

## **Nordic sports - from social movements via emotional to bodily movement – and back again?**

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### **Abstract**

When talking about bodily movement, emotional movement and social movements, one applies the same term, ‘movement’, to very different practical, psychological and social relations. This is not accidental. This article inquires into the connections between these three dimensions, *via* an analysis of sports in the Nordic countries. In relation to social movements, Nordic sports developed historically from dynamic popular movements. The cases of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway reveal very different relations between sports movements (often gymnastic movements) on the one hand and national, political, and social movements on the other. In relation to emotional movement, three different ways of identity building can be identified. While elite sport favours competitive identities and oppositional patterns, mass sport stresses social discipline and fitness, and popular festivities and games give rise to emotions of encounter. The third dimension, bodily movement, is examined in a phenomenological, experiential sense. The article concludes with some questions about how the different dimensions of movement interact.

### **Introduction: levels of human movement<sup>i</sup>**

Sport is represented and organized by ‘sports movements’ – this is a very common understanding in the Nordic countries. That the ‘sports movement’ is the given societal form of sports seems uncontroversial and may claim some general truth. But when seen in international comparison, the Nordic pattern is seen to have distinctive elements. British sport, though regarded as the ‘mother’ of modern sports, has for a long time existed on the basis of clubs, but these have never really constituted a ‘movement’.<sup>ii</sup>

From this observations, more fundamental questions may arise: What is a ‘social movement’? Why it is called ‘movement’. And how is sport – and especially Nordic sport –related to this social phenomenon?

The term ‘movement’ covers three very different dimensions of human: bodily, emotional and social movement.

In the first dimension, people move in concrete bodily activities like sports and dance, games and meditation, outdoor activities and festivals. To understand *bodily movement*, one needs a theory of body practice. Praxeology casts light on the culture of inter-bodily situations and relations.

In the second dimension, people are moved by feelings, affects and humour. Emotions (i.e. e-motions), motives and motivations demonstrate that there is *emotional movement* – fascination and euphoria, anger and fear, pain and laughter. This is what the psychology of social interactions and social relations is about. By a psychology of belonging, togetherness and difference, one discovers identity.

In the third dimension, people unite in *social movements*. They meet in associations and peer groups, informal networks and formal organizations – and in movements, which in general understanding are more dynamic, more oriented

towards change, conflict and practical democracy. This is what the sociology of popular life and democracy is interested in. What one discovers here is civil society.

The three dimensions are connected with each other – but how? The rich studies existing in the specific fields need to be completed by a new type of comparative knowledge and philosophy. It seems not to be accidental that different languages use the same term for these different dimensions: movement – *bevægelse* (Danish), *bevegelse* (Norwegian), *rörelse* (Swedish), *Bewegung* (German), *mouvement* (French) and *movimento* (Italian).

This article will sketch some key characteristics of Nordic sports within all three dimensions, moving analytically from social *via* emotional to bodily movement. In a concluding section we will speculate about how to understand the different links and connections between the dimensions.

### **1. Social movements, welfare, and democracy in Nordic countries**

Nordic sport is a historical result from popular movements, and it has been marked by links to other popular social or political movements. Though these movements and their contradictory configurations during historical change have sometimes had very different characters – ‘red’ and ‘white’ in Norway and Finland, agricultural and urban in Denmark, disciplining or oppositional, nationalist or international, middle-class or workers – they had a lasting influence on the structure of modern sports. Certain tensions developed between a popular movement culture at the grassroots level and competitive sport on the elite level. This had consequences for sport in current Nordic welfare society. And the existence of these tensions will constitute a new political challenge as the Nordic welfare societies and their sport systems come to be more fully integrated into a European framework.

In an historical perspective, the inquiry into sport, social movements and welfare may contribute to the question of the *sonderweg* (the special path) of Nordic welfare.<sup>iii</sup> Some of the most marginal states, with an agrarian economy, acute food problems, and massive emigration, were transformed into modern and successful nations in just under one generation.<sup>iv</sup>

#### **Denmark: Rivalling movements**

Danish sports originated from popular movements in different social milieus. Modern Danish sport culture involved, from its very beginning in the nineteenth century, a complex mix of three elements – rural farmers’ culture, urban bourgeois culture, and workers’ culture. During the twentieth century, this initial profile was supplemented and received further nuances by new reform movements, cultural radicalism, welfare culture and grassroots movements. All these milieus and social movements gave different, rivalling, and sometimes contradictory impulses to the Danish practice and understanding of sports.

