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The Olympic memory: institutional and heritage issues

Louis VIOLETTE & Michaël ATTALI

Univ. Rennes 2, Laboratoire VIPS²

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Abstract:

As major sociocultural phenomena, sport and its Olympic showcase are unable to escape either the heightened subjective (re)interpretation of the past or the social frameworks structuring the extension of memory representations during the final decades of the twentieth century. In order to better understand the phenomenon, this article aims to determine the role and weight of the various actors and institutions of the Olympic Movement in safeguarding the ideology advocated by Pierre de Coubertin. From the 1950s on and at several different levels – individual and collective – the promotion of a legacy oriented towards the pedagogical principles of Olympism became a recurrent challenge in institutional Olympic space. Through the segmentation and diversity of its uses, however, this memory raises the issue of its own instrumentalization and contributes to highlighting discordant heritage schemas within a movement presented as being unitary.

Keywords: Legacy, Memory, Representations, Heritage, Olympism.

The originality of the approach proposed here vis-à-vis historiography lies in the study of how memory is structured and its role with regards to the heritage-based approach to sport.[1] The scientific challenge is to shed new light on the construction of socio-sporting representations, and to examine the transmission and diffusion factors of a cultural object that became increasingly popular in the twentieth century. For this reason, our approach lies more in researching heritage uses of memory than in a critique of the latter.[2]

From the perspective of history at its reflexive stage,[3] it appears relevant to ponder the past through the prism of memory representations. As questions addressed to the past by the present, memory simplifies a reality that is inevitably subjective as a result of its selectiveness. It rests on interaction between persistence and forgetting, remembering and amnesia;[4] it calls upon individual affect and multicollective emotions.[5] Constructed on the affirmation of historical consciousness, the social frameworks of memory as defined by Maurice Halbwachs are indeed overtly plural: the individual, the group(s) and collective form the subject bases of a multiform (re)interpretation of the past.[6] In this regard, memory considerations have become community bond factors and the most varied of identity vectors, overturning the predominance of the two traditional levels of historical interpretation, the Family – as an institution – and the Nation.[7] They are nonetheless neither the past in its temporal unity, nor history as a critical academic discipline – "whose aims include precisely the interrogation of memory and the myths it generates".[8] The extension of memory into the final decades of the twentieth century invites us however to consider this paradigm as a structuring factor for a certain number of present day sociocultural references, including first and foremost the question of heritage.[9] For this study, "heritage is a version of the past received through objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations, and the preparation of places for cultural purposes and consumption".[10] It is therefore understood as a social use of the past by the

present, whose selective process echoes memory claims and–whose identity question exacerbates political dimensions.[11]

Modern sport, its dogmas and its institutions are subjected to what Eldon E. Snyder calls "flashbulb memories", in other words bearers of commemorations and nostalgia.[12] By generating a series of myths, they contribute to the construction of an "imagined past" capable of activating ideological and cultural levers.[13] For this reason, the theme of sporting memory, first considered at local/national level,[14] now merits a wider scope of analysis. Through its central position, the Olympic Movement provides a field of study that is both plural and homogeneous. The largest planetary event – the Olympic Games – has established itself as the expression of a universal and civilizational value of sport. Nevertheless, between Pierre de Coubertin's pedagogical project and the spectacular nature of present-day Olympic Games, a clear break in the continuity of time can be seen through the ideological evolution of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).[15] Moreover, from the extensive definitions given by the Baron himself to the recent floating interpretation used by IOC,[16] the concept of Olympism is fluid, where meaning and experience depends on whom refers to it.[17] From the 1950s onwards, this situation led a number of leading figures such as Geoffroy de Navacelle, Norbert Müller and Conrado Durantez, as well as entities such as the French Pierre de Coubertin Committee (FPCC), International Pierre de Coubertin Committee (IPCC) and the International Olympic Academy (IOA) or, as a last resort, the IOC, to become involved in a movement aimed at reappropriating and reviving the Baron's work. This memory quest was organized on the basis of legitimizing objectives, and symbolized the emergence of polyphonic interpretations regarding the traces left by the sporting past.[18] Indeed, through its own segmentation, the plurality of its frameworks – individual, group, institutional – and the various levels of its construction, Olympic memory raises the issue of its own uses and instrumentalization. It tends moreover to demonstrate the existence of heritage tensions within

a Movement that is presented by its leaders as being unitary, yet within which defenders of tradition and advocates of modernity cohabit. In this respect, the Olympic sphere illustrates the diverse forms of heritage paths – between managership and criticism; commodification and authenticity.[19]

