

International Symposium

AT THE RISK OF SPORT
*Body integrity, Self-management
and Climate Change*

July 3 & 4, 2025

UFR STAPS - University of Montpellier

700 avenue du Pic Saint-Loup
34090 Montpellier

Co-organized by:
SantESiH, SENS, LIREM, I3SP



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Rationale

In order to extend individual life expectancy, the recommendation to undertake health-oriented sport has become strong within contemporary societies (Gallenga & Soldani, 2023). Sports, or at least physical exercise, is now part of medical or dietary self-care. It finally portends the quest for well-being and control over one's life. "Moving" represents the guarantee of a controlled existence, as hammered home by public health campaigns. On the contrary, a sedentary lifestyle is stigmatized, symbolizing carelessness. We are talking about the "sportivization" of the body (or "sportization", the neologism invoked has little consequence) where everyone would be responsible for their image. In this sense, the individual is supposed to shape their body in their free time, in response to a collective and social expectation. The maintenance of an "athletic" body is therefore essential, synonymous with health. The individual body must no longer rely on the group, and its lack of maintenance becomes, in return, synonymous with risk. Sport then generates a technical body, a measured body, and its progress as well as its training are "mechanized". To what extent does the instrumentalization of the body push us to take risks in order to get closer to an ideal body, in the name of better health? How does this risk-taking respond to the fear of a risk, within the collective body, in managing bodies that are considered more "fragile" or "weak"? Is the individual thus confronted with a new paradoxical injunction, that of one risk in the face of another?

The logic of sports focused on training can produce an instrumentalized relationship with the body and lead to certain excesses. Indeed, the body becomes competitive, it fully enters into the service of performance, to the detriment sometimes, not to say often, of the individual's health. This body is sculpted in an often distorting exploitation of its biological potentialities: from the remodelling of its morphology to the destruction of its organism, whether this is due to doping or intensive training. Surpassing oneself or even a rationally constructed management of the body, thus implies risks that consist in playing with the limits of what is possible and illicit. Medical progress, but also new technologies, contribute to this and suggest possibilities of action upon the body that feed the "body market". How are these new ways of transforming bodies to improve performance organized at the level of sports leisure?

This idealized sports body (Duret, 1993), widely mediatized and glorified (Duret, 1994; Vigarello, 2006) has become a consumer item (Baudrillard, 1986) influencing our bodily existence. Conforming to existing body norms (Quéval, 2008) is also a very popular activity. In the 1980s, a real market developed (Bessy, 1987), named the "aerobic wave" where physical exercise and dieting became marketing products. The so-called "consumer" society seems to provide a set of means to sculpt the body and offer "remarkable" experiences (Andrieu, 2008). In this sense, the "civilization of leisure" (Dumazedier, 1964) pushes individuals to create an idealized body for themselves but also to develop edutainment and sports activities that turn the natural environment (land, water/nautical and air sports) into a new playing area (Bourdeau, 1994). This commitment to nature, considered as a "source of well-being" (Perera and Le Roux, 2021), has been amplified by recent collective experiences, particularly during the COVID-19 period (Charrier, 2021). In the end, it is a question of getting out of a daily life perceived as too sanitized (Barthelemy, 2002) in order to live an extraordinary adventure during which a certain amount of risk-taking can take place. The interplay between security measures and the natural environment – suggesting a risky outcome – creates a climate conducive to the impression of experiencing an extraordinary event. Safety, often increased by new technologies, plays a role in the impression of taking risks, where "prudence is often the best aid to risk" (Le Breton, 1991).

In fine, security logics seem all the more important to take into account, since climate change (such as heat waves, decreases in agricultural yields, water shortages and floods) is disrupting the ways in which outdoor and nature activities (APPN) are practiced (Orr & Inoue, 2019). Specifically, climate change is a risk to consider because it tends to limit the practice of and access to APPNs. On the one hand, the impracticality of APPNs can result from extreme environmental phenomena such

as heat, drought or the degradation of practice sites, manifested by landslides or forest fires for example. On a more local or circumscribed scale, rapid weather changes require a new form of reactivity in order not to take undue risks in the face of a river that is flooding or a climbing wall that has become too slippery and, therefore, dangerous, to mention only a few cases that have become recurrent. On the other hand, measures to limit access to natural areas have been politically decided to protect natural areas and biodiversity. Activities involving animals, such as horses for instance, seem to be affected by these same issues, if not more so depending on the place they occupy within the practice concerned and the multiple effects that these changes can have on them.