(1) Danish *farmers’ culture* of the nineteenth century was based on land owners who developed a liberal-democratic self-conscience and a social practice of their own – in contrast to the aristocratic ruling class on the one hand and the bourgeoisie in Copenhagen on the other. The farmers founded rural producers co-operatives, people’s academies (so-called *folk* high schools), and local assembly halls. Continuing some traits from revivalist religious movements of the 1820s, the rural milieu with its spiritual, emotional, and educational impulses became the cradle of a special type of gymnastics. This was adopted from the Swedish-Lingian system in the 1880s and became the origin of Danish popular (*folkelig*) sports in voluntary associations. People’s academies integrated the new movement activities into the

construction of “the whole human being”, as it was expressed in Grundtvigian terms.<sup>v</sup> Gymnastics played a central and controversial role in the national democratic policy of education around 1900, when the majority party of the “Left” finally gained power.<sup>vi</sup>

(2) Another source of sports in Denmark was *bourgeois culture* in Copenhagen, and soon afterwards also in other towns. Following the English model, middle class people – most men and only a few women and a few young people – met in socially exclusive clubs, taking over the British patterns of achievement and competition. It may be questioned whether the local clubs with specialized activities at that time really can be regarded as a ‘movement’. When a minor group of well-dressed men in 1896 founded the *Danish Sports Confederation* (DIF), they were mostly interested in common rules of competition and in amateur rules which excluded non-bourgeois people from sport. On the political level, they were ‘non-political’ with undertones from national liberalism and royalist conservatism. At first, this umbrella federation, represented by military officers, medical doctors, businessmen, and lawyers, did not catch the interest of the majority of local clubs. But when sport in the early twentieth century became a mass movement, DIF gradually developed more elements of a social ‘movement’ such as common symbols, rituals and a health-related ideology.<sup>vii</sup>

(3) That sport became a mass movement owed much to *workers’ culture*. A part of this milieu was connected with Social Democracy and its cultural initiatives – “peoples’ houses”, socialist scouts, cultural associations, and socialist people’s academies. Workers’ sport in Denmark, however, failed to develop a lasting alternative to bourgeois competitive sport. The *Danish Workers Sport Association* (DAI) lasted for only a few years (1931-1937) as a separate body, before joining the sport federation DIF. As social democracy became increasingly hegemonic and reformist, so it favoured corporative structures and “sport for all” instead of socialist sport. A special feature of workers sport was the “Festivals of Professions”, mixing sports with carnival-like popular competitions.<sup>viii</sup>

(4) After 1900, new *reform movements* supplemented the picture with youth movements, alternative and social health movements, and outdoor activities (*friluftsliv*). As an open-air movement, sport obtained a new profile and a new mass character. Cultural radicalism between the two World Wars connected functionalism and technological enthusiasm with jazz, boxing, expressive gymnastics, and nudism, valuing sport as aesthetical events.

At the same time, urban social democratic administrations developed a *welfare system*: “Culture for the people”. In the name of consensus, the cultural struggle was downgraded, and a new type of welfare culture institutionalized the workers movement. Welfare policy supported people’s tourism (*Dansk Folkeferie*), laid out urban folk parks with sport facilities, opened the green natural environments of the countryside for outdoor activities, and supported Sport for all, especially municipal sport and company sport, in the spirit of health for all (*folkehygiejne*).

(5) After 1968, in reaction against the authoritarian traits of welfare policy, an oppositional youth culture and new *grassroots movements* appeared. A new relation to the body was developed: “The private is political!” Side by side with new games, new forms of meditation, and anti-authoritarian pedagogy, sport was now understood as personal development and social learning, based on body experience. Cultural struggle reappeared.

During the last few decades, sport organizations have shown tendencies of developing either towards the bureaucratic institution culture of the welfare state, or

towards profit-oriented service industry. This tended to adopt a quasi-state logic on the one hand, and market logic on the other. But many local associations, though decoupled from the earlier idealistic movements, are still dominated by voluntarism. And in non-organized sports, new movement practices have spread, re-establishing associational patterns in new forms.

### **Sweden: Towards a monopolistic movement**

In Sweden there is a tradition of talking about sport as a *folkrörelse* – as *one* popular movement along with religious revivals and free churches, with trade unions, political parties, and co-operative consumers' movements, with the temperance movement, women's movements and movements of people's education.<sup>ix</sup> The background of this is a connection between these movements and the welfare system, but it developed in different ways than in the Danish case.<sup>x</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the transformation of 'peasants into Swedes', building a modern nation of citizens who were prepared to break with traditional norms and rules and to integrate into *folkhemmet*, the 'folk-home' of welfare society.

Intellectuals dreamt about a functionalistic designed future; homes that let the sun radiate from the south and the west, schools and higher education for everyone, a strong society that distributed justice, money and opportunities equally to every citizen. This was the imagined 'Folk-Home' that later became 'Sweden of the Middle Way'.<sup>xi</sup>

But as in Denmark, modernization in Sweden was not a merely intellectual process. It was a shift of movement practice, driven by people's movements.

