

Special issue of *STAPS* journal

“Combat Sports, Martial Arts and Societies”

Editors:

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Main objectives of the special issue

This special issue focuses on combat sports and martial arts (CSMA) and the socio-cultural challenges and changes linked to them. CSMA have given rise to more than a decade of innovative national and international research, as evidenced by their diverse research questions and theoretical frameworks¹. This special issue wants to explore several themes related to this rapidly expanding body of knowledge.

The recent economic, social and health crises have not spared sporting and physical activities². The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has affected many aspects of the CSMA’s practice: contact and training *praxis*; competitions; regulations, as well as the perceptions and uses of CSMA as health and prevention or adapted physical activities³.

The diffusion, the regulation and the institutionalization of new fighting disciplines, and the hybridization which sometimes underlies them⁴, modifies the competitive space of combat activities in connection with the specific stake of the combative efficiency and some national features. The success of MMA remarkably⁵ evidences this while questioning the moral norms or forms of violence accepted in society⁶, as in the specific French context⁷.

The emergence of a “risk culture”, the increased search for security and the omnipresence of the principle of responsibility also emerge at the level of CSMA. On the one hand, some practices and disciplines can be perceived as risky activities, potentially impacting the engagement of practitioners and professionals. On the other hand, security considerations emerge through the renewed interest in different forms of self-defence⁸, the processes of development and dissemination of CSMA in various institutions, the re-problematization of the place of these martial activities in school curricula⁹, or the promotion

¹ See, for example, Paul Bowman (2019), *Deconstructing martial arts*, Cardiff: Cardiff University Press.

² See, for example, Evans AB, Blackwell J, Dolan P, Fahlén J, Hoekman R., Lenneis V, McNarry G, Smith M, & Wilcock L. Sport in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Towards an Agenda for Research in the Sociology of Sport. *European Journal for Sport and Society* 2020; Online Editorial: 1-11.

³ Feng F, Tuchman S, Denninger JW, Fricchione GL, Yeung A. Qigong for the Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of COVID-19 Infection in Older Adults [published online ahead of print, 2020 May 15]. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2020;10.1016

⁴ See for example Quidu, M. (2019), « Le Mixed Martial Arts, entre innovation et hybridation : genèse et développement techniques d’un sport de combat de synthèse. Étude empirique de la diversité des techniques victorieuses à l’Ultimate Fighting Championship », *Sciences sociales et sport*, 13(1), 137-185.

⁵ Delfavero, T., Nuytens, W. & Penin, N. (2019), « Exister malgré les résistances institutionnelles : observer le *mixed martial arts* dans sa dimension associative », *Staps*, 124(2), 7-22.

⁶ Vannier, J. (2014). Les « Mixed Martial Arts » sont-ils solubles dans la pulsion sexuelle de mort ? *Le Carnet PSY*, 179(3), 30-38.

⁷ Loudcher, J. & Aceti, M. (2018). « MMA, « procès » de civilisation et sportivisation : repenser la théorie éliásienne pour mieux s’en émanciper ? », *Corps*, 16(1), 371-382.

⁸ Visible for example within the French Judo Federation through the promotion of self-defense, but also more broadly the sportivization of jiu-jitsu at the international level.

⁹ Groenen H. & Ottogalli-Mazzacavallo C. (2011), « Les activités de combat au sein de l’éducation physique en France depuis le XIX^e siècle : entre pertinences éducatives et résistances scolaires », *STAPS*, 94, pp. 103-120.

of safety education. Once again, the COVID 19 pandemic problematizes this risk/security dialectic.

A public health issue emerges through the quest (or even “privatization”) of health and well-being within different populations, which is linked to prevention strategies and health education. More broadly, CSMA emerge through the transformation of public policies (e.g. sport and exercise as medical prescription). This can redirect the development strategies of some CSMA’s institutions¹⁰ and their use for educational or even therapeutic means¹¹, or engagement in their practice¹².

Identity and bodily transformations are crossed by the issue of gender: the growing place of women in physical and sporting activities and the evolving nature of their practices, in connection with broader socio-cultural changes, are a significantly evident in CSMA too. These practices are symbolically rich from the perspective of the social relations of gender domination. They are both vectors of emancipation and spaces for the reproduction or deconstruction of established gender relations¹³. These transformations are then linked to the emergence of new relations between bodies, society and nature, in which martial arts and Asian mind-body disciplines play a major role¹⁴. This is accompanied by the loss of speed of the federal competitive sports model, for the benefit of other kinds of practice.

The evolution of digital technologies helps the media coverage of some combat practices, especially among younger audiences (e.g. WWE wrestling, MMA), and the emergence and institutionalization of e-sports. At the same time, these technological advances are renewing the possibilities for studying techniques¹⁵ and training strategies.

These elements underline the plurality of transformations and contemporary challenges (social, cultural, technological, health, physical, etc.) which cross the CSMA in different national contexts, and the importance of comprehensive and critical approaches. Finally, this special issue aims to identify, through the illumination of a plurality of themes and human and social sciences, to what extent the CSMA are both a witness to changes in contemporary societies and a specific driving force for changing society.

Proposals should position themselves within the abovementioned themes, which are not exclusive.

Paper submission and selection process

1. Abstract submission and selection through peer review
2. Full paper submission and second peer review.

¹⁰ Since the 2000s, the French Judo Federation has developed taïso, a form of practice finalized by health, before promoting “judo health”.

¹¹ Larose, P. (2018). « L’atelier Corps et Parole; une application singulière du judo pour favoriser l’émergence d’une parole sur ce qui fait violence ». *Enfances & Psy*, 78(2), 142-151. See also, for example, the practices developed by the National Psychoboxe Institute.

¹² Jennings, G. (2015), “Transmitting health philosophies through the traditionalist Chinese martial arts in the UK”, *Societies*, 4(4), 712-736.

¹³ Channon, A. (2014), Towards the ‘undoing’ of gender in Mixed-Sex Martial Arts and combat sports. *Societies* 2014, 4, 587–605.; Miarka, B., Marques, J.-B. & Franchini, E. (2011), “Reinterpreting the History of Women’s Judo in Japan”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 7: 1016-1029;

¹⁴ Brown, D., Jennings, G. & Sparkes, A.-C. (2014). Taijiquan the ‘Taiji World’ way: Towards a cosmopolitan vision of ecology. *Societies*, 4(3), 380-398 ; Porrovecchio A. (2017), « Sport, corps sexué et immortalité. Une expérience de recherche dans le monde des disciplines orientales », *SociologieS* [Online], Files, Eros et Thanatos, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/sociologies/6326>

¹⁵ Terret, C., Morlier, J. & Mikulovic, J. (2020), « La biomécanique au service de la formation du judoka ». *Etat des lieux, questionnements et perspectives*. In Heuser, F., Terrisse, A. (Eds.). *Formation, sports de combat et arts martiaux*. Toulouse: Presses universitaires Toulouse 1.

Abstract format: 500 words max., Times New Roman, single spaced, title in bold, author(s) and related institution(s). No subtitles, no footnotes.

Abstracts should be sent to haimo.groenen@univ-lille.fr and alessandro.porrovecchio@univ-littoral.fr. They should show clearly the object of study, the issue, the possible hypotheses of theoretical framework, the data collected/analysed, the methodologies used, the main results, and a maximum of five bibliographical references.

Timeline:

Deadline for sending abstracts: September 13th.

Reviewers' feedback on selected contributions: no later than September 27th.

Deadline for sending full papers: December 20th.

Reviewers' feedback: at the end of February 2021 at the latest.

Receipt of revised full papers: mid July 2021 at the latest.

Special issue scheduled for December 2021.