The aim of this study is therefore to determine the memory issues inherent to the amplification of the Olympic phenomenon, to understand the filial attachment of modern Olympism to its founder and to highlight the heritage schemas taking shape. To do so, a variety of primary sources have been used (correspondence, minutes, acts and monographs) from the archives *Fonds d'archives Geoffroy de Navacelle* (*FGN*), housed in the Centre for History at Sciences Po in Paris. The prime position of Pierre de Coubertin's great-nephew within the Olympic Movement, the scope of his involvement and the extent of his personal archives represent a heuristic opportunity regarding the role of the individual witness in memory transmission, as well as precise institutional understanding. This data has been compared with many papers presented at IOA sessions and Olympic congresses, declassified reports of IOC Commissions, as well as an extensive range of university sources and official publications, such as the *Olympic Review*. This has made it possible to understand the structural aspect of Pierre de Coubertin's memorialization as an instrument of heritage, through both the memory approaches cherished by defenders of Coubertinian ideology – organized in the form of interest groups – and the corporate directions taken by the Olympic organization.

THE WITNESS AND HIS TIME

As a fundamental medium for transitioning between memory and history,[20] testimony is an extension of individual memory at its narrative stage. As such, self-reference at microhistoric level serves the purpose of factual reconstitution through cross-checking: the historian must question the veracity of individual interpretations in order to establish their value with regard to collective meaning. However, as François Hartog underlines, given its power to attest that the past existed, individual memory must be sustained for the "matrix" of history.[21] A central figure in the Olympic microcosm as a memory witness is Geoffroy de Navacelle. The reason for this is twofold: he was the filial custodian of Pierre de Coubertin's intellectual heritage and strove to safeguard the original Olympic spirit within the Olympian community.[22] The meaning of his approach should nonetheless be questioned in terms of an evident discontinuity between the original pedagogical essence and the contemporary substance of the Olympic Games. Memory here is in opposition both to the doctrinal evolution sustained by the Olympic organization and to a first academic criticism of the cultural foundations of the Olympic phenomenon.

Break in the continuity of time and of the Olympic spirit

Arising from an audacious but marginal pedagogical reform designed by Pierre de Coubertin as the foundation of an industrial society and driven by a universalist project,[23] Olympism made its progressive entry into the heart of a uniform and globalized society.[24] The Olympic Games were, in his eyes, only a means to reunite world youth in mutual and educative respect through the nobility of effort.[25] In addition, they were open to encompassing sports, arts and literature.[26] The revival of the Olympic Games, announced at the Sorbonne on

June 23, 1894, should therefore be perceived in a social light, namely that of recognition by the aristocracy in "civilized" nations of the necessity to change schooling for the future generations.[27] As a cyclical event, the Olympic Games should be the banner of a worldwide sporting and pedagogical cult destined for élites, and not a factor in the disenchantment of the world, as their rationalization may imply.[28] Actually, from a state of mind, Olympism became a state of the world. It was torn between identity, ideological and then commercial stakes,[29] hardly conducive to the valorization of the pedagogical legacy of its reviver. This situation diminished that of eurythmic accomplishment advocated by the Baron[30] – as an expression of individual versatility and social usefulness – and harmed the dogma of amateurism.[31] There was then a blatant imbalance between Olympism as driving force of the Movement, and the imperatives linked to growth and corporate aspects of the IOC.[32] Furthermore, the many facets of Pierre de Coubertin's personality and his work may appear as obstacles to sustaining his memory.

The pedagogue considered himself above all to be a pathfinder.[33] In turn a cultivated reactionary, enlightened conservative and social humanist, his personality and Olympic conception underwent constant evolution.[34] In the space of forty years, the same man perceived sport as an instrument of social distinction and colonial domination,[35] and then advocated the creation of a "worker's university",[36] while developing an ambiguous discourse on the subject of women's integration into sport.[37] These evolutions continued to surprise observers at the end of the twentieth century. In this respect, the period between 1970 and 1990 was marked by strong intellectual criticism of the Olympic Games and denigration of the Baron's work. Sociologist Norbert Elias pierced the first hole in the utopian concept of the myth,[38] but the most critical injunction of contemporary sport may be credited to Jean-Marie Brohm.[39] He proposed a deconstruction of Olympic values through the demystification of the dramaturgy surrounding competition sport.[40] This led him to attack the idealization of de

Coubertin, whom he consistently perceived as being conservative. In the face of such criticism, the IOC chose to tone down – to polish – its filiation to Courbertinian heritage, namely by hammering home the concept of universal Olympic education.[41]

Thus, at the heart of the second half of the twentieth century, time relegated Pierre de Coubertin to a dual contradictory representation, that of elitist reactionary for some, and the founder of present-day spectacle and mercantile sport for others. Two partially erroneous visions but which paved the way for polyphonic interpretations and divergent heritage schemas. Who would nevertheless defend intellectual tradition in the face of modernity and its many stakes? The case of witness Geoffroy de Navacelle, tied both through family heritage and spiritual filiation to the life and concepts of Pierre de Coubertin, shows how the social frameworks of memory cannot depart from individual initiatives and commitments.