(1) Between the two World Wars, the *Swedish Gymnastic Association* (*Gymnastikförbundet*, 1904) became Sweden's fastest growing popular movement. Gymnastics spread side by side with sport and outdoor enthusiasm, vegetarianism and nudism (*frisksport*), hiking (*wandervögel*) and sexual reform. But more than other activities, gymnastics represented the patterns of modernity. Key values were health and 'naturalism', moving in straight lines and all together, following physiological science and medical reason expressed by bodily correctness.

The Swedish way of combining gymnastics, rationality, health and democracy was strongly marked by a top-down logic coming from experts and the state down to the people. It was not result of a revolution, as it was in Denmark after 1848 when *folkelig* gymnastics grew from opposition against the state.<sup>xii</sup>

(2) However, it was not gymnastics that provided finally the political framework for modern movement culture in Sweden, but competitive sport. Sport, though politically rather conservative, succeeded in presenting itself as a popular movement in line with other so-called *folkrörelser*, the temperance movement, the labour movement, the women's movement and the free churches. By the Olympic Games in Stockholm 1912, sport made a break-through in the broader public. In the longer run, the central organization of sport, *The Swedish Sports Confederation* (*Riksförbundet*, RF), out-rivalled the gymnastic organization as the dominant organisation in the field of movement culture. Social democratic welfare policy adopted the sport federation RF, in spite of or because of its middle class character, and officially recognized it as the central representation of sports. RF took on some quasi-state functions as *the* public authority of sports policies.

(3) The corporative model under one central organization<sup>xiii</sup> did not remain uncontested. *Company sport* felt uncomfortable under the umbrella of competitive sport.<sup>xiv</sup> In 1945, an autonomous federation of company sport, *Svenska*

*korporationsidrottsförbundet* (since 1949, *Korpen. Svenska motionsidrottsförbundet*), was founded. Local sport activities at the work place and in relation to the community, as well as the health-related superstructure – *hälso, friskvård* – did not fit so well into the achievement-oriented pyramid of RF.

(4) Another field with a distinct identity was *skiing*, which was linked with a particular image of Swedish nationalism and exceptionalism.<sup>xv</sup> In 1892, skiing formed its own organization for ski and outdoor activities (*Skid- och friluftsförbundet*) which left RF in 1955.

At this time, two organizations for mainly non-competitive and outdoor activities challenged the position of RF as the single central organization. However, the state intervened and solved the Swedish ‘sports war’ by re-establishing the monopoly of the ‘imperial federation’, RF. In 1975, *Korpen* joined the RF, while the league of outdoor activities was outmanoeuvred.

Since that time, the central organization has continued unchallenged. However, the terminology of ‘popular movement’ as applied to sport and its monopolistic central organization has also been subjected to critical discussion.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Norway: Dual tensions through the history of sports**

The Norwegian case was again different.<sup>xvii</sup> In Norway, Swedish gymnastics, German *Turnen* and British sports rivalled with each other and with the indigenous practices of skiing and other outdoor activities. This was sharpened by the striving towards national revival and independence.<sup>xviii</sup>

(1) Two lines of development proved to be of most significance in the longer term. These were non-competitive gymnastics, which were organized in the *Centralforening for Udbredelse af Legemsøvelser og Vaabenbrug* in 1861, and competitive sports, inspired by the British model, which formed the *Norges Riksforbund for Idræt* in 1910.

(2) This dualism developed a new and political character between the wars. In this period, the workers’ sport organization, (*Arbeidernes Idrettsforbund*, AIF), had a strong position, trying to build a clear ‘red’ alternative to bourgeois sport. However, the ‘Red’ mass sport and ‘white’ elite sport united as a consequence of WW 2 when the patriotic movement of resistance against the Nazi-German occupation had a unifying effect. In 1945, the workers’ AIF merged with the bourgeois *Landsforbund* to form (?) the Norwegian Sports Federation (*Norges Idrettsforbund*, NIF).

(3) Norway, thus, joined the model of centralized sport corporatism, though with a stronger focus on ‘people’s health’ than in Sweden, inherited from the socialist tradition. Nevertheless, contradictions survived and again and again gave rise to tensions, for instance between the more elite-oriented elements of NIF with the special federations on the one hand and the local and regional levels of NIF on the other.

Furthermore, the integration of sports into the welfare state did not remain without conflicts. During the 1950/60s tensions arose between the state’s sports department (established in 1950 under Rolf Hofmo, a prominent figure from the workers’ sports movement) and the federation NIF. This ‘sports war’ was won by NIF,<sup>xix</sup> but in the 1990s, new tensions arose when the cultural department, now responsible for sports, gave financial support to the regional and local level, thus weakening the central leadership of NIF. Strengthening the dimensions of health and social welfare in sports at the expense of elite orientation can be understood as an aspect of the historical tradition of sports dualism in Norway.<sup>xx</sup>

The power game in Norwegian sports policies has recently called forth some critical voices proposing a solution of more plurality and greater arms' length between mass and elite sport after the Danish model.<sup>xxi</sup>

(4) Outside all these conflicts, outdoor activities (*friluftsliv*) have always kept their position as a particular marker of national identity: 'We Norwegians are open-air beings.' The relation between outdoor activities and sports remains an open question for the Norwegian understanding and policies of sports.<sup>xxii</sup>

In other parts of the North – in Finland, Iceland and Greenland, on the Faeroe Islands, and among the Saami – still other combinations and contradictions between social movements, democratic striving and sport can be found. After all, popular movements in the North led to modern democracies, but the understanding of 'movement' in different cultural contexts was not the same.

