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The Fight against Doping in Sport as a Sociology Issue – Construction of a Research Programme

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Abstract

This article examines the ways in which Sociology questions the fight against doping. By focusing on the particular place of this subject in relation to other health issues, the author lists and pinpoints the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches. He then proposes a research program, initiated by the group he directs, with an aim to examine the connections between the values defended by the fight against doping, the tensions in the implementation of policies and the realities in the field. This work puts in perspective 15 years of studies and makes it possible to consider the challenges for an up-coming international observatory.

Keywords: Sociology, Public Policy, Doping, Drug policy, Methodology

1. Introduction

Why does doping in sport not appear on the lists of social studies on health risks? Is it a mere oversight? Is it a deliberate choice assumed by researchers working on this problematic issue to give it a special status? Does the subject have unique properties that resist well defined approaches? Would it be heuristic to alter the approach given to it? If yes, how?

A starting point could be identifying a first series of factors: doping is generally a voluntary act (though certain sports people claim it is done without their knowledge) and potentially dangerous (though there are controversies on this point), upsetting a ethic supposedly shared by all sports people. There are however many other assumed and dangerous practices (like drug addiction and professional practices that ignore safety regulations) that are subjects of social research programmes; issues on cheating, corruption and other forms of deviancy also interest health sociologists in their analyses. Some other features concerning doping regulation can be put forward. The fight against doping took a long time to get organized. Action plans – notably legal – started to be put in place in the middle of the 1960s. The responsibility of regulation was placed in the hands of governments that took up this issue along with sports movements (the International Olympic Committee – IOC – and international federations). However, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was not created until 1999. The model of this international institution had another curious aspect. Set up in response to an emergency, as if in answer to a particular crisis situation (Demeslay and Trabal, 2007, Hanstad, Smith and Waddington, 2008), stakeholders set aside the UN model in preference to a private Swiss company; with the Executive and funding being 50% from sports movements and 50% from government contributions. To give the legal strength needed in decisions on world sport, the structure was reinforced by the involvement of member States in the form of an agreement under the aegis of UNESCO (2005) and a ‘private’ appeal with the backing of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). Was it the governance, sometimes

denounced as being under the control of the sports movements that granted this health issue a special status? The hypothesis may therefore be expressed in this way: as the protagonists do not use the usual routines to draw up norms and set up international plans of action as is the case for other health issues, sociologists are reluctant to undertake the description of this puzzling process and focalize on doping itself within the framework of only one sociology of sport.

Doping and the struggle to curb it have been influenced by the power of images, possibly another characteristic. Sport itself has been spot lighted by symbolism; its heroes are caught up in a Nietzschean quest of challenging the adversary, overcoming obstacles and exceeding human limits. Even those who manage to disqualify these Gods of the stadium, like Travis Tygart, President of the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) who ‘toppled’ Lance Armstrong, may become heroes. Because sport, doping and the fight against it seem to be shaped by false beliefs laden with symbols and heroics that potentially reveal social dynamics, the reality of doping and the action plans aiming to qualify and regulate it worry few sociologists. However, there is no epistemic community bringing them together. Despite the quality of some research, studies remain dispersed and more importantly lack controversy. But it is possible to organize them according to their proximity with the practice itself. A part of the studies, very close to psychosociology sought to identify determinants of doping: apart from “traditional” variables such as sex, age or the level of practice, also of interest to us were the entourage of the sportsperson, the relationship with the trainer and self-esteem. A common point in all this research concerns the procurement of the illicit products by the potential user or the direct witnesses of these practices, studied for and through their close relationship with the world of sport. Though never discussed on the basis of this empirical data, psychosocial theories were called on to identify the factors and answer a formulated social demand in terms of epidemiology: for example, the WADA website pointed out that a study result entitled ‘A study reveals that trainers play an essential role in the anti-doping behaviour of sports people’ and underlined how this research, led by the University of Stirling (Scotland), ‘corroborated’ the standpoint of the institution (<https://www.wada-ama.org/en/media/news/2014-02/study-suggests-coaches-are-crucial-to-anti-doping-attitudes-amongst-athletes>)

