Introduction

This is the story of one dream, five miracles, and a project – to use the values of the Earth Charter as a unique reference point, as a starting point and final objective.

All nations on the planet enjoy a valuable repertoire of traditional games, dances, and other elements of physical culture. Dating back thousands of years, many of them were used – and are used still – to celebrate numerous social occasions and notable circumstances, such as the harvest, sowing time, solstices, weddings, births, thanksgiving and rites of passage, among others.
The meaning and purpose behind these celebrations is easily connected with the different values encompassed in the Earth Charter; in this sense, it is not impossible to incorporate these hobbies and rituals into the Charter – this wonderful tide of hope and excitement; this declaration of a sustainable, peaceful, and just world.

The dream is that one day all the children of the world will start their school day by showing their appreciation of life through singing, dancing, and playing cooperative games. In the dream, they celebrate being alive and being a part of Gaia – the living earth – by gathering each morning to participate in an active ritual, typical of the physical culture of their own country.

The first miracle that happened to help make this dream come true took place during the summer of 2006, when a good friend gave me a wonderful book, “The Earth Charter in Action: Toward a Sustainable World” (Eds. Corcoran et al, KIT Publishers, Amsterdam 2005), I read it and was captivated by this great, appealing ethical vision.

By September 2006 I went before the Group of Praxiological Studies of the National Institute of Physical Education of Catalonia (INEFC) at the University of Lleida, and presented a proposal to design a descriptive catalogue of traditional games, dances and physical exercises from a scientific perspective. It would be designed using motor praxiology – the science of motor functions – in congruence with the values contained in the principles of the Earth Charter. The idea was to design a game, dance or physical exercise in connection to a specific Earth Charter value, so that when executed, it might be capable of activating the value within the participants – simply by playing them out.

The project was received with enthusiasm by both professors and doctoral students from the research group, and so it became the star project for the 2006-2007 academic year.

The second miracle began during the first session of the 2006–2007 academic year through the Governing Coordination Body of the INEFC of Lleida, when there arose the need to design a project for a Masters’ Degree Programme and an official PhD course for that year. It was suggested that the project be called Earth Charter in Motor Action and be designed for a Masters’ Degree Programme that would have ‘Sustainable Sports’ as its thematic axis. A draft was drawn up to further develop this idea which was later accepted by the University of Lleida. Finally an official Masters’ Degree Programme on Sustainable Sports and Wellbeing was approved by AGAUR, the Catalonian agency for universities and research.

The third miracle was the insertion of the Earth Charter into the project. The basis for Earth Charter in Motor Action was shared during the Tenth International Seminar on Motor Praxiology held in the city of Vitoria in November 2006, with researchers, professors, colleagues, and laboratory personnel in attendance from Spain and other countries, including France, Portugal, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. We received an enthusiastic and committed response from everyone to actively contribute to this project. In order to provide an opportunity for wide involvement of universities and individuals, a section entitled, ‘The Earth Charter,’ was added to the website, www.praxiologiamotriz.inefc.es. Currently the laboratories and research groups mentioned above have begun working as a network. We believe that this is necessary – a contribution to the collective process heralded by the Earth Charter to look towards a new horizon for life on Earth.

The next miracle was the pedagogical experience that we obtained and shared throughout the process of
developing the project. We shared the goals of *Earth Charter in Motor Action* with University of Lleida students, particularly within the INEFC. During the 2006–2007 academic year, 120 second-year students prepared a social intervention project based on motor practices, which implemented the Earth Charter principles.

This project involved the subjects of Cooperative Games, Dance, Sociology of Sports and Research Projects II (PI-2), culminating in a celebration – a large, collective event on 26 April 2007 at the Mitjana Park by the Segre River. At this event, the university students, together with grade school students, the disabled and the elderly (some 400 people), put their bodies into action, in movements designed and practiced as testimony that it is feasible to celebrate the party of life in an active, cheerful, and playful manner.

Finally, the *fifth miracle* occurred when the INEFC joined the Earth Charter. In May 2006, the Governing Body of the Centre of INEFC in Lleida, in which all professors, students, and service and administration staff are represented, unanimously approved endorsing the Earth Charter as a “document for teaching and disseminating sustainable sports, within the academic and scientific activities and programmes organized by this centre.”

**The Earth Charter in Motor Action project**

In a more precise description, this project intends to: select, within the realm of motor action (homogenous groups of motor activities); seek, within the world’s ludic heritage; and design (or create, if necessary) motor activities such as games, exercises, and dances, coherent with the values stemming from the sixteen principles set forth in the Earth Charter. The goal is to provide a ‘motor inventory’ of activities that can be put into practice simply and efficiently by any person, regardless of age, gender and culture. This project is organized in three phases:

**Phase One**

This is an ongoing phase to design and create a practical programme, capable of activating, in an entertaining fashion, all the values embedded in the Earth Charter. As a complement of this phase, a series of teaching experiences have been held at the INEFC and in the city of Lleida during February, March and April 2007, in which the final outcome was the collective celebration that took place at the Mitjana Park in April 2007. These experiences will continue in the years to come, as once this programme of games and dance is finalized, between September–October 2007, we expect to put it into practice in the various social settings in the city of Lleida, including schools, institutes, educational institutions for the disabled, and homes for the elderly.

