

Historein/Ιστορείν
a review of the past & other stories

4th International Conference

***The Utopian Years: 1968 and Beyond.
Movement Dynamics and Theoretical Implications
40 Years Later***

Athens, 5-7 June 2008

May '68 in Paris, the Prague Spring, student protests on US campuses, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the youth movements in both capitalist countries and the Communist block but also the anti-dictatorship struggles in Southern Europe: all constitute major turning points in contemporary history on both a socio-political and theoretical level. This conference is timed to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the events around the key year 1968 and seeks to provide a forum for reflecting both on the dynamics connected to the social movements generated at that time as well as on their impact on past and current theoretical endeavours. Accordingly, the aim of this conference is not to search for yet another interpretation of this 'annus mirabilis' or 'horribilis' - the 'monster events', to quote Pierre Nora. Rather it aims at triggering a discussion on this political, social and cultural phenomenon.

1968 brought to the fore social actors and movements that challenged old theories and ideologies. Instrumental in shaping people's imaginary was the diffusion of romantic utopias, often based on the ambivalence between radical humanism and structuralism. However, people who were actively politically engaged in this time of crisis and transformation followed diverge itineraries in its aftermath, albeit being equally influenced by its catalyzing experience. The utopias of the 1960s were canalized into various domains during the 1970s, ranging from feminism and ecology to counter-culture and academia. Part of the same process was the theoretical elaboration of the protagonists' lived experience, which resulted in the development of social movement theories, the theorization of feminism and women's movements, postcolonial critique and the theorization of empire and decolonization and the further development of critical theory. The manifold intellectual consequences of 1960/70s activism also led to changes in historical theory: it boosted labour history, radical history, but also oral history, which sought to give voice to the suppressed subject.

The apogee of the New Left and Neo-Marxism and the revival of evolutionist theories of a rupturing society were also parts of this development. Major breakthroughs ranging from social theory and philosophy to anthropology and literary theory were triggered by the very utopian and radical master narratives of the Sixties, which transformed the intellectual map and resulted in theories and concepts with a long-lasting influence. Given that many people at present, including the new French president Nicolas Sarkozy, are declaring the "death" of 1968, this conference aims to find new ways of rethinking and reassessing its lasting impact on contemporary society and theory.

The conference, entitled *The Utopian Years: 1968 and Beyond. Movement Dynamics and Theoretical Implications 40 Years Later*, will take place in Athens in early June 2008. It will address three major themes regarding the impact of '68: a) its impact on social movements and collective subjects, b) its impact on the changing of the concept of culture and the cultural practices, and c) its influence on scientific fields and theoretical perspectives. Possible topics of interest are:

- New social movements and actors
- Ideology and the New Left
- Cross-cultural and transnational trends in Eastern and Western Europe
- Epistemological and scientific shifts
- Developments and trends in the humanities
- Cultural transformation and cultural studies