Social research deals primarily with these problematic practices by looking at the depictions they generate, the social context that produces them or even the underlying logic. Some insist on the rationalities and strategies at work (Collard, 2002), others on the weight of a hexis (Gasparini, 2004), or the process of inculcation of a sports culture (Brissonneau, 2007) whereas some adopt a pragmatic approach in terms of configurations (Trabal et al., 2006, Le Noé and Trabal, 2008). Researchers call on and discuss various traditions that do not easily communicate with each other. These are useful from a sociological standpoint, as doping provides an opportunity to study concepts such as rationality, norms, the functioning of habitus as well as social groups or professional activities such as sports movements or journalists. But they respond less to the immediate preoccupations of the people responsible for combating doping; more precisely they often generate misunderstandings, as social demands are also part of the subjects questioned. The disparity is measured in psychosociological studies that reflect, as cited previously, elements expected by the research sponsors. Further still from the preoccupations of the players in the fight against doping, studies continued in a political sociology form, but differed from public action analysis as these studies link questions on doping to a criticism of sport, the discourse itself – or sometimes the research on the subject – even capitalism or its avatars.

For its part, the fight against doping remains poorly studied. When dealt with, the ‘critical’ approaches ignore or rather, only see in the persistence of doping an unwillingness to finding

a solution to the problem on behalf of less acceptable interests (maintaining at all costs the exciting sports events for financial reasons, retaining power...). For their part, philosophers question the ethics of the fight against doping and the axiology contradictions underlying it (McNamee and Møller, 2011). In a more empiric way, some research based on Eliasian traditions aim at describing possible policies for the fight against doping (Waddington, 2010), or examine the legislative process (Le Noé, 2000, Sallé et al. 2006) or more recently the harmonizing process (Waddington, 2010 Demeslay and Trabal, 2013, Demeslay, 2013). We can see norms of criticism or analyse the difficulties of the players involved in the fight against doping when studying an affair or a case (Buisine and Demeslay, 2012).

This report documents the approaches, though not as well as that proposed by Mignon (2002), and aims at pinpointing the dispersal of studies and the need to structure an epistemic community whose vocation would be to study doping and its regulation over a period of time. For nearly 15 years, we have been assembling studies and this has led to the establishment of a research programme. After defining certain standpoints relative to the approaches chosen and laying down the conditions, we propose to describe this process that will indicate some potential directions.

2. An attempt to establish research in social science

The ‘Social Science and Doping’ Group was created at the beginning of the 2000s and set a first target of grouping together researchers working on different approaches and getting them to discuss the issue of doping. This willingness to cooperate led us to develop various sociological issues, while respecting the complexity of this dossier and a serious consideration of the preoccupations of the players.

From a sociological standpoint, our activity can be described through the identification of a series of issues. Within the field of sociology, socio-historic analyses led to studies on the historic developments in ways to train, how doping prohibition was presented and the social and economic constraints that encourage sports people to engage in illicit drug use (Brissonneau, 2003, Trabal et al., 2006). This willingness to understand the habits of sports people raised questions in terms of institutionalization in the professionalization of sport (*Ibid.*, Brissonneau et Le Noé, 2006, Demeslay, 2011).

Researchers in this group were able to consult public policies on doping. This interlinked with a historic perspective since it meant understanding how a State, then a group of States, were to become responsible for the issue of doping and to set up plans of action to fight it (Le Noé, 2000, Demeslay and Trabal, 2007, Demeslay, 2013, Demeslay and Trabal, 2015). Other problems, from a more pragmatic approach but using the same subject material, led to consideration of how opinions came to be established. To do this, we were initially able to take as study material interplay between denunciation, accusation and justification that unfolds during doping affairs (Duret and Trabal, 2001, Trabal and Duret, 2003, Rodas and Trabal, 2008, Demeslay and Buisine, 2012). We were also interested in the temporality of doping (Trabal et al, 2006, Le Noé and Trabal, 2008) and the projections into the future. While they were not central during the creation of the group, issues relating to the anti-doping thematic have gradually developed (it should be noted that research on the fight against doping is relatively rare). This movement may be interpreted as a serious consideration of the interactionist view concerning the *labelling theory* that calls for more interest in the labelling process of deviant behaviour. In our group, the analysis of public policies for the regulation of doping led us to address plans of action and their assessment thus reflecting a preoccupation of pragmatic sociology.