The memory quest of Geoffroy de Navacelle

Son of Isaure de Madre, niece of Pierre de Coubertin on his mother Marie's side, and of Gaëtan de Navacelle,[42] Geoffroy de Navacelle boasted about having known his great-uncle during his adolescence. He was owner of the domain and Château of Mirville (Seine-Maritime, France) where Pierre de Coubertin had spent most summers in his youth. After receiving part of the family's archives and heritage from the Comte de Madre, his uncle, Geoffroy de Navacelle saw in them the opportunity to revive the memory of a doctrinal ideal he shared with Pierre de Coubertin.[43] He prided himself on defending the essence of the Olympic ideal and spreading the cultural philosophy of the Baron as from 1968: "In the property at Mirville, where he lived when young, I am setting up a documentation center for his work, which will no doubt be unique in France".[44] This dual role of legatee, of which he most likely exaggerated both the personal aspect and importance of intellectual safeguard, predisposed him to undertaking an intensive memory-based endeavour. In his own way, he

became a modern standard-bearer for the ideas of Pierre de Coubertin. As recognition for his efforts, as well as because of his role of institutional administrator, Geoffroy de Navacelle received the Olympic Order from Juan-Antonio Samaranch on October 2, 1987.[45]

Geoffroy de Navacelle held a large number of responsibilities for nearly all of the forty years of his commitment. As "moral beneficiary" of the work and image of Pierre de Coubertin, and Vice-President of the PCC then FPCC from 1969 to 1991, President of the IPCC from 1980 to 1992, Honorary President of the two Committees and member of the committee responsible for the extension of the Olympic Museum between 1969 and 1972,[46] he sat on the IOC's Annual Pierre de Coubertin Commission as from 1995.[47] In line with the hobbyhorses of the CFPC, he was also proactive in defending French as the official language of Olympism.[48] While we cannot, within the framework of this article, list the numerous initiatives showing his engagement, two examples make it possible to understand his individual commitment to memory and the networks he used. Geoffroy de Navacelle was behind a symbolic event that occurred in France when, in 1991, the Olympic flame of the Albertville Winter Games made a relay stop in the Baron's historical residence.[49] As it was now occupied by the French public postal service *La Poste*, the Organizing Committee responsible for the flame's journey had initially not planned for the Olympic emblem to travel across the family's land, despite the fact that one of its journey stages was in Le Havre (Seine-Maritime, France). This was totally unacceptable in the eyes of the pedagogue's descendant, who decided to take the lead in the matter, and obtained the flame's journey to be modified so as to include Mirville.[50] Finally, when the International Fair Play Committee (IFPC), defending similar values to those of Pierre de Coubertin,[51] wished to create the "International Jean Borotra Prize" in the early 2000s for accomplished athletes committed to the cause of societal humanism and fair play, it was indeed Geoffroy de Navacelle who was mandated vis-à-vis the family and the Paris Mint, *Monnaie de Paris*.[52]

Should the omnipresence of Geoffroy de Navacelle in the Olympic memory movement mean he can be given infinite credit? If the question deserves to be asked, it is clearly because certain positions of Geoffroy de Navacelle appeared to be extremely subjective. As a result, in 1996, he criticized the place chosen by the IOC for Pierre de Coubertin's statue, namely under an oak tree facing the Olympic Museum.[53] "The Founder of the IOC contemplates the museum he wished to create, from under this centenary oak that has been preserved by changing the form of the building. Here is a definite tribute to the Founder and nature", was the reply he received from Fernando Riba and Françoise Zweifel.[54] Two years earlier, he had already shown bias in his fight against forgetting when he overestimated his authority. In 1994, with mixed feelings and somewhat dissatisfied with the content of the first volume of the publication co-edited by Yves-Pierre Boulongne,[55] and dedicated to the Centenary of the Olympic Movement, Geoffroy de Navacelle took the liberty of telling Raymond Gafner how he felt and ensured his point of view was published in the *Olympic Review*.[56] With the result that, while Geoffroy de Navacelle's commitment was unwavering and militant – in the form of moral backing – his singularity was likewise just as remarkable. His social status moreover left little doubt as to the cultural mimicry and class reproduction he endeavoured to activate,[57] often in reaction to the heritage directions chosen by the IOC and/or to the detriment of critical distancing from his memory quest.

