

Movement Culture and Sport for Development

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This is a personal summary of the Discussion Forum on Sport for Development and Peace session held on 17th October 2006 at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences written by Marielle Leraand. Marielle is a Masters student of sport philosophy at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

Introduction

We, participants in the discussion forum, had the pleasure of the presence of two great tutors: Anne Leseth from the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo; and Pamela Hiley from the Peacepoint Foundation. They presented two different perspectives on the topic “movement culture and sport for development”.

“Us” and “them” – The savage suffering...

Anne is an anthropologist, now lecturing at the University of Oslo, but who took her doctoral degree here at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences. While teaching aerobics to women in Tanzania she discovered how globalized the western notion of sports was in these women's minds. She used the terms “hard” and “soft” to describe the women's experiences which qualified “hard” bodies as being more attractive than the “soft” ones. The women also considered aerobics, with its straight and diagonal (machinelike) movements to have a more slimming effect than their traditional dancing.

The notion of “us” and “them” was a general topic in her presentation, and she saw an interesting similarity in the way aid-cooperations portray the poor and helpless locals “before-and-after”, in the

same way we see it in women's magazines. The way you look before should be really bad, so that the “after-picture” can look really nice.

How do we experience doing different kinds of movements?

... was the second question she raised. The Tanzanian women didn't like the movements where they had to spread their legs. As Anne began to think about it, she had never liked these movements herself either, but in Norway, we are not used to object to movements. We do as the instructor shows, without really “feeling” what the movement does/says to us.

Anne Leseth rounded off her presentation by attacking the notion that we have “movement culture”, while they don't.

-They have lots of knowledge about movement! Perhaps we should start to learn something from them instead of sending people down to teach them sports culture!

-Could African dance be a tool towards development in Europe?

Tai Chi – Chuan and peace from within

Pamela Hiley from the Peacepoint Foundation gave us an introduction to another movement culture. We in the group got a taste of the movements in “Tai Chi – Chuan”, an ancient martial art from China. It was a challenge. We in our group are used to talk. We are used to sports. But not to silence! She told us about silence...

- The movement from a state of violence... to a state of silence... Sport is

a silent dialogue. That's why it is so important.

Our discussion

Then we had a discussion and shared our thoughts and views on all the issues raised. We were eighteen people, sitting in a “holistic circle”.

And to all of you who were there:

Let's be whole again!

See ya' in a couple of weeks!