By seeking to describe the qualification processes of protagonists, which deal with the dangers of certain practices, the culpability or responsibility of certain players, the fairness of a decision, the relevance of an anti-doping policy, we were able to explain the authentication methods and the willingness to stabilize the ‘grip’¹ (Bessy and Chateauraynaud, 1995) through the reality of doping and attempts at regulation. The problematic arising from this questioning resulted in discussions on the institutionalization, the stabilization and the harmonizing conditions of policies, the operations around additions to the agenda, the structuring of expertise, the argumentative activity generated by scientific, juridical, political and economic debates, the reality of the work of players that claim they are ‘fighting against doping’.

Before presenting our results more precisely it may be useful to emphasize several aspects.

One of these concerns a series of weaknesses. Though open to controversy as far as social discussions are concerned, we disassociate ourselves however from two postures often mobilized in studies on doping. For reasons, that we have also started to examine and that are not specific to doping, the institutions in charge of regulating doping often favour an epidemiological approach supported by a behaviourist concept inherited from social marketing (Trabal, 2014). Social demand is often expressed in terms of ‘prevalence’ and an identification of ‘populations at risk’ on the one hand and the need to change individual ‘behaviour’ on the other. There is little room, in this paradigm, for an impartial axiology – which means identifying practices to modify them – or for reflexivity – only the ‘doped’ label counts when calculating prevalence – though it is essential in social surveys. In addition, our approach led us to be careful of discrepancies in the construction of our objectives. When possible we chose to ‘follow the actors’ in the diversity of the challenges they defended rather than lay down, *a priori*, classifications potentially associated with the study material. In other words, while protagonists exchange arguments blending sports, ethics, legal, economic, medical, scientific, media considerations, we consider it preferable to recognize the complexity of doping by describing the emergence of these dimensions and their interlinking rather than delimiting beforehand our subject by permanently restricting it to one of them (for example, only media related issues to a doping affair). Finally, the intention in our approach is to be different from the analyses that underline continuous oppositions or disagreements, through the crystallization of values and beliefs that are in constant conflict. Instead we want to study the roles of the actors and the arguments, the plans of action and norms of judgment during disruptive events (as in media cases) or during more gradual procedures (such as in new regulation negotiations).

These three weaknesses can be expressed in comparison to many studies by underlining our attachment to axiological neutrality, reflexivity and taking duration into account, not only through an analysis of quite a long historic process that supposes the building of series but also through the relevant time when the actors try out solutions aimed at solving their problems.

¹ According to Francis Chateauraynaud “the concept of “grip” (in French “prise”), is difficult to translate by an analogue word in English. It is possible to introduce the notion of a “hold”, where the subject may “have a hold over” and/or “be afforded a hold”. In French the term « prise » has a very large range of meanings and has been used to conceptualize the relationships between persons, objects and environments through a perceptual work which can be distributed on a continuum joining transparency of external world and pure representational activity. Many terms may be used to mean “prise”: grip, grasp, hold, purchase ... it must be adjusted in context”. Francis Chateauraynaud, *Public controversies and the pragmatics of protest. Toward a ballistics of collective action*, GSPR, EHESS, Paris, February 2009, p. 6.

To respect our initial conditions, many of our studies led us to work on texts and mobilize the latest developments in socio-information technology. We collaborated in the development of software programmes to aid the researcher in analysing vast textual corpora in natural language by enabling them to test these interpretations and to link, with a same convenient tool the statistical, semantic, pragmatic and historic dimensions (Chateauraynaud, 2003; cf. also: prosperologie.org).

Mobilizing this sociological posture and these tools, we carried out a series of research to analyse the interlinking between three levels of questions, often explored in separate and dispersed ways.

