

Theme: Sport and the Construction of Identities

Content: At the XIth International CESH Congress in Vienna questions on the phenomenon of 'Sport and the Construction of Identities' will be dealt with within the framework of the history of sport in Europe and its chronological developments and changes; however, the contemporaneous and varied developments outside of the European cultural area will not be neglected by any means, for it is only by comparing non-European conditions can new light be thrown on certain European characteristics. The view from outside in combination with that from the inside will help to define and understand the specifically European characteristics.

By means of this event researchers from the most varied areas of cultural, social and sports science are to be inspired to an interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge. Particular emphasis is placed on following certain phenomena from their origins through their entire historical development up to their position in modern times and in current history. The concept of 'sport' must be understood here in its comprehensive meaning of a social phenomenon of movement.

A special concern of the Vienna congress is to grasp the roots of the 'culture of movement' in its construction of identity from ancient times, as far as the evidence permits, and to illustrate its development during the entire ancient world. Classical archaeology and its neighbouring disciplines can make a noteworthy contribution here: beginning with Minoan bull-jumping and its initiatory or legitimising character with regard to the rulers, through the sport of Greek antiquity with its strong religious connotations to the increasing professionalism of the Roman Empire, the sciences dealing with the ancient world can follow the development and make it comprehensible, a development which parallels and is connected to developments on the social and political levels of antiquity.

A further area of emphasis will be the survival of certain phenomena of the culture of movement and the occurrence of new ideas and ideals during the Middle Ages, an epoch which may be considered a decidedly significant foundation for thinking about the developments of modern times. According to the most recent investigations in this field, two types of 'sport' appear to have played a role in constructing identities: hunting and tournaments. Both will be taken into consideration within the framework of the congress. In medieval tournaments the competitive character of several ethnic groups contributed primarily to the construction of identity. By hunting, the ruler represented himself as the armed, noble master of the collective (the peasants were forbidden to carry arms!), who also tamed the wild - characteristics reflecting important facets of his style of rule. In this way the identities of the ruling elite and the ruled peasants were constituted.

From early modern times to the 21st century a large number of developments in the culture of movement can be identified, in the course of which the actors were confronted with complex processes of transformation with regard to their identities. These are to be interpreted against the background of (and in complex interaction with) the specific social, political and economic changes taking place. In the 19th and 20th centuries 'Deutsches Turnen' (the German gymnastics movement), the 'Sokol' movement or 'Swedish Gymnastics' document the coupling of important phenomena

such as nationalism and the culture of movement. The adoption of sport by the working classes at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries clearly illustrates how sport and the culture of movement can also possess a function of social distinction. The crystallisation of individual and social corporeal identities can be partly explained by means of discourses specific to sport, or to hygiene, as they appear in modern times. The transformation of the social grammar of sportive corporeality may find an explanation in the habitus concept of Bourdieu or the investigations by Philipp Sarasin. Sarasin, for instance, points out the 'sublime body of the athlete' as a central metaphor for modernity. Other matters requiring investigation are e.g. professionalising processes in sport, such as the creation of professional identities. But more recent phenomena, too, such as the construction of identity by means of the parasocial practice of communication in the course of the establishment of electronic media are to be discussed as well.