Differences appeared in the way that sport was related in concrete terms to social movements. Sport was a part of some popular movements – in Denmark: *folkelig* farmers', workers', social reform and grassroots movements – but it is a legitimate question as to whether sport was also a social movement in itself, as is suggested by Swedish terminology. And there is no reason to follow uncritically the Olympic rhetoric, which declares the IOC – rather an exclusive lodge and a business – as being or representing an "Olympic Movement".<sup>xxiii</sup>

What is clear is that, under very different circumstances, sport was an indicator of paths to democracy.<sup>xxiv</sup> The modern nation was not only an "imagined community"<sup>xxv</sup> – it was also a community in practical movement. The "imagined communities" were at a closer look connected with exercised communities or communities of revolutionary festivity, and with competitive, disciplined, emotional communities. Their political imagination was related to experienced and practised civil relations in bodily movement.

## **2. Emotional movement and contrasting identities of sports**

Different social patterns of sports interact with different emotional 'atmospheres' of movement cultures. The social logic of a certain activity, its social organization, goals and structure of meaning develop hand in hand with characteristics of the relationships that arise between persons within this logic. We hypothesize no strict causal relationship between social logic and emotional atmosphere, but social organization constitutes a framework stimulating certain emotional atmospheres in favour of others. In the following section we examine relevant differences by comparing the emotions of three historically important Nordic sport practices; competitive sport, gymnastic festivals and popular games.

### **Elite sport – the competitive model**

Competitive sport in its modern versions developed in nineteenth century England, 'the land of sport'.<sup>xxvi</sup> It emerged on the basis of the scientific revolution, cultural, social and material changes in the process of industrialization, and it flourished under classic liberalism and capitalist Western society. Three characteristic features played a central role.<sup>xxvii</sup> Firstly, competitive sport is based on the idea of quantifiable progress as manifested through competitions with exact measurement of performance, standardization of performance conditions, and the idea of the sporting record. Secondly, competitive sport is characterized by an increasing specialization. Sport disciplines and the role of athletes and game players are differentiated through exact and codified norms and rules, and game areas such as courts, pitches, and track and

field arenas are strictly defined. Thirdly, competitive sport is dominated by instrumental rationality in which ever more efficient means are developed in terms of training methods, equipment and technical and tactical patterns to enhance performance.

The competitive sport model was spread globally with the growth of the British Empire and reached the Nordic countries in the last part of the nineteenth century. In the globalization processes and with the development of electronic mass media, competitive elite sport has become the hegemonic sport model all over the world.

The social logic here is that of competition for mutually exclusive rewards: victory or defeat. Competitive sport is oriented towards quantifiable progress as indicated in the Olympic slogan *citius, altius, fortius*. In competitions, participants are measured, compared and ranked according to performance. In some sports, such as athletics and speed skating, performances are measured under standardized conditions and in exact mathematical-physical entities: seconds, kilograms, meters and centimetres. We talk here of records in the precise sense of the word. In games such as football and handball, performances are relative to the opposition, but goals are counted and the very activity aims at structurally deciding the winner.

Competitive sport stimulates identity constructions in oppositions and through line drawing. Results and records are regarded as representative, collective outcomes: 'Two-zero in favour of us.' And results can release strong emotions: 'We have won!' – or: 'We were defeated!' In this, identities of results and production are constructed. By connecting collective identification with the obtained results, competitions can stir up intensive feelings of collective opposition to others.

The emotional atmosphere that arises from this logic is a contested one. On the one hand, oppositional patterns create a social logic in which competitors become obstacles to be conquered. The atmosphere is one of dominance and repression.<sup>xxviii</sup> Elite sport can promote an atmosphere of aggression and winning at any cost, and can lead to problems such as violence, doping, and the forced manipulation of persons. On the other hand, sport contests (etymologically derived from Latin *con-testare*: 'striving together') presuppose cooperation on a deep level. Contestants need to agree on rules and challenges in order to enjoy the experiential qualities and uncertainty of contest. This idea is embedded in the fair play ideal.<sup>xxix</sup> Fairness refers to principles of giving all competitors equal opportunity to perform, and to measure, compare and finally rank competitors according to performance. The play ideal points towards the attitude with which competitors engage and points towards a non-instrumental and generous attitude. However, whether competitive sport is practised with aggressive instrumentalism or based on the ideal of fair play, the emphasis is on individual achievement and on strict ranking according to performance.