One consists in focusing the analysis on the axiological references and the depictions presented in the arguments. The anti-doping fight is full of symbols, like sport and its ethics, as previously mentioned. The when and how protagonists call on these principles and for what purposes need to be examined. Another proposes to study the epistemic dimensions by placing the analysis more precisely on the setting up of plans of action aimed at communicating the values. The conditions to implement decisions usually generate tensions between the respect of principles and their interpretation within social organizations which have their own way of functioning. The last looks at ontological considerations through the study of field practices, of the realities and the constraints of the actors. Sometimes neglected or even discredited, and at others renowned, it is the place where the activity of doping happens which preoccupies those who create and evaluate the plans of action.

Dividing the prevention of doping into phases concerning ‘aims’, ‘means’ and ‘instantiation’ is in effect not unlike the schemes of actors. The sociological view becomes very useful if it proposes to explain systematically the interlinking between these levels. But symmetrically, a doping experience can be described as a way to get away from constraints at field level (in this case, sports), to mobilize schemes to obtain products and to position (even justify) oneself vis-à-vis a system of values.

By structuring the research in this way, it seems possible to describe doping and the fight against it symmetrically. We propose to focus our remarks on this last point, as it enables to give a precise response to some of the issues previously raised.

3. A sociology of the fight against doping in sport

3.1. Examining the values

Depictions of doping can be accessed through the analysis of the values of the fight against doping. Debating on the limits of doping is very similar to carrying out an inquiry, often preferred in the psychosociological approaches, and consists in identifying the social representations of the practice by asking people to ‘define’ doping. Some authors (e.g. Guerreschi and Garnier, 2008) were able to identify factors concerning the risks, the tension between what is natural and artificial (thus echoing an analysis by Vigarello, 1999), the dispossession of one’s self and of one’s performance, the effects on the body and the idea of transgressing the law. Several of these ideas were shared by the anti-doping supporters. Representations of sports people have sometimes been studied in relation to their practices. The idea of a ‘culture of doping’ developed that insisted on a set of values, distanced from sports ethics though paradoxically linked to the requirement of another moral principle built in the commitment to sport: the quest for performance.

Our approach does not contradict these results but aims to analyse the ways in which protagonists cite principles in support of their arguments and their standpoint. There are still a

lot of investigations to be carried out from this perspective though we have begun some analyses on doping affairs. These indicate conflicting values that interlink technical, metrological, practices and contingent considerations. By examining in particular the interplay of denunciation, a reminder of moral order and justification that calls on other principles, we were able to identify others: the respect of the employer (for cyclists), an inalienable right... (Duret and Trabal, 2001).

Collecting an axiology ‘in action’ consists in identifying projections in the future. One of our studies took as its subject the ‘visions of the future’ of protagonists that were positioned on bio-nanotechnologies (Chateauraynaud, Doury and Trabal, 2012). Genetic doping and mutations of the human race are sometimes expected, and often denounced. Whether about establishing their reality, the legitimacy of the doubts on their existence or the certitude of possible dangers, the authors were obliged to prove and simultaneously digest some factual elements, a projection model of the future and an inference process. This led us to clarify the depictions of the methods of intervention on the body to improve performances, subject to time constraints: reparation, hybridization, progression, adaptation... In addition, we identified a series of future-orientated discursive regimes (urgency, expectations, anticipations, forecasts, planning, promises, prophecies) that thrive on descriptions and analyses on the production modes of current performances. In this respect, the principles called on are connected to the logics of action and open to new forms of criticism.

But value-based clashes were also identified at the very heart of debates on the organization of the anti-doping fight. *A priori* very consensual, policies aiming to fight doping led to discussions as the analyses became more precise. For example, we were able to show that objectives could vary (responses from a corpus assembling productions from anti-doping institutions show that these aim above all at ‘eliminating doping’, to ‘fight against’ it, to ‘eradicate’ it, or to ‘refuse’ it, to ‘reduce’ it, to ‘condemn’ it, to ‘abolish’ it... Cf Trabal, 2014) and for the preventive dimension alone, international institutions did not decline their mission in the same way while continuing to celebrate their partnership and their unity in a common battle.