In a society that was eager to question its own past and lessons learned, it was through individual commitments that memory intuitions and representations emerged.[58] At this stage, it nevertheless seemed that Geoffroy de Navacelle was already experiencing the complexity of familial memory functions, between "transmission", "revival" and "reflexivity".[59] However, the work of his ancestor was far from being confined to the family doxa. For this reason, the memory conceptions of Geoffroy de Navacelle may no longer be isolated from a wider ideological movement, dedicated to assailing the supposed spiritual travesty of original

Olympism and reinstating Pierre de Coubertin as legitimate figure. In addition to Geoffroy de Navacelle – singled out here as a witness – a host of other key committed individuals, acting alongside a number of specific institutions, formed the basis of a collective defence of memory and supposedly authentic heritage promotion.

KEY FIGURES IN MEMORY REINSTATEMENT

As already indicated by Maurice Halbwachs in 1925,[60] the need for otherness asserts itself as an imperative in memory transmission. Within the Olympic sphere, a first collective impetus therefore took shape at meso-historical level. As a result, it was via affiliated organizations that Pierre de Coubertin's project was reinstated in the Olympic sphere as from 1950. The PCC, IOA, IFPC and IPCC were all born in the following twenty-five years. As melting-pots of reflection and contemporary analysis of sport, as well as instruments of collective memory, these organizations strove to restore the legacy of Pierre de Coubertin in its entirety. For this purpose, they produced a decentralized narrative arc of the IOC's secular concerns (economic, political, organizational). Albeit more symbolic than decisive, their action mainly aimed to constitute a first heritage-based vision of the Olympic dogma. This is the consequence of an imposed process of memorialization in the name of authenticity and tradition. The endeavour nonetheless remained fragmented regarding interpretations of the Coubertinian ideal.[61]

The guardians of Olympism: the birth and structuring of affiliated institutions

When the *Association nationale pour la défense et le développement du sport, des activités physiques et du plein air* (National Association for the Defence and Development of Sport, Physical and Outdoor Activities), ancestor of the PCC, was created in 1950, the agreement of the Baron's niece, Yvonne de Coubertin, was decisive in linking the de Coubertin name to the French association.[62] The latter was set up by Alfred Rosier, former chief of staff for France's Ministry of Education, Jean-François Brisson, teacher of law, and Pierre Rostini, journalist for *Le Figaro.* The PCC aspired to defend the sport ethic and was

also involved in promoting sport among the young generations. From June 19 to 23, 1964, numerous ceremonies successively celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the revival of the Olympic Games, as well as the centenary of de Coubertin's birth.[63] For the occasion, the French Government and PCC organized several symbolic events. On June 19, a commemorative plaque was fixed to the façade of number 20 rue Oudinot in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, where the Baron had lived before leaving for Lausanne. The following day, a ceremony was held at the Mirville family château, in the presence of Maurice Herzog,[64] former alpinist and Secretary of State for Youth Affairs and Sport. In 1973, the PCC officially became the French Pierre de Coubertin Committee (FPCC), following the creation of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (FNOSC) (1972), of which it was an associate member. Last but not least, from 1996 onwards, it awarded Pierre de Coubertin medals to personalities contributing to the diffusion of the Olympic spirit.[65] Consequently, the FPCC paved the way for reinstating the legacy of the Coubertinian endeavour in the intellectual sporting landscape of France.

Consubstantial with these first French initiatives, the 1960s marked a turning point in the building of an international memory front focused on Coubertinian heritage. The IOA, as a private entity supervised by the Greek Ministry of Culture under the patronage of the IOC, began operating at Olympia in 1961, twelve years after its creation was approved at the 44th IOC Session at Rome in 1949. The Academy was highly symbolic in perpetuating the Olympic spirit: it was a cultural and scientific version of the Modern Gymnasium desired by the Baron.[66] Initially, German Carl Diem and Greek Jean Ketséas, Secretary General of the Greek Olympic Committee, had put forward a memorandum on the workings of an Olympic Academy at the 41st IOC Session held at Stockholm in June 1947. Although the IOA shared knowledge on the modern Olympic world and its original philosophy during annual sessions, it remained little known and lacked accessibility for a long period of time.[67] Over the years,

the Academy has also aspired to be a melting pot for reflection and research with over 30,000 students in 1994.[68] Most of the works conducted during the annual sessions are based on archive documents and, as such, may claim scientific objectivity and university classification. Yet, the institution is above all a “central vehicle for the discussion and dissemination of Olympics values” and may, in some respects, relay discourse based on close knowledge of "common thought".[69] In more concrete terms, the IOA was an instrument of historical and cultural legitimacy for the IOC in the form of a prestigious showcase. In the same vein, the Carl Diem Institute opened its doors at Cologne University (Germany) in 1962, and gave pride of place to research concerning the work of Pierre de Coubertin. As both Secretary General of the Organizing Committee of the Berlin Games and committed to the denazification of German sport after the Second World War – a mark of historical dissonance[70] – the German was a pioneer in defending the Olympic idea and Coubertinian precepts. The vast archive collection concerning him – housed at the Olympic Studies Centre at the German Sport University Cologne – also took the joint name of Liselott Diem – his wife and disciple – in 1992. Yet the work and personality of Carl Diem remain subject to ambivalent memories and still gave rise to debate at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century.[71]