This conference focuses on sport-health behaviours and the search for adventure, which may seem natural, but are in fact social and cultural behaviours (Elias, 1993). Under the effects of medical authorities, self-responsibility, as well as market pressure, the body is shaped, it "straightens up" (Vigarello, 2004), normalizes itself and the search for sensations becomes a more or less controlled risk-taking. Exercise becomes a rationalized categorical imperative, an obsession, marking the shift towards an ideal that combines, or wants to associate, health and performance. Even if we are witnessing the development of new sports leisure practices, which value the search for sensations more than performance, they do not escape the search for better health and question the right measure, on the relationship between risk and security, freedom and servitude, of self-commitment. There is also an increasingly closer relationship with nature, about which we would also benefit from understanding what it represents for the actors, that is marked by physical practices aiming at managing oneself and one's own well-being. Dealing with climate risks, in the context of nature or outdoor sports, raises not only new public health issues (increased risks to the health of those who access them) but also social issues of access to natural spaces (risks of impassability of spaces and/or restriction of access). These issues crystallize a tension between the need to preserve natural spaces and the well-being associated with physical and/or sporting practice within these spaces.

Theme 1: Athletic achievement: body control and risk management

The management of human capital, understood as a set of tools governing the relationship between the individual and the organization, appears as a technical and symbolic device (Townley, 1994; Alvesson, Kärreman, 2007) encouraging forms of self-control within different types of organizations: companies, associations, sports clubs, etc. Being capable, efficient, happy and competent, self-activation and its collective or individual development techniques are omnipresent. Thus, from the entrepreneurial being (Broeckling, 2016) to the individual investor in themselves (Feher, 2017) via the creative being (Reckwitz, 2017), the processes of subjectivation (Brown, 2003; Butler, 1997; Foucault, 1994) find, within sport, a particularly favourable breeding ground for ways of being and behaving in order to always transform themselves.

The training that is necessary nowadays, to achieve a competitive body, is the legacy of hygienic methods that have long worked for a healthy body, to the point of becoming the key word in physical education pedagogies (Bourdelaïs, 2001). At the beginning of the century, Hébertism proposed methodical development and physical training (Delaplace, 2005). This method was quickly joined and competed with by Philippe Tissier's "Swedish gymnastics", made up of movements that were as rigid as they were rigorous (Saint-Martin, 2006). At the same time, Edmond Desbonnet sought to "make complete athletes" through the use of dumbbells (Andrieu, 2014).

The methodical approach to exercise has evolved since then, and athletes are looking for a full exploitation of biological potential at the risk of injury, intensive training and the use of doping products. These excesses are the price to pay to achieve an idealized body, which can only be considered if rationally constructed. The search for a constant "surpassing of oneself" can lead to doping. High-level sport is considered as an "experimental laboratory" for this pushing of personal limits (Queval, 2001; Rouanet, 2014). Dietetics, bodybuilding, even doping, are the modern tools of body management. In addition, aside from doping, the excesses linked to the instrumentalization of the body in all its forms are beginning to be denounced.

The use of the body, sometimes to the point of wearing out – very present in high-level

competition, but not only – and the constant search for an increase in one's capacities (through training, doping, or the use of equipment as an extension of their corporeality), in the wake of that of performance, end up colliding, or even contradicting, the hygienic dimension of physical exercise, today recognized as necessary for the balance of the individual and their health, both physical and mental (Ehrenberg, Mongin & Vigarello, 1999). Doping can push the body to its limits (Vigarello, 1999; Vigarello & Béja, 2013), and its inclusion in the broader system of sports competition raises the question of its control but also of the legitimacy and meaning of the struggle against it (Bodin & Sempé, 2012). Where should risk management be placed and who should be the guarantor?

This involvement of bodies forces professional athletes, who increasingly respond to the canons of the self-entrepreneur, to manage their efforts and to temporize certain injunctions (from their environment, their federation, their club, etc.) to preserve their body capital, which is also their main work tool and source of income. A career is also built on the management of injuries and excesses, to which professionals are strongly exposed, through regular and intense exercise. This ambivalent management of the body, in response to the paradoxical injunctions of the practice, underlines a little more visibly the gap between the daily life of the athlete and the external representations, that of the public or the funders, which relate to this same daily life and the very purpose of sport.

The rational body, the body of the future, is also that of the overinvested present, the sensitive matter of which existence is created and more than ever on which identity is centred. The rational body made by reason tends to conform to supposed or fantasized characteristics: supposed because the body is our reflection in perpetual incarnation of what we are; and fantasized, when it refers to a techno-scientific perspective of human identity. The aim is to identify the contemporary dimension of a project of appropriation and production of the body through rationality, in particular that of the high-level athlete (Howe, 2004), which is also a project of identity construction involving a share of risks.