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As we were able to show in a report from which the above illustration is an extract (*Ibid.*), the institutions could focus on defining very precisely the difference between these terms and forget these punctilious objections in the argumentation. Furthermore, mobilization behind the slogan ‘stop the doping’ generated quite virulent opposition as soon as the question of means or limits to do so was evoked. Is society ready to invest a lot of money to protect the health of a few champions already supervised by doctors (Trabal, 2013)? Would people agree to give up certain principles guaranteeing individual freedom as assumed in the ADAMS guide by the WADA (Desmeslay and Trabal, 2013)? Should medical confidentiality be lifted demanding that a doctor warns the authorities in the case of suspected doping in a patient? So many value-based conflicts emerge when attention is given to an analysis of values through investigations aimed at understanding the dynamics of the reference to principles, which is not the case when the usual methodology aimed at recording ‘definitions’ or ‘representations’ unrelated to their modes of production is carried out.

3.2. Studying the preventive policy tools

Literature on this dimension refers essentially to Anglo-Saxon research; it is quite surprising that very little research has been carried out in France. Firstly, authors interested in doping usually insist on the need to have a symmetrical view, and cite Becker in his invitation to describe the labelling process, without following his programme as they do not engage into the descriptions of qualification operations. For example, in his thesis, Brissonneau (2003) offers quality study material on the experiences and justifications of drug-using sports people. While assuming an 'interactionist' posture and citing Becker, anti-doping measures and the work of those supporting them are never described. Secondly, studies on the analysis of political policies have largely developed since the analyses by Jean-Claude Thoenig (Dupuy and Thoenig, 1985, Thoenig and Meny, 1989, Kessler, Lascoumes, Setbon, Meny, Thoenig 1998). Public action interests a lot of researchers when it concerns risk prevention, education or agriculture... but the issue on doping seems to escape many of these investigations.

Our team took on studies on the organization of different plans of action and how they functioned. One research, funded by the MILDT (Interministerial Mission for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addiction), addressed criticism of the fight against doping (Trabal et al., 2010). It was in keeping with the first analyses by Le Noé (2000) or by Sallé (2004) on the operations to include on the agenda (respectively the laws of 1965 and 1999) the question of preventative operations, modalities for the fight against trafficking, control procedures (by describing the work of those deciding which sports people to control and of those who actually organize the controls, describing the activity of those taking the samples, and even of the biochemists that analyse the samples), and of the exchange of views between jurists such as judges or lawyers (Trabal, 2009).

The analysis is still incomplete, as the different phases of this process have not yet all been thoroughly investigated. Our efforts have been focused on activities in the area of prevention in particular. The analysis of the contents of 'preventative tools', debates on their effectiveness and the reality of practices have all been subjects of investigations in France (Trabal et al., 2008). We were able to analyse the work of experts in prevention involved simultaneously in tensions on the nature of the 'knowledge' called on, the search for legitimacy of the different players, the scant State involvement and the space left by this relative vacuity, and also the operations aimed at concealing and claiming the complexity in the field (Le Noé and Trabal, 2009).

Our investigations on the other aspects of the anti-doping fight are worth developing even though they highlight other kinds of tensions, other ambivalences and other oppositions. This is the case for example when evaluating a measure where the question of its efficacy provokes internal criticism. These relate to the pressure of external constraints, in particular the requirements linked to the harmonization in the fight against doping. This aspect was the subject of a well-documented study by Demeslay (2011) that showed how an attempt to harmonize, although first debated in the 1960s, was only implemented from 1999. Beyond the description of this historic process, it was underlined how the harmonization process itself assumes the renunciation of 'doping' on the milieu and therefore a tension between 'know how', critical assessments and relations to norms built without really considering local constraints (*Ibid.*).

One of the delicate questions of these anti-doping measures concerns their assessment. This can be done within the framework procedures. These are based on indicators that according to Houlihan, present a risk as 'they are often conceived to assess the productions rather than the results' (Houlihan, 2002). In other words, and in keeping with the conclusions of our investigations and other social political studies concerning instruments and their relating

metrologies, internal assessments are built on coding operations and produce artefacts that get trapped in a loop, and include the information on the assessment attempts.

