

Report from the meeting in Barcelona with the SIEF Working Group BASE; Body Affect Senses and Emotions, October 29-30.

The meeting was held at the localities of IMF-CSIC Egipcíacs 15, hosted by Begonya Enguix and Josep Martí (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), in the presence of the Chair for BASE, Jonas Frykman. This was the fourth time that BASE convened, counting from the first initiative in Zagreb 2015, inaugural meeting in Lund 2016, and a panel in Göttingen 2017. Given that this WG was scheduled five months ahead of the Compostela conference nine of the registered panelists 29 found it possible to attend. Two days were set aside for the meeting and every participant was given a generous timeslot for presentation. The vivid discussions that followed clearly demonstrated the great potentials this field of investigation offers; new perspectives were suggested, multiple theoretical venues opened up. Questions concerning the *impact of material and social experiences* to understand affect were continually touched upon in most of the papers; so was the matter of *intensity* of emotions and affects, as well as the all-encompassing issue of *sedimentation* - how affective reactions in the present are the result of incorporated experiences in the past.

If these worked as the theoretical and methodological backdrops for discussion during the days, ethnographic fieldwork gave substance into the practical doing of affect oriented studies. Daniela Lazoroska from Lund University did present her results from her work with youths in a Brazilian favela. Following her local protagonist through different zones of the town – from intense public street life of the favela to the composed life of middle class areas of central town. The act of movement from one place to another turned out to an act of making and remaking oneself, while the body easily moving from one context became apparent as a social and materially formed habitus in the next.

The life and collective rituals of the Brazilian religion of Condomblé as it was performed in Berlin, was in focus for the paper by Nina Graeff from Freie Universität in Berlin. Again body, motion, and sedimentation was at the core. Condomblé as practiced by Brazilian immigrants has a long tradition of a practice and religion that minimizes the effect of racism. Joining is not so much a matter of ideology or belief as participation by tune in to the music, participate in dances, joining in common meals and rituals. Graeff gave images from her mimetic learning during the course of her fieldwork and how meaning was invested in such practices. The intensity of “sensorial and communal experiences proved to have the power to integrate subjects regardless of cultural context and meaning, to their surrounding world – humans, nature deities – and their selves.”

The politicized body in contemporary Catalonia and the fervor with which it is on display at notably feminist and LGTBQI demonstrations was the theme for Begonya Enguix’s paper. Compared to demonstrations way back when participants were making claims due to their mass, unity and pursuit for justice, today recognition of personal and collective identities are at the core. The means of expression has become the exposed and sexualized body – not seldom wrapped in national symbols like the Catalan colors. At the same time connections to the political movements and demonstrations from 1968 are visible, although the forms of expressions have changed.

Trust and skill of a collective body and the physically close entanglement of the many was discussed by Josep Martí in his presentation of “Castell” the Human Tower. This of building of human towers in squares and open arenas appear all over Spain, but is locally accentuating

Catalan identity. Being of ancient origin it is today included in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. From the perspective of body, affects, senses and emotions it is a remarkable case for inquiry. First the very construction of an up to ten levels of bodies in the most intimate physical contact and bodily coordination. Secondly the interplay between the assemblage of bodies in motion and the surrounding spectators becomes vibrant with affects and emotions

How material objects were harboring emotions and affects was effectively demonstrated by Natalia Alonso Rey in her discussion of the importance trinkets and objects had for migrants arriving in Catalonia. The things she had been studying through interviews with migrants and through pictures made her dwell upon the important issue of intensity. Of course objects always carries memories and stories, but the affective intensity of them made her put emphasis on what they *did* and how they were used, rather than what they represented.

How a place and the materiality thereof gets incorporated was the aim of the presentation by Jonas Frykman (Lund University). The site in question was the family-owned summer house, and how it was to be dealt with when bequeathed at the death of the parents. It so turns out that this often is one of the most conflict generating part of the estate. Everyone has been incorporating the place and affectively attached to it in different ways during summers and holidays. While other things of the inheritance can be negotiated in a rational manner, the affective ties are harder to allocate and articulate. The summer houses takes on a special significance since it takes on an existential dimension, the place where life was lived at the fullest. This opens up for discussions about affective intensity and the oneiric potentials of things and places.

Using her rich field-material from Egypt and the Tahrir square in 2011 Maria Frederika Malmström (Lund University) dwelled in a more direct manner upon intense experiences during insurgence and combat. How does violence and fighting invade individual bodies, and how do the very places, artifacts and sounds carry the memory of events taking place? Affects are transmitted from the material context but also socially from one body to another. Thus the Post Traumatic Stress that victims encounter are not harbored within the single subject can also be released by and integral to the very cityscape once marked by violence.

A mood of fear and pending apocalypse is characterizing the mindset of many children of today, Helena Hörnfeldt from Stockholm University, has found in her interviews at schools. Especially the imminent change in the climate hangs over their attitude towards the future. The background of course is the fear-mongering that emanated from news-media and social media. The many alarmist reports that are an incentive to policy-makers, organizations and companies to act for children easily ruin their prospect for their personal future. This follows, as a fact, a well-known pattern of using children as leading the way to a better society. But now with the risk of making them the victims of a fear they have limited means to affect.

Finishing the work-shop on a higher note Connie Reksten-Kapstad (University of Bergen) draw the contours of a project where she is studying food-festivals from the point of view of how the senses are activated by the display of food and drink. Her fieldwork was carried out in three contrasting regions Italy, Britain and Norway. Her main objective was to find the synesthetic of how food, drink, music, literature and art was forming a “sensual materiality” at these festivals. Preliminary conclusions made her point to how the careful display of produce resonated with the surrounding countryside and local culture. But as for the synesthetic, there was still some comparisons to be carried out.

A common trait in the papers was the inspiration drawn from scholars dealing with located affect, from old-timers like for instance Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger and Pierre Bourdieu to more recent research by for instance Vena Das (1996), Jane Bennett (2009), Cameron Duff (2010), Rosi Braidotti (2012), and Frykman & Frykman Povrzanović (2016).

A better build-up for the BASE-panels 1, 2 and 6 in Compostela 2019 would be hard to find.

Lund and Barcelona December 6th 2018.

Jonas Frykman

Begonya Enguix