In the wings of a seminar organized by UNESCO’s Youth Institute in Gauting (Germany) in 1963, the fight against sport-related chauvinism and violence was becoming a priority.[72] On December 5, 1963, the constitutive meeting of the provisional International Committee for the Organization of the Pierre de Coubertin Fair Play Awards nominated the French former tennis player Jean Borotra as head of its board. The Committee took the name International Committee for Fair Play (ICFP) in 1973. While references to the name of Pierre de Coubertin no longer appeared, the action of the ICFP nonetheless focused on his vision of selfless, ethical and loyal sport, inherited from his philosophy. Furthermore, a new entity

claiming to espouse the Baron's cause saw the light of day in January 1975.[73] It was the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee, set up in Lausanne, Switzerland. Accepted by the IOC as institutional interlocutor in 1978, the Committee was chaired by Geoffroy de Navacelle between 1980 and 1992, Conrado Durantez between 1993 and 2002, and then Norbert Müller from 2003 onwards. On November 8, 1984, the Executive Board of the IOC ruled on the official acknowledgement and partnerships tying it to the IPCC: it had indeed been its sole funding body since 1983.[74] The Committee acted as an international organ defending the Olympic spirit and universal pedagogical concepts of the Baron: it was in charge of coordinating the action of National Pierre de Coubertin Committees.[75] Its members took part in projects of the Olympic authority, intended to promote sport and spread the roots of Olympism. Finally, from 1995 onwards, the Pierre de Coubertin Commission, based at the IOC's Commission for Culture and Olympic Education, began to establish "a bridge between the IOC and IPCC".[76]

In this way, the spirit of de Coubertin gradually forged itself a legitimacy in the stakes of the present, a pressing agenda and an international presence. A memorial movement surrounding de Coubertin's work took form within an intermediary collective framework, with the main aims of fighting against forgetting and initiating the reinstatement of his thought in modernity.[77] Indeed, the general development of affiliated institutions, as well as the heterogeneity of their aims, introduced the notion of community at the heart of the Olympic sphere, on the basis of aspects linked to participation, identity and dissonance.[78] The institutional segmentation of this memorial front, however, raises the question of its audience regarding the movement's strategic direction.

Uneven influence

No form of modernity could have been fertile without the prerequisite foundation of collective memory capable of transmitting a legacy that was already over a hundred years old. Such was the watchword of the artisans of memory dedicated to the fundamentals of Olympism, the foundation stone of a hypothetical heritage oriented towards the leitmotiv of authenticity.[79] In this respect, the narrative of those defending the Coubertinian ideal differed perceptibly from the rational and corporate approaches promoted by the IOC during the last decades of the twentieth century – including economic development, institutional diplomacy and managerial discourse of 'legacy'.[80] This could be seen in publications essentially intended to show the place of Pierre de Coubertin's precepts in contemporaneity.[81] In this sense, two distinct and often conflictual areas of memory production cohabited under the banner of the Olympic Movement. Yet, the influence of the legitimist memory movement remained uneven. It was very largely dependent upon the will of the IOC, which wavered between a modernist course and uncertain loyalty to heritage.

The engagement of Coubertinian Olympians accomplished a number of concrete achievements, a sign that their influence had been progressing since the early 1980s. First, prizes and medals were awarded to personalities having worked for the glorification and ethics of Olympic sport. The ICFP, for example, gained the support of UNESCO for the annual awarding of fair play trophies and honorary diplomas as from 1984. As for the IPCC, it had been giving an award for humanism and eurythmy, ancestor of the Medal for Arts,[82] since 1985, and the French National Olympics and Sports Committee (CNOSF) introduced a "Coubertin d'Or" award in 1992.[83] Secondly, organizations dedicated to perpetuating the Coubertinian endeavour succeeded in establishing themselves as a driving force for the scientific activity surrounding Olympism. And so, the Carl Diem Institute, led by Liselott Diem, held the first scientific meeting at Lausanne in March 1986, organized around the work of Pierre de Coubertin. Indeed, advocates of the Coubertinian line strove to build ties with

universities as seen, for example, by the successive commitment of Professors Donald J.W. Anthony, Otto Schantz and, of course, Norbert Müller to the CIPC cause. A complex and somewhat ambivalent relationship given that the academic requirement for neutrality – for the purpose of objectivity.[84] At the turning point between the 1970s and 1980s, however, history moved from university to the civilian and political society, meeting memory halfway along the heritage path.[85] The IOC itself likewise activated certain levers of university validation in order to ensure the cultural legitimacy of its ideological projects.[86] Last but not least, Olympic-affiliated organizations gradually began to enjoy international recognition. Their invitation to and participation in the debates of the 12th Olympic Congress, organized by the IOC in Paris from August 29 to September 3 1994, showed how they had become key actors in the Olympic world. However, the whole problem resided in the status of affiliated organizations.