Among the judgments on the efficacy of the fight against doping are those of criticism. The analysis of the denunciations relating to anti-doping highlights the existence of internal criticism. This is built on power struggles that exclude some actors, which pinpoint the flaws in government policies and the weaknesses of the options chosen. But most often the criticism comes from outside and emphasizes the gap between the aims of the fight against doping and the reality of doping. Each positive case draws further criticism underlining ‘the inefficacy of the fight against doping’. We have already been surprised by a questioning of an efficient monitoring procedure, as it is often during the identification of cheaters that criticism may appear. But what this paradox reveals may probably stem from the opacity of these problematic practices that the fighters against doping find difficult to grasp.

3.3. Field tests

Protagonists often call upon the reality of practices. But the decisive issue is knowing how to detect them and social science is confronted with this constraint.

Sometimes social investigations are very careful when using certain figures. In keeping with the work of Gasparini (2004), some strive to describe the reality of practices. Others rely more on interviews. This implies collecting, as several authors have tried to do, a sample of sports people who had already experienced doping (Léséleuc and Marcellini, 2005, Brissonneau, 2007, Brissonneau, Aubel and Ohl, 2008, Lentillon-Kaestner and Brissonneau, 2009), top sports people (Bodin, Heas, Robène and Sayeux, 2005), students (Bondarev, 2007), sanctioned athletes (Piffaretti, 2011) by fixing criteria on the discipline practiced, the sporting level, the sport, the age, ...

Our team also worked in this direction while trying to extend the investigations to other forms expressing doping experiences. Likewise, Buisine collected nearly 50 autobiographies of cyclists to systematically analyse with Prospéro (Buisine, 2009, 2010). His subject concerned the development in ways of thinking on how to ‘do the job’; this work of sociology permitted a description of the status and when doping took place during the career of a cyclist. We have also collected another kind of ‘environmental’ material from on-line discussions. We developed software allowing Internet forum messages to be automatically extracted and analysed. The type of data – sports people exchanging their fears, experiences and advice –, the data base (nearly 250,000 messages) and the time dimension (we could follow the conversations on a particular aspect and relate the history of the developments) all contributed to the quality of material (Trabal et al. 2010, Trabal, 2013).

But beyond the strict methodological debate on the artefacts produced through the different forms on investigation, the questions varied. It was often the case of finding a ‘cause’ to these problematic practices. Some authors evoked a more liberal hexis (Gasparini, 2004); others tried to distinguish the properties of a doping culture, intrinsic to the culture of performance (Lüschen, 2000, Coakley, 2001, Bodin et al. 2005). Without opposing these approaches, Brissonneau (e.g., 2007) tried to distinguish stages in the commitment to sport linked to those specific to doping practices.

Colleagues involved in the ‘social science and doping’ group adopted different procedures. Some were similar to those cited previously, and enabled us to draw attention to variations in the particular conditions according to the sport (or categories of sports). This same approach included forms of homogeneity, even invariants, extending beyond disciplinary divisions in the modalities of doping. So we tried to grasp the structuring of careers that use doping

through the effect of longitudinal structuring upstream, and the result of the action of individuals taking part, downstream, in the preservation or transformation of these structures.

We also placed the analysis on the temporalities of doping. By being attentive to the temporal inclusion of effort whereby sports people confront body sensations and the physics of the universe, i.e. the results of their perceptual activity to a set of concepts built on signs (for example description languages), we believe we have identified the pertinent elements in the development of opinions and their serializing. The importance given to the body and sensations, the central position of instruments, metrologies and schemes linked to dope taking, the role of networks and the mobilization of calculating means, of depictions, of values arising mostly in their temporal dimension: variations in the state of the body, the modification of haematocrit, the future or history of a network, the search for precedents, the permanence or disappearance of axiological principles that seem to weigh on the development of opinions and the forms of action. This study led us to locate a series of cases for which we have described quite precisely the organization of these resources. This enabled us to identify example configurations. This notion of 'configuration' was defined by an alignment of a situation, sets of constraints as much physical as social, interpreting and cognitive work in which the temporal dimension is central and, of course, doping practice (Le Noé and Trabal, 2008).

