

International Symposium

"The May 1968 of Sportspeople and Physical Educators"

University of Paul Sabatier - 29 May to 1 June 2018



Call for papers

In spring 2018, the events of "May 1968" will have taken place half a century ago. However, it would appear that the embers of this incendiary period have not yet stopped burning. Whether repudiated or celebrated, the legacy of May 1968 continues to haunt the political and social arena in France owing to its omnipresence (Zancarini-Fournel, 2008). This social mobilisation movement of unprecedented scale, whether a vehicle of hope and utopia for a generation or held responsible for all the ills of France today, remains inconsistently etched in the French collective memory. The legacy of May 1968, which is now a real remembrance issue, is regularly drawn upon in politics and the media due to its particularly divisive nature.

The high number of publications and the diversity of interpretations, far from guaranteeing better comprehension of this "monster event" (Nora, P., 1974), to the contrary, actually seem to contribute to the continuation of the "mystery of May" (Foucault, 1988). The instant interpretations of this major crisis in 20th Century France, often marked by political and ideological commitments, were initially replaced by analyses favouring cultural dimensions. Characterised by the emergence of sensitivities and behaviours in the political arena that had been developing from the 1950s, May 1968 subsequently appeared *"more telling than a*

revolution" (Sirinelli, 2007).

In the most recent period, various publications on political science have tried to reinstate the strictly political dimension of the "symbolic shake-up" of spring 1968. The catalyst effect of these days on collective representations and the lifestyles of the "1968 generation" is sometimes interpreted as a "sort of practical epoch" according to the thesis of Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1980s (Bourdieu, 1984). A synchronisation of the crises from various sectors contributed to the advent of a "critical moment" promoting the "reinforced discovery" of the arbitrariness of the dominant social order (Gobille, 2008). In this period of widespread access to secondary education and increased university enrolment, this major crisis fell into the debates accompanying decolonisation. It therefore marked the transition between two successive ideological and economic phases: the end of "happy growth" and a political life entrenched between two sterilising orthodoxies, Gaullism and communism (Nora, 1988) and the "magic return" of liberalism (Capdevielle & Mouriaux, 1988, Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999).

Another way of bypassing the process of "collective repressed memory" of the political dimension of the 1968 years involved restoring the subjectivity of the players in the unity and diversity of their perception of the events based on the individuals and the group to which they belonged (Neveu, E., *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*, Paris, La découverte, 1999). It encouraged investing in the "unexpected posterity of May 1968" and the ways in which the protestation was often prolonged by the players in the movement, in their daily lives and work, via "practical subversions" (Pagis, 2014) and the emergence of an "alternative ethos" (Lebaron, 2008).

Even though May 1968 revealed itself as a difficult object to define on the whole in all its complexity, its comprehension from the point of view of physical activities helps set the boundaries and limit the research areas. The pioneering work on this period was drafted during the decade following 1968 and bears the mark of the political struggles of the period and a certain militancy. Certain work came from a critical point of view inspired by Freud and Marx, such as the special issue of the "Partisans" journal entitled "Sport, culture et répression" [Sport, Culture and Repression], with the first edition dating the day after the events. Others very quickly became interested in invented or reformed practices during this period (outdoor activities, gentle exercise, physical expression, etc.), referring to the context of critical sociology inspired by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. They were mainly based on delineation with respect to the federal competitive sports model and its institutions, by showing how forms of practice could "be invented" outside the control of official bodies, based on a

critical mode, via a symbolic recoding of their purpose and value, to be claimed as "free" activities (Defrance, Loirand). The inclusion of this "innovation" in foreign, mainly North American, affiliations sometimes led to the grouping of these practices into general categories such as "Californian sports" (Pociello, 1981). Various research subsequently qualified these dual oppositions between an "established sporting order" and the emergence of "new practices", which were inevitably "alternative". Via empirical research on the sociogenesis for each of these disciplines, they showed that the conflicts and oppositions were established according to more complex and changeable scenes (Defrance, Loirand, Hoibian, Guibert, Sébilleau, Jallat, etc.).

If we consider two areas in the social space of sports, the federal competitive area on the one hand and the social-educational area of leisure on the other, it seems that it is mainly in the second one, which is less autonomous with respect to social life and its hierarchies, that protestation about authority developed from the early 1960s. Youth sociologists noted a questioning of the ritual of uniform and hierarchy resulting in a decline in scouting (Galland, 2011). Forms of conflict and disaffiliation appeared in the area of young Christian movements (JEC, YCW, etc.) whilst tension was present in young communist movements from 1965 - 1966 (Augustin, 1993). Anti-sports criticism started to emerge during this period, such as in the first issues of the "Partisans" journal, mainly focusing on the environment of physical education in the mid-1960s.

Note that although crises did exist in certain federal sports or physical leisure activities, they were not necessarily "synchronised" with the university crises of May 1968. Whilst the youth movements were "hit hard" by tension amongst young people, what really happened in the sports federations, leisure activities and school physical education before spring 1968, during the events and in the years that followed?

Paper proposals:

The aim of this symposium is to seize the opportunity offered by hindsight and the new generations of researchers to take a fresh, distanced look at the crisis of spring 1968 in the world of sport, leisure and physical education, by looking at its origin, progression and posterity throughout the following decades. It hopes to illicit interventions aiming to specify the extent to which May 1968 showed a rupture or continuity in the world of "sport".

They could deal, on the one hand, with the origins of the crisis by looking for "warning signs" in the area of sporting, socio-educational and leisure activities. They could also consider the

immediate effects of protest movements during the Spring of 68 on institutions such as sports Federations, Ministry of Youth and Sports, ENSEP, IREPS, CREPS, the school sector, etc... as well as on those involved in sports – professional athletes, women athletes, students and members of local clubs – and the practice themselves from the point of view of educational innovation, of challenging traditional sports, and subversion strategies... Finally, they could take into account the legacy of May 68 by discussing the possible emergence of a “physical counter culture”, the renewal of traditional practices and the formalization of new practices (i.e. free running, free climbing, free flying, body expression, gentle exercise practices, etc.). Analyses in terms of cultural transfers both from the point of view of communicating philosophical and cultural frameworks as well as physical approaches and practices according to different scales of interpretation will also be welcome. The interventions will be based on empirical data from the different areas around the seven following themes, all based on 1968:

1. Physical activities and their transformations and renewals within the federal framework and the emergence of new activities often at its fringes.
2. Innovation and debates in teaching, school or socio-educational environments.
3. Gender issues in physical activities between equality demands and gender differences.
4. The forms of mobilisation in the world of professional sportspersons and educators.
5. The confirmation of a "physical counter culture" and evidence of an "alternative ethos".
6. Critical debates and political protestations in the area of sport.
7. Players and their trajectory.

Abstracts are due **December 1st, 2017**. Authors should submit their abstracts in English or in French. Abstracts should not exceed **300 words**.

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Scientific valorization: there will be a publication of the conference proceedings and a selection of papers, as well as thematic publications in scientific journals.

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