



Centre d'études sur la Chine moderne et contemporaine
近代现代中国研究中心

SciencesPo
CENTRE DE RECHERCHES
INTERNATIONALES

International Workshop

**Materialities and emotions in times of disasters.
An anthropological perspective.**



Paris, May 15th and 16th, 2019



Events such as “natural” and technological disasters, development projects implying displacement and destruction of territories, environmental crisis and territorial upheavals in general constitute disruptions that induce a series of processes affecting, some temporarily other permanently, people and social worlds in a vast array of aspects. This workshop proposes to examine, from an anthropological point of view and through ethnographic data, two sets of interconnected dimensions: the material and the immaterial.

New Materialities

Whether induced by human settlements and activities alone or by their encounter with unruly natural phenomenon forces, devastating events have the peculiarity of making new materialities emerge. Urban and rural landscapes change, ephemeral buildings may be built in the transitory time, unfamiliar materials and structures may be introduced during the event and the reconstruction period, objects’ associated meaning and symbolic may be altered, bestowed with renewed social representation (such as memorabilia and survivor objects), while specific sites may be chosen and equipped for funeral rites, memorial, commemoration and tourism purposes (squares, headstones, museums, scenery routes). We wish to launch a dialogue between ethnographic cases aiming at exploring the emergence of such new materialities. We also aim to discuss their interactions with people (directly affected or witnesses), in the short, medium and long term - how new status and representations are in conflict, rise, are inscribed in people’s daily life, incorporated by people? We also may wonder how these new materialities may - or not - affect broader ways of doing and thinking in the area they appeared.

Affects and emotions

Affects and emotions related to devastating events - whether they were violent, sudden or moderate, progressive - are well documented (Oliver-Smith 1986, Adams 2013, Simpson 2013, Makley 2014, Browne 2015, Latté 2015, Pernin 2015, Barrios 2017). Whether they are related to survivors, witnesses, actors of the “relief and reconstruction” or simple observers, expressions and “consumptions” of emotion (in its raw form and representation) are intrinsic to such events. They concern a wide array of feelings such as sadness, empathy, compassion, rage, courage, loss (of home, kin, friends, sense of familiarity) which are felt by affected people but also witnessed by observers. Survivors and witnesses may express their feelings through art (poem, music, painting, literature, movie), social actions or building private museums. Intense feelings at the time of the event may have them engaged in life bifurcation, radically changing some aspects of their life (such as temperament, emotional structure). Media, governments, charity organizations and NGOs may catch and mobilize representations of emotions as resources for specific goals. After the event, outsiders may be attracted to devastated sites (physical ones or filmed in documentaries and fictions), stimulating a somewhat desired replicated emotional state. And in any case, ethnographic fieldwork in a place having experienced destroying forces, in particular deadly ones, implicate dealing with local people affects which may also be affecting the researcher and its work, hence necessitating reflexivity on the methodology. For this workshop, we wish to put in perspective ethnographic cases associated to affects and emotions after devastating events. How they are expressed and mobilized, by who and to what end? To what extent some supports allow them to be mediated? How to study post disaster affects and emotions from an ethnographic and anthropological approach and following an ethic posture?

PROGRAM DAY 1: NEW MATERIALITIES

May 15th 2019, 9h -19h

Sciences Po, CERI

56 rue Jacob 75006 Paris, Salle de conférence

9h00: Welcome coffee

Discussant: **Mara Benadusi** (University of Catania) and **Laurent Gayer** (CERI-Sciences Po)

9h30-10h - Introduction : **Sandrine Revet** (CERI-Sciences Po) and **Katiana Le Mentec** (CNRS)

10h00-10h45

Giovanna Salome (Douleurs Sans Frontières Haïti/ Université de Strasbourg. Faculté de Sciences Sociales)

“Contesting the ephemeral: t-shelter uses and the production of future in Haiti”

In the three decades following the fall of the ferocious Duvalierist dictatorship, Haiti embodied the archetype of an unfinished democratic transition, in which the earthquake of 2010 represents one of the many emergencies experienced by the country. The post-disaster housing crisis, embodied by the image of the many IDP camps arise in the interstices of the capital, is inscribed in an urbanization process closely connected to the national history, which goes beyond the boundaries of the emergency period.