Whether consultative, promotional or scientific in nature, the groups involved in promoting Coubertinian precepts were never in a position to make any decisions. A thousand calls for the asceticism of the Games, prizes and medals awarded, did not therefore hold the same weight as a decision of the IOC Executive Board. Was there then a wish on the part of the IOC to develop Olympism in the light of Pierre de Coubertin's teachings? The question was open to debate. Patronage and the subsidization of Olympic-affiliated organizations oriented towards the knowledge and memory of the Baron would suggest an affirmative response. In 1986, IOC financing of the publication of Pierre de Coubertin's *Textes Choisis* (Chosen Texts) supported this idea.[87] However, this very same IOC had been backing the corporate, mercantile and spectacular engagement of the Olympic Games since 1980,[88] as well as the gradual abandoning of the pedagogue's referential status. This was evidenced by the official omission of reference to Pierre de Coubertin in the opening speech of the Olympic competition, ratified by the Olympic Charter between 1991 and 1994.[89] An omission that gave

rise to an outcry from advocates of keeping the memory of Coubertinian Olympism alive. As Geoffroy de Navacelle's reaction to the institution shows:

> "I am both stupefied and pained to see that the reference to Pierre de Coubertin has been removed from the speech given by the President of the IOC at the opening ceremony. […] You are aware that President Samaranch "forgot" it at the opening of the Los Angeles Games and did so again in Seoul. I am beginning to think this is a deliberate option given that the Charter officializes the fact".[90]

Finally, the IOC was also the omnipotence which could make or break bodies dedicated to the original doctrine and its memory. *A contrario*, it was very generous with symbolic celebrations where institutional communication represented a central political stake.[91]

In the face of group initiatives from the guardians of Olympism, the IOC's schizophrenia vis-à-vis memory thus appeared to be structural. The IOC was trapped simultaneously between the wishes of its modernist current and its tradition of a hundred years, in the same way as ambivalent cultural representations conveyed by the mega sports events it promoted.[92] This observation led to another which became increasingly clear as levels of analysis multiplied: all or part of its memory resided in its institutional uses. As a result, the question of the heritage instrumentalization of memory representations on a macro-historical scale can be raised, in other words for the benefit of the Olympic organization. It seemed *a priori* to be oriented towards the management dominant in heritage,[93] with the aim of developing a form of cultural tourism.[94]

INSTITUTIONAL USES OF MEMORY

Memory representations, even if shared, are not a guarantee of historic consensus. These representations contribute to a continuous but multiform reinterpretation of traditional history. For memory is not frozen, it has a history and a use. A use which diverges depending on group frameworks and institutional scales. As a result, it is difficult not to think about Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, who underline the ability of invented traditions simultaneously to symbolize social cohesion and group belonging – real or fantasized – to legitimize institutions and their status, and to mythify systems of values and beliefs inherent to society.[95] In the case here, the construction of the Olympic Museum marked a certain concession from the IOC leaders in the recognition of memory commitments. Such macro-institutional voluntarism nonetheless implies an increasingly selective heritage schema, dictated by brand imperatives.[96] To such a point that far from being a quest for authenticity – admittedly a risky one – the museum project organized by the IOC seems to have been above all directed towards a "themes-markets-resources" managerial model.[97] What therefore was the general heritage policy of the institution?

The Olympic Museum

Since 1993, an Olympic structure essentially assigned to history and memory has existed: the Olympic Museum of Lausanne. In 1968, the IOC took up residence in the Château de Vidy, on the bank of Lake Geneva, Quai d'Ouchy. The inauguration of the Olympic Residence in 1986, followed by that of the Olympic Museum on June 23, 1993, brought the Lausanne Complex to completion. As the result of de Coubertin's wish to offer a "sanctuary" to Olympism at the dawn of the 21st century, the desire to preserve Olympic heritage was therefore active. After moving into Mon-Repos, the reviver of the Olympic

Games brought his entire collection of sports-related objects to the residence and exhibited some of them as from 1924. The permanent exhibition closed its doors in 1970[98] – now unadapted to the increasing development of the Olympic Games.[99] As important issues for IOC management under Monique Berlioux, between 1969 and 1985, the conservation and display of Olympic collections proved to be a subject which raised a great deal of tension within the institution,[100] as did the place given to Pierre de Coubertin in the heritage schema chosen by the IOC and the use of sources concerning him.[101] In 1993, the building designed by Pedro Ramirez Vazquez, Jean-Pierre Cahen and Miguel Espinet opened its doors: it covered 22,000 square meters over five floors.[102] It housed, in particular, a huge documentation centre consisting of the IOC library and archives.

