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Research Practices and Fields in Transition

From "Classical" Field Research to Accompanied Research "At Home" and in the Fields of Sport

Paper proposal for the planned handbook "Accompanied Fieldwork in Anthropology", edited by Julia Koch-Tshirangwana, Judit Tavakoli & Sophia Thubauville, cp. GAA Working Group „Family in the Field" & Handbook Project "Accompanied Fieldwork in Anthropology"

This paper examines the classical conceptualization of the field and fieldwork practices in ethnology and how these changed over time. Drawing on my own research on migrant sports clubs in Germany, I discuss the specific challenges and opportunities presented by ethnographic research that deviates from traditional ethnographic conventions – because it is conducted at one`s place of residence with family members present. Researchers with children depend on social infrastructure such as kindergartens and schools as well as social networks such as friends and other family members in their daily lives. Conducting research locally means that ethnographers can make use of established structures and networks. However, it also means multiple positioning and the challenge of combining fieldwork with other academic and non-academic tasks. Conducting fieldwork in sporting contexts with small children requires consideration of the form of participation in the field, ensuring it is suitable both for the research topic and family life. Being accompanied by family members can open "new doors" and enable alternative forms of participatory fieldwork and knowledge acquisition. Fieldwork that deviates from the traditional conception of fieldwork practice changes the parameters of the research.