In this context, the humanitarian apparatus, intended to promote an emergency response inspired by a principle of human rights protection, has dictated the conditions of access to the aid system, contributing to produce in the encounter with the displaced people new forms of spatiality - camps, transitional sites - and new identities - IDP. The humanitarian machine, in this sense, did not represent only a transnational governance regime of the disaster, but a privileged channel for the introduction of new resources within the Haitian context.

Starting from these premises, in this paper we will focus on the introduction and different uses of the Transitional Shelter on the Haitian post-disaster arena. The individuals called to inhabit new “ephemeral spaces” (*transitional sites*) transform, sell, rent the T-Shelters. These became a new economic and symbolic capital marketable - according to the logics that are inscribed in a housing crisis pre-existing to the earthquake - redefining the logics and the practices of the reconstruction process and contributing to shape the future production of the inhabitants.

10h45-11h30

Maëlle Calandra (CREDO, France)

“Studying historicities and materialities of a disaster: the Cyclone Pam case”

From ethnographic data collected in 2015 and 2018, this paper aims to reflect on the historicities and materialities of a “natural” disaster and how they affect current and future life. For this purpose, it focuses on the tropical Cyclone Pam, a category 5 event, with winds gusting at over 300 km that devastated much of the Vanuatu archipelago in March 2015. The eye of the storm passed near the island of Tongoa, inflicting the worst damage in local living memory by destroying most of the buildings, gardens and landscapes and by putting in jeopardy people’s very sources of subsistence for months. Three years later, in 2018, the inhabitants were describing this event as a fundamental rupture between their past and their present ways of living. Indeed, while the cyclone inflicted losses, it also brought what they called “development” and new materialities through NGOs donations that allowed them to live in houses made of concrete, to cultivate new plant species with new tools and from different technics and to benefit from running water. I shall analyse this very rupture between two worlds, two modes of being and interacting with the

environment, as both a radical change in historical epochs and as a change in the way people think their place in history.

11h30-12h15

Giovanni Gugg (Faculty of Engineering of the University of Naples “Federico II”, Italy)

“Survive the Vesuvius: live with the volcanic risk”

More than a symbol of wild nature, Mount Vesuvius, a volcano in the south of Italy, is a cultural product. Its silhouette represents the “landscape stereotype” of the town of Naples, which, from Plinius to Andy Warhol has seen its iconic charisma grow over the centuries. As a stereotype that has the function of reducer of complexity, the image of Vesuvius is also a simplification that takes to cover a very articulated reality far from the oleographic picture. In particular, the extraordinary population growth experienced by the area surrounding the volcano is at the core of many controversies: at present 700,000 people live in the 24 municipalities of the “red zone”, i.e. the area classified as the most endangered in case of eruption. For this reason, Vesuvius has been labelled as “*one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the world*” and “*Europe’s ticking time bomb*”. In my contribution I will show the local point of view, through two sets of relationships. Firstly, the relationship between the inhabitants of the Vesuvius area and their political and scientific institutions. Secondly, the relationship people have to the places where they live and to the local memory of eruptions. In my ethnography experts, politicians, and ordinary people share the same value system, but historicize differently the meaning ascribed to various risk events. Thus, scientific concepts are constantly reformulated in a new stratification of knowledge. This reworking is one of the crucial points in the current historicisation and spatialization of risk and it takes part at the process I call “scotomization”, a mechanism that allows for distancing oneself from an anxiogenic element. Scotomization is a socially determined process; it is continuously evolving, it is related to the space construction, to a plurality of daily times, as well as to the interpretation of scientific knowledge by the population and the media. In other words, this process is not uniform and represent a “polyphony” of approaches: from cognitivity to the sense of time and space, from the memory selection to the religious rituals. It is a social and mental processes that make it possible to live at the foot of Vesuvius.

12h15-13h: Discussion

13h-14h: Lunch Break

14h-14h45

Katiana Le Mentec (Centre Chine, CNRS, France)

“People’s Contrasting Interactions with Ruins after the destruction of their familiar space. A Selection of Ethnographical Cases in China”