As can be seen from the earlier sections above, the British sport model, and in particular elite sports, have been contested terrain in Nordic sport policies since their introduction. In the 1890s and early 1900s, sport was strictly opposed by nationally oriented sport leaders who rejected its utility and its moral value for the education of young people.<sup>xxx</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, Nordic sport politics have struggled with the tensions between the Olympic ideal of *citius, altius, fortius*, and ideals of sport such as *folkebevegelse*, with moral and social hygienic ideals of collectivity and equality.

With the development of elite sport towards professionalism and entertainment spectacles, the contradiction to the ideals of the *folkebevegelse* became even more clear. One may wonder how long it will be possible to keep elite sport

within the main voluntary sport confederations, as is still the case in most of the Nordic countries.

### **Broad sports – gymnastics, the health model and Sport for all**

A second pattern of movement stresses discipline and fitness for the purpose of an identity of integration. Gymnastics stand in contrast to sport by a social logic that is independent of the measurement of results. Competition is not needed here either, as one single team alone may be a source of collective identity and the feeling of community.

In this case the emotional atmosphere in terms of presentation and production of we-feeling is affected by discipline and a collective demonstration of fitness and adherence to the rules. A team of dynamic young people moves in rank and file, with flag and hymn, radiating by its joint force and precision, that ‘we are the people’. For this type of mass sport, the display of aesthetic processes and choreographies play a more important role than the list of results. Some elements were taken from popular festivity (in Danish: *stævne*), using music (nowadays rock music) and producing an ecstatic atmosphere.<sup>xxxix</sup>

During early modernization in the nineteenth century, i.e. the age of the classical nation state, the disciplinary model of gymnastics became the classical modern form of ‘popular movement’ in the Nordic countries. This was, however, not only the case in the North. The French Jacobins of 1789 dreamt of new revolutionary gymnastics for the whole democratic nation. German *Turnen* arose around 1810, linked with movements of choir singing and the oppositional self-organization of students. Their new types of festivities, political confrontations, and rituals pre-figured the revolution of 1848. Similar popular movements arose in Eastern Europe with the National Democratic movements of *Sokol* gymnastics.

Broad sport has, however, changed its emotional face from early gymnastics to contemporary health sports. Sport as healthy activity is an old story – and a new one: physical education for health. The general public’s acknowledgement of sport as an efficient means to improve public health belongs to the twentieth century. Perhaps the first systematically developed *folkehygiene* ideals are to be found in the workers’ sport movement of the European 1920s and 1930s.<sup>xxxix</sup> Health was not seen as a goal *per se* but as an instrument to strengthen the working class in the struggle with what was considered the hegemonic power structures of the time.

The emphasis on bodily movement as a means of improving health is even stronger today. But the premises have changed. There has been a gradual transition from ideological towards epidemiological justifications. This process can be understood as a ‘medicalization’ of society, conceptions of illness, medication, and health taking on an increasingly important role in individuals’ lives.<sup>xxxix</sup> Moreover, in a visual, Western culture, health is idealized not only as a bio-medical condition but also as an image and a social symbol of success.<sup>xxxix</sup> The healthy image with the sporting body as the paradigmatic expression is cultivated almost to the extreme.<sup>xxxv</sup> Surveys from a series of Western countries show that a majority of the adult population is dissatisfied with their own weight and body image.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Inactivity and obesity are considered the main challenges. Actually, obesity is increasingly seen as a global epidemic.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In the medical literature dramatic new concepts can be found such as the Sedentary Death Syndrome (SDS). Sport and movement have been embedded in a hygienic project culture which has taken two directions.

One direction includes the significance of joy and aesthetic experience as found in the gymnastic festival. A typical Nordic expression is the so-called *Friskis*



& *Svettis*.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Its social organization emphasizes a sense of community. Participants move together in large groups to popular, loud music and are led by an instructor. The emotional atmosphere is one of rhythmic movement, joy, spontaneity and friendly togetherness.

The other direction has separated from the heritage of the gymnastic festival and elevated health in both symbolic and biological senses as the higher value. Individualized training programs are arranged in health centres, under the consultation of personal trainers. The social logic here can be alarming. From a Foucauldian perspective, one may see repressive strategies of normalization at work.<sup>xxxix</sup> The cult of health and fitness has been called “a logic of discontent” (*missnöjets logik*).<sup>xl</sup> There is a transition from the emotional atmosphere of togetherness and community towards an instrumentally oriented fitness activity in which health is made an individual responsibility and in which it becomes, to many, a source of obsession.