Thus the body, taken in its dimension as an object, and the result of ever more advanced techniques, creates ambiguity and raises new questions in the face of deviant behaviour: mechanical man or mutant man? Idealized body or deformed body?

Theme 2: Access to sports leisure activities in the face of climate change

The free time dedicated to body care is also an opportunity to venture into outdoor activities. "Nature has reaffirmed itself as a major cultural and ideological referent for urban civilizations" (Bourdeau, 1994). A market is developing around new forms of places of practice and is accompanied by the emergence of unprecedented cultural imaginaries and renewed structures. These require multiple technical innovations and great creativity in terms of planning (Mao *et al.*, 2013). These "forms emerge by explicitly or implicitly exploring new models of relationship to the time, places and uses of the Elsewhere" (Bourdeau, 2012, p. 31). They are also a source of sensations where risk-taking is questionable. The new "adventurers" will choose a destination conducive to the practice of activities that can be: land (hiking, horseback riding, skiing, mountaineering, climbing, trekking, mountain biking and caving), aquatic and nautical (sailing, windsurfing, white water sports, rafting, canoeing and scuba diving) and aerial (hang-gliding, paragliding and gliding) (Bourdeau, 1994). In this sense, "Tourists want to escape, for the duration of a stay, from our hyper-secure societies" (Le Breton, 1991). Many adventure trips are marketed by tour operators offering sports stays in harmony with nature or meetings with local populations. They include in this type of trip an element of risk that is measured but which contributes to the quality of the experience sought (Ladwein, 2005). By playing on safety instructions, for example, the tour operator helps to create feelings of risk-taking, a climate conducive to the feeling of living an adventure (Barthelemy, 2002).

Moreover, as Le Breton (1991) points out, adventure is also a communication project. Everyone wants to share their experience of their adventure on social networks with supporting evidence. To what extent does the use of new video tools lead to a risky staging of oneself? It is also a question of focusing on so-called "risky" sports (such as Base-Jumping) (Martha & Griffet 2006; Raveneau, 2006), as the pinnacle of thrill seeking. We can therefore question the management and euphemizing

of risk in practices where it is a central parameter (such as Climbing). It is also possible to question the shifts in representations that have made these practices, once considered "deviant" (Donnelly, 1985), a lever for the conquest of territories that have not yet been explored.

Nowadays, the risk is all the more debated as climate change is changing the ways in which APPNs are engaged, as well as their access. In this regard, the example of the decrees relating to drought illustrates how thresholds are established to prohibit certain aquatic practices, such as canoeing or canyoning. In addition, the implementation of regulations aimed at limiting the risk of fire has led to the temporary closure of forest areas popular with nature sports enthusiasts. Climate change is also impacting the behaviour of athletes and tourists, with an awareness of risks that is close to the trend towards "slow sport", integrating a commitment to the environment, understood as both natural and social. Recreational activities have a part in landscape planning, and sports initiatives encourage participation in raising awareness and preserving the natural heritage. These initiatives are all the more interesting to study as tourist flows are evolving, with trends in summer attendance decreasing on the coasts against an increase in temperate regions. Public policies are also gradually being developed and implemented in the direction of increasing the preservation of natural environments, but at rates that are often unsatisfactory for environmental defenders, and sometimes delegating to local actors the responsibility for carrying them out without providing them with the means to do so, particularly financial ones.

The challenges of this axis therefore concern accessibility but also the sustainability of outdoor practice places, as well as reflections on the part of the territories regarding the control of frequentation and its effects. In a society where outdoor sports are still very socially divisive or discriminatory, don't restrictions on access to natural spaces risk reinforcing social inequalities that are already very present? Can the regulation of access to spaces indirectly reinforce the difficulties of access to nature for populations that are already far from it for multiple reasons (disability, health, social, gender, etc.)?

Theme 3: Sports actors: between body integrity and ethical agency

The ethics of sport now depend "democratically" (Callède, 1998; Eichberg, 2010) on its agents to exist in the sports fields but also in the various ethics committees of federations and institutions. The agency of the actors (Scott, 1977) and actresses of sport, through their bodily commitment (Soulé and Corneloup 2007), is opposed to a passive conception of ethics that would consist in waiting for the application of regulations and sanctions before acting properly. Through their actions, athletes (Andrieu, 2011) can manifest alternative ethical values through new practices by relying on a "body awareness" (Vigarelo, 1985: 320) that no institution can impose on them. This seems to be the challenge of commitments, events and other technical and ethical innovations. Through their actions, athletes question norms, criticize normalities, and participate in the emergence of ethical normativity against the moral normalization of behaviour. By embodying new values, their independence arises by acting autonomously in the world of sport and by renewing the meaning to be given to action.