While academic literature explored the topic of ruins through issues of commemoration and Dark tourism as well as the art it may inspire, too few studies have paid attention to interactions between a site in its destroyed state and those for whom it was a familiar location. What happens when materialities are irrevocably transformed by a destructive event, i.e. to enter a transitory state before cleaning or rebuilding, left abandoned to further deterioration, or preserved in the decaying stage of a disaster aftermath? The ethnographic approach allows us to understand at the micro level the transformative processes affecting the relations people have with such distorted familiar materialities, upon which meaning was bestowed, to which feelings and memory were associated, and in which specific activities and practices took place. Relying on ethnographic data collected in Yunyang (since 2004) and in Beichuan (since 2015), this conference paper examines a selection of contrasting interactions between people and the ruins of their city of origin, destroyed in its entirety a) on purpose before the progressive submersion by the Three Gorges Dam Reservoir from 2003 to 2009 for the case of Yunyang, and b) suddenly by the Wenchuan Earthquake, which swept away half of the population in 2008 in the case of Beichuan - a city

advertised as the world's biggest and best preserved remnant of a catastrophe. Relocated nearby, Yunyang and Beichuan people can - and sometimes have no choice except to - view the ruins of their native city. Although the context and temporality of destructions are different, desire or avoidance of ruined familiar materialities are fostered by the frames of interpretation and affective states identified in both cases.

14h45-15h30

Sébastien Penmellen Boret (International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University, Japan)

“The Temporality of Disaster Landscapes: Des *Lieux de Mémoire* for the Dead of the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake”

On March 11 2011, the northeast region of Tōhoku was hit by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and an annihilating tsunami which destroyed entire coastal cities, caused the death of 15,083 individuals and left 3,971 missing bodies. The survivors memorialized the tragic event and its victims through tangible (memorial monuments) and intangible (ceremonies) acts of remembrance. Numerous coastal communities became “*des lieux de mémoires*” where survivors, newcomers, and visitors come to pray and pay their respect to the victims and remember the disaster. Over the years, these sites have changed from being filled with debris, cleared of any remaining traces of the existence of a pre-disaster community, and finally busy reconstruction sites. A few scholars already reported on the intense collective memorialization of disasters via monuments, ceremonies and collective narratives. However, there are few studies that document the evolution of these places of memories through time. This paper attempts to fill the gap by discussing the changes observed in one of places of memories over the last six years. It suggests that an understanding of the liminal period that precedes the completion of the reconstruction and formal memorialization is essential to understand not only the process of remembering and forgetting but also the severed relationship between tsunami survivors and their land.

15h30-16h15: Discussion / 16h15-16h30: Coffee Break

16h30-18h: Film screening. Research movies.

Fogo na Boca (38 mn) de Floriane Chouraqui (LISST-Dynamiques Rurales, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès)

Souls of Zen - Buddhism, Ancestors, and the 2011 Tsunami in Japan (93 mn) de Tim Graf & Jakob Montrasio

18h-18h30 : Discussion (with Floriane Chouraqui)

18h30-19h30 : *Apéritif dinatoire*

PROGRAM DAY 2: AFFECTS AND EMOTIONS

May 16th 2019, 9h -19h

Grand salon (1er étage, portes situées face aux escaliers)

Maison de l'Asie

22 Avenue du Président Wilson, 75016 Paris

Discussant: **Susann Baez Ullberg** (Dept of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University, Sweden) and **Sara Le Menestrel** (CNRS, CENA EHESS)

9h15: Welcome coffee

9h45-10h30

Diego Zenobi (National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET) / Institute of Anthropological Sciences, University of Buenos Aires, UBA)

“After the fire. Emotions, trauma and commemoration in contemporary Argentina”

In this paper I address how the emotional dimension has been displayed during the political struggle carried out by the victims of a fire where 194 young people died and thousands were injured. The public demand of the victims and the contentious mobilization they promoted were shaped around an emotional language involving ideas on psychological trauma. Here I study the conflictive processes through which certain behaviours are classified (or not) as emotional, morally evaluated, and mobilized to produce effects of power. From this starting point, I analyse the conflicts between the contentious movement and the local administration, but also among some factions within the movement. I also examine the role played by the psychologists who accompanied the victims and became an important resource to nurture their political cause. Finally, I pose some questions on the analytical status we could give to emotional register in our research studies and on the political consequences of our decisions on this matter.

