Sabine did not have their fellow gymnasts around them during the event, yet they knew it would be easy to join other people. Antonia explains why:

If somebody asks, what are you doing tonight, where are you going, you can simply say 'we'll join you', and you can also do so, well, even if you are on your own, you can join others. The gymnasts are a big family. That's amazing.

Antonia depicted the gymnasts as a family. This supports Lyons and Dionigi (2007, p. 382) who, in their study on the Australian Masters' Games, also identified the 'family

metaphor was commonly used to describe the feelings of bonding and connectedness.’ Likewise, for Doris, the particular feature of the Gymnaestrada is its strong orientation towards the group. She is the coach of an elite team in rhythmic gymnastics. Even if this research focuses on non-elite gymnasts’ perceptions, her statement is worth mentioning:

I attend the Gymnaestrada with the girls as it gives variety to their everyday life of competitions. At the Gymnaestrada, they can do something together as a team, they can enjoy some time with each other. The girls train six times a week for several hours, so they see me and their mates more often than their parents and families. So it’s important they can spend some time with each other without thinking about competitions.

Doris’ comment demonstrates that even elite gymnasts, who are usually deeply involved in and focused on individual competitions, appreciate the Gymnaestrada as a way to set the competitive element aside for a week, to enjoy time with their peers and experience community. This matches Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011), who argue gymnasts who are involved in individual competitions and group displays value both for different reasons. While they appreciate being assessed as an individual in the former, the latter positively influences collectivism, solidarity and fellowship.

No matter whether participants attend the Gymnaestrada with or without their fellow gymnasts from home, whether they are elite or non-elite, my research partners’ comments reveal the event provides the scope for the individual to feel part of a group. Two particular event characteristics clearly foster and reinforce this effect: accommodation in school classrooms and the focus on collective displays. The most common form of lodging for gymnasts at the Gymnaestrada and other similar festivals is to share a classroom with their group members and other participants allocated by the organisers or respective Gymnastics federation. Heidi comments:

Sleeping in the classroom is part of the whole experience, that goes without saying. Even at my age, you accept the discomfort. In the room next to you, some gymnasts from your neighbouring municipality or club are staying or others you don’t know yet, but you will get to know them. I stayed at a hotel once, but it felt like missing something. The school accommodation is crucial for the community spirit, being together is crucial.

For Heidi, being at the Gymnaestrada is inextricably linked to school accommodation, which she considers to play a significant role in fostering the group spirit at the event. It is at the school where people get in touch with each other, make friends and sit together at night. When Heidi chose to stay at a hotel once, she thought her event experience was incomplete. Birgit confirms that by saying *'If I stay at a hotel, I would lose contact with the group, I would be missing something.'*

School accommodation at the Gymnaestrada fosters, reinforces and expresses the group experience. During the event in Lausanne, accommodation for the German delegation was provided in four schools in Morges, a village on the lakeside of Lake Geneva, about ten kilometres outside the city. The school my research partners and I stayed at was a reasonably new, modern building. Its big terrace and patio made the atmosphere very comfortable. The cafeteria provided beverages and snacks. At night, groups sat outside and had fun together. Someone played the guitar, with gymnasts sitting around, practicing their vocal skills. In the corridors, gymnasts turned a cartwheel or did a handstand. Other gymnasts rehearsed their display in the middle of the entrance hall or at the top of the staircase or they attempted new gymnastics elements they had witnessed during the day. In the basement, someone tried to juggle with shoes, surrounded by screaming gymnasts who applauded and cheered him. In each corner, you could hear someone bursting into laughter. In the classrooms, people had arranged their sleeping bags and mattresses on one side of the room, and tables and chairs on the other to allow space for socialising, chatting, laughing, and having fun. Bärbel knows what this means. While laughing, she complains: *'I wanted to sleep earlier yesterday, but I couldn't, my mates made me get out of my bed again and I had to join their party'*. She could not hide a smile in her eyes, while saying that. It appeared as though she expected this to happen and she might have been sad if her mates had respected her wish to sleep. *'Cling together, swing together'*, that is the slogan at the school. And there was a consensus among my research partners that the school in Lausanne was *'fantastic'*, *'amazing'*, *'the nicest school we ever had'*. It played a particular role in shaping the event experience for the individual as part of a whole.

The second event feature that entails intensive group feelings among the participants may be attributed to the Gymnaestrada's focus on non-competitive group displays.

Taking part in a collective performance is central to the event experience. When I asked Sabine about the role the display played for her, her prompt and spontaneous answer was *'That's why I am here'*. She continued:

Taking part in a display is part of the Gymnaestrada experience, only then you are a real participant. If I am only watching, I am a guest or visitor and don't belong to the active participants.

Antonia agrees, as she shares Sabine's view saying: *'When you perform, you are part of the whole event, that's the core of the experience'*. When I asked Theresa whether she would travel to a Gymnaestrada as a spectator, she answers: *'That would not be that appealing. It would need to be fairly close to where I live. I would not travel a long distance only to watch.'* The group display puts participants in the thick of things. Heidi explains why this is the case:

It's so fascinating to perform as part of a group ... You are there, on the ground in the middle of the stadium, a little human being among many others, in front of several thousand spectators. The music starts, you do your stuff, it gives you chills. It's a fantastic experience to perform in front of so many spectators, you as part of a group.

It is the experience of physical interaction in unison which fascinates the gymnasts. Being part of a whole is perceived in both a non-physical and physical way. The participants interact and communicate as a group not only in a social, but also in a bodily sense. According to Theresa, participating in the Gymnaestrada is about *'displaying with your group, hanging around with your group, celebrating together'*. She mentions performing with her fellow gymnasts in the same breath as socialising with them. The two aspects are interlinked. The physical and social experiences of belonging to a group are connected to each other. *People* interact with each other, and they interact with and through their *activity*; and all this happens in a specific *place*, Lausanne. These findings, thus, confirm the strength and appropriateness of the conceptualisation of sports tourism as the unique interaction of activity, people and place, as proposed by Weed and Bull (2004). In particular, the results provide empirical evidence for the synergistic nature of sports tourism, blending the physical aspects of

sports with the participants' socio-cultural practices. The findings contribute to address Higham and Hinch's (2009, p. 70) concern that:

The physical and sensory nature of sport provides very concrete and often overlooked aspects of culture that are used in the development of personal narratives.

Emphasising the connection between the physical and the social is also what Bourdieu (1984; 1989) did, notably in his concept of *habitus*, albeit with a slightly different focus. He argued (1984, p. 368-369) the body, the self and the social are inextricably linked in the form of the habitus:

This psychologization of the relation to the body is inseparable from an exaltation of the self, but a self which truly fulfils itself ... only when 'relating' to others ('sharing experiences') through the intermediary of the body...

For Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1989), the habitus generates and moulds an individual's practices; it 'implies a "sense of one's place" but also a "sense of the place of others"' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 19). Practices, customs and behavioural forms shape an individual's place and relationship to others. This complements Cohen's (1985) conceptualisation of community, considering it to be a meaningful system of cultural practices, patterns and values which provides its members with a sense of belonging. In the particular context of the World Gymnaestrada, this feeling of connecting and sharing with others is expressed and experienced not just socially, as revealed in the example of school accommodation, but also physically, in and through the gymnastics group displays.

Cohen's (1985) approach to the study of community provides an insightful and relevant theoretical framework for my findings. Cohen (1985) acknowledged the importance rituals play in constituting and confirming community. He considered rituals to be a means through which the sense of belonging to a community can be experienced and strengthened. Rituals are understood as 'collective memories encoded into actions' (Schechner 2006, p. 52). This notion is again complemented by Bourdieu's (1984; 1989) understanding of the habitus as a system of internalised,

unconscious and taken-for-granted dispositions and unconscious rules that guide an individual to undertake, or not, certain actions.

At the World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, two particular incidents made me reflect on the nature and importance of collectively internalised practices among the observed participants and how these seemed to constitute and affirm the gymnasts' community. The first occurred on the evening I arrived in Lausanne, the day prior to the official opening ceremony. The German Gymnastics Federation had invited all German participants to a party. It took place on the patio of one of the four schools the organising committee had allocated to the Federation for accommodation. Speeches by the officials and displays performed by selected groups were followed by a barbecue. People were dancing and having fun. Later in the evening, I saw a female gymnast, perhaps in her mid-twenties, climbing onto a bench, turning around, lifting her arms above her head, bending herself backwards, flopping herself in the arms of four other gymnasts. More and more gymnasts were attracted by this little group. It started as a spontaneous incident, but soon turned into a process with its own internal dynamics. On a rotating basis, one person jumped on the bench, performed a gymnastics element, carefully collected by the surrounding gymnasts. Step by step, the exercises became more sophisticated, with people doing backward flips and handsprings. This all appeared to happen automatically, without anybody interfering. Nobody took an obvious lead, nobody was talking. It all worked out through eye-contact and based on tacit knowledge. People were not familiar with each other, but they relied on and trusted the other participants. Everybody knew exactly how to give mutual support in order to enable each other to manage the gymnastics elements. The collective memory and internalised practice of how to render assistance served as a strong, unconscious unifying device. As Eva and Charlotte told me later, this incident caused them to experience goose bumps (*cutis anserina*) on their arms and legs.

The second example of this kind took place at the Lausanne exhibition centre Beaulieu, the main venue for the World Gymnaestrada. There, three halls were commissioned for serving lunch to all participants. One day, I went there together with Antonia and her group. We were having our meal, when Irene suddenly screamed '*Look over there*': in one corner of the hall, a gymnast entertained the crowd while having lunch.

Somewhere between the tables, he took a run-up and turned a cartwheel, followed by three back handsprings. Lunch did not seem to be important any more. People stood up, left their food for a while and came running, surrounding the gymnast. He, in turn, thanked the crowd by jumping a backward flip, followed by a spontaneous Michael Jackson dance show, performing the moonwalk. Four female gymnasts did not hesitate, jumped on the bench and started singing Michael Jackson songs. The gymnast did his movements in harmony with the women's chant. Antonia turned towards me saying *'Yes, you see, Angela, the interactions do work here'*. The impromptu performance, involving gymnasts who had never met before, could not have been better if it had been rehearsed. There was a strong feeling of connectivity in the air, caused by a spontaneous interaction through bodily movements.

These examples reveal how rituals, shared and internalised practices, shaped in the sports tourism context of the World Gymnaestrada, fostered, strengthened and perpetuated a sense of belonging to the community of participants. This supports Fairley (2009), Green and Chalip (1998), Lyons and Dionigi (2007), Weed (2006b; 2007) and Ziakas and Costa (2010), who all agree on the potential sports tourism activities entail for facilitating feelings of attachment and for constituting and confirming community. What makes this study different, however, is its identification of the extent to which the physical nature of sports contributes to these effects. At the World Gymnaestrada, the sense of connectedness is perceived and expressed not only socially, but also, and in particular, through bodily practice: in the form of rehearsed collective displays, on one hand, and through spontaneous physical encounters and practices on the other.

As has been shown, taking part in the World Gymnaestrada makes the individual feel part of a whole. The event provides the scope for physical and social community experiences. This theme has emerged already from the analysis of the socio-historical context of gymnastics and its respective festivals. In spite of dramatic social change over the past two centuries, there seems to be a rather stable core experience that has been, and still is, perceived by the participants. The impact of social change on a community is a prominent theme in Cohen's (1985) work. He argued that while social

change may alter the structure of a community, the meaning it provides may become even more significant.

4.2 Fluid community meanings – Setting and transcending boundaries

The World Gymnaestrada makes the individual feel part of a whole. It provides a sense of belonging that unfolds in a social and physical way. What ‘the group’ or community means to participants, however, varies considerably and changes continuously. This came to the fore early on during the rehearsal stage for the large group performance. Erna, for example, had registered to take part in this type of display together with her group from the club at home. The corresponding rehearsals took place not only at a club level, but also locally with fellow gymnasts from the surrounding area as well as regionally, overseen by the Swabian Gymnastics Federation. Each preparation stage offered the opportunity to meet and see fellow gymnasts from the region and to (re-)establish relations with the other participants. After the rehearsal, Erna went back home with her group and continued practicing at club level. In May 2011, all 500 participants of the German large group performance came together for a rehearsal weekend close to Frankfurt. There, the Swabian gymnasts met their counterparts from all German regions. The individual is not just part of one group; instead, group affiliations are varied and fluid. Uta-Maria comments about this phenomenon:

There is this little group, the group you are travelling with, and then there is a group you meet along the way, you do your display with, but there are many other gymnasts you rehearse and perform together with, the gymnasts from the large group performance. You split up and then you have your own group again, so with your group mates, you are a small bunch in a big bunch.

Uta-Maria’s comments reflect her perceptions of how the different groups merge and flow into each other. During both the preparation period and the event week in Lausanne, the gymnasts moved back and forth between those overlapping affiliations. This also happened in terms of socialising. Heidi comments that one of her Gymnaestrada highlights was a joint celebration with people from the North German Gymnastics Federation:

The gymnasts from the North had their party together at the school... we bumped into them by accident, and it was a little highlight for me that the North Germans asked us from Swabia to join them, we had a great night together.

The invitation to the Swabians to join the festivities of the North German gymnasts and the related merging of group affiliations that resulted made Heidi feel special. Being at the Gymnaestrada is, thus, about the individual being part of a whole that is constituted by overlapping and fluid affinities.

The floating affiliations were expressed through the participants' clothing. At the rehearsal stage, the vast majority of participants wore T-shirts that were related to one of the many different gymnastics groups with which they rehearsed. Some clothes supported the logos and names of the club to which they belonged. Birgit wore such a T-shirt during the first rehearsal for the large group performance, while Sabine's dress featured the emblem of the Swabian Gymnastics Federation. Other participants wore the official delegation dress of earlier World Gymnaestradas in which they had participated, branded with the logos of the event 2003 in Lisbon, Portugal, or 2007 in Dornbirn, Austria. These tracksuits displayed the German national flag and the official country label. The next time we met, Birgit wore a shirt featuring the logo of the regional federation to which her club belonged. Later, she put on her vest showing the insignia of the local gymnastics county. Also in terms of clothing, people switched back and forth between the different groups with which they were associated.

The Gymnaestrada participants' perception of the collective differed and changed continuously. This supports Cohen's (1985) approach to community. He argued what a community means to each individual can be significantly different. What matters is the sense of belonging it provides. As the literature review revealed, for Cohen (1985), the element which represents its distinctive character and its sense of difference is its boundary. What he emphasised is not the boundary as such, but what it means to people, and how it is experienced. The perceptions of boundaries are fluid and relative. They may be experienced by some, but 'may be utterly imperceptible to others' (Cohen 1985, p. 12).

There are several examples of boundary setting processes that can be identified during the World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne. After arriving at our school accommodation, Antonia and I went to see the officials of the German Gymnastics Federation to find out the number of the allocated classrooms that would be our home for the next days. On our way there, Antonia said to me: *'I really hope we have a single room.'* She laughed while saying so and continued, *'I mean, the 11 of us, hopefully we have a room on our own.'* They did. For the group, it was important to stay among themselves. This was also confirmed in the post-event interviews when Antonia reiterated: *'It was so nice we had a classroom just for our group, and didn't have to share it with another group.'* This was also confirmed by Irene and Erna. They all enjoyed any opportunity to join others, but still were pleased when they could shut the door when they wanted to. The classroom walls had a meaning for them; they symbolised the group boundary.

A little earlier, when I arrived at the train station in Lausanne with Antonia and her fellow gymnasts, I observed a dialogue that caused the group to mark their confines clearly. During the journey, all group members wore white T-shirts and their red club jackets. Upon our arrival, a volunteer approached us and asked *'Which group number do you have?'* Antonia became slightly anxious and started to review her documents. *'Group number? We don't have one!'*, she finally answered, visibly confused. The volunteer continued querying, a little impatient, *'But which Swiss team are you?'* Antonia seemed to be relieved and replied, *'We are not a Swiss team, we are from Germany.'* *'Oh I see.'* Now it was the volunteer's turn to look puzzled, *'Okay then, enjoy your stay'*, she said while walking away. Everybody broke out into laughter. Irene commented, *'I think she really thought we are Swiss because of our white shirts and red jackets, it's unbelievable, maybe we should reconsider our dress.'* The group members smiled at her. Suddenly, Bärbel answered *'I know what we are doing about it, now and right away.'* She opened her bag to find the red, yellow and black make-up she had kept from the 2006 Soccer World Cup and quickly painted a German flag on the cheeks of each group member. Once she had finished, she looked pleased. *'So, now we are German, and no longer Swiss.'*

In this incident, the group clearly delineated itself, using the colours of the German national flag as a sign of demarcation. The lack of such a visual, and visible, borderline

was a major reason for complaint in another case. While the jacket of the official clothing of the German delegation contained a clear country label on its back part, no signifier of nationality was recognisable on the trousers of the suit, nor on the official bag each participant received. This caused Ulrike to grumble, *'Our bag is so boring, you can't recognise where we come from.'* Birgit took a more pragmatic approach to the situation and said: *'At least I can wear the trousers at home afterwards. I would not do that, if the German flag was imprinted on them, but somehow it's a bit sad.'* Sabine agreed, saying: *'What a pity, only our T-shirts give a hint that we are German.'* This grievance about a missing symbol of national identity may be interpreted as a hidden desire to express belonging through demarcation.

According to Cohen (1985), the conscious setting of boundaries has a meaning, namely to raise the perception of community. Cohen (1985, p. 13) argued *'[t]he consciousness of community is, then, encapsulated in perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction'*. In the case of the World Gymnaestrada, these delimitation processes happened again not only in a social sense, but were also experienced physically in and through the group display. In this case, it is the awareness and pride of performing for Germany that sets the demarcation line in the participants' minds. Heidi explains:

I don't want to be nationalistic now, but it is amazing to perform for Germany. People at home are laughing at me, if I tell them, but I feel a little national pride when I am representing my country.

Birgit, Antonia, Gerda and Uta-Maria share this view. The group performance is at the same time a setting where boundaries are transcended and differences become blurred. Underpinned by the official objectives of the World Gymnaestrada and the Gymnastics for All philosophy, the collective displays of gymnastics are a means to demonstrate the diversity of gymnastics, to unite its different facets as well as the gymnasts themselves (International Gymnastics Federation 2012b). One example of enabling everybody to participate was the German large group performance. Its programme was introduced by a modern dance choreography performed by 100 female dancers, followed by an energetic piece of dance aerobic presented by both

male and female gymnasts. A group of 100 older people then took to the stage, performing a display with hand apparatus, succeeded by a group of younger gymnasts whose performance was dominated by high-level parkour, free-running and tricking elements. The programme was rounded off by a big finale with all 500 participants. The purpose of the show was to present the diversity of gymnastics practiced within the German Gymnastics Federation. Participation was open to anybody.

The gymnasts appeared to appreciate this mix of skill levels and gymnastics forms, and that age and gender were not relevant. When the 500 performers were waiting for their display's turn in the back stage area of the stadium, a female participant, perhaps aged 60, suddenly grasped the megaphone the choreographer used for her final comments before the show, and said, visibly touched by her own emotions and directed to the coaches and officials, *'We would like to thank you for this cross-generational choreography, and thanks also for your patience, so that we had the chance to become a harmonious whole.'* Everybody started applauding and answered the gymnast's comments with a spontaneous Mexican wave, a very emotional moment that caused Maria and Bärbel to experience goose bumps, as they both told me later.