For Jean-François Pahud, curator of the Olympic Museum at the time, the latter was "responsible for the memory of the International Olympic Committee".[103] Both originally desired and set up by Pierre de Coubertin, the Olympic Museum found real roots in the cultural and pedagogical concepts of the Baron.[104] By presenting the history of the Olympic Movement, athletes and evolutions of sport, the Olympic Museum enabled the IOC to concretize the foundations of a temple devoted to the sporting memory of Olympism. A number of Pierre de Coubertin's philosophical and pedagogical teachings can also be found there. The arts, for example, have their place through the parts of the museum assigned to antique statues, posters and their creators, although they were removed from the four-yearly Olympic event after the 1948 Games.[105] In the same vein, the modern statues offered by various National Olympic Committees and spread throughout the Olympic Park (Lausanne) are presented as an integral part of collective Olympic heritage – and have been so since 1985.[106] As an instrument of historical legitimization, the thought of Pierre de Coubertin was therefore included in the heritage on display at the Olympic Museum. It was however freed of

any complexity on account of the cultural stakes of the present, in order to justify the continuity of the Olympic dogma presented by the IOC.

Yet, this museological initiative did not really reflect the general viewpoint of the advocates of original Olympism. In glorifying athletes and the central committee, the museum could be seen as much as a tool of promotion as one of communication and marketing, likely to encourage cultural sport tourism based on the Anglo-Saxon model.[107] Through a sanitized version of the history of the ideas presiding over its construction, exhibiting an authorized past is above all a strategy for cultural sustainability. An international network of museums formed moreover around this heritage epicentre, representing true sites of cultural production where the wish to build a heritage based on the intersection of temporalities (past, present, future) and certain mercantile aims combined.[108] A network which prospered both on the activation of nostalgia and the resources of a community of believers,[109] and whose administration made the notions of market, resources and image central paradigms. This socio-economic distribution was added to a further negative element in the choice of IOC partners and sponsors, often affiliated to multinational firms such as Coca-Cola, Visa, IBM, etc.[110] It went against calls for degrowth from several fervent Olympians, adopting the asceticism advocated by Baron de Coubertin.[111] In the end, it was well and truly a question of two divergent heritage approaches.

Thus, memory representations gave rise to debate, even down to the example of the Olympic Museum. While IOC presidency fairly regularly displayed an attentive and benevolent attitude towards initiatives put forward in the name of Coubertinian memory, it is clear that it promoted heritage that was oriented towards safeguarding its institutional prestige and its place in the ideological and cultural dogma of the present. For memory and heritage, in their contemporary synonymy,[112] cannot be separated from their political dimensions.

IOC heritage policy

Sport is a “phenomenon of cultural hybridity”, in other words, it is conducive to the contextualization or domestication of cultural flows according to local, community and institutional codes.[113] Such partitioning of social scales is somewhat reminiscent of the frameworks governing past-present representations: where tangible or intangible heritage objects are dedicated to preserving social groups and are constitutive of their identities.[114] And so, in a context of accelerated sporting progress where individualism, spectacle and mercantilism have become the rule, the issue of memory must aim, at its most official level, to ensure the equilibrium and continuity of the relationship between tradition, legitimacy and modernity.[115] For this reason, the Olympic Committee refused to submit fully to the philosophical aims of organizations which gave priority to cost reduction and the management of the media and financial development of the Games. The heritage designs of the IOC were indeed not oriented towards essentialized authenticity but rather towards institutional self-promotion and economic development strategy, with the aim of creating market value.[116] On a more symbolic level, the IOC Cultural Commission had twice rejected the project to create a "Medal for Arts" led by Geoffroy de Navacelle,[117] until the IPCC took up the matter in the mid-80s. A sign among others that the sporting dimension of Olympism took priority over its original essence. In reality, sport was one of those societal mirrors that did not invalidate either the commodification of cultural matters or the segmentation of memory representations.

In this respect, the IOC had the duty of managing its heritage. Accordingly, it appeared to implement a memory policy in the strictest sense of the term, namely a policy based on assertion and promotion, devoid of the questions that shape History. It structured and venerated a sporting tradition contoured by mythology;[118] it organized a sham heritage presented as being authentic. To this end, the Olympic body relied on a partial and selective

group of representations. It focused first on a series of emblems and symbols with common strong and meaningful overtones, including the motto "Citius, Altius, Fortius", the flag representing "the five parts of the world henceforth converted to Olympism",[119] as well as the "Olympic Games" brand. This was confirmed by Raymond Gafner, delegate administrator of the IOC, during the Olympic Congress held in Varna in 1973.[120] The Olympic torch completes this list of supposedly universal symbols whose use was strictly governed by law.[121] As of the 1980s, the protection of emblems, their management and then their use were likewise central agents of the Olympic economy, henceforth oriented towards commercial exchange (market, offer, regulation, etc.). Within this brand approach, the IOC likewise kept a tight reign over its own history and diffused an instrumentalized version of it, as shown by the publication of *Textes Choisis* and the organization's centenary book, as official narratives.[122]

