

Hanna Hacker, PhD  
c/o Department of Sociology, University of Vienna  
Rooseveltplatz 2  
A-1090 Vienna  
Austria  
[hanna.hacker@univie.ac.at](mailto:hanna.hacker@univie.ac.at)

## **Dissertation Review**

**Eva Soares Moura (2020):**

**Sport for Development in Brazil: A Gendered Perspective.**

[Charles University Praha, Department of Sociology]

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In her dissertation thesis, Eva Soares Moura discusses theory and practice of gender-sensitive development projects. She presents the work and reflection process of a several months long field research in two social projects in the São Paulo region that focus on (non-competitive) football and particularly on support for girls and women.

The thesis deals with a highly relevant question and successfully combines different problems, i.e., development politics and their colonial momentum; feminist social work for girls and gender relations at local and global levels; sport and empowerment as a field of action for NGOs.

The candidate appears to be very well-read and well-informed about a large part of the literature pertinent to her work; this applies to both theoretical approaches and empirical studies. She uses approaches from development criticism, gender studies, post- and decolonial theories as well as all research published in recent years on "Sport for Development and Peace" in a very competent manner. The emphasis, the most detailed discussion, is on the concept of empowerment and theories of "power" from a development and gender perspective.

Many considerations are devoted to the methodical proceeding. One focus is on "reflexivity" as an indispensable accompaniment of classical field work and as a principle in the author's ethnographic approach.

I find the term "gender situation(s)", coined by the author herself, interesting and in any case more broadly applicable. She uses it to descriptively and analytically recapitulate the dynamics of empowerment processes in her field of research.

The work is thus written in a very competent, committed and reflective manner, and in some parts it is a really exciting read.

However, the text also has a few weaknesses. Especially for future research and publications by the author, I would like to recommend to pay attention to the following:

- Often the cited secondary literature or the theoretical concept presented does not really fit the specific argument or the specific example in the text.
- Although the author describes her work as "partly informed by queer theories", this does not really seem to be the case. The approach of the study remains a binary one; it reiterates the dichotomy of "women" (or "girls") and "men" (or "boys") rather than deconstructing it. The existence of queer theories and the author's encounter with same-sex desires and trans people in her field research appear more of an appendix to the thesis.
- Regarding the method of field research: The author does not relate to participatory and transformative (e.g. action) research, although these are very important methodological approaches, especially in the context of development critique. She also does not address the existing systematic guidelines of decolonial research ethics. Unfortunately, we learn nothing about how she has reported or will report back her findings to her "research subjects".
- It feels quite strange for me to read more about the "I" of the researcher only from page 90 or 100 on. Until then (and partly also afterwards) the author's positionality stays a complete mystery, although she – quite rightly and expertly – attaches so much general importance to dimensions like class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, geopolitical position, and sexual identification.
- I missed a critical discussion of the central concept of "youth". What is the historical site of this category, how does the central role it plays in the context of international development come about? Likewise, the author hardly works at all with theories on the body, which could be obvious and important when we are dealing with "sport" (and gender). A critical overview of gender politics in Brazil's recent history and present would have been beneficial in the theoretical part of the thesis.

But this criticism actually wants to underline that Eva Soares Moura's study is a high-level work. Overall, the thesis is very well-written, worth reading, inspiring, knowledgeable and ambitious and makes a profound contribution to the sociology of gender and international inequalities.

I am very happy to recommend this dissertation for defense.