These findings support the work of Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011) who, in their investigation of the 2007 World Gymaestrada in Dornbirn, came to a similar conclusion. They also identified the merging of age, gender, skill levels and gymnastics forms to be not only a philosophical idea, but one that was consciously perceived and appreciated by the participants. They went even one step further to argue it is the mixture of the different facets connected to the non-competitive environment which is the reason for the positive atmosphere, solidarity and cohesion that characterises the event. This matches some of my interview partners' answers to my question what they considered to be the highlights of their event experience, mentioning *'the joyful atmosphere'*, *'experiencing an amazing fellowship'*, *'being able to rely on the other's support'*, *'the harmony'* and *'the conviviality'*.

In the collective display, differences became blurred and boundaries were transcended. Only the national element remained. Erna explains:

Ultimately, everything gets blurred, when we are out there presenting our performance. It doesn't make a difference whether we are male or female, 30 or 60 years old, whether I am slim or chunky, big or small.

These blurring and merging processes were reinforced and made visible through the uniform dress of the participants, something which was carefully checked and monitored. To make sure each participant took all necessary items along, packing lists were provided and in the morning, before leaving the school, the gymnasts asked each other whether they had packed everything they needed. Uta-Maria comments:

In the morning you check that everyone takes all necessary items along for the display, do you have the red scarf, do you have your make-up, the shoes, and you'd better not forget anything.

Antonia tells about an incident where one of her group members did indeed forget to take along one item of her costume:

That was so horrible, also because she was so sad ... and yes, what did I do, I jumped around, I knew, there are other persons who don't need this item now, but who took it along, and I went to get it for her, that was so terrible.

The significance and emphasis that is attributed to matching clothing in the display can be interpreted as a visible and perceivable sign of the blurring of differences. Moreover, this prompts a match with the *Gleichtracht*, the uniform dress gymnasts wore in the nineteenth century under Jahn, hence showing a degree of continuity relating to the ideal of equality that was so central to the early *Turner* movement.

The collective display is not the only showcase at the World Gymnaestrada where boundaries are transcended. There is also a very popular ritual in which confines are dissolved, and again, clothing plays a crucial role in this case. It is common for the participants to exchange the official delegation clothes and other symbols that identify one's national background. When I asked Birgit in my post-event interview which Gymnaestrada memories came to her mind first, she replied: *'The swapping of clothes and how everything gets blurred.'*

At the official opening ceremony, all participants are offered the opportunity to march into the stadium in their national delegation clothes. As soon as the ceremony is over, people start exchanging their dress items, which becomes an important element of the festival week. That night, I observed the first incident of this kind in the middle of the city centre of Lausanne. A group of Swedish gymnasts approached several gymnasts who belonged to the Swiss delegation. They chatted for a while, then both the Swedes and the Swiss took off their caps, handed them over to their counterparts, put them on, said good bye to each other and moved along, the Swedes wearing the Swiss caps and vice versa. A moment later, I saw a woman wearing Swiss trousers along with a T-shirt of the Brazilian delegation.

The swapping of clothes is an issue that my interview partners had already mentioned at the pre-event stage, at least those who had taken part in the event before. As a novice, one discovered this ritual during the registration process when one needed to decide whether or not to purchase two extra T-shirts that the German Gymnastics Federation offered explicitly for the purpose of the exchanging ritual. Nadine, World Gymnaestrada novice, comments:

The German Gymnastics Federation offered these extra shirts for swapping clothes, so I knew about it, but I would have never expected this to be such a huge issue as it turned out to be.

The process started the first night after the inauguration and became a dominating feature of the event from the middle of the week onwards. Birgit explains: *'For the opening ceremony, you still need your clothes, for marching into the stadium, and probably also for the first displays, and then here we go.'* Coming across Swedish gymnasts wearing a T-shirt of their national delegation, a jacket originally belonging to a French participant and trousers of the Germans, while waving a Czech flag, was far from unusual in the second half of the week. Step by step, the inner patio of the Beaulieu exhibition centre turned into a colourful market place where people offered items of their delegation clothing in return for others.

The swapping ritual occurs in and through the material object of clothes. From an anthropological point of view, swapping material goods, a ritual of gift giving, exchange and reciprocity, contributes to perpetuate the cohesion of a community (Gregory 1982; Miller 1998). Totally different from Gregory (1982, p. 51), however, who suggested that the motive of the gift transactor is 'to acquire a large following of people (gift-debtors) who are obligated to him [sic]', the clothes swapping ritual at the World Gymnaestrada is not strategic, but rather playful in nature (Wichmann 2014). Identifying the motives for swapping and, in particular, finding out why the clothes of specific nations were selected would be a research project in its own right, yet some of them shall be presented. Participants mentioned, for example, '*simply getting rid of the German shirts*', but also the size, fit or colours of clothes, practical aspects like '*in the German bag, you have got more space than in our Austrian one*', as well as an interest in or a personal relationship with a particular country.

When I asked Ulrike in the post-event interview to tell me how she perceived the swapping of clothing, she revealed to me an incident that happened in a shop after she had exchanged her German T-shirt with a Canadian gymnast:

I was considered to be Canadian. I had the Canadian maple leaf on my shirt and then I bought postcards and the lady at the shop asked me 'You need stamps to Canada, don't you?' and I said, 'No, to Germany', that was so funny. Well, she thought... I mean, I had the German flag on my accreditation card, but she only saw the Canadian maple leaf and so she thought that I was from Canada.

When I asked her whether she herself was confused at some point about other persons' nationalities, she answered, while laughing, '*Oh no, I wouldn't say so. You are used to that.*' But still, some of the participants themselves became baffled as Gerda's story reveals that occurred to her the day before going home:

We met a guy on the train with his bag, he wore a Canadian jacket, and we asked him whether he was going to the airport to fly back home and he said, no, he was going to Fribourg, and we asked, is there an airport, whether he flies from there to Canada. Oh no, he said, he is Swiss.

With an increasing number of participants wearing pieces of clothing from two or more delegations as the week progressed, nationalities were merging in and through the participants' appearance. The national flag on the accreditation card remained the only reliable source of information about a person's citizenship. The multinational dressing of participants can be considered a clearly visible sign of transcending boundaries.

The World Gymnaestrada is a stage characterised, to some extent, by the erosion of barriers, a sense of equality and togetherness, solidarity and community spirit, which clearly relates to Turner's (1969, 1982) notion of *communitas*. The findings, hence, support Fairley (2009), who, in her study on travelling fan groups, comes to a similar conclusion. She identified (2009, p. 219) 'a liminoid status of *communitas* was evident, with group members interacting without status barriers'. Here again, however, this study is different as it points out these processes come to the fore not only socially, but also physically in and through the collective display.

Turner (1969) differentiated three types of *communitas* in society. *Existential* or *spontaneous communitas*, a more immediate form or 'happening' (Turner 1969, p. 132), a *normative* one, which has an identifiable structure and is organised into a social system, and one he calls *ideological*, which is a label for utopian models of society. The findings reveal the *communitas* identified in Lausanne comes closest to the first type. Despite the long preparation and rehearsal period, it is unprompted incidents, encounters and interactions, both socially and physically, which make up a considerable part of the participants' experience and perception of the event.

The World Gymnaestrada is a stage where affiliations are fluid and overlapping, and where boundaries are both set and transcended; these can have different meanings to different people; they may be perceived by some, but not by others. Setting confines and dissolving them are two diametrically opposite processes. Consequently, and at a first glance, there seems to be a contradiction inherent in the findings. Cohen (1985) argued setting boundaries constitutes a sense of belonging, while Turner (1969) claimed the opposite. Turner's work can be understood in a way that makes the erosion of borders accountable for the development of a spirit of solidarity and

affinity. In *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Cohen (1985) himself acknowledges the contrasting perspectives between Turner (1969) and his ideas. At the World Gymnaestrada, these antithetical processes overlap; they appear to occur simultaneously in a synchronised way. It can be concluded that this is possible as both, in the end, have the meaning of contributing to the constitution and confirmation of a sense of affiliation.

4.3 The importance of commitment – The Gymnaestrada participant as ‘Serious sports tourist’

The deep sense of belonging that the participants experience and express in both a physical and social way did not arise automatically or naturally. A sense of duty and dedication on the participants’ side turned out to be crucial for the development of the spirit of affiliation. This section refers to the rules and mechanisms of how the Gymnaestrada community is constituted. Commitment and subordination emerged to be the driving forces behind the strong feeling of connection. This, again, did not only occur in a social sense, but also on a physical level. *‘It only makes sense when it’s perfect.’* Eva’s comment on the quality that a display should demonstrate illustrates that, even if the World Gymnaestrada, by itself, is non-competitive, participants are very ambitious to do well in their show, even on a non-elite level. Antonia comments: *‘It’s our ambition to perform free of errors’* and explains:

The large group performance means representing your home country. That’s not just about being there, but that’s a real big event, the whole world comes together, and to experience something special like that, you have to be well prepared.

Incited by the awareness of performing for one’s home country, striving for success and perfection in the display is considered to be important, in spite of, or precisely because of, the non-competitive environment of the event. Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg (2011) come to a similar conclusion. At the 2007 World Gymnaestrada, they identify an element of contest was perceived by some participants, in that the event

'has a serious motto and is a kind of competition where you simply compete in a different way' (2011, p. 111). In Lausanne, this became visible in and through recurring discussions about participants' own performance as compared to other nationalities, as Birgit comments before travelling to Lausanne:

The gymnasts from the Nordic countries particularly put so much emphasis on preciseness in their displays; we are far away from that.

Also, Christina reflects critically on the group's own performance as compared to the Scandinavian gymnasts, especially those from Sweden:

The gymnasts from the Nordic countries perform extremely synchronised, everybody is blonde, everybody is in unison, everyone comes from the gymnastics school in Malmö. That would not be possible here in Germany, where every club and region rehearses separately and then everything is put together.

For Evelyn, it is the Swiss gymnasts who are the role models:

The Swiss are superb, they rehearse for more than a year, everything they do is aligned and coordinated.

These statements spell out the serious approach and reveal that there is an element of contest, albeit a subtle one, in spite of the formally non-competitive nature of the event. Doing well in the large group performance matters for my research partners; it is tantamount to representing the home country. In contrast to Bourdieu (1978, p. 838, original emphasis), who considers gymnastics to be the 'ascetic sport *par excellence* since it amounts to sort of training (*askesis*) for training's sake', at the World Gymnaestrada, there is a common goal behind the gymnastics display, 'it is the collective's achievement that is most central' (Mechbach and Lundquist Waneberg 2011, p. 112). This contradicts Weed and Bull (2009, p. 72), who argued involvement in sports tourism for task reasons, 'i.e. enjoyment of working with other members of the team in common pursuit of the task completion', may not be immediately relevant in sports tourism. At the World Gymnaestrada, it is. Working together for the common

goal is part of the experience. This supports Ziakas and Costa (2010, p. 20), who suggest sports tourism can provide a context of 'cooperative physical endeavour that everyone can participate in while working towards common goals'.

At the World Gymnaestrada, everybody is expected to give one's best and to take the performance seriously, despite, or because of, the non-elite level. Antonia comments:

If you go there, you need to take that seriously. It is not appropriate to say, I go there and do a little bit of training and at some point I will be able to do the routine somehow but no, you need to know and internalise your part, your body needs to do it automatically, you have to know it in a way that you don't need to look at what the gymnast next to you is doing.

Antonia's statement alludes to the significance of commitment and engagement, of willing to do well. She explains herself what she means by that:

There will, of course, be mistakes. Knowing it and making mistakes is okay, but not knowing it and making mistakes is another thing.

This clearly highlights that commitment is more important than skill level. If one knows the routine, mistakes are forgiven; if one does not know it, there is no excuse. It is not about being a highly skilled gymnast, but about taking the display and the rehearsals seriously. Heidi states in this respect:

I am rather pragmatic, either it goes smoothly or it doesn't. Each gymnast gives one's best, or at least I tried to do so, and, well, I always think okay, we are only human beings, and if it doesn't go well, that's not the end of the world. It's no competition, okay, it is about representing Germany as well as possible, but it's not about being assessed.

Heidi's perspective is slightly different from Antonia's. She takes a more pragmatic and unconstrained approach towards achievement. Yet, what she clearly underlines is that she aimed at giving her best in the display. She took the rehearsals seriously.

Diverging levels of commitment led, on various occasions, to conflict and frustration at the pre-event stage. Bärbel explains:

If other clubs don't take it seriously, that is very frustrating.

Despite the coach's request to practice the choreography at home on a club level between the regional cluster rehearsals, a few participants apparently did not know the routine when the Swabian group came together next time. This caused Irene to grumble:

They go there only for having fun. But you can only enjoy it once you know the routine and do your stuff without having to think about the steps.

At several points over the one-year research period, debates arose concerning how to deal with gymnasts who showed little commitment. Comments like *'The German Gymnastics Federation should exclude participants who don't know their stuff'* or *'They should do a casting'* clashed with *'But the philosophy of the World Gymnaestrada allows anybody to participate'*. It is not the intention here to go deeper into this philosophical discussion. What these comments spell out, though, is that clashing levels of commitment were the centre of conflict and frustration on the side of the dedicated participants. Being engaged and committed to do well can be interpreted as the price that must be paid to be part of the Gymnaestrada community. *'This is no vacation here'*, is another statement that teases out the significance of taking it seriously. Commitment, dedication and subordination to the common goal is the key and unifying device that provides access to, and allows being part of, the community. As in the nineteenth century, the group display is a physical symbol of coherence and a common will. The original political aim of setting territorial boundaries has disappeared, yet the meaning behind, namely to experience and express a sense of belonging, remains prevalent. Echoing Cohen (1985), in spite of social change, the *meaning* the community provides can still be discovered.

Commitment is what constitutes the Gymnaestrada community. It reflects the required behavioural device that needs to be displayed to experience the value of membership of the group. This complements Rickly-Boyd's (2012) finding that exclusivity of membership in a sports tourism community is expressed through

dedication and commitment. This also supports the appropriateness of Turner's work (1969) to account for the research findings. Here again, both Cohen's (1985) approach to *community* and Turner's (1969) concept of *communitas* fruitfully complement each other to understand what was going on at the World Gymnaestrada. Turner (1969, p. 103) argued, in close connection to *communitas*, individuals show commitment and 'have to submit to an authority that is nothing less than the total of the community'. The issue of commitment in a leisure context has been explored more in detail by Stebbins (1982). His Serious Leisure concept provides a more differentiated insight into the strong dedication Gymnaestrada participants show towards their activity. Among the six qualities that distinguish serious from casual leisure, Stebbins (1982) identified as particularly relevant the need to persevere and to undertake considerable efforts based on knowledge, skill and training. In the case of sports tourism, it has been argued, over and above the activity, these features are reinforced through the very act of travelling (Green and Jones 2005; Higham and Hinch 2009).

At the World Gymnaestrada, the participants already had to persevere during the practice stage. They had to undertake effort to take part in the rehearsals. They had to overcome failure and needed to deal with mistakes. They had to arrange themselves and set aside time to take part in the preparation weekend in Frankfurt. In addition, the act of travelling threw up additional constraints such as cost and time that had to be sustained and negotiated. Having to take days off from work and the costs associated with the journey to Lausanne were aspects my research partners frequently mentioned when they told me about unsuccessful attempts to convince other club members to take part. Discussions about whether or not participating in the World Gymnaestrada equates to taking a holiday is closely intertwined with this issue. A typical dialogue would run: '*For the amount of money you need to pay, you could go on vacation*', with somebody replying '*This is indeed vacation*', followed by '*No, it isn't*'. In this context, the issue of school accommodation also plays a crucial role. My research partners were aware there would be more comfortable modes of accommodation, yet they would not have wanted to do without, as identified earlier in this chapter. They had to overcome both activity- and travel-related constraints and, hence, could be classified as 'serious sport tourists', who, according to Green and Jones (2005, p. 167),

are considered to be 'an extreme form of serious leisure'. In terms of the required effort, some participants even think one step ahead, as the following comment reveals:

When I come back from Lausanne, I will save 1 Euro each day and I will be fine for the one in Helsinki 2015.

Even before making the trip to Lausanne, this gymnast, a woman in her late twenties whom I met at the first rehearsal, had already started thinking about negotiating potential constraints for the next event. She appears to receive something in return for doing so. Heidi provides some more details in this respect:

It's difficult to motivate people in the club to take part, but if you have seen it once, you want to go there again.

It is not only the need to persevere and to undertake effort, but also gaining durable benefits such as self-esteem, social interaction or feelings of belonging as well as being part of a group or 'unique ethos' which characterise Serious Leisure enthusiasts (Stebbins 1982). In an attempt to account for the continued commitment and involvement in an activity, Green and Jones (2005, p. 173) proffer the 'profit hypothesis' as one possible explanation. Seen from this perspective, dedication occurs as long as 'the benefits of participation outweigh the costs of taking part'. In their study on a distance running event in Cyprus, this was confirmed by Shipway and Jones (2007, p. 379) who identified:

There seems to be a reciprocal relationship here, in that the activity needs to involve significant effort to provide a valued identity, and when that identity is obtained, the individuals will undertake efforts to maintain this identity.

At the World Gymnaestrada, a similar process seems to be applicable. It can be argued there is a relationship between commitment and subordination, on one hand, and the sense of belonging that participants experience and express, on the other. There seems to be a mechanism that takes the form of give-and-take. Being dedicated to the

group, the common goal and the activity constitutes the Gymnaestrada community. Commitment is what the participants need to 'give', the strong feeling of belonging is what they are able to 'take'. Eva clarifies this relationship:

Being together with the group means a lot to me. I am more than happy to accept any efforts this entails, no matter whether it's sitting in the train or bus for hours, sleeping in a classroom or rehearsing in the rain.

The participants' commitment to a common goal shapes the sense of affiliation. Being a 'serious sport tourist' establishes, defines and validates the Gymnaestrada community. The latter, in turn, unfolds in a physical way through bodily interaction in unison in the collective display, as well as socially in and through the conviviality, hilarity, joy, peacefulness and harmony that characterise the atmosphere of the event.

4.4 Mutual recognition: Performing, watching and giving feedback

It is not only performing that plays a significant role in shaping the experience of the World Gymnaestrada community; so does watching other groups' displays. Apart from the activities related to their own performance, it is viewing gymnastics that occupies an important place in the participants' event schedule. Typical comments I heard, at the pre-event stage, on site in Lausanne and in the post-event interviews were:

Watching other groups' displays is fantastic.

I can't get enough of seeing other displays.

Well, looking at others groups' performances is an obsession.

What are you doing today? - Well, going to Beaulieu for watching of course, what else should I be doing?