The emergence of *body agency* reveals minority agents and inventors of new ways of describing the bodily practices of sport, such as the hybridized body of Oscar Pistorius (Marcellini et al., 2010), the doped and testoroned body of Heidi Krieger, who has since become Andreas, the hermaphrodite body of the South African Caster Semenya, the hand of Thierry Henry, Zinedine Zidane's headbutt, or Isabelle Demongeot's raped body (Demongeot, 2007), the training strike by players of the France team, the public insults against Cantona's coaches in Anelka, or the three African-American athletes Lee Evans, Larry James and Ronald Freeman who saluted the spectators with their fists raised, black berets screwed on their heads and smiles on their faces. The self-organization of street athletes (Gasparini and Vieille-Marchiset, 2008) proves how much the practice defines its own rules.

The actors of sport, through their ethical agency, are now at the center of the ethical production of sports norms in what Canguilhem called normativity as the creation of new subjective norms: women (Bois, 1976; Carton-Missoum, 1985; Davaisse & Louveau, 1991; Velez, 2010), *gender*

(Bohuon, 2008), *care*, colonial sport, discrimination, war, violence (Mouret, 1975; Sabatier, 1993), and on the other hand, by an incarnation of the actors of sport who constitute themselves as objects of study opening up new readings of practices and ethos: rugby players (Darbon, 1995, 1999; Saouter, 2000), street basketball players (Vieille-Marchiset, 1998), supporters (Charrion, 1994; Beccarini, 2001), body-builders (Roussel, 2000; Perera, 2017), dope users (Coste et al., 2017), prisoners (Courtine, 1980, 1998; Garnier, Minotti, 1993; Sempé, 2007), mountaineers (Lejeune, 1974), climbers as anthropological places (Leséleuc, 2000), surfers (Sayeux, 2008), hooligans (Bodin, 1998), naturists (Bauberot, 1998, Villaret, 2001; Barthe-Deloizy, 2003), doctors (Quin, 2011), ecology (Sirost, 2009; Andrieu, 2011), people with disabilities (Seguillon, 1998), hybrids (Andrieu, 2008), lesbians (Gury, 1999), androgynous people (Gassel, 2000), or the wounded...

Sexual harassment, present in the scientific community since 1986 (Crossett, 1986; Brackenridge, 1987; Lenskyj, 1992a; 1992b) in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, has become an ethical problem over the past decade (Kirby & Greaves, 1996; Cense, 1997; Brackenridge, 2001; Leahy et al., 2002; Fasting et al., 2003; Fasting et al., 2004) in the international community within the coach-trainee relationship (Brackenridge, 1997; 2001) before procedural and legal avenues were implemented (Demongeot, 2007): three categories of relationship have now been identified, "typology that consists of three main types: (1) The Flirting-Charming Coach; (2) The Seductive Coach; and (3) The Authoritarian Coach" (Fasting, & Brackenridge, 2009: 21). By distinguishing between harassment (Pryor, & Whalen, 1997) and sexual abuse, the difficulty of defining standard profiles does not prevent us from raising the question of trust in the relationship of paternalistic power (Shogan, 1991; Tomlinson, Yorganci, 1997; Burke, 2001) that is established between the coach and the trainee. Thus, the valuation or not of self-esteem in a performance/reward system would allow the coach to extend his or her power into the private sphere. The situational inequality between the two people is not contractualized, so much that moral values could be enough to contain the investigations and the overstepping of limits that any educational action requires.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMUNICATORS

Oral presentation s (20 minutes and 10 minutes of discussion) will be in either French or English; the official languages of the conference.

The submitted abstract should be formatted as follows:

Title of the submission, (Times, 12, left-aligned)

Name of author(s), address (Times, 12, left-aligned)

Abstract of no more than 300 words (Times, 12, justified).

Keywords: 5 keywords that clearly specify the themes and scientific fields.

Proposals should be sent before **March 3, 2025** to the following email addresses:
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The "Body, Sport and Risks" Congress will be held **on July 3 and 4, 2025** at the UFR STAPS of the University of Montpellier.

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