In this context, the study of the electronic discussions enabled firstly a census to be taken on the knowledge of sports web users. Sometimes precise, sometimes incomplete, these discussions focus on the questions that lead them to exchange on Internet. We were able to observe how this search for proof led these people to conduct collective surveys, during which experiences formed a very important resource (Trabal, 2013, 2015). We also pinpointed 'anti-doping' arguments which contrasted with criticism of institutions responsible for the anti-doping fight. In this way, the study of argumentation deployed during these exchanges led us to list a series of suggestions for preventive action (Trabal et al., 2010): interventions on the site, creation of indicators to identify the 'latest' products, support of web surfers fighting against doping...

4. Conclusion: for an international observatory on doping

It is certainly possible to carry out other investigations to learn more about these problematic practices, the measures to regulate them, the principles and depictions they provoke, and the interlinking of these three aspects. We believe we have shown the heuristic interest of symmetrizing the subject that led to an examination of the relations between doping and the social action to curb them. In our opinion, it also allows this area of research to be structured. This construction involves at least three challenges. Firstly, the development of research in social sciences and the building of an epistemic community on these issues would allow more discussion. There are no arenas for social exchanges on the questions on doping and events organized by the institutions in charge of the anti-doping fight are not adapted to critical deliberations on the work presented. Yet, scientific knowledge is built on controversies and active argumentation that are based on theoretical discussions and empiric data. Secondly, a structuring of research will allow this knowledge to be accumulated. Attempts to collect academic papers in social science emanating from several institutions (UNESCO, WADA...) were never completed. We believe that the scientific community can and should organize a reasonable collection of these studies. Finally, the structuration we defend is essential for a comparative analysis. Though this pinpoints another series of issues. Of course, thought must be given on how to identify the converging and diverging points when observing the compared entities. But to avoid over interpreting these similarities and differences, there is

also a need to examine how the players themselves move towards or away from certain positions that provide a basis for comparison, how they construct their equivalences and their irreductions, how they construct their own judgments.

‘To follow the actors, to use this Latourian expression, is also observing how they compare. The push for harmonization, during the last few years, demands that international comparisons be carried out. These need to be done for both the actors (controls, legal procedures... are they the same in each country?) and the researcher (in what measure, for example, can cultural variations be considered as having an impact or not on the links to comparable rules?). After having studied the French situation and the harmonization procedures, we have started to analyse how, in different countries, policies are implemented to meet the display constraints from the international community on the one hand and from the pressures of domestic policies on the other.

The complexity of the task increases even more when the methodological problems generated by this programme are considered. For multilingualism alone, our research aimed at comparing with software applications corpora in different languages. Apart from questions relating to finding equivalent words and concepts, we came up against classic translatology problems that also pinpointed cultural variations: for example, in what measure can it be considered that the State has the same meaning in a very centralized country like France as it has in a federal country? Our collaboration with linguistic laboratories reflects a genuine will for openness to the international realities of doping but also raises serious questions on the conditions of equivalence in linguistic expressions and the cultures using them, on translatology and on the status of interpretations.

To respond to these challenges, our team is now working on the setting up of an international observatory whose task will be to group together a large amount of research. This observatory will have two goals. The first, heuristic based on the structuring of research in social science. The second, political to provide actors with the necessary resources to elaborate their opinions and their actions. In doing so we will be able to consider another form of comparison that consists in questioning the parallel with other health issues. Researchers specialized in the sociology of risks share these metrologies and work on questions which are among our preoccupations: Can calls for vigilance be identified? Can ‘warning signs’ be identified (Chateauraynaud and Torny, 1999)? Are there already metrologies quantifying future risks? And for how far? Are there signs of normativity? Under these conditions, we could remove the doping dossier from its focus on sport, and evaluate its possible characteristics and suggest to those in charge of regulating this issue, lists of actions that have not yet been mobilized.

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