While the participants agree they enjoy viewing displays, there are different methods of selecting which groups to watch. With up to 40 performances taking place every hour, spread across the Beaulieu exhibition centre, the so-called city stages in the centre of Lausanne and the stadium as main sites, the gymnasts had to choose where

to go and what to see. While some people had detailed plans regarding the displays they intended to view, Heidi adopted a more relaxed approach towards making a choice this time, compared to the earlier events she attended. She explains:

Watching other groups, that was always a bit of a, um, hassle, do I watch that display or the other one? Well, this time I took things as they came and didn't decide what I absolutely wanted to see, I didn't jump from one hall to the next, but kept my seat, stayed in one hall and simply watched what came next. Last time, that was so stressful, also because there are always time displacements, well, yes, and then you really come under stress, when you are running from one hall to the next to watch something.

Not only the selection mechanism varies, there are also contrasting preferences in terms of which groups to see:

It's great to see the people from my home town perform.

I like to see the Brazilians, we saw them in Dornbirn last time, you could see in their eyes how they enjoy life, that they like doing gymnastics.

I like the South Africans ... they have great choreographies, also the Norwegians, well, Germany is doing it differently; there, Aerobic and dance are in the foreground, when watching the Swedes, it's the ease which fascinates, also Tahiti and Bali, usually you don't see something like that.

People like watching performances from other nations that seem 'exotic' or from groups they have seen or heard about before. The gymnasts may also select a display when they are familiar with one or more performers in the team. What is worth noting, is, the first couple of days, groups explicitly advertised their displays. In the lunch hall or outside in the exhibition centre's patio, groups carried large signposts indicating the day, time and site of their displays: *'Come to see our display, Monday 14.00, hall 3 and Tuesday 15.00 hall 4'*. Also, distributing flyers was a common device in order to attract people as spectators. The group advertisements assisted people to make their choice. In addition, passing on recommendations from person to person turned out to be helpful to make one's way through the filter process:

You need to see the Malmö Flickorna from Sweden.

Have you seen the German group display from Aalen? No? You have to go there! They do it again on Thursday.

You should not miss the Swiss large group performance.

Watching displays entailed several levels of meaning. Ulrike comments, *'Some displays are just amazing, as they have great ideas or it's so great to see masses of gymnasts perform together.'* This is in line with Heidi, who explains, *'It's great to watch the other nations' displays, to see how creative they are, the diversity of gymnastics forms.'* Besides enjoying the richness and diversity of gymnastics, another aspect comes to the fore in these statements. Becoming inspired by the creativity of other groups' choreographies and developing and trying new ideas is what matters to the gymnasts. Ulrike explains what this means:

It's amazing to see what you can do with gymnastics groups. Well, we were all so motivated and tried some of the acrobatic elements we saw in the school accommodation.

Viewing and trying out what others did is a crucial part of the event experience. Theresa told me her group mates tried some acrobatics elements they had seen during the day in the meadow of a little park in the middle of Lausanne. Watching and learning from each other is one of the core event objectives, according to the International Gymnastics Federation (2012b). My research partners' statements illustrate this is not only an idea that exists on paper, but one that is consciously perceived, appreciated and valued. Also, when I asked Ulrike in our post-event interview to tell me about her Gymnastrada highlights, her spontaneous answer was:

Some of the performances which were simply amazing, as some of them had, I mean, such great ideas, ..., and again and again, this crowd of people that does something together, well, that's impressive.

This statement stresses it is not only the creativity presented in the displays which attracts the spectators, but also, and in particular, the collective form it takes. This is confirmed by a woman I was talking to towards the middle of the week. When I asked

her what she liked most so far, she answered, *'Watching the Swiss national evening'*. When I queried *'Why?'*, she continued, *'Because they did not present a spectacular elite performance, but a gymnastics crowd on a good level.'* Adopting the perspective of a performer, Theresa explains why this is the case:

Well, I think you can create impressive things for the spectators with rather easy means, I mean, without the need to reach your performance limits.

The possibility of creating impressive images on a non-elite skill level is what attracts the participants. They appreciate it is the collective, not an individual performer, who facilitates these effects. The group displays fascinate the gymnasts, not only in their role as performer, but also as spectators.

The community of Gymnaestrada participants is expressed and experienced not only by performing as a collective, but also by watching other groups' shows. Even Theresa, who commented earlier that she would not travel a long distance to the event to be a spectator *'only'*, states she feels highly attracted to watching other groups. Subject to the condition that she herself performs, being a spectator *matters* to her. The performers themselves are eager to watch others; likewise they also wish to be watched. Viewing other groups' displays means changing one's perspective. The collective goal of doing well in one's own performance has a meaning which is encapsulated in a relationship between performing and watching. Antonia explains:

You want to perform free of errors, you want to deliver a message to the spectators. Well, when you know your stuff and enjoy doing it, you can do an impressive display and reach the spectators.

The gymnasts are aware they are watched by spectators who would like to see a harmonious picture. In the very moment of delivering her show, however, Ulrike faded out the thought of being watched. While laughing, she says, *'The display was stress ... I had to focus on what I had to do, I didn't have time to think about the spectators.'* For Antonia, in turn, thoughts about those viewing came up during her performance:

I enjoyed the display, as we did so well, as you could also have a look at the spectators and I thought, wow, great, and also what I enjoyed was, when afterwards, you could say, we were good, and, great, no errors, we were great.

Even if the point of time and form of reflection was different, both Ulrike and Antonia knew, by way of their performance, they would deliver a message to spectators which they wanted to perceive and feel themselves when they changed their role from performer to spectator. The World Gymnaestrada can be interpreted as a two-sided experience that entails constantly shifting roles of performing and watching. This notion seems to challenge the binary division of sports tourists of either being actively or passively involved when travelling in terms of sport. The World Gymnaestrada provides a context where the traditional boundary between acting and spectating appears to dissolve. This study, therefore, reinforces the fairly recent theme of merging participant-spectator roles that had been touched upon by Green and Chalip (1998), Ryan and Lockyer (2002) and Tassiopoulos and Haydam (2008), and in greater detail by Lamont and McKay (2012). The strength with which performing and watching are shifting and constitute overlapping activities at the World Gymnaestrada goes beyond Weed and Bull's (2009) mediating category of being a 'vicarious' sports tourist. Nor does Kruger and Saayman's (2012) distinction between fans who are committed to the general sports context of an event versus those who are devoted to an individual participant appear to be applicable. As in Lamont and McKay's (2012) case of the Tour de France, the World Gymnaestrada is a context where the active-passive dichotomy is dissolved and where both extremes, being involved and watching, play a significant and constantly changing role in shaping the participants' experience.

Being viewed is something that is explicitly sought. Typical questions and comments which I fairly often heard were *'When is your display?', 'Did you see our display?'* or more strongly *'Did you like our display?'* or even *'Sorry, I could not make it'*. The latter also features prominently in the following dialogue: *'What kind of performance are you doing?', 'Large group for Germany.', 'Me, too, large group Switzerland. Sorry, I couldn't watch yours, it was our turn right after you finished.'* It is worth noting that people apologise, when they were not able to watch the display of their counterparts. There

appears to be an internalised agreement within the Gymnaestrada community that viewing each other's display is a taken-for-granted activity. Nevertheless, performers showed explicitly they were pleased when somebody who had considered going to see the display did so, with common statements being, *'It's so great you watched our performance'* or *'Thanks for coming'*.

Communicating with the spectators through the collective display is clearly something that matters to the participants. And whether the message has been received is an object of critical self-reflection. As Birgit comments:

The spectators had difficulty to understand what we wanted to say with our choreography, I mean, 'Cut your own path', what message do we want to deliver ... I mean, in a non-elite routine, you cannot expect the highest level of exactness. People want to take part, there is no qualification you need to pass ... and if everybody understood what we wanted to say, I don't know, it's difficult. I mean, what do you need to provide that it is well-received by the audience?

The performers aim to touch the spectators through their display, and they want to discover whether this has been achieved, as Bärbel's statement reveals:

I would really like to get a honest feedback ... Did the audience like the kind of performance we did? I would like to know that. I mean, during the display I think I did well, at least I have the impression we did well, but was it well received? I am missing that, the feedback.

Maria adds, *'I would have liked to see the whole thing, if somebody had filmed it, I would like to see it.'* Apart from asking for and receiving verbal or visual feedback, the performers experience and enjoy the spectators' response immediately and straightforward, as soon as the last tone of their display's piece of music has faded out. On many occasions, I was able to observe a broad smile and a sparkle in a gymnast's eyes, when, while s/he remained in the final position of the choreography, the spectators were showing their appreciation through thunderous applause and standing ovations.

As illustrated, at the World Gymnaestrada, performing is inextricably linked to watching. Asking for and providing feedback can be interpreted as the mediating device between the two. What seems to play a particular role in this context is that the response is provided by an expert audience that is able to assess and judge what is happening. Nicole states:

It's so nice to see when difficult elements work out well in the display, especially if you have seen how the group struggled with them in their rehearsals.

When the participants change sides to watch other displays, they do so as experts, using their performers' eyes. This also came to the fore when, on the occasion of the World Gymnaestrada, nearly 80 gymnasts successfully managed to inscribe their names in the Guinness Book of World Records, performing 790 double somersaults in fewer than 20 minutes. While excitedly watching it, Sabine turned to me saying:

That's clever they do it here during the Gymnaestrada, where the audience understands what this is all about.

Being a gymnast herself, Sabine empathises with the Swiss world record holders. She is able to think her way into what they were doing, even if she comes from a completely different discipline within the wide field of gymnastics. At the World Gymnaestrada, artistic and rhythmic gymnasts, acrobats as well as people involved in aerobics, dance or trampoline gymnastics come together. For Theresa, an acrobat, it makes a difference from whom she receives feedback:

What is particular about the World Gymnaestrada is that there are totally different gymnastics groups. Well, I mean, compared to the events where you only meet acrobats. When I travel to acrobatic events, that's much more homogeneous... I mean, and the particular thing is the feedback you get, especially when you perform in front of people who are not so familiar with what you are doing. Acrobatics events are different, as you are assessed by an expert audience. ... The feedback here is tremendous, you can really impress people, you can make people enjoy your display, and this happens, as I said, without doing the most difficult elements, it's more about giving artistic form to it..., well, impressing people who are experts in acrobatics is much more difficult.

Theresa appreciates feedback from people involved in gymnastics in general, but not necessarily in her specific discipline, acrobatics. At first glance, she seems to set a boundary within the Gymnaestrada community, one between her area of expertise and others. Yet the participants' overall interest in gymnastics, taken as a whole, makes this borderline invisible. Watching displays at the event enables the participants to identify and use synergies between their different disciplines. What unites them is a general understanding of the basis of gymnastics which qualifies them to perceive things that people who are not involved in this kind of sport would not be in a position to notice or comprehend. While watching in the stadium in Lausanne, I heard a dialogue between two spectators who discussed the display that was taking place in front of them:

I'm curious to see how they will drag away the parallel bars for the second part of their show.

Me too. Interesting we talk about that, somebody who is not a gymnast would never ever see that.

Well, you are right.

The general understanding of gymnastics, as well as the awareness thereof, shapes the participants' perspective through which they view other groups' performances. Bourdieu's (1984; 1989) notion of the habitus helps account for these findings. According to him (1989, p. 19), 'Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices'. His theoretical construct explains what happens at the World Gymnaestrada, where not only creating and performing something, but also assessing it, shapes the event experience, with both being inextricably linked.

Closely connecting these findings to the issue of commitment, the foundation of the Gymnaestrada community, provides an insightful, additional layer of understanding the actions and occurrences on site. Bourdieu (1984; 1989) argued the more committed persons have schemes of perception which enable them to see things the

less skilled ones cannot see. All the same, the displays are created through the participants' habitus, 'however they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 19). Access to the group depends on competencies needed to appreciate and understand it. Full members are those connoisseurs who have the knowledge and competencies to judge the quality. The ability to assess serves as a marker of distinction and belonging (Bourdieu 1984; 1989). This is exactly what happens at the Gymnaestrada. The individual is affiliated to the community in a two-fold way, through performing in specific gymnastics activity, and through the ability and competence to assess and appreciate other gymnasts' displays. Asking for and giving each other feedback based on one's expertise is an indicator of mutual recognition and affirms the community's membership.

4.5 Perceiving Lausanne through the eyes of the Gymnaestrada sports tourist

Being part of the World Gymnaestrada community both shapes, and is shaped by, how its host destination, Lausanne in this case, is perceived. The event takes place every four years in a different city, which has a direct impact on how it is experienced. Antonia explains:

Each World Gymnaestrada has a particular atmosphere ... it is the host destination which makes the Gymnaestrada different from the previous ones, as each city has its individual character, and, well, that was really nice, I need to say. The rehearsals, being nervous, the displays, the activities, that's very similar each time.

While the Gymnaestrada has a similar structure and programme each time it takes place, for Antonia, it is the host destination which represents its particular character and flavour. What this means becomes obvious in and through explicit comparisons with earlier places in which the event occurred. What made the Lausanne experience unique was that the city was perceived to be smaller than Lisbon, Portugal, where the

2003 World Gymnaestrada was staged, but much more urban than Dornbirn / Feldkirch in Austria, hosting the event in 2007. Birgit comments:

Dornbirn was much smaller, more familiar and rural. The valley around Bregenz is so spacious, I mean, Dornbirn was the centre, but it was spread out across the whole region ... In Lausanne, everything was more central, in Lausanne the atmosphere was different, the lake, the view, even if we were accommodated outside [Lausanne] in Morges. Yes, it was more urban, you know, the whole atmosphere.

For Birgit, Lausanne represented an ideal size and scale; the event activities were spread across the city, yet these could be reached easily. The Beaulieu exhibition centre was considered to be the starting point and central venue 'where it all happened'. Ulrike states:

There was this little courtyard [at the exhibition centre], and when the weather was fine, everybody met there, did some gymnastics movements, changed clothes, went swimming in the little lake in the middle. It was an amazing atmosphere, which you only experience during a World Gymnaestrada. In Lisbon, the distances were much bigger, there the exhibition centre was so big.

The city of Lausanne clearly shaped the character of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. It stood out, however, that my research partners felt they did not have sufficient time to see and enjoy the host destination and its surroundings. Heidi states:

The week is so short. You have rehearsals on site, you have your displays on two days. You need to be there some time in advance, get dressed, wait for your turn, perform, then the debriefing. Each display takes several hours, so only three days are left for other activities and I use them primarily for watching displays.

The participants have a demanding week. Several rehearsals on site and at least two or three displays are fixed dates that need to be adhered to. Ulrike explains that the tight schedule made her reconsider her original plan to spend some time on visiting the region:

I intended to go to Geneva for a day, but didn't manage to do so [she laughs], as we had three displays and so three days were blocked, but at least we went to see the Olympic museum and the Cathedral.

Activity-related commitments clashed with *place*-related ambitions. The requirements caused by taking part in the display kept the participants busy, too busy to engage properly in sightseeing. Being strongly committed to the collective performance and taking it seriously, the fundamental base defining the World Gymnaestrada community, entails a tacit and taken-for-granted agreement that the dates and times for rehearsals and the displays are prioritised over anything else. These findings support the work of Green and Chalip (1998) who suggested, in the context of sports event tourism, it is the *activity* and the occasion to spend time with like-minded *people* which attracts them rather than the *place* hosting the event. This is also in line with Chalip and McGuirly (2004), who identified sports tourists who are very dedicated to their chosen activity, running in their case, showed less interest in the destination hosting the marathon under investigation than those who were less involved in sports. Also, Filo et al. (2013, p. 101) indicate 'sport tourists' initial connection with the destination is often secondary to the event itself'. In the case of the World Gymnaestrada, the close relationship between performing and watching reinforces this effect. In the above-mentioned comment, Heidi states, over and above the time commitment caused by her active involvement in the display, she spends a deal of time viewing other groups. Only when there is some time left, does she consider exploring the host destination: '*Why should I see Lausanne, when there are such fascinating performances going on? I can come back later.*' In my research partners' minds, there appears to be a hierarchy of activity priorities, which was already revealed at the pre-event stage of data collection when Birgit told me:

I am especially looking forward to the display and to watching displays. In terms of sightseeing, I take things as they come.

Similarly, when I asked Miriam why she had not realised her original plan to visit Montreux for a day, she answered:

We have not even seen Lausanne yet. So we took a guided city tour and then spent the rest of the day watching displays. That's what we are here for.

Based on these findings, it could be argued Lausanne as the destination hosting the event played only a subordinate, even tertiary (after performing and watching), role in the participants' perception and experience of the World Gymnaestrada. Attempting to explain this phenomenon would, at a first glance at least, entail the need to revert to those early sports tourism definitions that conceded primary or secondary roles to either sports- or tourism-related activities. Yet, as revealed in the literature review, accounting for sports in terms of tourism, or vice versa, did not make a considerable contribution to develop an in-depth understanding of sports tourism participation. Likewise, interpreting the research findings in this way would be too simplistic. Comprehending what the host destination meant to the participants requires a more differentiated approach.

There is a specific point at which even the most committed Gymnaestrada participants made a conscious choice to enjoy Lausanne. Uta-Maria comments:

You go to work, I would say, and once the work is done, you start exploring the environment.

Albeit with an ironic undertone, Uta-Maria considers the display to be work, which again confirms the dedication, commitment and seriousness my research partners showed towards performing. She continues:

The programme consists of compulsory and optional activities, I would say, compulsory in that you have your schedule which indicates where you need to be for which activity. They tell you where to be for the rehearsals, for the displays, you need to be at a specific location at a given time, that's somewhat compulsory, I would say, ..., and then there is time for the optional activities, where you can decide yourself what to do.

The display entails compulsory dates and activities that need to be adhered to, followed by, or rotating with, 'leisure' time or optional pursuits. It is in the context of

the latter that Lausanne as the *place* hosting the event plays a significant role for the Gymnaestrada participants. Exploring the destination becomes a sought-after pursuit '*when I have time off, so no rehearsals or displays*', as Birgit puts it. In line with their serious attitude towards performing, at the World Gymnaestrada, the participants consider work and leisure time to alternate, just as in everyday life. Becoming acquainted with Lausanne and engaging in tourism activities is perceived as '*a way to relax*' after work or of '*being on holidays*', as Sabine's comment illustrates, '*Tomorrow, after the rehearsal, I will go to the city centre, just to take a rest.*' This does not only relate to the rehearsals, but also to the performance itself. Having successfully completed the display was a reason for my research partners to reward themselves with consciously enjoying the city. After the first performance, Antonia commented '*now we go to the city, now we take a holiday.*' When I asked Bärbel that night what she did after the display, she said:

We went to have coffee by the lake, that was good to come down after the adrenaline rush during the display.

A deliberate choice to enjoy the destination is not only made as a simple way to relax after having managed the rehearsal or display; it also plays an important role in celebrating the common achievement. It is not only about '*we have done it*' or '*now it's over*', but also, and in particular, about being satisfied with the quality of the performance. From a destination point of view, exploring Lausanne can be interpreted as a conscious way of rewarding oneself for the achievements that were reached in the display. Perceiving both individual and collective success as a gymnast-performer matters significantly in terms of how the remainder of the event week, including the activities over and above performing and watching, are experienced. So, enjoying the destination can be considered to be a way of celebrating the collective achievement of the Serious Leisure World Gymnaestrada community.