### **Popular sports – *folkelig idræt*, games and festivity**

A third pattern of emotional movement centres on festivity, play and games, related to popular identity. Here, all people can participate, whether old or young, male or female, folk from different ethnic origins and different languages, top athletes as well as people with disabilities.

In popular festivity, the differences within the group are not treated by streamlining or by seeking uniformity, but by displaying or even exaggerating differences, often in grotesque and carnival-like forms. In popular festival, people play theatre, using funny roles and masks. The social logic here is one of displaying the dialectic of identity and non-identity, of ‘who I am’ and otherness. The eccentricity of popular culture follows the logic of mutual communication: the truth is neither here nor there, but it is in-between.

The emotional atmosphere and the feeling of ‘we’ in popular festivity and games are produced by encounters, people meeting as ‘brothers and sisters’ in a temporary community of participation. In this situation, tradition and surprise are mixed as well as competition and laughter, skill and drunkenness. Local associations may function as elements of continuity, but the festive encounter is the important event – a moment of discontinuity, surprise and becoming ‘high’ in the here-and-now.

Before the rise of modern social movements, popular games and rural as well as urban festivities dominated the field of what today is called ‘sport’.<sup>xli</sup> The majority of people met in competitions, dances, play and game, which were not ‘sport’ but parts of a carnival culture of laughter. During the nineteenth century, these games and festivities became marginalized by the modern movement cultures of gymnastics and sports. These, however, adopted also some elements of popular culture as a sort of ‘underground’ dimension, and festivity made up an important part of all dynamic ‘people’s movements’. Furthermore, some pedagogical versions of the games were transferred into educational sports, but on the way they lost their connection with festivity. During the 1970/80s, however, the games reappeared in New Games festivals. Laughter seems no longer to be a suspected underground dimension of sports.

What nowadays is called ‘Sport for all’ is often a mixture of popular festivity and gymnastic mass sport. It is therefore a field of diffuse and composed identities. Perhaps today’s youth movement culture is the true descendent of these popular festivals.<sup>xlii</sup> Borders of many varieties – snow, skate, surf, wake – develop their activities in ways which distance them from traditional sports and organized activities.

They meet in non-organized and informal ways to play and demonstrate their expressivity in mutual communication. There are codes in terms of appearance and movement, and there is often an emphasis on skill and performance, but there are no formal hierarchies or ranking lists. Movement patterns and techniques are developed in direct encounters and in a communicative atmosphere of openness and creativity.

Boarders have developed their activities as alternatives and in opposition to organized sport. Especially in the Nordic countries with their strong mass sport movements – *folkebevegelser* – this has led to a series of tensions. A prominent case was delivered by one of the world's best snowboarders, the Norwegian Terje Haakonsen, who rejected the Norwegian Olympic Committee and declined participation in the 1998 Nagano Winter Games. The emotional atmosphere of freedom, creativity and informal community ran counter to what Haakonsen described as the hierarchical and corrupt “oligarchy” of the IOC.<sup>xliii</sup>

Of course, one should not idealize the board culture. In the case of snowboarding for instance, there are strong commercial interests involved, which sometimes require the same kind of loyalty and discipline as the nation state in previous times. However, as a mass sport, the broad cultures represent similar social logic and emotional atmospheres as are found in *folkelig idræt*.<sup>xliv</sup>

### **3. Bodily movement and meaning**

The third dimension of movement culture is the immediate level of bodily participation: the experience of movement and its meanings and values. We are talking here of the more or less tacit dimension of sport, play, and games; their immediate and experiential qualities at a very basic level of engagement.

In the study of such qualities, the methodological tool is often that of phenomenology and qualitative inquiry. Phenomenology tries to grasp the phenomenon under study in its immediacy, and the way it is given to the observer directly through experience; it studies the life-world (*Lebenswelt*). In play, games and sport, participants run and jump, throw and hit, kick and swing, they move in indoor and outdoor environments, on concrete, on grass, in water and on snow and ice, in flat terrain, uphill and downhill, and through air. They experience the joy of free movement, the challenges of strictly defined motor skills, the discomforts of anaerobic exercise and the joys of a steady state aerobic activity, and cooperation and conflicts in team games. All these experiences are anchored in bodily movements and seem to carry significance and meaning to all those who take part in sport. Is it possible, then, to move from the tacit, experiential dimension of sport, games and play to more systematic articulations of their possible meanings?

A first step must be to acknowledge that experiential qualities cannot be understood *in blanco* and independent of the social-psychological and socio-cultural context in which they take place. The experience of an elite soccer game is coloured by an intense winning attitude and by the view of players as opponents. The experience of a playful pick-up game in the park with friends will in most instances be very different. And yet, in the strongest experiential phases of sport, games and play, when participants are totally absorbed in the activity, their experiences share some key characteristics. A comparison between two very different kinds of activities may illustrate this point.