**Phase Two**

This phase is the creation of a database of movement activities related to the Earth Charter, through which we will make possible a direct access to games, dances and physical performances that implement the Charter’s values to the whole human community. These activities will have been previously analysed and selected by qualified personnel from the Motor Praxiology laboratory of the INEFC in Lleida.

The conclusion of this phase is expected in the year 2010. To date we have produced a descriptive record card for data collection to enable, through the Earth Charter section of the virtual document centre www.praxiologiamotriz.inefc.es, any individual or institution to make an active contribution by sending...
games, dances and motor activities they deem suitable, taking into account the conditions stated in the guiding record card. The record card has been created so that someone without knowledge of motor praxiology may be able to adequately complement the information posted. All contributions are welcome.

**Phase Three**

In this phase we engage in the application of motor conduct pedagogy, in the hopes that this teaching strategy may pose an authentic revolution in the teaching of physical education. This project is determined to design a descriptive catalogue of sustainable and innovative motor actions so that teachers, using this support, may be able to evaluate the process by which students gradually modify their motor conduct to include the values in the Earth Charter. This phase will start upon conclusion of Phase Two.

### Methodological aspects of the experience with Phase One of the project

**Interaction between teachers and students**

For one day, university students, elderly people from the municipal centres, professors and students of the Compulsory Secondary School system (ESO), people with cognitive disabilities, environmental technicians of the City Council of Lleida, university professors, and politicians joined together in search of a common objective: *To promote and disseminate the values contained in the Earth Charter*. The challenge we posed to our students was to reach this objective through motor action, which we are all so passionate about. Dance, traditional games, cooperative games, and expressive motor practices were our motivation for acting and reflecting on sustainability and respect for diversity.

We managed to involve a large number of people in the process: First, we started with three groups of 40 second-year students of the honours degree in Science of Physical Activity and Sports, and three professors (playing the role of tutors-facilitators) of the INEFC-University of Lleida, who proposed a project methodology organized as a learning experience based on problems (POPB). Students worked in groups of five, with different roles to encourage cooperative work. Boys and girls from the Lestonnac School in Lleida were also involved, as were groups of disabled and retired elderly people – happy to be taken into account – from municipal care centres in the city. INEFC professors from different subjects played the roles of ‘advisors,’ and worked closely with the student groups to organize tasks and develop evaluation tools to be used.

The Environment Council of the City Hall in Lleida has provided support to the project since its inception, contributing knowledge, coherence and expertise in organizing events.

**Description of the learning approach: content and methods**

In harmony with the changes proposed by European Universities (EEES) for 2010, we have attempted to develop the cross-cutting competencies for teamwork, critical and reflective thinking, autonomous work planning and organization, and the capabilities for verbal and written communications. The Tuning Project and the Berlin Indicators are solid proof of the significance the University grants these competencies within the concept of life-long learning for professionals.
The Earth Charter has become the perfect framework to encourage discovery and passion in our students. In addition, this powerful tool allows us to tell society that we are interested in transforming motor action into a means of educating about values of prime importance – those values set forth in the Earth Charter.

Using methodologies focused on student learning helps us connect with a real context, and provide training in professional areas. It helps us consciously evaluate the learning process, while simultaneously aiming for a final result. Organizing the project and turning the ludic educational programme into an authentic evaluation tool for the acquisition of competencies. It also helps us establish a closer relationship with society, recognizing that our professional work will always be determined by our knowledge of our surroundings and the individuals to whom we address our interventions. These methodologies allowed for the students’ involvement in the entire learning process, including the evaluation, since it was the students themselves who designed the criteria and – based on these – selected the activities to present on the day of celebration.

The project calls for the incorporation of knowledge acquired during the first cycle of their educational programme, and ‘new’ knowledge, such as the Earth Charter values, on which they have to do research, requiring analysis, synthesis and assessment. It is important that students learn why something is essential, and be able to make an argument and defend their reasoning, as well as learn to work with their peers and others from all walks of life in natural environments. Showing that education is our most valued treasure allows us to bring about transformations in learning – education that touches all of us, from politicians to schools involved in a learning community. Within the various expressions of physical and sporting activities we find a true uncut diamond.

Lessons Learned

The experience of having our dream become a project - the Earth Charter in Motor Action - has borne fruit and important lessons. It has given us confidence in our capabilities and efforts to bring this project to fruition, although we recognize that we need everyone’s help to complete the project’s phases, since every person can contribute actively to making this dream-project a daily reality. Motor action has already started becoming a transformer of life on this planet, by placing wheels on this great vehicle, the Earth Charter.

With regard to Phase One of this project, we can state that it has already been successful and we hope it will continue to be so. The best assessment of our efforts, however, is that José María, one of the boys with cognitive disability who participated in our April 2007 celebration, continues to water the plant that he placed in the ground that day and pamper it with affection, as he waits impatiently for next year to come…

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