There is another aspect that supports the need for adopting a differentiated approach towards understanding the role Lausanne played in the participants' experience. Uta-Maria comments:

As the Gymnaestrada always takes place in a different place, you are able to get to know a little piece of the world in addition, quasi 'en passant'. Well, that is absolutely great, I mean, I have never been to Lisbon in my life, nor to Dornbirn, nor to Lausanne, and well, that has something to do with getting to know places you would perhaps never get to know otherwise.

Uta-Maria is aware that the *activity* in which she is engaged facilitated her travelling to a *place* she would perhaps not go to otherwise. It is therefore not surprising that, for her, it mattered that she could experience the city in close connection to the World Gymnaestrada:

What impresses me is when you can see signs from the event very early when you arrive, no matter whether you travel by coach or train, when you see signposts or flags, whether you can see the World Gymnaestrada logo, whether you read something about it in the newspapers.

For Uta-Maria, it is important to recognise visually the event in the host destination when she arrives. Her comment reveals the city of Lausanne is merging with the event; the *place* is not experienced in isolation, but through the *activity* and with a differentiated focus that goes far beyond tourism activities. Evelyn comments:

You perceive a place with a focus you will never have there again; even if you come back one day, the city will be different.

Heidi agrees, as the following incident reveals that had happened to some of her friends who returned to a destination that had hosted an earlier gymnastics festival in which they took part:

Some people who attended a gymnastics festival in Hamburg told me, they went back to Hamburg one day, but that wasn't the city any more they had visited during the gymnastics festival, even if it was the same city.

For these participants, experiencing and perceiving a destination during an event has a particular and unique flavour they would miss if they returned to the city. Sabine expands what this means to her:

Let's take Helsinki, where the next World Gymnaestrada takes place in four years. That's great, even if I have already been to Helsinki, but it's a great city, I could imagine going there again even without the Gymnaestrada, and if there is such a big and exciting programme for a week in a city, and you can watch, there is so much going on.... If you travel to Helsinki [as a regular visitor], you don't have so many activities at night, you cannot socialise in a school, what are you doing the whole week? Visiting museums, but at night, there is not so much going on, and at the Gymnaestrada you know you always meet people, can have a beer together, enjoy a glass of wine ... I mean, if you are there on your own, you cannot go to the theatre every night, you perhaps go out and have dinner, but here you experience the city from a different perspective, you have got the city and the Gymnaestrada programme, that's a great combination.

What makes the event experience unique and special for Sabine is that Lausanne, the World Gymnaestrada and gymnastics are inextricably linked. Coming to the city again one day without the event taking place would be different. This is also confirmed in the following comment I heard while sitting on the bus during the event week:

When you are there on vacation, you only experience the normal tourism attractions, there's much more going on when you are there during a World Gymnaestrada.

The extent to which the place perception is different and particular when being a Gymnaestrada participant as compared to being a regular visitor is also expressed by Uta-Maria in her following comment:

If I went to Lausanne on vacation, it might be interesting as well. If I went to Lausanne or Lisbon or Dornbirn for a private trip, I would have a different focus, automatically, well, in this case I would explore the landscape, perhaps the people, the museums, but I would never be able to experience the same kind of hospitality or all those things I get while I am there as a gymnast I would not experience that otherwise. That's also why it feels differently, it does make a difference, and I don't know whether I would have selected Dornbirn as a holiday destination, but with hindsight, I need to say, after having been there, it was a great experience to get to know the region and the people from Dornbirn. That's somewhat special and goes beyond gymnastics.

What all these statements unveil consistently is a strong link between the destination, Lausanne, and the event it hosts. These findings, hence, do not explicitly support Filo et al.'s (2013, p. 114) suggestion that 'sport tourists can develop a connection to the destination beyond the sport event attended'. At the World Gymnaestrada, the *activity* shapes the perspective through which the participating *people* perceive the *place* where it all happens. The findings of this research, here again, empirically support the strength and appropriateness of conceptualising sports tourism as the unique and synergistic interaction between *activity*, *people* and *place* (Weed and Bull 2004). Even if, or just because, the city of Lausanne is not the main attraction, it plays a vital, essential and indispensable role in the overall experience. Two more examples illustrate the extent to which the city of Lausanne conflated with the perception of the World Gymnaestrada. When, while walking through the city, Uta-Maria saw Lausanne's cathedral for the first time, she exclaimed excitedly:

Look, there are the towers of the cathedral, they are the mascots, right?

Indeed, the two event mascots, called Jim (standing for 'gymnastics') and Cathy (standing for 'cathedral') featured the two towers of Lausanne's Notre-Dame cathedral, which is an example of how the organisers used the synergy between the destination and the event. The second incident of this kind reveals that even people who were not directly involved in the World Gymnaestrada perceived their home town in a different light during the week. While conducting a city tour, the guide told us, with a smile in her eyes, that the wings of the angel figures in the cathedral, hewn in stone on the walls of the church building, appear as though they had been painted in the colours of the Gymnaestrada logo. She laughed and said: '*I discovered that on Monday when I did my first tour with some Gymnaestrada participants.*' The event appeared to have freshly inspired her way of seeing Lausanne. She empathised with the Gymnaestrada participants whom she guided during the week. A moment later, however, she realised she stood outside. While we were waiting in front of the cathedral, she suddenly looked puzzled, turned towards us, pointed to the bag of one

of us and asked *'What is the strange rod you are carrying around in your bag?'*, the gymnast answered, *'That's the stick of my ribbon.'* This guide looked even more confused, *'And what are you doing with that?'* To answer this question, several gymnasts started to simulate rhythmic gymnastics movements with a fictitious ribbon in their hand. *'Oh, I see, I think I have seen it on TV once.'* The guide looked relieved and continued the tour.

This little story unveils an additional layer of the role of *place* in the context of the World Gymnaestrada. No matter how Lausanne was perceived and to what extent it attracted the participants in the first place, being in a different place outside everyday life is the foundation on which the World Gymnaestrada community is based. Again combining Cohen's (1985) approach to community with Turner's (1969, 1982) *communitas* concept help account for these findings. While, within the Gymnaestrada collective, boundaries are gradually transcended, this process happens against fixed confines of space and time. It is in the face of the other, the outside world in Lausanne, that the community is symbolically constructed (Cohen 1985). This is revealed in Nadine's observations she mentioned to me one morning while showing me a picture she took the day before. The photograph featured an elderly man, sitting on a bench at a bus stop, while smoking, buried in thought and self-engrossed, his appearance suggesting he was not involved in the Gymnaestrada:

Look at the picture. When I saw this guy with his cigarette sitting there at the bus stop, I thought, gosh, and only two kilometres away from here, the normal everyday life of the people with all their problems goes on, and we are here in a completely different world.

Nadine realises the way she perceives and experiences Lausanne is different from the way the man in her picture does. Through her particular lens as a Gymnaestrada participant she feels there is a boundary that sets her apart from the population of the city. Her accreditation card is a symbol of distinction which makes her see and experience things to which the man at the bus stop does not have access to, even if he is located in one and the same place. What is different is that Nadine is outside everyday life, while the man is in the thick of it. Drawing on the ideas of Turner (1969;

1982) and in line with previous sports tourism studies (Fairley 2009; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Shipway and Jones 2008; Rickly-Boyd 2012), it is being in a different place which accompanies the process of *communitas* formation. With the participants being outside their familiar environment, it can, hence, be argued the particular way Lausanne is perceived through the eyes of the 'serious sports tourist' is a basic constituent of the Gymnaestrada community.

4.6 Telling stories about shared and unshared experiences

According to Smith and Weed (2007, p. 256, original emphasis) '[m]eaning is created through telling stories *and* stories are relational achievements that are achieved through dialogue with real or imagined others within the course of social interactions'. At the World Gymnaestrada, telling stories appears as a significant way of living and reflecting on common occurrences. Through the participants' stories, the community experience is constituted, intensified and reconstructed. Antonia comments:

When you are there, memories come up and we talk about them. It's so nice to know you share so many things.

Also, Erna and Antonia talk about what telling stories means to them:

We discuss what we are doing the next day... At night, we finally have time to talk, we don't get around to doing that during the day [she laughs].

That's right, there are so many impressions during the day, it's nice to talk about our common experiences.

The stories involve one's display, other groups' performances, but also earlier events and World Gymnaestradas they took part in, as well as the destinations that hosted them. Typical questions around which the verbal interaction is built are, for example, 'When did we go the Gothenburg, was that in 1998?' or 'When did you take part in a World Gymnaestrada for the first time?', but also 'Remind me, when did you join our group, was that before we went to the Gymnaestrada 1991 in Amsterdam?'. The

previous section included statements in which my research partners explicitly compared Lausanne to the 2003 and 2007 host destinations, Lisbon and Dornbirn. Searching for commonalities and differences between the different events the participants attended shapes the discourse and perspective through which the occurrences on site are perceived. In this context, both social and physical interactions of the Gymnaestrada community assist in the process of recalling memories:

Didn't we have our classrooms next to each other in Zurich [in 1982]?

Oh yes, I remember how much fun we had at night sitting together.

The incident that features in this little dialogue between two women, one coming from the Northern part of Germany, the other from the South, dates back nearly 30 years. Through talking about their socialising in the school accommodation that took place three decades before, a strong connection to each other is reconstructed. Likewise, recalling earlier interactions that occurred in a physical way in and through the display serves as a common denominator. This comes to the fore in the following conversation that happened at the rehearsal stage between two gymnasts the coaches had just asked to stand next to each other at the beginning of the choreography:

We were in the same row in the display last time too!

Yes, that's funny, they have placed us so close to each other again – where are you from again?

The two gymnasts recall having stood in the same row in a display several years ago rather than where the other one comes from. Their physical encounter in the rehearsal for Lausanne makes the memory they share re-surface. By way of their common retrospection, their sense of affiliation to the Gymnaestrada community is reconstituted. Here again, Turner's (1982, p. 47, original emphasis) theoretical approach provides valuable insight into what happened. He suggested, '[w]e thus encounter the paradox that the *experience* of *communitas* becomes the *memory* of *communitas*'. Here, however, it is not the common experience that turns into a shared

memory. Rather, it is the other way around: the joint remembrance of an earlier encounter shapes, and is part of, the current mutual experience in the present.

Storytelling among the gymnasts does not only involve events they share. Also unshared experiences feature prominently in their verbal interactions. Uta-Maria explains what this means:

There are so many activities on offer that you cannot do and see everything anyway, and then it's about do we split as a group, well, or does somebody even do something completely on her own. Who wants to do something completely different? And then, you merge all your impressions when you meet again, and everybody tells about her experiences, what she has seen. So we complement each other, and we can't believe what the others have seen and you yourself did not, and all that is so fascinating.

The overwhelming number of activities available on site, over and above their own displays, means that each participant experiences only a tiny snapshot of what was going on at the World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne. By telling each other about what they did and saw during the day, the conversationalists get access to a rich store of occurrences in addition to those they experienced themselves. It is in this context that the significance of the following questions needs to be understood, which I heard people ask each other very often:

What are you doing today?

Or slightly differently:

What did you do today?

Besides searching for and exchanging ideas about *shared* occurrences, through this additional layer of storytelling involving *unshared* events, the gymnasts are able to complement, intensify and complete their Gymnaestrada experience. The process of collective storytelling and recalling memories of both social and physical encounters and interactions constitutes and re-constructs the community. It is worth mentioning that also as a Gymnaestrada novice, one is part of this process, albeit in a different way. Uta-Maria comments:

They are old hands, they have been at many more Gymnaestradas than I have, and, well, their highlights are different. I don't know, for them it's more common that there is so many people there, and, well, no, I mean for me everything is still very, very impressive.

At a first glance, being new to the event, Gymnaestrada novices appear to be excluded from the stories in which the more experienced participants search for common ground. Yet, at the same time, listening to the stories makes the novices feel part of those experiences, even if they had not taken part in them. Here again, Turner's (1982, p. 42) theoretical ideas provide insight. In his consideration of initiation rites that train and make novices become part of the community, he proposed '[t]he novices are at once put outside and inside the circle of the previously known'. The findings on storytelling among the Gymnaestrada participants empirically support this suggestion. This comes to the fore with Nadine, attending the event for the first time, stating, '*as soon as you have been there once, you start comparing*'. Her own perceptions, viewed through the eyes of the novice, are contextualised and embedded by way of listening to and understanding the experienced participants' stories and impressions. The novices know, as soon as they attend the event a second time, in Helsinki 2015 for example, that they will be able to contribute actively to those stories, drawing on their own experiences in Lausanne. Here indeed, Turner's (1982, p. 47, original emphasis) notion pertains that '*the experience of communitas becomes the memory of communitas*'. The actual experience of the events and the corresponding process of recalling them appear as a two-way relationship, with the former both shaping, and being shaped by, the latter.

The theme of storytelling does not only involve the gymnasts themselves, both novices and the experienced, but also those at home. In his study on football spectating in pubs, Weed (2007, p. 407) addressed 'the desire to have an experience that can be re-told to others after the event' to be one of the two main characteristics of the sport spectating experience. The other one is the 'desire to experience physical proximity to the live event' (Weed 2007, p. 407). He concluded watching football in a pub with like-minded people can indeed make the spectator feel close to the spectating experience. However,

the longevity of such experiences, as measured by their retelling after the event, is likely to be much shorter than 'live' event spectating. It is this, more than any other part of the sport spectating experience, that is likely to ensure there is a continued demand for 'being there' (Weed 2007, p. 412).

Weed's (2007) suggestion can be interpreted to the effect that being able to tell stories to those at home plays a significant role in deciding to participate in sports tourism, even if this may be an unconscious process. Likewise, Kane and Zink (2004, p. 339) considered stories to be 'the valued and enduring product of the tour experience'. While my research partners Theresa, Uta-Maria and Beate, indeed, told me towards the end of the week in Lausanne they were looking forward to speak about their experiences with those at home, Birgit makes a point in which a subtly different aspect comes to the fore:

I mean, of course you tell people at home about what you experienced, the family and so on, but they can't understand it the same way as those who took part themselves.

In our post-event interview, Ulrike makes a similar comment:

Well, I... here in Regensburg [where she lives] there is nobody who took part and with whom I could have talked about that [her experiences].

These quotes imply the desire to tell a story is one thing, the desire to be understood another. Drawing on the case of kayaking as a sports tourism activity, Kane and Zink (2004, p. 340) noted that the participants in the tour 'universally agreed that non-kayakers could not understand the experience of this'. Equally, for Birgit and Ulrike, one is only able to comprehend a tale about the Gymnaestrada when one has been close to the event. This is something those at home obviously cannot provide. That is why telling stories among themselves appears to matter more to my research partners than speaking to those who cannot share the occurrences, with the notable exception of the novices. While the latter are not able to contribute any memories of earlier Gymnaestradas to the process of storytelling, they can do so drawing on their

perceptions on site and even more when participating in the event next time, when they would no longer count as novices. Being able to recall and understand memories is an additional way of the community setting their boundaries (Cohen 1985), this time distancing themselves from those at home. The participants interact through their stories. By way of searching for, sharing and exchanging ideas on their common experiences, they constitute and confirm their community confines.

4.7 Going home: Looking beyond the sports tourism experience

And next week everything is over.

Maria's statement, I heard her delivering towards the middle of the week in Lausanne, expresses her awareness of the temporary nature of the Gymnaestrada community experience. Erna's comment, '*At home life continues. My everyday life happens again only next week*', echoes this. Yet, in what she says, an additional aspect arises, namely her being mindful of the preliminary boundary between her current involvement in the occurrences on site in Lausanne and her life at home. Both Maria and Erna are aware of the clearly defined end of the Gymnaestrada. They know that in several days' time, they will return to their everyday lives.

Going home is at the core of any tourism experience (MacCannell 1976), with its concomitant counterpart being *going away from there* (Page and Connell 2009). The latter was consciously appreciated by the 11 gymnasts of my core research group with whom I had the chance to travel to Lausanne. The group lives close to a big lake in South West Germany, sharing its shore line with both Germany and Switzerland. We made the first part of the trip by ferry and then continued to Lausanne by train. Once, after having said goodbye to their families and friends at the ferry terminal, the boat put out to the lake, Antonia took a deep breath and said, while smiling and blinking her eyes, '*Wow, now we are rid of them*'. The group answered with broad laughter. Immediately, the process of saying farewell to their relatives served as a bridge for recalling memories of earlier events of this kind:

Oh, my dear, when we went to the Gymnaestrada 20 years ago, my kids were of the same age as your grandchildren now, who just said goodbye to us.

You are right.

We went by ferry as well to Zurich [to the Gymnaestrada in 1982].

It seems as though this happened yesterday.

Remembering shared experiences made the group look forward even more to the event, now finally about to begin. In this respect, the theme of storytelling discussed in the previous section emerges through another perspective. In those first minutes of the trip, the women talked a lot about how they had prepared some guidance for their relatives for their everyday life which, for those staying at home, would continue as usual. *'I prepared them check lists', 'I precooked food' and 'I wrote an overview of my kids' appointments for the week'* were typical comments I heard. Talking about the *'survival strategies'* for those at home, flew into, and intermingled with, stories about the process of packing their suitcases and bags:

Packing took me two hours yesterday, I didn't manage to get all my stuff into my bag.

I packed and unpacked everything four times, it got easier and easier and in the end, everything was in my bag, including my air mattress and sleeping bag.

I thought, great, everything is inside, and then I saw my mattress was still lying around. Damn, I had to start all over again.

Through their stories about earlier shared experiences, about those remaining at home and about the process of packing, the group members appeared to detach themselves from their everyday life. But the very act of travelling to Lausanne did not only serve as a way of going away from home, it also underlined the joy and thrill of anticipation in relation to the finally approaching experience of the Gymnaestrada as a group. To speak in the words of Gerda, *'it is so nice that we are finally on the road again, the group of us'*. These findings support Fairley (2009, p. 219), who suggested the mode of transport, the bus in her case, *'contributes to the sense of isolation from the outside world and acts as a physical boundary to delineate how the group is defined'*.

While the group members' home environment still appeared to be prominently present on the trip to Lausanne, the first couple of days, on site, aspects of everyday life, such as job and family, were strikingly faded out for the most part. The only incident I observed in which my research partners conspicuously integrated their life at home into their Gymnaestrada experience was on the occasion of celebrating Ingrid becoming a grandmother. The news that her daughter had given birth to a girl caused the group to throw a special party in the school accommodation that night. Apart from this occurrence, it was only during the last days of the week that my research partners increasingly linked their daily life into how they perceived the Gymnaestrada, merging it into the stories they told. In some cases, this led to confusion, as the following dialogue, which occurred at breakfast the morning before last between Bärbel and Maria, illustrates:

What are they doing today?

They are going to an amusement park.

Eh? Here? In Lausanne?

No, my kids at home.

While Bärbel's thoughts were captured by her life at home, Maria's perception was still predominantly influenced by the events happening on site. The incremental involvement of daily routines into the Gymnaestrada occurrences was also expressed visually in the form of the clothes the participants wore. During the first days, participants mainly wore their delegation dress, either the original or swapped ones, or their performance attire; towards the end of the week, however, the cityscape was increasingly peppered with people in everyday clothes along with the accreditation card around their neck that clearly identified them as a Gymnaestrada participant. Antonia agreed and confirmed she and her group put their daily dress on '*when you are in town for no reason, when the displays are over*'.