Case 1: When children play the game “You can't catch me!” the object is to ‘tag’ or touch other players and to run away from each other in order to avoid being caught oneself. Usually one player is ‘it’ and has to chase and tag the other players, one of whom then becomes the new person who is ‘it’. This seems to be a simple

game following a simple principle. On closer examination however, chase and tag is impossible if all participants really act according to the rule of running away as quickly as they can. In this case, the slowest runner would very soon stay behind in tears, and the game would end abruptly. Chase-and-tag is an 'impossible game'.

If the game is to continue, the players must limit the application of the rule of speed and winning. Instead of excelling in achievement, the quicker runner will approach the slower one, teasing and mocking: 'You can't catch me, tralala!' The quick runner provokes the possibility of being touched because only this brings flow into the game. It is in the interest of all players that no absolute loser is produced. No loser – this is a deep social quality of play. Evidently, there is something more important in the game than winning: it is the game itself.

The experiential qualities of the game are obvious and apparent. The game produces experiences of joy, speed, empathy and a sense of community as players run together as one, moving organism.<sup>xlv</sup>

Case 2: An elite football game is strictly defined in terms of rules and definitions. Each team consisting of eleven players tries to score more goals than the other team. At elite levels, the winning orientation is strong and the relationship to opponents sometimes aggressive and hostile. At the same time, the players are extraordinarily gifted with talent for the technical and tactical challenges of their sport. Players end up at this level because they master their craft.

Psychologically, it seems as if they find meaning in the game and enjoy it for its own sake. In tight matches with well-matched opponents, some of the key qualities of football such as technical and tactical finesse and uncertainty of outcome can be realized. The competition becomes a contest in which players and teams strive together to overcome each other. The social logic of the game is oppositional and contrasts with that of children's play. However, in a phenomenological, experiential sense, all participants can experience satisfaction and meaning in the activity. In good games, it is apparent that players experience joy, speed, the exhilaration of really being challenged and to perform at their best, and a sense of an embodied community of players that acts as one, organic whole. Even if elite sport is far more vulnerable to harsh instrumentality, the possibility of deep, embodied play exists here just as in children's run-and-catch.

Moreover, sport, games and play may have meaning at even more fundamental levels. Upon reflection on their immediate, experiential qualities, the link between phenomenology and existentialism becomes apparent. Participation in sport, play and games can be seen as an embodied "exploration of our humanity".<sup>xlvi</sup> In all its varieties, movement cultures can be understood as particular and concrete thematizations of existential questions such as "who am I?", "what can I do", "who are we?", and "what can we achieve together?" Whereas literary culture deals with human beings as narrators and story-tellers, and art deals with our capabilities of symbolic imagery, movement culture explores in a variety of ways our possibilities and limitations as embodied selves. The ethics of movement culture, then, must take as its key premise that movement activities provide meaning and value for its participants. From this premise, norms can be deduced that encourage the same diversity and complexity in movement forms and organizations as can be found in other spheres of human culture.

#### **4. How do the different dimensions of movement interact?**

The complex connections between bodily movement, emotional movement and social movements through modern history and in current society turn our attention towards

some shortcomings in hitherto existing literature about 'social movements'. Being mostly interested in the (political) aims, in their ways of organization, action, strategy and control over their members, and in the societal 'function' and the mobilization techniques of social movements, research has so far paid little attention to the significance of the body and of bodily movement. The role of collective bodily activity, meeting, festivity and sports remained systematically underexamined.<sup>xlvii</sup> And on the other side, attempts to understand the embodied practice of sports tend to become de-contextual and to a certain extent essentialistic. The cases of Nordic sports movements oblige us to revise these methodological approaches.

This essay indicates that there are significant questions which are opened up by using movement as the basic metaphor. We would not claim any strict causal relationship between social, emotional and bodily movement, but a future theoretical challenge would be to explore and try to interpret somewhat more precisely their mutual and interactive relations.

Further theory-building should perhaps also look at the varying significance of the three dimensions in the development of movement culture. Can they be ranked in terms of impact? The third dimension, bodily movement and its meaning, is perhaps of particular interest. The experience of movement is shaped by its socio-cultural and socio-psychological context. However, the phenomenological structure of radically different movement practices at their best (as the cases of children's play and elite football illustrated) in which human beings are deeply absorbed in meaningful ways may still be similar to each other. One hypothesis could be that if movement cultures have these strong experiential qualities but contradict predominant value systems and ideologies, they can be repressed but will still survive. Movement cultures with less strong experiential qualities, on the other hand, tend to change into something else or die irrespective of whether they are considered important by hegemonic value systems and ideologies or not. This raises questions of the degree of autonomy of sport from the socio-economic and cultural contexts of which they are parts. Football, for example, has successfully travelled the world and developed in all kinds of societies: communist and capitalist, developed and undeveloped. American sports, or Irish sports, have not enjoyed the same international success. There are of course good historical and sociological explanations for this. However, it might be the case that conventional analyses overlook important aspects of particular game structures and their corresponding experiential qualities. There might even be good reasons for arguing for the primacy of phenomenological and experiential dimensions and the grassroots level in understandings of the development and spread of movement cultures.

