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A Movement Culture without Competition: From Ling Gymnastics to Aerobics

The purpose of this presentation is to through a perspective of performing knowledge, interpret and understand changes of a movement culture over time. The presentation starts with a cultural historical introduction to the field of bodily exercise where the traditional Swedish Ling gymnastics from the beginning of the 1800s, a movement culture without competition, is followed and analysed; from Ling gymnastics to 'aerobics'. Through this cultural historical travel, accompanied with a film material, which is part of the empirical data of a study called 'Movement in Motion', the results of the study show a dramatic shift in the manifestation of the performing knowledge in the empirical material. The shift is visualized by the physicality of the moving bodies, compositional and aesthetical aspects of movement content and movement figuration. The corporeal regulation moves from a focus on movement expression to methods of training.

The 'dramatic' shift in movement culture is discussed in terms of how the subject gymnastics lost its legitimacy during a period of fifty years (1940s-1990s) and how the two former gymnastics discourses (one male and one female) turns to one. This shift can be explained as a result of changes in society: the growing interest of measurable performances and out comes, the dominance of the sport discourse, the strive for equity and the scientificization of higher education – but it can also be explained in terms of ideological changes in the field of bodily exercise and body movement culture where the ideology of the old Ling gymnastics, including the values of aesthetical schooling, lost its importance. The presentation includes an overview and some consequences of the development in the bodily exercise field from the 1800s to current time.