It seemed as if the Gymnaestrada community prepared itself for its return to daily life. The upcoming end of the event was consciously perceived, yet different approaches on how it was dealt with were identified. Antonia comments:

At the end of the week, I was a bit sad. Oh no, the week is already over again, and how quickly it went, and what a pity that it's over. It could have lasted 2 or 3 days longer, as now you are familiar with the place, and you would like to do that or that... but in the end, you know that it starts one day and ends after one week, you know that.

Antonia saw the closure of the experience somewhat woefully. Yet, what made it less difficult for her was the awareness that *'everybody needs to go home, that makes it easier'*. Also, Birgit was not happy about the upcoming end of the week, *'I can't get enough of watching performances'*, she says. By way of contrast, Sabine admitted that she was rather glad the week in Lausanne was coming to an end. She stated, *'It's enough now, I am saturated.'* A fellow gymnast joined in, saying *'It's good that it's over, I need a break now'*. This is in line with Gerda, who commented in our post-event interview, while laughing, *'I enjoyed going home as I was so tired.'*

While towards the end of the week life at home was integrated into the experience on site, on the trip back this process was reversed. Now, elements of the Gymnaestrada, the accreditation card, for example, were incorporated into aspects of the familiar environment at home. *'We should ask whether we can use the accreditation card for public transport not only in Lausanne, but also at home.'* This little joke was responded to by Charlotte saying: *'Or perhaps we can use the card for parking in the local car park, I mean, after all there is a 'P' on it.'* The big white letter 'P' in a green square, imprinted on the accreditation card, meaning 'participant', caused Charlotte to associate it with 'P' for 'parking'. Her comment made the group laugh. It was echoed by Antonia saying: *'In one hour, everything is over, we need to behave well then again.'* She knew her daily routines would seize her as soon as she was back:

When I am back, I always need a day or so to 'arrive' back home. It's good that everyday life catches you right away when you are back, so you are quickly into it again.

Likewise, Birgit said she was confronted with her life back home immediately. She was a bit sad about it, yet admitted *'Maybe it's best like that.'* Heidi, in turn, did not feel sorry:

No, I wasn't sad. Well, I mean, you know it happens again in 4 years... I'm already looking forward to next time.

The knowledge and awareness of the next World Gymnaestrada taking place in four years' time and the prospect of meeting her fellow gymnasts again helps her deal with the closure of the event. In overcoming the end of the week, trying to extend the shared group experience into everyday life plays an important role when returning home. My research partners attempted to take the joy and joviality of the event's atmosphere back with them. Eva comments:

My husband knows, when I had my time off and travelled to a gymnastics event, I am much more relaxed in my everyday life.

This supports Kane and Zink (2004), who suggested the value of the sports tourism trip exceeds the experience on site into the participants' wider social life. At the World Gymnaestrada, this does not only happen on an individual level, but also concerned the group taken as a whole. When reflecting on the effect participating in the Gymnaestrada had on the group's everyday gymnastics life, Antonia states '*Our group has been fostered through the World Gymnaestradas.*' In our post-event interview, Ulrike makes a very similar point when she says '*Our group has grown together during the week.*' Theresa goes into even more detail. She explains:

I hope and believe the group spirit from Lausanne continues to have an effect. Since Lausanne, there is a different spirit in our group, friendships have been fostered and there are fewer controversies.

It needs to be underlined that this point exclusively applies to those participants who travelled to Lausanne with their club peers, hence going back to the differentiation made earlier between groups taking part and individual participants. In the context of this section, this distinction plays a crucial role. Seen from this perspective, it is noteworthy these comments were made independently by three gymnasts who were not members of the same group at home. They share the view that their participation

in the Gymnaestrada contributed to foster the team spirit and group cohesion and, therefore, extends beyond the event experience into their common gymnastics life at home. This point is also made by Uta-Maria. She provides a subtly more differentiated notion on what this means, when she says:

Well, it doesn't help us advance as a group in terms of gymnastics skills. Well, we are elderly gymnasts [she laughs] and in terms of gymnastics, we do what we are still able to do. We always give our best and we do that every Monday.

She clearly underlines it is on the social, rather than physical, level that the group advances through taking part in the Gymnaestrada. While the community at the event is experienced and expressed through both bodily and social interactions, it is on the latter the event has an effect that extends into the everyday life of the group. These context-related findings are different from Kane and Zink (2004), who identified their participants were eager to advance their skills in kayaking through taking part in sports tourism. However, no matter whether the bodily or social level is impacted, these findings support Lyons and Dionigi (2007, p. 375), who countered 'the claims that leisure-related experiences of community are largely episodic, emotional and fleeting, and do little to provide sustained experiences of community'.

The process of leaving the familiar environment, experiencing the Gymnaestrada and returning home can be interpreted against the backdrop of van Gennep's (2005) rites of passage, denoting a ritual that marks 'every change of place, state, social position and age' (Turner 1969, p. 94). Rites of passage facilitate transformations of status or position of individuals within society and, thereby, ensure the continuity of a community (Turner 1969; 1982). Turner (1969) refers to van Gennep (2005) to demonstrate that wherever and whenever people pass from one life stage to another, this involves three phases: *separation*, *transition* and *incorporation*. In the first phase, people are separated from their previous status or position. The second period relates to the transitional stage, called *limen* or threshold, where one has left the original state, but not yet reached the new one. In the third stage, then, people are reincorporated, having assumed a new status (van Gennep 2005). For Turner (1969, p. 95), the transition or liminal period is of particular relevance:

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.

While Turner (1982) originally investigated ritual processes in traditional cultures, he suggested that in modern societies, activities such as sports, arts and entertainment take over the functions of rituals. While, for him, the term *liminal* referred to pre-industrial social forms of living, he used the notion *liminoid* to 'describe ritual-like types of symbolic action that occurred in leisure activities' (Schechner 2006, p. 67) in modern and postmodern societies. No matter whether a traditional or post-industrial social order is concerned, it is in the transition period in which the *communitas* phenomenon develops, characterised by equality, solidarity and comradeship (Turner 1969; 1982).

The findings in this section provide empirical support for the three-stage-process in the context of a sports tourism activity. The Gymnaestrada participants abandon their familiar environment, experience a liminoid period of *communitas*, 'a time and space of withdrawal from normal modes of social action' (Turner 1969, p. 167), before they return to everyday life. What needs to be critically reflected on, however, is to what extent the participants adopt a new status or position upon their returning home. Turner (1969) differentiated two key types of liminality, one that occurs in *rituals of status elevation* and one that happens in *rituals of status reversal*. In the case of the former, as a result of the ritual, the concerned individuals move from a lower position to a higher one. In the case of the latter, groups of people who usually have a low status in a social system are encouraged 'to exercise ritual authority over their social superiors; and they, in their return must accept with good will their ritual degradation' (Turner 1969, p. 167).

At the Gymnaestrada, the participants neither move to a higher or alternative new status, nor do they exercise power over their superiors. Instead, when they enter the *incorporation* stage of the rites of passage and leave the liminoid sports tourism experience in Lausanne, it is the joy and joviality of the event and an enhanced group spirit and cohesion which extend into their daily life. While Turner's (1969; 1982) notions of *communitas* and *liminality* are useful to explain the findings as they relate to

the *separation* and *transition* stage, they are less helpful in exploring the occurrences upon the gymnasts' returning home. Regarding the latter, Cohen's (1985) theoretical approach appears to be more appropriate in accounting, at least partially, for what happened. It is the role and function Turner (1969; 1982) and Cohen (1985) ascribe to rituals that make the difference. Turner (1969; 1982) suggested rituals accompany the process of changing status, with *communitas* being experienced during the transition stage. Cohen (1985), in turn, acknowledged rituals play a crucial role in constituting and confirming community. He considered rituals to be a means through which the sense of belonging to a community can be experienced and strengthened. In simplified terms, this means, for Turner (1969; 1982) the group experience is a temporary stage in between, while for Cohen (1985), a fostered sense of community is the outcome. It is suggested, in the case of the World Gymnaestrada, both phenomena occur closely linked to each other. The participants go through the temporary stage of *communitas* on site in Lausanne; upon their returning home, the shared experiences extend beyond the event and impact their everyday life by fostering the group's *community* spirit.

4.8 Being a Gymnaestrada participant – An episodic-perpetual identity

In Lausanne, I faded out my everyday life at home, I was just in Lausanne, Lausanne was just Lausanne, and there I am, for the moment, that's my life.

Antonia's comment on how she felt in Lausanne is an illustration of the centrality being a Gymnaestrada participant captured in my research partners' understanding of who they were. For the time of the event, they were nothing but a Gymnaestrada participant. In the course of the week, the community went through the process of developing a specific, collective identity, which can be seen to be the consequence of the previously discussed findings, synthesising the themes that emerged from the data. By way of transcending the community's boundaries both in a physical and social way, traditional sources of identity construction, such as gender, age and nationality (Jenkins 2008; Higham and Hinch 2009; Woodward 1997), appeared to be insignificant. Being dressed identically in the display, irrespective of age and gender, is a visual symbol for the weakened significance of classical identity reference points in this context, so is the phenomenon of changing delegation clothes. In the collective

display, everybody is equal and differences become blurred. Just as the members in a *communitas* experience *liminality* (Turner 1969), in Lausanne ‘persons are stripped of their former identities and positions in the social world’ (Schechner 2006, p. 66). These findings confirm Kane and Zink (2004, p. 335), who, in their study on kayaking as a sport tourism activity, identified their research partners ‘offered kayaking identities, with no information as to their wider life’.

The Gymnaestrada *communitas* (Turner 1969), comprising both individual participants and those who are part of a group in their everyday gymnastics life at home, develops a new collective identity. It is based on a specific common ground, namely the shared love for gymnastics, along with the awareness that everybody has something to present *and* has the competence to judge others’ performances. It is in this context that the centrality of the display needs to be understood – both in the sense of performing and watching. Uta-Maria puts it straightforwardly:

Having common grounds with many others, who share the same emotions and feelings, that’s where the joyful and happy atmosphere is coming from.

Feeling a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded gymnasts is the key to the collective understanding of who one is as a Gymnaestrada participant. This is confirmed in Antonia’s comment she made during the rehearsal stage:

Look, over there, there are the gymnasts from Hamburg, ‘hey, come and join us’, we knew them from the rehearsals, it’s just people who think as you do, that’s really nice.

The community’s shared identity is framed by being committed to the common goal, that is, doing well in the display. Whether it is achieved or not comes to light during the event in Lausanne, a place outside the familiar environment. Fading out everyday life plays a significant role in the process of developing the Gymnaestrada community’s identity. Antonia comments:

The particular thing about the World Gymnaestrada is to be away from everyday life, a week off from job and family constraints, I can just be as I am and decide to do things spontaneously.

Drawing on Turner (1969), in the Lausanne *communitas* the individuals are stripped of their everyday obligations which enables them to ‘do things I would never do at home’, as I heard a female gymnast say one night in the school accommodation. Antonia agrees with this view when she says:

I would never keep late hours at home like I do at the World Gymnaestrada or when I am away with my group. Well, at home I would not be able to get going with so little sleep, but at the Gymnaestrada it somehow works.

The way *people* see themselves and want to be seen in Lausanne is not only tied to their *activity*. The identity formation process also entails travelling to a different *place*. It requires, occurs and is experienced through the unique interaction of *activity, people* and *place* (Weed and Bull 2004). At first glance, this seems to support Shipway and Jones (2008, p. 74), who suggested ‘the travel element enhances the salience of participants’ sporting identity’. Yet, when explaining the formation of the new collective identity at the Gymnaestrada drawing on Turner’s (1969) *communitas*, a tiny, yet subtle difference emerges. Considering the important role that is attached to ‘being outside everyday life’, it can be argued that *travelling away from* the home environment shapes the collective Gymnaestrada identity considerably more than *travelling to* a different place, Lausanne in this case. This supports Fairley (2009), Gillett and Kelly (2006) and Rickly-Boyd (2012), who suggested consistently that being away from home is a basic requirement for the experience of a specific shared identity.

At the World Gymnaestrada, the identity formation process is, however, not restricted to the seven days of the actual event. It also includes the community members’ face-to-face encounters during the pre-event stage that in itself plays a crucial role. Sabine explains:

The display is secondary, ... rehearsing together is what matters, the mutual, the preparing in common, sitting together, chatting, having a cup of coffee together.

The face-to-face encounters at the rehearsal stage matter in their own right. The common preparation and work towards reaching the mutual goal, the collective achievement in Lausanne, can be seen as the basis for the community's cohesion. The latter, in turn, is the foundation for the development of the shared Gymnaestrada identity. In this respect, not only does the physical aspect of rehearsing together play a significant role, so does the socialising and the making contact with the other performing gymnasts. Uta-Maria states:

When you meet again, there is always a bit of chatting, 'when was the last rehearsal, do you still know the routine, do you remember the steps?'

In her comment, she blends display-related aspects with informal talking and social interaction with her fellow gymnasts. In the same way as the Gymnaestrada community is experienced and expressed in both a physical and a social way, the collective identity formation process also comprises both levels.

It is noteworthy to learn that the participants do not usually stay in touch with each other in the years between the events, if they are not from the same club or region. Here again, the differentiation between individual participants and groups taking part needs to be kept in mind. Uta-Maria illustrates this point:

You get to know someone, you sit side by side on the bus and talk ... you actually always make contacts ... you are in touch during the week, but I don't extend the contacts beyond the Gymnaestrada.

The shared understanding of 'who one is' appears to be restricted to the days of the event involving the preparation period. It seems to take the nature of a project, hence meeting Stebbins' (2005) notion of project-based leisure. With the World Gymnaestrada taking place every four years, the identity the community provides seems to be of a temporary nature. The collective being-nothing-but-a-Gymnaestrada-

participant appears as a loose and provisional state. Yet, to fully grasp the phenomenon, a more differentiated view is needed. Antonia comments:

It's so fascinating, you meet people again and again, or get to know other gymnasts, talk about things, but it's just something like a project. It's not compulsory in the sense that you don't need to write each other letters and postcards for the next years until we meet again. Sometimes this may be the case, but there is no obligation to keep in touch between the Gymnaestradas and nobody takes this badly. That's a phenomenon.

Despite the episodic character the collective Gymnaestrada identity takes, the common experience of the event appears to serve as an invisible thread that unites the participants in the years in between. Heidi comments:

We joined a party of gymnasts from Northern Germany one night, we joined up with them by accident ... we made casual friendships ... and I don't even know where they are from. But that is exactly what is so nice, well, that you are in touch just for this week, I mean, and then you may see each other again in 4 years, and then it's nice to recognise each other, and you approach one another and say, 'You took part 4 years ago as well, didn't you?', and so on. That's great, you meet the same people again.

The prospect of meeting the other participants again at the next Gymnaestrada or – depending on the disposition of the display group – at the preparation stage plays a significant role in how the community understands itself. 'We grow older together', is what Sabine said to me in one of the first rehearsals, 'Look, the people over there are now between 50 and 70 years old.' The encounters within the Gymnaestrada community are transient, while they are permanent at the same time; they are loose and temporary, but stable. Being-nothing-but-a-Gymnaestrada-participant means the community shares a collective identity which is both episodic and perpetual. It is *episodic* in that it only comes to the fore for one week every four years, albeit launched in the months before the event during the rehearsals. Its episodic nature is also underlined through the need to go home and to leave the experience on site behind. Simultaneously, the collective identity is *perpetual*. The participants know the World Gymnaestrada will take place again. It is against this prospect the popularity of

buying merchandise of the 2015 World Gymnaestrada in Helsinki, such as T-shirts, caps or mascots which were already sold on site in Lausanne, needs to be understood. The view towards the future event, made visible through the demand for items marked with the logo of the 2015 event, along with the prospect of meeting the other participants again, after three years at the rehearsal stage or at latest on site in Helsinki, makes the participants perceive the persistence of their Gymnaestrada identity. This process is complemented by the joint look into the past. By way of telling stories about earlier shared and unshared experiences, the common ground on which the community constitutes itself is relived, shaped and intensified. It is through the simultaneous retrospection into a shared past and the thrill and anticipation of the future common event attendance that the *episodic* nature of the Gymnaestrada identity obtains its *perpetual* notion.

5. CONCLUSION

This research explored sports tourism participation in the context of the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland. It was the aim of this thesis to identify and makes sense of the meaning that non-elite gymnasts attach to travelling to, and taking part in, the event. The data collection, analysis and interpretation allowed for a rich, theoretically underpinned understanding of the investigated setting. The following chapter answers the research questions, discusses the conclusions that derive from the findings and offers a synthesised critical understanding of sports tourism participation at the World Gymnaestrada. Furthermore, the conceptual relationships and the utility of the theoretical framework to account for the findings are explored and examined. In addition, the chapter highlights this project's contribution to knowledge on various levels and elaborates on the limitations, practical implications and future research directions.

5.1 Sports tourism participation in the World Gymnaestrada

Four research questions guided this study. Framed by the literature review, these were formulated to understand and make sense of sports tourism participation in the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne within wider discourses on community and identity, Serious Leisure and habitus. The first question aimed to identify the extent to which, and how, sports tourism participation in the World Gymnaestrada shapes the development, expression and experience of a sense of belonging to a community. The key theme that emerged from the data from the pre-event research period onwards was, indeed, that taking part in the event makes the individual feel part of a whole. The World Gymnaestrada provides a platform to express and experience a sense of belonging to a community that unfolds in both a social and physical way (see section 4.1 – theme 1). As their predecessors, the gymnastics festivals in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, the World Gymnaestrada combines group displays with socio-cultural activities that embed the individual in a larger whole. In spite of dramatic social change, the event has remained the core of its original meaning. This is

promoted, in particular, by two event characteristics, namely, school accommodation and the non-competitive group display.

First, the school accommodation underlines and fosters the group experience. Sharing classrooms means being-together 'seven days a week – 24 hours a day', with having little or no privacy. It is at the school where people get in touch with each other, socialise, make friends, meet former fellow gymnasts and enjoy the evenings with their group companions. In spite of the discomfort, for my research partners, school accommodation is inextricably linked to, and a defining characteristic of, taking part in the Gymnaestrada. Staying in a hotel, in contrast, would mean losing contact with the group. The importance attached to sharing residential classrooms indicates the strength of the World Gymnaestrada as a collective experience.

While school accommodation fosters the social interaction of the Gymnaestrada community, the non-competitive group display underlines the physical nature of enjoying the event as a collective. For my research partners, taking part in the display and interacting with their fellow gymnasts through gymnastics movements in a synchronised way is central to the experience. The Gymnaestrada participants interact and communicate collectively in a bodily way in and through the display. What makes this setting special is being part of a whole that is perceived both physically and non-physically, with both being inextricably connected to each other. People interact with people in and through the activity of group gymnastics.

