

International conference: “Stonewall at 50 and Beyond: Interrogating the Legacy and Memory of the 1969 Riots”

University of Paris-Est Créteil / IMAGER (EA 3958)

Paris-Dauphine University (Paris-Sciences-et-Lettres) / IRISSO (UMR 7170-1427)

June 3rd–5th, 2019

Call for papers:

The original announcement of the conference was followed by well-founded criticism regarding the organizing committee’s and scientific committee’s lack of inclusiveness. The composition of these two committees was consequently modified. The call for papers below was revised by the new organizing committee.

The Stonewall riots are fraught with a conflictual memory. A standard narrative might read as follows: In the night of June 27, 1969, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village bar on Christopher Street in New York, refuse to endure yet another occurrence of the police harassment they routinely faced. For five days and nights, the neighborhood was the scene of a confrontation between rioters and the police. In the following weeks and months, this upsurge reinforced emerging liberation movements that coalesced into a diverse political force. The vents were celebrated the following year and have since generally been presented as “the birth of the gay liberation movement” that is commemorated in today’s yearly LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) pride marches.

On the fiftieth anniversary of Stonewall, this conference aims to shed critical light on this major event and its effects on the development of LGBTQ mobilizations. It seeks to investigate the processes of memorialization, as well as the political legacy and the cultural and activist representations of Stonewall.

The various ways in which the history of the event has been written reveal lasting tensions within LGBTQ movements. While among the rioters were lesbians, sex workers, drag queens, transgender people and people of color, such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, post-Stonewall movements have produced narratives that invisibilize these protagonists and their multiple sexual, gender, and racial identities. In what ways have these tensions been exacerbated or reshuffled by the memorial conflicts that Stonewall crystallizes?

Paradoxically, while Stonewall was an act of disobedience and insubordination to state power, it has been reclaimed as the starting point of an assimilationist politics of respectability by the more mainstream LGBTQ organizations in the United States. And LGBTQ pride marches have gradually turned into entertaining parades or commodified festivals. How, concretely, has the understanding of riots driven by the rejection of policing and social control gradually shifted toward a narrative in support of homonormativity, state security, and neoliberalism? How does this shift affect working-class LGBTQ people and LGBTQ people of color? Through what processes has this history been re-appropriated in official discourses sanctioning more or less subtle forms of racism, sexism, and homonationalism? Correlatively, what enduring role do commercial venues (bars, clubs, etc.) play in the construction and politicization of sexual and gender minority identities and communities?

Stonewall is indeed also mythic because its fame has exceeded US national borders. The conference aims to look beyond this particular case in order to address the reception and influence of Stonewall in other national contexts, and the circulation, translation, importation, reappropriations, and sometimes rejection of LGBTQ communitarian practices and cultural models that originate in the United States. How has the memory of the riots crossed borders? Does Stonewall’s notoriety “colonize” the memory of movements born outside the United States? Does it invisibilize or even destabilize different forms of identification and resistance? How does the Stonewall myth participate in the globalization of sexual and gender identities?

We invite submissions from all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as activist groups and movement spaces. Submissions based on empirical data (archives, interviews, ethnographies, cultural productions in literature, cinema, TV series, comics, songs, etc.) and with a comparative or intersectional approach will be especially welcome.

Submissions may reflect one or several of the following sets of issues:

- Narrating Stonewall: the diverse and conflicted memories and histories of Stonewall;
- From riots to respectability: investigating assimilation and normalization strategies in the “LGBTQ movement”;

- Beyond Christopher Street: transnational and transhistorical perspectives on queer liberation;
- Circulating sexual identities and struggles in an imbalanced world: homonationalism, transnational solidarity, and the homogenization of identities and modes of resistance;
- “Out of the bars and into the streets”? Political uses of commercial venues;
- Resisting police harassment before and after Stonewall: facing state control.

When and how to submit:

Paper submissions in French or English (c. 500 words) with an explicit presentation of the methodology and data, and a brief biographical note (5 lines) should be uploaded by December 1st, 2018, at: <https://stonewallat50.sciencesconf.org>.

Selected speakers will be notified by January 15th, 2019.

Organization:

The conference will take place at the universities of Paris-Est Créteil and Paris-Dauphine, France, on June 3rd–5th, 2019.

Organizing committee: Catherine Achin (Paris-Dauphine), Emmanuel Beaubatie (IRIS-EHESS, INED), Hugo Bouvard (Paris-Dauphine), Guillaume Marche (Paris-Est Créteil), Lucie Prauthois (Paris-Dauphine), Antoine Servel (Paris-Est Créteil), Damien Trawale (URMIS).

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