10h30-11h15

Kristoffer Albris (Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen)

“Public Affect and the Politics of Solidarity in Post-flooding Dresden”

During the 2013 floods in Dresden, widespread public participation in the response efforts developed into what locals called “an almost festival-like scene”. Politicians and the city authorities sought to capitalize on these public outbursts of solidarity by staging honorary medal ceremonies and issuing statements of support to the volunteers. Meanwhile, as local agencies charged with emergency tasks criticized what they perceived to be acts of dilettantism on part of volunteers, they in turn faced accusations of inefficient flood response efforts through emotionally intense campaigns on social media by citizens. In the immediate aftermath of the emergency, different actors thus sought to control the narrative of who acted correctly or not during the flood response. Such instantiations of sympathy, praise, blame and critique, moreover show how disaster emergencies are analytically fruitful instances for understanding the workings and staging of public solidarity in post-crisis situations. Such forms of discursive affect, I argue, are used to create a space in the public sphere in which the narrative of the disaster as an event can come into existence. Affective practices and discourses, in other words, renders the disaster public

11h15-12h: Discussion

12h-13h: Lunch Break

13h-13h45

Salma Siddique (University of Aberdeen)

“Emotional First Aid in the Field: Creating a humane, supportive environment in the aftermath of stressful events”

The purpose of this presentation is to explore how reflexivity supports fieldworkers in identifying symptoms of vicarious trauma when conducting an ethnographic research of a traumatic event. It is hoped that a relational reflexive practice researcher may be able to identify vicarious trauma symptoms and challenge their own unhealthy strategies as part of the research process. I suggest that we can learn from the work of W. H. R. Rivers in Britain in the early 20th century. Rivers (1974) was both an ethnographer and a psychiatrist. His approach incorporated different forms of knowledge and practice and was an important tool in helping people to make sense of traumas in their lives. He used his observations from his travels in Melanesia (*Hviding and Berg* 2014) to develop his understanding of psycho-neurosis in his work with soldiers who suffered from mental breakdown in the First world war. Rivers attributed the neuroses they suffered to how they dealt with their painful memories and their associated emotions from the unconscious and the mind's unsuccessful efforts to force such memories and their emotions back into the conscious. It could be said that he introduced the notion of “culture of therapy”. Bion (1961) wrote about the use of ‘instinct’ and intuition in observation, (re)cognition, memory, attachment styles and desire which can be seen as moments that create a fragile process. Illustrations of this can be found in Bion's (1961) ideas of binocular vision particularly concerning ethnographical fieldwork.

Exploring affect is the resonance of the relationship of intersubjective experiences between our bodies, our environment and others. Affect is transgenerationally transmittable between feelings and emotions within the ethnographer's writings that create disrupted (auto)biographies often out of their awareness. Feelings and emotions can be transmitted through expressions, respiration, silence, gesture, and posture and can be communicated through nearly every form of mediated communication. Supervision of these aspects of affect can help support fieldworkers with any post traumatic stress they could be experiencing from their research in the field.

13h45-14h30

Roberto E. Barrios (Southern Illinois University Carbondale)

“Emergent Relationalities: Re-thinking affect theory from the vantagepoint of disaster anthropology”

Affect, or the body's capacity to sense, has been the subject of philosophical, humanist, and social science ruminations since the 17th Century. These discussions of affects and emotions have routinely involved concerns with rationality, morality, ethics, and governance. Immanuel Kant, for example, considered both affect and passion as subcategories of emotion, the former being an involuntary reaction to socio-environmental situations (i.e. anger), and the latter being a “lasting inclination” that becomes the subject of reflection and premeditation (i.e. hatred). Most importantly, Kant saw both affects and emotions as threats to reason and proposed “moral apathy” as a disposition from which to ethically govern the self. In the late 1990s, a number of cultural studies scholars revived academic interest in affect. While affect theory is laden with great potential as an analytical vantagepoint, it is also limited by a number of Eurocentric and modernist assumptions that are deeply embedded in the ways it has been theorized during the last four centuries. In this presentation I use ethnographic evidence from two studies of disaster recovery to examine the ways an affective-focused disaster anthropology beckons a re-theorization of affect as a simultaneously emergent and mnemonic property of human bodies that has both historicity and ecology. The cases include the people in the working class post-disaster relocation community of Limón de la Cerca in Choluteca, Honduras, following Hurricane Mitch, and the residents of the predominantly African American neighborhood of Tremé in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. I conclude by reflecting on how the examination of affect in disaster studies leads us to also re-think the very concepts of human and political ecologies as emergent relationalities in which sensing bodies come into being in socio-environmentally contingent ways.

Discussion: 14h30-15h

15h-15h45

Film screening. Artist movies

La Soufrière de Werner Herzog (30')

Farewell rhapsody de Chen Qiulin (10')

Discussion : 15h45-16h15

16h15-16h45

Conclusion : Sandrine Revet (Sciences Po – CERI) and **Katiana Le Mentec** (CNRS, Centre Chine)