What the 'whole', the group or community, however, means to the participants varies considerably and continuously changes (see section 4.2 – theme 2). The individual feels affiliated to fellow participants from the local club or gymnastics region. This connection overlaps with experiencing belonging to the display group that, in turn, consists of gymnasts from the whole country, as in the case of the German large group performance. The individual moves back and forth between the different affiliations in a flexible and dynamic way. The World Gymnaestrada is a platform where all sorts of boundaries between the local, regional and national, between gender and age groups, between skill levels and gymnastics forms become blurred. The ritual of changing delegation clothes as soon as the opening ceremony is over offers an illustrative

example that indicates how boundaries are gradually transcended in the course of the week. At the same time, this ritual challenges the rigid way in which national identity was dealt with during the nineteenth century gymnastics festivals. Whereas at that time, the festivities played a significant role in the development and consolidation of distinctive national identities in various countries across Europe, participants in today's Gymnaestrada deal with these issues in a much more flexible, almost playful way (Wichmann 2014). Underpinned by the inclusive Gymnastics for All philosophy, the event aims at building bridges and fostering understanding between people. The findings reveal this intended diversity is not only an abstract philosophical idea that exists 'on paper', but something that is consciously perceived, lived and appreciated. Participation in the World Gymnaestrada is a means through which the belonging to an international community of gymnastics can be expressed and experienced, no matter the age, gender or nationality, on one hand, no matter the skill level or gymnastics form, on the other.

The second research question related to how access to, and membership of, the achieved community is negotiated, affirmed and validated. The results reveal commitment, expertise and telling stories to be the three strongest constituents of affiliation endorsement. First, commitment and subordination emerged to be the driving forces behind group cohesion (see section 4.3 – theme 3). The non-competitive environment does not prevent participants from striving for perfection. They pursue the common goal of doing well in the performance. Working together towards collective achievement is part of the event experience. To reach this aim, there appears to be a subconscious and internalised agreement to take the display seriously. Commitment constitutes the Gymnaestrada community. It appears to be the internalised behavioural device that needs to be shown to feel the value of affiliation. Engagement and subordination is what an individual needs to offer; access to, and membership of, the community is what one is able to receive.

The observation that commitment matters more than skill level does not contradict the second constituent of affiliation endorsement, namely expertise (see section 4.4 – theme 4). Over and above taking part in a display oneself, watching and talking about other groups' performances is central to the event experience. During the week, the

participants adopt two constantly shifting roles of being a performer and being a spectator, with asking for and giving feedback based on one's own expertise being the mediating device between the two. There appears to be an internalised consensus that being involved in a display, which is taken seriously, provides the ability to assess and judge others. The constant interplay between performing and watching, between asking for feedback and showing appreciation, constitutes a significant device of mutual recognition through which the community is confirmed and validated. All this occurs by way of telling stories, the third aspect of affiliation endorsement (see section 4.6 – theme 6). Exchanging ideas not only on shared and unshared experiences in Lausanne, but also including memories of earlier Gymnaestrada events, is a strong means by which the community produces and reproduces itself.

The third research question focused on identifying the role that spatial and temporal aspects – the *place* element and the temporary nature of sports tourism – play in shaping the expression and experience of community at the World Gymnaestrada. While the participants show an interest in exploring the host destination of Lausanne, the tight time schedule involving performing and viewing makes sightseeing a less-prioritised activity. Yet still, to the participants, the city of Lausanne matters, as it merges with the event (see section 4.5 – theme 5). The *place* is perceived and experienced to be conflating with the *activity*, which also has an impact on how *people* interact with each other. Hence, for the Gymnaestrada community, *place* does indeed play a significant role in the participants' perceptions and experience, albeit more in the abstract and generic sense of being *outside* everyday life than specifically being *in* the city of Lausanne. In line with previous studies (Fairley 2009; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Shipway and Jones 2008; Rickly-Boyd 2012), travelling and being way from home provides the basic foundation on which the Gymnaestrada community is constituted. The community participants' encounters are bound to the destination hosting the event. The international Gymnaestrada collective as such does not involve the gymnasts as they interact and engage in their activity in their daily lives, but as they travel to Lausanne to participate in the event. Travelling there implies the need to go back after the end of the week (Page and Connell 2009). Indeed, the awareness of having to go home accompanies the way the event is perceived and experienced (see

section 4.7 – theme 7). The temporal limits of the event, and being outside everyday life, are, thereby, the very defining characteristics of the Gymnaestrada community.

These considerations lead to the fourth research question that explored to what extent and how the Gymnaestrada community develops, expresses and experiences a shared identity. The participants experience the process of developing a specific collective identity which starts at the rehearsal stage several months before the event takes place. The identity's common ground is the shared commitment to and interest in gymnastics in its various forms, along with the awareness that everybody has something to present in a display, as well as the expertise to assess others. Being dressed identically in the group performance, no matter the sex or age, visually symbolises the weakening of traditional reference points of identity construction. For the time of the event, the gymnasts feel they are nothing-but-a-Gymnaestrada-participant; anything else has disappeared. The particular feature of this shared understanding of 'who you are' is that it is loose, transient and temporary and, at the same time, stable and fixed. With the event lasting for only one week every four years, the collective identity is episodic in nature. Yet it is simultaneously perpetual as, when going home, the participants know the next event takes place after a quadrennial period. Experiencing and enjoying the event together, sharing memories of earlier ones and looking forward to seeing each other again at the next Gymnaestrada – or earlier at the rehearsal stage – intertwine to make the community's collective identity episodic-perpetual in nature (see section 4.8 – theme 8).

Synthesising the theoretical underpinning and conceptual relationships

The research questions were framed by the theoretical notions of community and identity, Serious Leisure and habitus. This, in turn, raises the question as to what extent these concepts help account for the findings and how these may relate to each other to provide a synthesised understanding of sports tourism participation in the context of the World Gymnaestrada. The data analysis and interpretation suggest the event participants consider themselves to be part of a group that is expressed and experienced in a social and physical way. In return for the value of affiliation, the

community members are expected to show commitment and subordination to the group. This relates in particular to the common goal of doing well in the display, which is taken seriously despite, or precisely because of, the non-competitive environment. The participants need to persevere and have to make considerable effort not only to do well in the performance, but also for travelling and acknowledging the discomfort of school accommodation. These considerations prompt the illustrated links to Stebbins' (1982; 1992) Serious Leisure qualities that characterise the participants' behaviour. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1978) suggested people who are dedicated to an activity also have the ability to assess it. Consequently, commitment and expertise, two of the constituents that endorse affiliation to the World Gymnaestrada community, are directly related, shaping an environment of mutual recognition. At the same time, both constituents, as they refer to each other, appear to form the basis of the internalised rules of the community. In other words, the conceptual notion of Stebbins' (1982; 1992) Serious Leisure constitutes the core of the collective's shared habitus (Bourdieu 1977; 1984). These two concepts particularly help address and account for the process of affirming and validating access to, and membership of, the World Gymnaestrada community. The question remains as to which concepts contribute to an understanding of the collective as such?

The findings suggest the community itself can be theorised insightfully drawing on both Cohen's (1985) *The symbolic construction of community* and Turner's (1969) notion of *communitas*. Cohen's (1985) approach to community helps to make sense of the symbolic nature it takes during the years in between the event's recurrence and of the fluidity of affiliations within the Gymnaestrada collective. More specifically, his argument as to what a community constitutes and means to people can vary, what matters is the sense and degree of belonging it provides, explains insightfully the flexible moving back and forth between the different groups within the Gymnaestrada collective. Closely related to this, Cohen's (1985) considerations shed light on the role that boundary setting processes play as constituents and consolidators of community. The findings suggest, at the World Gymnaestrada, boundaries are both set and transcended, constituting antithetical processes supporting each other in confirming the sense of affiliation.

It is in relation to the boundary transgression processes where Turner's (1969) notion of *communitas* comes into play. His theoretical ideas contribute to an understanding of the erosion of barriers and the deep solidarity that characterise the atmosphere of the event. The equality in the display, underlined by the uniform dress of the gymnasts, is a symbol of the erosion of traditional reference points of identity that occurs at the Gymnaestrada. In a liminoid setting away from home, outside, and freed from, everyday life's demands and obligations (Turner 1969; 1982), a new collective identity is formed which is shared by the members of the Gymnaestrada community. In contrast to Turner (1969), however, no status reversal nor status elevation occurs. Instead, when leaving the liminoid setting, it is the joy and joviality of group cohesion and the community spirit the participants take back home with them. Linking Cohen's (1985) approach to *community* with Turner's (1969) notion of *communitas* offers valuable insight into the occurrences during the 2011 World Gymnaestrada. What both concepts fail to properly account for, however, is the process of the community's 'going home' to everyday life.

The World Gymnaestrada's interpretation of community

In line with Cohen's (2002) call for reconceptualising the idea of community based on its use in a specific setting, in the following an attempt is made to provide the World Gymnaestrada's interpretation of community that accounts in particular for the notion of 'going home'.

At the World Gymnaestrada, the individual feels integrated into a larger whole that transcends the self, especially through physical interaction. The community is based on a restricted interest and purpose, the common love for a form of gymnastics and the shared goal performing well. The community does not extend beyond the common interest. Travelling and interacting outside daily life enable a focus on, and celebration of, the shared interest, while everything else disappears. The shared interest and purpose and the meaning behind, namely the belonging to an international community, is spread beyond geographical boundaries, but its face-to-face realisation and interaction is place-bound. It is the very act of travelling to a place away from

home which enables the community's face-to-face realisation and interaction, a process which is launched at the rehearsal stage. When travelling home after a week, the community turns into an idea infused with meaning. The intensity of the face-to-face encounters during the event, both the social and physical ones, is sufficiently strong that the community's meaning can be kept alive through memories until the next rehearsal stage.

In other words, when going home, it appears, as if after a very intense experience filled with emotions and impressions, the community goes to sleep. These considerations evoke an analogy to the world of animals' state of inactivity during winter time. Drawing on the metaphor of an animal, it appears as if the World Gymnaestrada community goes into hibernation after the event's week, infused with and conserving the energy it derived from the intensity of the face-to-face encounters. The community relaxes, sleeps well and wakes up, full of energy, when the next rehearsal stage starts.

This interpretation suggests how sports tourism participation in the World Gymnaestrada contributes to the debates on, and helps to inform the theoretical notions of, community and identity. More specifically, it highlights the extent to which the findings contribute to the reinterpretation of community in the sense of its being real or imagined, place-bound or spread beyond geographical boundaries, and whether identity, as it manifests itself at the World Gymnaestrada, is fixed or fluid, stable or fleeting. The findings' analysis and interpretation suggest the World Gymnaestrada community challenges and balances these binaries. The community is simultaneously social and physical, place-bound and spread beyond boundaries. It develops, experiences and expresses a collective identity that is at the same time episodic and perpetual, fixed and fluid. The community is realised through face-to-face real encounters during the event whose intensity appears to be sufficiently strong to keep them alive in the participants' minds in the years in between. The community, hence, provides evidence for Amit's (2002, p. 8) suggestion that 'what is imagined can only be truly felt and claimed by its members if they are able to realize it socially'. At the same time, it supports Amit's (2002) aspirations to balance the polarisations in the discourses on community as well as Bradley's (1996) suggestion that identity is both

fluid and stable. It is the hibernation metaphor that serves as the mediating device between these binaries and polarisations.

5.2 The contribution to knowledge

This project's contribution to knowledge is constituted on various levels. The research is placed among the emerging and growing body of studies that meets the call for a more theoretically underpinned in-depth understanding of participation and involvement in sports event tourism (Coghlan 2012; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Green and Chalip 1998; Lamont and McKay 2012; Lyons and Dionigi 2007; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008). It is closely related to previous investigations of emerging research themes that were deemed insightful, such as sports tourism participation as a physical experience (Higham and Hinch 2009; Lamont and McKay 2012; Rickly-Boyd 2012), the oscillation between the kinaesthetic and the viewing perspective (Higham and Hinch 2009; Lamont and McKay 2012; Ryan and Lockyer 2002), and the particular role travelling, and being outside everyday life, plays in the sports tourism experience (Fairley 2009; Fairley and Gammon 2005; Gillett and Kelly 2006; Griffith 2013). Furthermore, my study is particularly associated with research on how sports tourism participation contributes to the development and expression of both a sense of identity (Beedie 2008; Shipway and Jones 2007; 2008) and a sense of belonging (Green and Chalip 1998; Lyons and Dionigi 2007; Rickly-Boyd 2012), especially among mature women, a largely ignored demographic.

This research specifically contributes further insights to these debates by identifying a variety of relationships between these emerging and still incipient themes and issues. My study not only complements Fairley (2009), Green and Chalip (1998), Lyons and Dionigi (2007), Weed (2007) and Ziakas and Costa (2010) in suggesting that sports tourism participation provides a sense of affiliation and consolidates community; it also reveals how both the physical nature of sports and the very act of travelling away from home contribute to reinforce these effects. Furthermore, my research goes beyond simply exploring the merging roles of being actively engaged and watching others. It investigates a context where these two are inextricably linked and where

asking for and providing feedback as a mediating device between the two is needed to validate and affirm community. In addition, in accentuating the relevance of 'going home' and its impact on the sports tourism community, my research broadens the scope of Fairley's (2008) and Weed and Bull's (2009) suggestion to provide insight into the wider sports tourism experience instead of addressing exclusively the event period.

These findings gather particular significance when considering them in relation to Weed and Bull's (2004; 2009) conceptualisation of sports tourism as the unique interaction of *activity*, *people* and *place*. While the inherently persuasive structure of this conceptualisation is beyond debate, and while it is out of the question that sports tourism as an academic field has moved beyond basic conceptual debates, it is noteworthy to recognise qualitative in-depth investigations into the synergistic nature of sports tourism seem to have escaped researcher's far-reaching attention. In the light of these considerations, this project provides crucial evidence for its core conceptualisation and the synergy of the three dimensions. First, the strong extent to which social and physical practices of interaction are interconnected at the World Gymnaestrada emphasise the link between the *activity* and *people* dimension. Second, the merging of Lausanne with the event in the participants' perception indicates how the *activity* conflates with *place*. Third, the realisation of the Gymnaestrada community through face-to-face encounters that are place-bound is a convincing example of the synergistic relationship between *place* and *people*. I would like to explicitly emphasise that, in line with the ethnographic, qualitative research approach adopted in this project, it has never been my upfront intention to examine empirically the conceptualisation of sports tourism; rather, the evidence for the relationships between the three dimensions strongly emerged from the data.

Another contribution to knowledge stems from the particular approach that was adopted in this project to understand and make sense of sports tourism participation. The findings and conclusions derive from exploring theoretical notions, community and identity, which emerged from the socio-historical context of the sports under investigation, namely gymnastics, in a contemporary setting that is beneficial for the theoretical ideas to emerge, the non-competitive World Gymnaestrada. Community

and identity issues not only arose as strong themes from the socio-historical analysis of gymnastics; they also clearly emerged from the data from the pre-event stage onwards. In other words, it was the combination and constant interplay of the socio-historical analysis of gymnastics with the debates around the emerging theoretical ideas, community and identity, that allowed for providing rich and critical insight into sports tourism participation. Drawing on Hinch and Higham (2004), Kane (2010) and Szczechowicz (2012), I am therefore arguing that the *activity* context under investigation in sports tourism research does make a difference and that a fundamental comprehension of its socio-historical background can inform insightfully the theoretical underpinning and understanding of a contemporary sports tourism setting.

Exploring the notion of community in a non-competitive setting could easily be accused of encouraging a self-fulfilling prophecy. The opposite applies. Since their emergence in nineteenth-century Europe, the meaning and role of gymnastics festivals went far beyond physical fitness and recreation. These events have always provided rich and multifaceted ways to experience a sense of belonging to a community and a shared identity. With its focus on non-competitive group displays, the World Gymnaestrada has kept this tradition. In this context, this research has listened to the less researched voices of mature women whose perspectives and narratives, in this under-researched gymnastics setting, allowed for a particular social dynamics to emerge. As such, the event appears to challenge the highly competitive nature of those popular, high-profile mega sports events that are the focus of much research (Higham and Hinch 2009), such as the Olympic Games and Football World Cup, but also those on an arguably more inclusive level, for example marathons. Maguire (2004) argued the research agenda in sports science is a reflection of the world of sports' emphasis on striving for achievement, a quest for excellence and continuous performance improvement. For him (2011, p. 861), it is the task of sport sociology to 'generate knowledge that will contribute to human development as opposed to performance efficiency'. Maguire (2004) suggested the adoption of an alternative paradigm in sports research that focuses on human development rather than breaking records. At a time when competition and the quest for excellence at all cost are

questioned increasingly, not only in sports but also in society overall, Maguire (2011, p. 862) argues this paradigm could help to develop a more human world of sports, because '[j]ust as the shape of the sporting present was made in the past, so a sporting future can be shaped in the present'. Kaufman and Wolff (2010) share this view, considering sport as a vehicle for social change due to the inherent logic they see in extending the values promoted in sports outward to the social world. This research has contributed to our knowledge of those contexts that have the potential of doing so. As such, the research participants' perspectives suggest the World Gymnaestrada is of value in promoting a world view in society where the focus is less on being better than somebody else, but about celebrating diversity, cooperation and community both on a social (age, gender, nationality) and physical (skills, forms) level.

This research has contributed to a better understanding of communities in the twenty-first century. The findings have offered the example of a particular contemporary community that provides a sense of belonging, which is based on a limited purpose, place-bound and, at the same time, spread beyond geographical boundaries, as well as a sense of self, which is both perpetual and episodic. The community is expressed and experienced through the constant interplay between social and physical face-to-face encounters that constitute, reinforce and perpetuate the participants' bonds. It is the intensity and social dynamics of these encounters during the event that keep the community's meaning alive in the participants' minds until they meet again at the next rehearsal stage, a phenomenon whose essence is summarised by the hibernation metaphor this research has brought forward.

The hibernation metaphor constitutes a particular form of community and identity that is simultaneously episodic and perpetual. It is expressed and experienced intensely during a limited period of time, before it goes into hibernation, awaking again a few years later. The strength of the World Gymnaestrada participant community and identity does not seem to be compromised by the state of inactivity in the intervening years. In other words, the notion of hibernation suggests an absence of the need to sustain community and identity between significant events, which has not previously been identified in detail in the literature. The reason for this might be the extent to which participating in in the World Gymnaestrada takes the nature of a

'project'. For Stebbins (2005, p. 2), project-based leisure is a 'short-term, ... either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time', that has the potential of providing fleeting communities and identities that might not be firmly fixed in everyday life. For many gymnasts, preparing for, travelling to and taking part in the World Gymnaestrada can indeed be considered as a 'project', in addition to their regular engagement in gymnastics in their daily life at home. While more research is needed to fully explore these occurrences, the identified absence of a need to sustain community and identity between significant events is potentially an insightful advance in the literature, as it shifts the sole focus from the event as such to the intervening years. So far, the literature in this field usually concentrates on events as a period of liminality outside of everyday life, rather than studying the period in between significant events. The hibernation metaphor encourages researchers to look beyond immediate event experiences. Relating those to the participants' engagement in an activity in their daily life in the intervening years could yield a more holistic picture and perspective, which could insightfully inform the knowledge on sports tourism and event meanings, on one hand, and leisure based communities and identities on the other.