Perhaps, after all then, a Bahktinian theme emerges. What we hear in situations of deep bodily involvement and play is people laughing. The laughter of children catching each other is different from the laughter in *Friskis & Sveltis* and this again from the triumphant laughter of the players and the crowd in elite football. And yet, the convulsions of laughter, jumping from body to body and from face to face, tell something about the basic processes of movement culture and about the limits of those value systems which constitute the ideological superstructure of human practice.

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<sup>ii</sup> An international survey about sport policy in Europe stated as late as in the years after 2000 that "the UK has a non-consolidated sports movement. There is no non-governmental national sport confederation for the entire United Kingdom. However, each constituent home country of the UK has a sport federation body that operates as loose sport confederation (Footnote: The Central Council of Physical Recreation in England, the Scottish Sports Association, the Welsh Sports Association, and the Northern Ireland Council of Physical Recreation). These confederations represent the interests of the governing bodies constituting their membership and act as advisory bodies to their respective sports councils. The British Olympic Association (BOA) is a separate and independent organisation that is responsible for the development of the Olympic movement in Great Britain (Northern Ireland falls under the Olympic remit of the Olympic Council for Ireland)" – Chaker 2004: 93-97. Here, 'movement' was evidently understood as an organized body, which was more than an umbrella or council above local clubs.

<sup>iii</sup> About Nordic exceptionalism see also Nielsen 2005: 154-169.

<sup>iv</sup> Frykman 1992 about Sweden.

<sup>v</sup> N.F.S. Grundtvig was a Danish poet, priest and politician who played an important role for nineteenth-century's popular movements. About the connection of Grundtvigianism, people's academies and sports see Eichberg 2006.

<sup>vi</sup> Korsgaard 1982, Eichberg 1996.

<sup>vii</sup> Trangbæk 1996, especially Jørgensen in vol. 1: 63-86.

<sup>viii</sup> Hansen 1993.

<sup>ix</sup> Solberg 1981, Lindroth 1974.

<sup>x</sup> About the Swedish case: Lindroth 1974, Bairner 2001: 139-161 and Norberg 2004.

<sup>xi</sup> Frykman 1992.

<sup>xii</sup> And yet, Danish gymnastics could subsequently be tempted by authoritarian attitudes, too, as it was the case of Niels Bukh gymnastics during the 1930s.

<sup>xiii</sup> This has sometimes been called "the Nordic model" of sports policy, contrasting the "Danish model": Norberg 1998.

<sup>xiv</sup> About the particularities of Nordic company sport see Eichberg 1993/94.

<sup>xv</sup> Sörilin 1996.

<sup>xvi</sup> Lundberg 1997.

<sup>xvii</sup> About the Norwegian case: Olstad/Tønneson 1986/87.

<sup>xviii</sup> Goksøy 1996 and 1998.

<sup>xix</sup> Norberg 1998.

<sup>xx</sup> Bergsgard 2005.

<sup>xxi</sup> Skille 2006.

<sup>xxii</sup> Breivik 1989 and Pedersen 1999.

<sup>xxiii</sup> IOC's *Olympic Charter* from 2004 speaks authoritatively about *The Olympic Movement* with large M, and furthermore about the *Olympic Family*.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Eichberg 2004.

<sup>xxv</sup> Anderson 1983.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Holt 1989.

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- <sup>xxvii</sup> See the ambitious Weberian analysis of the development of modern sport during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Guttmann 1978.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> For a critical review of the idea of competition and its social and moral consequences, see Kohn 1992.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Loland 2002.
- <sup>xxx</sup> See Olstad/Tønnesson 1986.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Madsen 2003 and Eichberg/Madsen 2006.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Krüger/Riordan 1996.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> See Waddington's (2000) discussion of Irving Zola's views in the context of sport.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Synnott 1993.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Wachter 1985.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Loland 1999; Sault, 1994.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Gard/Wright 2005.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> For more information about Friskis & Svettis, see <http://www.friskissvettis.se/>
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Loland 2006.
- <sup>xl</sup> Johansson 1998; Elliot, 2003.
- <sup>xli</sup> Møller 1984 and 1990/91, Hellspong 1998.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Rinehart 2000.
- <sup>xliii</sup> For more information about Terje Haakonsen, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terje\\_Haakonsen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terje_Haakonsen).
- <sup>xliv</sup> Rinehart 2000.
- <sup>xlv</sup> I borrowed this case from J. Møller 1990/91.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Anderson 2003.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Raschke 1985, della Porta/Diani 1999, Snow/Soule/Kriesi 2004.