Finally, the IOC gave its backing to a number of temporary exhibitions it had chosen, which were set up by its national institutional partners. The exhibitions in question valorized the heritage and cultural side of its work throughout the twentieth century. In this respect, the symbolic year of 1994 saw the implementation of three different exhibitions on French soil, alongside the Centennial Olympic Congress: the *Pierre de Coubertin, vivant*, set up by the national sports museum *Musée national du sport*; *L'Olympisme par les monnaies et médailles*, implemented by Paris's coin museum *Musée de la Monnaie de Paris;* and *Un siècle de philatélie olympique*, organized by the IOC committee of collectors *Commission des collectionneurs olympiques*.[123] These initiatives symbolized the making of a discourse on origins and with heritage aims, even though the substance of Olympism had radically evolved throughout the century. They moreover demonstrated the ability of Olympic management to reap the benefit of a cultural exchange economy, by taking advantage of the polyphony of the historicity regime regarding its founder.[124] For legitimist and communication purposes, the IOC's instrumentalization of the fight for memory conducted by Olympic-affiliated

institutions was therefore structural. It served as proof of the acute consciousness of heritage issues and contexts in which memory levers were quick to structure a line of identity linking tradition and modernity.

For want of fully embracing the memory concept of those supporting the legitimist course linked to its founder, the IOC took up the role, as from the 1990s, of defending and valorizing a heritage with universalist claims: that of the incredible history of sporting Olympism and its development within the civilizational space of the twentieth century. Far from being a mere half measure, this undertaking in historical legitimization conducted by the organization took the form of a managerial approach centered on the Capitalist dogma – with its production, communication and diffusion modes. It rested on a partial vision of the Olympic and Coubertinian legacy.[125] In truth, the polymorphism of the frameworks and scales of memory was equalled only by the diversity of its heritage uses.

In order to show how the memory paradigm expanded into the very heart of one of the most hegemonic sociocultural phenomena of the twentieth century, the Olympic Movement appeared as a particularly pertinent field of study. Through the explanation of the social strata structuring the emergence of the memory issue, from witness to the central organization, this article puts into perspective the heritage tension connecting a movement often presented as being unitary. And does so well beyond the sporting and emotional events the Olympic Games represent, "where heritage can be celebrated, created and memorialised, almost simultaneously".[126]

More concretely, this identity truism of unity was the logical consequence of a heritage brand policy that was orchestrated around a proclaimed continuity of time, partly artificial but dedicated to ensuring both the historical legitimacy and future of the IOC. The

Olympic governing body was thus founded on its decision-making omnipotence and on a clear capacity to manage its legacy. Yet, such interventionism must not in any way mask the existence of the various stages in the construction and use of the Olympic memory. The case of Geoffroy de Navacelle reveals that the overall movement may not be separated from individual initiatives conducive to memory creation. At this level only, it is question of an amplified subjective narration, whose heritage value is certainly mainly family-based, but which also becomes a driving force. As for institutions uniting defenders of the original Olympic spirit and philosophy, such as the FPCC, IPCC and IFPC, they set themselves the goal of promoting sporting selflessness and the pedagogical value of Baron de Coubertin's teachings. In direct line with Coubertinian social thought, they were buttressed by volatile notions of virtue and moral (sporting chivalry, educative values, ethics, etc.) and claimed heritage filiation, presented as being authentic.

In each case, a policy for the reappropriation of history was implemented, yet these policies did not result from the same heritage approach. According to the classification proposed by Emma Waterton and Steve Watson,[127] the IOC referred to an "in heritage" theoretical approach, in other words a material and managerial perspective in the use of the past. As for, the guardians of Olympism and their memory institutions, they tended to place themselves in the theoretical field "of heritage", apart from the fact that the cultural criticism they conveyed was stained with poly-subjective devotion to the Coubertinian ideal. Were these two heritage schemas however that conflictual, that antagonistic? By capitalizing on both individual affects and group representations, the Olympic Movement placed itself in a position enabling it to organize a form of inclusive socio-historical consciousness – through a "for heritage" approach.[128] At the end of the twentieth century, it was however only a barely audible invocation. In the face of corporate and mercantile imperatives, is the IOC willing to explore, in the same way as new museology in social history,[129] a less standardized heritage

way in the 21st century? Nothing is less certain. By showing the central place of memory in the heritage structuring of the Olympic Movement, academic history encourages it to do so.

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