Last but not least, the World Gymnaestrada community not only contributes to challenge and balance the binaries discussed in the literature, using the hibernation metaphor as a mediating device; it also furthers the understanding on the double-sided nature that life in a community may entail. To *receive* a sense of self and belonging, the individual needs to *give* something in return. Access to, and membership of, the community is affirmed and validated by way of showing commitment and dedication to the common goal. This give-and-take mechanism is embedded in an environment of mutual recognition based on each member's expertise which constitutes the shared belief that both the individual and collective achievement matter. The individual is committed to a common goal, but knows at the same time s/he is significant to reach it. It is the awareness of this interdependent relationship between the individual and collective achievement that, perhaps, and inspired by Taylor's (1991; 1992) world view, counts more than anything else in our interdependent world of today. The give-and-take mechanism establishes a

relationship between commitment, expertise and mutual recognition. It constitutes a community that is kept together by the awareness that the individual is embedded in a whole that *both transcends and needs* the self of each member.

5.3 Implications, limitations and recommendations for further research

Both managerial and research implications derive from this study. The former relate in particular to the special role *place* plays in its synergistic interaction with *activity* and *people*. While the World Gymnaestrada's programme has a similar structure and content each time the event takes place, the host destination tends to bestow a particular flavour on the event. The tight schedule involving performing and watching does not concede much time for extensive explorations of the destination; yet the findings indicate participants still perceive *place* intensely and with an *activity* focus that goes far beyond tourism attractions. *Place* matters to the gymnasts as it conflates with the *activity*. Future event organisers should, hence, be aware of the importance the participants may attach to seeing the host city merging with the event. They should collaborate with destination managers to leverage this conflated perception in and through strategically shaping the cityscape, for example by tactically posting signposts, flags and posters featuring the event logo and visuals.

Furthermore, the interweaving of the host destination with the World Gymnaestrada in the gymnasts' view has an important spillover effect that needs to be considered. Destination managers and event organisers should be aware that strategies to attract event participants as potential repeat visitors may be counterproductive. Perceiving the city during the event generates a peculiar atmosphere the gymnasts would miss if they returned to the destination one day. To avoid disappointment among possible repeat visitors, destination managers and event organisers should collaborate to create attractions such as a museum exhibition to keep the event memories alive. Keeping in mind that telling stories about earlier events is a crucial indicator of endorsing affiliation to the Gymnaestrada community, a small site to commemorate

the event would provide repeat visitors with content for additional stories during the community's hibernation period.

The implications for future research are closely related to this project's restrictions. A limitation emerges when considering this project's conclusion that the World Gymnaestrada community is one that is 'real' during the event, and that is an idea infused with meaning in the years in between, against the backdrop of its philosophical underpinning, subtle realism. This position acknowledges there is a reality that exists independently of one's thoughts, but which cannot be directly assessed (Hammersley 1992); it does not explicitly address reality's existence in thoughts. The conclusion, however, implies two different levels of community, one that is 'real' and one that exists in one's mind. This project has not drawn on subtle realism to address the extent to which 'realness' exists in contemplation. More specifically, the reality of the World Gymnaestrada community as an idea infused with meaning was investigated only over a ten-month period before and three-month period after the event. Certainly, my study could have addressed the hibernation period of the community in much more detail. To understand fully how it is perceived by its members and what it means to them in the years following, as well as preceding, the World Gymnaestrada, future research should address specifically and explore these questions in the period before and after the event's recurrence.

Another limitation refers to the kind of knowledge that has been generated. The findings, in general, and the World Gymnaestrada's interpretation of community, specifically, derive from, are shaped by, my field work in the German delegation exclusively. Despite the qualitative multi-methods approach that was adopted, and even if multiple layers of actors and accounts were considered, it was ultimately me, an individual female, German, gymnast, who analysed and interpreted the results against my particular background of being part of the social world under investigation. In line with this project's theoretical perspective framed by *realism*, *relativism* and *reflexivity* (see chapter 3.1.2), this study's conclusions generate relative knowledge about relative meanings drawing on my research partners' perceptions of reality. They may not represent the meanings developed by all World Gymnaestrada participants, nor by all non-elite, female, German gymnasts. To add further insight, I suggest similar

research should be conducted with Gymnaestrada participants from other countries. Keeping in mind the controversies between German *Turnen* and Swedish gymnastics in the nineteenth century, a comparative study between those two countries, for example, would be a promising avenue forward. It could explore whether the distinctions between the two physical culture concepts (still) have an impact on how participants from these countries perceive sports tourism participation in the World Gymnaestrada.

The knowledge produced in this research is highly contextualised and cannot be generalised. To extend the findings and conclusions, further research should explore the questions and issues this study addressed in the context of sports tourism in other team sports with a strong focus on physical interaction, movement synchronicity and task completion. How do, for example, grassroots football players who travel to a tournament perceive the interaction with their team members not only in a social, but also physical way on the football pitch? Do they experience a collective hibernation phenomenon of community as well? Could the findings, perhaps, even be related to other non-sports-related leisure contexts and events? To what extent do, for example, choristers, musicians in an orchestra or members of marching bands, who interact with their bodies in and through their art form, share my research partners' perceptions of community when they travel to international amateur gatherings in the world of music? Is there a similar hibernation phenomenon with possibly different time frames between the real encounters? Does a different duration of the hibernation period have an effect on the sense of affiliation to the respective community? Addressing these questions would not only contribute in a cross-disciplinary way to advancing the understanding of sports tourism participation; it would also help to give additional answers as to how sports tourism, and other leisure contexts, provide individuals with a sense of self, location and belonging in the social world.

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APPENDIX A – MAP OF EVENT SITES

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APPENDIX B – SELECTED EXTRACTS OF CODES AND CATEGORIES

WHO?	When	Category	Code / description	Transcript page
Eva	Pre-event	Fascination Gymnastics		1
Eva	Pre-event	Discipline		1, 2
Eva	Pre-event	Accept discomfort		1
Eva	Pre-event	Group belonging	share joy & sorrow with group mates	1
Eva	Pre-event	Group belonging	group offers stability	1
Eva	Pre-event	Stay young, keep vital		1
Eva	Pre-event	Identity	Part of my life, impacts personality	1
Eva	Pre-event	Beyond gymnastics	Impact beyond gymnastics, skills taught used in everyday life	2
Eva	Pre-event	Commitment	Go to training regularly	1
Eva	Pre-event	Commitment	Catch up what you missed	2
Eva	Pre-event	Subordination to group rules	Don't put yourself to the fore	2
Eva	Pre-event	Strive for perfection		2
Eva	Pre-event	Performance feeling	Adrenaline	2
Eva	Pre-event	Performance feeling	Show what you have rehearsed until perfection	2
Eva	Pre-event	Age	fitter than non-gymnasts	2
Birgit	Pre-event	Compare performance	More exactness elsewhere	1
Birgit	Pre-event	Rehearsal reflection	Frustration that perfection level not reached yet	1
Birgit	Pre-event	Individual as part of group	goes to WG on her own	1
Birgit	Pre-event	Group needs a leader	idealism needed	2
Birgit	Pre-event	WG fascination	Variety of performances	2
Birgit	Pre-event	WG as work	Watch other performances if you have 'spare-time'	2
Birgit	Pre-	Tourism activities	no plans yet, focus on sports activities	2

	event			
Birgit	Pre-event	Meet people	International contacts rather superficially, make contacts more with Germans	2
Birgit	Pre-event	Get to know people		2
Birgit	Pre-event	Family-get-together	You see each other again	2
Birgit	Pre-event	School accommodation	celebrate group experience	3
Birgit	Pre-event	WG fascination	in comparison to gym festivals: no competitions, international scope	3
Birgit	Pre-event	Goose bump feeling, strong emotions	performance, opening ceremony	3
Birgit	Pre-event	Perform for Germany		3
Birgit	Pre-event	People and event more important than place		4
Heidi	Pre-event	WG fascination	Unique atmosphere, positive undertone, hilarity, joviality	1
Heidi	Pre-event	Family-get-together		1
Heidi	Pre-event	Accept discomfort		1
Heidi	Pre-event	Meet people		1
Heidi	Pre-event	Get to know people	very easy	1
Heidi	Pre-event	School accommodation	celebrate group experience, otherwise you miss sth (as she did in 2007)	2, 3
Heidi	Pre-event	Across age groups	be in contact with younger gymnasts	2
Heidi	Pre-event	Across gender		2
Heidi	Pre-event	Across gym forms		2
Heidi	Pre-event	Perform for Germany	national pride	3
Heidi	Pre-event	Group performance	Fascination to be part of the group	3
Heidi	Pre-event	Gym performance as a marker of national identity / as a way to get to know other nations in a different way	Watch other nations' performances, have expectations in mind based on earlier experiences	3
Heidi	Pre-event	earlier experiences	cause expectations on what other nations perform	3
Heidi	Pre-event	WG fascination	Variety of performances, see also dance elements, look forward to see other nations' ideas, get inspired, see new things	3

Heidi	Pre-event	WG as work	organise activities around performance related dates	4
Heidi	Pre-event	WG fascination	if you go there once, you want to go there again	4
Heidi	Pre-event	WG fascination	ease, ambiance free of competitive stress	4
Heidi	Pre-event	Group performance	perform as part of a group, be part of a group, show sth together	5
Heidi	Pre-event	Group performance	perform sth for spectators	5
Heidi	Pre-event	Group performance	like playing theatre	5
Heidi	Pre-event	Across age groups	wants to inspire younger gymnasts to go there too	5
Antonia	Pre-event	WG fascination	if you go there once, you want to go there again	1
Antonia	Pre-event	Group cohesion		1
Antonia	Pre-event	Meet people		1
Antonia	Pre-event	Get to know people		1
Antonia	Pre-event	WG as project	no obligations to keep contact in between WGs	1
Antonia	Pre-event	Fascination Gymnastics	improve skills, work on yourself	1
Antonia	Pre-event	Performance feeling	Show what you have rehearsed until perfection	1
Antonia	Pre-event	Performance feeling	present yourself	1
Antonia	Pre-event	Group needs a leader	inspire others	2
Antonia	Pre-event	Change within gym forms		3
Antonia	Pre-event	Step back to continue		3
Antonia	Pre-event	Difficult to live without		4
Antonia	Pre-event	Start with day trips to gym festivals		4
Antonia	Pre-event	Group cohesion	event participation consolidates group cohesion	5
Antonia	Pre-event	WG career	1st time 1982	5
Antonia	Pre-event	Strive for perfection	Body does automatically what has been rehearsed	5
Antonia	Pre-event	Commitment	Frustration if other do not take it as seriously	5
Antonia	Pre-event	Perform for Germany		5

Antonia	Pre-event	Across age groups	be accommodated together	6
Antonia	Pre-event	Across regions (in Germany)	be accommodated together	6
Antonia	Pre-event	WG career	Used to be the youngest at their 1st WG, older took them seriously	6
Antonia	Pre-event	Goose bump feeling, strong emotions	opening ceremony, march-in of nations in delegation clothes	6
Antonia	Pre-event	marker of national identity	delegation clothes	6
Antonia	Pre-event	mixing of nations		6
Antonia	Pre-event	Change clothes		6
Antonia	Pre-event	Get to know people	from other nations you have never seen before	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	Adrenaline	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	be not only spectator, but at the core of event, be in the thick of things	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Family-get-together	you never feel out of place, even if you were alone - easy question: what are you doing tonight?	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	perform as part of a group	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	perform in unison	7
Antonia	Pre-event	Get to know people	International contacts rather superficially, make contacts more with Germans	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Indirect communication (with other nations)	show appreciation for performance (applauding, Daumen hoch)	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Group belonging	rather stick with one's kind	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Meet people	Hey, I have seen you before	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Commitment	as a requirement	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Discipline	as a requirement	8
Antonia	Pre-event	Family support	as a requirement	9
Antonia	Pre-event	Freedom of constraints	be in a different world	9
Antonia	Pre-event	Place attraction	Where is the next one?	9
Antonia	Pre-event	Marker of identity	gym clothes	10
Antonia	Pre-event	Family-get-together		10
Antonia	Pre-	Across regions (in	Hello gymnasts from Hamburg	10

	event	Germany)		
Antonia	Pre-event	Group belonging		10
Antonia	Pre-event	Identity	I can be as I am	10
Antonia	Pre-event	Freedom of constraints	be spontaneous	10
Antonia	Pre-event	Group belonging	enjoy time with group	10
Antonia	Pre-event	Tourism activities	watch host destination	10
Antonia	Pre-event	Fascination Gymnastics		10
Antonia	Pre-event	Fascination Gymnastics	joviality, enjoy perfection	11
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	transmit joviality to spectators	11
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	Body does automatically what has been rehearsed	11
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	Expressive forces of body only once perfection stage has been reached	11
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	Fun once body does movements automatically	11
Antonia	Pre-event	Group performance	show sth in harmony	12
Antonia	Pre-event	Group cohesion	Harmony fosters group	12
Antonia	Pre-event	Avoid errors	If you make an error, you stand out	12
Antonia	Pre-event	Beyond gymnastics	enjoy time with group also socially at home	12
Antonia	Pre-event	Planning for perfection	packing list	13
Antonia	Pre-event	Markers of group belonging	Group clothes	14
Antonia	Pre-event	Tourism activities	no plans yet, focus on sports activities	16
Antonia	Pre-event	Gym performance as a marker of national identity / as a way to get to know other nations in a different way	Watch other nations' performances, have expectations in mind based on earlier experiences	17
Antonia	Pre-event	School accommodation	Lausanne for the 1st time again	A
Antonia	Pre-event	School accommodation	Stay together 1 night in FN during gym festival	B
Antonia	Pre-event	Age	Show sth even if you are older	B
Antonia	Pre-event	Freedom of constraints		C

Antonia	Pre-event	Age	Take part even if you are older	C
Antonia	Pre-event	Group belonging	friendships that last a lifetime	C
Antonia	Pre-event	Across skill levels		C
Antonia	Pre-event	Group needs a leader	motivate the less skilled	C
Antonia	Pre-event	WG career	earlier performance was the core, now: freedom, enjoy non-performance related activities, otherwise WG too stressful	C
Antonia	Pre-event	Commitment	people who do not go to training regularly cause problems	C
Antonia	Pre-event	WG time is blocked	Son's birthday during WG period	D
Antonia	Post-event	Freedom of constraints	Escape from everyday life	1
Antonia	Post-event	Identity	I can be as I am	1
Antonia	Post-event	Freedom of constraints	decide spontaneously what I want to do	1
Antonia	Post-event	Coming home	good that everyday life hogs you immediately once you are back	1
Antonia	Post-event	Freedom of constraints	do things you would never do at home	1
Antonia	Post-event	School accommodation	wonderful school	1
Antonia	Post-event	Group cohesion	great they had a classroom for themselves	1
Antonia	Post-event	Place attraction	Place marks character of each WG	2
Antonia	Post-event	Group performance success	key factor	2
Antonia	Post-event	Individual performance success	matters too	2
Antonia	Post-event	Group performance success	joy and gladness when it was over as it went well	3
Antonia	Post-event	Group belonging	we respect each other	4
Antonia	Post-event	Identity	each group member can be as she is	4
Antonia	Post-event	Shared memories		4
Antonia	Post-event	Need for break	After WG it'S good to have a break	4
Antonia	Post-event	Tell stories	at home	5
Antonia	Post-event	WG end		5
Antonia	Post-	Freedom of constraints /	spontaneous decisions, ease, absence of	6

	event	suspension of rules	rigidity	
Antonia	Post-event	Change clothes	South Africa - I admire the country, Finland - due to 2015	7
Antonia	Post-event	Change clothes	Career - became more relaxed on that, did not change during 1st WGs, kept Germany clothes	7
Antonia	Post-event	WG highlights	Own performance, opening ceremony, closing ceremony, mass performance, Japanese evening	8
Antonia	Post-event	Group performance	Across age groups in perfection (Japanese evening)	9
Antonia	Post-event	Change clothes	you do not recognise national origin of people any more, you don't see any more who is the person wearing a specific national dress	10
Ulrike	Post-event	WG career	1st participation through mother	1
Ulrike	Post-event	WG career	Lausanne 4th WG	2
Ulrike	Post-event	WG fascination	in comparison to gym festivals: no competitions, more variety, get inspired, see new ideas which you can implement, international scope, but rather superficial	2
Ulrike	Post-event	WG highlights	Swiss evening, creativity, masses of gymnasts	2
Ulrike	Post-event	Place attraction	Lausanne small place, short distances, small fair area, place to celebrate, do acrobatics in the courtyard	3
Ulrike	Post-event	WG time is blocked		4
Ulrike	Post-event	Integration everyday life - WG	immediate start, immediate end	4
Ulrike	Post-event	WG as a project	project group, no belonging before, group members did not know each other before	4
Ulrike	Post-event	Group belonging	belonging to a project group, rehearsal stage difficult to organise	5
Ulrike	Post-event	Group cohesion	not existent	5
Ulrike	Post-event	Commitment	Some group members not committed, do not take it seriously	5
Ulrike	Post-event	Group performance	Stress - perfection level not reached	5
Ulrike	Post-event	Group performance	focus on what body is doing, no time to enjoy	5
Ulrike	Post-event	Group performance	watch others' performances, which are good, exotic, where you know people	5
Ulrike	Post-event	earlier experiences	I knew there were good	5
Ulrike	Post-event	WG as work	no time to enjoy city, but at least city center and Olympic museum	6

Ulrike	Post-event	earlier experiences	book national evenings in advance based on earlier experiences	6
Ulrike	Post-event	School accommodation	sit together with group mates	7
Ulrike	Post-event	delegation clothes	looks always the same	7
Ulrike	Post-event	Change clothes	get rid of everything	8
Ulrike	Post-event	delegation clothes	boring if you don't see where you are from (backpack)	9
Ulrike	Post-event	Change clothes	you do not recognise national origin of people any more, you don't see any more who is the person wearing a specific national dress, funny situation, when people get mixed up	9
Ulrike	Post-event	Group cohesion	grew during week	11
Ulrike	Post-event	Coming home	good that everyday life hogs you immediately once you are back, but she was not very motivated to go back	11
Ulrike	Post-event	Tell stories	nobody at home was with her, she could only talk to non-participants who could not share her memories	11
Ulrike	Post-event	Next WG	Everybody highly motivated to take part in 2015, plans for building new group	12
Ulrike	Post-event	Watch other performances	get inspired and try gym elements you have seen	12
Theresa	Post-event	WG career	group took her along to take part	2
Theresa	Post-event	WG career	could not join 2003, 2007 only some days	3
Theresa	Post-event	WG fascination	International scope, all age groups, all disciplines (in contrast to gym discipline specific festivals)	3
Theresa	Post-event	Across age groups		3
Theresa	Post-event	Across disciplines		3
Theresa	Post-event	Watch other performances	oversupply, overflow, need to select, elements repeat themselves	4
Theresa	Post-event	earlier experiences		
Theresa	Post-event	Get inspired	ÜL Forum	4
Theresa	Post-event	Watch other performances	get new ideas, develop new choreography while watching	4
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	small skill, big effect -	5
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	impress people who have not seen it before, who are no specialists in a specific	5

			discipline	
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	entertain people, touch spectators	5
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	artistic elements matter more than high skills	5
Theresa	Post-event	WG fascination	heterogeneity vs. homogenous acrobatics meetings	5
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	non-specialist spectators less demanding, easier to impress them	6
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	compare performance at national evening with other performances	6
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	spectators who came again, standing ovations	7
Theresa	Post-event	Across gym forms		7
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance	adapted for WG	8
Theresa	Post-event	School accommodation	place to meet people and get to know people	8
Theresa	Post-event	Group belonging	WG as experience with a group you really belong to	9
Theresa	Post-event	Tourism activities	not much time	9
Theresa	Post-event	Group belonging	vs individual activities	10
Theresa	Post-event	WG highlights	group experience, harmony in the group	10
Theresa	Post-event	Change clothes	this time for the 1st time, get rid of German clothes	10
Theresa	Post-event	delegation clothes	same as national team 2007	11
Theresa	Post-event	Change clothes	she got mixed up, confusion if you do not recognise national origin of people any more,	12
Theresa	Post-event	Change clothes	wanted to keep German clothes when taking part for the 1st time	12
Theresa	Post-event	delegation clothes	as symbol of participation, pride	12
Theresa	Post-event	Watch other performances	try new elements	13
Theresa	Post-event	WG as a project	no contact Follow up	13
Theresa	Post-event	Coming home	everybody leaves	13
Theresa	Post-event	Coming home	everyday life started again immediately	14
Theresa	Post-event	Group cohesion	much better since WG	14
Theresa	Post-	Group experience	perform together, have fun together	14

	event			
Theresa	Post-event	Group experience	rota for performances	15
Theresa	Post-event	Tell stories	sad she had no time to tell stories at home	17
Theresa	Post-event	Group performance success	enjoy success together	17
Nadine	Post-event	WG fascination	get to know officials from Germany and other countries	2
Nadine	Post-event	Group performance	small skill, big effect	2
Nadine	Post-event	earlier experiences	define expectations for next time	3
Nadine	Post-event	Across disciplines		4
Nadine	Post-event	Handicapped		4
Nadine	Post-event	Change clothes		6
Nadine	Post-event	Watch other performances	oversupply, overflow of impressions	8
Nadine	Post-event	WG end	sad she left earlier	8
Nadine	Post-event	School accommodation	used to it for decades	9
Birgit	Post-event	WG fascination	Variety of performances, international scope, market place, mixing of elements, lively flair	1
Birgit	Post-event	Change clothes	South Africa & Portugal	1
Birgit	Post-event	WG as project	contact follow up (from other nations) only when there is a concrete reason	1
Birgit	Post-event	delegation clothes	nice marker of memories	2
Birgit	Post-event	WG career	2007 for the first time	2
Birgit	Post-event	Place attraction	Dornbirn smaller than Lausanne	2
Birgit	Post-event	Integration everyday life - WG	moving between the worlds, immediate start, immediately back to reality	3
Birgit	Post-event	Tell stories	non-participants cannot share experiences , post-event meeting with other participants however helps to make experiences revive	3
Birgit	Post-event	Group performance success	relief	3
Birgit	Post-event	Individual performance success	be annoyed about making errors	3
Birgit	Post-event	Group performance	worried that spectators did not understand performance	3

Birgit	Post-event	Group performance	exactness difficult to expect	4
Birgit	Post-event	Group performance	be part of the core of the event	4
Birgit	Post-event	Goose bump feeling, strong emotions	during performance	4
Birgit	Post-event	earlier experiences	cause expectations on what other nations perform	5
Birgit	Post-event	Compare performance	compare event venues	5
Birgit	Post-event	Compare performance	with other nations	5
Birgit	Post-event	School accommodation	instead of hotel	6
Birgit	Post-event	WG as work	no relaxation, no vacation	6
Birgit	Post-event	Goose bump feeling, strong emotions	closing ceremony	6
Birgit	Post-event	Integration everyday life - WG	immediate end	6
Birgit	Post-event	thrill of anticipation	one year of preparation	6
Birgit	Post-event	Next WG	look forward to it	6
Birgit	Post-event	WG highlights	group performance, march-in, masses of gymnasts, national colours	7
Heidi	Post-event	WG highlights	group performance, international flair, many nationalities, rehearsing	1
Heidi	Post-event	Group experience	already during rehearsal stage	1
Heidi	Post-event	Tourism activities	watched city	1, 3
Heidi	Post-event	School accommodation	WG feeling only if you stay in school	1, 4
Heidi	Post-event	Group performance	meet the same people every four years	1
Heidi	Post-event	Group performance	everybody gives his best	2
Heidi	Post-event	Group performance success	no competition, but still you want to represent your country	2
Heidi	Post-event	Individual performance success	if you make an error, that's not the end of the world, no competition, no jury's judgements	2
Heidi	Post-event	Watch other performances	watch other performances caused stress earlier, so she stayed in the hall and let things develop, spontaneous decisions, no planning what groups to watch	2
Heidi	Post-event	WG end	had to leave earlier, sad, you should stay there until the end	3
Heidi	Post-	Next WG	no sadness at the end, in 4 years again	3

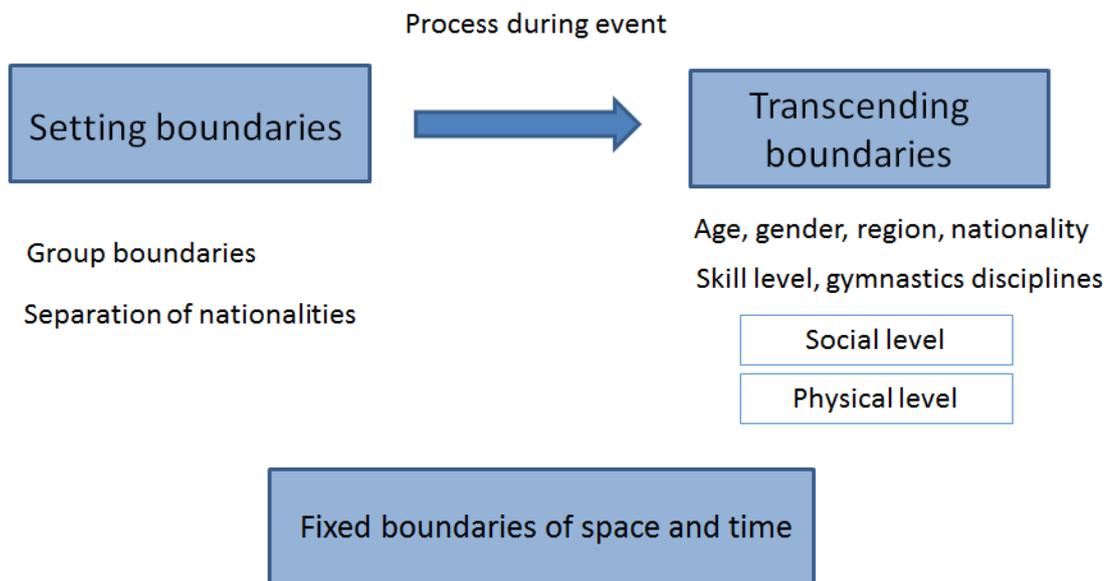
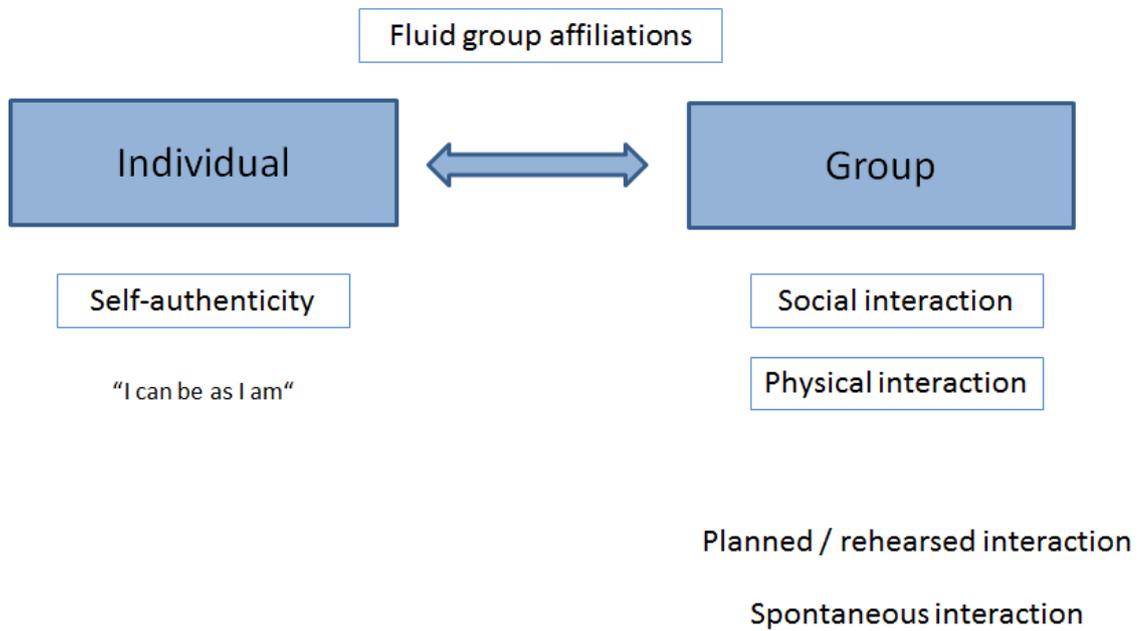
	event			
Heidi	Post-event	thrill of anticipation	looked forward to WG	4
Heidi	Post-event	School accommodation	fantastic place, nice view	4
Heidi	Post-event	Meet other nationalities	superficial level	4
Heidi	Post-event	Change clothes	no, kept clothes	5
Heidi	Post-event	WG highlights	group performance, spontaneous invitation to party at school from gymnasts from Northern Germany	6
Heidi	Post-event	WG as project	temporary, lose friendships	6
Heidi	Post-event	WG as project	no contact Follow up, don't even know where people come from, temporary but stable friendships	6
Heidi	Post-event	Meet people	nice to meet people again in 4 years, you can share stories	6
Sabine	Post-event	WG career	group took her along to take part in gym festival performance, then same performance at WG 2003 and 2007	1
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	Large group only possible with non-elite 'masses'	2
Sabine	Post-event	WG fascination	travel to another city, country, meet people from all over the world, watch performances	2
Sabine	Post-event	School accommodation	German delegation a bit isolated	2
Sabine	Post-event	Tourism activities	spontaneous decisions on site	3
Sabine	Post-event	WG start	immediate start, suddenly day of arrival is there	3
Sabine	Post-event	WG fascination	meet people from many other nationalities, peaceful flair, no competitive stress, performances	3
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	important part of WG experience	4
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	stress before happens every time, in the end it works	4
Sabine	Post-event	Meet people	grow older together	4
Sabine	Post-event	Commitment	difficult to motivate people to go to training regularly and also to travel to rehearsals	5
Sabine	Post-event	WG highlights	Performance, meet people, watch a city	5
Sabine	Post-event	Place attraction	experience a city through activity	5

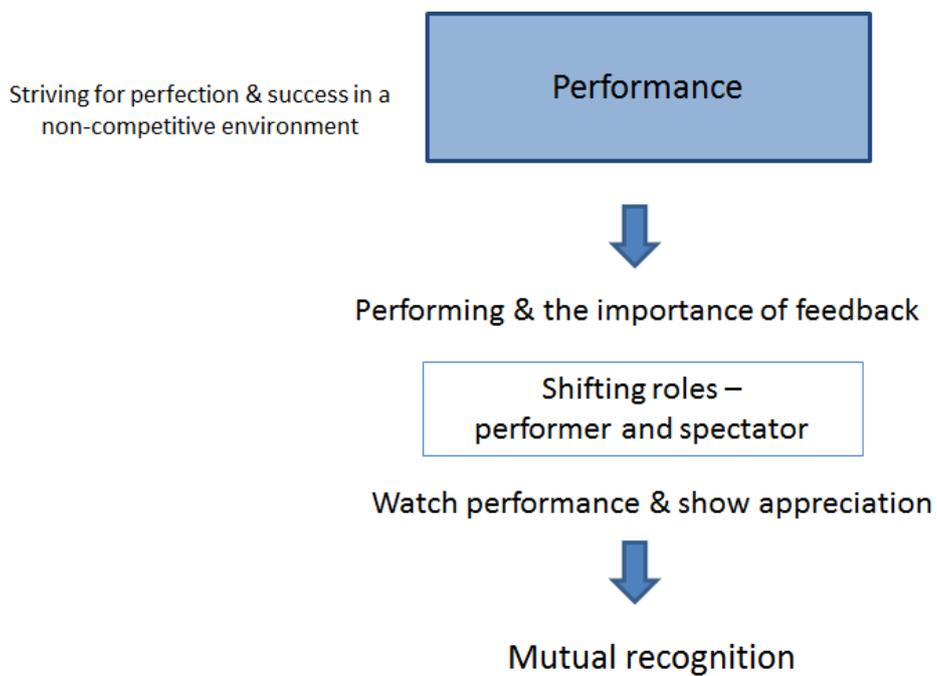
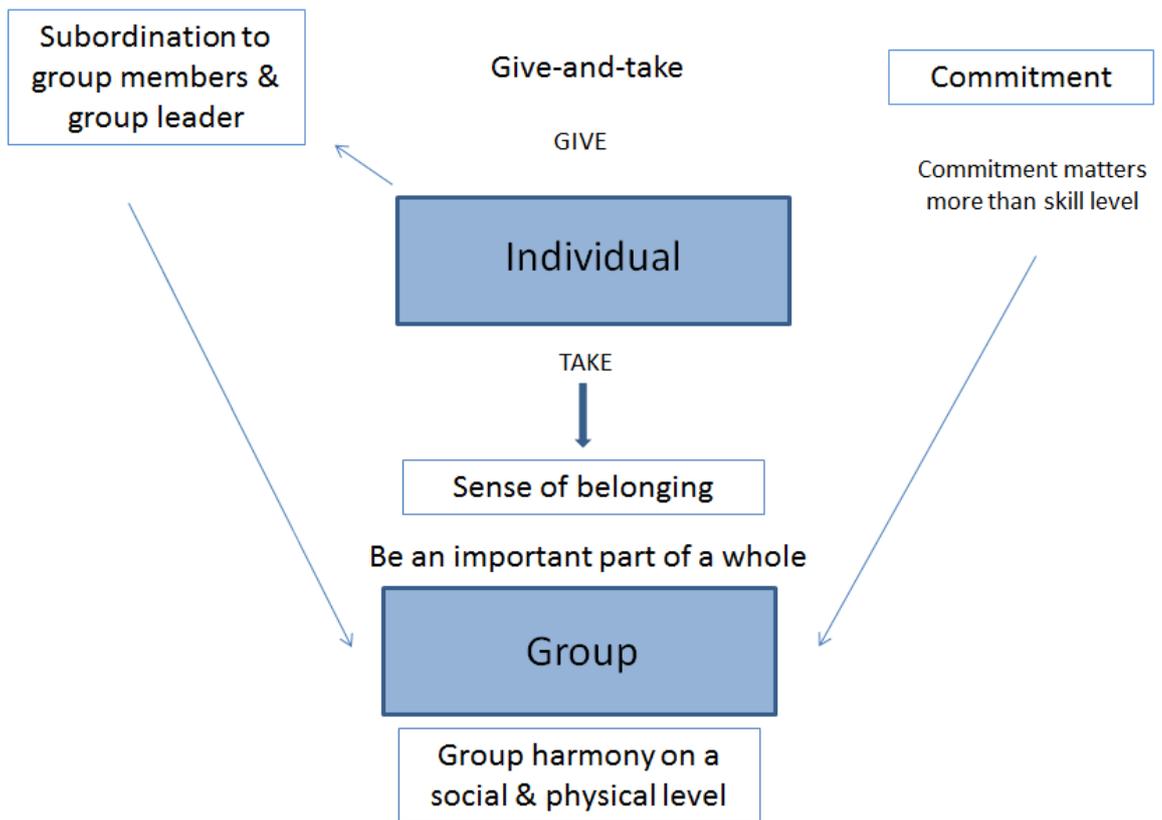
Sabine	Post-event	Place attraction	experience a place differently from normal vacation	5
Sabine	Post-event	Place attraction	if you come back, place will be different	5
Sabine	Post-event	Place attraction	great combination: place & activity programme	5
Sabine	Post-event	Meet other nationalities	not this time as own group quite large	6
Sabine	Post-event	WG end	profit from memories	7
Sabine	Post-event	Watch other performances	overflow of impressions towards the end	7
Sabine	Post-event	Group belonging	shared activities, experiences	7
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	everybody looks the same	7
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	have fun together - it's worth to undertake to efforts	7
Sabine	Post-event	Commitment	need that as a contrast to everyday life	7
Sabine	Post-event	WG end	good to have a break	7
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	plays secondary role, rehearsal stage much more important, joy to meet each other again and again during preparation	7
Sabine	Post-event	Group performance	Adrenaline	7
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group experience	masses of gymnasts, in national clothes	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG fascination	joviality, holiday feeling, be away from home	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	big group - small group you do your activities together with	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	groups overlap constantly, groups flow into each other	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	rehearsals with small group, then large group	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	rehearsal stage as a basis for group cohesion	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG fascination	opening ceremony, march-in of nations	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Place attraction	Can you perceive a place as host destination (flags, etc)?	1
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	how do Germany get together who need to get together?	2
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Meet people	meet people again after rehearsal, you know each other, share stories, meet people again and again also during WG	2
Uta-Maria	Post-event	delegation clothes	as a orientation guideline at the beginning	2

Uta-Maria	Post-event	Get to know people	open-mindedness	2
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	love for gym is shared by everyone, everybody can present sth, even if it's different, you have sth to share and talk about	2
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG as work	Compulsory and free programme	2,3
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Share stories on site	live what you have not seen through group mates' stories	3
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Share & show pictures		3
Uta-Maria	Post-event	School accommodation	don't stay themselves, but as visitors	3
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Meet people	already during rehearsal stage, have not met each other for 3 years	4
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG as project	no contact follow up, but during WG period you know each other and say hello to each other as it were lifelong friends, temporary, but stable friendships	4
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Place attraction	Place gives WG its character	4
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group belonging	large group mixes with small group	4
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group performance	The more spectators, the more adrenaline	4
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group performance	everybody is equally dressed, if you make an error, you stand out	5
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group performance	individual as important part of the group, even if group offers protection as you know the people and you have rehearsed with them	5
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Group performance	no time to enjoy, need to concentrate myself	5
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG as vacation	costs time and money	6
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG as project	meet people, get to know people, but no follow up after WG	6
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG end	a bit sad, as at the end of holiday	6
Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG end	everybody leaves, that makes it easier	7
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Tell stories & show photos	to non-participants, but also to group mates, everybody sees things differently and sees different things	7
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Coming home	stars at their club	8
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Next WG	after 3 years it starts again	8

Uta-Maria	Post-event	WG as project	requires extra effort and commitment, not everybody at their club is willing to take part	8
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Commitment	Take along the less skilled as long as they show commitment	9
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Individual performance success	Goal attainment	9
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Place attraction	get to know the world en passant	9
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Place attraction	experience a place differently from normal vacation	9
Uta-Maria	Post-event	Place attraction	get to know places you would perhaps have never travelled to	10
Bärbel	Post-event	Tell stories	Talked so much about it, not possible any more to talk about that spontaneously	1

APPENDIX C – SELECTED THEMES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS





Group identity

Gymnastrada participant

